The Kinetics of Liberatory Pedagogy: An Exploratory Narrative Inquiry across Disciplines among Educational Activists of Marginalized Identities

Latashia Harris

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The Kinetics of Liberatory Pedagogy:
An Exploratory Narrative Inquiry across Disciplines among Educational Activists of Marginalized Identities

by
Latashia Harris

A dissertation proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to use narrative inquiry and found poetry to explore how educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines embody liberatory pedagogy and to describe why they practice liberatory pedagogy, how liberatory pedagogy functions and what it could or does materializes when adopted from the perspective of five participants in formal and non-formal educational locations. The findings and implications of the exploratory outcomes and possibilities of adjustable replication is discussed. The analysis of the collected data discusses how data can impact the educational field for current of aspiring practitioners of liberatory pedagogy by means that act as a paradigm shift to Western oppressive practices of research.

Keywords: Liberation, pedagogy, curriculum & instruction, intersectionality, educators of color, educational activism, ways of knowing, ways of being, formal and nonformal education
Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge the support of friends, family, and my committee for expecting nothing less than the excellence they knew I could produce and for supporting me in my push to manifest something I am proud of, that I believe in, and something that tells a story of what I seek to embody every day. I want to thank the Portland, OR organizing community for showing me how much is possible when you go out on a leap of faith. I would also like to acknowledge the trust the participants had with me to tell their stories. Without their willingness, honesty, hope, faith and work- this would not have been possible. Thank you for believing in possibility and fighting with community to create something more than what exists through the liberation of our bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Momzy Bear and Gramma Weezie. I hope I make you proud. This is for Alabama, for making my soul and mind strong through generations. This is also dedicated to Amena, Nikki, Zeenia, Amy, Beatriz and last but not least, Amanda and her kitchen table. Thank you for loving me and supporting me when I was running out of gas, when I was in tears, and when I was losing my mind. I am deeply, deeply grateful that we are a part of each other’s stories. I love you all. For every Black and Brown person that was ever told that their stories, their ways of knowing, and their ways of being weren’t valid because it wasn’t academically supported- we are here and we are worthy of the love we give ourselves. This is for us.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction to the Study

Fundamentally, racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, colonialism, imperialism of land, mind, body, and spirit, and extractive capitalism exist and have existed for centuries (Adams, 2017; Altvater, Haraway, Hartley, Parenti, & McBrien, 2016; Anderson & McFarlane, 2011; Baxi, 2009; Blackwell, 2010; Bryan, 2012; Cabrera, 2014; Chesir-Teran, 2003; Collins, 1993; Crampton & Elden, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991; Deckha, 2008; Dillard, 2012; Lemke, Casper, & Moore, 2011; McClintock, 2013; Nguyen & Larson, 2015; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998; Trainor, 2002). These definitions can be found in Appendix A. If hegemonic social and institutionally-mandated education and curriculum cultivate students into global citizens, the different forms of genocide within the world in which we now live are the fault of educational methods that have been utilized (Ball, 2012; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1990; Crampton & Elden, 2016). Who is intervening? Who should be leading intervention? How are they intervening? Is it working?

These societal plagues are not new, though they have found new insidious and explicit forms. These -isms are ever-present, and despite the pushed propaganda that progress has been achieved, it is important to discuss continued narrative erasure of marginalized communities and the restructuring of structural barriers that reify oppression in response to new policies and amendments that supposedly sustain or uplift ontological freedom for historically marginalized communities.
For instance, what is deemed progressive law by *de jure* existence does not mean or unequivocally ensure that lived realities have or will shift. In addition, what is deemed progressive law by *de jure* existence does not stop oppression from moving through laws or regulations surreptitiously in order to retain power in its historical locations. It requires critical thought to question whether the concept of freedom is defined by those who oppress the marginalized, but critical inquiry starts and most often ends with its beginning questions. Though this research does not allow for emancipation, freedom, or liberation to be used interchangeably, other educational and political activists have stated that true liberation or freedom requested, given, or allowed by way of “false generosity” of oppressors (Freire, 1968, p. 44; McIntire & Burns, 2010, p. 411) is simply a move to a different location of the same oppression that the marginalized have always been subjugated to within the domination matrix (Collins, 1991, 1993; Freire, 1985). As Dussel (2013) stated, liberatory change in and of itself, is “made possible by the affirmation of the value of the victims by the victims themselves” (p. 297).

