

**Understanding Contemporary Practical Latino/a Theology Through the
Lenses of College-Age Latinas in Their 20's: *A New Marianismo?***

By: Claudia H. Herrera-Montero

February 13, 2017

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Doctor of Philosophy in
Practical Theology

St. Thomas University
Miami Gardens, Florida

Approved:



Mary Carter Warren, D.Min., Associate Professor of Theology, St. Thomas University
Committee Chair



Michelle Gonzalez Maldonado, Ph.D., Professor of Religious Studies and Assistant
Provost for Undergraduate Education, University of Miami
Committee Member



Beth M. Stovell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Old Testament, Ambrose University
Committee Member

ProQuest Number: 10257806

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10257806

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

**Copyright © 2017 by Claudia H. Herrera-Montero,
All Rights Reserved**

Copyright Acknowledgement Form
St. Thomas University

I, Claudia H. Herrera-Montero, understand that I am solely responsible for the content of this dissertation and its use of copyrighted materials. All copyright infringements and issues are solely the responsibility of myself as the author of this dissertation and not St. Thomas University, its programs, or libraries.



Signature of Author

2/13/17

Date



Witness (Dr. Mary Carter Waren)

2/13/17

Date

St. Thomas University Library Release Form

Understanding Contemporary Latino/a Theology Through the Lenses
of College-Age Latinas in Their 20's: A New Marianismo?

Claudia H. Herrera-Montero

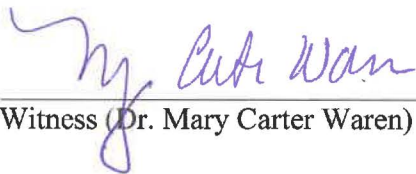
I understand that US Copyright law protects this dissertation against unauthorized use. By my signature below, I am giving permission to St. Thomas University Library to place this dissertation in its collection in both print and digital form for open access to the wider academic community. I am also allowing the library to photocopy and provide a copy of this dissertation for the purpose of the interlibrary loans for scholarly purposes and to migrate it to other forms of media for archival purpose.



Signature of Author

2/13/17.

Date



Witness (Dr. Mary Carter Waren)

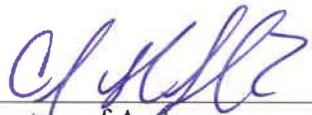
2/13/17

Date

Dissertation Manual Acknowledgement Form

By my signature below, I Claudia H. Herrera-Montero assert that I have read the dissertation publication manual, that my dissertation complies with the University's published dissertation standards and guidelines, and that I am solely responsible for any discrepancies between my dissertation and the publication manual that may result in my dissertation being returned by the library for failure to adhere to the published standards and guidelines within the dissertation manual.

<http://www.stu.edu/Portals/library/HowTo/docs/Dissertation-Manual.pdf>



Signature of Author

2/13/17
Date



Signature of Chair

2/13/17
Date

To my daughter, Mariana Guadalupe, who sings, dances, prays and laughs; and who Papi and Mami love her with all our hearts...Te amo con toda mi alma [I love you with all my heart]: my future Latina who one day will be 20.

Abstract

This dissertation articulates an understanding of contemporary practical Latino/a theology through the lenses of young adult Latinas (from South America, Central America and the Caribbean) who self-identify as Catholics and are the daughters of immigrant parents from Latin America. Methodology of participatory action research in practical theology particularly articulates on the lived experiences of Latinas between the ages of 18 and 29, who were born or raised in the United States and attend local universities in Miami. Beginning with a brief overview of the wider context of Latino/a communities in the United States, this work builds upon the voices of these young adult Latinas –considered as active participants of research– that will converse with sources from Practical, Latin American and Latino/a theology, as well as faith tradition, in order to unfold Latinas’ lived experiences, faith and spirituality interpreted in this work as a new *marianismo*. This work aims to provide insight and to open new conversation for both practical theological and pastoral work within the academy and the Catholic Church that engages Latino/as in the United States and the wider context.

Acknowledgements

This work is the fruit of a communal process. I dedicate my dissertation to my dear husband and *compañero de vida* Andrés Montero and our daughter Mariana Guadalupe. I am beyond grateful for their unconditional love, patience and sacrifice. This PhD is the fruit of their love, prayer, teamwork and family efforts. I will always be grateful to my parents, Francisco Javier Herrera and Claudia Zarate, and my brother Juan Rafael Herrera who are a blessing to my life. *Gracias por creer en mí y darme animo en la lucha!*

I am deeply grateful to my dissertation chair and mentor, Dr. Mary Carter Waren, who affirmed my voice and writing as a Latina theologian in the dissertation process, and have guided me throughout my journey in the U.S. with such extraordinary sense of family, human touch, and highly academic demand that kept me moving forward. To my committee members: Dr. Beth M. Stovell, who believed in my voice as a Catholic Latina theologian and gracefully mentored my reflection, work and writing on *Mary (Maria)* through the lenses of the Gospel; Dr. Michelle Gonzalez Maldonado, who introduced me through her writings to a new understanding of *lo cotidiano* (the lived experiences of the people) in practical theology. I offer my sincere gratitude to the extraordinary young Latinas at St. Thomas University who actively participated in this research as conversation partners. They gracefully shared their life-giving narratives and oral stories as key source to the Church and the theological enterprise.

I also want to acknowledge the unconditional support of St. Thomas University during my doctoral program. To Monsignor Franklyn Casale, President at St. Thomas University, and Monsignor Terence Hogan, Vice President for Mission and Dean at the

School of Theology and Ministry, for their great support and encouragement to complete my dissertation in a timely matter. To faculty and staff at the School of Theology and Ministry and others who have walked with me throughout my doctoral journey, including Dr. Bryan Froehle, Dr. James Conley, Dr. Theodore Whapham, Dr. Sister Ondina Cortes, Mrs. Cynthia Rose and Mrs. Cary Trujillo. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Jonathan Roach who in his role as library administrators and colleague, offered a great support and helped to make the resources available throughout my research. A special thanks to my fellow classmates and colleagues in the PhD program who were extraordinary conversation partners and brothers and sisters in the academic journey. Also, to ACHTUS (Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States) and HTI (Hispanic Theological Initiative) for their friendship and *acompañamiento*.

My gratitude and heart deeply goes to my dear campus ministry staff, peer ministry students and the staff at the president's office at St. Thomas University. For their deep care, support, prayers and understanding during my writing journey. Also, I would like to thank all prayer warriors and friends who were witnesses in this process. To my family, extended family and *comunidad* in Colombia for their genuine and unconditional love and strength.

Finally, my primary thankfulness goes to whom made everything and everyone possible in the everyday. I thank to the Lord with all my heart! Thank you, God, for sustaining me through this pilgrimage and sending your Spirit during times of hope and struggle. To *la Virgencita* for her intercessions and for leading me to the wonderful young women I have met in this work. *Jesús en tí confío!*

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter One | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| The Pilgrimage of the Practical Theologian: <i>La Peregrinación de la Teóloga</i> | 2 |
| Campus Minister in Higher Education: Towards a Practical Theology | 6 |
| Listening to Latino/a Students | 8 |
| Latino/as in the United States | 10 |
| Key Historical Immigration Events | 13 |
| Immigration Status: “Undocumented” Human Beings | 17 |
| A Shifting Population..... | 20 |
| Religious Landscape | 24 |
| Towards a Contemporary Practical Latino/a Theology | 29 |
| Tracing on Roots from Latin America: Constructing Theological Discourse .. | 30 |
| In the Practical Theological Task of Participatory Action Research with Latinas | 34 |
| Chapter Two..... | 37 |
| FROM MEDELLIN TO MIAMI AND BACK: A LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 37 |
| Tracing Roots from Medellín..... | 37 |
| Towards a Preferential Option for the Poor | 45 |
| Latin American Theology Crosses the Border..... | 46 |
| Salvation as Liberation of the Poor | 47 |
| <i>El Eco de La Lucha</i> (Echoing the Struggle)..... | 51 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Retrieving Voices from U.S. Hispanic-Latino/a Theology..... | 53 |
| <i>Mestizaje</i> : Retrieving Dangerous and Liberating Memory | 57 |
| <i>Lo Cotidiano</i> : The Art of Living..... | 61 |
| Latina: Embodying and Articulating the Everyday | 67 |
| Chapter Three..... | 73 |
| (RE)THINKING METHOD AND METHODOLOGY: TOWARD A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF <i>LO COTIDIANO</i> (THE EVERYDAY LIFE) | 73 |
| An Interdisciplinary Conversation in Practical Theology..... | 74 |
| Attending to <i>Lo Cotidiano</i> (the Everyday)..... | 77 |
| Attending to the Lived Experiences of the People..... | 80 |
| Active Participants of the Everyday Life | 81 |
| Women Participating in the Everyday | 82 |
| Latinas Participating in <i>Lo Cotidiano</i> | 87 |
| Embodying <i>Fiesta</i> (Celebration) in the Struggle: <i>La Lucha</i> | 90 |
| Claiming Space from the Private to the Public: <i>La Familia/La Comunidad</i> | 92 |
| <i>Permitanme Hablar</i> (Allow me to Speak): Voice | 94 |
| Mary Participating in <i>Lo Cotidiano</i> | 95 |
| Mary’s Response: An Active Fiat | 98 |
| Mary’s Visit to Elizabeth | 102 |
| In a Manger: Jesus was Born | 103 |
| Maternal Face of God through Latino/as Eyes | 106 |
| Chapter Four | 109 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| THE PRACTICAL (PASTORAL) THEOLOGICAL JOURNEY OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH WITH COLLEGE-AGE LATINAS (CATHOLIC) | 109 |
| Overview of Participatory Action Research | 110 |
| Participants as Subjects of Research | 113 |
| <i>Vivencia</i> (Lived Experience)..... | 114 |
| Participatory Action Research with College-Age Latinas | 116 |
| Phase One: Social Context and Invitation of Participants | 118 |
| Invitation: Called by Name | 118 |
| Phase Two: Implementing Preliminary Questionnaire | 119 |
| Session One: Pre-Testing Preliminary Questionnaire..... | 119 |
| Session One: Observations..... | 120 |
| Session Two: Preliminary Questionnaire..... | 120 |
| Session Two: Choosing Time and Place of Gathering..... | 121 |
| Time..... | 121 |
| Place..... | 121 |
| Session Two: Observations | 121 |
| Assigning Names or “Naming Ourselves”..... | 123 |
| “Naming Ourselves”: Observations | 123 |
| Listening to the Preliminary Questionnaire: Who are you Latina?..... | 125 |
| Participants..... | 125 |
| Preliminary Categories..... | 127 |
| Language | 127 |
| <i>Spanglish</i> | 128 |
| <i>En La Lucha</i> | 129 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Dichos</i> (Sayings)..... | 131 |
| Prayer and Expressions of Faith..... | 132 |
| Passing of the Faith..... | 132 |
| Prayer and Practices as Young Adults..... | 135 |
| Religious Imagery..... | 137 |
| Church Participation..... | 140 |
| <i>Familia</i> (Family)..... | 140 |
| Self-Identity..... | 143 |
| Observations from Results and Next Steps..... | 145 |
| Phase Three: One-on-One Interviews (Listening to the narratives)..... | 146 |
| Scheduling One-on-One Interviews..... | 146 |
| Recording and Transcribing “What Moves the Human Heart”..... | 147 |
| <i>La Familia</i> (Family)..... | 149 |
| Immigration: From Latin-America to the United States..... | 149 |
| Language at the Core of their Hearts..... | 156 |
| <i>La Lucha</i> : The Struggle to Survive..... | 159 |
| <i>Hogar: Iglesias Domésticas</i> (Home: Domestic Churches)..... | 163 |
| Prayer Life..... | 163 |
| <i>Abuela/os: Casa de Dios</i> (Grandparents: House of God)..... | 173 |
| <i>Espacios Sagrados de Oración</i> (Sacred Prayer Spaces)..... | 184 |
| Imagining Mary: <i>La Virgencita</i> | 193 |
| Final Words: “Allow me to Speak”..... | 201 |
| Observations from Results..... | 208 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Phase Four: Focus Group..... | 211 |
| Key Points for Dialogue..... | 215 |
| Immigration | 215 |
| Spanish..... | 218 |
| <i>Familia</i> : And the Father Figure? | 220 |
| Expressions of Faith: How about the Local Church? | 222 |
| Chapter Five..... | 228 |
| LATINAS INFORMING PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: A NEW MARIANISMO?..... | 228 |
| Called by Name and the Power of “Naming Ourselves”: Latina? | 231 |
| <i>Recuerdos</i> (Memory): <i>Y Maria Guardaba en el Corazón</i> (and Mary Kept All these Things Remembering them in her Heart) | 235 |
| <i>La Familia/La Comunidad: Iglesia Domestica Imigrante</i> (The Family: Immigrant Domestic Church) | 239 |
| <i>Abuela/o: Casa de Dios</i> (Grandma/pa: House of God)..... | 241 |
| Parents: Resilient Immigrant Families..... | 245 |
| Mothers: Resilient Women | 247 |
| <i>Celebrando la Lucha</i> (Celebrating the Struggle)..... | 249 |
| Expressions of Faith: <i>Fiesta!</i> | 250 |
| Latinas Imagining Mary..... | 252 |
| <i>Permitanme Hablar/Allow me to Speak: Pastoral and Theological Recommendations</i> | 240 |
| Allow me to Participate: Towards a Ministry of Participatory Action..... | 255 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Engaging the Families: Prophetic Domestic Churches..... | 256 |
| Allow my Language to Speak: Re-Imagining Language..... | 259 |
| <i>Salve Latinas!</i> | 266 |
| In the Margins | 267 |
| Appendix A: Consent Form | 271 |
| Appendix B: Preliminary Questionnaire..... | 272 |
| Bibliography | 279 |

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Who are you, Latina! When someone sees your face. Who are you, Latina! When someone is listening to what you are trying to articulate once you start moving your lips through the rhythm of a strange vocal language. Who are you, Latina! When someone reads what you have been trying to write under an acceptable standard. Who are you, Latina! When you dance in between two different worlds “con lucha.”¹ Who are you, Latina! When you and God meet in that sacred space in which your whole-self unfolds. Who are you, Latina! When you are you, and you “set out and travel...in haste.”² Lord, lead me through these pages and from these pages to the places I need to go.

This dissertation research and the process of writing this manuscript is not merely an academic, but a spiritual, pastoral and ministerial exercise that strengthened my faith and call as a Latina Catholic practical theologian. “When we rest in God we can find the safety, the spaciousness, and the scary freedom to be who we are, all that we are, more than we are, and less than we are. Only when we live and see through God can everything belong.”³ This process took research, investigation, analysis, critical thinking, reflection, engaging and participation of the people; but it also took prayer and steadfastness that sustained my journey as a woman, mother, wife, daughter, sister, friend, campus minister and doctoral candidate. In the end, everything belongs.

¹ With struggle.

² Phrase inspired by verse from scripture that narrates the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. “During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah.” (Luke 1:39). Unless otherwise noted, the biblical verses used in this dissertation are taken from the New American Bible (NAB) translation.

³ Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 26.

The Pilgrimage of the Practical Theologian: *La Peregrinación de la Teóloga*

December 24 of 2006. *Las novenas*⁴ (the novenas) that lead us to *Navidad* (Christmas) have almost finished except one, *la abuelita* (my grandmother) cooking Christmas eve supper and *el pesebre* (the manger) eager to welcome *El Niño Dios* (Baby Jesus) at *atardecer Bogotano* (dusk in Bogotá). These events and the joyful *villancicos* (Christmas songs) singing out loud that *El Niño* (the child) is coming; this is the context of my two-year-old daughter Mariana and I boarding an *Avianca* air flight with the destination of Miami, Florida, our new home reunited with *papi* (daddy). The very same day that millions of Colombians⁵ were joyfully preparing to celebrate *Navidad* (Christmas) with *la familia* (family), the deep awareness of Mary's struggling journey of giving birth to our Savior in the foreign land of Judea was happening at *El Dorado* International Airport in Bogotá. *El Pesebre* (the manger) represented the uncertain struggling "place" of three faithful pilgrims in which a new life was just beginning.

Swinton and Mowat define "place" in practical theology as "human experience...where the gospel is grounded, embodied, interpreted and lived out."⁶ Our "place" of belonging was uncertain and about to take a turning point as we were about to

⁴ Herrera notes "traditional Novena of *Aguinaldos*: This is the most important popular religious tradition for Catholics in Colombia. During the nine days before Christmas, Colombian families and friends get together to pray the novena and to celebrate the road of the Holy Family in Judea. The word *aguinaldo* is attributed to the tradition of exchanging gifts before Christmas." Claudia H. Herrera, "Colombia and Christian Education," in *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*, eds. George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport (New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 310.

⁵ Herrera notes that "studies by the Episcopal Conference (CEC) show that 90 percent of the Colombian population is Catholic. However, the Colombian Council of Evangelic Churches (CEDECOL), represents the evangelical churches in Colombia and asserts that 13 percent of the Colombian population is identified as evangelical...Christianity in Colombia is influenced by a *mestizaje*, or mixing, of elements adopted from popular religious practices. There is a particular devotion to Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, patroness of Colombia, and to diverse local representations of the Virgin Mary. Local practices such as the praying of the rosary, devotions to saints, and processions, pilgrimages, and altar venerations during Holy Week and the *novena de Aguinaldos* are also common." Ibid.

⁶ Jon Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 5.

embark into a new immigration experience in which our faith was an “embodied act.”⁷ *Tranquila Maris, vamos a regresar pronto!*⁸ where some of the words that I nostalgically, yet courageously, pronounced to my two year old daughter Mariana, while trying to deal with the unending sound of the airplane turbines, the harsh rhythm of the passports stamps, the suspicious and compromised scanning of human fingers, and Mariana’s strong determination to liberate herself from her stroller in order to run back to her *abuelitos* (grandparents), who were waving good bye at the entrance to the immigration point. Beyond this point there is no crossing and return, but a “place” –the sacred stories, narratives and lived experiences– carried in the heart of the faithful pilgrims.

I was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia in South America, within a family that practices Catholicism. I was blessed to grow up very close to my *abuelas* (grandmothers) from whom I learned a great devotion to Mary and love for God. I was blessed to grow up walking distance of *la vida de la parroquia* (the parish life) and to be formed and educated within the Catholic Tradition with *las Madres Escolapias* (the Piarist Sisters) and *las Salecianas* (the Salesian Sisters). These two religious communities taught me a great love and knowledge of God and the Church and walked with me as my values and faith as a woman were formed from kindergarten until senior year. After High School graduation, I went to Our Lady of the Rosary University, one of the oldest Universities in America, where I finished my undergraduate studies and I met my husband Andres, and became parents of Mariana Guadalupe. We moved to the United States ten years ago, to pursue our graduate studies, but mostly to follow God’s call in a place new to us.

⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸ Be still Maris! We will come back soon!

The pilgrimage of leaving behind yet moving forward, “remembering” and “keeping in our hearts,” struggling for identity yet becoming, dying to oneself yet beginning a new life, are some of the significant moments that newcomers, in our case Latino/as, have faced once we leave our place; our *Tierra*⁹ of origin. As we landed in the United States, my family and I encountered a place in which the social categories of language, immigration status and ethnicity were foreign, new, and difficult to avoid. I did not anticipate that we would be reminded of these categories not just in the academic enterprise or the classroom setting, but within the social spectrum of our everyday life. We learned to negotiate who we are and where we come from, with the uniqueness of the place that received us as newcomers.

As we began our journey as faithful pilgrims, we learned to be the other. This experience challenged us and called us to step out of the uniqueness of the world we brought with us and moved us to go out from our comfort zone and meet the other as the other; to reflect deeper in the concept of *otherness* and to listen and re-encounter the joy of the Gospel in unexpected places and with unexpected people. I have found that my immigration experience and identity as an immigrant Latina in the United States has shaped my lenses as a practical *teóloga* (theologian). I have learned to reflect about how the “gospel is embodied, interpreted and lived out through human experience”¹⁰ and the current social location that surrounds individuals. Therefore, our *place* as faithful pilgrims was no longer visible and tangible, but the memories of that place became part

⁹ *Tierra* is a noun that translates literally “land” and it is usually used to refer to someone’s “place” or nation of origin. It refers to the uniqueness of a place and its specific characteristics. For this purpose, *tierra* signifies not only “land,” but the people and what “a place” means to the people, including its practices, expressions, sayings, religion, faith, language, food, and so on.

¹⁰ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 5.

of a construct as we entered deeper into the new sacred “place” in which the Holy Spirit dwells, moves within, transforms, inspires and breaks through beyond ordinary time and through the ordinary of the everyday life of individuals.

The image of the journey of Mary in Judea in the Gospel of Luke,¹¹ as a metaphor to describe my own experience, embodies the pilgrimage of the immigrant faithful disciples, as she is being exposed to the hardship of not finding a room for the birth of her son. Mary’s *fiat* –the faithful and selfless discerning heart of the disciple to respond *yes* to the movement of the Spirit when God calls– has a significant connotation in my journey as an immigrant Latina, lay minister and practical theologian. As faithful newcomers in the United States, my family and I moved from a place of belonging to a foreign culture and system where now home is the message of salvation. Carrying within us our faithful roots as Latino/a Catholics, we struggle to find a place for our faith to be born even in the most unexpected conditions. As Latino/a *extranjero/as* (foreigners) our lived experiences and *la lucha*¹² as the “struggle to survive”¹³ are not separated from our deep spirituality. The language that once I used in the public spectrum, becomes “incarnation and

¹¹ “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” Luke 2: 1-7.

¹² *La Lucha* is a term that is used in popular Hispanic-Latino/a culture. It does not have a literal translation, but it is generally used as a *dicho* (saying) to express the practice of surviving and moving forward in hope, even in the midst of struggle. *La lucha* has become key epistemology in U.S. Hispanic-Latino/a theology, as it articulates not only the struggle of Latino/as in the United States, but also, it brings about the different expressions and lived experiences of the people. This work will use *la lucha* throughout the following chapters.

¹³ Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1988), 45.

symbol,”¹⁴ kept in the core of the heart, and becomes part of the mystery of God when the human soul and body encounters the sacred.

Campus Minister in Higher Education: Towards a Practical Theology

For the past four years, I have studied the work of Latino/a theology. Following the work of contemporary Latina/o theologians, I have concluded that *lo cotidiano*¹⁵ (the everyday life of the people) is a primary source of knowledge and reflection in the task of practical theology. My social location as a Latina Catholic, who is also a mother, wife, daughter, sister, friend, colleague, mentor, and lay minister at a Catholic university in South Florida, shapes my understanding and lenses as a practical theologian and the way I live, write and interpret theology and the world. “As a foreigner, I learned what it’s like to be the “other.”¹⁶ Embodying *otherness* has shaped my lenses and my relationships and interchanges with others and the world that surrounds me. Working as a Catholic campus minister in South Florida for the past six years, I have had the opportunity to work closely with unique and diverse college students in their everyday life. I have been moved to explore deeper their understanding of God, faith, and spirituality, in light of their lived experiences as college students. In my early training in pastoral ministries, I learned in a campus ministry seminar *to listen well to the heartbeat of the community*. Moreover, I cannot separate my training and academic work in practical theology from my current pastoral work in campus ministry in a Catholic university setting. The lived experiences of the students and their social context, regardless their participation in

¹⁴ Ibid., 52.

¹⁵ *Lo cotidiano* is translated and interpreted in Latino/a theology as “the everyday life” or “ordinary life.” It has become key epistemology for the work of Latino/a theologians and the broader theological enterprise in the United States and Latin America. This epistemology and other epistemology used in Spanish from Latino/a theology will be used throughout this manuscript.

¹⁶ See Felicity B. Kelcourse, *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), xiii.

ministry or the local church, have transformed my lenses as a practical theologian and lay minister.

In order to attend and explore the identity of young adults in this setting, it is important to consider and explore the young adulthood stage in human development. “The promise and vulnerability of young adulthood lie in the experience of the birth of critical awareness and the dissolution and recomposition of the meaning of self, other, world, and God.”¹⁷ Reaching out to college students in South Florida, I have found a diverse generation of students who are constantly seeking meaning and purpose, while negotiating academics, relationships, self-identity, family dynamics, immigration status, race, gender issues, finances, spirituality, and so on, both inside and outside the classroom setting. This is the stage when young adults negotiate values and are able to respond to critical questions related to self-identity and faith. The reaffirmation of self-identity allows them to build meaningful relationships with others and the world that surrounds them. Moreover, their lived experiences and social location help them to start articulating understanding about themselves, God and others –including family, friends and those they encounter. Felicity Kelcourse notes in her book *Human Development and Faith* that “one begins to care for oneself...search for meaningful work, and negotiate and renegotiate relationships to parents, peers and communities.”¹⁸ My lived experience as a Catholic campus minister, working in a Catholic institution in South Florida that serves to a majority minority student body, has helped me to listen to the ways college students negotiate relationships as they live between different contexts in the everyday.

¹⁷ Mark Wm. Radecke, “Service-Learning and the Spiritual Formation of College Students,” *Word & World* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 291.

¹⁸ Kelcourse, *Human Development and Faith*, 249.

Their own social contexts –formed by age, gender, country of origin, socio-economic and immigration status, language, cultural beliefs and attitudes, faith tradition, and so on– must negotiate the world of the university within which they are expected to assimilate and learn to adjust in order to be successful.

Listening to Latino/a Students

My background as Latina has helped me to connect as a campus minister with college students who come as international students from Latin America. However, listening deeper, I have encountered a generation of students that in addition to overcoming some of the transitions of young adulthood noted above, they have to rethink, reflect and live between two worlds: the world that they have at home or in *la comunidad*¹⁹ (the community), which is the construction of the culture of origin and the world that their parents or grandparents left behind in Latin America and the world and context of the United States culture into which they were born or raised, grew up and now where they attend to the university. The task of practical theology in this primary encounter with Latino/as college students is not about speaking of the existence of Hispanics-Latino/as living in the borderlands of the United States culture or Latino/as in the university setting. Rather, practical theology here takes the lead in engaging deeper in conversation with the reality of the people. It asks critical questions about the lives of specific groups of individuals, including their social location, lived experiences –not only of the individual but also the lived experiences of their communities– and faith tradition.

The practical theological task of enfolding new knowledge is possible by asking critical questions such: “What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going

¹⁹ *La comunidad* is formed by family, extended family and friends who share the same roots and faith. The local Church plays a very especial place for Latinos/as Catholics as a community.

on? How might we respond?”²⁰ These questions proposed by Richard R. Osmer, allow the practical theologian to begin listening, and start responding to critical questions about reality, rather than moving into assumptions or abstract knowledge about people. This work intends to explore an understanding of contemporary practical Latino/a theology understood through the lives of the people. Of particular interest in this work are the voices of young adult Latinas, who were born or raised in the United States, who identify themselves as Catholic and who attend local universities in South Florida. This exploration does not intend to focus on the religious identity of Latinas based on Church participation or affiliation with campus ministry, *la pastoral Hispana* (Hispanic pastoral ministry) or their local parishes, but rather to explore the lives of young women who attend to higher education and self-identify as both Latinas and Catholics. How do faith tradition, social context and the lived experiences of these young women intertwine and enfold religious identity in United States twenty first century Christianity? Michelle A. Gonzalez notes that “Latino/a theology offers a way to speak of the diversity, messiness and beauty of reality.”²¹ In order to speak and understand *the diversity and beauty of reality* within Latino/a theology, this work requires us to deeply engage in the lived experiences (*lo cotidiano*), the social context, and the faith practices and beliefs of the people. *Lo cotidiano* in this work will be interpreted as a changing and living category that involves lives. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier notes:

Practical theology that focuses on justice requires living in the borderland between God and the people. It creates a prophetic space where we do not

²⁰ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

²¹ Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality: A Woman's Perspective* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009), 15.

announce or denounce but help to bring about alternative practices for more humane living. One learns to observe, collect data, analyze or make meaning from the data, think critically, imagine, and synthesize data in order to come up with insight and action.²²

In order to understand the social location of these young Latinas in the university setting, there is a need to listen to the wider context before one analyzes, critically responds and makes meaning out of it. For the purposes of this work, sources from practical theology will enter into conversation with the voices from a group of Latinas who identify as Catholics and attend to higher education in South Florida. These voices will certainly not speak for the whole of Latino/a students in the United States who identify as Catholics, but rather will serve as a point of departure and reference for practical theology to offer new theological insights to the society, the academy and to the Church. The practical theological exercise of listening and discernment, which in most cases implies “to observe, collect data, analyze or make meaning from the data”²³ that comes from the narratives and the lived stories, will allow this work to put in conversation the literature review with the reality of the world, in this case, the people.

Latino/as in the United States

The following paragraphs present an introduction of critical patterns among Latino/as in the United States that builds upon further work with young adult Latinas. “Latino/a theologians are not merely attempting to bring forth the particular religious reality and practices of Hispanics, they are also seeking to transform the very discourse of

²² Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing Press, 2012), 241.

²³ Ibid.

theology.”²⁴ This work does not aim to merely inform the reader about Latino/as in the United States, but it calls for further transformation when reflecting about the reality of Latino/as in the United States that will inform theological insight when one critically reflects in the uniqueness among Latino/a communities and groups in the United States. This overview of the context includes key historical immigration events, socio-economic and educational patterns, and religious landscape of Latino/a Catholics.

The Pew Research Center estimates that there were 55.3 million Hispanics in 2014, which represents 17.3% of the whole of the United States population.²⁵ The number of the Hispanic population has increased from being 6.3 million in 1960 –3.5% of the total of the United States population– to 55.3 million in 2014,²⁶ representing a rapidly raising Hispanic population in the United States during the last five decades. Moreover, the total of Hispanics in 2014 continues to represent the largest minority of the United States population. This same data documents other minority groups; 12.3% who are black non-Hispanic, 5.2% who are Asian non-Hispanic, and 3.2% considered as other non-Hispanic people.²⁷ The majority population of the United States by race and ethnicity is white non-Hispanics with 61.9%,²⁸ but this shifting reality of an ever-increasing Hispanic population continues to tilt that reality.

On the other hand, the diversity of the Latino-Hispanic population in the United States varies by regions. The Pew Research Center notes that the largest Hispanic

²⁴ Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Sor Juana: Beauty and Justice in the Americas* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 15.

²⁵ Renee Stepler and Anna Brown, “Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States,” *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*, April 19, 2016, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/04/19/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states/#current-population>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

population is concentrated in the West with 22.1 million Hispanics, with a leading number in the states of California (14.9 million) and Texas (10.4 million Hispanics),²⁹ the majority of whom report being of Mexican, Salvadoran or Guatemalan descents. The second major Hispanic population is concentrated in the Southeast, with a predominant number in the State of Florida (4.7 million).³⁰ According to the 2014 report *America's Hispanic Children* “the South holds not only the largest share of Cuban children, but also the second-largest share of Puerto Rican children.”³¹ The great contrast between the Hispanic-Latino population in the West and the South helps one to understand not only the diversity among the Hispanic population, but it begs to further analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of each ethnic group among Hispanics. The third largest concentration of Hispanics is located in the Northeast, predominantly in the State of New York, with 3.6 million Hispanics, most Puerto Ricans, Dominican Republic and other populations from Central and South America.³² In addition, the Pew Research Center notes that the three largest concentrations of Hispanics by metropolitan areas are Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, California with 5.9 million Hispanics (predominantly Mexican, Salvadoran and Guatemalan); New York-Newark-Jersey City with 4.7 million (predominantly Puerto Rican, Dominican and Mexican); and, Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, Florida with 2.5 million (predominantly Cuban, Colombian and Puerto Rican).³³ The diversity and concentration among Hispanics in the United States impacts

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ David Murphy, Lina Guzman and Alicia Torres, “America’s Hispanic Children: Gaining Ground, Looking Forward,” Child Trends Hispanic Institute, 2004, 8, <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014-38AmericaHispanicChildren.pdf>

³² Stepler and Brown, “Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States.”

³³ Pew Research Center, “Hispanic Population and Origin in Select U.S. Metropolitan Areas,” *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*, September 6, 2016, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/hispanic->

the different Hispanic outreach initiatives, particularly with pastoral work among Hispanics in South Florida.

Given this data, it seems imperative to look at immigration patterns over the last fifty years to better understand the Hispanic population in 2016. According to the statistics presented by Pew Research Center, the percentage of Hispanics born outside of the U.S. equaled the number of Hispanics who were born in the U.S. with 3.1 million in the 70's, and increased from 5.6 million over 4.4 million U.S born in 1980's, to 8.1 million over 7.0 U.S. born in the 90's.³⁴ These percentages suggest that the population of immigrant Hispanics increased consecutively up to 1.4 million each decade over the decades of 1970-1990, an effect that seems to overlap with the challenges of the socio-economic and political context of Latin-America, Central America and the Caribbean during those years.

Key Historical Immigration Events

Even though the landscape of Hispanic immigration into the United States is complex, it is important to briefly highlight and trace historical events from 1900 that are critical to the trajectory of some of the largest Hispanic populations in the United States. These historical events do not represent the immigration story of the whole of the Hispanic population that lives in the twenty century United States. However, it is a call to reflect on the reality that every Hispanic immigration pattern is different and has its own story, not the same story. Once people cross to the North Hemisphere, they are no longer

[population-in-select-u-s-metropolitan-areas/](#)

³⁴ David G. Gutiérrez, "A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States," U.S. Department of the Interior, American Latino Theme Study, accessed October 12, 2016,

<https://www.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/immigration.htm>

only Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cubans, Central American and so on; but also, if people are Hispanic legal or illegal “aliens.” An overview of the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban trajectories will help to trace some of the events that are distinctive to each people, and immigration.

A critical event to highlight are the waves of Mexican immigrants in 1900, the moment in which the number of Mexican born living in the United States reached 100,000 for the first time,³⁵ and continue to increased dramatically reaching “at least 1.5 million [Hispanic of Mexican-origin] in 1930.”³⁶ It is critical to note that, as a result of the Second World War in 1941, the U.S. government urged the implementation of the *Bracero* (hand worker) Program during the early 1940’s due to the United States facing “a significant farm labor shortage.”³⁷ This program

not only reopened the southern border to Mexican labor, but also more significantly, reinstated the use of large numbers of immigrant workers in the U.S. economy for the first time since the Depression.³⁸

Moreover, it brought a number of long-term effects including a rising number of Mexican workers residing in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total of Mexican population in the United States included foreign and U.S. born increased from 1.6 million in 1940, to 2.5 million in 1950, and reached 4 million by 1960.³⁹ It is important to highlight that the total of the Hispanic population in 1960 was 6.3 million

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ U.S. Department of Justice: Immigration and Naturalization Center, *1978 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978), 36.

Hispanics,⁴⁰ which suggests that the majority of the Hispanic population at that time was Hispanic Mexicans with the other 2.3 million representing other Hispanic populations. According to the Pew Research Center, the Mexican population represents the largest Hispanic population in the United States in 2014 with 35.3 million.⁴¹ These trends indicate that the population of Hispanic Mexicans has continuously and rapidly grown during the last five decades, becoming today in 2016 the largest Hispanic-origin group with a direct impact on the socio-economic and religious landscape of the United States.

Another event to highlight in this immigration story is the Jones Act in 1917 that gave Puerto Ricans the right of U.S. citizenship and therefore, legal migration within the U.S. territory. Though, before and during the early 1900's, Puerto Rico was an unincorporated possession of the United States with an acquired civil government, it was not until 1917 that the Congress granted Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship. Consequently, the Court decided that Puerto Ricans “were by law to enjoy every right of any other citizen of the U.S., civic, social, and political.”⁴² This historical event had a significant effect on the growing number Puerto Rican migrations to the United States during the following decades. After the Great Depression in 1930 and the years during and following the Second World War “nearly 88 percent could be found in New York City where they became low-wage workers in the region’s expanding clothing manufacturing and service sectors.”⁴³ In 1960, the Puerto Rican population reached about 887,000.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Stepler and Brown, “Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States.”

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² José A. Cabranes, “Citizenship and the American Empire: Notes on the Legislative History of the United States Citizenship of Puerto Ricans,” in *A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States*, ed. David G. Gutiérrez, accessed October 12, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/immigration.htm>

⁴³ Gutiérrez, “A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States.”

From this point of departure, Puerto Rican population began to expand and thrive to other locations within U.S. jurisdiction. After Mexico, Puerto Ricans become the second largest Hispanic population of the United States with 5.3 million⁴⁵ in 2014, a number that has shown considerably growth of the Puerto Rican population over the last decades.

It is critical also to highlight three major Cuban immigration waves to the United States after 1960's, in response to an oppressive political regime. "Although a significant Cuban population had existed in the U.S. since the 19th century (mainly concentrated in Florida and New York City), virtually overnight the exodus of Cubans after the revolution created a major new Latino American population,"⁴⁶ reaching 163,000⁴⁷ exiles by 1960. Also, between 1965 and 1970, a second Cuban wave occurred when the Cuban regime allowed Cubans to be reunited with their families in the United States, and the U.S. government approved the entry of about 300,000⁴⁸ Cuban refugees into the United States. The *Cuban Adjustment Act* of 1966 permitted thousands of Cuban refugees –with accompanying spouses and children– to escape from persecution by the political regime, and to adjust to lawful permanent residence in the United States. As a result of this Act, the Cuban population in the United States increased to 638,000 by 1970. Finally, the third wave in the 1980's, known as the "Mariel boatlift," added 125,000 additional Cuban migrants who escaped to the U.S. shores and claimed political asylum. There were many political implications raised about the background of those who came in the Mariel boatlift, many from earlier Cuban immigrant themselves.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Stepler and Brown, "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States."

⁴⁶ Gutiérrez, "A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States."

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

These waves are critical in order to understand the trajectory and presence of the present Cuban-American population in the United States, representing 2.0 million⁴⁹ in 2014, the fourth largest Hispanic population in the United States. These events are particularly important in the context of South Florida (predominantly in Miami and Broward Counties), where the largest population group is Cuban, with approximately 1.1 million among the 4.7 million Hispanics that reside in Florida. Throughout the past five decades, the Cuban population has greatly influenced the educational, socio-economic, religious, and political life of South Florida in particular.

Contemporary migrations caused by political turmoil in Latin America during the 1970's and 1980's are important to highlight, as they "resulted in an unprecedented wave of migration as hundreds of thousands of Central Americans –many of them undocumented– fled the violence of their homelands to enter the U.S."⁵⁰ This data refers to migrants from nations other than México, such El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua, who left their countries due to authoritarian regimes, violence and war. The nations of South America have endured political and social conflict caused by war between governments and revolutionary armed forces. This armed conflict has affected the lives of individuals over these last decades, causing people to flee into exile from their lands.

Immigration Status: "Undocumented" Human Beings

Once immigrants cross to the North Hemisphere, they are no longer Central American, Caribbean or South American. People are Hispanics or Latinos of "legal" or

⁴⁹ Stepler and Brown, "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States."

⁵⁰ Gutiérrez, "A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States."

“illegal” immigration status, and considered as “aliens.” As seen in historical events above, a great number of foreign born Hispanics have come to the United States under special status or adjustment. However, many more also have come from their country, in most cases fleeing from precarious circumstances that forced them to cross to the North Hemisphere without “U.S. documents,” or came with such documents and overstayed without the documentation required from the Department of Homeland Security. The processing of a human with “papers” or “documents” within the U.S. territory has become more than a federal, political or social task under discussion. The Church and the academy have been challenged to respond to a situation that involves the human dignity of the person beyond documentation or paperwork. This is about the lives and the dignity of human beings created in the image and likeness of God, not limited by legal status. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), following the Church’s Social Teaching, has made public policy statements on immigration, particularly on the status and treatment of undocumented immigrants. In one of its statements, USCCB notes:

The Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social service, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country, and it works for the respect of the human dignity of all –especially those who find themselves in desperate circumstances.⁵¹

The process of entering or crossing into a strange territory involves thousands of people and families currently living in fear and with uncertainty of the future. People

⁵¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, November 15, 2000, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/pastoral-care-of-migrants-refugees-and-travelers/resources/welcoming-the-stranger-among-us-unity-in-diversity.cfm>

come to the United States in search for a better life and a new beginning, called “the American Dream.” Newcomers called “undocumented” not only face *la lucha* (the struggle) to adapt to a new language, culture and way of life, but they must overcome fear about the future and the hard and often difficult to understand immigration processes. According to the Department of State, “migration scholars agree that somewhere between 40 and 50 percent of all persons not legally in the country are individuals who did not cross the border illegally but rather have overstayed valid tourist, student, or other visas.”⁵² Trends from the Department of State estimate that the actual number of undocumented persons within U.S. increased from 3 million in 1980, to 5 million in 1990, 8.4 million by 2000 and reached 12 million by 2009. This number started to decrease during the following years, and is stable at about 11.1 million people in 2014.⁵³ This is around the same time that the number of Hispanics U.S. born started to increase, which suggests that it is most likely that at least some of the Hispanic U.S. born population in 2009 and following years were the children of undocumented parents. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that about “6.8% of K-12 students have at least one parent who was undocumented in 2008,”⁵⁴ a group which would present young adult Latino/as attending college in 2016. Mexicans continue to report the majority of the unauthorized immigrant population with an estimate of 5.8 million in 2014,⁵⁵ half of the total undocumented population in the United States. In reference to labor opportunities, the

⁵² Gutiérrez, “A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States.”

⁵³ Jeffrey Passel and D’Vera Cohn, “The Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010,” *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*, February 1, 2011, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/02/01/unauthorized-immigrant-population-brnational-and-state-trends-2010/>

⁵⁴ Passel and Cohn, “A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States.”

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Pew Research Center estimates that

the U.S. civilian workforce included 8 million unauthorized immigrants in 2014, who are overrepresented in farming occupations (26%) and construction occupations (15%). In all industries and occupations, though, they are outnumbered by U.S.-born workers.⁵⁶

These trends suggest that unauthorized immigrant families are most likely to be exposed to diverse risks such living in poverty or low-income households that find difficult access to basic rights as education, health insurance, employment and housing. This also suggests that kids growing within unauthorized immigrant families are also vulnerable to grow up facing the struggle of immigration processes or even separation of the family itself due to cases of deportation, detention or removal of at least one parent or family member.⁵⁷ This situation has not only awakened the attention of the U.S. government for the past decades, but it also urges for the attention of the academy and the Church in twenty first century United States.

A Shifting Population

As noted above, between the years of 1960 to 1990, there was an increase in immigration of foreign born Hispanics in the United States over U.S. born Hispanics. However, the number of immigrant Hispanics began to decrease in the 1990's and showed a great shift in the 2000's when the U.S. born Hispanic population reached its peak, with 9.5 million Hispanics who were U.S. born over 6.5 million Hispanic

⁵⁶ Jens Manuel Krogstad, Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "5 Facts about Illegal Immigration in the U.S.," *Pew Research Center*, November 3, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/03/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>

⁵⁷ See Passel and Cohn, "A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States," Krogstad, Passel and Cohn, "5 Facts about Illegal Immigration in the U.S.," Murphy, Guzman and Torres, "America's Hispanic Children," 8.

immigrants. Estimates are that within the existing 55.3 million (17.3% of the United States population) Hispanics in 2014, about 36 million (61%) Hispanics are U.S. born; number that leads over the foreign born Hispanic population that represents only 19.3 million (39%) by 2014.⁵⁸ During the last two decades (1990-2010), there has been rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, which is currently represented in majority by Hispanic population that is U.S. born. It seems that the majority of this U.S. born Hispanic population are represented by the Millennials generation or youth that are up to 26-year-old or younger in 2016. According to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from 2014,

Hispanics are the youngest major racial or ethnic group in the United States.

About one-third, or 17.9 million, of the nation's Hispanic population is younger than 18, and about a quarter, or 14.6 million, of all Hispanics are Millennials (ages 18 to 33 in 2014).⁵⁹

This suggests that Millennials are those who were born between 1981 and 1996. Millennials and the younger population together represent 32.5 million Hispanics out of the total member of Hispanics (55.3 million) that currently live in the United States. This confirms that the majority of the Hispanic population in the United States is represented by youth and young adults who are most likely be U.S. born from immigrant parents, although not necessarily first generation. Percentages estimated that the total of the U.S. born Hispanic population in 2014 is represented with 65.1%; 47% are U.S. born

⁵⁸ Stepler and Brown, "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States."

⁵⁹ Eileen Patten, "The Nation's Latino Population Is Defined by Its Youth," *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*, April 20, 2016, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/04/20/the-nations-latino-population-is-defined-by-its-youth/>

Hispanics younger than 18.⁶⁰ This suggests that a minority of U.S. born Hispanics are Millennials or older than 18. According to age patterns among Hispanics, 27% U.S. born Hispanics are Millennials compared to 26% who are foreign born Hispanics in 2014.⁶¹ These patterns show that among Hispanic millennials in the United States there is still a proportion between those who are U.S. born and those born outside of the United States. In conclusion, the trends analyzed above show not only the majority of the Hispanic population in the United States are U.S. born, but also, that the majority of Hispanics in the United States in 2016 are young, which is most likely that they are children of immigrant families. The additional implication is that they can speak the English language often in addition to another language spoken at home.

About three –quarters of Hispanic Millennials are proficient English speakers—that is, they either speak only English at home (28%) or speak a language other than English at home, but speak English “very well” (48%)...Among Hispanics ages 5 to 17, nearly all of whom are U.S. born, 88% are proficient English speakers, including 37% who speak only English at home and 50% who speak another language at home but speak English very well.⁶²

These statistics imply that the majority of Hispanics in the United States are most likely to speak English at some proficiency level, regardless that they may speak a language other than English at home. Among Hispanics, it is most likely that Millennials and younger Hispanics speak English. The fact that the majority of Hispanics in the United States are U.S. born opens the door for further reflection regarding Hispanic-

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Latino identity beyond the linguistic implications and to further reimagine the category of language.

In reference to college educational journey, it is critical to highlight that in 2014 only 4.4 million (14.4%) Hispanics obtained a Bachelor's degree from which 1.7 million (10.8%) are foreign born.⁶³ 7.3 million (23.9%) obtained a two-year college degree from which only 2.6 million (15.9%) are foreign born.⁶⁴ 8.3 million (27.1%) of Hispanics are High School graduates or those who have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent such a General Educational Development (GED).⁶⁵ These reports suggest that a large number of Hispanics in the U.S. do not report educational attainment. Particularly, statistics suggest that a low number of Hispanics obtained some higher education diploma 2014 (a Bachelor's degree or a two-year college degree). As a matter of fact, compared to 47.7 million White alone, 4.8 million Black and 5.9 million Asian,⁶⁶ foreign born Hispanics represent the lowest number of those who attained a Bachelor's degree in 2014.

Concerning to K-12 students, the *National Survey of Catholic Schools Serving Hispanic Families*, indicates that 96% of Hispanic students are enrolled in public schools, 2% are enrolled in Catholic Schools and 1.5% attend private, non-Catholic schools.⁶⁷ There is still a small number of Hispanics who attend private schools, and therefore Catholic schools in the United States. This picture may reflect the fact that Hispanic

⁶³ Stepler and Brown, "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States."

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Hosffman Ospino and Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, "Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church: A Summary Report of Findings from the National Survey of Catholic Schools Serving Hispanic Families," Boston College, 2016, 24, http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/lsoe_sites/cce/pdf/STM%20Catholic%20Schools_final%20v4_opt.pdf

families still struggle socio-economically in this country. According to *America's Hispanic Children*, "the majority of Hispanic children (62 percent) live in low-income families. Roughly one in three Hispanic children lives in poverty. And one in eight lives in deep poverty."⁶⁸ This suggests that the majority of Hispanic children live in low-income households that survive with low-salary jobs such as retail, transportation, warehouse, food services, construction, manufacturing, business services⁶⁹ and so on.

The same report notes that even though Hispanic families face challenges such as accessing education, unemployment and solving immigration status, the reports note that 59% percent share home-cooked meals with their families,⁷⁰ which is a high percentage compared to white non-Hispanics. Pew Research notes that 42.9% of Hispanics in the United States make less than twenty thousand dollars a year; and 40.3% makes between twenty thousand to forty-nine thousand dollars a year.⁷¹ Low-income households are less likely to access private education, and therefore go to college, and are more likely to be at a higher risk for poverty, unemployment, and so on. This historical and socio-economic landscape of Latino/as in the United States helps to provide the background for further work with College-age Catholic Latinas in South Florida. It will also help further analysis on the participation among Latino/as in the life of the Church.

Religious Landscape

It is important to consider some trends that report not only religious identity among Latino/as in the United States, but also presence of Latino/a Catholics in the life of the Church; in this case, the Catholic Church. The Center for Applied Research in the

⁶⁸ Murphy, Guzman and Torres, "America's Hispanic Children," 9.

⁶⁹ See Stepler and Brown, "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States."

⁷⁰ Murphy, Guzman and Torres, "America's Hispanic Children," 14.

⁷¹ Stepler and Brown, "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States."

Apostolate (CARA) reports that

29.7 million U.S. residents who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino are estimated to be Catholic, representing about 58.9 percent of the 50.5 million people of this race and ethnicity in the country. About 16.0 million of the nation’s Hispanic or Latino Catholics are estimated to be born in the United States. Some 13.7 million are foreign-born.⁷²

This suggests that most Latino/as in the United States self-identify as Catholics due to a historical religious trajectory in Latin America where the predominant religion for the past five centuries has been Roman Catholicism. Pew Research also notes that in 2014 “Latin America is home to more than 425 million Catholics – nearly 40% of the world’s total Catholic population.”⁷³ This number confirms that almost half of the global Catholic population is Latino or Hispanic. According to Pew Research, for “most of the 20th century, from 1900 through the 1960s, at least 90% of Latin America’s population was Catholic.”⁷⁴ This percentage is quite interesting to compare with immigration patterns studied above in key historical events, in which the majority of Hispanics or Latinos living in the United States at that time in history were predominantly immigrants from Latin America.

The USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs estimates that based on the 2010 Census, 68% of Hispanics are

⁷² Mark Gray, Mary Gautier, and Thomas Gaunt, SJ, *Cultural Diversity in the Catholic Church in the United States* (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University: Washington D.C., June 2014), 8, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/upload/cultural-diversity-cara-report-phase-1.pdf>

⁷³ Pew Research Center, “Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Religion,” November 13, 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/#history-of-religious-change>

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Catholic.⁷⁵ Yet, it is also striking to observe that the percentage of Hispanic Millennial Catholics in the United States is 54%⁷⁶ which is half of the Catholic Millennials in the United States. The Center for the Applied Research (CARA) also notes that seven in ten people remain Catholics as adults and 78% of Hispanic or Latino adults affirm that they were raised Catholic.⁷⁷ This compared to the total of Hispanic Catholic population suggests that is most likely that the majority of those who were raised Catholics, remained in the Faith or still self-identify as Catholics, regardless of participation.

In reference to Parish life or leaders, 3% of priests in the United States self-identify as Hispanic or Latino.⁷⁸ The Center for Applied Research (CARA) reports that there were three thousand Hispanic priests out of about forty thousand priests in the United States in 2013.⁷⁹ In addition, 18% of women and 11% of men, such as religious brothers and sisters self-identified as Hispanic or Latino/as in 2013.⁸⁰ The percentage for religious brothers and sisters who are Hispanic is higher than Hispanic priests who self-identify as Hispanic or Latino. However, 16% of permanent deacons⁸¹ self-identify as Hispanics and 43% Hispanics are enrolled in formation programs;⁸² CARA estimates that about one in ten professional lay ministers⁸³ working in parishes self-identify as Hispanics. This suggests that the majority of Hispanics who are in leadership positions in

⁷⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *Hispanic Ministry at a Glance*, accessed October 12, 2016, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/hispanic-latino/demographics/hispanic-ministry-at-a-glance.cfm>

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), "Fact Sheets: Hispanic Catholics in the United States," Georgetown University, 2014, 1, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/staff/webpages/Hispanic%20Catholic%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ USCCB, *Hispanic Ministry at a Glance*.

⁸⁰ CARA, "Fact Sheets," 2.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² USCCB, *Hispanic Ministry at a Glance*.

⁸³ CARA, "Fact Sheets," 2.

the Catholic Church in the United States are those related to lay ministry in parish life. This number is still low but larger than the percentage reported for Hispanic or Latino religious brothers and sisters, permanent deacons and Catholic priests as leadership positions in the hierarchy of the Church.

The *National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry* reports that approximately

35.5% of all Catholic Parishes in the United States, a total of 6,269, are known to serve a particular racial, ethnic, cultural, and/or linguistic community other than Euro-American white Catholics. The majority of these parishes, approximately 70%, serve Spanish-speaking Catholics.⁸⁴

These findings correlate with trends in which Hispanic Lay participation in parish life represent a major percentage of participation. It also confirms that there are a large number of parishes who serve the Catholic Hispanic population. However, it seems that there is still a percentage of Hispanics or Latinos who self-identify as Catholics, but they are not necessarily registered in a Parish or participate in the Sacramental life of the Church. CARA notes that 45% of Hispanic or Latino/a Catholics are registered with a parish compared to 62% of non-Hispanic Catholics. Also, 55% Hispanic or Latino Catholics attend Mass at least once a month, a number higher than the 45% of non-Hispanic Catholics who attend Mass at least once a month. However, CARA reports that 21% Hispanic Latino Catholics are less likely to attend to weekly Mass than 26% of non-Hispanic Catholics.⁸⁵ These numbers are lower than the percentage of Hispanic or Latinos who report as registered in a parish. Also, the percentage of those who participate

⁸⁴ Ospino and Weitzel-O'Neil, "Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church," 8.

