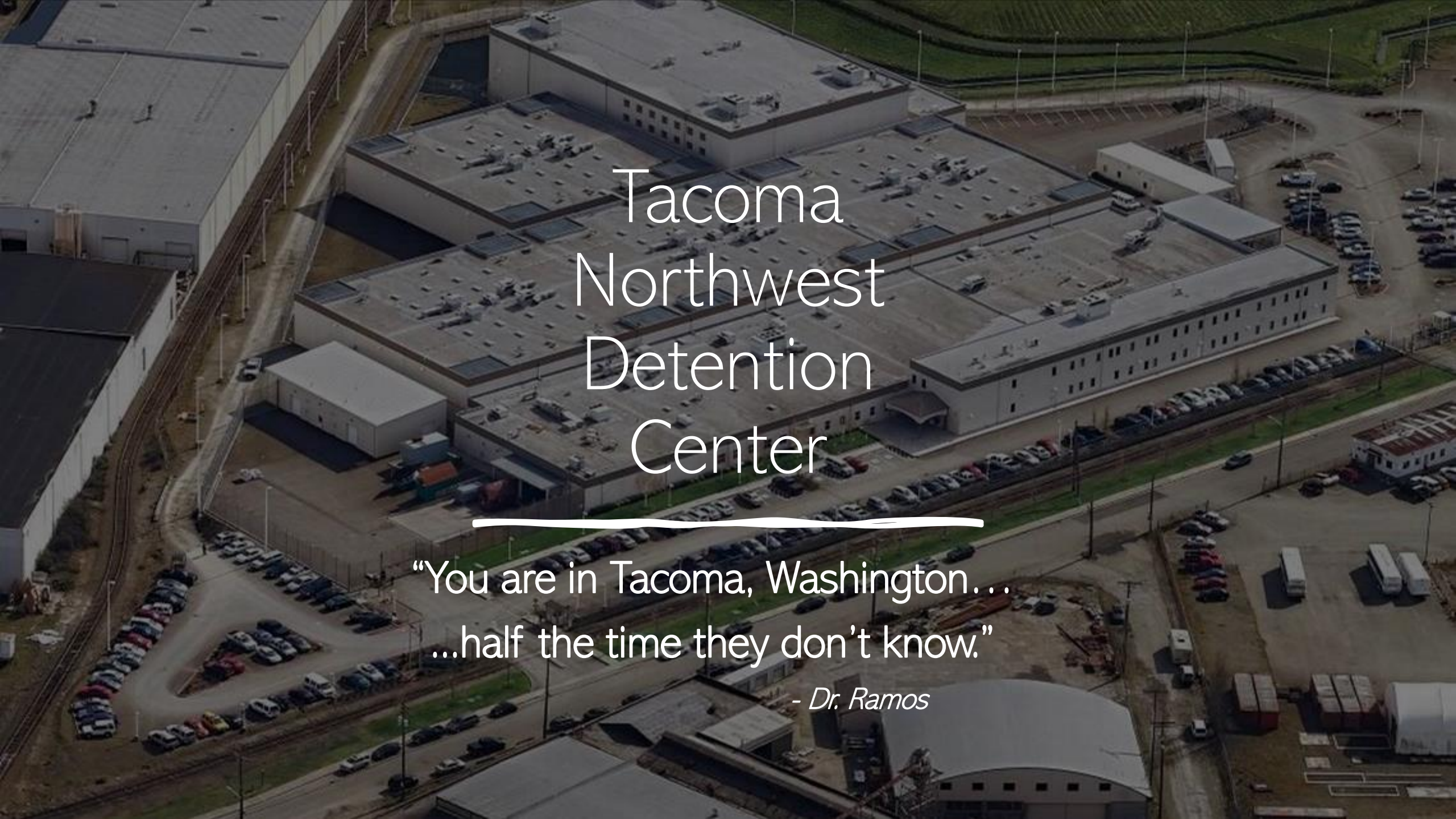




# Strength and Vulnerability

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A Qualitative Exploration of Mexican Immigration in the Pacific Northwest and Beyond



# Tacoma Northwest Detention Center

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“You are in Tacoma, Washington...  
...half the time they don't know.”