⁸⁵ CARA, "Fact Sheets," 1.

in monthly and weekly Mass is lower in proportion with the margin of 60% of Hispanics or Latinos who identify as Catholics in the United States.

Moreover, CARA notes that 85% percent of Hispanics or Latino/a Catholics say “their faith is an important part of their everyday life”⁸⁶ and 83% affirm “they are proud to be Catholic.”⁸⁷ Yet, 40%⁸⁸ of Hispanic or Latino/a Catholics report attending weekly services; half of Hispanics or Latinos, who affirm their Catholic faith is important in their everyday life, attend or participate in weekly Mass. Pew Research notes that “this group is more detached from institutions, including traditional religion, than their elders.”⁸⁹ It is estimated that about “three-in-ten (31%) say they attend religious services at least weekly,”⁹⁰ which is striking compared to the total percentage of Hispanic Catholics in the United States who have faith or remember God in their everyday life.

The *Summary Report of Findings from the National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministry* noted that “the spiritual/liturgical celebrations that attract the largest numbers of Hispanic parishioners” are “30% Lent, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Easter etc.; 25% Our Lady of Guadalupe; 19% sacraments, Masses, weddings, first communions, etc.; and, 10% Advent, Christmas Eve, Epiphany.”⁹¹ These trends suggest that the participation of Latino/as or Hispanics increase for extraordinary celebrations or spiritual devotions. Moreover, faith as an important part of people’s everyday life is expressed through religious symbols or attitudes. CARA notes that

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Pew Research Center, “The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States,” May 7, 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states/>

⁸⁹ Jessica Martinez and Michael Lipka, “Hispanic Millennials are Less Religious than Older U.S. Hispanics,” *Pew Research Center*, May 9, 2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/08/hispanic-millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-u-s-hispanics/>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ospino and Weitzel-O’Neil, “Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church,” 15.

Hispanic or Latino/a Catholics are more likely than other Catholics to have faith-related items at home or on their person. Two-thirds have a statue or picture of Mary at home. Four in ten wear a crucifix or a cross, and a quarter carry prayer cards or coins.⁹²

These percentages highlight the presence of religious devotions or attitudes in the home of Hispanics or Latino/as. This will help in Chapter Four when presenting and contrasting the results from close-ended questionnaires and open-ended interviews with College-age Latinas' religious expressions, devotions and attitudes that begin in the family. Even though this work does not aim to study participation in the local Church among young adult Hispanic Catholics, it focuses on exploring religious identity among College-age Latinas who self-identify as Catholics, regardless of their participation in the local Church.

Towards a Contemporary Practical Latino/a Theology

In this work, sources of practical theology –such the voices from Latin American theology, the pastoral response to the context of Latin America, its move to the North American hemisphere, as well as the voices of both the first and contemporary waves of U.S. Latino/a theologians– are put in conversation with the voices of the College-age Latina Catholics who were born or raised in the United States by immigrant parents and attend college in South Florida.

I came to this work studying *lo cotidiano* (the everyday life) as a major theological source in contemporary Latino/a theology and spirituality in the United States. The term has strongly and naturally bloomed and flourished out of the hopes and

⁹² CARA, "Fact Sheets," 2.

struggles of Latinas/os living in the borderlands of the U.S. context. *Lo cotidiano* has been translated, described, written, read, re-read, discussed, omitted, appropriated and adapted within the very discourse of theological enterprise, in order to explore the lived stories of the people, initially of those who suffer in silence. *Lo cotidiano* is more than a colloquial and abstract term addressed *con lucha* (with struggle) beyond the Latino/a audience. It is a dynamic process that carries oral stories and the lived experiences of the people, making *lo cotidiano* a living practice that produces new knowledge and transformation.

Tracing on Roots from Latin America: Constructing Theological Discourse

Beginning with a brief overview from the Latin American Council of Bishops in 1968, Chapter Two traces voices from Medellín through those of Latin American theologians and U.S. Latino/a theology; a literature review sets the context and preamble of further work on the lives of College-age Latinas and their families. The departure point is Latin America, where the Church calls out and addresses for the first time a pronounced concern and cry of the suffering and the oppressed of this region. In a social context embedded in political and socio-economic turmoil, resulting in poverty, violence, social iniquity and oppression, the thinking about God and the call for salvation, becomes not just a theoretical reality, but a pastoral response rooted in pastoral work with the people. Prominent Latin American theologians acknowledge that it was the contact with reality that happened first, in order to construct theological reflections about the poor as a response to this reality.

Pastoral action in the community created spaces to listen to the people and from there move to action, as we, the Church, “hear the shout which arises from [their]

suffering.”⁹³ In this line of events, theological reflection unfolded not first as an option for Latin American theologians, but rather from inherent and deep contact with the reality of despair and turmoil in Latin America. Theological reflection, or the thinking and reflection about God’s acting presence and grace in the lives of the people, therefore, emerges from the grassroots of *el trabajo pastoral* (pastoral work) and social action. The writings that came from the Latin American Council of Bishops that will be overviewed in Chapter Two, as well as other theological work from Latin American theologians, were not solely a pastoral proposal but a prophetic response⁹⁴ to a living context and the voices of the people.

Salvation and the liberation of the poor and the marginalized became a key theme in the work of Latin American theologians. In light of ongoing pastoral responses, new theological voices began to articulate the cries for justice, peace and solidarity began to echo in the North American hemisphere, with a *salvific goal* of liberation of the poor and the marginalized. Prominent voices from Latin American liberation theology such Gustavo Gutiérrez and Jon Sobrino are included, which present the image of the crucified God when referring to the first encounter with the poor and the oppressed in Latin America. Theological reflection and practice is presented in communion among people, into fullness with the face of Christ through the poor and the marginalized, and the Spirit

⁹³ Paul VI, “Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá,” accessed April 12, 2016, Vatican.va.

⁹⁴ In this practical theological work, prophetic response or voices indicate the movement of the spirit to reflect, respond and call in action to the good news of salvation. It anticipates the hope for the future, recall the news of salvation and brings new insight and knowledge. Elizabeth Conde Frazier notes that “practical theology that focuses on justice requires living in the borderland between God and the people. It creates a prophetic space where we do not announce or denounce but help to bring about alternative practices for humane living. One learns to observe, collect data, analyze or make meaning from the data, think critically, imagine, and synthesize data in order to come up with insight and action.” See Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 241.

working within. This work is presented as critical for the work of first wave contemporary U.S. Hispanic-Latino/a theologians for whom *la lucha del pueblo Hispano o el pueblo inmigrante* (the struggle of Hispanic people or the immigrant people) in the North American Hemisphere became a key source in the construction of new theological work and epistemology. The work of U.S. Hispanic theologians, such as Virgilio P. Elizondo with Mexican-American immigrants in the parish setting, and Ada María Isasi-Díaz in her work with the voices of immigrant Hispanic women in the Church, neighborhoods, and streets, are examples of the concern of first wave U.S. Hispanic-Latino/a theologians doing theological reflection from the margins. These are prophetic voices that served and paved the way for contemporary U.S. Latino/a theologians.

Consequently, this work will explore an epistemology that is used in the everyday life of the people but has become a key theological source for U.S. Latino/a Theology. Epistemology from Latino/a theology in conversation with sources of practical theology is re-affirmed in this work not just as colloquial terminology, but as theological categories addressed by the academy and claiming within the public sphere and the dominant theological enterprise of the United States. Also, epistemology constructed by contemporary Latino/a theology based on the faith, experience and social location of a community of faith is fundamental to further work with first and second generation College-age Latinas who identify as Catholics.

First wave Hispanic theologians began to construct an epistemology of *la lucha* (the struggle to survive) and *mestizaje* (mixing) –as the intersection of living in-between two worlds and social locations. This epistemology becomes primary, a living practice in the streets, homes, churches, and communities, transcending then to the theological and

academic enterprise. Other prominent voices, such as Roberto Goizueta and Orlando Espín, began to explore *un Jesús que acompaña a la gente* (a Jesus who accompanies the people) in the midst of their suffering, hopes and struggles. Latino/a theological reflection on the faith of the people, visible through their different expressions, attitudes and devotions, helped to articulate the theological implications and significance of popular religion or the living expressions of faith from the grassroots. The Gospel is presented as incarnational through the symbols, narratives and practices of the people, unfolded out of a rich socio-economic and historical context and trajectory of a people journeying together in faith and hope. The epistemological category of *acompañamiento* (accompaniment) explores Christology from the perspective of Christ as the daily companion of Latino migrant communities in the United States. Suffering and memory are explored from the perspective of Christ in Calvary, included the work of Roberto Goizueta and other Latino/a scholars who begin to approach the meaning of the “dramatic reenactments” of Jesus’ passion and the implications on the faith of the people.

Acompañamiento (accompaniment) becomes palpable and visible in the presence of *la comunidad* (the community) as the extended family in the *barrios* (neighborhoods), church, the academy and so on. God is explored as a relational God that enters in communion with the people and through the everyday life of the people. *La familia* (family) then is explored as a key category for the work of U.S. Latino/a theologians and, therefore, *las abuelas* (grandmothers), as cornerstones within the Latino/a families, become a source upon which to construct and write on memory, faith expressions and practices.

Language is explored as a hermeneutical category and transformative practice at

the core of the spirituality of Latin o/as. Authors explore language expressions to connote Latino/a spirituality and faith. From this exploration, the category of “Spanglish” is explored for contemporary Latino/a theologians, not only as hybrid dynamic of language, but also as a hybrid category that articulates Latino/a identities that help to reimagine and understand new meanings and interpretations of race, language, class, religion, gender and other categories of discourse. The voice of the Latina within the theological discourse is critical in order to re-think not only some of the struggles and hopes of Latina Catholics in the Church, but also to contribute to the retrieval and construction of categories that will be used to re-think on method and methodology in practical theology and therefore, further work with young Latinas. It will be critical to highlight the practice of listening to the lived experiences, oral stories and narratives of the people while actively reflecting and discerning on the call of the Spirit to actively respond and participate in the world as a primary field of action.

In the Practical Theological Task of Participatory Action Research with Latinas

The work of practical theology is vocational and transformational work because it is related to God’s purpose and call of the active disciple in the world. Chapter Three presents a reflection in which method and methodology is re-thought through the *descriptive-empirical* and *hermeneutical* tasks in practical theology, proposed by Richard R. Osmer, that focused on both “attending” to particular realities such social contexts, experience and tradition, and “discerning” as the prayerful attentiveness that moves the theologian to critically reflect and make meaning out of new observations.⁹⁵ The virtue

⁹⁵ See the four tasks of practical theology. Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

of practical wisdom⁹⁶ is critical in the conversation of practical theology with the social sciences. It involves the practice of the heart and the mind. A thinking heart that enters in communion with the reality of the world as the primary field of action as it asks critical questions that will unveil new meaning.

Among the different methodologies that help practical theology to prophetically listen to the voices of the people and reflect in God's purpose in the world, the practical theological methodology of participatory action research has served my work in order to listen to the lived experiences of Catholic College-age Latinas and to engage them as active participants in the research. The goal of participatory action research is that these Latinas are considered as active participants, including the researcher, working together in the articulation of their own lived experiences and religious identity as Catholic College-age Latinas, instead of objects of research or receivers.

Participation recognizes the value of including [participants] as essential to the generation of useful knowledge. Action indicates that the research is intended to contribute directly to bring change. Research indicates a systemic effort to generate knowledge.⁹⁷

The methodology of participatory action research will be explored in Chapter Four through the lived experiences of young adult Latina Catholics in their 20's who live and attend College in South Florida. Findings about their social locations, faith traditions and lived experiences will provide insight towards a new practical theological

⁹⁶ Kathleen A. Cahalan refers to the notion of Christian practical wisdom and notes that "it arises from how one lives and prays in relationship to the ultimate goal of loving communion with God and neighbor." It requires "practice" in order to fulfil this communion. Kathleen A. Cahalan, "Spiritual Practices and the Search for a Wisdom Epistemology," in *Christian Practical Wisdom: What It Is, Why It Matters*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass, Kathleen A. Cahalan, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, James R. Nieman, Christian B. Scharen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 277.

⁹⁷ Conde-Frazier, "Participatory Action Research," 236.

understanding of Latino/a theology and will open the door to further understanding of *marianismo*, interpreted as their lives themselves as Latina Catholics.

Marianismo,⁹⁸ attributed in Catholic tradition to the values, virtues and imagery of Mary, will be articulated in this work in light of Latinas' "values, symbols, ideas and other conceptual vehicles that [lift them up] to discover, rediscover or uncover a hidden meaning or truth connecting [them] to God."⁹⁹ Chapter Three overviews literature on theology of Mary within Catholic tradition. The review of this literature will serve as a point of reference to introduce *Marianismo*, which in this work is forged and constructed through the lived experiences and faith of young adult Latinas who identify as Catholics, instead of exploring the notion through traditional models. *Lo cotidiano* or the lived experiences of Latinas is interpreted also as the *fiat*,¹⁰⁰ making reference to Mary's *yes* in the Gospel, her role as an active disciple and her courageous openness to the movement of the Spirit within. Moreover, *fiat* –as the active response of the participant in *lo cotidiano*– deeply engages, participates, listens and articulates the lived expressions that unveil, at the core, a sacred dynamic between God and God's people.

⁹⁸ *Marianismo* traditionally represents devotion to the Virgin Mary within the Catholic tradition. For the purpose of this work, *marianismo* is defined as the imagery of Mary in light of Latinas' self-understanding and lived experiences of God, *familia* (family), relationships, church, devotional practices, and language.

⁹⁹ Jeanette Rodriguez, "Mestiza Spirituality: Community, Ritual, and Justice," *Theological Studies* 65, no. 2 (2004): 319.

¹⁰⁰ Mary's *fiat* has traditionally been interpreted in Catholic tradition as the Mary's humble prayer and conversation with the angel in scripture as she accepted God's will to be the Mother of God: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Luke 1: 38. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, accessed February 1, 2017, Vatican.va, 973.

Chapter Two

FROM MEDELLIN TO MIAMI AND BACK: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Nos estáis ahora escuchando en silencio; pero oímos el grito que sube de vuestro sufrimiento (Now you are listening to us in silence, but we hear the shout which arises from your suffering).

—Pope Paul VI¹⁰¹

Tracing Roots from Medellín

Echoing historical events, the Church of Latin America gathered for the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Colombia from August 26 to September 7 of 1968 with the theme “*la Iglesia en la actual transformación de América Latina a la luz del Concilio Vaticano II.*”¹⁰² This reunion, known as Medellín,¹⁰³ vividly opened the space for the Second Vatican Council to become a living document in the Church of Latin America. The current context in Latin America, fogged by political turmoil and economic and social iniquity, unintentionally planted a seed of hope that required immediate transformation and focused the attention on those who suffered in silence. A living human face cried out for bread, peace and justice, and hopes for a better life in the streets and fields of Latin America at a crucial time in history, both socially and in the Church.

The preface to Medellín is marked by the first papal visit of Paul VI to Colombia

¹⁰¹ Paul VI, “Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá.”

¹⁰² The theme of the II General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín was: The Church within the current transformation of Latin America in light of Second Vatican Council. See Luis Carlos Mantilla Ruiz, OFM, “Visita del Papa Pablo VI a Colombia: Agosto 22 a 24 de 1968,” *Credencial Historia*, no. 117 (September, 1999), <http://www.banrepcultural.org/node/32975>

¹⁰³ “After the Second Vatican Council, CELAM [Conference of Latin American Bishops] held two conferences: The first was held in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, and the second in Puebla, México, in January 1979.” See Robert Pelton, “Latin America, Catholicism In” in *The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, ed. Richard P. McBrien (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1995).

from August 22 to 24 of 1968. During this visit, the pontiff celebrated Mass for the *campesinos* (peasants) in Colombia and addressed for the first time a great concern for their needs and suffering. In the small municipality of Mosquera that belongs to the department of Cundinamarca in Colombia, the words of *Salve* (hail) were pronounced aloud: “*Salve, Campesinos colombianos! Salve, trabajadores de la tierra en América Latina! ¡Paz y bendición a todos, en el nombre de Jesucristo, nuestro Señor y Salvador!*”¹⁰⁴ These are the initial words from Paul VI’s homily in which the *Salve* becomes a voice of *esperanza* (hope); a *fiat* in which uncertainty and faith prevail.

Porque conocemos las condiciones de vuestra existencia: condiciones de miseria para muchos de vosotros, a veces inferiores a la exigencia normal de la vida humana. Nos estáis ahora escuchando en silencio; pero oímos el grito que sube de vuestro sufrimiento y del de la mayor parte de la humanidad (Cf. Concilio Vaticano II. Const. *Gaudium et Spes* n. 88). No podemos desinteresarnos de vosotros; queremos ser solidarios con vuestra buena causa, que es la del Pueblo humilde, la de la gente pobre. Sabemos que el desarrollo económico y social ha sido designa en el gran continente de América Latina; y que mientras ha favorecido a quienes lo promovieron en un principio, ha descuidado la masa de las poblaciones nativas, casi siempre abandonadas en un innoble nivel de vida y a veces tratadas y explotadas duramente. Sabemos que hoy os percatáis de la inferioridad de vuestras condiciones sociales y culturales, y estáis impacientes por alcanzar una distribución más justa de los bienes y un mejor reconocimiento de la

¹⁰⁴ “Hail, Colombian peasants! Hail, workers of the land in Latin American fields! Peace and blessings in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!” Paul VI, “Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá.”

importancia que, por ser tan numerosos, merecéis y del puesto que os compete en la sociedad.¹⁰⁵

Pope Paul VI's homily marked the beginning of a public pastoral claim that prophetically announced the Church's preferential option for the poor in the lands of Latin America. There was a call for solidarity with the people of God who suffer from exploitation, abandonment and violence due to social and cultural conditions; "A situation of injustice that can be called institutionalized violence."¹⁰⁶ Besides all the pastoral efforts and the Church's commitment to the poor, such the writing of Paul VI's social encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in 1967, the preparatory meetings for CELAM¹⁰⁷ II (1966–1968), and the social pastoral efforts of bishops in Brazil and Latin America, the context of Paul VI's visit in Latin America was characterized by social and political commotion between the social classes.

The poor and the oppressed were greatly conscious of their own reality, phenomena that lead to anxiety for liberation and revolution. This conscientization¹⁰⁸ led

¹⁰⁵ This discourse is transcribed only in Spanish and it has been translated by the author of this document as it follows: "Because we know the conditions of your existence: conditions of misery for most of you, sometimes inferior to the regular standards of human life. Now you are listening to us in silence, but we hear the shout which arises from your suffering and the suffering of most of humanity (Cf. Concilio Vaticano II. Const. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 88). We will not avoid our interest on you; we want to be generous with your cause, which is the cause of the poor. We know that the social and economic development has been a designation in the Latin American Continent; and while it has favored those who originally promoted it, it has affected the masses from native groups, almost always forgotten, treated and exploited. We know that you acknowledge the inferiority of your cultural and social conditions, and that you are impatient to acquire a fair distribution of wealth and recognition as a prevalent group of the society." Translated by author, September 6, 2015. See Paul VI, "Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá."

¹⁰⁶ Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Document on Peace*, September 6, 1968, 14, http://www.povertystudies.org/TeachingPages/EDS_PDFs4WEB/Medellin%20Document-%20Peace.pdf

¹⁰⁷ See Consejo Episcopal Latin Americano [Conference of Latin American Bishops], accessed February 1, 2016, <http://www.celam.org/>

¹⁰⁸ Conscientization refers to the deep awareness of one's social reality that serves as a point of departure towards education, reflection and action. Paulo Freire refers to the term conscientization or

to the emergence of new voices that advocated for critical changes in the society. “The late 1960’s saw the emergence of more radical voices which pressed for revolutionary changes and created a vibrant new atmosphere of liberation in progressive intellectual circles.”¹⁰⁹ The emerging voices from social groups in Latin America moved intellectual and pastoral circles to unite in solidarity with existing dynamics of oppression in the society of Latin America. There was a prevalent consciousness for the need of liberation of the poor that calls the attention of the Church and her pastoral leaders but also different groups of the society. However, there was also fear, despair and divisions among the people. The emergence of guerillas or social movements of liberation, which originally intended to advocate for the poor due to social and political corruption and impoverishment, eventually took arms and engaged in a violent resolution of conflict with the current governments.

In the case of Colombia, and within the frame of the meeting of Medellín, celebrated in Colombia, this dynamic known as the armed conflict has been the most regrettable phenomenon that has impacted in a certain way each Colombian family and its generations during the past five decades. This situation correlates with other Latin American Countries. Average middle class and privileged¹¹⁰ Latin Americans have grown up living in a context where poverty and social fragmentation adorns the backyards and is the view outside of one’s windows, where the fear of violence, persecution, danger and war runs through one’s souls. Many families who are physically

conscientização in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire notes that “is the deepening of the attitude of awareness.” Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York, NY: Continuum, 2003), 109.

¹⁰⁹ David Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology* (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 88.

¹¹⁰ One can be called privilege in a third world country when one has access to the basic needs such as private housing, nutrition, health, primary basic, secondary and higher education.

and psychologically affected by the armed conflict, poverty, and lack of opportunities to survive, dream for a better future. At these moments when individuals experience the lack of opportunities, family roots and identity have to be negotiated with the option of embarking on the immigration experience; a human face trying to survive, thrive and dream into fully living.

Within the frame of different social dynamics geared towards liberation of the poor in the Latin American society, the Church of post-Vatican II faces a new reality, challenged it and moved to pastorally respond. Among exhortations that remind the people the meaning of human dignity, service, peace and solidarity in the society, there is also a claim towards peaceful resolution of ongoing conflict and despair. Paul VI's discourse to peasant groups pledged for mercy and compassion, while invited to reflect on peaceful community organizing. There is an exhortation to initiate small faith-based communities that focus on the instruction and learning of civic popular action, modernization of agricultural methods and sustainable projects for families in need, particularly the workers. This was only facilitated through literacy methods that teach the people to read and write.

Pero hoy el problema se ha agravado porque habéis tomado conciencia de vuestras necesidades y de vuestros sufrimientos y, como otros muchos en el mundo, no podéis tolerar que estas condiciones deban perdurar siempre sin ponerles solícito remedio. Nos preguntamos, ¿qué podemos hacer por vosotros, después de haber hablado en vuestro favor? No tenemos, lo sabéis bien, competencia directa en estas cuestiones temporales, y ni siquiera medios ni autoridad para intervenir prácticamente en este campo. Permitid finalmente que os

exhortemos a no poner vuestra confianza en la violencia ni en la revolución; tal actitud es contraria al espíritu cristiano y puede también retardar y no favorecer la elevación social a la cual aspiráis legítimamente. Procurad más bien secundar las iniciativas en favor de vuestra instrucción, por ejemplo, la de Acción Cultural Popular; procurad estar unidos y organizaros bajo el signo cristiano, y capacitaros para modernizar los métodos de vuestro trabajo rural; amad vuestros campos y estimad la función humana, económica y civil de trabajadores de la tierra, que vosotros ejercitáis.¹¹¹

Touched by the *campesinos'* needs and pain, Pope Paul VI, retrieving his words mentioned at the closing of the *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, extends an invitation to encounter Christ in the human face: “*Para conocer a Dios es necesario conocer al hombre.*”¹¹² These words in Spanish are written in one of the final documents of Medellín and prophetically announced the beginning of a period of pastoral transformation within the Church itself and in the society. The documents of Medellín developed with an explicit hunger for justice, a call to enter deeply into the human needs and serious issues that affect directly collective groups of the society in Latin America,

¹¹¹ “The problem has aggravated today because you are conscious of your needs and sufferings, and as other people in the world, you cannot continue tolerating these conditions. We ask ourselves, what can we do for you after speaking up on your behalf? As you all know, we do not have direct competence and authority to intervene in temporal affairs of this kind. Finally, allow us to exhort you to not put your trust in violence and the revolution; that attitude is contrary to the Christian spirit that may delay the social status that favors you. Instead, promote the initiatives that are in favor of your instruction and literacy as an example of popular cultural action; try to be united and organized under the Christian sign and I encourage you to be trained to contribute to the modernization of methods of agricultural work; love the fields and appreciate the human, economic and civil function of the farmworkers that you exercise.” Translated by author, February 1, 2016. Paul VI, “Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá.”

¹¹² “To know God, there is a need to meet the human face.” Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Documentos Finales de Medellín*, September 1968, http://www.diocese-braga.pt/catequese/sim/biblioteca/publicacoes_online/91/medellin.pdf. See Paul II, “Closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council,” accessed February 1, 2016, Vatican.va.

particularly the family in the role of “estructura intermedia.”¹¹³ The agenda of the conference was addressed in light of Vatican II, and poverty was one of the main concerns expressed by the bishops, as it marginalizes specific groups of the society that claim for justice.

In the same decade of the meeting of *Medellín*, Paulo Freire published in Portuguese and Spanish *Pedagogia do Oprimido*¹¹⁴ that offers a new model of basic adult education of illiterate areas of the society. Freire proposes a methodology where illiterate adults (*campesinos*) in Latin America become active participants and collaborators in the educational process of listening to people’s needs, struggles and hopes and offers a way to articulate their own voices in the society and eventually produce social change. “These literacy projects provided the framework for the *Movimento de educação de Base* (MEB or Base education Movement) that was created in 1961.”¹¹⁵ Working with unprivileged peasants in Brazil, Freire proposes a network of both giving and receiving in educational small communities that offer literacy programs to peasants in rural areas, and “stresses that people must be agents of their own actions for liberation.”¹¹⁶ Freire’s literacy programs were emphasized in teaching people to articulate “everyday basic words for house, water or types of food.”¹¹⁷ In this methodology, the learners were active subjects in the process of articulating their own lived experiences and reflect on their roles in the

¹¹³ “Intermediate structure.” In *Documentos Finales de Medellín* (Final Documents of Medellín), the family was considered as an intermediate community, “no sólo como comunidad humana sacramental sino también como estructura intermedia en función del cambio social” (not merely as a human sacramental community, but also as an intermediate structure that works towards social change), Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Documentos Finales de Medellín*, September, 1968, http://www.diocese-braga.pt/catequese/sim/biblioteca/publicacoes_online/91/medellin.pdf

¹¹⁴ See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

¹¹⁵ Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 94.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 95.

society. “Freire’s method linked to social and political literacy to basic literacy. He combined the two to help people to learn more about their lives and become better able to change it...Freire referred to this as *conscientização* (conscientization or consciousness-raising).”¹¹⁸ This connects with the pastoral dynamics and realities pointed out at Medellín which were based on “conscientization” and “participation” of the people in the society.

We wish to affirm that it is indispensable to form a social conscience and a realistic perception of the problems of the community and of social structures. We must awaken the social conscience and communal customs in all strata of society and professional groups regarding such values as dialogue and community living within the same group and relations with wider social groups (workers, peasants, professionals, clergy, religious, administrators, etc.). This task of “conscientization” and social education ought to be integrated into joint Pastoral Action at various levels.¹¹⁹

This goal correlates with the road that traced Medellín. A road that led to new sacred spaces of “conscientization” where all people would peacefully, justly and actively participate in social transformation, regardless of their level and role in the society. This goal not only challenged the status quo where merely predominant groups of the society had the power to speak; but it also opened a new door that invited new voices and human faces into dialogue.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Document on Justice*, September 6, 1968, 17, http://www.povertystudies.org/TeachingPages/EDS_PDFs4WEB/Medellin%20Document-%20Justice.pdf, see Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering* (Eugene: OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986), 14.

Towards a Preferential Option for the Poor

The documents from Vatican II helped CELAM II to trace the vision of the Church in Latin America towards a commitment with the poor translated as a *preferential option for the poor*. In light of the vision of the Church proposed in Vatican II, new voices as “pastoral workers and other church sectors”¹²⁰ were invited to help the hierarchy facilitate reflections that inspired the final documents on justice, peace and poverty. At this stage, the Church of Latin America was committed to the poor and aware of the needs of the people. However, there was not yet an active “option with the poor” in the sense that the people were not yet active participants in the process of their own liberation from poverty and suffering.

In the mid-70’s, *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (faith base communities) helped the people to organize themselves, get educated, articulate their own hopes and struggles, and share them with ecclesial, social and academic circles of the society with the goal of social change. In addition, the family, serving as *estructura intermedia* (intermediate structure¹²¹), became the primary participant of the *comunidades de base* or grassroots communities, and a mediator between the individual and the society, particularly in rural and isolated areas where there was lack of basic needs and institutional and pastoral presence. Many of the proposals and conversations, that came from the decade before, were articulated in a defined theological enterprise known as liberation theology. Gustavo Gutiérrez published in 1971 his work *Teología de la*

¹²⁰ Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 107.

¹²¹ The term *estructuras intermedias* (intermediate structures) is attributed to the family in cases where the family becomes the mediator between the individual and the society, particularly in rural areas where there is lack of basic needs such housing, food, health, education and association. See Conference of Latin American Bishops, *Documentos Finales de Medellín*.

Liberación, and translated in 1973 as *A Theology of Liberation*; with this, Latin American Theology crosses the border.

Latin American Theology Crosses the Border

Prominent Latin American voices brought across the *salvific goal* of liberation of the poor and marginalized to the Western theological discourse. There is nothing tangible but memories and imagination of what claims to be the Church and its people in the Third World country. The dynamic of *mestizaje*¹²² continues as a living and changing (spiral) practice. The discourse of Latin American theologians and the thinking about God arises out of the daily struggles and hopes of the people. It arises organically in the middle of social chaos and pursues justice for the poor and the oppressed. Christ is present in the suffering of the people who hope for salvation. This theological discourse becomes incarnational, a response to living societies in suffering, a compilation of memory, narrative, “solidarity, reflection and martyrdom”¹²³ which crosses the frontier as living scholarly work. Johann Baptist Metz presents the interrelated categories of memory, narrative, and solidarity in practical fundamental theology.¹²⁴ Memory is interpreted as “remembering” the narratives of the living and the dead. These narratives are passed, constructed, appropriated and interpreted by the people and social structures that “save identity”¹²⁵ through them.

¹²² The term *mestizaje* is explored by Hispanic-Latino/a theology in the intersection of categories such as race, gender, faith, language with religion. It represents “hybridity of our culture, our language, our daily living.” See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, “Foreword,” in *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology (1972-1998)*, ed. Eduardo C. Fernández (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press), xii.

¹²³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History Politics, and Salvation, 15th Anniversary Edition with a New Introduction by the Author*, trans. and eds. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), xx.

¹²⁴ See Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 2007).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

When a theological discourse crosses the border, and gets out to a new context, it passes through the living memories and narratives of the people and enters to a new context that receives, reimagines and interprets them through new lenses. These memories and narratives are living documents because they are the people themselves, thus discourse, identity and everyday life are intrinsically inseparable. This is when a new *mestizaje* happens; when elements between the two worlds intertwine and create and reinvent new social images that are added to the theological discourse. Therefore, Latin American theologians, and those who claim theological discourse in Latin America, intrinsically bring with them to the United States the story of their people.¹²⁶ These narratives, memories and imaginaries are shaped within the context of the United States and move forward to a constant redefinition within the realm of what becomes U.S. Latino/a Theology.

Salvation as Liberation of the Poor

As the thinking about God crosses the borders, it carries a desire for *salvation* of the people of God that Medellín is concerned for. “Dominated peoples, exploited social classes, despised races and marginalized cultures were formulas often used in speaking of the poor in the context of liberation theology.”¹²⁷ These formulas are useful in theological work to highlight the social dimension of these specific groups of the society. “What is the meaning of the struggle against an unjust society and the creation of a new humanity

¹²⁶ I identify myself as an immigrant Latina in the United States, whose theological lenses have been shaped within the context of the U.S. Practical Latino/a Theological enterprise. I negotiate both worlds in the everyday life and the story of my people in Latin America intrinsically emerges out of my theological discourse and thinking.

¹²⁷ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, xxi. The 15th Anniversary Edition, published in 1988, makes reference to the social dimension of women and the urgent need to attend to current issues that affect women in the context of poverty and violence that affect the society.

in the light of the Word?”¹²⁸ What does it mean when suffering, pain and injustice are explored from the perspective of the cross and Christ walking with the people in this journey? *A Theology of Liberation* presents an approach of *liberation* of the poor and the oppressed in Latin America as a “salvific process.”¹²⁹ Salvation is approached as the communion of human beings with God and among themselves “which embraces human reality, transforms it and leads it to its fullness in Christ.”¹³⁰ Gustavo Gutiérrez introduces a theological claim for liberation of the poor and the marginalized in Latin America in which the salvific process of liberation is “a question about the very meaning of Christianity and about the mission of the church,”¹³¹ a human relational dimension in which Christ is “the total gift that gives the whole process of liberation its deepest meaning and its complete and unforeseeable fulfillment.”¹³² This is theology that calls for the liberation and salvation of the poor and presents a twofold relational dimension of the human: a relationship of the human with other humans, and the relationship of the human with Christ. This perspective presents a claim of how theology and pastoral work must respond to the historical processes of the Latin American nations, their people and the signs of the times:

The new epoch in the history of Latin America of which Medellín spoke continues to be our vital context. In the language of the Bible, we are in a *kairos*, a propitious and demanding time in which the Lord challenges us and we are called upon to bear a very specific witness. During this *Kairos* Latin American

¹²⁸ Ibid., 83.

¹²⁹ Ibid., xiv.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 85.

¹³¹ Ibid., xiv.

¹³² Ibid.

Christians are experiencing a tense and intense period of *solidarity, reflection* and *martyrdom*.¹³³

Latin American theologians and therefore pastoral theologians did not deal solely with intellectual pursuits, but primarily with the social and political challenges that faced the people in the everyday life. The statement that “faith and life are inseparable”¹³⁴ is the translation of the living practices of the Church facing societies that needed hope and immediate responses to the signs of the times; work that still supports the correlation of faith and action, and it serves theology and the Church in the twenty-first Century.

Jon Sobrino explores the concept of *practice* in the context of Latin American liberation theology. He argues that

theological contact with reality came first, and only then reflection on the theological implications, that is, on making love and justice a reality among the oppressed. The stimulus to thought and theory came not from a tradition of theological theory but from the faith lived in a process of liberation amid conflict.¹³⁵

The work of the Latin American theologians that crossed the border to the European theological enterprise arose from the grassroots of *la pastoral* (pastoral life) in which they were immersed and some of those who were engaged in participation “action-oriented groups” that attended to the needs of the poor. Theological reflection on the poor and the oppressed was not an option for Latin American theologians. Latin American

¹³³ Ibid., xx.

¹³⁴ Ibid., xix.

¹³⁵ Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 21. Originally published as *Resurrección de la Verdadera Iglesia: Los Pobres, Lugar Teológico de la Eclesiología* (Santander, Spain: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1981).

theology was the result of an immediate pastoral action and reflection to a context in turmoil and despair in which the gospel represented salvation. “Now you are listening to us in silence, but we hear the shout which arises from your suffering.”¹³⁶ Pastoral plans of action, reflection, conscientization, evangelization and peaceful resolution of conflict retrieved these words in the context of Latin America and beyond borders. In the words of Father Jorge Mario Bergolio, Latin American theologian and first Latin American Pope in the Catholic Church:

Los argentinos marchamos por nuestra historia acompañados por el don creado de las riquezas de nuestras tierras y por el Espíritu de Cristo reflejado en la mística y el esfuerzo de tantos que vivieron y trabajaron en este hogar, en el testimonio silente de los que dan de su talento, su ética, su creatividad, su vida. ¡Este pueblo comprende hondamente lo que significa el amor a su tierra y la memoria de sus convicciones más profundas! En su religiosidad más íntima, en la siempre espontánea solidaridad, en sus luchas e iniciativas sociales, en su creatividad y capacidad de goce festivo y artístico, se refleja el Don de Vida del Resucitado. Porque somos un pueblo capaz de sentir nuestra identidad más allá de las circunstancias y adversidades, somos un pueblo capaz de reconocernos en nuestros diversos rostros.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Paul VI, “Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá.”

¹³⁷ Jorge M. Bergoglio, SJ, *Ponerse la Patria al Hombro: Memoria y Camino de Esperanza* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Claretiana, 2005), 4. “We, Argentinians march through life on behalf of our history, accompanied by the gift of the richness of our fields and by the Spirit of Christ reflected in the mysticism and efforts of those who lived and worked in this homeland; in the silenced testimony of those who give their talents, ethic, creativity; their life. The people deeply acknowledge how much the love to their land and memories reflect their deepest convictions! In their most intimate religiosity, in their spontaneous solidarity, in their *luchas* and social initiatives, in their creativity and ability to enjoy art and celebration, the gift of the life of the Resurrected Christ is reflected. Because we are people capable of recognizing our identity beyond our circumstances and adversities; we are people capable of recognizing

Insiders in the struggle inevitably crossed the pastoral and theological borders of the Southern hemisphere and echoed the cries of the poor as categories of memory, narrative and solidarity. This theological discourse from the grassroots was appropriated through the lenses of a new context that did not anticipate the beginning of a new realm within the U.S. theological enterprise: Hispanic-Latino/a Theology.

El Eco de La Lucha (Echoing the Struggle)

“*La vida es la lucha*”¹³⁸ writes Ada María Isasi-Díaz when telling her story at the beginning of her work *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*. The fervor to *fully live*, to fully survive was the critical question of Latin American and first wave U.S. Latino/a Theologians who started to cross the border of the dominant theological enterprise. Fully living became a critical question of those whose work started to echo beyond frontiers; beyond the border. Fully living became *la lucha* to survive beyond one’s own homeland or invisible social locations. *La lucha* to fully live, to fully hope is represented by “the people’s most intimate religiosity; in their spontaneous solidarity; in their *luchas* and social initiatives; in their creativity and ability to enjoy art and celebration.”¹³⁹ This living dynamic is not separated from the gift of the resurrected Christ to the people. Rather, it is inherent in the narratives and memories of those who tell the story. Poets, musicians, artists, theologians, historians, sociologists, mystics, ministers and so on constructed their work based on their own identity and the identity of their own land. “We are people capable of recognizing our identity beyond our circumstances and adversities; we are

our diverse faces among ourselves.” Translated by author, February 17, 2016.

¹³⁸ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 23.

¹³⁹ Bergoglio, SJ, *Ponerse la Patria al Hombro*, 4.

people capable of recognizing our diverse faces among ourselves,”¹⁴⁰ notes Bergoglio when he writes to the people of Argentina.

Echoing *la lucha* resonates with Bergoglio’s statement about enjoying the gift created from the richness of a land that has been sown for those who have worked and lived in a common space.¹⁴¹ When this gift or common space is not enjoyed by everyone or justly, hope (*la esperanza*) finds her most intimate partner, *la lucha*, to survive. Ada María Isasi-Díaz notes that “survival has to do with more than barely living. Survival has to do with the struggle *to be* fully.”¹⁴² These are the similar voices that Latin American and Hispanic-Latino/a Theologians (these voices include those from South America, Central America and the Caribbean) echoed, carrying with them the cries of the poor and the memories of diverse social locations. While these voices shared the common *lucha* of their hemispheric reality, differentiated from the European context, they carried with them unique and distinctive political, socio-economic and religious trajectories.

La lucha emerges and develops as an everyday practice in Latin America and subsequently takes new shape as a methodological category within an interdisciplinary discourse beyond theology. This theological and well known methodological and epistemological frame in U.S. Hispanic-Latino/a theology¹⁴³ in the twenty-first century begins not as an intentional category for Latin American theologians, but as a response to a context in conflict. *La lucha* was the living practice of Latin American pastoral

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, 4.

¹⁴³ “Latino/a theology was born at the intersection of European and European American theologies, on the one hand, and of Latin American liberation theologies, on the other – an intersection which did not occur in either Europe or Latin America, but did in the US, and here within the extraordinarily diverse contexts and realities of the Latino/a communities.” Orlando O. Espín, introduction to *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 4.

ministers who became martyrs by giving their lives and attention to the poor and marginalized, while remaining faithful to the Gospel, social changes that became new public policies in favor of the people, theological reflection and debate that became pastoral recommendations to the universal Church, and prophetic voices who paved the road for the emerging new Hispanic-Latino/a theological enterprise in the United States.

Retrieving Voices from U.S. Hispanic-Latino/a Theology

At the beginning of the twenty-first century one can look back and see a bountiful harvest that has been planted throughout the ages by grassroots Christians whose religious beliefs sustain their daily struggle to survive and to make justice flourish. They are admirably capable of explaining their own beliefs and religious practices, and committed academic theologians have found in their religious understanding of the people a rich source for our theological work and a blessing for our lives. Hispanic/Latino theology and theologians witness to this...Latinas and Latinos, most of us economically poor and all of us socially and politically marginalized, have inherited this legacy of struggle, and our cry echoes that of our ancestors as we insist on the validity and value of our perception of reality.

Hispanic/Latino theology makes explicit our relationship with the divine and insists on our own way of doing theology...¹⁴⁴

The categories of memory and solidarity¹⁴⁵ play a role in epistemology of *la lucha* as it developed as a source of theology. Instead of *la lucha* becoming new terminology, a separate method and methodological category, or a static new interdisciplinary discourse, its communal dynamic created a sense of responsibility and “accountability” with an

¹⁴⁴ Isasi-Díaz, “Foreword,” in *La Cosecha*, xi.

¹⁴⁵ See Metz, *Faith in History and Society*.

extensive community that remembers the living and the dead. Ada María Isasi-Díaz notes that “to do *mujerista* theology is a vocation...It is a way of responsibly living my Christianity...Hispanic Women are indeed my community of accountability.”¹⁴⁶ Moreover, this community of “accountability” and “complicity” becomes *la comunidad* (the community) and therefore a community of saints among those who left but remain *presente* (present) in the work of the subsequent generations of U.S. Latino/a scholars.

This community of *acompañamiento* (accompaniment); a community of saints among the Latino/a pastoral and academic realm, became a sustaining and meaningful dynamic during the present challenges that the people of God face in the U.S. context. *La lucha* to survive poverty, violence and political conflict in Latin America becomes for U.S. Hispanic-Latino/a theologians *la lucha* to survive to the challenges of race, ethnicity, language, immigration status, gender, poverty and other realities that Latino/a communities face in the U.S. context.

In any case, when Latino/a theological critique of dominant theologies started with the tools we had then (mostly borrowed from the Latin American critique of ideologies), it began by insisting that theologically, “we are we” and therefore “we are not they.” This led to a number of publications on the significance of culture, particularity, and ethnicity for theology.¹⁴⁷

This is how from the core of the everyday struggles and hopes of Latinos/as among diverse social locations, faith traditions, and communal experiences in the United States, Latino/a theology is born and finds its source and reflection. “We needed to open “our space”, speak with “our” voice, discuss our issues...we insisted on being included as

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., xi-xii.

¹⁴⁷ Espín, introduction to *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, 4.

equals in the theological conversation.”¹⁴⁸ Early Latino/a theological and pastoral work focused not only on exploring the social context of Latino/a communities in the United States.

In a quest for the sources of a distinctly Latino/a theology, we turned to Latinos/as themselves –to their faith, their Christian experience, their cultural expressions, and the broader Latino/a intellectual tradition. And it is in this quest that many of us began to work through such issues as “the popular,” epistemology, praxis, spirituality, *lo cotidiano*, and so on.¹⁴⁹

Paying attention to the people themselves and to their *cotidianidad* (everyday life), became a source for Hispanic-Latino/a theology. This quest for the sources naturally arose within diverse social contexts such as church, *la familia* (family), the *barrios* (neighborhood), *la casa* (home) and other spaces inherent to the everyday life of Latinos/as in the United States and where God is encountered in the margins. These particular issues and spaces became categories, sources and symbols in thinking about God within the academic enterprise; discourse was built with *lucha* for the first pioneers of Latino/a theology. “There is no question in my mind but that Latino/a theology has always tried to be sensitive and responsive to the social, economic, and political realities of Latinos/as. Our theology has been just as sensitive to popular expressions of the Christian faith.”¹⁵⁰ In this particular work it is critical to highlight the work of Catholic Hispanic theologians and the first pioneers such as Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Virgilio Elizondo. Both theologians, coming from diverse social locations, constructed their

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

theological work from pastoral and engaged work with the people.

In her text *En la Lucha*, Isasi-Díaz constructs on *mujerista* theology in light of Hispanic women's *social construct*.¹⁵¹ She articulates on their *cotidiano* (everyday life) as a point of departure to reflect on "how [Latinas] are self-defining as they struggle to survive"¹⁵² from oppressive categories such as "poverty, violence and marginalization."¹⁵³ Her work and essays compiled in *La Lucha*, and other texts such *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* and *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*, paved and inspired the way for the next generations of Latina and *mujerista* theologians. Her *mujerista* theology intended "to bring a theology from the perspective of Latinas as an intrinsic element of Hispanic/Latino theology in the USA,"¹⁵⁴ but also, to carry the voices of Latinas in a sacred manner as they claim space in the public sphere. This was possible by providing and proposing spaces "in which Latinas can hear themselves, can find themselves, can express their concerns, and can, therefore, find ways to have others pay attention to those concerns."¹⁵⁵ This perspective opened the door to further prophetic theological work and dialogue on the lived experiences of Latinas and their struggle to survive from oppression by the dominant culture.

Elizondo begins to construct his theological discourse doing pastoral work with Mexican-American communities in the parish setting and, therefore, in the social location of the marginalized *barrios* (neighborhoods). In his famous work *Jesus of Galilee*, he

¹⁵¹See Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha, In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹⁵⁴ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

proposes a quest for an encounter and knowledge of a human Jesus who walks with the people in their hopes and struggles. In his introduction, Elizondo explain his Christological perspective beginning from the grassroots and his own lived experience of Jesus in the *barrios* (neighborhoods): “*Jesús Nazareno*, suffering for us on the cross and with us in our struggles; and *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, reigning majestically in the temple of our hearts while offering us all her love, defense and protection.”¹⁵⁶ His Christological work portrays and retrieves imagery of the historical Jesus of Galilee, but it also becomes a metaphor to understand the faith of Latino/a communities in the barrios as they encounter God in the struggles of everyday life.

Mestizaje: Retrieving Dangerous and Liberating Memory

Johan Baptist Metz proposes “memory” as one of the categories of fundamental practical theology. *Memoria Jesu Christi* is explored as “the fundamental way that Christian faith is expressed.”¹⁵⁷ Metz articulates that *memoria Jesus Christi*

is not one that deceitfully dispenses one from the risks of the future. On the contrary, it holds a particular anticipation of the future as a future of the hopeless, the shattered and oppressed. In this way it is *a dangerous and liberating memory*, which badgers the present and calls it into question, since it does not remember just any open future, but precisely this future, and because it compels believers to be in a continual state of transformation in order to take this future into account.¹⁵⁸

In their goal of articulating the daily struggles and hopes of the people as sources

¹⁵⁶ Virgilio Elizondo, *Jesus of Galilee: A God of Incredible Surprises* (New York: NY, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 1.

¹⁵⁷ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 88.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

of theology, Latino/a scholars began to rethink on *mestizaje* without leaving behind the “dangerous and liberating”¹⁵⁹ memory of *la Conquista –la lucha racial* (the racial intertwine). They offer an exploration of *mestizaje* beyond just historical narratives and racial intermingling. U.S. Latino/a theologians utilize *memoria* as part of their [our] theological reflection and bring about critical questions of ultimate concern that transform the theological discourse.

It is critical to present a brief historical overview of *la Conquista* (the conquest), in order to introduce *mestizaje*. Around 1492, the Christian empire, commanded by the Catholic monarchs of Spain, decided to expedite an enterprise to the new world envisioned as a big opportunity for discovering new resources and missionary work. “The Catholic conquest of the Americas brought with it a new people, a new ethnos –*la raza mestiza* (“mixed clan, family,” or “race”).”¹⁶⁰ From *la raza mestiza* (mestizo/a race), it bloomed the uniqueness of two separate worlds that came together and carried in one the “suffering memories” and the hopes for the present and the future. Narratives from *la conquista* and the dangerous memories of the discovery of the new *Hispano-American* world became metaphors for Hispanic-Latino/a theology to articulate new theological categories. Virgilio Elizondo introduces his reflection on *mestizaje* by introducing *la lucha* (the struggling journey) departing from the colonization of the southern American hemisphere “differed radically from the Protestant conquest and colonization of North America.”¹⁶¹ However, this perspective is a point of departure for further analysis and reflection of the term *mestizaje*, as critical to U.S. Latino/a theology.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 9.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

The term *mestizaje*, originally interpreted as a mixture of races, becomes a point of departure to explore other realities of the people within the U.S. Latino/a context. “Elizondo’s work goes beyond the bicultural aspect of the *mestizo*. He uses the term *mestizo* to designate marginal status. Both the Galileans in their day and *mestizos* today are marginalized people.”¹⁶² These are the grassroots Latino/as whose lives are highlighted by the work of first wave and contemporary Latino/a theologians. In her reflection with the lived experiences of Latinas, Isasi-Díaz notes that

mestizaje for us Hispanics is not only a matter of mingling of races...this understanding certainly impacts and is defined by our religious beliefs and practices, our use of Spanish in an English speaking world, and our *proyecto historico*, our historic project. But before exploring these elements of our ethnicity, it is necessary to understand our socio-economic reality.¹⁶³

Therefore, *Mestizaje* was not merely explored from the perspective of race and ethnicity, but it called to deepen into the social location of the people. It began to appropriate and reinterpret the categories of language, race, gender, religion, social status and beliefs. “*Mestizaje* is grounded in the fact that we live in-between, at the intersection of our countries of origin and the U.S.A.”¹⁶⁴ The *mestizo/a* negotiates these categories while claiming space in between two worlds: the one Latino/as are coming from and the world of the U.S. culture in which most Latino/as struggle to *fully live*.

In the struggle to fully live, the aspect of “memory of suffering” plays a critical role. The memory of the suffering passion in Christianity offered by Metz, correlates with

¹⁶² Fernández, *La Cosecha*, 39.

¹⁶³ Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha, In the Struggle*, 15.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

the notion of *mestizaje* as a “historic project”¹⁶⁵ that in solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized, remember the living and the dead. María Pilar Aquino notes that *mestizaje* becomes a “historical locus where different cultures and experiences converge, each carrying its history of suffering and struggle against the powers of death.”¹⁶⁶ The memory of the suffering, however, does not stay in the suffering but it calls for solidarity and salvation of a people, as well as reaffirms and gives access to a new cultural identity and reality.

As this term continues transforming within epistemological discourse, it also correlates with the dynamic of metaphor. Paul Ricoeur notes that “real metaphors are not translatable, nor ornaments of discourse but they offer something new about reality.”¹⁶⁷ *Mestizaje*, interpreted as a source to describe the reality of Latino/a communities in the everyday, is not an ornament of discourse, but rather it is claimed by Latino/a theology as a key source of the theological enterprise.

First pioneers in Latino/a theology define *mestizaje* as they submerged, engaged and explored in the lived experience of the mestizo/a; a phenomena that goes beyond the colonial definition that only grasp the encounter of races. The *mestizo/a* is explored as a new metaphor for new voices in the sense that it becomes the bridge for dialogue and the rising of new theological perspectives, methods and methodologies within the task of Latino/a theology. *La lucha* to survive in *lo cotidiano* (the everyday) and *mestizaje* that unintentionally are born from this dynamic became categories of discourse in Latino/a

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ María Pilar Aquino, “Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology: Toward an Intercultural Theology for the Third Millennium,” in *From the Heart of Our People*, ed. Orlando O Espín and Miguel H. Díaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 37.

¹⁶⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Forth Worth: TX: Christian University Press, 1976), 50.

theology and that intentionally paved their way in the U.S. theological discourse.

Lo Cotidiano: The Art of Living

“*Caminante no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.*”¹⁶⁸ – Antonio Machado.

Lo cotidiano or “daily life” has been introduced for the last decades as a major theological source in contemporary Latino/a theology and spirituality in the United States. Instead of remaining just as an idiomatic term and expression, it becomes an intentional theological *locus* (point) within the Latino/a theological discourse. The crying of the poor, *la lucha*, to survive to social and political turmoil and struggles, and the tension of crossing a new border, happened in *la cotidianidad de la gente* (the everyday life of the people). The first voices from U.S. Latino/a theology explore *lo cotidiano* not as an idiomatic term and expression, but as a source of theology in *the public sphere* or *the popular* –the daily events, suffering and hopes of the people who respond in faith to the art of living.