- *Dr. Ramos*

# Literature review

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## STRENGTHS

- Family cohesion
- Ethnic group identity
- *Consejos* (advice)
- *Cuentos* (stories)

## VULNERABILITIES

- Race/systematic oppression
- Low SES
- Lack of documentation
- Fear of separation

(Hershberg & Lykes 2015)

# In depth-interview

“...[the] relational process between the knower (participant) and would be knower (researcher)”  
Packer, 2017

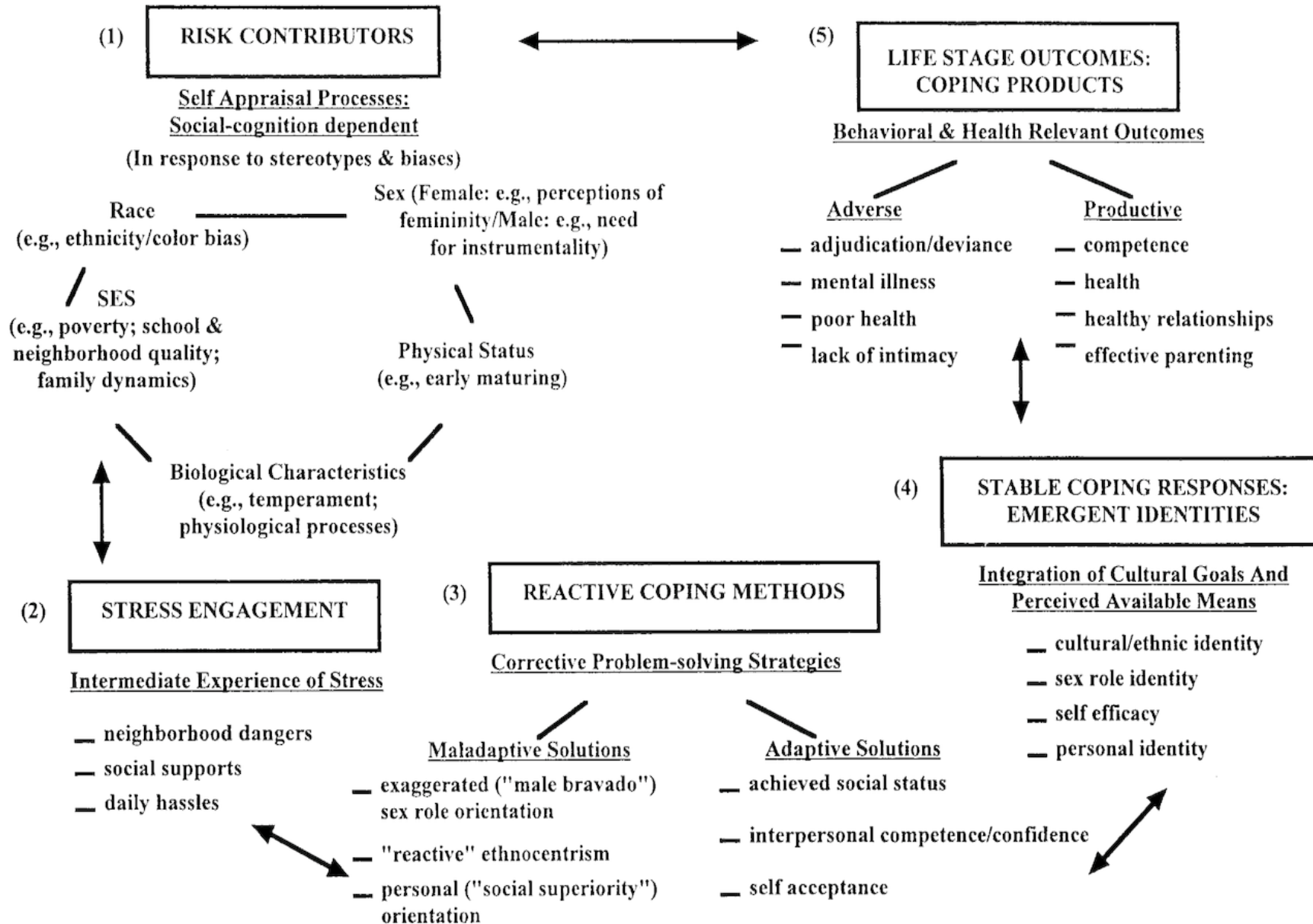
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## Dr. Tomas Ramos