Roberto Goizueta and Orlando Espín begin from a deep theological reflection on popular Catholicism and popular religion as inherent to *lo cotidiano*, claiming their own theological voices as distinctive from the Western approach in the social sciences. Popular Catholicism is approached by early voices from Hispanic-Latino/a theology not just as the description and qualitative and quantitative analysis of religious attitudes, practices and devotions of the people, but as the faith expressions of the people as they respond to daily hopes and struggles while remembering and carrying with them rich cultural memories. These faith expressions happen within “daily life” and from the core

¹⁶⁸ “Wanderer, there is no path; the path is made by walking.” Verse from Poem: *Caminante no hay Camino* (Wanderer, there is no path). See Antonio Machado, *Selected Poems*, trans. Alan S. Trueblood (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

of people's identity, which draws from "the socio-historical context in which Latinos/as do theology."¹⁶⁹ Orlando Espín approaches popular religion as "an emphasis on compassion and solidarity, an emphasis on the affective and, literally of the popularity of it –its people Catholicism."¹⁷⁰ From this approach, faith expressions are not seen as mere static representations of the divine or are seen as ornaments separated from everyday life, and therefore the life of the Church. Rather, Hispanic-Latino/a theology claims that popular religion is the living faith of the people who embody and appropriate the narratives, symbols and rituals of the Gospel in their everyday life and struggles and make them their own. María Pilar Aquino notes:

The theological significance of daily life as source and locus of U.S. Latino/a theology is grounded in the fact that it is here where the real life of real people unfolds, and where God's revelation occurs. We have no other place but *lo cotidiano* to welcome the living Word of God or to respond to it in faith. The faith of the people, as lived and expressed in popular Catholicism, happens within the dynamics of daily existence."¹⁷¹

U.S. Hispanic theologians claim that the living expressions of faith of the people such as "religious symbols, practices and narratives are *of the people*."¹⁷² The first Hispanic theologians approach U.S. Hispanic popular religion as "probably the most important way in which Latinos and Latinas can maintain our own identity and history

¹⁶⁹ Roberto S. Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 18.

¹⁷⁰ Orlando O. Espín in discussion with Dawn Gibeau, "Hispanic Theology Aims Church at Poor," *National Catholic Reporter* (September 11, 1992).

¹⁷¹ Aquino, "Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology," 39.

¹⁷² Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 28.

alive in the face of the dominant culture.”¹⁷³ This socio-historic dimension correlates, in one hand, with the notion of *mestizaje* as a “historic project”¹⁷⁴ in which theology urges solidarity with the living and the dead; and on the other hand, with the perspective of “dangerous and liberating memory”¹⁷⁵ presented by Metz, in which the ultimate concern is salvation. “It would be extremely difficult (if not impossible) to think about or to understand Hispanic cultures without finding the crucial role that popular religiosity has played (and still plays) in our midst as a matrix and vehicle for our most authentic values and selves.”¹⁷⁶ Within the perspective of the popular in *lo cotidiano*, symbols and narratives play an important role for Hispanic theologians. “In his writings Espín singles out two key symbols found in popular religiosity, symbols he calls “bearers of the Christian gospel”: The crucified Christ and Mary.”¹⁷⁷ These symbols and the narratives and rituals of the Christian faith, embody the life of a community, its lived expressions and the hope for salvation.

Goizueta notes that the lived experiences with the sacred are more than religious symbols or rituals. “Jesus and Mary are identified with life itself.”¹⁷⁸ He notes that “Jesus and Mary are prevalent in every aspect of U.S. Hispanic life, from explicitly religious rituals to everyday “*dichos*,” or sayings.”¹⁷⁹ It is critical to explore how these representations are embedded in the life of the people and introduces the perspective of Christ as a companion in the journey of life.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha, In the Struggle*, 15.

¹⁷⁵ See Metz, *Faith in History and Society*.

¹⁷⁶ Orlando O. Espín, *Grace and Humanness: Theological Reflections Because of Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 148.

¹⁷⁷ Fernández, *La Cosecha*, 52.

¹⁷⁸ Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 30.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 29.

The image of *el Cristo compañero* –*Christ our companion* (The Christ who walks with the people in their daily life and understands their struggles and hopes) is presented by Goizueta’s Christological approach in which he retrieves insights from Latin American theology and offers an aesthetic perspective to the theological reflection.

The Crucified is not only a symbol of suffering, but even more, a symbol of indestructible hope, hope in a liberation experienced not first in some future victory but in the present, silent solidarity of the One who, like the Mother who accompanied him to Calvary, stays when everyone else has abandoned us.¹⁸⁰

These voices bring and highlight an intrinsic and inseparable relationship of the Mother with the son. *Acompañamiento* (accompaniment) offers an image of Jesus as a companion in the journey of Latino/as and Mary his mother is presented as companion of his suffering Son and therefore of his people.

This Christ is, therefore, the companion of Latino/a communities in our own histories, where resurrection remains always marked by the memories of suffering, violence and struggle –what Johan Baptist Metz has called “dangerous memories,” for they make demands on us. They are dangerous precisely because they can never be erased; no amount of future success or liberation can wipe away the wounds, the price paid for that success or liberation.¹⁸¹

The images, expressions, devotions and attitudes of the suffering Jesus, Saints and Mary become the sources of Hispanic-Latino/a Theology in order to understand the socio-historic context of the people and their Catholicism. Goizueta and other Latino/a

¹⁸⁰ Roberto S. Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion: Toward a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 11.

¹⁸¹ Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 19.

scholars talk about the “dramatic reenactments” of the passion of Jesus in the Calvary through practices such the *Via dolorosa* (*Via Crucis* or Stations of the Cross) and processions, the representations of the journey of Joseph and Mary in Judea through different religious practices before Christmas, as well as Marian devotions and prayers through religious articles and imageries. These practices become symbols of *acompañamiento* to faithful Hispanic-Latinos/as communities and therefore critical to Latino/a theological discourse.

The dynamic of *acompañamiento*, as a theological category within the framework of Hispanic-Latino/a theology, places the individual in relationship with the public sphere. It recognizes “the intrinsically relational or communal character of human persons and human action.”¹⁸² This living faith of the people unfolds in the streets, the neighborhoods (*barrios*), home altars, living rooms, churches and other places where *la comunidad* (the community) gathers and faith and hope are lived out and celebrated. Through these expressions of faith,

Latinas and Latinos experience the palpable, loving presence of God who walks with us in the daily rhythm of life in family, neighborhood and community.

Consequently, the *manera de ser* (way of being) that I am calling here as “popular Catholicism” is, above all, a way of living centered on relationships and, even more, specifically on family –though by family, I do not mean the nuclear family but the extended family that, if extended far enough ultimately unites us to the larger human –indeed cosmic– community. The Catholicism of Latinos and Latinas, therefore, tends to be a Catholicism rooted, first, not in the Parish but in

¹⁸² Ibid., 178.

the home, in the neighborhood.¹⁸³

This relational character of the individual highlighted by Latino/a theologians calls to opt for the needs and the lived experiences of the poor, the voiceless, the marginalized, the other, and those who are coming after.¹⁸⁴ In this order of ideas, *la familia* (family) enters into dialogue with language as a theological theme. Roberto Goizueta, studying *la familia* (family) within *lo cotidiano* as locus theologicus, highlights the impact that *language* has on *culture*. “We consider the Spanish language –passed down to us with such great love– one of our parents’ most important legacies.”¹⁸⁵ Latino/a theology highlight as critical the role of *las abuelas* (grandmothers) in the passing of the faith and love for God to children and grandchildren. Michelle Gonzalez notes that “the stories of our mothers and grandmothers are remembered and lived in our spiritual lives.”¹⁸⁶ *Las abuelas* are considered as cornerstones of the community and their voices claim space within the Latino/a theological discourse.

Latino/a theology highlights that there is a need to explore language not only as a hermeneutical category of culture but as a transformative practice within the realm of Latino/a theology, which is at the core of spirituality in *la familia* (defined as *la comunidad* or the extended community). Edwin David Aponte explores Spanish popular expressions at the core of “spirituality and religiosity” of Latinos/as such: *Si Dios quiere/God willing*, *Dios proveerá/God will provide*, *Ave Maria, con la ayuda de*

¹⁸³ Goizueta, *Christ our Companion*, 50.

¹⁸⁴ Claudia H. Herrera, “Motherhood as a Metaphor for Contemporary Latina Theology and Spirituality: Pregnant Mary (Maria) on a Pilgrimage,” in *Making Sense of Motherhood*, ed. Beth M. Stovell (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 161.

¹⁸⁵ Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesus*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 7.

*Dios/with God's help, en la Lucha!/in the struggle.*¹⁸⁷ Carmen Nanko-Fernández presents a theological reflection of *Spanglish* as a theological source within latin@ theology and describes multiple or hybrid identities in order to articulate *latinidad* (identity of Latino/a). Her argument that “there is no typical Latino/a”¹⁸⁸ but a *mestizaje* of multiple identities correlates with the initial quest and reflections from Latino/a theology about the diversity of Hispanic-Latino/a culture. Her attention to language, particularly Spanglish, serves to reimagine and articulate race, language, class, religion, gender and other categories of discourse. At the same time, Aponte articulates on *Spanglish spirituality* as “contextual expressions of *lo cotidiano*.”¹⁸⁹ As noted in lines above, Spanglish in this particular case, is address as a metaphor that does not have a literal translation, but unfolds beyond a mere linguistic category as it represents identity of a people.

Latina: Embodying and Articulating the Everyday

“Solo le pido a Dios que el dolor no me sea indiferente.” –Mercedes Sosa.¹⁹⁰

In her text, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* from 1988, Ada María Isasi-Díaz notes:

Our lived experience has pointed us in the direction of being theologians... Doing theology is a communal process. We do theology because of, for, and with other [Latinas] Hispanic women with whom we participate in the struggle for liberation.

¹⁸⁷ Edwin David Aponte, *Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012), 108.

¹⁸⁸ See Carmen Nanko-Fernández, *Theologizing en Espanglish: Context, Community, and Ministry* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010).

¹⁸⁹ Aponte, *Santo!*, 133-147.

¹⁹⁰ “I only ask of God that I am not indifferent to pain,” verse from song *Solo le Pido a Dios* (I only ask God) sung by Latin American singer Mercedes Sosa well known as *La Negra* or “the voice of the voiceless.” Mercedes Sosa is prominent and meaningful among Latin American folk music. Mercedes Sosa, “Solo le Pido a Dios,” by León Gieco, originally released in Argentina, 1978.

Those with whom we engage in the process of accountability.¹⁹¹

This dynamic raises questions of embodiment, Latina's communal dimension, and accountability among an extended community. It explicitly contributes to the importance of social location that problematizes questions of self-identity when naming oneself Hispanic or *Latina*, without generalizing on the lived experiences and the context of Hispanic/Latinas at large. "Isasi-Díaz readily admitted that it was difficult to define *lo cotidiano* but possibly to describe its multilayered complexity."¹⁹² However, her work and the work of early and contemporary voices of Latina theologians did not explicitly and intentionally define *lo cotidiano* as a mere academic claim. Nanko-Fernández, referring to Ada María-Isasi's claim in *lo cotidiano*, notes that it encompasses "the points of departure for imagining different ways of living, being and relating."¹⁹³ Latinas' own lived experiences, relationships and social locations, not only as women within the church and the academy, but as witnesses, caretakers, midwives of themselves and their people's struggles and hopes, become a "*communal process*"¹⁹⁴ that is central to Latinas doing theology.

The communal dimension of Latina theology occupies a central part of the work of Catholic Latina theologians that in most cases correlates with the work of Latinas *Evangélicas* and it challenges the academy at large. Michelle A. Gonzalez notes that "Latinas' emphasis on community as a fundamental dimension of our identity is a key contribution to Catholic women's spirituality."¹⁹⁵ This is connected to initial thoughts in

¹⁹¹ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, ix.

¹⁹² Carmen M. Nanko-Fernández, "Lo Cotidiano as Locus Theologicus," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 21.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, 2.

¹⁹⁵ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, xiv.

this section that Latinas' work in theology cannot be understood in isolation. *Our* discourses are written not only in the books of the academy, but in the book of our families. *Our abuelas* (grandmothers) and *madres* or *mami* (mothers) are the sources of our writing, while they also become part of the community of saints that points *Latinas* to the divine. These women are those who paved the way for *us*,¹⁹⁶ but also those who still live and hold *us* Latinas accountable as *we* live and build *our* work in relationships. Ivone Gebara presents the dimension of otherness, offered by Emmanuel Levinas, as an "ethical and epistemological effort"¹⁹⁷ that enlightens the differences between individuals and the relationship to one another. "Fundamentally, the other is like me, but the other is also one that is different from me and who brings me up short by his or her difference."¹⁹⁸ This helps Latinas doing theology to situate their social location in relationship to the other and the tension and response in this dynamic.

First waves and contemporary work in Latino/a theology bloomed and revamped from the grassroots of their own lived experiences and within *la cotidianidad de la gente –la cotidianidad de mujeres cuyo propio ser se ha desvanecido a través del sufrimiento, la pobreza, la violencia, la lucha por conciliar el trabajo arduo, la crianza de los hijos al llegar como inmigrantes a los Estados Unidos; o aquellas que han sido privadas de necesidades básicas ya que viven en comunidades marginalizadas en sus países de origen...En la búsqueda constante de identidad y la lucha por el diario vivir, Dios se*

¹⁹⁶ In this section, there will be an intentional use of the word "we" and "us." This is supported in the statement of Michelle A. Gonzalez who refers to the work of Latina theology and Latina's spirituality not as an isolated work. Gonzalez notes that "who we are cannot be reduced to an isolated "I" but instead must be understood as an "I" that is organically linked to a collective "we." Also, the author makes an intentional account of the persona "we" in order to highlight the critical role of self-identity in Latino/a Theology. See Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, xiv.

¹⁹⁷ Ivone Gebara, *Out of Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*, trans. Anne Patrick Ware (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 76.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

*revela a través de su ser como mujeres de fe.*¹⁹⁹ In a quest to articulate these voices, carriers of lived experiences, the work of Latina theologians is not just a claim for solidarity with the poor and the struggles of women in Latin America or of Latin American descents. The work of Latina theologians is an embodied act that raises questions of identity and salvation including a deep understanding of “who they [we] are, what they [we] believe and why they [we] believe it, what they [we] do”²⁰⁰ and why they [we] do it, strengthening a deep and inherent accountability of their work with a larger audience.

The question about *who are we?* points Latinas doing theology to reflect on their own social location and their relationship with the sacred and the world. Michelle Gonzalez affirms, “I cannot understand who I am without reflecting on these relationships and how they shape and affect me. The same is true for the Latina understanding of our relationship with the sacred.”²⁰¹ The dynamic of embodiment plays a critical role in order to enfold self-identity and spirituality.

Latinas struggle with the question of identity on a daily basis. They often describe themselves as bridge people whose lives “on the hyphen” mean that they are never fully comfortable in the two contexts we straddle. On one side you find the

¹⁹⁹ Translation: “First waves and contemporary work in Latino/a theology bloomed and revamped from the grassroots of their own lived experiences and within the everyday life of the people –the everyday life of Latinas whose true-self have vanished and dismissed due to suffering and enduring poverty, violence, juggling hard work while raising a family once they arrived to the United States. Women whose basic needs have been vanished because they live in marginalized communities in their own countries. In the quest for identity and *la lucha* for daily living and surviving, God reveals through their own self as women of faith.” This phrase is written by the author in Spanish. There is not an intentional reason to switch from English to Spanish in this paragraph. The initial intent to use Spanish in this paragraph poetically bloomed out of the “authentic” grassroots of the author which, in her own words, these lines represent her own language (Spanish). Reflecting deeper in the movement of the Spirit, as this paragraph is formed, it shows the distortion or contrast between two worlds in which identity is transformative and changeable when trying to understand *latinidad* in practical theology.

²⁰⁰ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, x.

²⁰¹ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, xiv.

country of your heritage, whether you were born in Latin America or your parents are from there. Often this Latin American culture is a key feature within our identity. On the other side is the United States. These two worlds meet in us, and we often feel that we do not fully belong to either.²⁰²

The experience of living in between two worlds moves Latinas to reimagine, embody and re-appropriate the divine. Catholic Latina theologians reflect on imaginaries of Mary according with people's social location and offer new insights that challenges original definitions of *marianismo*, adding something new to the theological discourse. Jeanette Rodriguez studies Mary from the *mestiza* perspective and brings insight to spirituality and identity by looking into the "lived experiences of mestizas."²⁰³ She approaches spirituality in "seeking meaning, purpose, and wholeness in the way one perceives the ineffable mystery of everyday life."²⁰⁴ Moreover, Rodriguez utilizes the conceptual vehicles such as values, ideas, symbols and rituals as a frame to articulate *mestiza spirituality* (see Chapter Three on method and methodology). Gebara gives insight to *historiography of women* by looking at the lived stories of women and reflecting in a methodological appreciation of women's daily life as "the fight to live today...to find meaning in life...is routine, the habitual, everyday activities...our personal stories, the way we feel about events, our reactions...our response to reality."²⁰⁵ Latinas theological lenses are shaped by *lo cotidiano* that is embodied and shared among *hermanas en la lucha* (sisters in the struggle). This work is critical in Chapter Three that addresses method and methodology in practical theology, particularly when working with

²⁰² Ibid., 2.

²⁰³ Rodriguez, "Mestiza Spirituality," 320.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 319.

²⁰⁵ Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 77.

Latinas.

This chapter begins tracing roots from the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín as a way of exploring grassroots of the Latin American theology that responded to a context that could not avoid the cries of the poor in the years of 1960's. This trajectory presents pastoral responses from the Church of Latin-America and it highlights pastoral voices of Latin American Liberation theologians, most of them who crossed the border of the U.S. theological discourse, claiming on the struggle for salvation as a way of liberation of the poor from dominant structures.

The work of Latin American theologians also introduces the work of U.S. Latino/a theologians who begin to work in epistemology unique to the everyday life and faith of Latino/a communities in the U.S. context. This section also presents a distinctive and unique dynamic that challenges the wider and dominant theological enterprise with the reflection of new terms such *la lucha*, *mestizaje* and *lo cotidiano*, as critical epistemology within the discourse of U.S. Latino/a theology. These terms are points of departure in order to re-imagine the categories of *la familia* (the family), *la comunidad* (the community), Spanish language, race and gender. Finally, this chapter highlights the critical role of Latinas doing theology as a communal and liberative experience, and it opens conversation for Chapter Three to rethink on the role of method and methodology in practical theology to bring about new knowledge. Chapter Three serves as a preliminary reflection for participatory action research (PAR) with young adult Latinas in Chapter Four.

Chapter Three

(RE)THINKING METHOD AND METHODOLOGY:

TOWARD A PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF LO COTIDIANO

(THE EVERYDAY LIFE)

“The field is the world...” – Matthew 13:38

Chapter Two explored the critical role of *lo cotidiano* and epistemology of the everyday as a critical source within the practical Latino/a theological enterprise. This chapter explores the critical role of method and methodology in practical theology when exploring *lo cotidiano* (the lived experiences) of the people. In this particular work, the use of method and methodology in practical theology is not approached as a static or abstract conceptual dynamic, but it highlights daily life as the primary source of observation, reflection, discernment and action in the quest of new knowledge. In the field of practical theology, one learns to listen; this is not the act of literally hearing with one’s ears. The practice of listening becomes an intellectual virtue that the practical theologian develops while seeking truth and when the Spirit is at work. One learns to ask questions, to reflect on these questions, to discern and correlate new meaning that comes out, and to respond to the challenges and opportunities that present new knowledge or revealed truth.

In the task of practical theology, Osmer proposes initial questions such as: “What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? How might we respond?”²⁰⁶ The process of asking critical questions and exploring more deeply into the urgent needs of the world makes the task of practical theology transformative. Practical

²⁰⁶ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

theologian Terry A. Veling notes that practical theology is “a constant “doing” in the world.”²⁰⁷ *Doing in the world*, in practical theology does not mean literally just acting, but intentionally listening to the call of doing “the work of God.”²⁰⁸ This means the uncertain openness to the Spirit in the *doing*. Therefore, “the work of practical theology is *vocational* work, in which our purpose for being in the world is related to the purposes of God;”²⁰⁹ A constant process of transformation that is not an abstract or a static practice, but “it is always in the process of coming and becoming”²¹⁰ and invites the theologian to *priestly listening* –as Osmer notes while referring to the *descriptive-empirical task* of Practical theology; to deeply and faithfully engaging in “doing” theology “within” the changing world as the primary field of action.

An Interdisciplinary Conversation in Practical Theology

Richard R. Osmer offers four tasks of practical theological interpretation. The *descriptive-empirical task* asks critical questions about particular issues that affect communities, and responds primarily through the practice of priestly listening in wisdom and discerning on new insights that arise in the listening process. Osmer describes this task as the practice of “gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.”²¹¹ Gadamer refers to “tactfulness in practical truth”²¹² or revealed truth as a *rightness of judgement*;²¹³ a practical virtue of the heart and mind that seeks truth by inviting “our very selves into the interpretive process,

²⁰⁷ Terry A. Veling, *Practical Theology: “On Earth as it is in Heaven”* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 7.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 12.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

²¹¹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

²¹² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York, NY: Continuum, 2011), 23.

²¹³ Ibid.

rather than standing apart.”²¹⁴ This task places practical theology into the question of method and methodology; “the journey of practical thinking that produce layers of reflection and from the reflection a practical wisdom”²¹⁵ that listen to the everyday life of the people.

In his work *Truth and Method*, “Gadamer felt that our approaches toward reading and interpreting life were too captivated by methodological concerns.”²¹⁶ In this statement, Veling, referring to method, notes that “it is not uncommon to read books on practical theology that devote considerable time to the question of methodology, that is, how we can best proceed with the task of practical theology.”²¹⁷ It is clear that the question of method and methodologies has pointed and expanded the practical theological horizons beyond the theological enterprise, opening conversation with the social sciences and other disciplines; therefore practical theology becomes an interdisciplinary practice among the theological enterprise. Veling notes:

There is nothing easy about practical theology. Trying to interpret present realities is an incredibly difficult and complex task. Often, it will require of theology a partnering with other disciplines, especially the social sciences, to help us get a better “read” of what is actually going on.²¹⁸

However, *the descriptive-empirical task*, described above, refers and calls for “discernment.” This suggests that practical theology will converse with the social sciences in a way that the methods used to gather information do not become mere

²¹⁴ Veling, *Practical theology*, 15.

²¹⁵ Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research: Practical Theology for Social Justice,” *Religious Education* 101, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 321.

²¹⁶ Veling, *Practical theology*, 15.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

producers of results, but instead, agents for discernment of new *patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts*. The tasks of practical theology allow the virtue of “practical wisdom” or “practical reasoning” to converse with other disciplines such as those from the social sciences and to mutually inform and construct one another. The virtue of “practical wisdom” or “practical reasoning” is defined as *phronesis* by Aristotle as a practice of the heart and the mind in which the Spirit dwells within. Osmer refers to a spirituality of presence in the *descriptive-empirical task* and he notes that “the key term here is “attending,” relating to others with openness, attentiveness, and prayerfulness...a quality of relationship that ultimately depends on the communion-creating presence of the Holy Spirit.”²¹⁹ Terry Veling, in conversation with Osmer, suggests and implies that in the use of method in practical theology, there is always a great temptation that

method becomes a set of rules or procedures that drives everything according to established norms and conventions. What is lost in these conceptions of method is the original sounding behind the word that suggests a path—a way, a search, or a pursuit—but not necessarily a controlled destination or an assured arrival.²²⁰

Osmer and Veling’s conversation of theology with social sciences suggests that the listening process can be challenged by the categorization of arising themes that serve as new knowledge. In other words, as practical theologians and researchers, we might fall in the inevitable pattern of trying to fit methodologies to our ultimate questions of faith or our dwelling in the world; this might make us unable to deeply grasp meaning, attend to the world in the margins, and make the margins our own; those unexpected places and the

²¹⁹ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 34.

²²⁰ Veling, *Practical theology*, 237.

unexpected people. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council suggests:

The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor and afflicted in any way, are the joy and the hope, the grief and the anguish of the followers of Christ as well...we must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live.²²¹

Because of our “dangerous memories” we may forget the ultimate meaning beyond the suffering of the Cross. The hope of the resurrection invites all women and men to priestly listening to the lived experiences of the people and recognizing our call as theologians, *llamados* and *llamadas* (called) to become practical reasoners, gifted and anointed by the Spirit to the task of discerning the needs of the world and the proclamation of the good news among all people.

Attending to *Lo Cotidiano* (the Everyday)

Practical theology directs particular attention to the everyday and the reality of the world. This process happens in the ordinary and can move from “informal” to “formal” attending,²²² exhorting the theological enterprise to become “a way of life, where it enters our dwelling in the world...and in which we [theologians] continually “answer and respond” to the call and vocation of apprenticeship and discipleship in God’s ways.”²²³ To respond to the call of taking the risk of living up to the virtue of “practical wisdom” and to navigate within the hyphen of different worlds is the task, within the interdisciplinary conversation in which disciplines mutually inform and construct one

²²¹ Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, accessed April 12, 2016, Vatican.va, 1, 4.

²²² Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 37-39.

²²³ Veling, *Practical theology*, 16.

another. “Out of these particularities arise the question of ultimate meaning...questions of survival. Survival has to do with more than barely living. Survival has to do with the struggle *to be* fully.”²²⁴ *La lucha* or the struggle to survive in the everyday, pointed out in previous chapter as a category for Latino/a theology, correlates with the broader realm of practical theology as it raises questions of ultimate concern for “more humane living.”²²⁵ Survival has to do with unexpectedly finding the empty tomb after the crucifixion and to *set up in haste* –like Mary– in tremble to tell the others, who are in despair and dread, that there is hope...the hope of the resurrection that brings good news of *salvation*, even in the struggle of finding “one’s vocation and historical mission.”²²⁶ The virtue of “practical wisdom,” that helps practical theology to discern and reflect on one’s vocation –the encounter between *our dwelling in the world* with the crying of the world– correlates with the *interpretive* and the *normative* tasks in practical theology that helps the theologian to listen and to interpret the world through the everyday life.

Gadamer notes that the interpretive process or hermeneutical task “is a fundamental human act and a significant way of being in the world.”²²⁷ In this sense, our understanding of the world and thinking about God are shaped by the practices in which we engage in the everyday life. Gadamer notes that “interpretation and understanding is a creative process within which even the author’s original assumptions concerning the meaning of the text may be challenged and deepened.”²²⁸ Therefore, the interpretive task of practical theology aims not only to describe observations from a specific issue or

²²⁴ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, 4.

²²⁵ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 241.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 110.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

situation, and present it as mere data. Its hermeneutical task calls practical theology to engage and deepen into a critical reflection that arises from the *fusion of horizons*; a deep and intimate conversation between the lenses of the interpreter and the world the researcher listens to. “Ada María Isasi-Díaz drew upon hermeneutics of suspicion that assert the descriptive, hermeneutical, and epistemological significance of *lo cotidiano*, everyday experience and practice of the people.”²²⁹ This perspective shifts practical theology to explore the everyday not as a static vision of daily life, but as an *incarnational practice* defined as the lived experience that dwells with God’s purpose in the world. The lived experience of the people unfolds the human face and the narratives and stories that live within. Orlando O. Espín refers to *lo cotidiano* as “the real life that is lived, lived and experienced, by real people, in the everyday.”²³⁰ *Lo cotidiano* is lived not in abstract concepts of reality, but is *incarnational* as it reveals God’s purpose in human flesh and its dwelling in the world.

Lo cotidiano, considered as a *locus theologicus* in the hermeneutical task in practical theology, intersects with God’s purpose in the world and seeks not only to transform the discourse of theology but to challenge it by “challenging all forms of oppression”²³¹ and fullness of life. Michelle Gonzalez notes that “Latino/a theologians are not merely attempting to bring forth the particular religious reality and practices of Hispanics, they are also seeking to transform the very discourse of theology.”²³² This emphasis does not merely describe the daily events as just daily routines, but it reflects on

²²⁹ Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 160.

²³⁰ Orlando O. Espín, *Idol and Grace: On Traditioning and Subversive Hope* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 114.

²³¹ Cahalan and Mikoski, *Opening the Field of Practical Theology*, 160.

²³² Gonzalez, *Sor Juana*, 15.

the critical questions that the lived experiences of the people raise and bring about change and transformation within the theological enterprise.

Attending to the Lived Experiences of the People

Elizabeth Conde-Frazier notes that “practical theology requires that we read the context of our daily living.”²³³ Practical theology is transformative and it happens in the practices of everyday life, or in *la cotidianidad de la gente* (the everyday life of the people). In Chapter Two, the everyday or *lo cotidiano* was reviewed as a source from Latino/a theology and in this section, is explored as participation and as an inherent practice to the life of the people. *Lo cotidiano* is more than a colloquial and sometimes abstract term addressed (*con lucha*) beyond the Latina/o audience. The dynamic of embodying and carrying oral stories and lived experiences of the people expand to the public sphere as a living practice that produces new knowledge and transformation. It is also the *fiat* –the hope of the gentle and fearless disciple– to deeply engage, participate, listen and articulate the lived expressions, devotions and attitudes that are unveiled at the core of a sacred dynamic between God and the people. For the purpose of this work, *lo cotidiano* is explored as a methodological frame, defined as participation, embodiment and lived practice or lived experience in the everyday, and a *locus theologicus* in the practical theological enterprise. Michelle Gonzalez notes that “Latino/a theology offers a way to speak of the diversity, messiness and beauty of reality.”²³⁴ The diversity, messiness and beauty of reality in *lo cotidiano* becomes *incarnational* and embodied work when it engages the people in active dialogue and reflection as active participants in the articulation and discernment of their call and *dwelling in the world*.

²³³ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 234.

²³⁴ Gonzalez, *Sor Juana*, 15.

Active Participants of the Everyday Life

The next chapter will present an extensive overview of participatory action research (PAR) –a conversation of theology with the social sciences– and the methods suggested and implemented that helped listening and articulating their lived experiences of young adult Latinas who identify as Catholics. For the purpose of this section, participatory action focuses on the lived experiences by real individuals who live in the real world, since without the people, there are not lived experiences. The use of this methodology from the social sciences is introduced in order to highlight the need of listening, reflecting and articulating on the lived experiences of the people as active subjects and participants within the task of practical theology and therefore, God’s purpose in the world. Participatory action will serve as a methodology of attending and priestly listening to the critical questions that practical theology asks (“what is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? How might we respond?”²³⁵) through the people in the ordinary.

By listening to the narratives and lived experiences of active participants in the theological reflection, in this case Latinas, *participation* recognizes “the value of including [the people] as essential in the generation of useful knowledge”²³⁶ towards change, transformation, and therefore *action* that “is informed by critical reflection,”²³⁷ in the theological exercise. Moreover, the act or practice of recognizing active participants within the frame of *lo cotidiano*, or the everyday, meets the challenge of exploring daily life as a mere abstract concept and grasps onto *the lived experiences* of the people who

²³⁵ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4.

²³⁶ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research: Practical Theology for Social Justice,” 321.

²³⁷ Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 234.

are considered as key in the articulation of their own lives. At the same time, participation and action enter into correlation with different sources from theology; in this work, participation and action enter into dialogue with sources from Latina/o and *mujerista* theology –that rethink the importance of listening and articulating the lived experiences of the people within the tasks of practical theology.

Women Participating in the Everyday

Ada María Isasi-Díaz highlights the critical task of *lived-experience* as a primary source of *mujerista* theology. Isasi-Díaz notes that, “we have to depend on how we understand and live the events of our daily lives. We have to consider carefully our own stories in order to bring understanding out of the chaos created in our lives by many forces that pull us in different directions.”²³⁸ In this particular work, the lived experiences of women become a critical point of reflection as they become living stories and narratives that help the theologian to reveal new meaning and raise new key questions of ultimate concern. The narratives of women not only challenge the theological discourse, by bringing out new theological categories, but also move the theologian to dialogue and negotiate the descriptive, hermeneutical, and epistemological significance, sometimes reflected with *lucha* (struggle), within the established normativity of the theological enterprise. Therefore, the practice of unveiling the narratives and stories of the people moves from the private to the public sphere in which the ultimate goal is transformation.

Isasi-Díaz denotes a correlation between hermeneutics of suspicion and the “validity”²³⁹ of established normativity in the theological enterprise, claiming *the lived experiences* of the people as primary source of theology. “The doing of *mujerista*

²³⁸ Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha, In the Struggle*, 174.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 173-174.

theology starts by examining the lived experiences of Latinas and uses it to understand who we are, to ask questions of ultimate meaning for survival, and to answer those questions.”²⁴⁰ These are methodological concerns that allow practical theology to find adequate methods of research, articulate new meaning that arise from those questions, bring about reflection, and move to concrete points of action. Moreover, “instead of thinking that only thought processes can yield rationality, we insist that lived experience highlights the point of view that the whole mystery of existence can also contribute to and yield rational thinking.”²⁴¹ The descriptive task in practical theology becomes not only the gathering of data and processing of new information through rigid systematized processes, but allows the practical theological enterprise to engage the Spirit in the process of listening, reflection and action. Rebecca Chopp talks about the prototype of a discourse of emancipatory transformation and the role of the Spirit in the discourse, arguing that “without the breath and fire of the Spirit, the relation of the words and Word is formal and empty, a mathematical equation of the finite and the infinite.”²⁴² The virtue of *phronesis* or *practical wisdom* allows the Spirit to break through in the theological process and to bring reflection within and without; in this process, our lived-experiences have to be the building blocks of our self-understanding and of our morality if we are not to lose ourselves in the process.”²⁴³ In this journey of *survival* the Spirit not only calls, but empowers and affirms one’s call and dwelling in the world.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 176.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Rebecca Chopp, *The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1991), 53.

²⁴³ Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha, In the Struggle*, 174.

The work of Michelle Gonzalez, in her work *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*,²⁴⁴ offers an emphasis on *the Good, the True and the Beautiful*, challenging the theological enterprise and emphasizing in the goal of the Latino/a theological discourse as “rooted in the methodological starting point.”²⁴⁵ Sor Juana, facing the limitations in the use of the formal sources of study, she found everyday life and the world as sources of explaining God’s purpose in the world. The silencing of her voice by the inevitable external forces allowed her to explore *the good, the true and the beautiful* of the world in creative and new ways; her own silence moved her to listen, and from that listening, to embody the power to write and respond to the challenges and hopes of her context, allowing the Spirit of God to speak up and empower her to transform the discourse. Rebecca Chopp notes that “here the Spirit is that which empowers, that which anoints to speech, that which blesses with voice,”²⁴⁶ even when voice is silenced by pre-established normativity.

Daily life, carried through *la lucha* and the hope of the people, becomes an important theological source that opens the conversation with other sources that enrich the theological discourse. “Interpreting present realities is a task that requires partnering with other disciplines, especially the social sciences.”²⁴⁷ Sally A. Brown notes that

²⁴⁴ The work and life of *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, a Mexican nun from the seventeenth century, has been retrieved in the work of theological aesthetics and within the Latino/a theological enterprise. Michelle A. Gonzalez explores the theological aesthetics of *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* as critical work to contemporary theology. She notes, “Sor Juana’s theology is a forgotten theological voice whose work is increasingly the object of study and the greatest contribution to contemporary theology is found in her aesthetic form of theology.” Her voice was challenged by the hierarchical order in seventeenth-Century Mexico. Gonzalez highlights that Sor Juana’s life and background are essential to understand her discourse as a seventeenth-century religious woman, writer, and intellectual. Moreover, Gonzalez notes that “her personal history and intellectual concerns were shaped by the contours and characteristics of her era.” Gonzalez makes an approach to her autobiographical narrative as the most well-known of her texts, *La Respuesta a Sor Filotea* “The Answer;” a response that “justify women’s intellectual gifts and endeavors.” See Gonzalez, *Sor Juana*, 57, 25, 96.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁴⁶ Rebecca Chopp, *The Power to Speak*, 53.

²⁴⁷ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 17.

“practical theology is that field of theological inquiry and practice that seeks critically to discern and respond to the transforming activity of God within the living text of human action.”²⁴⁸ In this sense, the practical theologian is no longer an outsider and merely a researcher of empirical data brought by useful methods of research from the social sciences. The researcher is called to bridge the gap between theology and the social sciences through a deep reflection and discernment between God and the people, calling on God’s revelation through the Spirit.

In the process of listening and discernment, one does not fully anticipate final results or answers within ordinary time and space. Rather, the faithful disciple, based on primary observations, is called to prophetically grasp meaning, reflect, imagine—even carrying trembling and the uncertainty that brings *la lucha* to survive—and seeks to transform the theological enterprise. Latina practical theologian Elizabeth Conde-Frazier notes:

One carries out participatory action research [in practical theology] with fear and trembling because it depends on God’s *Kairos* and the movement of the Spirit.

Kairos is a Greek term for time that opens onto the eternal now. In technical views of the physics and philosophy, *kairos* is placed outside of space-time.

Some theologians see God as the agent of *kairos*.²⁴⁹

There is a breakthrough of the Spirit in human time and there is no longer ordinary time, but *Kairos* time working in the ordinary life. Chopp notes that “this time

²⁴⁸ Sally A. Brown, “Hermeneutical Theory,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, 112.

²⁴⁹ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 240.

does not blend the borders of the self as much as it calls all borders into question.”²⁵⁰ In this prophetic space, God reveals to the people in *kairos* time through the ordinary people and the ordinary life, which becomes as a vital source of theology; a *locus theologicus*, particularly for Latino/a theology.

Conde Frazier notes that practical theology that focuses on justice “requires living in the borderland between God and the people. It creates a prophetic space where we do not announce or denounce, but help to bring about alternative practices for more humane living.”²⁵¹ As noted earlier in this work, prophetic space, response or voices indicate the movement of the spirit to reflect, respond and call in action to the good news of salvation. *Lo cotidiano* is prophetic then as “a way of approaching theology as a space where God encounters those who are oppressed at the very place of their suffering.”²⁵² It anticipates the hope for the future, recall the news of salvation and brings new insight and knowledge. In the process of listening

one learns to observe, collect data, analyze or make meaning from the data, think critically, imagine, and synthesize data in order to come up with insight and action. *Insight* is wisdom and understanding from the inside and the power to see deeply. *Critical thinking* is making connections and seeing implications.

Imagination is looking at what form to give to the wisdom we have derived. How does it shape the world differently? *Action* comes as we organize our thinking to see the causes of reality. Our actions are then informed by critical reflection.²⁵³

The world is shaped differently when humanity fully participates in the

²⁵⁰ Chopp, *The Power to Speak*, 49.

²⁵¹ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 241.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 235.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

articulation of its own historical project in dialogue with divine purpose. The practice of engaging the people directly in the articulations of their own struggles and hopes is what Conde-Frazier calls “*incarnational research*.”²⁵⁴ This process opens the space for dialogue and theological reflection between the researcher and the people. It calls us to reflect on people’s lived experiences in the world, to listen prophetically to God’s purpose and revelation through those lived experiences, to imagine God’s revelation through new insights, and to raise new questions that move us to action.

Latinas Participating in *Lo Cotidiano*

Practical theology is transformative and it happens in the practices of everyday life, or in *la cotidianidad de la gente* (the everyday life of the people). In Latino/a theology, this theological source, known as *lo cotidiano* (everyday life), is explored as participation and practice inherent to the lived experiences of the people. *Lo cotidiano* is more than a colloquial and sometimes abstract term addressed (*con lucha*) beyond the Latina/o audience. The dynamic of embodying and carrying oral stories and lived experiences of the people expands to the public sphere as a living practice that produces new knowledge and transformation. It is also the *fiat* –the hope of the gentle and fearless disciple– to deeply engage, participate, listen and articulate the lived expressions, devotions and attitudes that are unveiled at the core of a sacred dynamic between God and the people. *Lo cotidiano* is explored as a methodological frame, defined as participation, embodiment and practice in the everyday, and a *locus theologicus* in the practical theological enterprise. “The diversity, messiness and beauty of reality”²⁵⁵ in *lo cotidiano* becomes *incarnational* and embodied work when it engages the people in

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 15.

active dialogue and reflection as active participants in the articulation and discernment of their call in the world.

Constructive theologian Loida Martell-Otero notes that “the everyday is an important epistemological and hermeneutical category that was initially explored by Latina *feminista and mujeristas*.”²⁵⁶ Martell-Otero calls the everyday “*teología del hogar y desde la calle*, a theology of the home and from the streets,”²⁵⁷ because it is constructed upon the lived experiences of the people in the everyday. Ivone Gebara, claiming daily life as critical in the historiography of women, describes the lived experiences as “the fight to live today, to look for work, to do the cooking, to bathe children and do laundry, to exchange the gestures of love, to find meaning in life.”²⁵⁸ The social location where these living experiences unfold and God reveals to the people, are *la casa, la calle, la iglesia* –*aquellos lugares donde luchamos y esperamos en fé en el día a día y también imaginamos a Cristo acompañando nuestro caminar y a María cubriéndonos con su manto*.²⁵⁹ These active practices of the ordinary life represent a *locus theologicus* in the theological enterprise. The everyday represents an epistemological and hermeneutical category in the Latino/a theological enterprise and it becomes a point of departure in methodology in practical theology as “it reflects critically on the basic categories of life”²⁶⁰ and it calls for a better quality of life in the everyday lives of Latinas.

As noted earlier in this chapter, reflection on the basic categories of life calls for

²⁵⁶ Loida Martell-Otero, *Liberating News: An Emerging U.S. Hispanic/Latina Soteriology of the Crossroads* (New York, NY: Fordham University, 2004), 135.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Gebara, *Out of the Depths*, 77.

²⁵⁹ Translation: “Home, the streets, the church –those places where we daily fight and hope in faith, imagine Christ walking with us in the journey, and Mary protecting us.” Phrase written in Spanish and translated to English by the author.

²⁶⁰ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 235.

“more humane living”²⁶¹ and it raises questions with which Latina feminists and *mujeristas* are preoccupied: “questions of survival. Survival has to do with more than barely living. Survival has to do with the struggle *to be* fully”²⁶² and to be an active participant of daily life. Within the practical theological enterprise, there is a call to deep reflection on the active participation of the people as active subjects in the articulation of their own living practices, rather than presupposing and determining their call in the world, upon established normativity. Conde-Frazier, reflecting on participatory action research within the frame of a suggested practical theology of *lo cotidiano*, notes that, this approach moves the Latino community away from usual categories of dominant theologies of colonization. *Lo cotidiano* is a way of approaching theology as a space where God encounters those who are oppressed at the very place of their suffering. It allows one to see the impact of social sin and culture, class, race, gender, poverty, joblessness, and the daily routines and relationships of life.²⁶³

The lived experiences expand from the private to the public sphere as categories as they grasp the social impact and enfold meaning. Reflection on critical categories that emerges from the people’s lived experiences becomes a key methodological starting point in theology in order to understand people’s identity and their relationships with the world they serve. Isasi-Díaz recognizes three critical “phrases” or correlated categories elaborated in her *mujerista* anthropology, “as critical to self-understanding of Hispanic

²⁶¹ Ibid., 241.

²⁶² Isasi-Díaz, *Hispanic Women*, 4.

²⁶³ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 235.

women [Latinas]”²⁶⁴ in the everyday: *la lucha* (the struggle), *la comunidad/la familia* (the community/the family) and *permítanme hablar* (allow me to speak),²⁶⁵ and “these phrases are repeated with such frequency that they seem to express essential elements of who Latinas are, of how we see ourselves, construct ourselves, describe ourselves.”²⁶⁶ When referring to these “phrases” or categories constantly reminded within the Latina theological enterprise, María Pilar Aquino enters into dialogue with Isasi-Díaz and Conde-Frazier referring to the “*dynamis* dimension of *lo cotidiano* that seeks for a better quality of life”²⁶⁷ in the everyday lives of Latinas and challenges oppressive categories that unveil beyond the Latino/a audience.

Michelle Gonzalez, refers to these three “phrases” or categories as becoming “the starting point for reflection: Latinas’ daily lives (*lo cotidiano*), their contributive voices and their relational conception of selfhood.”²⁶⁸ Gonzalez also argues that these categories expand to the wider audience of women who struggle and hope in the everyday, rather than applying exclusively to Latinas.²⁶⁹ For the purpose of this chapter, these three proposed “phrases” will be noted as methodological categories from *mujerista* anthropology that will serve in the articulation of further participatory action research in this dissertation.

Embodying Fiesta (Celebration) in the Struggle: La Lucha

The first category of *la lucha* in *mujerista* anthropology –explored as source of

²⁶⁴ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista theology*, 128.

²⁶⁵ These “phrases” or categories are proposed by Ada María Isasi-Díaz in the following order: *la lucha* (the struggle), *permítanme hablar* (allow me to speak), and *la comunidad/la familia* (the community/the family). Even though Isasi-Díaz does not set a rule of order to name these categories, this work will present these three categories in the order above. Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista theology*, 128.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Aquino, “Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology,” 38-39.

²⁶⁸ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 11.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

theology in Latino/a theology in Chapter Two— is explored and interpreted in this section as “a fundamental category for Latina understandings of the human because it recognizes the trials and tribulations that are part of life.”²⁷⁰ First of all, *la lucha* makes the theological frame of *lo cotidiano* an *incarnational* and embodied practice in the practical theological process. *La lucha* (the struggle) is not reflected from the outside but it calls one to embody and live out the Gospel through deep reflection and transformation of both the people and the theologian. Secondly, it reminds the wider audience that *la lucha* (the struggle) —the mingling of struggles and hope— is interpreted through the lenses of Latina as celebration (*fiesta*). *Fiesta*, a living theological source within Latino/a theology, is more than a colloquial term used to connote “party.” *Fiesta* is the redemptive climax of the human heart that is revealed through living practices, expressions and rituals of a human community. Thirdly, our own limitations and struggles as Latinas do not define us within the *status quo*, but allows us to deal and respond in a creative way with the suffering that affects us and our communities, beyond stereotypes and pre-established normativity about our identity as Latinas/os. It helps us to reimagine and reinterpret the Cross and it moves us to embody the message of hope in our communities and the world that surrounds us.

For the purpose of this work, *fiesta* represents the meaningful and sacred expressions, symbols and rituals within the Latino/a communities. It happens in the streets, at home and in the church and reminds us that *the true, the good and the beautiful* is in the struggle and on the path of Salvation where life is celebrated, even in the midst of precarious conditions. *Fiesta*, as an implicit and subversive response to communal

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

struggle, shapes identity, visibility and self-understanding among the dominant culture. Within the Catholic Latino/a-Hispanic culture, the stories of the Gospel are recreated and reenacted as significant *fiestas* or religious expressions and celebration: processions and living *Stations of the Cross* reenact the Calvary of Jesus; the Novenas and Posadas practiced nine days before Christmas, recreate the journey of Mary and Joseph in Judea before giving birth to Jesus; the lighting of candles around images and statues of Mary, remember the role of Mary in the Gospel and her pierced heart as Mother of God; the feast days dedicated to the Saints empower and ignite the community to remember *acompañamiento* (accompaniment) and resilience in the everyday journey.

Within the Protestant community, the stories of the Gospel are embodied through empowering sermons that bring hope, living *testimonios* (testimonies) that witness the presence of the Spirit, *coritos* (spiritual songs) that *adoran* (praise) the Lord in joy and redemption.²⁷¹ Fiesta includes also our *dichos* or sayings in the everyday life that we Latino/as use to express resilience, victory, faith and strength regardless of the circumstances. These practices are not exclusively lived out *within* the Hispanic-Latino/a community in isolation, but extend to a larger community that witness identity and share the struggles of the everyday life.

Claiming Space from the Private to the Public: La Familia/La Comunidad

For the purpose of this work, the category of *la comunidad/the community* will be briefly overviewed before the category of *permitanme hablar/allow me to speak*. Isasi-Díaz, writing on Latinas' role within the family, notes that "it is in *la familia* that we are

²⁷¹ For more Reading on Latino/a Theology that describe both Catholic and Protestant traditions, see Miguel A. De La Torre and Edwin David Aponte, *Introducing Latino/a Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001).

agents of our own history, that we can claim a historical role within space and time, that we make our mark –so to speak– by making viable future generations and by influencing them.”²⁷² Therefore, *la comunidad/la familia* becomes an *incarnational* category within the Latina theological enterprise as it explores the everyday of Latinas as embedded by a larger community inherent to [our] their identity and the identity of those who come after. Latinas’ domestic life is not separated from the public sphere or “the great challenges of culture.”²⁷³ It creates a social dimension and it shapes the conditions of how we live and experience the world. *Acompañamiento* (accompaniment) explored within Latino/a theology in the previous chapter, places the individual in relationship with the public sphere. This relational character of the individual called first wave and the following generations of Latina theologians to reflect, work for and opt for the needs and the lived experiences of the poor, the voiceless and the marginalized, as well as for the needs of those who are coming after.

Moreover, the relational character of the individual that exists in community becomes a key component of Latina spirituality and *mujerista* anthropology. Michelle Gonzalez, reflecting on this category from *mujerista* anthropology, notes:

A feminist Trinitarian understanding of the *imago Dei* places relationships at the center. It is through our relationships that we most concretely reflect God’s image. This Trinitarian notion of the image of God also gives us a theological grounding for our relationships with each other.²⁷⁴

In this sense, the person and the community enter into a deep and inherent

²⁷² Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 139.

²⁷³ Gebara, *Out of Depths*, 77.

²⁷⁴ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 16.

communion in which “the identity of the “we” does not extinguish the “I.” In *familia/comunidad* the “I” of Hispanic women is heard and embraced without fear for it does not in any way threaten the “we.”²⁷⁵ Therefore, when we tell our own oral stories and narratives, they are told on behalf of those who paved the way for us or are coming after us. These oral stories and narratives are not built in isolation, but built upon those relationships we engage in everyday life. These are inherently unfolded within the social dimension of *la comunidad* and they represent a critical component for Latina theologians as we construct and identify our voice within the theological discourse and among the community.

Permitanme Hablar (Allow me to Speak): Voice

This category plays a critical role by reflecting on our call and vocation as human beings within the world. It emphasizes on our *vocational* work in which “our purpose for being in the world is related to the purposes of God.”²⁷⁶ It takes into consideration our call to discern on one’s vocation –*our dwelling in the world*– and the freedom to *fully* live out that call within the context in which we live. “This dimension of our humanity recognizes the need for Latinas, and in fact all women, to have a voice and authority in their lives.”²⁷⁷ However, there is a deep call for the community “to affirm and take into consideration our insights and concerns,”²⁷⁸ thus, we are able to contribute and transform our communities and lives. This category correlates with participatory action research within the frame of *lo cotidiano* in Latina theology, where the participants are active subjects of research in the articulation of their own stories and lived experiences.

²⁷⁵ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 144.

²⁷⁶ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 12.

²⁷⁷ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 12.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Besides the reflection on Latinas as active agents and participants of their call in the world, *permitanme hablar* also emphasizes and reflects on humanity from within and from below (the grassroots). It offers a way to speak on the everyday of the people from a living context and their own lived experiences, instead of “an idealized type of humanity or about an abstract understanding of humanity,”²⁷⁹ which is critical for self-understanding. Conde-Frazier, elaborating on social context, notes that “practical theology requires that we read the context of our daily living.”²⁸⁰ *Lo cotidiano* is explored by engaging the people to reflect upon their call in the world and the context that shapes the lived experiences of the people.

Being intentional about the context or social location of one’s daily living allows people to situate themselves in the social spectrum and reflect on their own relationships and vocation within the world as they construct identity and new meaning. “Participants [of *lo cotidiano*] are no longer passive receptacles but full subjects, actors and catalysts of a historical moment for change...this change begins not in the esoteric confines of the abstract, but with everyday life, in the realm of *lo cotidiano*.”²⁸¹ In this sense, our faith expressions, thinking about God and love for God, are shaped by these *vivencias* (lived experiences) that move the people to raise questions of ultimate concern in the world in which we are called to live and discern about who we are and ask: *Who are you, Latina? Permitanme hablar* (allow me to speak).

Mary Participating in *Lo Cotidiano*

The practical theological method of participatory action within the frame of *lo*

²⁷⁹ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 133.

²⁸⁰ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 234.

²⁸¹ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research: Practical Theology for Social Justice,” 321.

cotidiano allows this work to not only engage Catholic Latinas by listening to their lived experiences, but also it serves to engage young adult Latinas who identify as Catholics by collaborating in the articulation of their own stories and narratives. It proposes to rethink methodology in practical theology and to reimagine the role of the people and their dwelling in the world as active participants in the mystery of evangelization, instead of defining their call in the world based on assumptions and pre-established normativity. The role of Mary in tradition is inherent to Catholicism. In the Church's wisdom, "what the Catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ, and what it teaches about Mary illumines in turn its faith in Christ."²⁸² The Council of Ephesus in 431, in which the Blessed Virgin Mary was appointed as the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), had the purpose of defending the true doctrine of the *incarnation* and to secure faith in the manhood of the eternal Son of God. The Council taught that Christ was the Word, and it was the Word who according to the flesh, was born of Mary.²⁸³ The Church has faithfully believed and honored for centuries this divine mystery in which Mary was called to be the Mother of God, and therefore of the people. The Congregation for Divine Worship notes:

The faithful easily understand the vital link uniting Son and Mother. They realize that the Son is God and that she, the Mother, is also their mother. They intuit the immaculate holiness of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in venerating her as the glorious queen of Heaven, they are absolutely certain that she who is full of mercy intercedes for them. Hence, they confidently have recourse to her patronage. The poorest of the poor feel especially close to her. They know she,

²⁸² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 487.