- 🛡️ Vice president of Human Rights for Washington State American Federation of Teachers Union
- 🛡️ Aid Northwest Volunteer
- 🛡️ Tacoma Community College Professor of Communications
- 🛡️ Immigrant activist

*“I have many fights.  
But if I could pick just one, this is it –  
immigration.” -Dr. Ramos*

# A Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) (Spencer et al., 1997)



“...If we can conceptualize where the body navigates  
itself for support and survival in marginalized contexts,  
...if we can conceive how an individual sees their context -  
perhaps we can fix the context.”

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Margaret Beale Spencer (NAFS, 2020)

# Codes

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## Data Analysis

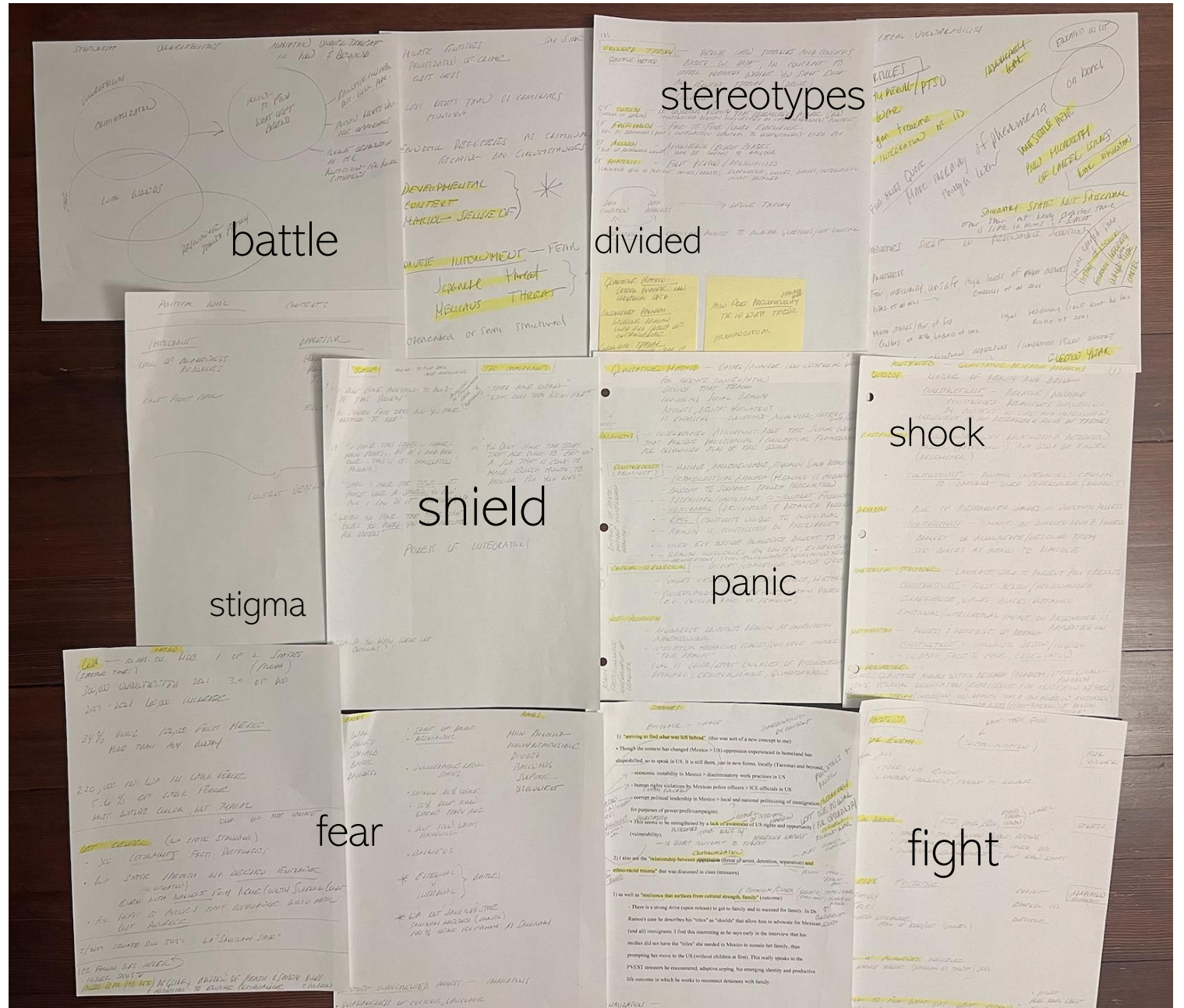
**detained with her husband.** But so she was released, but he wasn't. And I asked her so have you seen your husband she say no it's been three months when we were detained and I haven't seen him because men and women are **separated.** And so **do you know when he's coming out.** **She said I have no clue.** And so that is what you know what I'm missing. And, and so...I'm not trying to get off track here but so...then the idea is that I interview you, and I gather as much information as I can, and who do you know, well first of all, **you're in Tacoma, Washington.** Do you know where it's at, and you know like **half of the time they do know half of the time they don't know.** Because, so remember they...were taken to a jail, a local jail. And then the next day they were, they were immigration took them here. And they could have been anywhere right in the US, practically, it could be anywhere. But so then they get moved over here. And **their world** is on their **work** and the **people they love** and their **connections.** Why would they, let me, let me figure out what Tacoma, Washington looks like or where it's at. And I wonder what the space needle is, no right, like no. They're, **they're all about their jobs** and their and their **survival and their community** and their everyday life. So then **half of the time, by the way, you're in Tacoma, Washington, which is in the northwest.** We're near Canada...okay, so then, so they'll tell me, for example, well I know I have an aunt who lives in, this is generally how it goes. I have an aunt or an uncle or a cousin who lives in Miami, Chicago, New York, LA. And can I, can I borrow, do you have a phone? I can call them. And then we call them on the spot and we try to connect them with, through WhatsApp. So then, so you hear the conversation, it's like, oh my god. And so then, yes, yes, come on over, come on over. So, my job is to get them as soon as possible that evening to Miami or to Chicago or to New York. So we buy their, when we talk to their family members, **they generally have a family member,** even if they weren't with them. Or

**Injustice.** **Family.** **Economics.**

# Themes

Ideas that link experiences in the world, *Gibbs (2020)*

## Data Analysis





# FINDINGS

Stressors faced are perceived as  
“warlike conditions.”

## Contributing Factors

### Enemylike criminalization:

“We're so divided, and if you already made up your mind that these people are **criminals**, then they just remain criminals in people's minds”