²⁸³ Paula Bowes, "Mary and the Early Christian Fathers," *Epiphany* 4 (June 1984): 4.

like them, was poor and greatly suffered in meekness and patience. They can identify with her suffering at the crucifixion and death of her Son, as well as rejoice with her in his resurrection. The faithful joyfully celebrate her feasts, make pilgrimage to her sanctuary, sing hymns in her honour, and make votive offerings to her.²⁸⁴

Church wisdom on Mary is considered as the *Marian teachings and dogmas* (*Marianismo*) that have sustained the beliefs, attitudes and expressions of the faithful within Catholic tradition. However, this work does not intend to study the beliefs, attitudes and expressions of faith towards Mary within Catholic tradition and therefore, among various cultural contexts. Rather, departing from what was noted above that the Virgin Mary holds a key role inherent to the Catholic tradition, as well as acknowledging the great devotion and attitudes of the faithful towards her, this work highlights the role of Mary as an active disciple and participant in the history of salvation. This will serve primarily to re-imagine method and methodology while working with young adult Latina Catholics considered as active agents of research in practical theology. Secondly, sources from scripture and the Church's wisdom on Mary –particularly Pope Francis' reflections– will help to re-imagine Mary's active role in the Gospel when grasping onto the lives of Latinas and their sacred connection with the divine.

Marianismo is a Spanish term that it is generally attributed to the values, virtues, devotion and imagery of Mary within the Catholic tradition. This work that will listen to the lived experiences of young adult Latinas, interpret *marianismo* as the living faith of Latinas in light of their “values, symbols, ideas and other conceptual vehicles that elevate

²⁸⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (London, UK: Catholic Truth Society, 2002), 131.

[them] to discover, rediscover or uncover a hidden meaning or truth connecting [them] to God.”²⁸⁵ Therefore, honoring each *pueblo* (people) and community’s devotion to Mary, exposed through the narratives and stories of Latinas in further chapters, *marianismo* –or Latinas’ living faith– is visible through the lived expressions of faith and experiences that unveil in *lo cotidiano* (the everyday life). In order to rethink *marianismo*, it is critical to note sources from scripture in which Mary acts as an active participant in the history of salvation. Mary’s *yes* becomes a point of departure.

Mary’s Response: An Active *Fiat*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that the Latin word *fiat* signifies “let it be [done] to me according to your word.”²⁸⁶ It represents Mary’s active response to God’s call in the daily event of *the annunciation*.²⁸⁷ Her *yes* to God’s dwelling in the world represents a point of departure on *Marianismo*. “The heavenly messenger announces God’s desire that Mary bear a child who will be great, the Messiah, the holy Son of God.”²⁸⁸ *Fiat* signifies her openness of heart and humility to respond *yes* to God’s

²⁸⁵ Rodriguez, “Mestiza Spirituality,” 319.

²⁸⁶ The technical translation of the word *fiat* in Latin is “let it be done.” See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2617.

²⁸⁷ See the story of the Annunciation in the Gospel of Luke 1:26-38. “In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.” But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.” Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.”

²⁸⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2003), 248.

will in the world. Her *yes* or humble *fiat* involved the heart offered in faith. Mary's *dwelling in the world* is seen in tradition as the humble and surrendering act of the disciple to follow God's call. As noted in *Lumen Gentium*, Mary "was enriched by God with the gifts which befit such a role...embracing God's salvific will with a full heart."²⁸⁹ However, a heart full of faith has the natural ability to discern God's call; we have an account where discernment involves not only surrendering but questioning and praying. Such a statement suggests that Mary was given the gifts of the Spirit, which are not seen as static virtues, but as the *practical virtues* of the human heart that moves the disciple to ask, reflect and move towards transformative action in the world.

In this episode, tradition notes how her *yes* is more than a static response. "Mary prays and intercedes in faith...It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross, that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true Mother of all the living."²⁹⁰ Mary's *yes* represents the fulfillment of God's plan in the history of salvation. The document of *Lumen Gentium* notes that "this maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect."²⁹¹ This statement reminds that *fiat* is also the uncertainty of the faithful disciple that actively decides to follow a new call in faith. Her faithful, tender, yet courageous spirit moved her to respond as an active participant and "a prominent actor in her own right."²⁹² Pope Francis encourages in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii*

²⁸⁹ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, accessed November 10, 2016, Vatican.va, 56.

²⁹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2618.

²⁹¹ Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 62.

²⁹² Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby, *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 9.

Gaudium:

Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness. In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves.²⁹³

Therefore, Mary's selfless *yes* in response to God is more than just the social and religious imageries of humility and self-giving stereotyped as weaknesses. Pope Francis notes that Mary's *fiat* and *yes* to God helps to imagine Mary as the "Spirit-filled evangelizer, fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit."²⁹⁴ Mary's *yes* to God is interpreted as the revolutionary response of a chosen disciple, created in God's image and likeness, who is moved by the Spirit to follow Christ. "Assured that the Spirit will empower and protect her, she gives her free consent, casting her lot with the great work of redemption in the belief that nothing is impossible with God."²⁹⁵ Mary's path of saying *yes* to God involved the virtues of self-giving and humility, but it also involved the practice of listening, reflecting, questioning, and *doing in the world*.

In Luke's Gospel, the evangelist describes Mary as an active participant and is "called by name"²⁹⁶ as an active disciple. Mary is troubled, and she brings questions, asking, "How can this be?" (Luke 1:34). Mary speaks up, anticipates, and gives feedback to the angel, saying, "May it be done" (Luke 1:38). Mary acts

²⁹³ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, accessed June 1, 2016, Vatican.va, 288.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 259.

²⁹⁵ Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 248.

²⁹⁶ "Joel B. Green describes Mary's role in Luke's narrative. He notes that "Mary is a prominent actor in her own right. Indeed, in Luke 2:5 Joseph is introduced in relation to Mary; in 2:16 she is named before Joseph; in 2:33-34 Simeon, having blessed "them" both, addressed himself to Mary; and in 2:48 Mary speaks for herself and her husband. Throughout his narrative, Luke mentions Mary by name thirteen times and refers to her directly" (Gaventa and Rigby, *Blessed One*, 9)." Herrera, "Motherhood as a Metaphor for Contemporary Latina Theology and Spirituality," 157-158.

as faithful disciple in *lo cotidiano*: “during those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste” (Luke 1:39). Mary proclaims: “My spirit rejoices in God my savior” (Luke 1:47) and “Mary kept all these things in her heart” (Luke 2:19).²⁹⁷

The act of the heart of the faithful disciple as she responds as an active participant plays a key role as she walks with her people, meets with them and identifies with them in *lo cotidiano* (the everyday), which happens in the public spaces such family, church streets and so on. These events happened in *lo cotidiano* (the everyday) within unexpected places and shared among unexpected people. Mary not only embodies the people’s joys in their everyday life, but also her heart is pierced with their tears and suffering and these identify with her own.

Even in the most unexpected conditions, God is born in unexpected places and through unexpected people. Mary’s yes to God is reflected in the practice of the faithful disciple that moves to action and participates in the history of salvation.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Mary walks with her people and for her people in the mission of hope and evangelization.²⁹⁸

Participation of Mary in *lo cotidiano* is embodied and interpreted by inviting Latinas to become active participants in telling and articulating their own stories, instead of serving as objects of study with the only purpose of producing or giving birth to new research. Therefore, practical theology calls for transformative work in which “people are

²⁹⁷ Herrera, “Motherhood as a Metaphor for Contemporary Latina Theology and Spirituality,” 157-158.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 155.

not objects of study but active subjects and participants”²⁹⁹ within everyday life. “It is vocational work in which our purpose for being in the world is related to the purposes of God.”³⁰⁰ As seen in tradition, Mary responded to her vocation and God’s call as she actively participated in the sacred mystery of salvation.

Mary’s Visit to Elizabeth

The second point to consider is the relational dynamic of the *fiat*. Scripture notes that once Mary received the good news, “during those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.”³⁰¹ *Lumen Gentium* notes:

This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation, it is shown first of all when Mary, arising in haste to go to visit Elizabeth, is greeted by her as blessed because of her belief in the promise of salvation and the precursor leaped with joy in the womb of his mother.³⁰²

This event interprets God’s call and dwelling in the world as the inherent relational dynamic of the active disciple. The call and active response or *yes* are not shared in isolation, but rather the good news of salvation are shared, celebrated, and affirmed within community; in this case, her cousin Elizabeth represents the first symbol of the extended community within which they both rejoiced and celebrated the great news of salvation. Moreover, the passage of Luke tells: “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the

²⁹⁹ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 238.

³⁰⁰ Veling, *Practical theology*, 12.

³⁰¹ Luke 1:39-40.

³⁰² Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, 57.

fruit of your womb.”³⁰³ These words are known in Catholic tradition in the prayer of the *Hail Mary*, but moreover, retrieve the transformative encounter of both chosen women who celebrate the struggles and the joys of God’s call; moreover this event also affirms vocation through active prophetic words. “Luke does not give Elizabeth the title of prophet, but “filled with the Holy Spirit” she functions like one. She blesses Mary as a woman in her own right first, then her child, then her faith.”³⁰⁴ These prophetic words, shared in *lo cotidiano* (the everyday), serve to reimagine Latinas’ narratives and stories and the critical role of their family (*familia*) as they imagine and reimagine their dwelling in the world as Latinas. In this, Sister Elizabeth Johnson notes that

Mary remained with Elizabeth for about three months...Luke does not depict their time together, but in women’s reflection Elizabeth takes Mary in and nurtures her, affirms her calling, nourish her confidence. Together they chart the changes taking place in their bodies and affirm the grace in their own and each other’s lives...the support they share with each other enables them to mother the next generation of prophets, the Precursor and the Savior of the world.³⁰⁵

Mary’s active *fiat* noted in her call and response was lived out in community and shared in hope and joy among the people. With the narratives of Mary in the Gospel of Luke, *fiat* is not a static dynamic in which the Word becomes flesh and an incarnational dynamic.

In a Manger: Jesus was Born

In the Gospel of Luke, the evangelist describes the episode of the pregnant Mary

³⁰³ Luke 1:41-42.

³⁰⁴ Johnson, *Truly Our Sister*, 262.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

to Judea and the image of the birth of her son in a manger when there was no room for them in the inn. John Paul II notes that, “we know from Luke that when, on the occasion of the census ordered by the Roman authorities, Mary went with Joseph to Bethlehem, having found “no place in the inn,” she gave birth to her Son in a stable and “laid him in a manger.”³⁰⁶ The narrative in the Gospel of Luke serves to re-imagine the journey of Latino/a immigrant families, particularly, the immigrant journey of Latinas noted in this work. Mary’s lived experience of being exposed to hardship of not finding a room for the birth of her son in Judea can be seen from the perspective of a Latina immigrant who tries to find a room, or place of belonging, in a foreign culture and system. Moreover, “Mary’s flight to Egypt with her husband and young son speak to the immigration experience of so many Latinas.”³⁰⁷ The immigration dynamic is critical in this work and will become an inherent part of the living faith of Latinas and their families through the Latina’s voices who participated in this research.

On the other hand, the good news proclaimed in Gospel of Luke to the shepherds or the ordinary people –“Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people”³⁰⁸– are interpreted in this work as *fiesta* (celebration). This perspective is seen in the work of *mujerista* theology when Latinas *celebrate in la lucha* (in the struggle). This is visible through Latinas’ expressions of faith

³⁰⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, accessed November 23, 2016, Vatican.va, 16. See Luke 2:1-7 “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

³⁰⁷ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 40.

³⁰⁸ Luke 2:10.

that happen in the most unexpected places.

In a humble manger, motherhood was underestimated by the world, and yet the community of believers lifted up motherhood and the message of salvation. Similarly, Loida Martell-Otero argues that “our traditions have too easily been dismissed.” It is in the traditions of families where the dynamics and the construction of evangelization and catechesis of Latinos/as in the United States begin. Our *abuelas* (“grandmothers”) become the carriers of God’s message. Our *abuelas* are the shepherds and the prophets who “made known the message that had been told them” about God (Luke 2:17). Latinas’ hearts are “amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds” (Luke 2:18) as they listen to the traditions passed down from their *abuelas* and construct new religious identities. Like these *abuelas*, Mary presented Jesus to the world similarly to how Latinas/os pass their faith from generation to generation.³⁰⁹

Pope Francis also notes that “Mary was able to turn a stable into a home for Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love.”³¹⁰ This episode serves as a metaphor to understand Latinas’ faith that have within *la familia* and the sacred places such a home where the dynamics of faith and love happen in the everyday of Latinas. It is important to note that the shepherds who received “the great news of joy” were unprivileged individuals in the society of their times. However, the message was spread to all people.³¹¹ This episode also serves to understand Latinas’ faith and *dwelling in the world* in a transformative dynamic that enfolds from the private to the public sphere. This

³⁰⁹ Herrera, “Motherhood as a Metaphor for Contemporary Latina Theology and Spirituality,” 162.

³¹⁰ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 286.

³¹¹ Herrera, “Motherhood as a Metaphor for Contemporary Latina Theology and Spirituality,” 160.

is another example in the Gospel of Luke that the news of salvation are not shared in the private, but these extend to the public dimension of *lo cotidiano* (the everyday life) in *kairos* time.

Maternal Face of God through Latino/as Eyes

Honoring images of Mary throughout the different social locations, traditions, and the lived experiences of the people in Latin America, this work will discover the imagery of the Divine through the narratives and stories of young adult Latina Catholics who actively participated in participatory action research noted in Chapter Four. In this work, it is critical to briefly highlight the role of Our Lady of Guadalupe for Latino/as. In Catholic tradition, she was appointed by Pope Pius XII in 1946 as *Patroness of the Americas*³¹² and her story and image has embodied the story of the people. Her image and story have served upcoming generations to re-imagine Mary and her role in Latin America. Also, they have served to construct a theology of Mary among Latin American and US Latino/a theology. This work will not have a primary focus on imagery of Guadalupe as key symbol in Latino/a theology and beyond. However, it is important to briefly note key insights in order to understand how Mary has entered into the lives of the people and embodied their struggles and hopes throughout history.

The scene of Mary's apparition to an indigenous pilgrim called Juan Diego happened during the time of the Conquest of the Americas by the Christian Western Empire. Virgilio Elizondo notes that in this episode, Mary appears as the "Indian Mother of God and the abandoned mestizo child of the Indian people. Through her, God

³¹² See John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, accessed April 7, 2017, Vatican.va, 11.

vindicates the downtrodden. In her, the Indians and their ancestors are vindicated.”³¹³

This image is critical to understand how Mary has embodied the maternal image of the Divine; in this case, she identifies with the particularities of the context in which she appears. Pope Francis notes in this dynamic:

Through her many titles, often linked to her shrines, Mary shares the history of each people which has received the Gospel and she becomes a part of their historic identity. Many Christian parents ask that their children be baptized in a Marian shrine, as a sign of their faith in her motherhood which brings forth new children for God. There, in these many shrines, we can see how Mary brings together her children who with great effort come as pilgrims to see her and to be seen by her. Here they find strength from God to bear the weariness and the suffering in their lives. As she did with Juan Diego, Mary offers them maternal comfort and love, and whispers in their ear: Let your heart not be troubled... Am I not here, who am your Mother?³¹⁴

Her image in Catholic tradition shifts to the prophetic embodiment in the living experiences and social contexts of a people in which Mary invites us to re-imagine her new identity. In this *mestizaje* (or the mixing of elements from different worlds), Mary’s diverse titles in tradition shift from a Divine image pictured in tradition to the communion between the divine and the human face who walks in hope and faith.

Elizondo writes about Juan Diego in his encounter with Guadalupe:

When Juan Diego sees her for the first time, she is divinely beautiful and

³¹³ Virgilio Elizondo, *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 65.

³¹⁴ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 286.

definitively one of his own brown-skinned, brown eyed, and black haired people. She is of the highest nobility but she comes out of the very earth of the native people.³¹⁵

This image, and other representations of Mary in *lo cotidiano*, represents a preferential option for the poor and oppressed. When the doors of society and the community are closed against those who are marginalized and whose voices are silenced, God reveals in *Kairos* time in the ordinary and through ordinary people. This image stands firm when listening to the stories and narratives of young adult Latinas as they describe their sacred relationship with God and shared through their lived experiences, their maternal images of the divine.

Imagery of Mary and her active role and response, through the history of salvation and the people, serve to interpret the lived experiences and oral stories of Latinas in *lo cotidiano*. Her role in tradition becomes a source for the work of practical Latina theology and spirituality. Narratives and oral stories of Mary in the Gospel of Luke help to reimagine her role as an active subject and her *dwelling in the world* and it moves the community forward to reflect on her values as active icon of faith and hope in the new evangelization. Also, Mary's imagery in scripture will serve in future chapters when understanding the incarnational dynamics and categories of *la lucha* (the struggle), *la comunidad/la familia* (the community/the family) and *permitanme hablar* (allow me to speak), through the eyes of College-age Latinas who identify as Catholics.

³¹⁵ See Salvador Pallares, in *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation*, 65.

Chapter Four

THE PRACTICAL (PASTORAL) THEOLOGICAL JOURNEY OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH WITH COLLEGE-AGE LATINAS (CATHOLIC)

Ultimately, one carries out participatory action research with fear and trembling because it depends on God's Kairos and the movement of the Spirit.

—Elizabeth Conde Frazier ³¹⁶

In the ministerial journey of the University setting, led and empowered by the Spirit, one encounters human faces, with living stories, full of joy, hope and struggle. One learns to prayerfully reflect and *listen to the heart-beat* of the community and to the people's journey. One learns to live on God's *Kairos* time within the ordinary and work with the movement of the Spirit. One learns to walk in messiness and experience beauty in it. One learns to feel uncomfortable and the Spirit pushes one to those places where God is in the struggle. One learns to meet the face of Christ in each unique student of every new academic year.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* or Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis talks about “the Church, as the agent of evangelization;”³¹⁷ the Church as “first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God.”³¹⁸ Then Pope Francis continues: “As the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of evangelization which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility.”³¹⁹ This evangelization is person to person in the everyday life. “This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation; personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys,

³¹⁶ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 240.

³¹⁷ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 111.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 127.

hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs.”³²⁰ In practical theology, this personal dialogue is critical in order to produce new knowledge and understanding. This process can be facilitated through different methodologies that support the listening and attending process. This chapter will present a brief notation of the development of participatory action research (PAR) in South America. Also, it will present implemented methodology of participatory action research with young Latinas, as well as results that came out from their social location, faith tradition and lived experiences; work that will serve to draw further recommendations in practical theology and within the Church.

Overview of Participatory Action Research

There are different perspectives about the historical roots of participatory action research. For the purpose and interest of this work, there will be a brief notation of the development of this methodology beginning in South America. Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson note that “the work of Miles Horton and John Gaventa of the Highlander Center served as an early inspiration for Participatory Action Research in North America, but it was the appearance of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in English in 1970 that galvanized critical research in the U.S.”³²¹ During the last four decades, “participatory research has been done all over Latin America and the rest of the third world. The first World symposium of Action Research was held in Cartagena, Colombia in 1977;”³²² almost a decade after Medellín.

The work of Paulo Freire focused on working with illiterate communities in

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Kathryn Herr and Gary L. Anderson, *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2005), 15.

³²² Ibid.

Brazil as a way of social action. He proposes a methodology where illiterate adults or *campesinos* (peasants) in Latin America become active participants and collaborators in the articulation of their own needs, struggles, and hopes, and therefore become agents for social change. Herr and Anderson note that this research identifies *generative themes* or *issues of vital importance* with a dual purpose: “(a) to help participants (usually adults) to acquire literacy and (b) to help them engage in social critique and social action.”³²³ In their work, *We Make the Road by Walking*, Myles Horton and Paulo Freire present an introduction to a dialogue between both authors on the dynamics of education and literacy projects. The following is an example of some of the dialogues in which both authors metaphorically articulate the process of pedagogy using both practical and theoretical examples:

Myles: Well now, when we talk about this kind of background, it’s mainly the things that would help people understand where I came from in terms of my ideas and my thinking, what they are rooted in. Is that the idea?

Paulo: Yes. Everything you recognize as something important. I think that even though we need to have some outline, *I am sure that we make the road by walking*³²⁴ ...You’re saying that in order to start, it should be necessary to start.

Myles: I’ve never figured out another way to start.

Paulo: The question for me is how is it possible for us, in the process of making the road, to be clear and to clarify our own *making* of the road...It’s necessary.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ “The phrase “we make the road by walking” is an adaptation of a proverb by the Spanish poet Antonio Machado, in which one line reads “se hace camino al andar,” or “you make the way as you go.” See Antonio Machado, *Selected Poems*, trans. Alan S. Trueblood (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 143; Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990), 6-7.

But I am not worried...because I think that they will come out of the conversation.

Myles: Not knowing what you had in mind, Paulo. I've been thinking about some of the things I'd like not so much to get into the book but to get out of this conversation...I'd like to get your reaction. There will be a lot of questions in the back of my mind as we go through this conversation...I see this thing as just unfolding as we go along...The conversation should be rooted and just keep moving along. I think we'll run out of time before we run out of ideas.³²⁵

This conversation serves as a metaphor of the flexible dynamic of the methodology of participatory action, accounting for the openness of the collaborators to the external circumstances of time and place, as well as how the participants, the researcher and participants, are mutually attentive to new insights that come out along the course of the research. McTaggart notes that "collaboration is fundamental to the idea of action research."³²⁶ This dynamic differs from conventional research as it offers a methodology that gives flexibility to the use of different methods and new dialogue among participants throughout the research. The challenge of this methodology is that it can be messy and changing like reality due to its openness in its use of methods from the social sciences that help to gather data, and to external circumstances that happen along the process. However, it naturally correlates with the task of practical Latino/a theology that explores *lo cotidiano* as a source of theology. This process aims to grasp truth out of

³²⁵ Horton and Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking*, 6-7.

³²⁶ Robin McTaggart, "Participatory Action Research: Issues in Theory and Practice," *Educational Action Research* 2, no. 3 (1994): 314, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0965079940020302>

*the messiness and beauty of reality*³²⁷ that unveil through participation and action with the people, which in this work are Latinas.

Participants as Subjects of Research

In the case of participatory action research, the researcher involves the participants as active collaborators in the course, articulation, and evaluation of the research. Gaventa refers to participatory action research as “an attempt to break down the distinction between the researchers and the researched, the subjects and objects of knowledge production by the participation of the people-for-themselves in the process of gaining and creating knowledge.”³²⁸ In this process, the intentional awareness about dynamics of power plays a key role in the research. It allows the participants to become *active subjects* instead of *objects* of research, sometimes considered merely as samples or *disposable*³²⁹ objects in the collection of data.

Swinton and Mowat note that the goal of this research is achieved “by ensuring that the individuals who traditionally have been the objects of research process are given an active role.”³³⁰ Elizabeth Conde-Frazier suggests that “changing the asymmetry of subject-object into subject-subject by engaging people in the daily routines of family, health care, education, politics, and so forth has powerful transformational impact.”³³¹ This practice allows the researcher to engage the people. Using different methods, the people are given the active role of thinking, articulating and reflecting on what Freire

³²⁷ See Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 15.

³²⁸ Henry Sanoff, *Community Participation Methods in Design and Planning* (New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, 2000), 62.

³²⁹ Orlando O. Espín makes an account of the term “disposable” in order to refer to those that have been “forgotten and marginalized.” “It is mainly among and from among [them]...that we may discover the most scandalous and definitive Christian understanding of the Ultimate Mystery.” Espín, *Idol and Grace*, xxix.

³³⁰ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 228.

³³¹ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 236.

notes above, *generative themes*; emerging themes or key issues that will lead the research towards a transformative course of action. The researcher acts in the role of facilitator with the goal of “bringing structure to the meeting. This process is of intense listening.”³³² It helps not only to bring structure to the research, but it serves to articulate the knowledge that people bring to the conversation.

Vivencia (Lived Experience)

Orlando Fals Borda³³³ suggested that “investigation should not be autistic but a rite of communion between thinking and acting human beings, the researcher and researched.”³³⁴ In order to evade falling in the great temptation of the rigorous “usual formality”³³⁵ that involves conventional methods in social sciences, as discussed above, there must be “a space for some *down-to-dirt* collectivization in the research for knowledge.”³³⁶ In this process it is necessary to explore practices that consist of listening to *the lived experience* of grassroots people as a field of action beyond the conventional normativity.

Vivencia or *lived experience*, noted in earlier chapters as a critical source for *mujerista* theology, is articulated in participatory action research through different methods that “have the potential to transform us as pastoral researchers and practical

³³² Ibid., 240.

³³³ Prof. Orlando Fals Borda is one of the most important Latin American thinkers and researchers in sociology and one of the pioneers in Participatory Action Research. “Dissatisfied with academic sociology, he left the National University of Colombia in 1970 where he was a professor and dean, and joined the peasant movement for land reform in Colombia... When he left the University he joined forces with the participatory action research movement of the peasant farmers of Colombia.” McTaggart, “Participatory Action Research,” 329.

³³⁴ McTaggart, “Participatory Action Research,” 329.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

theologians.”³³⁷ They involve and carry oral stories, narratives, attitudes, emotions, feelings and new knowledge towards a given reality in which both participants and researchers are called to reflect in a mutual dialogue. The methods used in participatory action research can be conducted in different ordinary settings such rooms, homes, streets, library, halls and other spaces that propitiate a comfortable atmosphere for dialogue and conversation, which is a critical characteristic of participatory action research. In addition, this methodology correlates with characteristics from ethnographic principles in *mujerista* theology that present “the understanding and opinion of Hispanic women [Latinas], as much as possible.”³³⁸ In this process, interviews “are much more a conversation, a dialogue. They provide an opportunity for different members of the community to reflect on their experiences, to grasp better what they believe and how those beliefs impact their everyday lives.”³³⁹ These practices lead to active participation of the people –including the researcher and researched– and it is open to a changing dynamic in the course of the research.

Every *vivencia* told as an oral story “fosters knowledge that comes from passion and experience and expands the space of the academic world for engaged dialogue and empowerment through agency.”³⁴⁰ The oral stories, including those that happen during and in between the research, are part of the process as well as the new relationships built along the way. “This process involves the knowledge of feelings. Heart knowledge [interpreted as the virtue of *practical wisdom* or *priestly listening*] is the capacity to feel. Being able to discern emotions helps us recognize contradictions and confusion and gain

³³⁷ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 239.

³³⁸ Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha, In the Struggle*, 66.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research: Practical Theology for Social Justice,” 327.

clarity about power relations.”³⁴¹ In practical theology, one learns to discern and become suspicious about power relations, particularly when listening to living realities and “the conflicts and contradictions that can take place when we are encountering others or attempting to create community”³⁴² in the everyday life. Kemmis argues that “we need to work practically and theoretically to help people to analyze their suffering (Fay, 1975, 1988), to articulate the conditions that disfigure their lives (Hall, 1986) which can change the conditions of social life.”³⁴³ According to Reason and Bradbury, the dynamic of action research “seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.”³⁴⁴ It is my hope and prayer that this methodology fosters knowledge towards the flourishing of a practical Latino/a theological understanding of College-age Latinas Catholic in their 20’s and their communities.

Participatory Action Research with College-age Latinas

The methods proposed and implemented in this research are informed by literature on participatory action research provided by Elizabeth Conde-Frazier and informed by Latina theology reviewed on Chapters Two and Three. This approach in participatory action proposes an “incarnational research”³⁴⁵ because it listens and enters deeply into the lived experiences of the people in God’s *Kairos*. “One learns to observe, collect data, analyze, or make meaning from the data, think critically, imagine and

³⁴¹ Conde-Frazier “Participatory Action Research,” 239.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 239.

³⁴³ McTaggart, “Participatory Action Research,” 333.

³⁴⁴ Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 4.

³⁴⁵ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 241.

synthesize data in order to come up with insight and action.”³⁴⁶ This process also intends to articulate Latinas’ “values, symbols, ideas and other conceptual vehicles that elevate [them] to discover, rediscover or uncover a hidden meaning or truth connecting [them] to God,”³⁴⁷ in order to understand their religious identity as young adult Latinas and Catholics, a subject which is only partially addressed by the academy and the Church in the twenty-first century.

The methodology of participatory action research with young adult Latinas was conducted through four phases: *Phase One* presents the beginning of the field work, departing from invitation of participants to the research and introduction of the social context. *Phase Two* presents the implementation of *Preliminary Questionnaire* at a group session with participant Latinas and the preliminary categories that arise from this session. *Phase Three* moves the research to begin with *One-on-One Interviews Protocol* in which each participant meet for a one hour one-on-one with the researcher to deepening reflection on key categories that came out in phase two. It also presents the process of recording and transcribing interviews and the key themes that resulted from interviews. *Phase Four* presents the concluding session or *Focus Group* in which Latinas gather together for second time to discuss and reflect on common themes about their lives as Latinas. Throughout the process of the research the participants were invited to gather as a group in two occasions. The first group session met with the goal of completing preliminary questionnaire. The second session met at the end of the research in the role of a focus group with the goal to discuss key common themes. Participants who were not able to attend to the group sessions, were invited to meet one-one-one with the researcher

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Rodriguez, “Mestiza Spirituality,” 319.

to either present preliminary questionnaire or discuss feedback and results from focus group.

Phase One: Social Context and Invitation of Participants

St. Thomas University, a majority-minority Catholic institution in the Archdiocese of Miami, located in Miami Gardens, FL, serves a diverse student population that comes from different backgrounds and cultures, particularly Hispanic-Latinos/as, Black/Caribbean students and other populations. According to the 2014-2015 St. Thomas University fact book, 2,220 students were enrolled in the 2014-2015 academic year. Hispanics represent the majority minority population with a total of 1,037 students. In percentage, this number represents almost half of the student population (or 44.8%); the second majority minority is Black Non-Hispanic with a total of 470 students (or 20.3%); the third higher population reports non-resident alien with a total 294 students or 12.7%.³⁴⁸ For the purpose of this research, I will focus on college students who self-identify as Latinas.

Invitation: Called by Name

The initial goal of the research consisted in inviting a group of 20-25 first and second generation³⁴⁹ College-age Latinas born or raised in the United States from immigrant parents from Latin America, who identify themselves as Catholics –regardless of participation in the local church or ministry– and who attend local universities in

³⁴⁸ St. Thomas University, Office of Institutional Research, *St. Thomas University Fact Book 2014-2015*, accessed May 18, 2016, <https://web.stu.edu/Portals/0/OIR/FB2014.pdf>

³⁴⁹ According to the Pew Research Center, “second generation,” means “they are the U.S.-born sons or daughters of at least one foreign-born parent, typically someone who came to this country in the immigration wave from Mexico, Central America and South America that began around 1980.” “First generation” means “they themselves are foreign-born.” Richard Fry and Jeffrey S. Passel, “Latino Children: A Majority Are U.S.-Born Offspring of Immigrants”, *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*, May 28, 2009, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/05/28/latino-children-a-majority-are-us-born-offspring-of-immigrants/>

Miami. For the purpose of this work, and being attentive to the diversity of the student body, the invitation was openly and prayerfully extended beyond St. Thomas University campus ministry, setting where the researcher exercised the role of campus minister. Therefore, the invitation was extended by e-mail or announcements in some classes through faculty referral or *person to person*. Out of twenty-five to fifty students who were indirectly and directly invited by the researcher through faculty or *person to person*, sixteen students freely, actively and joyfully responded the invitation and committed to participate for a one-year participation action research study. All the participants who accepted the invitation to participate in the research were invited personally by the researcher. Only one student who was referred through faculty accepted the invitation. The participants were informed about the dynamic of the research in written and verbal forms and were asked to sign a consent form approved by the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This consent form describes the three stages of the research and explained the confidentiality policy (See Appendix A).

Phase Two: Implementing Preliminary Questionnaire

Session One: Pre-Testing Preliminary Questionnaire

A preliminary questionnaire protocol containing 45 closed and open-ended questions about self-identity, faith tradition and social location was designed and pre-tested with three participants in order to observe their reactions to the questions and language. The three participants who were invited to pre-test the questionnaire protocol met one-on-one with the researcher to present their feedback and discuss their challenges and insights on the questions. Each participant met with the researcher in a conference room setting.

Session One: Observations

The following changes in language were made to the questionnaire protocol as suggested and agreed by participants and researcher during pre-tested questionnaires:

Original question: Does your faith tradition affect your understanding of _____?

New question: Does your identity as a Catholic woman influence or impact your understanding of _____?

After pre-testing the preliminary questionnaire, the section in which participants felt more challenged to mark an option (YES or NO) was the section related to interpretation of *faith tradition* in light of the categories of social location such as *race, gender, career choices and so on*. Terminology used in the questionnaire was discussed with each participant after pre-testing the questionnaire. The term “faith tradition” was interpreted by the three participants as “hope, spirituality or Church practices/teachings.” One-on-one discussions showed that there is a gap on religious language, understanding or attitudes towards the term *faith tradition*. “Faith tradition” was changed to “self-identification as a Catholic woman.” The rest of the questions were responded to without any major challenge.

Session Two: Preliminary Questionnaire

The sixteen student participants who accepted an invitation to the research were invited through an e-mail communication to gather together for the first time in order to complete a preliminary questionnaire (See Appendix B). The participants gathered in a group session to complete questionnaire at the end of Spring Semester of 2014.

Session Two: Choosing Time and Place of Gathering

Time

In order to set up a time and place of the first meeting, the researcher did research on the University class schedules and chose a time and place that would be convenient for the participants, who were all students at the time of the research. After discussing with some of the participants about place and time, the chosen setting of the meeting was a conference room at St. Thomas University Library. We met on a Wednesday morning. Out of sixteen participants, eight students attended to the first session. The other eight students scheduled separate one-on-one meetings with me due to conflict with academic commitments or work.

Place

The room was set up with a rectangular table and chairs so that participants and researcher could sit down around the table. The questionnaire was completed electronically via Google Docs using portable iPads. Morning snacks such as juice, yogurt, granola bars and fruit were set up at the center of the table in order to bring more hospitality into the room and create a familiar relationship with the participants from the beginning. The first fifteen minutes of the session helped to provide a brief introduction on participation action research, emphasizing to the participants the importance of their role as active participants in the research and my role as a facilitator with the goal of helping in the articulation of their own voices.

Session Two: Observations

Inquiring about the University calendar, as well as an appropriate place for the meeting, is critical when setting the time and place of gathering with college students.

However, this exercise reaffirmed the dynamic of *Kairos* time, reflected on Chapter Three, and the Spirit breaking through in human time. I observed that in the exercise of scheduling time and place, *se hace camino al andar* (the road is made by walking)³⁵⁰ and the Spirit walked and opened the roads for us and with us.

The conference room setting and the placing of personal mini iPads around a large rectangular table, empowered the students to feel active participants of a professional doctoral research, instead of students in a classroom setting where they had to face the researcher/educator. Paulo Freire would suggest in this dynamic that the goal of a participatory process is that there are not *educators* and *educated*, but dialogue among active participants who are empowered among one another to create change. Sitting at table together set the mood of the research and the dynamics of power between researcher and participants. From this session of *preliminary questionnaire*, Latinas were not participating in the role of students, but active participants in a doctoral research on College-age Latinas. This exercise invited participants and the researcher to become peers and active collaborators during the research from the beginning. It also defined the role of the researcher as a facilitator in the listening process of the written narratives and oral experiences. Moreover, the exercise of serving healthy or home-made snacks played a significant role when gathering with College students. For most of the participants, this time represented a space in between they change from class to class or they commute to work after class.

³⁵⁰ “Wanderer, there is no path; the path is made by walking.” Verse from Poem: *Caminante no hay Camino* (Wanderer, there is no path), Antonio Machado, *Selected Poems*, 143.

Assigning Names or “Naming Ourselves”

In order to protect the participants’ identity and confidentiality, the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) suggested changing the names of the participants, particularly when using internet databases. Ana María Isasi-Díaz talks about the power of naming ourselves as

one of the most powerful acts any person can do...because a name is not just a word by which one is identified but also provides the conceptual framework, the point of reference, the mental constructs that are used in thinking, understanding, and relating to a person, an idea, a movement.³⁵¹

After prayerful discernment and reflection about holding and protecting the sacredness of each participant, confidentiality issues and the purpose of this theological exercise, I decided not to give codes or numbers to the participants. At the beginning of the preliminary questionnaire session, I discussed with the participants about the importance of confidentiality in the research. Therefore, before the participants started preliminary questionnaire, I provided –*with fear and trembling*– a list of optional names attributed to the different representations of Mary in Latin America. The name of each country was noted in parentheses in front of each name of Mary and each participant was free to choose one of the optional names.

“Naming Ourselves”: Observations

It was striking to observe how this prophetic exercise gave creativity and beauty to the research. Latinas *naming themselves* with the different names of Mary in Latin America helped to make the experience more personal, relational and dynamic. This

³⁵¹ Isasi-Díaz, *En La Lucha, In the Struggle*, 2.

exercise was implemented on a first-come-basis, which opened the door for the participants to suggest a different name of a female saint or icon from their country of origin. As a result, eleven participants from this group chose a Mary or a female saint from their Country of origin and five participants expressed their interest in choosing a name that is close to their roots or chose a name that most likely relate with their roots.

These are unexpected outcomes from this exercise: one participant, Cuban-American descent, proposed to name herself *Ochun Caridad*; one participant who was born in Peru and raised in the United States decided to appropriate the name *Rosa* after the Peruvian female saint, *Santa Rosa de Lima (La Merced)*, Patron of Peru, was chosen by another participant of Peruvian origin); one participant from Colombia suggested to appropriate the name of *Catalina* after the Colombian saint, *Santa Laura de Santa Catalina de Siena*. I worked in collaboration with the participants on this exercise. The following are the names chosen by the sixteen participants: *Rosario* (Patron of Guatemala), *La Paz* (Patron of El Salvador), *Concepción* (Patron of Nicaragua), *Los Angeles* (Patron of Costa Rica), *Chiquinquirá* (Patron of Colombia), *Coromoto* (Patron of Venezuela), *La Merced* (Patron of Peru), *Luján* (Patron of Argentina), *Candelaria* (Patron of Bolivia), *Milagros* (Patron of Paraguay), *Aparecida* (Patron of Brasil), *Ochun Caridad del Cobre* (Patron/ female Saint from Cuba), *Altagracia* (Patron of Dominican Republic), *Providencia* (Patron of Puerto Rico), *Rosa de Lima* (Patron Saint from Peru), *Catalina* (Santa Laura de Santa Catalina de Siena, Saint from Colombia).

After the completion of the questionnaire, participants were asked for permission to be voice recorded for one-on-one interviews and the focus group. When each one of the participants finished the preliminary questionnaire, I briefly discussed with them a

tentative time to schedule one-on-one interviews in the Fall Semester. Participants left one by one as they were finishing and discussed the best times for interviews.

Listening to the Preliminary Questionnaire: Who are you Latina?

The responses of the participants from initial questionnaire were logged and recorded through *Google docs*. This program organized the responses in an electronic database and helped me to start expanding my understanding about their social location. Puerto Rican philosopher Raúl Fonet-Batancourt talks about the epistemological mistake of the meaning of the term *knowing someone*, which requires a deep encounter with the person. In Spanish, there is a differentiation between *saber de alguien* (to get to know of somebody) *y conocer a alguien* (to meet somebody).³⁵² These insights helped me to reflect in the critical fact that I first invited the participants to the research with the knowledge of them as young adult Latinas and Catholics. However, *no las conocía* (I did not know them) and neither I knew about their lives as young Latinas and Catholics. In this process of *knowing* “one learns to observe, collect data, analyze or make meaning from the data, think critically, imagine, and synthesize data in order to come up with insight and action.”³⁵³ In order to know the women who were going to participate in the research and grasp an understanding of their lives, the first element was to recognize the need of a deep encounter, the need of entering into their lived experiences by deeply listening.

Participants

Listening to the preliminary results, I started to get to know a very diverse group

³⁵² Insights taken from presentation by Raúl Fonet-Batancourt, “¿Quién dicen ustedes que soy yo? Discerniendo el Cristianismo en las Américas,” Panel Presentation at the Academy of Catholic Hispanics Theologians of the United States Colloquium, San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 2016.

³⁵³ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 241.

of participants characterized by sixteen University students, born between 1987 and 1998. Fifteen students attended St. Thomas University and one student the University of Miami; fifteen students reported being enrolled in undergraduate studies (four students enrolled as biology majors; two in nursing; two in communications; two in criminal justice; one in psychology; two in education; one in finance; one double major in political sciences/and English literature). One of the participants is enrolled in a graduate program (Marriage and Family Therapy). The majority of the group or eleven participants are U.S. born citizens and the daughters of immigrant parents from Argentina/Chile, Peru, Colombia, Brazil/Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Honduras. Five participants of this group were born in their countries of origin (El Salvador, Perú, Nicaragua, Cuba, Argentina) and came to the United States (the majority of the group with both parents and sibling and one participant reported coming only with her mother) between the ages of one through eleven years old. This group is composed by women who self-identify as Latinas from South America, Central America and the Caribbean. Some participants who were born in their countries of origin openly reported that despite living in the United States from eight to twenty years, and all of them having attended elementary, middle school, high school and currently college, they are still resolving their immigration status, and therefore, their parents as well.

All of the participants reported having close family connection with their country of origin and having visited their country of origin, some once in their life and others once a year. One participant, who was born in the United States and is of Cuban descent, reported that she has not yet visited her country of origin. The majority of participants reported living in Miami Dade County and three participants reported living in Broward

County. Also, the majority of the group reported living in a family household of three to four people.

Preliminary Categories

In order to facilitate the process of listening and begin the process of generation of new knowledge, the common questions were grouped in the following tentative categories: Language; Prayer and Expressions of Faith; *Familia* (family); and Self-Identity.

Language

According to the preliminary results, it is critical to note the fact that all sixteen participants speak both English and Spanish because they were born or raised in the United States by their immigrant parents or grandparents who live in the United States or stayed in their countries of origin; two participants within this group reported speaking a third language, Portuguese and Quechua (the latter is an indigenous language from the Andes).

The following are preliminary results on the use of language in the everyday:

Eight students (half of the group) reported that both English and Spanish are their main spoken languages; four participants reported English; two participants reported Spanish; and one participant reported Portuguese as the main spoken language. Also, nine participants (more than half) responded that Spanish is the main spoken language while at home among family, friends and relatives; six responded both English and Spanish, and one participant responded Spanish, English and Portuguese. In addition, the participants were asked about what language they feel more comfortable speaking on a daily basis, and eight responded English (half of the group); six reported both English and Spanish;

one reported Spanish; and one Portuguese. These results suggest that even though the majority of Latinas reported Spanish as their main language, used both at home and in the public sphere, it is most likely they speak English in the public sphere.

The following are preliminary results from a multiple choice question about the meaning of Spanish language: Sixteen participants (the entire group) shared that Spanish is a very important tool that helps them connect/bond with family, friends and people who share their roots; eleven participants (the majority of the group) responded that Spanish is the most important legacy their parents have passed down to them; nine participants (over half of the group) responded that Spanish is a very important part of their spirituality and identity; seven participants (less than half of the group) affiliated Spanish with a skill; three participants (the minority of the group) reported that Spanish presents a challenge when communicating with family, friends and/or people who share their roots.

Results from the questions above show that even the majority of the group feels more comfortable speaking English in the public sphere as they live in the United States, all of the participants reported that Spanish is inherent and highly significant to their family/community life and spirituality as women of faith. Within the category of language, the participants were implicitly asked open-ended questions about their understanding of terms used in *lo cotidiano* or the everyday life the people. These terms that have become significant epistemology to Latino/a theology as noted in Chapters Two and Three of this dissertation.

Spanglish

The participants were asked an open-ended question about symbols, images,

words or phrases that come to their mind when referring to the word *Spanglish*.³⁵⁴

Twelve participants (the majority of the group) associated *Spanglish* with the hybrid dynamic of language in the everyday life. In addition, four participants (the minority of the group) associated the term *Spanglish* with phrases, images or symbols beyond the linguistic meaning of the term: “*Calle Ocho*, Cuban restaurants, immigration, diversity, fusion;”³⁵⁵ “Unity; I think 2;”³⁵⁶ “First generation Latino-Americans intermixed with generations born and raised in Latin American Countries;”³⁵⁷ “It also reminds me of my Dad.”³⁵⁸ These associations were studied in depth during one-on-one interviews.

En La Lucha

The participants were asked about words, symbols or images that came to their minds when they hear or use the term *en la lucha*³⁵⁹ (in the struggle). Fourteen participants or almost all of the participants were able to name words, phrases, and images based upon their understanding of *la lucha*: “*Peliando por libertad*,”³⁶⁰ “Protest;”³⁶¹ “I see it always as an expression of *siempre en la lucha* but still happy and

³⁵⁴ In popular culture, the term *Spanglish* is usually understood as a linguistic hybrid dynamic or combination of words, terms or phrases from both English and Spanish. In Contemporary Latino/a theology, noted in Chapter Two, *Spanglish* is explored beyond the linguistic category and becomes symbol to interpret identity among Latino/as in the U.S. culture.

³⁵⁵ 8th Street or *Calle Ocho* is a well-known street in Miami that represents mostly Cuban culture and Latin America, Los Angeles, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁵⁶ Candelaria, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 7, 2014.

³⁵⁷ Coromoto, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁵⁸ Chiquinquirá, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁵⁹ The term *la lucha* can be translated as, battle or fight. For the purpose of this work, *la lucha* is explored beyond literal translation, and interpreted as the sacred dynamic between hope and struggle in the everyday (or *lo cotidiano*). The term *La lucha* is reviewed in Chapter Two as a critical category of *lo cotidiano* in Latino/a Theology. In addition, it is explored in Chapter Three as an important element to *mujerista* theology and anthropology. In this work, *la lucha* makes the theological frame of *lo cotidiano* an *incarnational* and embodied practice in the practical theological process.

³⁶⁰ *Peliando por libertad*: “Fighting for freedom.” Providencia, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁶¹ Concepción, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

positive;”³⁶² “Work hard to become successful;”³⁶³ “When I hear *en la lucha* I think of a superhero. For some reason it sounds like something a superhero would say;”³⁶⁴ “I think of my mom struggling working day to day for her kid’s future; or my family and their debts they are trying to pay off...and the terrorism that took place in Ayacucho Perú during my mom's time;”³⁶⁵ “*Es para seguir adelante*...I think of prayer, determination, and the road (journey);”³⁶⁶ “This means they are going through things but they are still surviving;”³⁶⁷ “Someone who is struggling (either with school, work, health, family issues, etc.) but that is not ready to give up. *A veces mi papa cuando me ve estudiando me dice: ¿cómo vas hija? Y yo le respondo, allí luchando;*”³⁶⁸ “Immigration. A day to day ordinary person that has obstacles that we have to overcome. Women;”³⁶⁹ “*Perseverancia, querer salir adelante*. I use this expression a lot when people ask me how I am doing, because I am constantly working hard to be the best I can be, and give everything. I do my all;”³⁷⁰ “I imagine that word symbolically, like climbing a mountain;”³⁷¹ “When I hear the expression *en la lucha*, I think of the struggle most Hispanics have gone through or are currently going through. I believe we are all on a mission, goal, or *la lucha* to strive for what we really want and for a better life. I always hear my mom saying *en la luchita* when someone asks her about how she is doing. I do

³⁶² *Siempre en la lucha*: “Always in *la lucha*.” Coromoto, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁶³ La Paz, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁶⁴ Luján, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁶⁵ La Merced, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁶⁶ *Es para seguir adelante*: “To move onward.” Los Angeles, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁶⁷ Aparecida, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁶⁸ “Sometimes when my father sees me studying, he asks me; how are you doing daughter, and I respond: *allí luchando!* (moving forward!).” Rosa de Lima, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁶⁹ Milagros, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁷⁰ *Perseverancia, querer salir adelante*: “Perseverance; willing to move onward.” Chiquinquirá, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁷¹ Candelaria, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 7, 2014.

believe we are all *en la lucha*, including my mom;”³⁷² “That the person who tells me this expression fighting through hard time, it does not really mean physically fight but the daily struggles a person lives through.”³⁷³ This exercise shows that results from representations of *la lucha* involve the public sphere and the fight to survive in hope to the everyday life.

*Dichos*³⁷⁴ (Sayings)

The participants were asked if there are other meaningful Spanish expressions they use in their everyday life and nine participants (the majority of the group) responded “yes” in contrast with seven participants who responded that they do not remember any popular expressions or sayings in Spanish. The following are some of the *dichos* (popular expressions or sayings) that the participants named: “*Libertad!*”³⁷⁵ “*Si Dios quiere,*”³⁷⁶ “*La vida es un carnaval,*”³⁷⁷ “*Mas sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo,*”³⁷⁸ “*Cada persona con su Cruz,*”³⁷⁹ “*Se dice el Milagro pero no el santo; Dios sabe porque hace las cosas. Anda con Dios,*”³⁸⁰ “*Al mal tiempo, buena cara,*”³⁸¹ “*Quien a Dios tiene, nada le*

³⁷² *En la luchita*: diminutive of the word *lucha*. Rosario, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 9, 2014.

³⁷³ Catalina, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, December 5, 2014.

³⁷⁴ *Dichos* (sayings) are not just colloquial terminologies used in the ordinary as mere Spanish jargon. They are considered an important part of Latino/a spirituality, memory and identity. They do not have a literal translation. However, I will translate the terms for the reader. Edwin Aponte explores “*dichos*” (sayings) at the core of “spirituality and religiosity” of Latino/as. See Aponte, *Santo!*, 108.

³⁷⁵ *Libertad*: “Freedom!” Providencia, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁷⁶ *Si Dios quiere*: “Before God.” Coromoto, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁷⁷ *La vida es un carnaval*: “Life is a Carnival.” Los Angeles, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁷⁸ *Mas sabe el diablo por viejo que por sabio*: “The Devil knows more because he is old than because he is the Devil.” Aparecida (May 1, 2014) and Candelaria (May 7, 2014), *Preliminary Questionnaire*.

³⁷⁹ *Cada persona con su Cruz*: “Every person with his/her Cross.” Aparecida, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁸⁰ *Se dice el milagro pero no el Santo*: “One tells the miracle but not the saint.” *Dios sabe porque hace sus cosas*: “God knows why he does it.” *Vé con Dios*: “Go on with God.” Rosa de Lima, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁸¹ *Al mal tiempo, buena cara*: “To bad weather, a good face.” Candelaria, *Preliminary*

*falta; Solo Dios basta;*³⁸² *“Dios te bendiga.”*³⁸³

The majority of the *dichos* (popular expressions or sayings) that the participants named have an implicit religious attitude or spiritual connotation. They also correlate to *la lucha* as all of them express hope in the midst of struggle. Two participants noted that these *dichos* (sayings) are used especially during time of prayer, need or sorrow: “I always use *si Dios quiere* when making plans or thinking of the future, no matter big or small they are.”³⁸⁴ *“Quien a Dios tiene, nada le falta. Solo Dios basta:* My grandmother, Abi used to always say this expression when I would ask her for advice. Even now after her passing, I still have that expression when times get rough or just when I think of her. I constantly read the beautiful prayer of Santa Teresa de Avila every morning.”³⁸⁵

Prayer and Expressions of Faith

Passing of the Faith

The participants were asked about religious practices, devotions and attitudes as key components of their identity as women of faith. Beginning with description of faith expressions from childhood, thirteen participants (the majority of the group) affirmed they remember expressions of faith such as religious practices, devotions and attitudes growing up within their family or household. All of the participants implicitly and explicitly mentioned their family or household as the primary place of passing on, teaching and sharing these expressions of faith. After observation of results and identification of common answers about participants’ religious practices, devotions, and

Questionnaire, May 7, 2014.

³⁸² *Quien a Dios tiene nada le falta, solo Dios basta:* “One who has God, needs nothing, only God is enough.” Rosario, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 9, 2014.

³⁸³ *Dios te bendiga:* “God bless you.” Catalina, December 5, 2014.

³⁸⁴ *Si Dios quiere:* “Before God.” Coromoto, April 30, 2014.

³⁸⁵ *Quien a Dios tiene nada le falta, solo Dios basta:* “One who has God, needs nothing, only God is enough.” Rosario: May 9, 2014.

attitudes from childhood, eleven participants (the majority of the group) reported religious devotions and attitudes towards Jesus, Mary and Saints; in contrast with five participants or a minority of the group who reported attending to Mass growing up; and five participants or the minority of the group who reported attending extraordinary religious celebrations such as processions and feast days.

The following are responses about memories of expressions of faith while growing up: Coromoto notes, “I remember my uncle in Venezuela teaching me to light a candle to pray to *la Virgen* for strength and protection.”³⁸⁶ Rosario notes as religious devotions to “Mary, St. Jude, and *Santa Teresa de Avila*.”³⁸⁷ Chiquinquirá shares with Rosario a deep devotion to *San Judas* (St. Jude) and she expressed other religious devotions and practices: “*San Judas Tadeo, La Virgen Maria, El Niño Jesús, el angel de la guarda*.”³⁸⁸ All these saints have played an important role in my life and as I grew up they were always present and still remain present. We also celebrate what they call *La Purísima*³⁸⁹ in Nicaragua which is a celebration to the Virgin Mary. We have celebrated it several times and we celebrated her in appreciation of my mother’s health.”³⁹⁰ Milagros remembers as religious practices: “Every Sunday and Thursday I would go to Mass with my grandmother; I remember the processions; the celebration of *la Purísima* in December; and of course on July 20th the celebration of *El Divino Niño*.”³⁹¹ Milagros

³⁸⁶ *La Virgen*: “The Virgin.” Coromoto, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁸⁷ *Santa Teresa de Avila*: “St. Therese of Avila.” Rosario, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 9, 2014.

³⁸⁸ *San Judas, el Niño Jesús, el angel de la guarda*: “Saint Jude, the Virgin Mary, baby Jesus, the guardian angel.” Chiquinquirá, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁸⁹ *La Purísima* or “the Purest” is a popular religious celebration to the “Purest Conception of the Virgin Mary” in Nicaragua. It is one of the greatest feasts celebrated throughout the year in December. Chiquinquirá, May 1, 2014.

³⁹⁰ Chiquinquirá, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁹¹ *La Purísima*: “The Purest,” *Preliminary Questionnaire*, Milagros, May 1, 2014.

and Chiquinquirá, both as Nicaraguan descents, expressed a deep devotion and celebration of *la Purísima*, which is a feast dedicated to the Conception of the Virgin Mary in Nicaragua. Rosa de Lima remembers as religious practices: “*Misa del señor de Los Milagros; el nacimiento del niño Jesús (navidad); Semana Santa.*”³⁹²

Altagracia notes as a religious practice: “The prayer of the rosary.”³⁹³ Concepción notes as devotion and religious practices: “Devotion to saints, angels, Mary and Jesus; going to Church; praying at home with my mother; having Sunday dinners after Mass.”³⁹⁴ Lujan notes as religious practices: “The Our Father prayer and attending Sunday Mass when I was younger.”³⁹⁵ Los Angeles remembers religious feasts such “the solemnity of the Virgin Mary, the Assumption, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Christmas, Divine Mercy Sunday, Palm Sunday, and Holy Week.”³⁹⁶ Catalina remembers as a religious practice: “My family daily prayer when we get in the car we pray for our family members and hope to have a good day.”³⁹⁷

There are two participants in the research who openly affiliate their religious practices and devotions as Catholics with *Santería/Yoruba* religion.³⁹⁸ *Caridad*, a Cuban

³⁹² *Misa del Señor de los Milagros*: “Mass of the Lord of Miracles,” *el Nacimiento del Niño Jesus (Navidad)*: “the Birth of Jesus (Christmas),” *Semana Santa*: “Holy Week,” Rosa de Lima, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

³⁹³ Altagracia, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁹⁴ Concepción, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁹⁵ Lujan, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁹⁶ Los Angeles, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

³⁹⁷ Catalina, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, December 5, 2014.

³⁹⁸ It is critical to highlight the dynamic between popular and official religion, particularly when listening to religious beliefs, devotions, practices and attitudes of Cuban descents who self-identify as Catholics. *Caridad* and *Candelaria* reveal the synchronous dynamic between Afro-Cuban religion and Catholicism through their religious practices, devotions and attitudes in the everyday life that they both openly call *Santería* or *Yoruba* religion. “The study of popular religion is especially important for the spirituality of Latinas...at times popular religion and official ritual are in tension; at times they intersect.” See Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 56. Association of *Oshun* with *La Caridad del Cobre* or the Cuban representation of Mary “occurred as a result of the mixture of African religion and Catholicism during the Colonial slave era in Cuba. Slaves often “hid” their devotions to their African spirits behind images of Catholic Saints. They pretended to participate in Catholic worship, when in fact they were

descent, remembers the following religious devotions and practices: “Devotion to San Lazaro; we would celebrate his birthday and also light candles whenever we are in need or feel grateful. Also, we celebrated the day that we all received our *Santos*; we would walk barefooted for Jesus at a church that my grandma used to attend sometime in December; we would light candles and pray; we would always thank God for everything. During Christmas time, we would acknowledge Jesus birthday and always have family together.”³⁹⁹ Candelaria shares what she remembers growing up: “My family practiced *santeria /yoruba* religion and continues to do so. I remember that the majority of the celebrations, there was a lot of dancing and a lot of singing....I also remember that my mom would read me *oración a San Luis Beltrán* if I felt bad or I had any pains any time (stomach aches, or sick, or anything that hurt me).”⁴⁰⁰ Religious expressions described by Latinas depicts the interjection between popular religion and the official practices and beliefs of the Catholic Church, which are critical to understand Latino/a Catholicism and spirituality in twenty-first century United States.

Prayer and Practices as Young Adults

In contrast with thirteen participants who shared memories of religious practices, devotions and attitudes from *childhood*, fifteen participants (almost the whole group)

worshiping their spirits.” Ibid., 56. This is how slaves began associating their deities or saints (*orishas*) with the icons and saints from the Official religion or Catholicism. The devotion to Saint Lazarus is also mentioned by Latinas more than once in the research. “He is the object of one of the most significant devotions in Cuban/Cuban-American religiosity... While they consider him a saint, he is not the official saint of the Catholic Church... [this is] a poor man, the beggar who appears one of Jesus’ parables...the Cuban Lazarus.” Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Afro-Cuban Theology: Religion, Race, Culture and Identity* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006), 112-113. Results from research show that popular or “unofficial” rituals and faith expressions happen at the homes, on the side of the church, or mingle in silence within the official ritual. These inherent expressions of faith and belief system, noted in some of the results throughout this work, interject and still create tension between the lives of these faithful young adult women and their immigrant families in the U.S.

³⁹⁹ Caridad, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴⁰⁰ Candelaria, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 7, 2014.

openly reported that prayer is important in their everyday life as *young adult Latinas*. This result signifies that all the participants, who expressed any faith expression growing up, still pray. Also, twelve participants (most the group) affirmed that religious devotions, celebrations, and practices from childhood come to their mind and heart in times of sorrow or need; eight participants (half of the group) openly reported they go to “God” in times of sorrow or need after implicitly asking them to whom they go to in times of need. Results from questionnaire about who the participants reach out in times of need, and eleven participants (the majority of the group) reported going to “family and friends,” and two participants reported going to “Church.”

Moreover, ten participants (the majority of the group) wrote in the questionnaire that they pray in English, in contrast with five participants who mostly pray in Spanish. Also, six participants named religious practices, devotions and attitudes in Spanish that they remember growing up, which presumes that they learned these faith expressions in Spanish, even though the majority of the participants reported they pray in English.

The participants were explicitly asked a multiple-choice question about current faith expressions they practice as Catholic young adults. The following are common answers: seven Latinas reported the prayer of the Rosary; seven Latinas reported devotion and prayer to Saints; seven Latinas reported the celebration of the Eucharist or Mass attendance as religious practice; six Latinas reported candle lighting as a prayer; three Latinas reported praying novenas; three Latinas reported family or personal prayer; two Latinas reported to have home altars; one Latina reported devotion to Mary; one Latina reported the reading of the Bible; and, one Latina reported just prayer. In short, fourteen young adult Latinas selected one or more types of expressions of faith or prayer

in contrast with two Latinas who wrote “None.”

Religious Imagery

The participants were asked about religious articles or images they carry with them or they have at home as a significant part of their faith and spirituality. Eleven participants (the majority of the group) reported that they carry with them a religious image, article or pendant in the everyday. Observations of common answers show that five participants reported carrying a cross or other image on a bracelet or necklace (*collares*). Three participants reported to have a Rosary chain. Two participants reported they carry the Virgin Mary. Two participants reported having a key chain of a religious image. The following are religious articles or imagery named in Spanish by participants: “*La Virgen de Guadalupe*,”⁴⁰¹ “*Sagrado corazón de Jesús. Jesus iluminado por rayos de color rojo y azul saliendo del corazón*,”⁴⁰² “My pendant is *el Divino Niño* and I cherish it so much because it means a lot to me,”⁴⁰³ “I have a *Virgen de la Caridad* bracelet and I carry a *pulso*,”⁴⁰⁴ “St. Jude.”⁴⁰⁵ In short, eleven Latinas or the majority of the group carry with them a religious article or imagery in the everyday in contrast with five Latinas who wrote “none.”

The participants were also asked if they have any religious article or imagery at their home and fifteen participants (almost the entire group) openly responded “Yes.”

⁴⁰¹ *La Virgen de Guadalupe*: “Our Lady of Guadalupe.” Coromoto, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴⁰² *Sagrado corazón de Jesús. Jesus iluminado por rayos de color rojo y azul saliendo del corazón*: “Sacred Heart of Jesus. Jesus is shining through red and blue rays of light that come from his heart.” Aparecida, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴⁰³ Milagros, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴⁰⁴ *Pulso* (bracelet) represents the protection of the *Santos* (Saints) in the *Santería/Yoruba* religion. It is given when the person is initiated into the religion, Candelaria, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 7, 2014.

⁴⁰⁵ Rosario, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 9, 2014.

Twelve Latinas (the majority of the group) wrote to have a Cross or image of Jesus in their homes and eight Latinas (more than half) shared they have an image, statue or frame of Mary and the saints in their homes. One to four participants described to have religious articles such a Rosary hanging in their home; a frame of the Holy Father (Pope); an altar; Holy water; a relic; and, candles. The participants described the following religious articles in their homes:

Providencia noted a “Cross.”⁴⁰⁶ Concepción noted “Images of Saints.”⁴⁰⁷ Coromoto noted “candles to light when praying to *la Virgen*, and Jesus.”⁴⁰⁸ Lujan noted to have “a Cross on the door of my house's main entrance.”⁴⁰⁹ La Merced shared, “there are pictures of Mary; there are little statues that say God bless and other sayings; I have a rosary hanging in my room.”⁴¹⁰ Los Angeles noted “statue of Our Lady of Fatima; Images our Lady of Guadalupe and the miraculous medal; Cross, and Image of Jesus Christ (Divine Mercy).”⁴¹¹ Candelaria shared, “I have an Image of the Holy Father in the kitchen, and a Rosary hung in my daughter’s bedroom wall.”⁴¹² Rosario shared, “I have many crosses at my house; a frame of Pope John Paul; a frame of the last supper of Jesus Christ; a relic blessed by Pope John Paul brought from The Vatican.”⁴¹³ Catalina shared, “I have a Rosary in my dorm room and at home there are pictures of angels around the house.”⁴¹⁴

The following are responses from six participants who described religious articles

⁴⁰⁶ Providencia, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴⁰⁷ Conception, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴⁰⁸ La Virgen: “The Virgin.” Coromoto, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴⁰⁹ Lujan, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴¹⁰ La Merced, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴¹¹ Los Angeles, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴¹² Candelaria, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 7, 2014.

⁴¹³ Rosario, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 9, 2014.

⁴¹⁴ Catalina, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, December 5, 2014.

in Spanish: Caridad shared, “at my home we have our *Santos*, *San Lazaro*, a Cross, Jesus eating with everyone and having dinner with them. We wear beads, and when praying we wear skirts.”⁴¹⁵ La Paz shared, “I have a frame of Jesus on the Cross, a frame of *Santa Barbara* and *el Niño Jesús*.”⁴¹⁶ Aparecida noted that there is a “religious corner of the house. *Jesús está en el centro acompañado por la Virgen Maria y los Santos están alrededor del altar. Alrededor de Jesús hay un Rosario grande colocado en su cuello. En todos los cuartos hay un Rosario por encima de la cama con imágenes del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús.*”⁴¹⁷ Rosa de Lima noted “*imágenes de La sagrada familia (la Santa familia) en el comedor; una Cruz en el cabezal de mi cama; la imagen de San Martin de Porres en mi closet; mi mamá aparte tiene un pequeño altar en su cuarto donde tiene imagines de la Virgen Maria, ángeles, cruces, y agua bendita.*”⁴¹⁸ Milagros shared, “On the wall of my bed I have a portrait of *el Corazón de Jesús*. I have it since I was a little girl; maybe about 8 years ago my grandparents gave it to me to bring back to the US so that it protects me here too.”⁴¹⁹ And, Chiquinquirá shared, “I have a frame that we keep in the living room with an image of *el Sagrado Corazón*; we also have a Virgin Mary that

⁴¹⁵ *San Lázaro*: “Saint Lazaro.” Caridad, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴¹⁶ *Santa Barbara*: “Saint Barbara.” *El Niño Jesús*: “Baby Jesus.” La Paz, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴¹⁷ *Jesús está en el centro acompañado por la Virgen Maria y los Santos están alrededor del altar. Alrededor de Jesús hay un Rosario grande Colocado en su cuello. En todos Los cuartos hay un Rosario por encima de la Cama con imágenes del Sagrado corazón de Jesús*: “Jesus is in the center next to the Virgin Mary. The saints are around the altar. There is a big Rosary around Jesus’ neck. In each room, there is a Rosary above the head of the bed and images of the sacred heart of Jesus.” Aparecida, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴¹⁸ *Imágenes de La sagrada familia (la Santa familia) en el comedor; una Cruz en el cabezal de mi cama; la imagen de San Martin de Porres en mi closet; mi mamá aparte tiene un pequeño altar en su cuarto donde tiene imagines de la Virgen Maria, ángeles, cruces, y agua bendita*: “Images of the Holy Family in the dining room; I have a cross in the headboard of my bed and an image of Saint Martin de Porres in my closet. My mom also has a little altar in her room with images of the Virgin Mary, angels, crosses and holy water.” Rosa de Lima, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴¹⁹ *El Corazón de Jesús*: “The Heart of Jesus.” Milagros, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

we keep on an altar.”⁴²⁰ As seen in results, imageries noted are not mere decorations, but are actively embedded and blended in Latinas’ expressions of faith.

Church Participation

The participants were also asked about Church participation and ten participants (the majority of the group) affirmed they affiliate with a local church/parish in contrast with six participants who marked “No.” Seven participants reported they attend local parishes located in Miami Dade and Broward County (Church of the little flower, St. Mary’s Cathedral, St. Timothy, Mother of Our Redeemer, St. Brendan, St. Kevin, and All Saints). Results show that the majority of the participants who affiliate with a local parish attend Mass at least once a week. Only three participants or half of this group attend to young adult or campus ministry. Moreover, four participants noted they attend the Chapel of Saint Anthony at St. Thomas University at least once a week. Results from the questionnaire show that the participants who reported only attending the Chapel of the University and are not affiliated with a local parish, are less likely to participate in any young adult or campus ministry. Preliminary results from questionnaire do not show a clear distinction between participation and affiliation with a local church or parish. This insight will clarify in Phase Three, which contains interview protocol.

Familia (Family)

Within this preliminary category, the participants were asked five close-ended, open-ended and multiple choice questions that focus on the relationship with their families and attitudes towards them. Results from the multiple-choice question show that thirteen participants (the majority of the participants) affirmed they have a close

⁴²⁰ *El Sagrado corazón de Jesús*: “The Sacred Heart of Jesus.” Chiquinquirá, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

relationship with their mothers. Also, eleven participants (the majority of the participants) wrote that one or both of their parents inspire them to succeed in life (six participants wrote their mothers play a key role in their life, three who wrote both parents and, two of them their fathers). Other answers of people who inspire them to succeed are *abuelas* (grandmothers), aunt, and Jesus, Mary or Saints.

Some of the participants extended the description of their answers as it follows:

Altagracia shared, “my mother’s struggle to maintain our household is what inspires me to succeed. I want to succeed so that my mother can finally feel that all she has done and all her sacrifices were worth something.”⁴²¹ La Merced shares, “my mother because *ella es la unica de diez hermanos que puedo llegar y quedarse aquí y mantener a sus dos hijos sola*, and I think it is time I repay her and make her proud of me and all the effort she has put for me.”⁴²² Caridad notes:

My parents most of all. They do not live the perfect life but they also gave me everything...my parents always tell me to be someone one day...My mother (#1) and my grandmother inspire me. They have showed me that it is a rough world out there and that you need to have a profession in order to be someone and not struggle. They continue to give me words of wisdom and they always paint the bigger picture for me...one day I will help them.⁴²³

Chiquinquirá shared:

My mom has always been an important person in my life as inspiration and

⁴²¹ Altagracia, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴²² *Ella es la unica de 10 hermanos que puedo llegar y quedarse aquí y mantener a sus dos hijos sola*: “She is the only one out of ten siblings who could come here [to the US], stay here and take care of her two children by herself.” La Merced, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴²³ Caridad, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

motivation to succeed. She has always been there for me supporting me and guiding me through the right path. My dad also plays a vital role in my life as inspiration. He is 51 years old and is pursuing his degree in Business which to me is wonderful. It makes me proud to know that I have a father that is willing to try his best to achieve higher levels in life. This is of inspiration to me.⁴²⁴

These Latinas also shared stories of extended family. Rosa de Lima noted “my aunt, who is a nurse and has loved me as if I was her own daughter...of course my parents who struggle every day to give me a better future.”⁴²⁵ Candelaria noted “my mom is everything as far as my inspiration in life. She can do no wrong in my eyes. She has always been and continues to be amazing in everything; as a mother, woman and hard worker.”⁴²⁶ Milagros noted “first my parents and grandparents because they are the most important people in my life. Also, my brother inspires me because I feel that since I am the oldest one I have to make him proud.”⁴²⁷

Moreover, participants were asked specifically about their relationship with their *abuelas/abuelos* (grandmothers or grandfathers). Even though results from the questionnaire show that only two participants wrote their *abuelas* (grandmothers) inspire them to succeed, the majority of the group or twelve participants reported their *abuelas/abuelos* have a significant role in their lives. Also, ten participants reported that their *abuelas/abuelos* (grandmothers and grandparents) had a significant role in their faith formation while growing up. Observations from the questionnaire show that their families, particularly their mothers, parents and grandparents played and currently play a

⁴²⁴ Chiquinquirá, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴²⁵ Rosa de Lima, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴²⁶ Candelaria, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 7, 2014.

⁴²⁷ Milagros, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

significant role in their life and are key subjects in the narratives/lived experiences described and noted in this preliminary questionnaire.

Self-Identity

As part of the preliminary questionnaire, Latinas were asked thirteen close-ended questions related to their identity as Latinas and Catholic women. There were only two possible responses: “Yes” or “No.”

Results from questionnaire show that the majority of the group reported that their identity as Catholics affects or influences their understanding of sexuality (eleven), their body (eight), and their career choice (nine). On the contrary, more than half participants (nine) reported their identity as Catholic women does not affect their views and reactions on issues of identity and gender. Also, at least half of the group or the majority of the participant reported that their identity as Latinas affects or influences their understanding of sexuality (ten), their body (eight) and their views and reactions on issues of self-identity and gender. On the contrary, more than half participants (nine) reported that their identity as Latinas does not affect their career choice.

On the other hand, the majority of the participants reported they would date (fourteen) and marry (eleven) somebody who does not identify as Catholic. Moreover, most of the Latinas (fourteen) reported that they feel comfortable talking with their friends about their faith as Catholics.

At the end of the preliminary questionnaire, the participants were asked open-ended questions about insights they have not thought before and in contrast, those that they have reflected before. Almost half of the group or six Latinas highlighted there are questions they have not thought before. All sixteen participants marked at least one

question that is part of the tentative category on *Latina's Identity* (See questions 33-42 in preliminary questionnaire). As per observations, the questions that were mostly highlighted were those that related to the participants' identity as Catholics and Latinas in light of their sexuality (nine) and issues of self-identity and gender (five). On the contrary, eight Latinas (half of the group) highlighted that there were questions in this preliminary exercise that they have reflected before. The questions that were most highlighted, and that the participants affirmed they have reflected before and described in their own words, were about their identity as Latinas and Catholics in light of their career choice (three) and sexuality (three).

Also, some of the participants like Candelaria responded in their own words: "The most interesting question that stood out to me was the question about sexuality. I had not thought about how important the image I described really is to me and to whom I am."⁴²⁸ Others, share about questions that they reflected before. La Merced notes, "I should probably be closer with my grandparents because I don't have much time with them left, they are wise and they do love me and they always have *un consejo para darme*, but I feel like I can get closer to them."⁴²⁹ Aparecida notes she has reflected before about "how my Hispanic roots influence my self-identification and how it can impact my future...and why is it unlikely for minority to succeed."⁴³⁰ Rosa de Lima responded, "I have thought before especially the questions about gender, identity and sexuality. Being a Latina in the United States, people expect you to be erotic and very sexual, which are not the case."⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ Candelaria, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 7, 2014.

⁴²⁹ *Un Consejo para darme*: "An advice to give me." La Merced, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, April 30, 2014.

⁴³⁰ Aparecida, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴³¹ Rosa de Lima, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

Chiquinquirá notes, “I have always thought about my sexuality and how my roots and my religious beliefs have affected my life in that particular aspect. I have always seen my body as a temple and something sacred. I have respect towards myself and my body and my roots and religious beliefs have always and will always play an important role in that.”⁴³² Candelaria notes that “identifying as a Catholic woman and my Catholic beliefs has always played a role in my view of gender, my womanhood and my role as a woman and mother. Not being legally married to the father of my daughter, but still living with him makes me think that there is something missing...The feeling that we should be married has everything to do with the messages I have been taught.”⁴³³

For the last question of this preliminary questionnaire, six participants or almost half of the group shared additional insights that they would like to see included or explored in the future. The majority of the group or five participants included insights that relate to the challenges and struggles of womanhood particularly: being Latinas in the United States culture, Catholic women and their role and vocation in the society. One participant noted that she would like to see included a contrast with self-identity and faith of their mothers and grandmothers (*abuelas*).

Observations from Results and Next Steps

The data from the preliminary questionnaire was not simply the collection of information. In-depth observation and analysis of results were critical in order to make meaning from the responses and generate data. “The underlying assumption is that you as the researcher are yourself an instrument in generating data.”⁴³⁴ All the closed-ended

⁴³² Chiquinquirá, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴³³ Candelaria, *Preliminary Questionnaire*, May 1, 2014.

⁴³⁴ David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action in Your Own Organization* (Los Angeles,

questions were analyzed with the help of Google Docs calculator, which is the format used to collect responses from the preliminary questionnaire. Open-ended responses were analyzed, synthesized and reflected in depth through identification and correlation of common responses. During this phase, I made use of my dissertation journal in order to record and log my own observations and possible interjections. As a researcher in the process of generating new data, I had the opportunity to interact again with the active voices of Latinas who participated in the questionnaire and make meaning out of their responses. I started to get familiarized with the tone of each voice and could grasp deeper on the uniqueness of their voices by listening (counting, reading, observing, analyzing, synthesizing, correlating, thinking critically and imagining) repetitively their written and real stories as active participants.

Phase Three: One-on-One Interviews (Listening to the Narratives)

In order to move forward with the one-on-one interviews protocol, I attentively read the participants' responses and designed key questions that served to expand on common insights mentioned in the questionnaire, particularly insights that were most highlighted.

Scheduling One-on-One Interviews

Questionnaires were completed and information collected by the end of the Spring Semester and part of the summer term. I contacted each participant *person to person* in order to schedule a one hour one-on-one interview for the fall semester. This exercise helped me to keep reflecting in *Kairos* time. It moves the research to think critically in the variable of time and schedules while doing research with college students

CA: Sage, 2010), 31.

who are in a stage of transition and have to face academic and financial responsibilities, work, family, personal struggles, hopes, and so on, parallel to the research. The challenge of re-scheduling or trying to accommodate interviews with a few of the participants became opportunities because I was able to learn to be flexible and be open to God's time and the movement of the Spirit in a research that entails the participation of active human subjects. Out of sixteen participants, five participants were not able to participate in oral interviews due to the following reasons: dropped out of school, moved to another city, and changed paths in life within the period of the spring to fall semester. I was able to schedule one hour *one-on-one interview protocol* with eleven active participants who moved forward with me to this third phase of the research.

Recording and Transcribing “What Moves the Human Heart”

This phase involved the process of listening to and recording the lived stories and narratives that are inherent in the lives of the participants. It also involved “the knowledge of feelings. Heart knowledge is the capacity to feel.”⁴³⁵ It involved the different expressions and *sentimientos* (aesthetics)⁴³⁶ of the human heart when deep memories and events unfold through personal dialogue. For the purpose of this work, the term *sentimientos* is explored from the perspective of theological aesthetics: *What moves the human heart?*⁴³⁷ The process of recording human hearts involved recording *sentimientos* or “the grace of God and the power of the Spirit *with* [us] and *within* [us]”⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 239.

⁴³⁶ *Sentimientos* comes from the word *sentir* (to feel). For the purpose of this work, the term *sentimientos* is explored from the perspective of aesthetics in theology: *What moves the human heart?* A question addressed by Alejandro Garcia-Rivera in theological aesthetics and the dimensions of the truth, the good and the beautiful. See Alejandro Garcia-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful: A Theological Aesthetics* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999).

⁴³⁷ Garcia-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful*, 9.

⁴³⁸ Oscar Garcia-Johnson, *The Mestizo/a Community of the Spirit: A Postmodern Latino/a*

as participants in this process. The exercise of inviting the participants to share their lived stories full of memories and current events of joys, hopes, and struggles “brings us closer to the mysterious experience of the truly beautiful”⁴³⁹ beyond ordinary time, but in *Kairos* time.

I contacted each participant *person to person* in order to schedule the one-on-one interview. Place and time varied as per participants’ availability. The interviews took place in either small conference room or an office at the University that had a circular table, making sure the space was a safe and comfortable place for dialogue. One-on-one interviews were voice recorded with the previous permission of the participants, using iPad Voice Record Pro, which saves the interviews in electronic MP3 format. Voices and identity were protected by using the assigned names during the recording interview protocol and saving each file with those names. Each interview consisted in open-ended common and individual questions and some responses from questionnaire protocol that needed further development. I saved the interview questions in a separate word document for each participant under the assigned name. Two copies were printed and one given to the participant for her review at the moment of the interview. Each interview presented a unique voice, tone and mood. All of the sessions opened with a brief prayer and greetings.

Interviews were transcribed electronically and manually after I reflected on the importance of language in the interviews. Language includes tone of voice, emotions, pauses and transitions from English to Spanish. In order to be able to generate and synthesize data from interviews, common words and questions that correlate were

Ecclesiology (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), xvii.

⁴³⁹ Garcia-Rivera, *The Community of the Beautiful*, 9.

regrouped and written by numbers in a separate file. The process of regrouping and categorizing is also the generation of new data in the research. After regrouping Latinas' one-on-one interview questions, the following new themes unfolded.

La Familia (Family)

In phase two, the questionnaire showed *la familia* (family) as one of the four preliminary categories (along with the other three categories of *Spanish language, prayer and expressions of faith*, and *self-identity as Latinas*). After listening to the one-on-one interviews and regrouping and correlating common words and questions, results showed that *la lucha cotidiana de la familia* (the daily struggle or *lucha* of the family), interpreted as the faithful family's pilgrimage, is not separated from their own identity as Catholic College-age Latinas.

Immigration: From Latin-America to the United States

After a brief prayer and greeting, I invited the participant to approach this one-on-one exercise as a conversation. During this phase the participants started to open and speak up as we began the conversation. All the participants began with the story of their parents, some of them grandparents, and how for most of them their parents coming to the United States shaped their lives from childhood. The stories of these young women trace from Latin America.

Eager to listen to Latinas lived stories, the one-on-one interview became a communal dialogue instead of personal and individual protocol. When conversing with each Latina individually, I felt conversing with their mother, *abuelas* (grandmothers) and families. Unexpectedly, the conversation flowed from the private to the public spectrum. Sixteen participants spiritually present, and eleven of them, actively present in this stage

of the research, opened the doors to a greater community of participants: *A community of saints* vividly and sacredly present during the interview protocol and this work. Chapter Two begins *tracing roots from Medellin* recalling the words from Paul VI, “now you are listening to us in silence, but we hear the shout which arises from your suffering.”⁴⁴⁰ Phase Two begins tracing roots from Latin America. The memories from the families listen in silence, and the participants tell the shout that arises from their voices. *Los Angeles, Rosa de Lima, Rosario, Candelaria, Lujan, Merced, Milagros, Aparecida, Catalina, Caridad and Chiquinquirá* began responding to a very important question: *Tell me more about your family.*

Aparecida, Milagros and Rosa de Lima began sharing their similar experience of being raised by one or both grandparents in their country of origin and how they took the role of their parents while they had to settle or begin a new life in the United States. *Aparecida* was born in the United States and both of her parents came from Honduras.

She notes:

My parents married at a very young age and they immigrated to the United States. They did not speak the language. My mother started cleaning houses. My dad was a driver and then at that time there was only us three...My mom does not speak English still, but she goes by.... I was born in the United States, but due to finances and stuff, my mom could not afford to have me here, so she sent me to Honduras when I was six or seven months old and I was raised in Honduras by my grandfather my first years of life. I came back when I was four or five years old. My father was very hard working, so as a father, he was not really there for

⁴⁴⁰ Paul VI, “Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá.”

me more like a provider, but in terms of being a father like going to the park and playing with me; I never saw that. The person who was there for me was my grandfather.⁴⁴¹

Milagros was born in Nicaragua and came to the United States with both of her parents and siblings when she was seven years old. She shares that immigration comes to mind

because that is what my dad went through. He was basically *luchando* (working hard in hope) for us to come to school, so we get prepared...my dad came to this country first and I believe in the year of 1999 my mom came to this country; so, she left us alone for a year. My grandmother took the role as my mom and for me that was very important. I know that I still have my mom but just the fact that I was living with my grandmother and my grandfather, I still look upon her as my mom, not just as my grandmother.⁴⁴²

Rosa de Lima was born in Perú and came to the United States with both of her parents at the age of eleven. She shares:

I was brought by my parents. They did not want to split the family. I was raised by my grandmother over there, so it was really hard for me to adapt to this environment...The language was very very hard! I felt so isolated from people, from my classmates. They did not understand anything that I said...but then my brother was born, so I kind of adapted to this new world...It was very hard...I always felt separated from everyone, but eventually I adapted.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

⁴⁴² Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

⁴⁴³ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

Other participants like *La Merced, Lujan and Catalina* highlight the story of their mothers as they grew up. *Merced* shares:

I think of my family and how they came to the US...My mom, *la unica que vino aqui de diez hijos y se quedó* [the only one from ten siblings who came here and stayed] ...but for the rest of my family...they stayed few years and then they would leave...*es un choque*...a cultural shock. This is another thing that I can correlate with *la lucha*...my mom went through *la lucha* just coming here and raising us on her own because my parents separated when they were little...back there [in Perú] she lived in a pueblo (a small town from the Andes), I've been there and at 9:00 P.M. they close the water, and every morning they get the water of the day with a bucket...resources are very limited...*mis abuelos y mis tios hablan Quechua* (my grandparents, uncles and aunts speak Quechua), so my family really represents the culture of Peru, that is very different from here...back in the days they lived in a home built with clay and bricks (it was not painted) and the roof and the door was made of metal. There wasn't a bathroom or shower... and also there was terrorism during my mom's time...that is why she came to give us a better future.⁴⁴⁴

Lujan was born in the United States and she shares the story of her parents:

As you know my family is Argentinean/Chilean but my grandmother from my mother's side is from Spain. My mother has been here over at least thirty years and my father for at least twenty-five. I was born here, as you know, but my mom in Argentina and my father over there in Chile...I have a brother. My grandma

⁴⁴⁴ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

(my mom's side) is still alive. My parents are divorced, so our family is divided and I live with my mom and my brother. In a way, my mother immigrated here dragged by my grandparents because of the war (regime) in Argentina. After the war, she went back because she did not know the language. I relate to it because, even though now she is a citizen and I was born here, she is an immigrant.⁴⁴⁵

Catalina was born in the United States and both of her parents are from Colombia. She shared the struggle of her mother as she made it in this Country:

[with soft and nostalgic voice] *Oh my God...my Mom!* She is the person I always go to; she is a big part of me. She raised me and my little sister by herself...my mom has been through so much...with my stepdad...they got divorced when she was pregnant of my little sister...and her papers and everything she had to go through at the same time. After all that happened, I just see her and she survived and never broke down. She is a strong woman.⁴⁴⁶

Candelaria, Rosario and Los Angeles shared the experiences of their parents coming here and how they overcame together their immigration experience. *Candelaria* was born in Cuba and she shared that she came to the United States with both parents when she was four years old. She shares:

My dad was a political prisoner, so I am not really sure why and how, but the government sent a lot of the political prisoners to the United States, so it was beneficial obviously to us, so him, my mom and myself came here. They gave us whatever they call the pass and they told us: *we are ready to go and we are leaving in the next week.* We got here and we stay with my aunt who we call my

⁴⁴⁵ Lujan, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2015.

⁴⁴⁶ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

tía abuela (which is my grandmother's sister) on my dad side. Then my parents started working. My dad worked in everything that relates to construction, and then my mom started trying to learn English and she started working at an office in health care. My mom is super smart, so she learned that business very well, so she worked there for a couple of years. During that time, they saved money and we rented a house, our first house and eventually we moved out from my aunt's home and my mom opened her own health care agency.⁴⁴⁷

Rosario was born in Argentina and she came to the United States with both parents and her sister when she was one year old. She shares:

I immigrated when I was one year old and it was not hard for me but for my mom and my dad it was the biggest culture shock ever. So, I did not go through the pain but my sister did because she was four. She would come home crying [from school] that she wanted to leave. So many times, my parents decided to leave: *Me voy, me voy!* [We are leaving, we are leaving!] but then they had to stick it out. It was very painful to hear the stories, the same when one listen to the stories of the Jewish people when they had to leave...it is a cultural shock, even if you come from a wealthy family. You get here and you have to start over...that was my mom. She was a princess back home and she never worked, so when she came, she had to start working as a maid.⁴⁴⁸

Los Angeles was born in the United States and she briefly shares: "My parents were not born here. My dad came directly from Cuba and my mom directly from Costa

⁴⁴⁷ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

⁴⁴⁸ Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

Rica and they both learned English.”⁴⁴⁹

Chiquinquirá was born in the United States and her parents came to the United States from Honduras and Nicaragua. She shares: “I thank my parents about feeling both *Hondureña* and *Nicaraguan* because I grew up loving both countries equally, so I can identify myself as both and that is what I grown to be, a little bit of both. I am a Central-American Latina.”⁴⁵⁰

Some of the participants extended their answers by sharing that their immigration experience affected the way they see the world. *Rosario* notes:

My immigration experience makes me more humble to see there are problems in the world and people immigrate here because of those problems. That is why I want to become a lawyer to help immigrants...this experience gave me the opportunity to be humble. Then, immigration was not as hard to me as it was for the rest of my family, but it was very hard hearing my story. This experience defines who I am. If I would still be in Argentina, I would be a completely different person...coming here was a shock for us...here we learned to be humble. I am proud of my parents because of what they have, they earned it by their hard work and I am so grateful.⁴⁵¹

Milagros shared: “My immigration experience affected the way I see the world because I have met people from many cultures, not only from where I am.”⁴⁵² In the same way, *Rosa de Lima* shares:

My immigration experience affects the way I see the world because I am able to

⁴⁴⁹ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

⁴⁵⁰ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁴⁵¹ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁴⁵² Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

think in other people who have different faith beliefs and views from me. For example, I was raised by my grandmother who was a strong Catholic closed minded woman, which I do love. Thanks to her I am who I am and I have my own values as a woman, but I am different because I respect the differences in others.⁴⁵³

Language at the Core of their Hearts

In phase two, results showed participants' attitudes towards the Spanish language including words, phrases and images based on their understanding of *Spanglish*, *la lucha and dichos* (sayings). In this phase, language is explored at the core of their everyday narratives and lived experiences (*lo cotidiano*). Listening to *Aparecida*, *Rosa de Lima*, *Milagros*, *Catalina*, *Rosario*, *Chiquinquirá* and *Caridad*, their native language Spanish signifies more than a linguistic skill or mere dialect. The Spanish language means to them “who they are” and *whom/where* they are coming from. It means their home, their roots, their culture, their parents, and the language of their heart. *Aparecida* connects language with home:

My mom does not speak English and *Honduras is at home*... We speak Spanish at home and my sister speaks English with me at home... I used to go to public school because my parents could not afford and since Spanish was my first language they would make fun of me all the time. I would linger between English and Spanish. All my friends were little blond girls and I was embarrassed and confused... did not understand at that age.⁴⁵⁴

Rosario also refers to her roots: “I communicate every day in Spanish. It is much

⁴⁵³ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁴⁵⁴ *Aparecida*, *Interview Protocol* July 16, 2014.

easier. The Spanish language at the end of the day is my culture I am from. It takes me back to my roots of Argentina and Spain...When I think about Spanglish I think about Miami.”⁴⁵⁵ *Rosa de Lima* also connects Spanish to her home and roots and introduces Spanish as the language of her heart:

Spanish means *my roots, my home*. I feel that I can speak even more in Spanish. There are so many words that you cannot translate in English. The difference between *te amo y te quiero*. In English [both expressions] are just “I love you.” I love speaking Spanish better than in English. We speak Spanish at home. I teach my brother Spanish. My parents do not speak English, so we have to speak in Spanish at home.⁴⁵⁶

Like *Rosa de Lima*, *Milagros* also introduces the reflection about the difference between *te amo* and *te quiero*.⁴⁵⁷

I could express myself better in Spanish than in English. I was having this conversation with my brother about when they tell you I love you, I don't link that as in Spanish *te quiero*, but for me if someone is going to tell you I love you and they really mean it is: *Te amo*; so, when I hear I love you, it is superficial. Spanish is my ability to communicate better with people; *it is who I am*. English becomes a tool.⁴⁵⁸

Milagros, Chiquinquirá and Catalina also express in their own words, explore

⁴⁵⁵ Rosario, *Interview Protocol* October 29, 2014.

⁴⁵⁶ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁴⁵⁷ The Spanish epistemologies *te quiero* and *te amo* express and unveil different meaning and attitudes towards someone, particularly towards God and family. For the purpose of this work, *te quiero* signifies: I appreciate/want you and, *te amo*: I love you. In terms of affection towards family, fiancé or espoused, it is generally used, *amar* (to love) instead of *querer* (to appreciate). *El amor de Dios* translates as God's love, and *el amor hacia Dios* (the love for God). It would not be the same to express *el querer de Dios* (God's will) and *querer a Dios* (our wanting/appreciation for God).

⁴⁵⁸ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

Spanish beyond language and note that it is who they are. Catalina shares: “Spanish means *who I am*...I am Colombian.”⁴⁵⁹ Chiquinquirá shares: “Spanish to me is an identity...especially in this Country that it is so diverse...It sets me apart as a Latina. It is who I am as a person.”⁴⁶⁰ Caridad notes that “it reflects my culture, where I come from...I talk to my mom in Spanish, to my dad in Spanish.”⁴⁶¹ Candelaria also notes, “It is not only language, but it is sort of like...you raise your head a little higher.”⁴⁶²

In contrast, *Merced, Los Angeles and Lujan*, present a hybrid or partial identity of language than the rest or the majority of the participants who report that Spanish become their full identity. *Los Angeles* notes:

When I was born and little my parents would speak to me in Spanish and as I got older they would speak to me more in English, since I went to School. When I went to Costa Rica for first time, I understood how important it was...it was part of my culture...so, I would say Spanish is more like part of my culture, not my identity or my full identity, but my partial identity.⁴⁶³

Merced shares her experiences navigating between two worlds:

When I am over there in Peru, I try to speak in Spanish except when I don't know the word I have to say it in English. My mom always spoke to me in Spanish...sometimes my family says *porque eres tan tosca o tan ruda...como hablo en English*... [why you are rough when you speak in English] Also, my friends say that I sound so different when I speak English than when I speak in

⁴⁵⁹ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁴⁶⁰ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁴⁶¹ Caridad, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁴⁶² Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

⁴⁶³ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

Spanish. *Tu tono de voz cambia* [your tone of voice changes]. I never noticed it...Spanish *es más romántico, mas suave* [is more romantic, smooth].

Lujan shares:

It gives me more opportunity to communicate with more people. If I need to reach out to someone who only speaks Spanish, I can comfort them in the same language. I would not say that Spanish is my strongest but it is my every day...I learn everyday a little bit more because of my parents. Also, my mom's Spanish from Argentina is different from my dad's Spanish from Chile...Language is a challenge for my little brother.⁴⁶⁴

La Lucha: The Struggle to Survive

La lucha was noted above as epistemology, part of a preliminary category of Spanish language. Listening to the voices of these young women, *la lucha* becomes a key theme and practice within the dimension of *la familia: Iglesia inmigrante* (family: immigrant Church). At this part of the conversation, some of the participants break in tears as they tell the stories of their families and what it means to them *la lucha* as young adult Latinas. *Rosa de Lima, Lujan, Candelaria, Aparecida and Merced* (half of the group) continue the correlation with the story of their families. *Rosa de Lima* and *Lujan* remember the story of their father as they tell their story. *Rosa de Lima* shares:

I remember my father for some reason. *La lucha* reminds me of him and all the struggle he had to go through for me to be in College, for me to have a place to go home, for me to be who I am today...both my parents and their struggles in life...I am always trying to make them proud and I am trying to not give up,

⁴⁶⁴ Luján, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2015.

because it is very hard [sensitive voice tone].⁴⁶⁵

Lujan also remembers her father: “Every time that I think of *la lucha*, I think of my dad...that means that he is working hard for a better life...so, when he asks me how I am doing I always respond, *en la lucha* as my dad is always telling me that he is working hard, *en la lucha*.”⁴⁶⁶

Candelaria is the only participant who is 28 years old and a single mother. She shares: “*En la lucha* is in the struggle...everything from getting through school to having a good day at home, to not seeing eye to eye as a couple to finding the time to have a conversation.”⁴⁶⁷ *Candelaria* also shares:

The theme of my family life has always been struggle. We have always successful, but it is like it has always been a struggle. Nothing has ever been like an easy flow. It has always been like sweet and tears...I have always felt that I need to fight for something. I do not know if this is because my parents have always been fighting for something [pause and starts talking with sensitive voice]. Not being married to the father of my daughter is a very difficult subject. I have always felt that I have to fight for that position of wife within my husband’s family or boyfriend...I call him husband because we have been together so long.⁴⁶⁸

Aparecida notes her struggle of being Latina in the United States by sharing her experience from childhood,

Lucha in my culture symbolizes survival; it symbolizes surpassing the struggle.

⁴⁶⁵ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁴⁶⁶ Lujan, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2015.

⁴⁶⁷ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

⁴⁶⁸ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

My mom always says that *Dios no te da una cruz que no puedas cargar* [she continues repeating the same phrase in English]. God does not give you a Cross you cannot carry. *La lucha*, would be my whole life in general, because as a Hispanic we tend to be stereotyped; we tend to be little sometimes or that we cannot overachieve. I did not chose to born Latina, I was born Latina. Already been born and been put all of these stereotypes on you, definitively impacts you as a person. Just an example would be coming here; when I was young, having parents immigrants in the United States, kids at school would made fun of that. I used to go to public school because my parents could not afford and they would make fun of me all the time, since Spanish was my first language...*La Lucha* represents this experience. It grew my character (resilient voice) ...carrying our own Cross.⁴⁶⁹

Merced continues the correlation of *la lucha* with the immigration experience of her family. She notes:

My mom always said that education was important, and I know she came here because she thought that *este País*, this Country was *el mejor del mundo*, like the best. Because of the American dream...She always talks about opportunities. This Country gives you more opportunity comparing with what she had back home in Peru. So, my mom went through *la lucha* just coming here and raising us on her own. She was a single mom with two kids and she always worked, so we did not spend as much time with her. We were always put in daycare, before care or aftercare program. Now that I got older I know how much she worked for us, how

⁴⁶⁹ Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

much she really wanted us to know how education is important. She would always say: *ustedes tienen todo lo que yo no tuve...si yo estuviera en tus pies, yo podría hacer tantas cosas, deberían aprovechar todo lo que tienen* [you have everything that I did not have...if I would be on your feet, I would do so many things...take advantage of everything you have now].⁴⁷⁰

Milagros continues highlighting that “the whole immigration dynamic comes to mind.”⁴⁷¹ She also introduces her view as a woman: “In terms of gender, I see *la lucha* as equality...unless you have a strong relationship with the people where they can see you as equal.”⁴⁷²

Aparecida introduces above an explicit religious attitude or aspect of *la lucha* when describing the story of her family. *Los Angeles* and *Rosario* share a personal religious attitude towards *la lucha*. *Los Angeles* shares:

Over the years, I have always thought of it like as a personal battle, but something that it is necessary as prayer. For me I like to do things for myself, but at the end of the day I cannot do it on my own (pauses and raises voice). It is impossible! Prayer is just that intimate conversation that you just can have and that you can find refuge, solace, and guidance...just laying out everything on the table...feeling vulnerable: [prayer:] “ok! This is what I have...do what you will...I put it in your hands,” and that is how I have been able to make it so far with my education for example. I put it in God’s hands.⁴⁷³

Rosario also shares that she overcomes the struggle “with the prayer of Santa

⁴⁷⁰ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁴⁷¹ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

⁴⁷² Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

⁴⁷³ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

Teresa de Avila, *Quien a Dios tiene nada le falta solo Dios basta* [One who has God, needs nothing, only God is enough]. I use this little prayer when things get rough.”⁴⁷⁴

In contrast, *Catalina and Chiquinquirá* present a more general view of *la lucha*. *Catalina* shares that *la lucha* represents “when I see people in the struggle. When you are in *la lucha* you are fighting for your survival throughout the day...you just keep going.”⁴⁷⁵ *Chiquinquirá* shares: “Always to do your best, to reach your goals; to achieve your dreams always giving a hundred percent...*lo cotidiano* [everyday life] is *la lucha* de cada día.”⁴⁷⁶

Hogar: Iglesias Domésticas (Home: Domestic Churches)

Conde-Frazier notes that practical theology “creates a prophetic voice where we do not announce or denounce.”⁴⁷⁷ Listening and helping to articulate the narratives shared during interviews, the preliminaries categories from phase two, such family, Spanish language, prayer and expressions of faith and self-identity, intertwine during the conversation and become inherent to each other in a way that it was inevitable to separate home from Latinas’ faith expressions and practices in the everyday life. These preliminary categories described in Phase Two, all became part of the new emerging theme *Casa: Iglesia Domestica* (Home: Domestic Church). Results from the preliminary questionnaires and interview protocol show that *la familia* becomes the primary domestic church or *la iglesia domestica* where this group of College-age Latinas grew up.

Prayer Life

The participants shared their attitudes toward prayer and the majority of the group

⁴⁷⁴ Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

⁴⁷⁵ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁴⁷⁶ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁴⁷⁷ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 241.

or nine participants affirmed that prayer is important in their lives. The majority of the participants correlated their attitudes toward prayer with attendance to church even though only three participants expressed openly that they attend a local Church/Parish and that they participate in the celebration of the Holy Mass on a weekly basis. Even though closed-ended question in the preliminary questionnaire shows that the majority of the group participants pray in English, the predominant language the participants feel more likely to pray is Spanish based on their narratives and attitudes towards prayer. Also, their lived experiences unveil that the first language in which the group learned how to pray is Spanish. Most of them still pray in Spanish with family at home. *Rosa de Lima* shares:

I pray in Spanish even when I go to church in English. It makes me feel more connected to God. I was raised that way. I was raised talking in Spanish to God, I was raised praying in Spanish. It is like talking to my mom in Spanish...I have to talk to him in Spanish and I feel more connected that way.⁴⁷⁸

Rosa continues saying:

I still go to a Church in my home, but now since I changed schools I go now to the church at the university. I go there either Sundays or Tuesdays, it is beautiful. After Mass, we always get together, talk, eat or just have ice cream. It is a gorgeous Chapel.⁴⁷⁹

Chiquinquirá shares:

I think prayer is very important in my life because it is my way to communicate with God and my way to express how I feel and to thank him for everything he

⁴⁷⁸ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

has given me in my life. I pray in Spanish. I grew up praying in Spanish, I go to Mass in Spanish, so it is kind of *lo cotidiano para mi* [the everyday to me] to pray in Spanish.⁴⁸⁰

She continues saying:

We go every Sunday to Mass at Mother of Our Redeemer [in Miami], and I try to join the youth group in Spanish because I am trying to get my sister involved too, but it is a little bit hard because they meet during the week and you know I have School and everything, but other than that, we try to be as much as involved as possible...we go to Mass and we feel that relationship with God.⁴⁸¹

Los Angeles shares that “She attends St. Timothy with her family once a week”

and that “prayer is important for her in the everyday” She says:

There are different kinds of prayer and I am the kind of person who needs structure. In terms of daily prayer, I like to do morning prayer and evening prayer. It is nice to do the *Liturgy of the Hours* [a prayer from Catholic Tradition]. A nice prayer too is the *Holy Rosary*.⁴⁸²

In contrast with *Los Angeles*, *Candelaria* shares that her prayer is more informal: I pray every night. I like to pray alone. I talk like if I was talking to a person, more than traditional prayer. My boyfriend does not practice. We pray but very privately, nobody prays together. As my daughter, she sees me praying [slowly starts crying in a low voice]. She would ask me to show her how to pray and we pray together. She would ask me those funny questions like: Does God know

⁴⁸⁰ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

Santa Claus? What does God do? Does he get mad? Just little questions like that. That is as much as we practice. I always prayed in English, I guess since I grew up here in the United States and I went to Catholic School, I pray to God and learned about God in English.⁴⁸³

Candelaria does not express directly about Mass attendance but shares when she is in sorrow or need: “Whenever I have a problem, I go to Church and I just sit and I pray and I talk to God. My boyfriend goes and sits by himself in the church.”⁴⁸⁴ In the case of *Catalina*, *Lujan* and *Milagros*, they shared that prayer is important or it was as they grew up, but some events have affected or influenced their attitudes towards prayer and church attendance. They mentioned the influence of a family member in their attendance to Church. *Catalina* and *Lujan* mentioned their *abuela* (grandmother); and *Milagros*, her aunt.

Catalina says that “prayer is important.” She continues:

I pray in Spanish because ever since I was a baby I always remember my mom in the car saying the prayer in Spanish: *El Padre Nuestro* [Our Father]. *Siempre pedimos por ayuda para la familia, por mi abuelita* [We always ask God to help our family, our grandmother]. We have a whole list that we go through and it is always in Spanish. We do *la Señal de la Cruz* [the sign of the Cross].⁴⁸⁵

Catalina continues on Church participation:

We do go to *All Saints* which is down the street from my house. I go to the Carnival. I did my first communion there and my first communion classes. I don't

⁴⁸³ *Candelaria*, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ *Catalina*, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

go every Sunday, but occasionally, for example when there are especial feasts like Holy Week, Easter, Christmas or other and we also go when my grandmother is here.⁴⁸⁶

Lujan shares:

Prayer was important, to be honest. I think it stopped when my grandmother, my dad's mom, passed away. She really made sure we knew how important prayer was or how important it was going to Mass. I still pray every day but it is not as regular or as much as when my dad's mom was alive...I pray in English.⁴⁸⁷

Lujan shares that she does "not attend to Mass anymore."⁴⁸⁸ She said:

I attended to an Episcopal School and we used to have Church every Wednesday. Also, my grandmother took me to Church every Sunday to St. Catherine in Kendall. It was also the one that was burned out. The last time I remember going to Church was last semester here at the Chapel of the University, but it has been years since I don't attend to a local church.⁴⁸⁹

Milagros shares:

I don't see prayer as important, but I know it should be because you have to be grateful with God for another day. Just because of the way we are in this society, religion is not the main goal. It would be great to pray every day. I used to do it when I was little. The main transition of coming from Nicaragua here, has changed my religious habits.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Lujan, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2014.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

She continues on her experience about Church attendance:

When I was in Nicaragua, I used to go to Church every single Sunday. I used to wake up and go myself. But here it is not the same thing. Growing up here I was not allowed to go to Church by myself when I was younger or something like that. Here you feel in a more isolated community. So, the whole limitation of that aspect has detained me from that growth. When I go to Mass here in School, it is different for me to hear it in English. I feel like this is not who I am. I would rather attend the Mass in Spanish. Sometimes my aunt takes me to Church with her. Even if I have not gone to a Church in a while, I feel immediately bonded because it is in Spanish.⁴⁹¹

La Merced's lived experience correlates with *Rosario* who both shared that they pray every day but struggle to find time to pray and go to Church. *La Merced* notes:

There are different types of prayer. Sometimes I used to go to church and sit down and pray, but now I don't have time. I kind of do more like and informal prayer, in my head, or when I am going to bed.⁴⁹²

She continues:

I used to pray at the Chapel on Sundays and then back home. Honestly, when I first came I thought this is the perfect opportunity to get back on my faith. I went almost every Sunday last year, and then, this year, I got a job and then I had to be the secretary in a club on campus, seven classes, and Sunday is the day when I do all my homework and laundry or I am just so tired. I pray mostly in English but when I am with my mom or family and we have gatherings, we pray in

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² *La Merced*, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

Spanish.⁴⁹³

Rosario engages in a conversation with God when she explains her prayer life:

I pray in good situations, no situations, bad situations! But I also pray to God especially in the bad situations. He also sees and looks upon me and says: *wow! she is going through a lot* and I am constantly reminded of him. But also, I choose not to see him sometimes. I say: *I know you are there, now let's now do homework* because I need to graduate, but at the same time I think: *How I am going do this without you?* So, that is the part when I get confused.⁴⁹⁴

Rosario continues mentioning the prayer of St. Therese of Avila, “*Quien a Dios tiene, nada le falta* [one who has God, needs nothing].” It helps me and I repeat it, even in the car because sometimes I feel that God is not there and *todo me falta* [I need everything].⁴⁹⁵ She also refers to church attendance in the conversation, “I used to go to Church of Santa Teresita in Miami [Church of the Little Flower] and ever since I started to know more who she is even my Patron Saint is St. Jude.”⁴⁹⁶

Aparecida and *Caridad* shared their attitudes towards prayer but they do not mention any affiliation to a local church or Parish. *Aparecida* shares that “prayer is important.” However, she shares:

I don't pray every day. I pray in Spanish. Since I grew up in a Hispanic household, *la Santa Maria* [the Hail Mary] or other prayers were thought to me in Spanish, till I went to a Catholic School in Middle School that I learned the Our Father. I always said the *Padre Nuestro* [the prayer of the Our Father in Spanish].