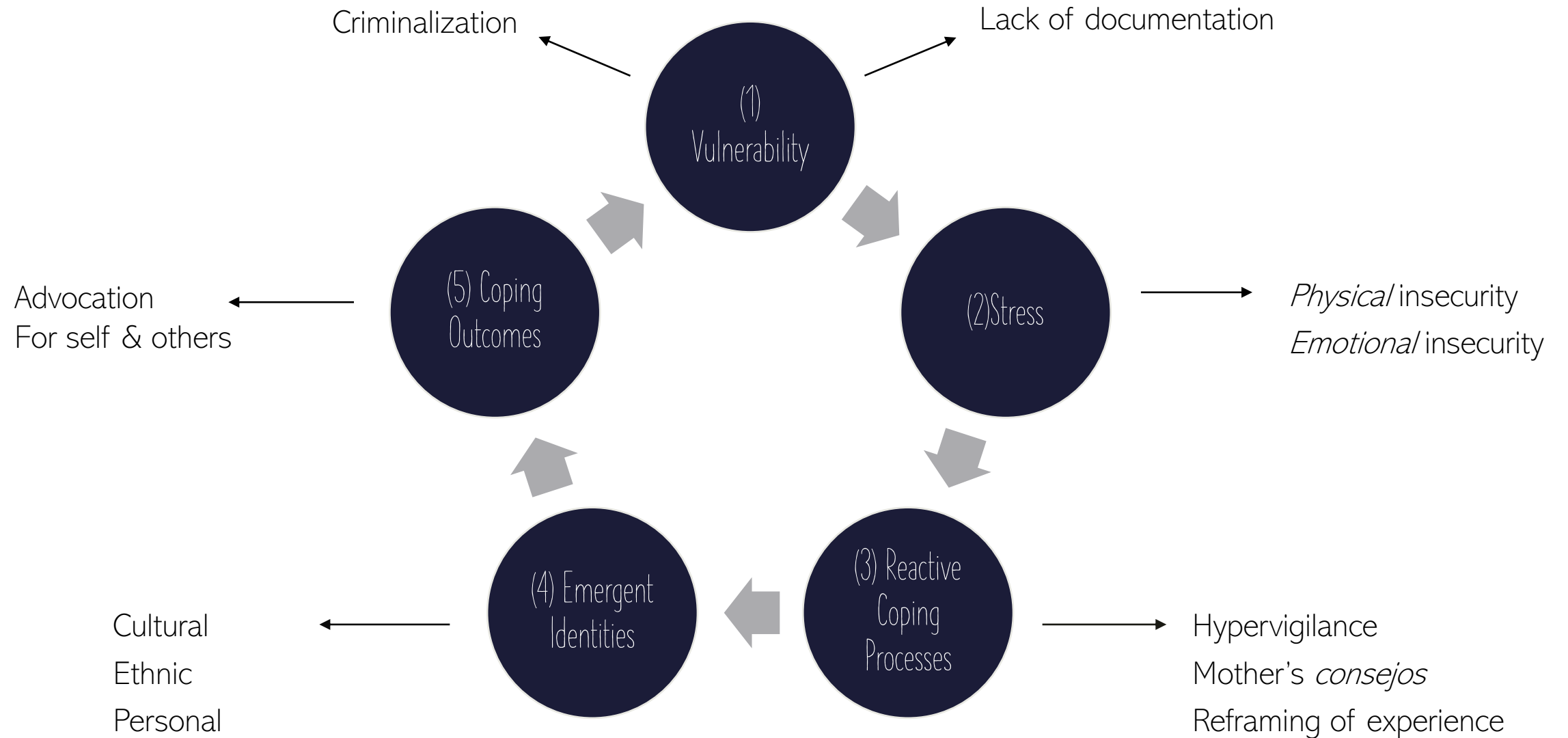
### Warlike Wounds:

“...at some point we became undocumented...that's when the **battle** begins...constantly looking over your shoulder...even “today...there's that part of the back of [my] brain... it's in there, what do you do?”

### Shieldlike protective factors:

When I have the [education] it's kind of like...*a shield* you know, and I can do it.

# PVEST





# IMPLICATIONS

For the Pacific Northwest  
& beyond

- 🛡️ Nationwide policy and practice that reflects progressive support of US immigrant populations
- 🛡️ Enforcement of established protective regulations in Washington state
- 🛡️ Accessible strengths-based trauma informed mental healthcare
- 🛡️ Educational opportunities as a pathway to self determination and advocacy
- 🛡️ Further research into contextual realities of Mexican immigrant populations

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