⁴⁹³ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁴⁹⁴ Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

I was so used to my household prayers, teaching them to me in Spanish.⁴⁹⁷

Caridad also shares that “some days is good to thank the Lord for everything he has done. Not only for when you are in need, you also have to thank God! For being here, healthy, in peace. I pray in English because I think it is better for me.”⁴⁹⁸

Each of the participants was asked to expand on the question: *To whom do they go when they are in sorrow or in need?* The majority of the participants noted in the preliminary questionnaire they go to a family member. However, listening to their lived experiences, there is a shift based on their narratives that show that more than half of the group or seven Latinas are inclined to go to God or pray for divine intercession when they are in sorrow or in need. *Rosa de Lima* shares: “When there is nothing else, when we do not have money or are sick, we always know that there is still someone who watches us all.”⁴⁹⁹ *Los Angeles* shares her great devotion towards Mary and she says that she goes to her when in sorrow or in need:

Mary has been a real role model, especially as a woman. She is someone that any person can relate to especially women with the struggles that she went through. She is very humble. She did not have much or a nice place or anything, but she knew that God would always be on her side, and she believed in that, and she affirmed in that, and she carried on to the point that she died, even when she saw her own Son being tortured. She could not do anything about it, but just be there in that presence. So, I always think of her as being like a strong force, but also submissive in a way with her presence, because she is not. Whenever we see the

⁴⁹⁷ Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 16, 2014.

⁴⁹⁸ Caridad, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁴⁹⁹ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

operations she has made, even in the Bible. Whenever she speaks is not in a loud way, it is more in a silent way. It is just her presence there, her physical presence there. I am your mother, who else do you have? Even I have my biological parents, for me she is a strong one. So, she is usually my go to as a role model as a woman in Christ.⁵⁰⁰

Rosario shares: “I try to stick mainly with God and the Holy Spirit when I am going to a test or need wisdom. I pray for the fruits of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁰¹ In the case of *Milagros* and *Aparecida*, they both noted they do not pray every day but they both go to God in sorrow. *Milagros* shares:

When I am in bed I ask for my grandparents who are there in Nicaragua and they are alone. Or when my mother says: *oh! your grandmother is sick*, or something like that, that is when I get worried and I start praying to God, but other than that it is just silently prayers.⁵⁰²

Aparecida also shares:

I always come back to God. I feel like I don’t want to be fake to him. I pray for more wisdom and guidance because I don’t want to be like a young teenager that she always talks to God when she needs something; often times we do that in struggle. I see God like if he was my mom and my father; mostly as an authority, but this is how my parents thought me to see him.⁵⁰³

Two participants in the group, *Caridad* and *Candelaria*, of Cuban descent, both noted that they identify as Catholics and that prayer is important in their lives, and both

⁵⁰⁰ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

⁵⁰¹ Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

⁵⁰² Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

⁵⁰³ Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 16, 2014.

shared when expressing their attitudes toward prayer that their families practice *Santería*. *Caridad* openly shares that her “*Santos* [Saints] come to mind in time of need but you have to put your part in it. It is not like asking for something material and it is not overnight. You have to wait and put your part.”⁵⁰⁴ In contrast, *Candelaria* shares her struggle as Catholic and being born in a family, who practices *the religion*:

Growing up, it was almost a conflict for me because I was going to Catholic School in Miami that it was very specific in Roman Catholic practices, but then at home they always said that this is the same thing; there are just different ways to see it. So, there was always a conflict to me: *Am I doing something wrong? Do my parents not know? Is this ok?*⁵⁰⁵

Candelaria continues, “Whenever I have a problem, I go to church, I go to the altar and I just sit and I pray and I talk to God.”⁵⁰⁶ *Candelaria* also shares about being witness of her mother:

My mom is super strong, *como luchadora* [like a fighter], she created a business and she has been running it for over 20 years, she came from Cuba, she learned English, she put her kids in the best private schools and she did that from nothing...so, she is an inspiration and I can see now that she has kept a family together by sacrificing, by staying and not giving up on her relationship so her girls can grow up with a mom and dad in the same house. And I wonder if that is what I am doing...I wonder if when I am her age, I will go through what they are

⁵⁰⁴ Caridad, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

going through now.⁵⁰⁷

Other participants such *Lujan, Catalina, Chiquinquirá and la Merced* also said that they go to their mothers in times of sorrow or in need, which shows that the second source this group most likely go to after divine intervention is their maternal figures. *Catalina* shares: “Oh, my Mom! [see immigration narrative] ...She is the person I always look up to...she played a big influence on me.⁵⁰⁸ *Chiquinquirá* also shares:

I go to my mom. Me and my mom have a very especial relationship. We are not just mother and daughter. We are more like best friends, we are like sisters. We share everything. We can talk about anything and it is just that relationship that has made her my person. She is the one that I can confide in for everything.⁵⁰⁹

Lujan shares that she goes to her father for some events, but mostly she goes to her mother:

My mom and I have a good relationship. I can speak to her about anything. My mom always has been very strong and moving forward type of person. For my mom, it takes a little bit longer to understand where I come from. That is why I go to my dad for some things, but I usually go to her most of the time.⁵¹⁰

Abuela/os: Casa de Dios (Grandparents: House of God)

Listening to *Latinas'* narratives and memories about their expressions of faith growing up, it is interesting to observe that their *abuela/os* had a role or influence in their faith as they grew up as women of faith. Most of the participants or ten Latinas shared narratives about their *abuela/os* teaching them or being witnesses of their faith as

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ *Catalina, Interview Protocol, December 11, 2014.*

⁵⁰⁹ *Chiquinquirá, Interview Protocol, October 31, 2014.*

⁵¹⁰ *Lujan, Interview Protocol, January 28, 2015.*

Catholics, and they kept those memories with them. Results from interviewing this generation (which is a group between 18-29 years old who were born between 1987-1998) show that *las abuelas* become part of an imaginary of what it means for them to embody Catholicism or what it means Catholicism and faith expressions and practices within the faith. Their narratives tell that their knowledge and love for God and the Catholic Church are the practices and attitudes passed by their mothers and grandmothers as they grew up within *la familia* [the family]. They associate Catholicism with *la abuela's* prayers, novenas, home altars, saints and other rituals unique to their countries of origin such as *Miercoles de Ceniza, Semana Santa, Navidad* [Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, Christmas] and so on. Now that they are young adults, there is a decrease on those practices in the majority of the group due to the fact that their grandmothers no longer live at home with them, or are still in the Country of origin. However, the participants joyfully and nostalgically express those memories and they come to mind in times of sorrow or need.

Listening to interviews there are two observed dynamics. The first dynamic shows that half of the group (*Catalina, Luján, Los Angeles, Rosario, La Merced and Caridad*) are witnesses of their *abuelas'* faith expressions, practices and lives as sacred, even though they did not teach them directly, but they observed their *abuelas* [grandmothers] expressions of faith. These participants are less likely to practice or participate in the same way and intensity in young-adulthood, than when they were younger or when their *abuelas* visit home. Also, there seems to be a high respect and duty in what concern to the teachings and practices of the *abuela/os* [grandmothers or grandfathers] within the faith. *Catalina* notes:

We go to Church when my grandmother is here. Every time that I did see her, I knew: *Oh, it's time to go to Church!* and she would always pray. She is a very religious woman and this is the only way I picture her. She has a very especial role in my faith. She did not teach me but she would make me go to Church here. When you go to Church in Colombia, it is totally different. In Colombia Catholicism is very strong compared to here. It is there, it influences people. Because I see my grandma and she is Catholic and she pray every day and go to Mass every day, like my dad's aunt too. They do novenas in Christmas and it keeps the family together. Here not everybody does novenas or people do not know. This makes a major difference.⁵¹¹

Lujan also describes about witnessing her *abuela's* faith:

I identify myself as Catholic. I went to an Episcopal School but this did not affect me that much as what my parents passed to me and their parents passed to them as Catholics. When my grandmother (from my mom's side and the one from Spain) stays with us, she always prays the Rosary. She has not forgotten about Jesus and God.⁵¹²

She continues:

My *abuelita* [granny], my father's mom, was very religious. She was also very humorous for everything, even when she was hurting, and I am so looking forward to that. We would go in the morning to Church and she encouraged not eating anything before Church, I don't know why! [smiles]. She would always like to eat together after Church. Half of everything that I know in my faith is

⁵¹¹ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁵¹² Lujan, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2015.

because of my *abuelita*. She had a *repisa* [altar] with Jesus. *Cuando llegamos a la casa* [when we got home] we had to give him a kiss in the forehead. I always remember that because we would never be able to leave the house if we didn't.⁵¹³

Los Angeles shares:

My grandmother from my mom's side has been a great influence as a strong witness in my life. She raised four kids and her personality is very strong. I feel sometimes that I take some of those qualities. When my dad left, she was always there. She is that strong presence that teaches you how to keep going, and she shows her affection on that and that influences me.⁵¹⁴

Rosario notes about her grandparents:

They are super Catholic. They participate in retreats. I am not sure that my grandparents understand that teenagers or young people have the ability to seek God. I am not sure if they fully understand my faith. Every time we go to Lakeland, because they do not live here, we go to Church and they don't even ask. It is just, we go. It is a rule, we have to go. Everything that they offer religiously we have to go. They do have an important role in my life, especially in my faith formation. I think if they would not be Catholic, we would not be Catholic.⁵¹⁵

La Merced joyfully shares:

I remember *los dichos de mi abuelo* [the sayings of my grandfather]. It was kind of those proverbs. He was very wise. Always whenever he sits down and talk to me about that, you knew what he was talking about. With *mi abuela* [my

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

⁵¹⁵ Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

grandmother], it was more like going with her *al mercado* [to the supermarket], I would hold *la bolsa* [the groceries bag] or when she would be cooking, she would ask me to help: *Pelame estas papas* [peel this potatoes]. I just enjoy her company! We would go to *procesiones* [processions] *en Ayacucho* [in Ayacucho] and my brother would carry *la Cruz* [the Cross]. We usually do *las alfombras para Semana Santa* [the carpets for Holy Week]. My family usually decorates *alfombras de flores para semana santa en el pueblo* [carpets made with flowers for Holy Week in the town] on the street. I remember going to Mass with My family in occasion of *las bodas de oro* [golden wedding] for my grandparents' anniversary. For my *abuelo* and *abuela*, I call them *máma Juana y papá Rodrigo*, out of respect. *Máma Juana*, she is for all, her *nietos y bisnietos* [grandchildren and great grandchildren], our mother.⁵¹⁶

Caridad shares:

With my *abuela*, we get along very well. She has always been there for us. She has been a great grandmother and even my parents raised me, she was part. When I was little we used to live with her because my parents didn't have a house, so we used to live with her. My faith was passed through my *abuela*, and I think that is true for everyone in my family. When I was little, my mom did not want to bring us into the religion because she wanted us to see and choose, so they would bring us to the *fiestas* [celebrations].⁵¹⁷

In contrast with the six participants above, five participants (*Rosa de Lima, Chiquinquirá, Milagros, Aparecida and Candelaria*) shared how their *abuela/os*

⁵¹⁶ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁵¹⁷ Caridad, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

(grandmothers or grandfathers) had passed and taught the faith to them with such love and dedication. Narratives show that the participants, whose *abuela/os* shared with them and taught the faith to them, are more likely to deeply remember and currently practice those expressions of faith. Also, those practices and encounter with God through them impacted who they are now and how they live their faith and values as Latina Catholics. In addition, this last group of participants shared some of the religious practices and devotions in their countries of origin, while sharing their experiences with their *abuelas* (grandmothers). *Rosa de Lima* shared her memories from Perú, *Chiquinquirá* and *Milagros* from Nicaragua, *Aparecida* her memories from Honduras, and *Milagros* her memories from her *abuela* [grandmother] in Cuba.

Rosa de Lima shares:

My grandparents helped me to build my faith, especially my grandmother since I can't even remember, since I was 4 or 5, I think. She would take me to church with her, she would take me to any *procesión* [procession] with her, she would always take me and teach me. Teach me what is this, who is this. Teach me her beliefs, teach me how to pray, teach me how to sing. She loves to sing! and that is something that I acquired. She told me singing is just as important as praying.

When you sing, you are singing to him, you are enjoying it and he is enjoying it. I would always sing with her and I would always know the lyrics of every single Mass. We always shared the same love for God and for the Church. She was the first one to encourage me to always go to Him for the first resource...always.⁵¹⁸

Rosa de Lima also shares some religious expressions of faith living the faith in

⁵¹⁸ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

Lima, Peru:

I never knew what Santa Claus was until I came here. Christmas was baby Jesus being born. I grew up knowing that the gifts were my parents. Also, I remember *la Misa del Señor de los Milagros* [Jesus Lord of Miracles] which is our Patron Saint in Lima. When I was born, my mom took me to *el Señor de los Milagros* [The Lord of Miracles] *y me encomendó como diciendo que yo pertenezco al Señor de los Milagros* [and entrusted me to Jesus the Lord of Miracles, signifying that I belong to him], that I am his daughter. So, ever since I am very religious of him, every time I pray to him, I feel completely different; I feel the strength in me. For that month, in October, you are supposed to wear purple and go to his Masses every Sunday. There are so many people and we even decorate the streets, because we carry his image from neighborhood to neighborhood. We call it *Procesión del Señor de los Milagros* [Procession of the Lord of the Miracles]. As he is passing we throw roses at him and it is beautiful. You see disable people or with sick families still going there and crying to him. The streets get flooded with people. Everyone is in purpose, everyone is praying, everyone is crying. It's a beautiful thing that everyone from the same faith comes together [Rosa smiles, pauses and continues]: We still keep it in here! Every year in October, we still go to the Mass *del Señor de los Milagros* [The Lord of the Miracles]. We still dress my brother in purple and I dress in purple...we still continue that! The original meaning of purple comes from the time of slavery in Peru and our faith to *El Señor de los Milagros* [The Lord of Miracle].⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

Chiquinquirá also shared a similar experience with Rosa by bringing back memories of her faith in Nicaragua and Honduras:

Growing up, we used to go a lot to visit our grandmothers and my grandmothers are very religious in Nicaragua and Honduras. It was like a costume. We would just sit down or kneel by the bed before going to sleep, and we would pray an *Angel de la Guarda* [guardian angel prayer] so he could protect us during our sleep, *Padre Nuestro* [Our Father], *un Ave Maria* [a Hail Mary] and it was consistent every night. We still do it and it has become a costume in our lives. My *abuelos* [grandparents] have played a special role in my life. Even though they are not physically near me, they have always been there. But every time we would go, they relationship would grow more and more. In a way, they play a role in the person I am today. Their advice and presence has structured me and my sister the people we are today.⁵²⁰

Chiquinquirá continues:

My *abuelas* [grandmothers] both taught me, along with my mother of course, about Church, about religion, about God, and they just expanded on that as the years went by. Because you know when you are little, you do not pay much attention to that. But as you grow older, you realize the importance to have God in your life, the importance of your religious beliefs and to create a relationship with God. So, they have thought me a lot about that. I think I have a very beautiful relationship with them.⁵²¹

Like *Rosa de Lima*, who shared a great devotion and religious attitudes towards *El*

⁵²⁰ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*

Señor de los Milagros [The Lord of Miracles] in Lima, *Chiquinquirá* also brought back her memories towards *La Purísima* in Nicaragua [The Purest Virgin Mary]:

In Nicaragua, we have what they call *la Purísima* which is a celebration *a la Virgen* [to the Virgin Mary] and what they do is that the different houses make *altares con la Virgen* [Altars with the Virgin Mary] and they decorate them with flowers. It is very beautiful! and people usually make food or they make like little goodies for the kids, or they give out toys. So, what happens is you have big groups of people that walk around the neighborhoods and they sing to *la Virgen* [the Virgin Mary] because they have *canticos* [diminutive for songs or folk religious songs or sonnets] and they sing to her, *le rezan, le piden, o le agradecen por lo que ella les ha dado* [they pray to her, ask to her and thank to her for everything she has given to them] and they get goodies, but they have to sing in order to get the goodies. So if you do not sing, there is nothing! [Chiquinquirá smiles]. The people from the homes give the goodies. It is around Christmas, the first week of December [Advent]. This devotion is just amazing because despite of everything that is going on in the world now, people still find the will to do this. For me it is just beautiful. People still have that faith that God still exist. I love it!⁵²²

Milagros tells her story growing up before she received the Sacrament of First Communion:

Basically, I remember that all started before my communion. I would go to Mass on Sundays but I remember it was always with my grandmother. When she could

⁵²² Ibid.

not go, I would ask her: *Can I go to Mass by myself?* And she would allow me to go. So, that is how I started. And in terms of the whole celebration, I think she has been a great influence in me because she has been the one who told us: *Ok! even if we have so little, let's share it with the people!* so the whole thing of the devotion to *la Purisima* [The Purest Blessed Virgin Mary – devotion explained above and below], *el Divino Niño* [Divine Child Jesus] and other celebrations I have attended, it is “*to pay una promesa* [to pay a promise]. I know she does that a lot, but the other times, she says: *You do it because you have to; the little you have, it does not matter if you could share with someone else!*⁵²³

Milagros also shared her lived experiences of faith in Nicaragua:

I carry the *Divino Niño* [The Divine Jesus] in my neck. In Nicaragua, on July 20th is the day of *el Divino Niño* [The Divine Child], so we always saw: It is the day we give out gifts! ...[smiles], but not that day really! Because on that day my grandmother has taught us that this day is not about us, but it is about giving out to the kids, so we would do, and even now I would give her money. I helped her to make food for the kids to go out to different communities, like poor communities and give out the food out there, even though it is not allowed to feed the whole community, but it is just something that we could do to give back. Everyone in Nicaragua they do the same. On that day, they give to the kids, so, carrying it for me it is a reminder always that *if you have you could share!* My grandmother says always: *Oh, que el Divino Niño te proteja!* [May the Divine Child Jesus protect you!]. So, it's kind of I have her in a way with me, I carry her

⁵²³ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

with me on my neck.⁵²⁴

Aparecida shares: “I was raised in Honduras by my grandfather my first years of life and I came back when I was 4 or 5 years old. I go to my Country every year and the reason why I go it is because of my grandfather. I would see my grandfather all the time every single day.”⁵²⁵ She also continues bringing back memories from Honduras:

My grandfather always enforced us to pray. In Honduras is very different from here. Here my family does not sit around to eat, but over there, we always sat down to eat. He would always want us to sit around to pray and eat. Where I lived in Honduras, is a *pueblo* [small town] and there is a huge Church, and every time we passed around the Church, he would have us *persinar* [bless our foreheads]. It does not matter what we were doing, we had to turn around, look at the church and bless ourselves. That is when I pass by a church here, I bless myself; even in front of the Chapel of Saint Anthony.⁵²⁶

Candelaria shares:

My great grandmother has a lot to do with my spirituality. Maybe now because it is like a hard time [*cries in a low voice and continues*]. I always cry when I think of her. She was very spiritual. I feel like the women in my family have always been very matriarchy; very powerful. She was one of them. She is a Cuban poet. She wrote and published books in Cuba. She traveled for her books, even she got invited to an international book fair before she passed away. She wrote me *un soneto* [a sonnet] and I have it in her hand writing. I framed it! She was very

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ *Aparecida, Interview Protocol, July 14, 2014.*

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

spiritual. She used to have what they call *misas* [masses] in her house, but again it was always intertwining with the other religion [*Santeria*]. She was very big against abortion...she was the one in my family with an aggressive believe on this. She died at 98, but she was a hundred percent in her mind. She knew that she was dying. She got pneumonia and she called me and said: *Ya yo no puedo esperar más, ya yo me tengo que ir* [I cannot wait any longer, it's time to go]. I feel a lot of times that she is with me [Candelaria starts crying in a low voice] and I feel sometimes that maybe she would want me to be a little stronger. I imagine her sometimes like disapproving.⁵²⁷

Espacios Sagrados de Oración (Sacred Prayer Spaces)

Latinas also shared about those religious spaces and symbols at their home which are important in their journey of faith as Catholics. Rosa de Lima shares:

My mom is very religious; she has a little altar in her room, so every time that something bad happens, or I am struggling with school, or I am sick, or my brother is sick. She will always light a candle and just pray...we just pray there. Every time we feel that there is something wrong or we feel alone, we just go and pray there. It is like our little church inside home. It makes us feel better and we feel that we are not alone. You just feel completely different after you go and pray there. Also, in my living room, we always remember to say thank you before the image of *la ultima Cena* [the last Supper]. We always remember to be thankful to him and even my brother says: *Let's pray before we eat!* It symbolizes what we

⁵²⁷ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

usually do and it reminds us every day.⁵²⁸

Lujan also shared:

At my father's house, we have *una repisa* [a little altar] where Jesus is on the cross. We also have some Holy Water in the wall. Every week my grandmother put Holy Water. To me this is that He is always watching. At my house [*Lujan* lives with her mother as noted above] it is different, we do not have that much.⁵²⁹

Los Angeles, la Merced and *Chiquinquirá*, besides of sharing about their sacred spaces of prayer at home, also shared about their personal religious articles that they carry with them as part of their devotions to God:

I have a Rosary in my bag and the reason why I carry it is not for what most people do, which is superstition...that is not it. For me is more, protection. I always feel the need to carry it...or in case I am stocked somewhere, just I pray the Rosary. I also got this keychain [she shows keychains from her school bag] when I went on retreat, but of course! this one of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* [Our Lady of Guadalupe] for whatever reason when I am around I always see this image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. For me, it is so strong, especially for what she said to Juan Diego, that even though he was afraid, she said to him: *I am your mother, why would you be afraid?* So, I always think something beautiful about that!⁵³⁰

She continues describing her sacred space at home:

I have Our Lady of the Streets. She is in blue clothing and she is carrying Jesus.

⁵²⁸ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁵²⁹ *Lujan*, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2015.

⁵³⁰ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

Now they associate her more with poverty and with those women in need...I know that the Religious order of the Sisters of Life, they have that Mary as their image...and they associate it more with those women that are seeking. Another statue that I have is Our Lady of Guadalupe, but in this one she looks like a child, most do not. My mom also has one statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We also have Rosaries. There are times I look at these images and I smile.⁵³¹

La Merced shares:

I have my First Communion Cross. I have it in my dorm. I used to wear it all the time. But I took it off. And then, I have a Rosary hanging in my room. *Es de mi madrina* [I got it from my Grandmother]. It is beautiful. I just keep it there. I use to pray the Rosary. When I hold the Rosary, it reminds me that I am called to holiness. It reminds me, that this is my faith. To me it is kind of a reminder that I am Catholic. This is what I believe on, even if it does not say it there.⁵³²

She continues talking about her sacred symbols at home:

I have a picture of Mary. My mom used to read the Bible to me in Spanish when I was little and I still have the Bible at my home, *mi primera Biblia!* [My First Bible]. She would always read to me every passage, but I always remember Mary because she is the Mother, and I would always relate it with my mom. I always remember Mary in the passages. I used to watch also *la Rosa de Guadalupe* [the Rose of Guadalupe] with my mom and I cried when I watched it.⁵³³

Milagros, besides of the narratives she shared above about *El Divino Niño* [The

⁵³¹ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

⁵³² La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁵³³ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

Divine Child Jesus] in Nicaragua, she also shared about sacred spaces and devotions at home:

The wall of my bed has *el Corazón de Jesús* [The Sacred Heart of Jesus] that I had since I was a little girl. I don't remember exactly when I got it but I remember that it was in my room when I was in Nicaragua. Then when I came here I guess the wall was empty and then I did not even remember that I had that when I was there. Then once my dad came back from a trip and he brought it. I remembered: *Oh! I had this over there!* and I asked him: *Oh! what did you bring him?!* And he said: *oh! because your grandmother wanted you to have it here!* Then, I linked that she wants us to be protected all the time in a way that we don't forget our roots and where we come from. It is the one thing that I could say that I pray to or I pray with.⁵³⁴

She continues describing that sometimes they light a candle at home:

I think it is a way of remembering and keeping in the Spirit. It is just simply that I remember the days going to Church and they lit a candle and this means something. It is like a symbolism, like a prayer. We lit the candle to *el Divino Niño o la Virgen María* [The Divine Jesus or the Virgin Mary].⁵³⁵

Aparecida also shares like *Milagros* that she keeps the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a special way and He continues reminding her of her grandfather and the memories of him in Honduras [See above]:

El Sagrado Corazon de Jesús [The Sacred Heart of Jesus] is in my wallet. It is interesting! When I was younger, my mom always had a frame of *el Sagrado*

⁵³⁴ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

⁵³⁵ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

Corazón, always! I always question myself why, but the reason why I carry it with me it is because I had a major lost in my family; I told you I live with four people in my family. My father like I said, immigrated and he was very hard working, so as a father, he wasn't really there for me, more like a provider. So my mom sent me to Honduras when I was 6 or 7 months old and I was raised in Honduras by my grandfather my first years of life. When my grandfather passed away two years ago, that was like losing my dad. In the little brochure of *la funeraria* [the funerary], *mi abuela puso El Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* [my grandmother put the Sacred Heart of Jesus]. It has a little prayer in the back that is why I carry it, because it symbolizes my *father* (Grandfather).⁵³⁶

She continues: "My mom is Catholic, so those images around my house are symbolism of my mom's religion which is my religion as well, but she puts them as a reminder; she puts them around the house."⁵³⁷ *Chiquinquirá*, like *Aparecida*, shares she has an image in her wallet:

I have *el Divino Niño* [The Divine Jesus] and I carry it in my wallet that my grandmother from my dad's side gave me. She is very devoted to him, so she gave it to me and my sister so we could have him. For me it is a symbol of protection to always have him with me. I have been wearing lately *el crucifijo* [A crucifix]. My dad gave me this [*Chiquinquirá* shows it to me]. I have one in my room. It is a Catholic symbol for me and the presence of God is always with me. It is kind of like a reminder that he is always there.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ *Aparecida*, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

⁵³⁷ *Aparecida*, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

⁵³⁸ *Chiquinquirá*, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

Chiquinquirá continues sharing about images at her home:

We have a portrait of *El Corazón de Jesús* [The Sacred Heart of Jesus] in our living room because this is where we share a lot of family moments and we spend a lot of time there. We just have the presence of *El Corazón de Jesús* there. We like to acknowledge that *Jesús* [Jesus] is there. We also have *una Virgen* [A Virgin Mary] in the living room and we also pray to her. This is part of our religious beliefs and the belief that having their presence there, it is going to always remind you that they are always there and they are always protecting you.⁵³⁹

Catalina, who lives on Campus, shares: “I have a Rosary. It is a way to know that God is there for me. It is actually in Colombian colors.”⁵⁴⁰ *Rosario* shared her experience different from other participants:

I do not think my family was strong Catholic in general when I was growing up, but stuff kept occurring, like the immigration or the crisis with my health when I was three years old. My mom was not very religious and she kept crying. So, one day she decided to go to the Church in Brickell, St. Jude, and she got the *estampitas* [prayer cards] and she would bring them home and we would pray. So they became devoted to St. Jude.⁵⁴¹

After reading the narratives from *Rosa de Lima*, *Los Angeles*, *La Merced*, *Milagros*, *Aparecida*, *Chiquinquirá* and *Catalina*, all of them use a language of remembrance when they refer to the images or sacred spaces that they hold or have at

⁵³⁹ *Chiquinquirá*, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁵⁴⁰ *Catalina*, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁵⁴¹ *Rosario*, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

home. They note that these symbols are a reminder of their faith, God's presence and *acompañamiento* (accompaniment) in their everyday life. *La Merced* notes: "It reminds me that I am called to holiness and that I am Catholic." *Milagros* notes: "Lighting a candle is a way of remembering." *Aparecida* notes that her mom puts the religious images as "a reminder." *Chiquinquirá* notes that these images are "a reminder that He is always there." Catalina says about her Rosary that "it reminds you that God is there for me." In the case of *Caridad* and *Candelaria*, they continue telling their lived experience as Catholics and how their religious practices and beliefs within *Santería* intertwine in their lives. They both shared the experience of *La Caridad del Cobre* or *Our Lady of Caridad* as their *guardian angel* or *protective Saint*. *Caridad* describes:

I have my bracelet that my *padrino* [Godfather] gave me and I have here my guardian angel *que es Ochún* [*Caridad*] that protects us. I have my *Santos* (Saints) at my house in a little table *en la sala* [in the living room]. *Caridad* is my guardian angel but she is also my mother. I imagine her dressed in yellow...she loves her children. So, every time I hear the Virgin Mary, it catches immediately my attention because she is my guardian angel. If I hear somebody talking and I hear the Virgin Mary and *la Caridad del Cobre* [Our Lady of Charity] I am already dragged. *Tengo la oreja ahí!* [I have my ears there! – she smiles]. We celebrate her feast on October 4th and we dress in yellow. *Yo le pido a ella* [I pray to her]: "Thank you for everything you have done for me" *y le prendo una velita* [and I lit her a candle] and give her *dulce*, like yellow candy. My grandma thought me all of this. When I was born, she told my mom: *El Angel de la Guarda de ella es*

Caridad [her guardian angel is *Caridad*].⁵⁴²

Candelaria shares:

The bracelet I have is just a round image of *la Virgen de la Caridad* [Our Lady of Charity]. As I grew up that Virgin was always represented to me as sort of the Patron. In that religion, you are born with a protective *Santo* [Saint] and they translate this into the different Virgin Mary's that we typically call for example Our Lady of Charity or other representations of Mary, but with different names. I was always taught of that image: *She protects you and she is there with you!* so I grew up looking after her. It sorts of bonded me to the image of the Saint. Having her is a protective way.⁵⁴³

In contrast with *Caridad*, *Candelaria* continues sharing her struggle of trying to negotiate her beliefs as Roman Catholic and the beliefs and practices from the world she is coming from:

I believe in Catholicism. I do not go and pray to *los Santos* [the Saints]. I go and I pray in a church. But then, I sort of feel that I grew up with that, so you can't deny and believe in it too. It is almost like if you deny that, you are turning your back on your parents and on these protective Saints that have been born with you, on this religion that you were born into, that has guided you and help you through life. So, I always make sure to keep in mind that for whatever the reason, they are there, and they are part of me, and they are part of where I was born. My mom in her home has a room with all the articles that represent all our Saints.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² *Caridad*, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁵⁴³ *Candelaria*, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

She adds:

One of the things that I love from the religion is the dance, the music, the stories. That is one of the things that draws me to it. When I have a problem in my relationship, I always sort of ask her [Caridad/Ochun], give me *la dulzura* [the sweetness] ...or being able to calm the situation and be happier.⁵⁴⁵

She continues describing how she faces this dynamic as a mother and within her household with the father of her daughter:

My boyfriend does not believe in this and he does not want my daughter to grow up thinking that she has to believe in that. So, we don't have anything in my house. But, also in my mom's home, you walk in and she has a cross on top of the door. Even in that room she has rosaries, they have *la Caridad* and a photo of Mary [she pauses, tears come from her eyes and she starts crying in a low voice]. My mom usually tells me: *Put at least at your home an image of La Caridad* [Our Lady of Charity] so she knows she is there. That is why sometimes I wonder how strong I should be. I usually talk to *La Virgen de la Caridad* [Our Lady of Charity]. I talk to Mary. I just pray to God, I pray the Rosary and when I pray to God and I go straight to the altar in church.⁵⁴⁶

Also, besides of *Caridad* and *Candelaria*, *Chiquinquirá* and *Rosario* shared their attitudes towards Mary, while describing their sacred places and devotions. *Chiquinquirá* notes on *La Purísima* [the Purest Virgin Mary]:

I imagine her *pura, por decir una mujer que tiene valores, que tiene respeto, una mujer espiritual, por decir no perfecta, pero en ese sentido como* [she pauses and

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

think]. *No se la palabra que quiero decir para expresártelo, pero en otras palabras para mí eso es lo que ella representa* [pure, to say a woman that has values, that has respect, a spiritual woman, not perfect but in this sense. I do not know the word that I want to say to express you, but in other words, to me this is what she represents].⁵⁴⁷

Rosario notes:

I see *la Virgencita* [The Virgin Mary] pure, clean...the blue mantel. Looking down like a mother image. She is the motherly image and even that I do not pray to her directly, I feel that she can intercede with God.⁵⁴⁸

Imagining Mary: *La Virgencita*

At the end of the questionnaire, all the participants were asked directly to express their attitudes about the Virgin Mary. The exercise of sharing stories about Mary was a prayerful and sacred moment. Listening to the interviews, all of the participants took their time to reflect and prayerfully respond to this question. Also, all of them lowered and slowed down the tone of their voice while responding, making pauses. Listening to their imaginary of Mary, they all describe the image of the mother and the majority of the group (nine participants) associated the motherhood image with Mary as the mother of Jesus.

Chiquinquirá, Los Angeles, Aparecida and *Rosario* introduced in their own words *la pureza de María* (the purity of Mary) through her maternity. They implicitly referenced events from the annunciation and incarnation of Jesus and Mary's *fiat* to accept God's will and remain faithful. They presented the image of motherhood and the

⁵⁴⁷ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁵⁴⁸ Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

virtues of holiness, humility, purity (pureza), innocence and strength in her pregnancy and suffering.

Chiquinquirá shares:

I think of that little statue that we have in my house [she smiles]. I think of that little statue because that is the image that I have in my mind of who she is. It is like a symbol. *El Ave María* [the Hail Mary] comes to my mind; *La Purísima* [The Purest Virgin Mary] comes to my mind. Mary is the mother of Jesus; she is the woman that gave life to a man that has done so much [stops and reflects]. She is just pure divinity. What I mean by pure divinity is that she is *pura y es divina*. *Es pura no solo por ser la madre de Jesús, sino también por todos los milagros, por todas las bendiciones que ella también da y por eso ella también es divina! Es pura y divina!* [She is pure and divine. She is pure, not only for all the miracles, but also for all the blessings that she gives. That is why she is divine!] Can I say it in Spanish? [I responded: ¡Yes, of course!]. *Pura es alguien que transmite pureza, alguien que es como transparente, alguien que la gente te ve y ven algo en ti que no pueden explicar. No importa en qué lugar esté, pero hay algo en esta persona* [pure is someone who brings purity. Someone who is transparent. Someone, that when people see you, they see something they cannot explain. No matter in what place they are, there is something in that person that makes her stand out. They don't even have to say anything]. *El simple hecho de que ella siendo madre, siempre fue pura de espíritu. Se me viene a la mente el nacimiento de Jesús que ella siendo tan pura y Virgen, la destacó entre todas las mujeres. Pura! De cuerpo y alma. A pesar de todo el sufrimiento que ella pasó, ella siempre noble y*

siempre dispuesta a ayudar [the simple fact of her being a mother, she was always pure in spirit. It comes to my mind the birth of Jesus and how much she stood out among women as pure and Virgin. Pure! In body and soul. In spite of all the suffering she went through, she was always selfless and ready to help and serve].⁵⁴⁹

Los Angeles shares:

I obviously think Mother, first of all. I think protection, guidance, humility, perseverance. Of course, like an image of how we usually see her, holding Jesus, and being that maternal figure with love and compassion. She is my ultimate role model as a woman, especially in my life style living out the faith, obviously after my biological mom. But she is usually my go to person, especially when it comes to living as a woman in this world. It is really hard! Usually I go to her when I read things about her and a lot of literature, specifically from Saint Louis de Montfort and of course Saint John Paul the second. I just read things that they write. Usually with this image that I have, I imagine her as someone who was given such a big role to be the Mother of God. She had this strong trust, knowing that things would be okay even though she was scared, and that is how I connect myself with her because I am afraid of a lot of things. It is normal! But I always try to imitate her in that way, trusting God and not trying to fight it. She fully accepted, she was vulnerable to him and she was very humble.⁵⁵⁰

Aparecida shared:

The image that comes to my mind is Mary with her veil. I see her as a respectful

⁵⁴⁹ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁵⁵⁰ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 2014.

and authority figure. She is not God but I see her right there next to him; I see her as the Holy Mother of God. What I mean by Holy is that she was in a way innocent. We all know the story of Mary. She is innocent, new. When you think of holy, you think of starting over. Everybody that is considered Holy like the saints, before they were considered saints they had a past. With Mary, there was a start in her life. She was innocent. In my life, I can identify with her. I feel that in decision making, she had to make a decision. So, for me that would be that aspect. What do you do? Do you choose right or wrong? And what is wrong and what is right? She was so innocent. She didn't know what was going on and she decided to follow. I see her strong in decision making, taking upon the challenge that she was probably going to be judged by her significant other and by the world itself [silence]. Also, she always stayed the same. She always remained the same, even after they did not believe about her pregnancy. She always remained in her beliefs, which is really important, especially back in the days when most people didn't believe, and this young woman would just come and say: Hey! I am pregnant and it's Jesus, God! She was able to sustain and remain at that time.⁵⁵¹

Rosario shares:

Peace, purity, calmness, a smile. I feel like every time she looks at me she smiles. She would not look at you like mad. I feel like if God is mad at you, she would be there smiling. I imagine mom, motherhood. She embodies everything. I feel like once I become a mom, that is when I will be more connected with Mary. Also, purity; I may not be pure, but I reflect purity. For me purity is like *pureza*

⁵⁵¹ Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

[pureness]. Every time that I pray to God I say: *Que tu luz brille en* [may your light shine in] my values and morals. I may not be pure completely but I still have morals and values. *Pureza* [purity] to me is innocence; because at the end of the day we are all innocents; the truth to yourself. I knew she was strong from the story when she tells Joseph [she stops, smiles and says]. But think about it! Think about it! You have a child in you and it is not his! Today, people are getting divorced because of that. Normal people! Do you image if in the world of today God decides to make me Mary and I say: *I am pregnant and it is not your child*. Specially at that time you would get stoned to death. How strong did she remain in her faith and she did not ask: *Talk to him! Appear to him and let him know!* But she remained. Imagine being Mary. She is so strong that she also saw her child dying. Imagine that you are told: *You have a child to die*, but of course you as a human forget. But imagine, you remember like Mary that he was made to die for all our sins. Have you ever thought of that? You raise your child, you teach him, you love him, you laugh with him, but you know. I would not be able to do this.⁵⁵²

Rosa de Lima and La Merced, both of Peruvian heritage, share the image of the nurturing, caring and selfless mother. They both present the image of a personal and intimate relationship as they associate the maternal love of Mary with the love and care of their mothers at home. *Rosa de Lima* shares:

The first word that comes to my mind is nurturing; she is my mom at home. I imagine the caring and the love of a mother. She is Jesus' mother and my mother,

⁵⁵² Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

and my mom's mother and our mother in general [smiles and pauses]. Someone I can definitively talk to and I just express myself and thank her for help. She is someone who is always there for me.⁵⁵³

La Merced shares:

I think of my mom [pauses]. I don't know, I just think of her like holding Jesus in her arms, because of course she is the mother, she is my mom. I think of the show, *La Rosa de Guadalupe* [The Rose of Guadalupe. She smiles and adds]. I used to watch it with my mom all the time. I think of the made crowning. We used to do that in Church with my mom. We used to crown Mary. This was in my Catholic Church from first to eight grade. Mary is the mother who looks over me. When I always think of Mary, I think of my mom and when I see Mary, I think what my mom has done for me. I think of Mary more like she is working with my mom, kind of like, within her! Because I know my mom *es una de esas madres que hace todo por sus hijos* [she is one of those mothers who does everything for her children] and when I say *todo todo* [everything, everything], *ella piensa primero en sus hijos que en ella misma. Muere por sus hijos, moriría por sus hijos* [she would think first of her children before her. She dies to herself for her children and she would die for her children]. Maybe she got that gift not just to help me. I think, her gift *es tan dulce* [is her tenderness]. I know she wants to help people and I think that this gift she gets it from Mary or Mary influencing her, within her. *Una persona tan dulce, tan buena gente, tan humilde* [a tender, kind

⁵⁵³ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

and humble person].⁵⁵⁴

Milagros and *Candelaria* continue describing the image of the caring and selfless mother, particularly when they poetically highlight on the suffering and strength of Mary. *Milagros* shares: “Mother, *bondad* [goodness], *cariño* [loving care] suffering, *fuera* [strength]. She is the Mother of God.”⁵⁵⁵ *Candelaria* notes:

I always think of Mary like the mother. I always think of Mary like the image of her with the child; the carrying image. I always think of her not like a happy Mary, but almost like a sad Mary [in a low voice tears pour down her face, pauses and continues]. If I had to envision Mary I think of her with her head top to the side, with a child, and a tear. To me she is the ultimate martyr, the ultimate woman of sacrifice, the ultimate peacemaker, like mother Teresa, without anger responding to the people. I see her strong for her people but taking the suffering in silence.⁵⁵⁶

Lujan, *Catalina* and *Caridad* associate their attitudes towards Mary with the memories, images or stories they have seen or heard at home. *Lujan* and *Catalina* make reference to the nativity of Jesus while describing these images, and *Caridad* shares images of Our Lady of Charity. *Lujan* shares:

The bracelet is the first thing that comes to my mind. That bracelet has also other saints and my *abuela* [grandmother] has one too. I picture her as I can see her, but when I think of her, I think of her with a veil. I think of her with a long hair [pauses, smiles and says]. Don't tell me why! I picture her with a very calm face,

⁵⁵⁴ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁵⁵⁵ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

⁵⁵⁶ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, November 2014.

very humble, very giving; that is how I imagine her to be. Very generous. She is one of our Saints. We have a nativity at home, so what I describe about her is what I see in the nativity. We always put her next to Jesus.⁵⁵⁷

Catalina shares:

There is a photo that we have of the Virgin Mary at my house. I think of angels. On Christmas, our tree does not have a star. It has an angel. So, I just think it is ironic because here we say Santa, but in Colombia we say *El Niño Dios* [Baby Jesus]. I think this is a big difference. I know I can pray to her. I don't know how I imagine her. I only think of a picture [she pauses and continues:] I feel she would be a strong woman and a very influential person especially to women.⁵⁵⁸

Caridad, remembering *La Virgen de la Caridad* [Our Lady of Charity], describes the following:

She loves her children, the color yellow, the river [she stops and adds]. Because for me Mary is *Ochun*. She loves the river, she loves her kids and she is identified by wearing yellow. And to be honest, *hay que decir que yo soy igualita!* [I must say that I am exactly like her!] When I went to Puerto Rico, I loved the river, it was so refreshing. I saw a lot of my culture that I express here in my house. I saw it there everywhere, and to me it was just fascinating. That is why Mary is my mother. I see her as my guardian angel, as my protector as my mother. She loves me and I love her. That is how I see her.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷ Lujan, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2015.

⁵⁵⁸ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁵⁵⁹ Caridad, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

Final Words: “Allow me to Speak”

At the end of the questionnaire, the group was asked to add final words about the questionnaire and interview protocol overall. Most of the participants shared at this final stage some words about the struggles and opportunities of being Latinas. *Candelaria* shares:

For me particularly as a Cuban, maybe it is the nature of the struggle of the Country from where you come from, that sort of sets the tone for an attitude of everything as a struggle. Sometimes I wonder that if I get that, my own feeling of that, from my mom and from my family because they are like that. Sometimes I see people that have less and they are happier and even if they have less, are we really treating others unfairly? Sometimes I wander about that.⁵⁶⁰

Lujan shares:

Before, thinking on my identity was not such a big thing. These questions opened up my mind to think that maybe there is something more than the word identity. There is more meaning behind my identity as a Latina Catholic. A lot of Hispanics don't think they are worth much. I feel like everybody is worth. I don't think that everything should not be based on identification. The challenges are that people look at you differently.⁵⁶¹

Aparecida shares:

I see myself as a strong Latina. A fighter in the twenty first century, especially with everything that is going on. I would definitively describe myself as a soldier. A humble soldier. I face stereotypes. Be seen as someone less than anybody else

⁵⁶⁰ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁵⁶¹ Lujan, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2015.

due to the fact that you are not from here. I am not from here. It is that simple.

Anything foreign is going to affect you and the people around you. The challenge is being able to say: *This is who I am! And this is what I stand for!* Standing by something means I am a Latina Catholic.⁵⁶²

Rosa de Lima also shares:

Growing up, my grandma always told me to help people, because God always helped me and I was always blessed. I have an amazing family and I always felt blessed. She told me that there are people that are not as blessed as you. She always taught me to help people and the people in need, and that influenced me to go into nursing and into the medical field. As a woman in the United States, it is very hard. As a Catholic Hispanic woman, it is very hard. You don't encounter many people as you. There are not many people you can talk to, or people who can understand your beliefs, your background, and your culture. It is definitely very hard, but influences me to get into the medical field and help others. I am a hard-working woman with goals, views and priorities in life, not willing to let the society stereotypes me or let the society or my ethnicity to set me back or stop me from getting in my goals or dreams.⁵⁶³

Milagros shares:

In the Latino culture is about what you could do for others not for yourself. I wanted to be a doctor because, when I was in Nicaragua, I remember that there was this group of doctors that they were going to different countries and they would go doing surgery to kids that have lice and other. I was able to think that I

⁵⁶² Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

⁵⁶³ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

wanted to be a doctor because I want to be able to help all those kids. And then, growing up and seeing that it is not just being a doctor that you can help people. You can help in other ways like doing research. How can you improve somebody's life even if they can't get the surgery.⁵⁶⁴

She continues:

I would say because of my faith I could understand other people. It gives me insight of myself, of my roots and where I come from. Being a Latina it is not about you. It is about a big community. Just being in the U.S. you are able to make opportunities for yourself and your people [Rosario makes a long pause and continues]. Just because you are girls you are seeing very powerless. Being Latino, it affects us. So, I guess, it is important being strong and providing the strength to the people that you love. You have to encourage the people that they are not lesser than you. That make us fighters as girls, as Latinas, as minority.⁵⁶⁵

Chiquinquirá shares:

I really thought how my religion and my roots of being Latina have affected not only my life but the choices I make or I will make in my life. I want to be a doctor. I think that as a Latina in this career path, I can make changes. I can do things to make it better for people, not only Hispanics, but also for people of other races. I think everybody should be treated equally. There is still discrimination with Hispanics here in the U.S. and in the field. Maybe I am not going to fix it but will help by just being part of sharing my thoughts and my beliefs. Maybe I can

⁵⁶⁴ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

get together with other people and make a change.⁵⁶⁶

Catalina shared her thought on her faith and explicitly shared like *Los Angeles* and *La Merced*, the same struggle of living in between both cultures. *Catalina* shares:

This opens my mind that I really don't know a lot. I don't know what makes me Catholic. I did my first communion and I received *mi bautismo* [my baptism]. However, these are the practices, but it was very hard for me to even picture *La Virgen Maria*. And I never put the effort to go church. I am so into the U.S. culture that if I was living in Colombia, I would have known more about the questions and seek God differently. I would think of these things in a random day [she stops and tears comes from her eyes and she pauses].⁵⁶⁷

She continues:

I love being Colombian and Latina, but I never thought of my views and reactions on a lot of things as a Latina. I identify myself as Latina but I have grown and learned to identify myself more now than before. Since I got to meet more people and learn the language, I started to appreciate more the roots in me. Soccer brings me a lot to Colombia and connects me with my Colombian roots and the things that we do at home identify me. I love *ajiaco*, *empanadas*, *almojabanas*, and *jugo de Lulo* [local food such as soup, patties and natural juice]. This makes me feel that I am part of Colombia.⁵⁶⁸

Los Angeles shares:

I remember that there was a question that was asking if I consider myself Latina.

⁵⁶⁶ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁵⁶⁷ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

Even though I have my roots, in a lot of ways I don't reflect them one hundred percent. For example, there are a lot of people coming from Latin America. I don't feel identified like them. But even I was born in the U.S., I can't say that I am one hundred percent American.⁵⁶⁹

La Merced shares:

I am a woman. I know who I am in terms of me being woman. I know, *yo soy Latina, soy peruana* [I am Latina, I am Peruvian]. I identify as being on the fence, because *una mujer Latina* [A woman from Latin America] over there, is kind of different of a Latina woman here in the way we act. *Reputación* [Reputation] means a lot for my family. *Todo es: Que van a decir!* [Everything is what they are going to say]. I guess I carry my family's name. So, I am in between. Here is about you and be you, but there you are more as a community. You are your family.⁵⁷⁰

La Merced adds:

I am Peruvian. I am Catholic. I believe there is a God. I am still learning about the Catholic faith which is my faith. I stayed away from my faith and now I am coming back. I am not completely there but I want to be there and that is something I would like to work on and I describe myself as a hard worker woman as my mom. I should pray more and do more service for others.⁵⁷¹

Rosario shares also *la lucha* of being Latina and introduces her thoughts about Latina body:

⁵⁶⁹ Los Angeles, Interview *Protocol*, November 2014.

⁵⁷⁰ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*

When I think Hispanics in the United States, I don't think Argentinian, I don't think Colombian. I think Mexican or Cuban, because this is how society sees Hispanics. There are so many titles that society gives you, which you need to unpeel. You start labeling and identifying yourself based on how people see you. How do media see Hispanic women? Super sexual for example! I start thinking about the media. To be a human is required to be sexual. I tight in sexuality with God's love to me. You need to love your body. Why? Because God made me! People meet God in you!⁵⁷²

Los Angeles, Chiquinquirá, Aparecida, Rosa de Lima and Candelaria shared also their thoughts about their body in relationship with the social location as Latina Catholics. *Los Angeles* shares: "Media portrays the Hispanic woman always wearing tight clothes and being loud. Even in the American shows. I ask myself: *Where do I fit in?* I don't fit in the prototype of Latina."⁵⁷³

Chiquinquirá shares:

As Catholics, we belief in certain things. Me being Catholic allow me to see things in a certain way. I am going to speak about my family and what I was thought. I was always thought that your body is your temple. God is in your heart and your heart is in your body which is your temple. It is just something sacred to take care of your body inside and out. I think that the relationship with God also influences that. My body is something sacred. It is something that I treasure very much. My family taught me to see sexuality more like a spiritual thing, not necessarily physical one hundred percent. It is something that involves God. God

⁵⁷² Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

⁵⁷³ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

is involved in everything! This is part of my catholic identity. That is what I grew up with and this is part of who I am and what I believe. My parents thought me that, and their parents thought them that.⁵⁷⁴

She continues:

As a Latina, it is very hard in the US because women are seeing as sexual people. I think society should not change how you see yourself based on your roots. We are women of virtue, and most Latina culture tries to cultivate that in their kids.⁵⁷⁵

Aparecida shares:

You have to respect yourself, because it's your house, it's sacred, it's your temple. If you don't respect it and if your temple is broken down, who are you at that point. As a woman, especially, you have to respect your body. As a woman, you learn to discover yourself. If you are brought up in a very Catholic Tradition but you go out in the world, it is like a battle between your religion and yourself. Everything just comes by together.⁵⁷⁶

She continues:

We are seen as sexual figures. If you watch movies, we are always the sexy figure. We are the Latin. And this affects my body and how it is portrayed in the world for every Latina out here. Every understanding and portray of a Latina is a stereotype.⁵⁷⁷

Rosa de Lima shares:

These questions have made me think in depth of my own views, especially the

⁵⁷⁴ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁵⁷⁵ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁵⁷⁶ Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

⁵⁷⁷ Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

ones of my own self-image and my body. I never thought about it or had anybody asking me that, which is good, which makes me realize that I need to keep myself focus and I need to know and reflect on my own views in order to express them to people. This is a Catholic University, so religion was always there. It was a very small diverse and Hispanic University. I felt at home. Then, when I transferred to the other University it was a huge campus. I see that minority people or the amount of Hispanics is very limited. I would find myself not talking in Spanish. Somedays I would go and talk pure English. Definitely it gave me the strength to look for God on my own, because I want to and I have the need to go and talk to God.⁵⁷⁸

Candelaria shared:

I think my body has everything to do with my heritage and me being Latina. I always think of my marriage. I think that being married will bless our relationship. I always think that if we would do things like *como Dios manda* [How God commands]. I am a really good mom. I am very determined and smart. I am very honest but at the same time I am very weak. I think I owe so much to my mom. Every time she is going through a difficult time I wish I would go further in career and my professional life and would be able to help her more financially, etc. Sometimes I feel very guilty that she is still helping me. I feel that I should be more self-loving.⁵⁷⁹

Observations from Results

Recording the lived experiences of these young Latinas, this exercise helped to

⁵⁷⁸ Rosa de Lima, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁷⁹ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

enfold Latinas' *recuerdos* (memories) of their lives. By way of their faith formation within their families, memory and the heart play a critical role. Memory –interpreted as remembering or keeping in one's heart– represents the favorite family narratives and stories that they heard from childhood. It includes: the dangerous memories, such as the original immigration journey, the hard labor that parents and grandparents had to take on here, and the struggle in order to stay in this country. However, their family stories also highlight the redemptive memories of hope that sustained them, such as giving birth, breaking bread and sharing meals, praying together, being able to get a new job, or being the first generation of their family to graduate from college. These memories reaffirm and help to sustain resilient and faithful lives with a communal call and purpose. They also form young Latinas in a Christian ethic, with a keen sense of the call to social justice for all.

Primarily, Latinas reported affiliation with Catholicism because they first learned of God's love for them and the love of their family and local community through the home. My research results suggest that Latinas' faith and moral formation are learned from their families, particularly from their mothers though also from *las abuelas* (the grandmothers); these are the primary educators of Latinas faith. Also, through their families, Latinas continue to reimagine the symbols, rituals, teachings, and values of Catholic faith with the particularities of the church and the language of their countries of origin. Daily faith is constructed in light of the ordinary expressions of faith such *las abuelas* (grandmothers) or mothers' daily prayers, blessings and *consejos* (teachings), approval of new friendships, encouragement to go to college, and so on. Expressions of faith, in most cases associated with Jesus, Mary and the saints, represent

acompañamiento de Dios (God's accompaniment) that were found first in sacred places within the home.

Latinas description of their little churches inside their home suggest that the memories of family faith expressions come to mind for Latinas in times of sorrow, need, or decision making. Sacred places highlighted by Latinas are *altarcitos* (home altars), *repisas* (shelves), walls with holy water holders, and prayer rooms. Other sacred places are the *medallitas* (medals) they carry with them around their necks, hands or in their back packs that remind them of their values as faithful Catholic women. Moreover, Spanish is no longer simply a linguistic tool. It represents the language of the heart from which they still enter into communion with God and their people.

It is also clear from the research that young adult Latinas receive their moral formation within the family; as they grow up, they develop a sense of responsibility and duty with their parents. Listening to the stories that describe their goal to help their families, there is a sense of negotiation or *lucha* (struggle) between their own identity as women and the love and responsibility they have for their families. There is still a sense of duty, commitment and sacrifice when Latinas talk about their dreams, their faith expressions and their lives and accomplishments.

The exercise of reflecting about their lives and the journey of their families helped them to construct their understanding and memories about God, particularly about Mary as the mother of Christ and her own life. Most of the stories or knowledge shared about their faith do not describe the divine as an abstract thought, but a living faith in which they have struggled and hoped as Latinas. It was shocking to observe how in most of the cases this exercise was liberating and life-giving for Latinas as they shared that

remembering about their identity helped them to reflect about who they are and stories from where they come from.

Phase Four: Focus Group

After the conclusion of *One-on-One Interviews Protocol*, all the participants, including those who participated in the first section, were invited via e-mail and text message to attend a focus group, so we could together celebrate the conclusion of the research and gather to discuss and dialogue on key themes that came up in the research. The main goal of the *Focus Group* was to gather the participants and be able to dialogue and receive feedback on points and insights that came from the questionnaires and interviews. The following nine Latinas attended the focus group: *Rosa de Lima, Los Angeles, Aparecida, Caridad, Miriam, Catalina, La Merced, Lujan and Altagracia*. *Altagracia* participated in the questionnaire protocol but due to her graduation and moving to another city she was not able to participate in the one-on-one interview protocol. She returned for the focus group.

I reserved a small classroom at St. Thomas University, which was convenient in the middle of campus. I set up all the chairs in a circle and I set up a table with a tablecloth outside of the circle. I served three types of salads, cold cuts, crackers, chips, water, ice tea, soda and dessert. All the participants arrived on time. We started by blessing the food and sharing the meal together. All the participants connected with one another from the beginning of the meeting. At this session, the participants introduced themselves and were addressed with their real names, instead of their research names. However, for the purpose of confidentiality, conversations were transcribed with assigned names.

After lunch and fellowship, Latinas were given a paper with a proposed agenda that contained selected key themes for discussion that arose from listening to their stories in questionnaire and interview protocols. Instead of going over the themes in order, I exercised the role of facilitator in the discussion. I started by inviting the group to read the themes which each contained some sub-themes or phrases that came up from reading questionnaires and interviews. The Latinas were eager and excited to participate. The conversation flowed naturally and joyfully. Each one of them started introducing who they were and sharing about their major and their goals and passion as college students. *Caridad* introduced herself, as a biology major, and shared her passion for being in the medical field: “I guess what inspired me to be in the medical field was when I was in tenth grade.”⁵⁸⁰ *Chiquinquirá* followed: “I am also a biology Major and I am also graduating in May. I am going to do medical school. I want to be a pediatric surgeon and medicine is my passion.”⁵⁸¹ *Milagros* introduced herself and shared her experience when she was invited to participate in the research:

I am a senior, also graduating in May; Biology major. I am not into the medical field. I want to do research in the field, so graduate school will be an opportunity...I was walking and Claudia approached to me and invited me. So, it just happened to be, that we were there at the right time, so it is nice to see you and see a couple of faces that I have had in class.⁵⁸²

Los Angeles introduced herself and noted that she graduated last May:

I double majored in political Sciences and International Relations. I am trying to

⁵⁸⁰ *Caridad, Focus Group, February 25, 2015.*

⁵⁸¹ *Chiquinquirá, Focus Group, February 25, 2015.*

⁵⁸² *Milagros, Focus Group, February 25, 2015.*

see what is it that I am called to do. I took a year off and I want to go back to Graduate School, probably taking a different round in terms of the major I will be pursuing, probably along the line of pastoral ministries or liberal arts. I am trying to see [pauses and keeps reflecting].⁵⁸³

Catalina introduced herself and shared:

Congrats to the ones graduating or who graduated! I am a sophomore. I see that some have a plan, but I am still trying to see a plan [everyone smiles]. I am business major and my plan is to be a CEO at a company. I play soccer here and I run cross country.⁵⁸⁴

La Merced introduced herself and shared:

I am a nursing major. This is my last year at St. Thomas and then I go to X University. After nursing I am thinking getting my masters and become a nurse practitioner. Also, I am in the psychology club.⁵⁸⁵

Atagracia participated in the *Questionnaire Protocol* and came back to participate in the *Focus Group*. She shared:

I graduated in May with a bachelor in communications with a minor in psychology. The last ten months I have been on the road of my life. After graduating I moved to Chicago to pursue my career in public relations, entertainment and corporate. I was such a great experience to be on my own in a city that I have never known that I would be living there. After that, I went to New York to work for two months but I could not stay there and I just moved

⁵⁸³ Los Angeles, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁸⁴ Catalina, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁸⁵ La Merced, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

back home a month ago. I love to travel, but I am still searching for what my calling and purpose is.⁵⁸⁶

Aparecida introduced herself and opened the conversation about the importance of gathering together as young Latinas:

I am biology major and I am looking to pursue medical school. I think it is very interesting we are all here today because I love learning about women who are Latinas and who are trying to get somewhere in life. I am very interested to see what our similarities are. I love this. I have a plan, but I am open to change.⁵⁸⁷

Rosario shares:

I am a sophomore and I am hoping to graduate with my bachelors in criminal justice and I am planning also in doing my masters in criminal justice. I would like to work with the Juveniles. I think that we all started off as young kids and coming from different backgrounds.⁵⁸⁸

After these brief introductions, I started the session by telling my story and how God led me and my family as immigrants in the United States. I also shared how the graduate program in pastoral ministry shaped my lenses into my ministerial journey in campus ministry, which led me into the doctoral program in practical theology. I also shared that my own experiences and background as a Latina theologian and campus minister helped me to listen to the lived experiences of first and second generation young Latinas in higher education. The following sentence was used to open the conversation with the participants: “This is a spiritual journey. When I was praying about the research,

⁵⁸⁶ Altagracia, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁸⁷ Aparecida, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁸⁸ Rosario, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

to get the people, I asked. Holy Spirit, I would like you to help me to choose the people that you want in this research. Please, put in my heart whoever needs to be in the research; and I got extraordinary women in here.”⁵⁸⁹

Key Points for Dialogue

This phase of the research opened the conversation on key common themes that needed more reflection or dialogue. These are, *Immigration*. Latinas shared how the stories of their parents and their journey of survival in the United States affected who they are today as women. *Spanish Language*. Dialogue on this theme was focus on the construction of joyful stories and memories from childhood and how these memories represent their identity as Latinas. *Familia: And the Father Figure?* This question came during the focus group departing from the event that most of the oral stories referred to the role of the mothers and *abuelas* (grandmothers). *Expressions of Faith: How about the local Church?* The narratives and stories that described the learning of the faith focused around the family and *la casa* (home), instead of the local church or members of the Church such lay ministers, catechists, priests of religious. The conversation about this topic helped to clarify that the majority of this group do not participate in the local church, but still keep the faith of their families which they identify as Catholics. The following key themes are described as it follows:

Immigration

In this point, the participants did not focus on sharing their parents’ immigration journey as they did in the interview protocol. At this point, the group emphasized how their parents’ immigration experience has impacted on the women they are now.

⁵⁸⁹ Claudia H. Herrera, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

Listening to this group, they shared how they were born and raised from resilient faithful Catholic families who came to the United States for better opportunities. The majority of the group shared implicitly how their immigration status was resolved over time.

Observations included that the values of responsibility, sacrifice and success are built in communal experience, not in isolation. Success is the fruit of family prayer, hard labor, economic efforts and *la lucha* (the struggle) to survive in this Country. Insights shared over the focus group describe that the typical career profiles of the parents of these College-age Latinas are: Housekeeping, cleaning, construction, sales, business, and so on. In this case, the majority of the participants are the first generation in their family earning a college diploma, as seen in introductions above. *Caridad*, the biology major and pre-med student, shared:

Both of my parents finished high school but they don't have a college degree. My parents worked hard to get me and my sister where we are now. They always tell me, go to school and be somebody; you are somebody because you have a title.⁵⁹⁰

Chiquinquirá, biology major and pre-med student, shared:

My mom came through *el Rio Grande* [a long river in Honduras named the *Río Grande* in Honduras that passes through Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico].

When she got here, she was fortunate to find a lady who offered her a job. She cleaned at her house and lived at the house. My dad is doing his bachelors in Business Administration, so we both graduate together in May. I am very proud. It shows that all the work was worth. He has been my motivation and my example to do good in school. To graduate and go into medical school and show them that

⁵⁹⁰ Caridad, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

all the sacrifice they have done is worth it.⁵⁹¹

Catalina, business major, shared: “My parents met in Colombia. My dad came first and my mom came after. I am so proud of them who thought me the way.”⁵⁹²

Aparecida, biology major and pre-med student shared:

It’s so amazing to have a vivid example in your household that your parents are warriors. It makes me stronger. If they have made it, me in this world with all opportunities, I am capable.⁵⁹³

Altagracia, graduate in communications, shared:

I can piggy back to her on this. I got a little taste of what is being foreign just by seeing my parents making it in New York City when I was born. A lot of doors were closed for my parents. They had three kids and just the way they got us out of the South Bronx. I need to show my mother that everything that she did and the struggle she faced it was for something. I am one hundred percent proud of my parents. I am my parents. I am the result of immigrants and my parents’ struggle to give their best to their family.⁵⁹⁴

Los Angeles, graduate in political science and international relations, shared:

My dad was part of the first exile in the 60’s. He came when he was about twelve or thirteen years old with his sister. Now that he retired, he shared the story with me like never before. He cried sharing his story with me. Just seeing my dad strength. I am just very humble to be part of the family. Most of what I do is for

⁵⁹¹ Chiquinquirá, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁹² Catalina, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁹³ Aparecida, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁹⁴ Altagracia, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

them and they are the ones who tell me to keep going.⁵⁹⁵

Spanish

Following their insights about their parents, these Latinas affirmed the Spanish language. This point evoked excitement among the group. Stories and memories from childhood were shared and accompanied by laughs and joy. They all agreed about the feeling of always living in between two worlds and the paradox of feeling “American” to the eyes of the international students who come from Latin America; but also, the ability to feel completely Latinas with the “American” or “white population” that go to school with them.

Caridad says: “It is who you are. Not the Spanish language, but it’s your roots; where you grew up.”⁵⁹⁶ *Catalina*: “It happens in my dorms with the Latinas who come from Latin-America and with others who are from here.”⁵⁹⁷ *La Merced* added to *Catalina*’s comment: “We are kind of the hybrid; American and Latinas.”⁵⁹⁸ *Altagracia* added about the dynamic of speaking Spanish only at home and English at School:

I definitively agree with that statement. When I go to the Dominican Republic, they say something: *You are not from here*. However, when I was growing up here, my parents told me: *You are going to learn English at School*. We speak Spanish at home. This is part of the sacrifice my parents did. They were not selfish and preferred to speak Spanish at home, so we could be better and bilingual.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁵ Los Angeles, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁹⁶ Caridad, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁹⁷ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁵⁹⁸ La Merced, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁵⁹⁹ Altagracia, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

La Merced added sharing her experience of coming from a native-American family in Peru:

I guess I was fortunate enough because my mom was the same, only Spanish in the house, but also, she wanted me to know my culture. Since I was four, she sent me to Perú for the whole summer with my grandparents. They live in *la Sierra*. *Un pueblo chiquito* [a small town] where I really got to learn my roots. Now, every year I go to Peru. I am dying to go in May to see my grandmother. It changes me and impacts me. Maybe I am *gringo* [a colloquial term that refers to someone from North-American origin] over there and Spanish over here. I get a little bit of both.⁶⁰⁰

Aparecida shared: “My parents never learned English and they speak Spanish at home. I go to Honduras every summer and I feel that you connect more with your culture.”⁶⁰¹ In contrast, *Los Angeles* shared her experience:

For me it was a little bit different. Obviously, my parents spoke to me in Spanish when I was born. Then, I went to elementary school and the dynamics changed. It was not until I was probably in High School, in order to be able to be fully part of my family, I had to get out of my comfort zone and start speaking Spanish. My love started to grow and sometimes I realize that I express myself better in Spanish than in English. There are phrases that you cannot translate like for example *la lucha* [in the struggle].⁶⁰²

Rosa de Lima shared her experience in the professional field:

⁶⁰⁰ *La Merced*, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶⁰¹ *Aparecida*, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶⁰² *Los Angeles*, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

I am a nursing Student and I do rotations at the Hospital and I get called from floor eight to floor four just for Spanish, because we don't have so many people in the professional field that Speaks Spanish. We don't have so many Hispanic people; it is mainly white. I think it is a gift the language itself.⁶⁰³

Catalina echoes:

It is a gift. I totally agree because for example my boyfriend is Cuban and he does not speak Spanish. I see him and his cousin isolated from his actual family because everyone in his family speaks Spanish. They can't share the experience.⁶⁰⁴

Familia: And the Father Figure?

Listening to the questionnaire and interview protocols, mothers and grandmothers came forward as important figures in their lives and faith formation, in contrast with their fathers, as father figures involved in the lives and faith formation of these young adult Latinas. This focus group reflected about Latinas' experiences with the father figure as they grew up. Some of the participants shared their love for their fathers, but also shared their struggle to understand their fathers' role in their lives as they entered their teenage years and young adulthood. *Caridad* shared:

My father was always part of my life. I guess my dad has been always there to work and my mother takes care of us. He is there and part of my life, but I see him overworked and I just simply go to my mom.⁶⁰⁵

Altagracia shared:

⁶⁰³ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁶⁰⁴ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁶⁰⁵ Caridad, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

My father was there basically as a provider and my mother more involved with the emotional aspect of it. My mother was the fighter. If it wasn't for my father providing and working, my mother would not have been able to fight. However, she just worries about the little things that are important and impacted the person I am today. My father was just there.⁶⁰⁶

Aparecida shares how she always struggled with her relationship with her father. However, she shares how she learned to forgive and work with her father for the good of her sister:

I am the oldest one and my parents married when they were very young. He was there as a provider. He is hard working and put food on my plate. However, I feel like he learned in his Country to be the man of the house and was never there. Now I look back and I already grew up and I am shaped. That is why I mention my mom all the time. I love my dad one hundred percent. I have a younger sister and I tell him: *You have the chance to be for her the father that you could not be for me.* It took me a long time to be able to understand him.⁶⁰⁷

Catalina quietly and with melancholic voice shares:

I am kind of in the realization point of coming from separated parents is very different. He is always there for me, but once I came into my teenage years he moved to Texas with another person [she breaks in tears]. I did not understand at first because I was thirteen.⁶⁰⁸

Lujan breaks in tears and responds to *Catalina*:

⁶⁰⁶ Altagracia, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶⁰⁷ Aparecida, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶⁰⁸ Catalina, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

My parents are divorced too and I can totally understand. I love my father and he has always been in my life. However, my mother has been always been the person to put me at the top compared to my father.⁶⁰⁹

Altagracia tried to mediate and added about the power of forgiveness: “Being able to forgive not for them, but for you.”⁶¹⁰

Expressions of Faith: How about the Local Church?

In the questionnaire and interviews, Latinas shared about their expressions of faith and Church participation and how their families played a key role on this. In this stage of the research, Latinas shared how they used to participate when they were children and after their first communion or reception of sacraments, their participation started to decrease. Most of the participants shared how their relationship with God does not depend on Church attendance and participation. They shared how their homes have become little churches; places where family prayer and expressions of faith happen.

Chiquinquira shared:

We used to go to Church every Sunday, and then when we grew up, everything changed. My dad got a new job, a new schedule, so we could not make it sometimes. However, we always prayed at home; *en el altar de la Virgen María* [in the altar of the Virgin Mary]. We pray at home as a family. That is something that we do all the time. *Mis abuelitas* [my grandmothers] have an important role in my faith. It is with them that I learned how to pray and communicate with God.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁹ Lujan, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶¹⁰ Altagracia, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶¹¹ Chiquinquirá, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

Catalina adds:

My relationship with God is more personal and private. When I did my first communion, I had to do my religious education classes and go to Church every week. I don't think I have to go to Church every Sunday to believe in God.⁶¹²

Altagracia shared:

I was born and received all the sacraments in the Catholic Church. My parents are believers but we do not go to Church every week. I feel that I need to set sometime apart to give him. We used to pray before meals and I still do it.⁶¹³

In contrast, *Aparecida* shares her experience of going back to the Church through campus ministry:

I am a young adult leader here at St. Thomas University campus ministry.

Everyone is welcome to join the young adult group! [She smiles]. When I turned eighteen, my mom said: *Lo deajo todo a Dios* [I leave everything to God] from now on. She never forced again to go to Church, but then I got to a point in which I wanted to go by myself and now I am a youth leader. I go to Church and participate.⁶¹⁴

Los Angeles adds: "My mother is the center of our faith. I go on Sundays to Mass and I am a lector. I am not sure if this is still a stereotype, but my mother is the one who is usually more the religious."⁶¹⁵ Some of the participants openly shared about some expressions of faith at home. *Caridad* openly shared with the group: "I am *Santera*. I do believe in God. For me it is really uncomfortable to tell somebody else and tell them

⁶¹² Catalina, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶¹³ Altagracia, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶¹⁴ Aparecida, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶¹⁵ Los Angeles, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

about my faith and beliefs.”⁶¹⁶ *La Merced* shares: “You see always the *abuelitas* praying.”⁶¹⁷ *Aparecida*: “My mom had *un altar* and *Santos* [a home altar and Saint images] and Mary. My mom prays all the time to Mary.”⁶¹⁸ *Chiquinquirá* adds and shares about her mom’s experience of faith:

I know how hard it is to be in *Santeria* because my mom is in it due to health issues. She is better now and it is impressive. So, I understand you one hundred percent [she looked at *Caridad*]. Regardless, she believes in God.⁶¹⁹

Rosa de Lima shared:

My mom has also an altar and she has *el agua bendita* [Holy Water]. I had a terrible headache yesterday in the back of my head; I was just really very stressed with school. And my mom said: *Ven y te hecho el agua bendita* [let me put you some Holy water] and she prayed with her hand in the back of my head and it went away.⁶²⁰

After they added about their faith, I asked them if anybody had any final word on Mary. *Aparecida*, *Altagracia* and *Los Angeles* added and echoed: “Fighter and humble servant.” We closed the session in prayer by reading the poem *Este Mañana es tuyo, nena* (*This “tomorrow” is yours, girl*)⁶²¹ by Latina Theologian, Dr. Zaida Maldonado Pérez that is noted at the beginning of the book *Latina Evangélicas*, she wrote along with Dr. Elizabeth Conde-Frazier and Dr. Loida I. Martell-Otero:

⁶¹⁶ *Caridad*, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶¹⁷ *La Merced*, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶¹⁸ *Aparecida*, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶¹⁹ *Chiquinquirá*, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶²⁰ *Rosa de Lima*, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶²¹ Zaida Maldonado Pérez, “*Este mañana es tuyo, nena* (This “tomorrow” is yours, girl),” in *Latina Evangélicas: A Theological Survey from the Margins*, ed. Loida I. Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado Perez and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), vi. I will translate words or phrases in Spanish that are not translated by the author.

Este mañana es tuyo, nena

(This “tomorrow” is yours, girl)

By Zaida Maldonado Pérez

September 7, 2012

*Mañana, mañana, mañana*⁶²²

Burst from yesterday’s grip

Biding, compelling, inciting

Get up, *mi Reina! Pa ’lante, Sí, se puede, nena!*⁶²³

Life is yours, mine, ours

What are you waiting for?!

Strut that beautiful body towards the prize

Walk it, jump it, crawl it, run it

However and whatever it takes, *mami*

You got it cause God gave it to you

You got *el Padre*, you got *el Hijo* and you got *Espíritu Santo*⁶²⁴

You got *coraje!*⁶²⁵

It runs through your veins as Taíno, African, Mayan and Spanish blood

It’s warrior blood

The kind that does not give up or fret *cuando la cosa se pone dura*⁶²⁶

This is your hour upon the stage

⁶²² Translation: *Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow.*

⁶²³ Translation: *My Queen! Move forward, this is possible, nena!* (female noun for *darling, girl* and so on).

⁶²⁴ Translation: You got *the Father*, you got *the Son* and you got *the Holy Spirit*.

⁶²⁵ Translation: *Courage.*

⁶²⁶ Sentence translated by the author of the Poem: “When things get difficult.” Maldonado Pérez, “*Este mañana es tuyo, nena* (This “tomorrow” is yours, girl).”

Show us what you got, *chula*⁶²⁷
Bless us with the light you see
The *candela*⁶²⁸ that drives you
The truth that carries you to the many
*Mañana, mañana, mañanas*⁶²⁹
Oh, and while you are at it,
Look back! ...look back
To the trail of women that follow you
The cola of *mujeres*⁶³⁰ that you have inspired
And, be blessed, *mamita*,⁶³¹ be blessed.

After reading this final poem and closing in prayer, some Latinas felt inspired to share some final words to the group. *Caridad* shared: “I just want to say this is a learning experience for me. The learning from all of you was wonderful.” *Catalina* added: “I think it is so amazing how we just opened up to all of us without knowing each other.” *Los Angeles* said: “I just want to say thank you for each and every one of you, for sharing your stories. Thank you for being vulnerable and honest.”

At the end, I suggested to the participants the importance of putting this research in their professional resume and curriculum vitae. Followed by final words of gratitude, each participant received a certificate of appreciation “for participating and providing their invaluable contribution to this: Participatory-Action Doctoral Dissertation Research

⁶²⁷ Translation: Female noun to denote beautiful.

⁶²⁸ Translation: Fire.

⁶²⁹ Translation: Plural for tomorrow.

⁶³⁰ Translation: Women.

⁶³¹ Translation: Diminutive for colloquial idiom, *mom*.

on Religious Identity of Catholic College-age Latinas.”⁶³² Latinas received their certificates and we took a group picture. The focus group concluded after a one-hour and fifty minutes session that included lunch, fellowship and discussion, including one-on-one final words. “*And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.*”⁶³³

⁶³² Certificate of appreciation, *Participatory Action Research with College-Age Latinas*, Miami Gardens, February 25, 2015.

⁶³³ Luke 2:19.

Chapter Five

LATINAS INFORMING PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: A NEW MARIANISMO?

I think of my mom [pauses]. I don't know, I just think of her like holding Jesus in her arms, because of course she is the mother, she is my mom. When I always think of Mary, I think of my mom and when I see Mary, I think what my mom has done for me...

-La Merced. ⁶³⁴

The story of *La Merced* above, as well as all the narratives and stories of young adult Latinas that unfolded in this research, are the stories and narratives of faithful resilient families that once immigrated in the United States, who through their love, efforts, sacrifice, hope, and prayer, made the way for their children and grandchildren to *fully live* in a new land away from home. This journey is not separated from the faith of the people; rather, *la lucha* (the struggle) to survive in this country reveals the living faith of Latino/a families that happen in sacred places called home (*casa*). Home represents *la familia* (family); a humbling and invisible manger where God is born and God reveals to the people in the ordinary (*lo cotidiano*) and brings the message of hope and salvation to and through ordinary people.

⁶³⁴ See full text with translation: "I think of my mom [pauses]. I don't know, I just think of her like holding Jesus in her arms, because of course she is the mother, she is my mom. When I always think of Mary, I think of my mom and when I see Mary, I think what my mom has done for me. I think of Mary more like she is working with my mom, kind of like, within her! Because I know my mom *es una de esas madres que hace todo por sus hijos* [she is one of those mothers who does everything for her children] and when I say *todo todo* [everything, everything], *ella piensa primero en sus hijos que en ella misma. Muere por sus hijos, moriría por sus hijos* [she would think first of her children before her. She dies to herself for her children and she would die for her children]. Maybe she got that gift not just to help me. I think, her gift *es tan dulce* [her tenderness]. I know she wants to help people and I think that this gift she gets it from Mary or Mary influencing her, within her. *Una persona tan dulce, tan buena gente, tan humilde* [a tender, kind and humble person]," La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

Chapter One presented a brief overview of the landscape of Latino/as in the United States and the key immigration events that serve to understand the uniqueness and diversity among Latino/a communities in the United States. Chapter Two traced roots from Latin America and the pastoral and theological response of Church to the cries of the people living in a context of turmoil and social iniquity. This chapter explored the transition from when the echo for liberation of the poor and the oppressed in Latin America crossed the border of the North American theological discourse, and claimed space within the dominant discourse; in this clash of two different worlds, the lived experiences of Hispanics or Latinos living in the margins of the U.S. culture become key sources for U.S. Latino/a theological discourse. Chapter Three offered a way to re-think method and methodology in practical theology, particularly when speaking with the social sciences, particularly when practical theological work calls for interdisciplinary conversation that suggests work with the people in the ordinary. Chapter Four presented participatory action research with a group of young adult Latinas who identify as Catholics and it articulates their lived experiences as active subjects in the Church and the society. Even though the original purpose of this research was to unfold religious identity and Latinas' attitudes and expressions towards God, this work encompassed the inherent memories, narratives and stories that happen in *la familia*, which are critical to understand their faith and identity as Latinas.

This chapter will present critical insights from this work that inform practical Theology. It utilizes the three categories from Ada María Isasi-Díaz in *mujerista* theology explored in depth later in this chapter. These are *la familia/la comunidad* (family/community), *la lucha* (the struggle), and *permitanme hablar* (allow me to speak).

The first two categories are utilized to present reflection of the research with Latinas in conversation with the sources. The third category is utilized to claim on my voice as a Latina Catholic practical theologian and propose recommendations that inform the field of practical theology and the Church. This chapter concludes with final words of affirmation about the purpose of this research and open a new door of departure towards further work with Latino/a communities in twenty-first century United States.

The practical theological exercise of attending to the voices of the people, in particular, young adult Latinas who identify as Catholics, served to not only to explore their religious identity and spirituality, but it also opened space to a wider community that is inherent to Latinas as they claim and negotiate identity in the public sphere. The task of attending to and engaging the people becomes a transformative and prophetic dynamic in practical theology that opens a new conversation and builds bridges between practical theology and the Church towards further reflection and work when working with and engaging to Latino/as Catholics in the Church and the public sphere in the United States. The methodology of participatory action research, defined as an incarnational work in practical theology, served this work to acknowledge the people as active participants and agents of research, instead of mere receivers in the construction of prophetic practical Latino/a theology and pastoral ministries in the Church today.

Within the practical theological enterprise, there is a call to deeply reflect on the people as active subjects in the articulation of their own living practices and experiences, and therefore those of their communities, rather than recreating and determining their call in the world upon pre-established assumptions and normativity. In this call, *lo cotidiano* – interpreted in this work as the incarnational living experiences of the people– moves from

the private to the public sphere in a relational dynamic transforming the public spaces such *home, church, academy, society* and those other places where individuals are called to *fully live* in hope and justice within the world. This dissertation has overviewed on the social realities of Latino/as in the United States, particularly focusing on the lives of College-age Latinas who identify as Catholics. Their religious identity as Catholics has been reflected and explored from their inherent social location as Latinas, and their roles as the daughters of faithful immigrant families from Latin America in the United States. Their social location and their own experiences along with those of their communities (*la familia*), became critical in this work, in order to understand and enfold their religious identity as women of faith religiously affiliated to Catholicism.

The methodology of *participatory-action research* served the process of listening to the lives of these young women of faith and allowed this work to articulate their voices as active subjects in the research and moreover in the reflection of their own lives. Moreover, it is also critical to highlight that the theologian, as researcher and facilitator, had the role of participant-observer. The practical theologian not only holds the task of listening to the lived experiences of the people and helps to articulate reflection towards change and new knowledge; the practical theologian is also a participant because the process that entails this work calls for reciprocal transformation in which the Spirit of God plays an important role in the human heart and the sources reflected in this work.

Called by Name and the Power of “Naming Ourselves”: Latina?

Throughout this work the literature on Latin American and U.S. Latino/a theology, as well as research about the landscape of Latino/as in the United States that inform further work with young Latinas, make reference to terms such *Hispanics* or

Latino/as in order to refer to a people from South America, Central America and the Caribbean –Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and Cuba. These both terms have been used, discussed, reflected, adapted, and re-thought in the public sphere and the theological and interdisciplinary discourse in the United States. This work will not address the controversy of the use of both terms, but it highlights the importance of the use of one’s name and being called by name; in this case Latina.

Chapter One presented a brief overview of the context of Latino/as in the United States in order to highlight the diversity of Latino/a communities with unique and complex socio-economic, immigration, and religious trajectory and patterns. The challenge suggested while presenting the landscape of Latino/as in the United States is that the diversity and identity among Latino/as have been overshadowed by particular assumptions that do not represent the whole of the Latino/a population, but rather reduce the Latino/a communities to a mere ethnic category among the wider context.

Michelle Gonzalez, referring to the Latino/a theological discourse, notes that “there is a tension, therefore, between claiming the diversity of Latino/as while at times discursively negating it.”⁶³⁵ Added to this complexity, Gonzalez notes that, “is the manner sources are taken from particular Latino/a groups and applied to the broader Latino/a community.”⁶³⁶ This work reviews literature from Latino/a theology that for the past decades has explored on the lives of Latino/a communities in the United States as sources of theology and reflection. These sources have served to paving the ground of contemporary U.S. Latino/a theologians whose work has aimed to transform the

⁶³⁵ Michelle A. González, “One Is Not Born a Latina, One Becomes One: The Construction of the Latina Feminist Theologian in Latino/a Theology,” *Journal of Hispanic/ Latino Theology* 3, no. 3 (2003): 10.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

theological discourse by speaking from the margins. “Starting by naming one’s identity is fundamental to articulating a theology from a marginalized perspective.”⁶³⁷ However, the review of the literature is critical as a point of departure when attending to the lives and reality (*lo cotidiano*) of Latino/as, as a source of theology. It also calls for “hermeneutics of suspicion”⁶³⁸ that reflect on whose voices are included or omitted in the discourse when listening to Latino/a communities as they claim space in time and history. It is critical “to focus our hermeneutics of suspicion upon ourselves and to examine carefully the way discourse has historically functioned within Latino/a theology.”⁶³⁹ This work was aware of established normativity and assumption on Latina/os and it pushed the reflection on the lives of young Latinas through the lenses of *hermeneutics of suspicion*. It deepened in the voices of young adult women who self-identify as Latinas and who were born or raised in the United States from immigrant parents from Latin America.

On the other hand, participatory action research with this group of Latinas unfolded a crucial insight about the power of naming one-self, in this case naming *ourselves as Latinas*. As noted in Chapter Four, Ada María Isasi-Díaz notes that “to name oneself is one of the most powerful acts any person can do,”⁶⁴⁰ particularly when the dominant culture creates or impose stereotypes or pre-assumptions over those who are marginalized. Loida Martell-Otero notes that “when someone else names you, they have the power to objectify you and create you in whatever image they desire. Scriptural text attests to the power of naming.”⁶⁴¹ In the Scriptural Book of Luke, Mary was not only

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha, In the Struggle*, 2.

⁶⁴¹ Loida I. Martell-Otero, “Introduction: *Abuelita Theologies*,” in *Latina Evangélicas*, 3.

first called by name⁶⁴² when she was told *the good news of salvation*. Mary also questioned and responded⁶⁴³ as an active agent in the process of evangelization. *Aparecida*, an active participant in this research, offers an insight on the challenges of naming herself within the dominant culture:

La lucha in my culture symbolizes survival; it symbolizes surpassing the struggle...I did not chose to born Latina, I was born Latina. Already been born and been put all of these stereotypes on you, definitively impacts you as a person.⁶⁴⁴

This point is particularly critical when exploring deeper on the lives, the hopes and the struggles of the people, in this particular case, women who were born or raised in the United States from immigrant families from Latin America and who self-identify as Latinas and Catholics. Carrying sacredly the power that people have to name themselves as active agents served this work to collaborate with young adult Latinas in the practical theological task of articulating on their own stories, narratives, and therefore, in the construction of understanding of themselves and their people.

At the beginning of this work there was not a clear insight on the power of naming one-self in connection with the dichotomy between the terms Hispanic and Latino/a epistemology. However, this reflection enfolded in the process of this

⁶⁴² Luke 1:26-30. "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was *Mary*. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, *Mary*, for you have found favor with God."

⁶⁴³ Luke 1:34. "But *Mary* said to the angel, "How can this be...?". Luke 1: 39-42. "During those days *Mary* set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard *Mary*'s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

⁶⁴⁴ *Aparecida*, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

transformative work. Using participatory action research, Latinas were asked if they self-identity as Hispanics or Latinas. It was striking to see how the majority of the group self-identified as Latinas. Also, the challenge of being asked by the IRB (Institutional Review Board) to use codes when naming Latinas moved the research to honor their sacredness and creatively avoid codes, and instead use names from the different titles and names of Mary or saints in Latin-America. This exercise unexpectedly brought beauty to the research and empowered the women to claim space and unite in solidarity with women coming before them, in this case, a new imaginary of Mary, with the particularities of a specific country, who identifies with her people and who is also called by name.

This chapter recognizes the complexity of the use of the terms, but does not stay in the challenges that this complexity brings. Rather, it claims in the use of *Latinas* to refer to the young women of faith, who are called by name and actively participate in their communities as well as in this research.

Recuerdos (Memory): Y Maria Guardaba en el Corazón (and Mary Kept All these Things Remembering them in her Heart⁶⁴⁵)

In this work, memory and the heart play an important role in the faith of College-age Latinas. Recording the lived experiences of these young Latinas, this exercise helped recall Latinas' *recuerdos* (memories) from childhood as being raised by their grandmothers, grandfathers and mothers. In this research with Latinas who were born or raised in the United States, their families, particularly, their mothers and *abuelas* (grandmothers) played an important role as they shape their identity as women of faith and as first generation Latinas attending higher education. As seen in Chapter Four, it

⁶⁴⁵ Luke 2:19.

was very critical for Latinas to share the journey of their families in the United States. This journey becomes *recuerdos* (memories) that help them to claim identity in the public sphere and that of those who are coming before and after them in a specific context. *Remembering and keeping in their hearts* the journey of their parents, beginning with their journey as immigrants in the United States, served this work during the one-on-one interviews and focus groups to reflect critically about Latinas' lives and identity as women of faith and their role as Latina Catholics in the United States.

This chapter retrieves some of the voices that unfolded in participatory action research. *Rosario* constructed on the impact of her immigration experience: "It was very hard hearing my story. This experience defines who I am...coming here was a shock for us...here we learned to be humble."⁶⁴⁶ *La Merced* also brings back the meaning of *recuerdos* and "place" as a metaphor to understand human experience, in this case the struggle of living between two worlds. "I think of my family and how they came to the U.S....My mom, *la única que vino aquí de diez hijos y se quedó* [the only one from ten siblings who came here and stayed]."⁶⁴⁷ The exercise of listening to their narratives and stories from childhood, particularly the lived experiences they have endured while growing up, unveiled faithful and resilient women of faith with a call and a purpose.

The narratives from their childhood as they grew up are not just past memories, but become inherent to their understanding of self as Latinas and their call in the world. *Rosario* notes: "My immigration experience makes me more humble to see that there are problems in the world and people immigrate here because of those problems. That is why

⁶⁴⁶ *La Merced*, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

I want to become a lawyer to help immigrants...”⁶⁴⁸ *Rosa de Lima* also shared about how her immigration experience affects her lenses as a woman: “*La lucha* reminds me of my father...both my parents and their struggles in life...I am always trying to make them proud and I am trying to not give up, because it is very hard [sensitive voice tone].”⁶⁴⁹ *Rosa* also shared the dangerous memories that become part of *la lucha* (struggle and hope) to survive:

I was brought by my parents. They did not want to split the family. I was raised by my grandmother over there, so it was really hard for me to adapt to this environment...*The language was very very hard*...It was very hard...I always felt separated from everyone, but eventually I adapted.⁶⁵⁰

The lived experience shared by *Rosa de Lima*, particularly those related to her struggle with the language and the culture of the United States, correlates with the *dangerous memories* explored throughout this work –that can never be erased because they represent the sacrifice and the price towards salvation– become critical in order to understand the importance of *remembering and keeping the living memories in their hearts*. These memories, re-imagined in this work as living stories and narratives are critical for Latinas as they bring hope and liberation to their everyday as young adult women of faith attending higher education. Even though, *Isasi-Díaz* uses the term “Hispanic,” it is key to adapt her definition of *mujerista*. She notes that “a *mujerista* is a [Latina] Hispanic woman...who builds bridges among [Latino/as] Hispanics.”⁶⁵¹ Particularly in this work, Latinas pave the way for their people and remember those who

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ *Rosa de Lima, Interview Protocol, November 25, 2014.*

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ *Isasi-Díaz, En la Lucha, In the Struggle, 4.*

came before and after them and make the story of their community theirs. In defining *mujerista*, Isasi-Díaz proposes three phrases that are key in the everyday life (*lo cotidiano*) of Latinas. These are “*La lucha* (the struggle), *permítanme hablar* (allow me to speak), *la comunidad /la familia* (the community/the family).”⁶⁵² These are noted in Chapter Three and serve this work “as critical to self-understanding of [Latinas] Hispanic women.”⁶⁵³ In this case, young adult Latinas who self-identify as Catholics or faithful religiously affiliated with Catholicism. Michelle Gonzalez notes:

These elements are not exclusive to Latinas, but embody a sense of our humanity that goes well beyond Latina culture. These phrases become the starting point for reflection: Latina’s daily lives (*lo cotidiano*), their contributive voices and their relational conception of selfhood.”⁶⁵⁴

Moreover, Isasi-Díaz notes that these categories are not “the only elements to be elaborated in *mujerista*...but they are central and that they come out of our experience as Hispanic women [Latinas] living in the USA.”⁶⁵⁵ For the purpose of this work, these categories will be helpful to propose key concluding insights that will serve to articulate on the lives of young adult Latinas, whose lived experiences and those of their communities, social location and faith tradition aim to inform practical Latino/a theology and furthermore, pastoral work with Latino/as in the United States.

Even though it seems that there is not further suggestion from the author to explore these categories in a specific order, this work suggests to begin with the category of *la comunidad/la familia* (the community/the family) in order to highlight the

⁶⁵² Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 128.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 11.

⁶⁵⁵ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 129.

importance of *la familia* (the family) as first community of faith or *Iglesia domestica* (domestic church) where Latinas first learn to claim space in time and history. Secondly, the category of *la lucha* (the struggle) is explored from the perspective of *fiesta* (celebration), which in the work of *mujerista*, it highlights the critical role of celebration and redemption in the midst of struggle. In this particular work with Latinas, *fiesta* (celebration) represents the different expressions of faith that sustain Latinas and their families in their everyday life. They represent a sacred dynamic between God and the people in the everyday, which in this work enfolds within *la familia/la comunidad*. Finally, the third category *permitanme hablar* (allow me to speak) will serve to reflect first on the importance of Latinas' participation and engagement as active agents of research in the present work. Results on their lives, allow this work to present recommendations that will serve the academy and the Church in the United States.

La Familia/La Comunidad: Iglesia Domestica Imigrante (The Family: Immigrant Domestic Church)

In the review of the literature the dimension of *la familia* is highlighted as *locus theologicus* within the work of U.S. contemporary Latino/a theology, becoming inherent and incarnational to self-identity of Hispanics and Latino/as in the United States. After listening to the literature from U.S. Latino/a theology as well as the voices of the young women who participated in this research, it is critical to highlight that *la familia* becomes the primary domestic Church or *Iglesia domestica*; a place where they first learned, not only about the love for God and the Church through their parents and *abuela/os*, but also, *la familia* becomes the most important place for them to live in and build in away from home in *comunidad* (community). *Rosario* noted in Chapter Four that, "being a Latina, it

is not about you. It is about a big community. Just being in the United States, you are able to make opportunities for yourself and your people.”⁶⁵⁶ Her thoughts express that identity is lived out in community, particularly within the family.

La casa (home) becomes *la familia/la comunidad*. The “place,” interpreted in this work as the “human experience,”⁶⁵⁷ where living practices such loving, giving birth, struggling, hoping, suffering, praying, sacrificing and breaking bread happen in the presence of God. Observations from the narratives and stories from the group of Latinas who participated in the research unveil a living God who *acompaña* (accompany) in the journey. “When there is nothing else, when we do not have money or are sick, we always know that there is still someone who watches us all.”⁶⁵⁸ Latinas use “we,” not because they dismiss *the power of naming one-self*, but rather because the “we” exalts the “self” within a wider and inherent community. In this dynamic, to live with the lived experience of the other becomes inherent to the lives of Latinas (*con-vivencia*) and it exalts their identity and voice in the public.

The importance of *la familia/la comunidad* (the family/the community) for Latinas moves this work to reflect on *con-vivencia* as critical to understand Latinas as they claim a “historical role within space and time.”⁶⁵⁹ As noted above, Latinas’ lived experiences, context, and faith tradition, are not constructed, walked, learned, lived-out and embodied in *isolation*, but they are rather lived out in *con-vivencia* (with the lived experience of the other). “The other” represents those who have paved the way for them to become students in higher education. In the same way, their narratives and stories

⁶⁵⁶ Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

⁶⁵⁷ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 5.

⁶⁵⁸ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2014.

⁶⁵⁹ Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 139.

unveil their hopes for “making viable [their] future generations and by influencing them”⁶⁶⁰ and those who are coming behind. *Con-vivencia* is critical when talking about *la familia* and *comunidad* as the extended family. In this particular work, the word *convivencia* is separated in order to speak of the relational dimension of each individual inherently called “to live with” the lived experience of the other (*con la vivencia del otro u otra*). *Con-vivencia* is therefore, interpreted as the act of walking together and building together in *comunidad* (community). Therefore, the narratives and lived stories from each Latina who participated in this research are the narratives and stories from a larger community that walk together in faith and hope. The young Latinas who participated in this work constructed their understanding of God as a relational God revealed in the ordinary practices of daily life within *la familia* (the family); in this case within Latino/a immigrant faithful families in the United States.

As noted in Chapter One, “place [is interpreted as] human experience where the Gospel is grounded, embodied, interpreted and lived out”⁶⁶¹ through the ordinary dynamics of life. “It is an interpretative context which raises new questions.”⁶⁶² Results from attending to the narratives and lived experiences with the group of young adult Latinas who participated in this research find *La familia* as the primary place where God reveals in the everyday (*lo cotidiano*), as well as the place where they learn to love God and the Church.

Abuela/o: Casa de Dios (Grandma/pa: House of God)

It is critical to highlight that all the participants reported to be Catholic and

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 5.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

faithful, not because they necessary participate and attend to a local church or ministry, or because they report affiliation with Church teachings or dogmas. Latinas who participated in this research self-identify as Catholics because they kept in their hearts the faith they learned from their mothers and grandmothers during childhood. As noted in Chapter Four, the life and example of their mothers and *abuelas* become part of their imaginary and representation of Catholicism. Therefore, the values and virtues of their mothers and *abuelas* embody the Catholic faith that was first learned and is practiced within the family.

Even though the majority of the participants in the research reported not attending to weekly Mass, all of the participants remember memories from childhood with their mothers and *abuelas* taking them to the local church and teaching them some of the practices and rituals during Mass. It is critical to highlight that Latinas' parents, particularly their mothers and *abuela/os* are the primary educators or *catechists* within *la familia*, proposed in this work as *Iglesia domestica inmigrante* (immigrant domestic Church) for Latinas. As noted above, Latinas kept the memories of their parents and *abuela/os* (grandmothers and grandfathers) as they grew up. In this work, particularly *las abuelas* –in some cases *abuelos* (grandfathers)– and mothers are the pillars of the faithful *Iglesias domesticas* (domestic churches). They selflessly dedicated their lives to their families, thus, their generations such children and grandchildren can *survive* in the public sphere when immigrating to a new country. In this journey, the teaching of the faith and the love for God was the most important gift their families passed to them through words and deeds. *Rosa de Lima* elaborates on the love of her *abuela* as she encounters God when growing up:

My grandparents helped me to build my faith, especially my grandmother since I can't even remember, since I was 4 or 5, I think. She would take me to church with her, she would take me to any *procesión* [procession] with her. She would always take me and teach me...teach me what is this, who is this, teach me her beliefs, teach me how to pray, teach me how to sing. She was the first one to encourage me to always go to Him for the first resource...always!⁶⁶³

Milagros also elaborated on the passing and teaching of the faith not only in words but in action by helping the poor in Nicaragua. She also shared how much the love and the care of her *abuelas* impacted her moral thinking an action as a Latina towards the other:

In Nicaragua, on July 20th is the day of *El Divino Niño* [The Divine Child]. My grandmother has taught us that this day is not about us, but it is about giving out to the kids, so we would do, and even now I would give her money. I helped her to make food for the kids to go out to different communities, like poor communities and give out the food out there... so, carrying it for me it is a reminder always that: *If you have you could share!* My grandmother says always: *Oh, que el Divino Niño te proteja!* [May the Divine Child Jesus protect you!].⁶⁶⁴

Aparecida also shared the memories of her *abuelo* [grandfather] in Honduras, and how much these memories kept in her heart with so much love come to mind and the heart through simple expressions faith in the ordinary life:

My grandfather always enforced us to pray. In Honduras is very different from here...Where I lived in Honduras, is a *pueblo* [small town] and there is a huge

⁶⁶³ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁶⁶⁴ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

Church, and every time we passed around the Church, he would have us *persinar* [bless our foreheads]. It does not matter what we were doing, we had to turn around, look at the Church and bless ourselves. That is when I pass by a Church here, I bless myself; even in front of the Chapel of Saint Anthony.⁶⁶⁵

Chiquinquirá shared about how the faith she learned from her *abuelas* formed the person she is now in the public sphere:

My *abuelas* [grandmothers] both taught me, along with my mother of course, about Church, about religion, about God, and they just expanded on that as the years went by. As you grow older you realize the importance to have God in your life, the importance of your religious beliefs and to create a relationship with God. So, they have thought me a lot about that. I have a very beautiful relationship with them. In a way, they play a role in the person I am today. Their advice and presence has structured me and my sister the people we are today.⁶⁶⁶

Candelaria also shares about the role of the women in her family, particularly the role of *la abuela* as a model of strength and spirituality in her household. She shares how the legacy of *la abuela* impacts her moral consciousness and reflection on her life as a woman:

My great grandmother has a lot to do with my spirituality. Maybe now because it is like a hard time [*cries in a low voice and continues*]. I always cry when I think of her. She was very spiritual. I feel like the women in my family have always been very matriarchy; very powerful...she was one of them...I feel a lot of times

⁶⁶⁵ Aparecida, *Interview Protocol*, July 14, 2014.

⁶⁶⁶ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

that she is with me.⁶⁶⁷

The living stories, like the narrative of *Candelaria*, become hope for young adult Latinas as they survive in the everyday life. On the other hand, it is striking to observe that the role of the lay ministers, church leaders or religious men and women in the local church are not mentioned when listening to the lived experiences of Latinas in the encounter with God and the learning of the faith. It is also striking to find out that the majority of these young adult Latinas are less affiliated with church teachings and dogmas. Latinas in this research are most likely to be engaged with religious practices, attitudes, values, virtues and beliefs that happen in the home and the ordinary, which have been born and bloomed in *lo cotidiano* within their primary domestic community: *La familia*.

Parents: Resilient Immigrant Families

As noted through the stories and narratives of Latinas, it is critical to highlight that the immigration journey of their families is critical when unfolding their religious identity and faith. The living and vibrant faith of Latinas in this work cannot be understood without first listening to the stories of their parents and *la lucha* (the struggle) to survive in a new Country away from home (*una tierra extranjera lejos de casa*). Moreover, in the case of these young adult Latinas who attend to higher education, the narratives of their parents are hope for them to pursue their studies in higher education and successfully graduate.

The stories shared during interviews, explored that these goals are lived out within a community of giving and receiving. In this case, academic effort and success are

⁶⁶⁷ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3.

geared toward repaying to their families all the sacrifices they have done for them.

Caridad shares that the values of success and sacrifice are not lived out in isolation, but in community: “Both of my parents finished high school but they don’t have a college degree. My parents worked hard to get me and my sister where we are now.”⁶⁶⁸ Results from participatory action research find that all Latinas who participated in this research and attend higher education are the first generation in their families obtaining a college degree, with the partial exception of *Chiquinquirá* who expressed that her father was pursuing a degree in business at the same time she reported being a senior majoring in biology and pursuing pre-med studies. “My dad is doing his bachelors in Business Administration, so we both graduate together in May...I am very proud...It shows that all the work was worth.”⁶⁶⁹ This point also reflects at a glimpse that this group are the daughters of the immigrant generation, described in Chapter One, that does not have access to higher education.

Recuerdos (memories) shared by Latinas unveil a group of participants who were born and raised from resilient faithful Catholic families who came to the United States for better opportunities, where the values of responsibility, sacrifice and success were not built in isolation, but in communal experience. Success is the fruit of family prayer, hard labor, economic efforts and *la lucha* (the struggle) to survive in this Country. Moreover, as seen in the exploration of the context of these families, the participants in this research grew up in family households where parents work as hotel workers, housekeepers, construction, sales and retailing and so on; which suggest and as seen in Chapter One, the socio-economic journey of this type of family profile has not been easy. This insight

⁶⁶⁸ Caridad, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶⁶⁹ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, November 16, 2014.

connects with the fact that the reality of the families of these young women is not separated from their faith as they learn to negotiate both worlds as students in higher education.

Mothers: Resilient Women

“My mom always said that education was important, and I know she came here because she thought that *este País*, this Country was *el mejor del mundo*, like the best. Because of the American dream.”⁶⁷⁰ The narrative shared by *La Merced*, as well as other stories and narratives unveiled in this work, show that besides the impact of the *abuelas* as the spiritual or faithful leaders of the households, the figure of the mother (*mom*) becomes the strong holder figure of the house. The majority of the Latinas shared how important it is for them the lived experiences of their mothers in relationship with whom they are today. As noted in Chapter Four, *Altagracia* articulated on *con-vivencia* (to live with the lived experience of the other) through her relationship with her mother: “My mother’s struggle to maintain our household is what inspires me to succeed. I want to succeed so that my mother can finally feel that all she has done and all her sacrifices were worth something.”⁶⁷¹ *La Merced* also shared: “My mother...*ella es la unica de diez hermanos que puedo llegar y quedarse aquí y mantener a sus dos hijos sola* [She is the only one from ten siblings who was able to make it in the United States, stay here and raise her two kids by herself] and I think it is time I repay her and make her proud of me and all the effort she has put for me.”⁶⁷² *Candelaria* understands her lived experience through *la lucha* of her mother:

⁶⁷⁰ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁶⁷¹ Altagracia, *Interview Protocol*, April 30, 2014.

⁶⁷² La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

My mom is super strong, *como luchadora* [like a fighter]. She came from Cuba, she learned English. She is my inspiration in life and I can see now that she has kept a family together by sacrificing. She has always been and continues to be amazing in everything; as a mother, woman and hard worker.⁶⁷³

The lives of Latinas and the journey of their families helped this work to re-imagine the story of Mary in the Gospel of Luke. Mary, a faithful and selfless woman was actively moved by the Spirit as a faithful disciple to respond to God's call and accompany her people when God presents the message of *salvation* through God's son. Her *Yes* in the story of the annunciation in the Book of Luke⁶⁷⁴ is not a passive response, but it represents the response of the active disciple who becomes participant and an agent of evangelization to her people in the history of salvation; even if doors were closed to her at the beginning. Moreover, when Mary receives God's call, she does not live it out in isolation, but she acts as a participant and immediately *sets out in haste*⁶⁷⁵ to visit her cousin Elizabeth. In this act of Mary, both shared in *con-vivencia* the great news of the Gospel.

This category highlights that *la familia* (family) becomes a critical space to understand the virtues of self-sacrificing, strength, faithfulness and steadfastness in *lo cotidiano*. In order to understand young adult Latinas who are Catholic, it is important to highlight that their faith is built in *comunidad* (community) and with the lived experiences of the other. This is also a critical characteristic of the community of the faithful in the Catholic Church.

⁶⁷³ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, May 7, 2014.

⁶⁷⁴ Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Luke 1: 38.

⁶⁷⁵ Luke 1:39.

Celebrando la Lucha (Celebrating the Struggle)

In participatory action research with the group of young adult Latinas, it was observed that the immigration experience from their parents and the memories and stories they kept in their heart as they survived in the United States, played a significant role in their life, particularly in times of sorrow or need. *La lucha* has been explored throughout this work as a key source in Latino/a practical theology: In Chapter Two *la lucha* was explored from the perspective of Latino/a theology when reviewing sources from Latin American and U.S. Latino/a theology; and in Chapter Three, *la lucha* was explored as a category from *mujerista* anthropology in order to explore Latina's understanding of the human and God through Latina's relationships with the world.

This dissertation explores on the lives and religious identity of Latinas within their inherent relationship to their families that connects them into a sacred relationship with God. This work suggests the exploration of *La Lucha* from *mujerista* perspective noted in Chapter Three. This perspective considers *la lucha* as “a fundamental category for Latina understandings of the human because it recognizes the trials and the tribulations that are part of life.”⁶⁷⁶ However, from this approach *la lucha* does not focus merely in the suffering and tribulations of a people; nor Latinas are defined by the suffering and the struggle of their people, but by the hope and the redemptive power of the heart when facing struggle. This redemptive journey is interpreted as *fiesta* (celebration) and God is exalted and reveal to the people in the most precarious conditions.

⁶⁷⁶ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 11.

Expressions of Faith: Fiesta!

In this redemptive journey noted above, God reveals to the people through the different expressions of faith, symbols and expressions. As noted in Chapter Three, these expressions happen in the streets, at home and in the Church as the faithful responds to communal struggle; to “the trials and tribulations that are part of life.”⁶⁷⁷ These tribulations and trials are infused in the stories of resilient families shared by Latinas. *Candelaria* mentioned: “The theme of my family life has always been struggle...I have always felt that I need to fight for something. I do not know if this is because my parents have always been fighting for something.”⁶⁷⁸ The struggle of *Candelaria* to survive in the everyday is not separated from her identity as a faithful woman. On this point Michelle Gonzalez notes that “we do not want to reduce our lives to struggles against injustice, but we do want to highlight the truth that life is a struggle, that things do not come easily and that this struggle deeply infuses our spirituality.”⁶⁷⁹ The journey of working with Latinas allowed this work to deeply listen to the lives of young Latinas and moreover to witness their silenced but real struggles and those of their families as they journey in this world as women of faith.

These participants are not parishioners, youth leaders, nor active participants in the diverse ministries of the local Church. Their faith and spirituality as Catholics is a pilgrimage where Church is home and home and the practices of their everyday life represent Catholicism. Their faith in this work becomes a metaphor to re-imagine the invisible and silent pilgrimage of Mary to Judea as a pregnant woman and her only option

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ *Candelaria, Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

to deliver her son on a manger.⁶⁸⁰ In this work, *the manger* is interpreted as their homes; the place where struggle and faith happen through the ordinary. “Seeing my parents making it in New York City when I was born; A lot of doors were closed for my parents...I am the result of immigrants and my parents’ struggle to give their best to their family.”⁶⁸¹ These are the words that Altagracia shared earlier in this chapter when sharing about the immigration pilgrimage of her parents in the United States.

These young Latinas carry in silence and humility the journey of resilient families in which faith has sustains them through the struggles and hopes of life. In the midst of the struggle, deep faith is unfolded in the invisible places where *salvation* is born and “the good news of great joy”⁶⁸² are shared and celebrated! Jesus in the womb of Mary represents Latina’s faith and their *dwelling place* with God in this world; and the manger represents those sacred places where faith is born and salvation is revealed to these women and their families in *lo cotidiano* (the everyday).

This work observes that these sacred places are not necessarily the local church, but their homes, where the practices of faith formation and catechesis happen implicitly through the expressions of faith in the ordinary life. Listening to the narratives of Latinas in this research, *la lucha*, interpreted as *fiesta* in this category, is seen in the re-enactment of symbols and ritual that happen in *la casa* (home). In Chapter Four, these sacred spaces are noted as *Espacios Sagrados de Oración* (Sacred Prayer Spaces). *Rosa de Lima* shared: “My mom is very religious; she has a little altar in her room, so every time that something bad happens we just go and pray there. It is like our little church inside home.

⁶⁸⁰ Luke 2: 1-7.

⁶⁸¹ Altagracia, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁶⁸² Luke 2: 10.

It makes us feel better and we feel that we are not alone.⁶⁸³ These religious attitudes and practices are expressions of faith for Latinas' families such the ordinary prayers at meals, in the morning, at night, before living the house and so on. Added to these practices, there are the special prayers such novenas, the Holy Rosary, prayers to saints, and others; particularly when extraordinary events in the family happen or in times of sorrow and need.

These practices along with symbols such images of Jesus, Mary and the community of saints are found in most cases in *altarcitos* (home altars), *repisas* (shelves), wall with holy water holders, or living rooms with images; or the medals (*medallitas*) around their necks and hands, and their native language they use to communicate directly with God, are symbols that are part of *fiesta (la lucha)* as Catholics. *Lujan* shared how much these symbols signify *acompañamiento* (accompaniment): "At my father's house we have *una repisa* [a little altar] where Jesus is on the cross. We also have some Holy Water in the wall. Every week my grandmother puts Holy Water. To me this is that He is always watching."⁶⁸⁴ Expressions of faith noted in this research are reminders for Hispanics or Latino families of God's *acompañamiento* (accompaniment) in the journey. These places, attitudes, devotions and practices are not mere decorations or just popular practices but sacred faith expressions for prayer, healing and encounter with the sacred, which are part of a living Faith.

Latinas Imagining Mary

It is critical to note the distinction between Latinas imageries of Mary and the construction of a new Marianismo after listening to the lived experiences of Latinas who

⁶⁸³ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁶⁸⁴ Lujan, *Interview Protocol*, January 28, 2015.

self-identify as Catholics. In this work, there was room to naturally discuss attitudes and devotions towards Mary that helped to understand their relationship with the maternal divine. The description of Mary shared by *la Merced* at the beginning of this chapter serves to explore Latinas' conception of a maternal love of God. As noted in earlier chapter, Mary plays an important role in the Catholic Church, particularly in this work that explores on the lives of Latina Catholics. Their attitudes towards Mary correlate directly with their lived experiences as women. Their imaginaries sacredly express how Mary enters into their lives and identifies with the joys and struggles of their age and as women of faith. *Los Angeles* shares how Mary becomes a role model as a woman:

Mary has been a real role model, especially as a woman, especially women with the struggles that she went through. She was very humble. She did not have much or a nice place or anything, but she knew that God would always be on her side. Whenever she speaks is not in a loud way, it is more in a silent way...it is just her presence there...her physical presence there...I am your mother, who else do you have?⁶⁸⁵

Chiquinquirá also expresses in Spanish her imaginary of Mary. This correlates with her own memories (*recuerdos*) of *La Purísima* [The Purest Virgin Mary from Nicaragua] when growing up:

She is *pura y es divina* [pure and divine]. *El simple hecho de que ella siendo madre, siempre fue pura de espíritu. Se me viene a la mente el nacimiento de Jesús que ella siendo tan pura y Virgen, la destacó entre todas las mujeres. Pura! De cuerpo y alma. A pesar de todo el sufrimiento que ella pasó, ella siempre*

⁶⁸⁵ Los Angeles, *Interview Protocol*, November 21, 2014.

*noble y siempre dispuesta a ayudar.*⁶⁸⁶

Their imaginaries of Mary not only embody their own *lucha* and *la lucha* of their families, particularly their mothers, but it also unveils the hope and salvation that is born in the midst of struggle.

Permitanme Hablar/Allow me to Speak: Pastoral and Theological Recommendations

As noted in Chapter Three, this category reflects on the need for Latinas, and therefore, all women of faith “to have a voice and authority in their lives.”⁶⁸⁷ It also reminds their call and anointing of the Holy Spirit to reflect and affirm their call and struggling dwelling in the world, and to *set up in haste*, like Mary in the Gospel, as active agents of transformation in their communities of faith and the society. “To allow us to speak is to take into consideration our particular insights and concerns.”⁶⁸⁸ In this case, insights and concerns that arise from collaboration with young adult Latinas in the articulation of their own lived experiences as Latinas and Catholics, allowed this work to grasp to their own reality as well as the reality of their people; in this case their families, considered in this work as domestic Churches (*Iglesias domesticas*).

The critical category of *allow me to speak (permitanme hablar)* addressed by *mujerista* theology will serve this work to present pastoral and theological recommendations on key insights that came up from this work in light of participatory action research with young adult Latinas who participated in this research as active

⁶⁸⁶ “The simple fact of her being a mother, she was always pure in spirit. It comes to my mind the birth of Jesus and how much she stood out among women as pure and Virgin. Pure! In body and soul. In spite of all the suffering she went through, she was always selfless and ready to help and serve.” Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

⁶⁸⁷ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 12.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

agents. Their voices and deeds will be always kept in the transformed heart of the practical theologian who was also a participant in the articulation of the art of the living.

Allow me to Participate: Towards a Ministry of Participatory Action

In this particular work, the methodology of participatory action research with young Latinas who are Catholics, served not only to listen to their lives and those of their communities, but it also called for the critical responsibility of the Church and higher education to the critical practice of engaging the people; in this particular work, engaging young adult Latino/as when discerning and understanding their pastoral needs as students and faithful. The exercise of listening to Latinas, helped not only to raise the critical role of attending, but it also called for their engagement and participation as active subjects of research. *Catalina* and *Rosa de Lima* shared on the power of being asked critical questions: “I love being Colombian and Latina, but I never thought of my views and reactions on a lot of things as a Latina.”⁶⁸⁹ *Rosa de Lima* offered some words on this: “These questions have made me think in depth of my own views, especially the ones of my own self-identity...I never thought about it or had anybody asking me that.”⁶⁹⁰ This action stage calls for transformation, which is reciprocal when it comes to collaborative work in which participants and researcher are collaborators, and active subjects of research.

The process of participatory action gave to the researcher or practical theologian the role of facilitator in the process of Latinas’ articulating on their own social location, lived experiences and faith tradition. If the people are engaged as active members in the articulation of their pastoral needs, instead of mere receivers, there will be opportunity

⁶⁸⁹ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

⁶⁹⁰ Rosa de Lima, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

for prophetic ministries that engage and outreach to people where they are. This will avoid overcoming the challenges of trying to fit abstract methods and methodologies based on assumptions that not necessarily apply to all the diverse groups of the Church and the society. This same statement applies when practical theology converses with the social sciences and abstract methods of research. There is a critical need not only to listen to the narratives and stories of the people, but also to create spaces to affirm those stories and make them part of the theological and pastoral discourse.

Facilitating conversation among young adult Latinas and the practice of empowering them as active participants in the research moved us as participants to actively reflect on our own lives as Latina women and as agents of change at the university and our communities; particularly *la familia*. Moreover, “allowing people” to participate within a diverse Church is a step forward “to affirm and take into consideration [their] insights and concerns.”⁶⁹¹ The practice of *one-one-one interviews* and *focus groups* in this work served as a methodology of participation and action that affirmed Latinas’ “insights and concerns”⁶⁹² about their own lives and their role as Latinas and college students.

Engaging the Families: Prophetic Domestic Churches

The lives of young adult Latinas who attend higher education and self-identify as Catholics raised particular questions about how the Church is engaging this specific generation and paying attention to their social context, lived experiences and tradition. Results from research show there is a decreased in church attendance and engagement in the local church compared to popular religious memories and practices shared from

⁶⁹¹ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 12.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

childhood. However, there is a need to explore and rethink deeply creative strategies to reach out to this population.

Listening to the context and the narratives from research with Latinas, it is critical to highlight that the lack of participation, attendance or drifting away is not because they have lost belief in God but because they have to negotiate loaded class schedules and jobs, so that they can graduate early and start supporting their families. In this case, it is critical to highlight that the values of sacrifice, success, responsibility and commitment are not lived out in isolation within Latino/a families, but are shared within a community that prays and moves forward together. This fact suggests Latinas' constant negotiation of values and principles lived out in the everyday life as Latinas and women.

Moreover, the journey of their parents and *la familia* is not separated from Latinas' negotiation of values and virtues in the everyday. It is critical to highlight that Latinas live in the tension of both worlds; the world that their families once lived in Latin America and the world of the United States culture in which they were born, grew up and they are attending in higher education. In the tension of these two worlds, values and virtues are constantly negotiated with struggle, trembling, guilt, hope and faith. In this case, the love and all the efforts of their parents in this country have a great impact as they make choices in the public sphere. *Candelaria* elaborated on this tension above when sharing about the key role of her *abuela*, in relationship with her current situation of not being married to the father of her daughter. "I feel a lot of times that she is with me [*Candelaria starts crying in a low voice*] and I feel sometimes that maybe she would want me to be a little stronger. I imagine her sometimes like disapproving."⁶⁹³ *La Merced*

⁶⁹³ Candelaria, *Interview Protocol*, December 3, 2014.

elaborated on the tension about living in between two worlds and how the moral formation thought at home and passed by her family, impacts the way how she lives her values and virtues as a Latina Catholic.

I identify as being on the fence, because *una mujer Latina* [A woman from Latin America] over there, is kind of different of a Latina woman here in the way we act. *Reputación* [Reputation] means a lot for my family. I carry my family's name. So, I am in between. Here is about you but there you are more as a community. You are your family.⁶⁹⁴

Chiquinquirá also suggests how she negotiates her understanding as Catholic values and teachings with her identity and lived experience as a Latina:

As Catholics, we belief in certain things. Me being Catholic, allow me to see things in a certain way. I am going to speak about my family and what I was thought. I was always thought that your body is your temple. God is in your heart and your heart is in your body, which is your temple. It is just something sacred to take care of your body inside and out. I think that the relationship with God also influences that. My body is something sacred. It is something that I treasure very much. My family taught me to see sexuality more like a spiritual thing, not necessarily physical one hundred percent. It is something that involves God. God is involved in everything! This is part of my catholic identity. That is what I grew up with and this is part of who I am and what I believe. My parents thought me that, and their parents thought them that.⁶⁹⁵

This tension is also visible when Latinas shared their expressions of faith and how

⁶⁹⁴ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

⁶⁹⁵ La Merced, *Interview Protocol*, October 27, 2014.

they are directly affiliated with their families or the lived experiences of their families. That is why I found it enlightening but at the same time challenging to try to separate their lived experiences as Latinas with the lived experiences (context) of resilient families, and therefore, mothers. If the values, practices, beliefs and attitudes of their *familias* are rejected by the public sphere or the official religion, they are rejected as well. Even though they live in the tension and the struggle to negotiate both worlds; the first world is who they are and where they came from before claiming space in the public. This is critical in order to understand moral decision making or moral consciousness among young adult Latino/as.

It is critical to understand Latinas social location, in this case the story of their families, in order to reflect and understand their faith. As shared in this work, Latinas carry a deep spirituality and faith that have been passed with love and dedication by Latinas' families from childhood. Therefore, how is the Church responding prophetically to this group and engage them as active faithful members? How is the Church responding to the realities of faithful hearts and immigrant families? Moreover, how is the Church engaging the family and empowering the family (*la familia*) to actively participate and name her-self in the public sphere?

Allow my Language to Speak: Re-Imagining Language

In the process of attending to young adult Latinas' voices as active agents as they carry the voices of their families, language played a significant role in order to interpret their understanding of God and the Church in light of their social location and lived experiences. According to results from this research with Latinas, English language is no longer seen as a category to be studied merely from the linguistic perspective. The

majority of the participants in this study were born or raised in the United States and attend higher education, therefore they all speak, read and write in Standard English. This fact and results from this work, and the larger context presented in Chapter One, suggest that it is critical to explore language as a transformative category in practical theology, which is inherent to the social context and the lived experiences of the people and their communities.

Working in this research with a group of Latina descents who were born or raised in the United States, observations suggest a new way of exploring language. While English language, on one hand, becomes for this specific group a skill to communicate and learning in the everyday, on the other hand, Spanish becomes a metaphor to understand and reflect on the language of their heart in communion with God and their people. “Spanish is my ability to communicate better with people; *it is who I am*. English becomes a tool.”⁶⁹⁶ As noted in Chapter One, the language that once the parents of these young Latinas used in the public spectrum, become “incarnation and symbol,”⁶⁹⁷ as it was kept in the core of their heart and passed to their children with so much love and dedication.

The work with Latinas as active participants led this work to explore *language* as an incarnational dynamic that embodies a deep spirituality, carrier of *recuerdos* (cultural memory), and the lived experiences of a larger community. As noted in the review of the literature, Michelle Gonzalez notes that “the stories of our mothers and grandmothers are remembered and lived in our spiritual lives.”⁶⁹⁸ These narratives and stories from Latinas

⁶⁹⁶ Milagros, *Interview Protocol*, October 24, 2014.

⁶⁹⁷ Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*, 52.

⁶⁹⁸ Gonzalez, *Embracing Latina Spirituality*, 7.

were passed in Spanish by Latinas' parents and *abuela/os* and they signify more than a linguistic category. *Aparecida* shared about a wider community carrier of language: "My mom does not speak English and *Honduras is at home*."⁶⁹⁹ Also, *Rosa de Lima* notes language as home and what happens in that sacred space:

Spanish means *my roots, my home*. I feel that I can speak even more in Spanish. There are so many words that you cannot translate in English. The difference between *te amo y te quiero*. In English [both expressions] are just "I love you." I love speaking Spanish better than in English. We speak Spanish at home. I teach my brother Spanish. My parents do not speak English, so we have to speak in Spanish at home.⁷⁰⁰

When listening to Latinas' stories and the narratives, particularly those that described their everyday expressions of faith as Catholics, language calls not only for the literal translation of concepts when working with Latino/as, but it signifies the spiritual language of a people that carry a people and a wider community and that has been passed, interpreted, adapted and reinterpreted throughout generations.

In the practice of participatory action research, one-on-one dialogue and conversation noted a consistent transition between English and Spanish, particularly when naming words and phrases that described religious practices, devotions, and attitudes that they learned from parents and grandparents; including *dichos* (the sayings) they use in the everyday to acknowledge the presence and *la compañía de Dios* (the company of God) in *lo cotidiano*. "*Quien a Dios tiene, nada le falta* [one who has God, needs nothing]." It helps me and I repeat it, even in the car...because sometimes I feel

⁶⁹⁹ *Aparecida, Interview Protocol, July 16, 2014.*

⁷⁰⁰ *Rosa de Lima, Interview Protocol, November 25, 2014.*

that God is not there...and *todo me falta* [I need everything].”⁷⁰¹ This is the language of the heart which calls for a deep reflection and interpretation, deeper than mere translation.

Moreover, the dynamic of living in-between English and Spanish, as well as the use of *Spanglish*, mentioned throughout this work, is not a colloquial use of language or a distortion of language, when it comes to defining or expressing words or terms. Phrases, terms, and words pronounced in Spanish by the group of Latinas who participated in this research, are the result of Latinas’ deep spirituality and faith they learned through their families when growing up and that enfolds Latinas’ “values, symbols, ideas and other conceptual vehicles that [lift them up] to discover, rediscover or uncover a hidden meaning or truth connecting [them] to God.”⁷⁰² They pray and talk in Spanish because this is the way they connect with the divine in the most ordinary and unexpected “places” which is home; places where God is born.

I pray in Spanish because ever since I was a baby I always remember my mom in the car saying the prayer in Spanish, *el Padre Nuestro* [Our Father]. *Siempre pedimos por ayuda para la familia, por mi abuelita* [We always ask God to help our family, our grandmother]. We have a whole list that we go through and it is always in Spanish. We do *la Señal de la Cruz* [the sign of the Cross].⁷⁰³

The challenge in this case, is that these terms, words, phrases, expressions or *dichos* (sayings) are usually translated to a standard language that does not necessarily connect with the people. The goal is not to propose a change on adapted epistemology

⁷⁰¹ Rosario recalls the prayer of St. Therese of Avila. Rosario, *Interview Protocol*, October 29, 2004.

⁷⁰² Rodriguez, “Mestiza Spirituality,” 319.

⁷⁰³ Catalina, *Interview Protocol*, December 11, 2014.

that has been translated from English to Spanish in order to engage and reach out to Latino/as and Hispanics in the Church and higher education in the United States. Rather, this work challenges the approach that has been used to reinterpret language, which sometimes is literal translation. In this case, language is called to be interpreted, re-imagined, creatively and sacredly dwelled within the context of the people.

Remembering Hans-Georg Gadamer's thought in Chapter Three, the hermeneutical task in practical theology "is a fundamental human act and a significant way of being in the world."⁷⁰⁴ Language carries the story of the people behind, in front and within⁷⁰⁵ the words. Language in this case, is carrier of cultural memory. "Interpretation and understanding is a creative process within which even the author's original assumptions concerning the meaning of the text may be challenged and deepened."⁷⁰⁶ In this case, mere translation upon language is challenged and called to be deepened in a way that fully connects people with the divine.

At the same time, religious concepts in English do not necessary have the same connotation for Latino/as who have grew up within immigrant families where the language of faith is Spanish. Among responses related to religious devotions and practices, the majority of participants are more likely to describe and name religious practices and devotions in Spanish, unknowing the meaning of these practices in English, because it is most likely that these practices are celebrated in their countries of origin. For example, as noted in Chapter Four, Chiquinquirá expresses this dynamic of language through her memories of *la Purísima* [The Purest Virgin Mary] in Nicaragua:

⁷⁰⁴ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 110.

⁷⁰⁵ For more on the hermeneutical circle, See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

⁷⁰⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 115.

In Nicaragua, we have what they call *la Purísima* which is a celebration *a la Virgen* [to the Virgin Mary] and what they do is that the different houses make *altares con la Virgen* [altars with the Virgin Mary] and they decorate them with flowers. It is very beautiful! and people usually make food or they make like little goodies for the kids, or they give out toys. So, what happens is you have big groups of people that walk around the neighborhoods and they sing to *la Virgen* [the Virgin Mary] because they have *canticos* [diminutive for songs or folk religious songs or sonnets] and they sing to her, *le rezan, le piden, o le agradecen por lo que ella les ha dado* [they pray to her, ask to her and thank to her for everything she has given to them] ...and they get goodies, but they have to sing in order to get the goodies. If you do not sing, there is nothing! [Chiquinquirá smiles]. The people from the homes give the goodies. It is around Christmas, the first week of December [Advent]. This devotion is just amazing because despite of everything that is going on in the world now, people still find the will to do this...for me it is just beautiful...people still have that faith that God still exist. I love it!⁷⁰⁷

Sayings, names and phrases have a meaning and a story behind. This work challenges the call to take the time to listen to the story and the meaning behind language in order to creatively and prophetically adapt it. Rosa de Lima also noted about the sacred dynamic of living in between: “When I was born, my mom took me to *El Señor de los Milagros* [The Lord of Miracles] *y me encomendó como diciendo que yo pertenezco al Señor de los Milagros* [and entrusted me to Jesus the Lord of Miracles, signifying that I

⁷⁰⁷ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

belong to him], that I am his daughter.”⁷⁰⁸ Listening to their expressions when sharing the stories, it is noted that even Latinas were born or raised in the United States, the terms of devotions, religious practices or the prayers of the Mass, were unknown in English, unless they have a solid religious background. In this particular group and looking at the largest audience, this is not the case, since this population most likely attended to public school. In the case of the Mass (or *la Misa*), the majority of the group reported knowing the format and the prayers of the Mass in Spanish. *Rosa de Lima* emphasized the importance for her to pray in Spanish:

I pray in Spanish even when I go to church in English... It makes me feel more connected to God. I was raised that way. I was raised talking in Spanish to God. I was raised praying in Spanish. It is like talking to my mom in Spanish. I have to talk to him in Spanish and I feel more connected that way.⁷⁰⁹

Chiquinquirá also shares how praying in her language has an impact on her participation to Mass:

I think prayer is very important in my life because it is my way to communicate with God and my way to express how I feel and to thank him for everything he has given me in my life. I pray in Spanish. I grew up praying in Spanish, I go to Mass in Spanish, so it is kind of *lo cotidiano para mi* [the everyday to me] to pray in Spanish.⁷¹⁰

Reflecting on this category of language and speaking to the Church, this work raises questions of accessibility and understanding of religious language used in pastoral

⁷⁰⁸ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁷⁰⁹ Rosa de Lima, *Interview Protocol*, November 25, 2014.

⁷¹⁰ Chiquinquirá, *Interview Protocol*, October 31, 2014.

settings, particularly with the people who come from different cultural backgrounds. It is visible how critical is to acknowledge religious celebrations and ministerial opportunities in the language of one's heart; the language of the people. Therefore, how can the Church and pastoral ministries be creative and re-imagine language and religious concepts in a way that language connects with the people and the contexts from where they come from? How can the Church and higher education bridge the religious language of the people with the pastoral and theological programs offered in the different ministerial and university settings?

Salve Latinas!

In Chapter Two, the voice of the people –*el pueblo Hispano* (Hispanic people)– was traced from Latin America and it echoed hope and salvation as it endured, struggled, and carried discourse to a new context. However, dangerous memory was carried in resilient silence with the hope of once seeing and experiencing salvation. Trespassed hearts that once trespassed to the North American Hemisphere for a new “place” to stay, paid a price for their future generations and made of unexpected places called family, houses for God; *Iglesias domesticas inmigrantes* (immigrant domestic churches) that crossed to a new social location to survive from human suffering, even paying the price of leaving home behind and carrying and keeping memory in one's heart. As Pope Paul VI recalls to the people in Chapter One:

Salve! ...Porque conocemos las condiciones de vuestra existencia: condiciones de miseria para muchos de vosotros, a veces inferiores a la exigencia normal de la

*vida humana. Nos estáis ahora escuchando en silencio; pero oímos el grito que sube de vuestro sufrimiento y del de la mayor parte de la humanidad.*⁷¹¹

Listening to the stories of these emerging adult Latinas through participatory action research, a *Salve* was chanted! Hearts full of hope and carriers of faith were lifted up. The women who participated in this research not only retrieved the narratives and the stories from their people, but they lifted them up and opened a new space for those stories to be told and live forever. When Mary in the Gospel set out in haste and visited Elizabeth to the Hill Country in a town of Judah, words, stories and narratives were shared and affirmed with one another: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”⁷¹² Words of salvation, interchanged in a deep encounter among Latinas, is interpreted as the response of Mary in the Gospel of Luke, when “Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.”⁷¹³ The greatness of the Lord and the spirits rejoiced when Latinas shared, with struggle and hope, stories and memories (*recuerdos*) about who they are and the places they come from. These stories were shared with love and *sentimientos* –interpreted in this work as “the capacity to feel”⁷¹⁴ and an active *yes* that moves the human heart to a redemptive journey.

In the Margins

In the practice of participatory action research, lives were shared and words of hope were remembered and affirmed. However, this work cannot be seen as an ended

⁷¹¹ “Because we know the conditions of your existence: conditions of misery for most of you, sometimes inferior to the regular standards of human life. Now you are listening to us in silence, but we hear the shout which arises from your suffering and the suffering of most of humanity.” Paul VI, “Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá.”

⁷¹² Luke 1: 42.

⁷¹³ Luke 1:46.

⁷¹⁴ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research: Practical Theology for Social Justice,” 239.

study or research. This work prophetically opened the door to creatively reimagine ways to unfold the stories of the people and recreate them, particularly those of women. *Lo cotidiano* of Latinas and their family continues when practical theologians and pastoral ministers are mediators in the creation of sacred spaces of participation; spaces where in this case, young adult Latinas/os remember who they are and where they come from. Pope Francis affirms that this evangelization is “person to person”⁷¹⁵ in the everyday life. “This communication takes place in so many different ways that it would be impossible to describe or catalogue them all, and God’s people, with all their many gestures and signs, are its collective subject.”⁷¹⁶ This is visible through the power of not only the sharing of the stories during questionnaires and one-on-one interviews, but also through the power of encounter to one another as women, like Mary and Elizabeth in the Gospel, and affirm our story.

In this particular work, encounter and action happens vividly through spaces, such as the *focus group* in participatory action, where Latinas affirmed the stories that were shared and reflected throughout this work and their dwelling in the world as women of faith. *Milagros* shared on this encounter: “I was walking and Claudia approached to me and invited me. So, it just happened to be, that we were there at the right time, so it is nice to see you and see a couple of faces that I have had in class.”⁷¹⁷ Also *Aparecida* shared on the power of encounter:

It is very interesting we are all here today because I love learning about women who are Latinas and who are trying to get somewhere in life. I am very interested

⁷¹⁵ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 129.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

⁷¹⁷ Milagros, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

to see what our similarities are. I love this. I have a plan, but I am open to change.⁷¹⁸

This research opened the conversation for new ways of engagement with Latinas at the University setting. This dynamic opened the door for a support system in which the lives and identity of young adult Latinas were affirmed. This dynamic acknowledges the need of creating these sacred spaces in the Church and at the University setting. Outside of the research, the practical theologian not only participated in the role of facilitator and researcher, but also this pastoral and theological exercise opened new doors and opportunities for this Latinas outside of the research (for example the creation of the Latino/a Student Association, ministry opportunities to led by Latina students and other ideas that empower Latinas to affirm their call at the university setting).

In this pastoral journey transformation was reciprocal and discourse prophetically shifted to a new journey. It opened the door to re-think in a new *marianismo* which at the end of this work is not defined by the values, traditions, devotion towards Mary. Rather, *marianismo* is constructed and re-imagined in light of the lived experiences of Latinas who embody the Gospel and are moved by the Spirit.

Elizabeth Conde-Frazier notes in participatory action research that “practical theology that focuses on justice requires living in the borderland between God and the people.”⁷¹⁹ Tracing the roots from Medellín, forwarded this work with Latinas to imagine the voices that arise from the borderland and the people’s grassroots. Even in the struggle, the act of living in the borderland between God and the people becomes

⁷¹⁸ Aparecida, *Focus Group*, February 25, 2015.

⁷¹⁹ Conde-Frazier, “Participatory Action Research,” 241.

prophetic work in practical Latino/a theology and the Church. This is pastoral work in which one is called to share the goods news of salvation.

Salve Latinas!

Blessed are you, Latina, among women, and blessed is the fruit of your people!

Blessed are those that you carry with you through the narratives and stories you shared, but mostly through the gift of who you are as you claim space as Latina in the public sphere.

And after this work, there is no going back, there is no way of being the same.

I will never be the same. This work has transformed and washed my soul with the holy water of a new call; a call that sets me free and pushes my voice as a Latina theologian to move forward.

Pa'lante, vamos pa'lante, que la Virgen nos sostiene y el Señor nos acompaña y afirma nuestro llamado en esta tierra como mujeres de fé al servicio de Dios y de su gente!⁷²⁰

⁷²⁰ “Forward, moving forward that Mary holds us all and God *acompaña* and affirm our call on this earth, as women of faith to the service of God and God’s people!”

Appendix A: Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a study about the lived experiences of Latinas between the ages of 18 and 29, born or raised in the United States, who identify as Catholic. This research project is being conducted by Claudia H. Herrera, a doctoral candidate at St. Thomas University, for her doctoral dissertation. The research entails four stages: 1) a questionnaire that will be completed electronically, 2) an hour-long, one-on-one personal interview, 3) a one-time, hour-long focus group meeting, and 4) a follow-up evaluation to be completed electronically.

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. There are no risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs for participation. Transportation is required to the research site. The information collected will help articulate the lived experiences, social contexts, and spirituality of young adult Latinas. Moreover, this study will benefit an understanding of the views of young women with Latin American roots who were born or raised in the United States.

Your participation will remain confidential. All participants will be instructed and asked to maintain confidentiality but the researcher will not guarantee that every participant will absolutely do so. In addition, your given name will not be used in the research, dissertation, or any future presentations or publications based on the work. Identifying information will be articulated collectively so that your identity is secured. Voice and video recordings will be used by the researcher solely for the purpose of the study.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. If you choose to participate, please sign this form below. By signing, you are indicating that you are over 18 years of age and, therefore, of legal age to participate in the study. If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me, the interviewer, Claudia H. Herrera, at _____, or my doctoral advisor, Dr. Mary Carter Waren, at _____.

Thank you very much for your interest and willingness to participate in this study, which aims to contribute to both the academy and the Catholic Church in the United States.

Signature of Interviewer

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

Appendix B: Preliminary Questionnaire

Questionnaire Protocol

(To be completed electronically via Google Docs).

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1NqN6620ofRz1j6MucpTcJk3yRgTkee9bisk5KAs2Xi4/viewform>

Dear participant: You are about to complete a questionnaire on self-identity, social context and faith of Latinas in their 20's. Kindly, read carefully each question and please respond accordingly. If you have any question about the meaning/content of a question, I ask you to please contact me (text or call) before answering. Your insight in every single question is crucial for the direction of the research. Thank you very much and let's begin!

1. First and Last Name _____

2. Nickname (if applicable) _____

3. School _____ Major _____

4. Age _____

5. Were you born in the United States?

Yes__ No__

a. If YES, where are your parents from? _____

Mother _____ Father _____

Other _____

b. If NOT born in the US:

Where were you born? _____

How old were you when you first came to the US? _____

Did you come with? (check all that apply)

Both parents__

Both parents and siblings__

One parent__

One parents and siblings__

Abuela/o (grandmother/grandfather) __

Tia/o (aunt/uncle) __

Other__

Please specify your answer _____

6. Do you or have you visit(ed) your Country/ies of origin?

Yes__ No__

If YES, how often/how long ago? _____

7. What area/neighborhood do you live? _____

8. How many people live in your household? _____

9. Do you consider yourself? (check all that apply)

American__ Latina__ Hispanic__ Other_____

10. What languages do you speak? (check all that apply)

English__ Spanish__ Both__ Other_____

11. What is your main spoken language?

English__ Spanish__ Both__ Other_____

12. What language you feel more comfortable speaking on a daily basis?

English__ Spanish__ Both__ Other_____

13. What language do you speak while at home among family, relatives, etc.?

English__ Spanish__ Both__ Other_____

14. When you hear the word *Spanglish*; what words, symbols, images or meanings come to your mind?

15. When you hear the Spanish expression *en la lucha!* (in the struggle); what words, symbols, images or meanings come to your mind?

16. Are there any other significant Spanish expressions that come to your mind?

Yes__ No__

If YES, please specify_____

17. Is prayer important in your everyday life?

Yes___ No___

18. In what language do you mostly pray?

Spanish___ English___ Other_____

19. What does the Spanish language mean to you? (Check all that apply)

- a. It is a very important tool that helps me connect/bond with family, friends and people who share my roots___
- b. It is the most important legacy my parents have passed down to me___
- c. It is a very important part of my spirituality and identity___
- d. It is a skill___
- e. Presents a challenge when communicating with family, friends and/or people who share my roots___
- f. Other (please specify) _____

20. Do you attend to any local church/parish?

Yes___ No___

If YES, which local church/parish do you attend? _____

How often do you attend?

Once a week___

Twice a week___

Every day___

Other_____

21. Do you belong to any young adult group at your church, local parish, or university?

Yes___ No___

If YES, please specify_____

22. To whom do you go to when you are in sorrow or need? _____

23. Do you carry any religious imagery, article, or jewelry on a daily basis?

Yes___ No___

If YES, please specify (answer in English, Spanish or any other language)

24. Do you have any religious imagery, article or frame at your home?

Yes__ No__

If YES, please specify (answer in English, Spanish or any other language)

25. Is there any particular devotion or religious practice that is important to your everyday spirituality (you can mark more than one)?

Rosary__ Bible reading__ Eucharistic adoration__

Candle lighting__ Novenas__ Home altar__

Journaling__ Mass__ Marian devotion__

Saints__ Other_____

26. Do you remember religious devotions (saints, Mary, Jesus, etc.), prayers, religious celebrations or practices growing up?

Yes__ No__

If YES, please specify (you can write in both English and Spanish)

If YES, do these religious devotions (saints, Mary, Jesus, etc.), prayers, religious celebrations or practices come to mind in times of sorrow or need?

Yes__ No__

27. Is there any particular person (or people) that inspire you to succeed?

Yes__ No__

If YES, who does/do inspire you to succeed?

28. How would you characterize your relationship with your mother? (check all that apply)

- A friendly relationship ___
- A mother- daughter relationship ___
- A mentoring relationship ___
- A strain relationship ___
- A distant relationship ___
- Other _____

29. Does your *abuela/abuelo* have a special role in your life?

Yes__ No__

30. Did/Does your *abuela/abuelo* have a special role in your faith formation?

Yes__ No__

31. Do your Latino/a- Hispanic roots affect your career choice?

Yes__ No__

32. Does your identity as a Catholic woman affect or influence your career choice/s?

Yes__ No__

33. Do your Latino/a- Hispanic roots affect or influences your understanding of your body?

Yes__ No__

34. Does your identity as Catholic woman affect or influence your understanding of your body?

Yes__ No__

35. When you hear the word “sexuality”, what words, images, meanings, emotions, come to your mind?

36. Do your Latino/a- Hispanic roots affect or influence your understanding of sexuality?

Yes__ No__

37. Does your identity as a Catholic woman affect or influence your understanding of sexuality?

Yes__ No__

38. Would you date somebody who is not Catholic?

Yes__ No__

39. Would you marry somebody who is not Catholic?

Yes__ No__

40. Do your Latino/a-Hispanic roots affect or influence your views and reactions on issues of self-identity and gender?

Yes__ No__

41. Does your identity as a Catholic woman affect or influence your views and reactions on issues of identity and gender?

Yes__ No__

42. Do you feel comfortable talking with your friends about your faith and spirituality?

Yes__ No__

43. Are there any questions on this questionnaire that you have not thought before?

Yes__ No__

If YES, please specify_____

44. Are there any insights or questions on this questionnaire that you have thought, reflected before?

Yes__ No__

If YES, please specify_____

45. Is there any additional question, topic or insight about self-identity and spirituality of Catholic Latinas in their 20's that you would like to see included on this questionnaire?

Yes__ No__

If YES, please specify _____

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It will be a great help to continue with the study. Your participation will remain confidential and I kindly ask you to maintain confidentiality about the content of this questionnaire. I am looking forward to keep working with you in the next phases of the study. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact information is on the consent form. Peace and blessings!

Bibliography

- Aponte, Edwin David. *Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012.
- Aquino, María Pilar. Daisy L. Machado and Jeanette Rodriguez. *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002.
- Aquino, María Pilar. "Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology: Toward an Intercultural Theology for the Third Millennium." In *From the Heart of Our People*, edited by Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz, 6-48. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999.
- Bergoglio, Jorge M., SJ. *Ponerse la Patria al Hombro: Memoria y Camino de Esperanza*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Editorial Claretiana, 2005.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: University Press, 1977.
- Bowes, Paula. "Mary and the Early Christian Fathers." *Epiphany* 4 (June 1984): 45-55.
- Brown, Sally A. "Hermeneutical Theory." In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 112-122. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2012.
- Browning, Don S. *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Cabranes, José A. "Citizenship and the American Empire: Notes on the Legislative History of the United States Citizenship of Puerto Ricans." In *A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States*, edited by David G. Gutiérrez. Accessed October 12, 2016.

<https://www.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/immigration.htm>.

Cahalan, Kathleen A. and Gordon S. Mikoski. *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Cahalan, Kathleen A. *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010.

———. “Spiritual Practices and the Search for a Wisdom Epistemology.” In *Christian Practical Wisdom: What It Is, Why It Matters*, edited by Dorothy C. Bass, Kathleen A. Cahalan, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, James R. Nieman, Christian B. Scharen, 275-325. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Accessed April 12, 2016. Vatican.va.

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). “Fact Sheets: Hispanic Catholics in the United States.” Georgetown University, 2014. Accessed October 1, 2016. <http://cara.georgetown.edu/staff/webpages/Hispanic%20Catholic%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>.

Chopp, Rebecca S. *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies*. Eugene: OR: Wipf & Stock, 1986.

———. *The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1991.

Coghlan, David and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action in Your Own Organization*, Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2010.

Conde-Frazier, Elizabeth. “Participatory Action Research.” In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, 234-243. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2012.

- . “Participatory Action Research: Practical Theology for Social Justice.” *Religious Education* 101, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 321-329.
- Conference of Latin American Bishops. *Document on Justice*. September 6, 1968.
http://www.povertystudies.org/TeachingPages/EDS_PDFs4WEB/Medellin%20Document-%20Justice.pdf.
- . *Document on Peace*. September 6, 1968.
http://www.povertystudies.org/TeachingPages/EDS_PDFs4WEB/Medellin%20Document-%20Peace.pdf.
- . *Documentos Finales de Medellín*. September, 1968. http://www.diocese-braga.pt/catequese/sim/biblioteca/publicacoes_online/91/medellin.pdf.
- . *Poverty of the Church*. September 6, 1968.
http://www.povertystudies.org/TeachingPages/EDS_PDFs4WEB/Medellin%20Document-%20Poverty%20of%20the%20Church.pdf.
- Congregation for Divine Worship. *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*. London, UK: Catholic Truth Society, 2002.
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Practices of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven F. Rendall. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984.
- De La Torre Miguel A. and Edwin David Aponte. *Introducing Latino/a Theologies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.
- Elizondo, Virgilio. *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000.
- . *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997.

- . *Jesús de Galilea: Un Dios de Increíbles Sorpresas*. Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2003.
- . *Jesus of Galilee: A God of Incredible Surprises*. New York: NY, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.
- Espín, Orlando O. and Miguel H. Díaz. *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.
- Espín, Orlando O. *Grace and Humanness: Theological Reflections Because of Culture*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . *Idol and Grace: On Traditioning and Subversive Hope*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014.
- . In discussion with Dawn Gibeau. “Hispanic Theology Aims Church at Poor.” *National Catholic Reporter*. September 11, 1992.
- . Introduction to *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*. Edited by Orlando O. Espín. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.
- . *The Faith of the People, Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism*. Foreword by Roberto S. Goizueta. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Fernández, Eduardo C. *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology (1972-1998)*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000.
- Figueroa Deck, Allan. S.J. “A Latino Practical Theology: Mapping the Road Ahead.” *Theological Studies* 65, no. 2 (June 2004): 275-297.
- Fornet-Betancourt, Raúl. “¿Quién dicen ustedes que soy yo? Discerniendo el Cristianismo en las Américas.” Panel Presentation at the Academy of Catholic

- Hispanics Theologians of the United States Colloquium. San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 2016.
- Fowler, James W. *Becoming Adult Becoming Christian, Adult Development and Christian Faith*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium*. Accessed June 1, 2016. Vatican.va.
- . “Holy Mass on The Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day: Apostolic Journey to Río de Janeiro.” Accessed June 1, 2016. Vatican.va.
- . “Holy Mass on The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.” Accessed June 1, 2016. Vatican.va.
- . “Holy Mass for The Marian Day on The Occasion of the Year of Faith.” Accessed June 1, 2016. Vatican.va.
- . *Lumen Fidei*. Accessed June 1, 2016. Vatican.va.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the City*. Translated by Donaldo Macedo. New York, NY: Continuum, 1993.
- . *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York, NY: Continuum, 2003.
- Fry, Richard and Jeffrey S. Passel. “Latino Children: A Majority Are U.S.-Born Offspring of Immigrants.” *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*. May 28, 2009. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/05/28/latino-children-a-majority-are-us-born-offspring-of-immigrants/>.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, New York, NY: Continuum, 2011.
- García-Johnson, Oscar. *The Mestizo/a Community of the Spirit: A Postmodern Latino/a*

- Ecclesiology*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009.
- García-Rivera, Alejandro. *The Community of the Beautiful: A Theological Aesthetics*.
 Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999.
- Gebara, Ivone and Maria Clara Bingemer. *Mary: Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*.
 Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004.
- Gebara, Ivone. *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation*. Translated
 from the French by Anne Patrick Ware. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002.
- Goizueta, Roberto S. "The Symbolic Realism of U.S. Latino/a Popular Catholicism."
Theological Studies 65, no. 2 (June 2004): 255-274.
- . *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment*.
 Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995.
- . *Christ Our Companion: Toward a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation*.
 Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009.
- Gonzalez, Michelle A. *Afro-Cuban Theology: Religion, Race, Culture, and Identity*.
 Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006.
- . *Embracing Latina Spirituality: A Woman's Perspective*. Cincinnati, OH: St.
 Anthony Messenger Press, 2009.
- . "One is Not Born a Latina, One Becomes One": The Construction of the Latina
 Feminist Theologian in Latino/a Theology." *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology*
 10, no. 3 (2002): 5-30.
- . *Sor Juana: Beauty and Justice in the Americas*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003.
- Graham, Elaine. Heather Walton and Frances Ward. *Theological Reflection: Method*.
 London: SCM Press, 2005.

Gray, Mark. Mary Gautier and Thomas Gaunt, S.J. *Cultural Diversity in the Catholic Church in the United States*. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University: Washington D.C. June 2014.

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/upload/cultural-diversity-cara-report-phase-1.pdf>

Gutiérrez, David G. “A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States.” *U.S. Department of the Interior, American Latino Theme Study*.

<https://www.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/immigration.htm>

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*. Translated and Edited by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973.

———. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation. 15th Anniversary Edition with a New Introduction by the Author*. Translated and Edited by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988.

Heitink, Gerben. *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains*. Translated by Reinder Bruinsma. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999.

Herr, Kathryn and Gary L. Anderson. *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2005.

Herrera, Claudia H. “Colombia and Christian Education.” *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*. Edited by George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

- . “Motherhood as a Metaphor for Contemporary Latina Theology and Spirituality: Pregnant Mary (Maria) on a Pilgrimage.” In *Making Sense of Motherhood: Biblical and Theological Perspectives*, edited by Beth M. Stovell, 154-165. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015.
- Horton, Myles and Paulo Freire. *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María and Yolanda Tarango. *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1988.
- Isasi-Díaz, Ada María. *En La Lucha. In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women’s Liberation Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993.
- . *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004.
- . “Lo Cotidiano: A Key Element of Mujerista Theology.” *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 10, no. 1 (August 2002): 5-17.
- . *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996.
- John Paul II. *Ecclesia in America*. Accessed April 7, 2017. Vatican.va.
- . *Redemptoris Mater*. Accessed November 23, 2016. Vatican.va.
- Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. New York, NY: Continuum, 1992.
- . “The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women.” *Horizons* 12, no. 1 (1985):116-185.
- . *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2003.

- Kelcourse, Felicity B. *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind and Soul*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004.
- Krogstad, Jens Manuel. Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, “5 Facts about Illegal Immigration in the U.S.” *Pew Research Center*. November 3, 2016.
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/03/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>.
- Loya, Gloria Inés. “Pathways to a Mestiza Feminist Theology.” In *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology*, edited by María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado and Jeanette Rodriguez, 217-240. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002.
- Machado, Antonio. *Selected Poems*. Translated by Alan S. Trueblood. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Mantilla Ruiz, Luis Carlos. OFM. “Visita del Papa Pablo VI a Colombia: Agosto 22 a 24 de 1968.” *Credencial Historia*, no. 117 (September 1999).
<http://www.banrepcultural.org/node/32975>.
- Martell-Otero, Loida I. *Liberating News: An Emerging U.S. Hispanic/Latina Soteriology of the Crossroads*. New York, NY: Fordham University, 2004.
- Martell-Otero, Loida I. Zaida Maldonado Pérez and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier. *Latina Evangélicas: A Theological Survey from the Margins*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013.
- Martínez, Jessica and Michael Lipka, “Hispanic Millennials are less religious than older U.S. Hispanics.” *Pew Research Center*. May 8, 2014.
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/08/hispanic-millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-u-s-hispanics/>.

- Matovina, Timothy. *Latino Catholicism: Transformation in America's Largest Church*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- McDowell, Josh and Thomas Williams. *Relaciones: La clave Para La Nueva Generación*. El Paso, TX: Editorial Mundo Hispano, 2007.
- McTaggart, Robin. "Participatory Action Research: Issues in Theory and Practice." *Educational Action Research* 2, no. 3 (1994): 313-337.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0965079940020302>
- Metz, Johann Baptist Metz. *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*. Translated by J. Mathew Ashley. New York, NY: Crossroad, 2007.
- Murphy, David. Lina Guzman and Alicia Torres. "America's Hispanic Children: Gaining Ground, Looking Forward." Child Trends Hispanic Institute, 2004.
<http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014-38AmericaHispanicChildren.pdf>
- Nanko-Fernández, Carmen. *Theologizing en EspanGLISH: Context, Community, and Ministry*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010.
- . "Lo Cotidiano as Locus Theologicus." In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, edited by Orlando O. Espín, 15-33. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.
- Osmer, Richard R. *Practical Theology: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Ospino, Hosffman and Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill. "Catholic Schools in an Increasingly Hispanic Church: A Summary Report of Findings from the National Survey of

Catholic Schools Serving Hispanic Families.” Boston College, 2016.

http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/schools/lsoe_sites/cce/pdf/STM%20Catholic%20Schools_final%20v4_opt.pdf.

Passel, Jeffrey and D`Vera Cohn. “A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States.” *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*. April 14, 2009.

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/14/a-portrait-of-unauthorized-immigrants-in-the-united-states/>.

———. “The Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010.” *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*. February 1, 2011.

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/02/01/unauthorized-immigrant-population-national-and-state-trends-2010/>.

Patten, Eileen. “The Nation’s Latino Population Is Defined by Its Youth.” *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*. April 20, 2016.

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/04/20/the-nations-latino-population-is-defined-by-its-youth/>.

Paul VI. “Closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.” Accessed February 1, 2016. Vatican.va.

———. *Gaudium et Spes*. Accessed April 12, 2016. Vatican.va.

———. *Lumen Gentium*. Accessed November 10, 2016. Vatican.va.

———. “Santa Misa Para los Campesinos Colombianos: Peregrinación Apostólica a Bogotá.” Accessed April 12, 2016. Vatican.va.

Pelton, Robert. “Latin America, Catholicism In.” *The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*. Edited by Richard P. McBrien. New York, NY: Harper Collins,

1995.

Pew Research Center. "Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Religion." November 13, 2014.

<http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/#history-of-religious-change>.

———. "The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States." May 7, 2014.

<http://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states/>.

———. Hispanic Trends. "Hispanic Population and Origin in Select U.S. Metropolitan

Areas." September 6, 2016. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/hispanic-population-in-select-u-s-metropolitan-areas/>.

Radecke, Mark Wm. "Service-Learning and the Spiritual Formation of College Students." *Word & World* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 289-298.

Reason, Peter and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*. Fort Worth, TX: Christian University Press, 1976.

———. *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of The Creation of Meaning in Language*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987.

Roberts Gaventa, Beverly and Cynthia L. Rigby. *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Rodriguez, Jeanette. "Mestiza Spirituality: Community, Ritual, and Justice." *Theological Studies* 65, no. 2 (June 2004): 317-339.

- . *Our Lady of Guadalupe. Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994.
- . *Stories We Live, Cuentos que Vivimos: Hispanic Women's Spirituality*. New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1996.
- Rohr, Richard. *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003.
- Romero, Oscar. *Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005.
- Sanoff, Henry. *Community Participation Methods in Design and Planning*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, 2000.
- Segundo, Juan Luis. S.J. *The Liberation of Theology*. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1976.
- Smith, Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton. *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Smith, Christian and Patricia Snell. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. Oxford: University Press, 2009.
- Sobrino, Jon. *Resurrección de la Verdadera Iglesia: Los Pobres Lugar Teológico de la Eclesiología*. Santander, Spain: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1981.
- . *The True Church and The Poor*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984.
- Sosa, Mercedes. *Solo le Pido a Dios* by León Gieco. Originally released in Argentina, 1978.

- St. Thomas University. Office of Institutional Research. *St. Thomas University Fact Book 2014-2015*. <https://web.stu.edu/Portals/0/OIR/FB2014.pdf>.
- Stepler, Renee and Anna Brown. "Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States." *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends*. April 19, 2016. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/04/19/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states/#current-population>.
- Swinton, John and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. London: SCM Press, 2006.
- Tombs, David. *Latin American Liberation Theology*. Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002.
- Torres, Valerie. "La Familia as Locus Theologicus and Religious Education in Lo Cotidiano (Daily Life)." *Religious Education* 105, no. 4 (2010):444-461. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2010.493413>
- Tracy, David. *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981.
- U.S. Department of Justice: Immigration and Naturalization Service. *1978 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). *Hispanic Ministry at a Glance*. Accessed October 12, 2016. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/hispanic-latino/demographics/hispanic-ministry-at-a-glance.cfm>.
- . *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*. November 15, 2000. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/pastoral-care-of->

migrants-refugees-and-travelers/resources/welcoming-the-stranger-among-us-unity-in-diversity.cfm.

Veling, Terry A. *Practical Theology: "On Earth as it is in Heaven."* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005.

Whiteheads, James D. and Evelyn Eaton. *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*. Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 1995.

Zaccaria, Francesco. *Participation and Beliefs in Popular Religiosity: An Empirical-Theological Exploration among Catholic Parishioners in the Diocese of Conversano-Monopoli in Italy*. Boston, MA: Brill, 2010.