When one talks about freedom, liberation, or the very notion of being critical, different definitions are used to describe the same words. It is important to understand that in this research these terms are not interchangeable. If educational conversations begin with critical pedagogy, in order to reach a development and praxis of liberatory pedagogy, there is a requirement that must be filled by a practitioner that involves the acceptance of fundamental assertions, constant intensification, evolution and reinvention in order to bring liberation to fruition in education (De Lissovoy, 2008). An unlearning
of hegemonic ideologies and mental slavery must still take place. Freedom is the latitude to navigate in different spaces once explicitly forbidden in the past. Though this latitude exists in ways not previously permitted, it holds *de facto* limitations in space and throughout time. One’s physical and mental mobility is still contingent on sociopolitical access and wardenship of the nation–state and social actors within it that seek to maintain hegemonic oppressions. The notion of freedom is also impacted by intergenerational residuals and continued on goings of oppression informed by historical contexts and learning spaces. Freedom also calls for the marginalized to abide by institutional mandates that once did and continue to construct forms of oppression they are subject to. Liberation includes the oppressed defining their own means and paths to freedom and it ensures that no others experience the subjugation that they have (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Liberation requires thought, iterative and generative redefining, *and* sustainable materializations and actionable productions—or at the very least, the latitude to try to find sustainable materializations through trial and error. Liberatory pedagogy is a form of education that mandates the creation, or pursuit, of material otherness through politicized ontology in spaces that operate to do more than just critical thinking or critique without metacognitive transformations that commit to shifting ontologies. Liberatory pedagogy seeks to avoid the “absence of a concrete social commitment” (Dussel, 2013, p. 235). Marx & Engels (1932) further corroborated this notion on actual change by stating that, “all forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism, by resolution into ‘self-consciousness’ but only by the practical overthrow of the actual
social relations which gave rise to this idealistic humbug” (p. 2). They make it clear that simply thinking critically is not enough to produce systemic shifts, even though Marx felt more compelled to work within systems and transform them in partnership, rather than create completely new materialisms. As such, liberatory pedagogy in this work is conceptualized and comprised of four interlocking parts: (a) a pedagogical practice performed by marginalized educators of color in formal and nonformal learning spaces wherein educational or social ACT/ivism is engrained in its development and implementation; (b) it is informed by the academic, professional, and lived experience(s) of racially marginalized communities as it pertains to ways of knowing and ways of being through the belief that the materializations born from hope is attainable for marginalized communities; (c) it is a paradigm shift from hegemonic instruction that oppresses marginalized communities of color that extends beyond critical thought and moves into action to deconstruct hegemony and replace it with the materialization of new realities of liberation (the autonomy of racially marginalized communities to live self-determined lives free of systemic and social oppression); and (d) it is a collaborative practice that is accountable to marginalized communities.

When there is no truth admitted in the hegemonic narrative of our present, when narratives repeatedly fail to produce actions and constructions of equitable and sustainable futures, or when paid homage to the incorporated and accurate story of the past told by those who know how it has helped and how it has hurt them, despite contested histories is denied, equality and equity become and are sustained as illusions
with a catchy rhetorical tune. This siren’s tune allows those not impacted by injustice to satiate their cyclically feigned guilt.

To pontificate that oppressive trauma does not have generational and residual impacts and to believe that the mechanisms that structurally allow these egregious dynamics of trauma inducement to continue need to be reformed *rather* than transformed is detrimental to the transformation of education. The term of educational transformation has begun to be a co-opted and reconceptualized term that alludes to the tenants of reformation, and, in this the narrative of transformation, becomes semantically lost or shape shifted for convenience. The canonized belief that the educational field can learn more if it suggests additions to research rather than re-evaluating the intentions behind its antecedents, also has an adverse impact on the transformation of education (Cowen, 2009). Reformation may work for those who have neoliberally found comfort or are inherently privileged by systemic interplay of institutions but the advocacy for stagnancy or reformation of them makes spaces to imagine or produce realities otherwise stiflingly limited.

Education has become a “dead zones of the imagination” (Giroux, 2014, p. 491), literally and figuratively, and has contributed abundantly to the suffering of the *othered* (Ball, 2012). Our modes of education are what create the society in which we live. These pre-existing and present modes of education resounds and influences the ecosystem in every facet, from natural to social to manufactured. The trust that must be extended in liberatory pedagogy is one that involves full investment in the liberation of all
marginalized people, thusly redistributing power and liberating all people—especially from their own oppressive behaviors, and the radical subversive, and/or insurgent transformation of systems and institutions of inequity. This investment is not one of time-limited freneticism that falls to the wayside and is picked back up at convenience. The privilege of one choosing specific time frames to pursue liberation alludes to their ability to thrive in an environment unchanged— an environment constructed to support the very privilege that affords them the opportunity and option of inaction. Therefore, this study focused solely on educational activists of marginalized identities with engrained cultural literacies that acknowledge the fundamental a priori viewpoint that oppression operates and continues to operate in society and spaces within it in ways that traumatically harm historically marginalized communities intergenerationally through mis/education. These educational activists understood the presence of structural and social oppression and actively seek to eradicate it rather than solely expatiating on whether it exists.

What does it mean and what does it look, function, and feel like for an educational activist of marginalized identities to fight for the liberation of others, but also the liberation of themselves through the very mode that created and proliferated the socio-spatial oppression they attempt to survive every day (Zembylas, 2003, 2003, 2005)? Why would these marginalized educational activists even want to use liberatory pedagogy? In this research, Theory in the Flesh, Third Space Theory, and Radical Geography were used to understand educational activists of marginalized identities’ stories concerning their relationship with liberatory pedagogy.
Conceptual Definitions

For clarification, in respect to the social model (Shakespeare, 2006) and recent critical disability studies (Annamma, Connor & Ferri, 2013; Goodley, 2014). The term *Dis/ability* is used in respect to those who do not believe their abilities are a deficiency (done by separating the *dis* prefix explicitly), they instead believe that the abilities to which they possess are marginalized by society. *Dis/ability* is also used to respect those who find a sense of community with the term *disability*. The term *Womxn* is used to encapsulate all genders who identifies with the term and identify as non- cisgender male. This term is also used as to see these identities as separate from the power of male identities, thereby replacing the *e* with an *x* (Khan, 2017). The term *Latinx* is used to make neutral a gendered linguistics within the Spanish language (Salinas & Lozano, 2017).

Operational Definitions

*Kinetics*

Any or all of the following: what made educational activists decide to use liberatory pedagogy (how does its use start); how lived and practitioner experience inform content, partnerships, and how curriculum is built, changed, chosen, or used; what challenges and opportunities exists and how are they navigated in ways that maintain liberatory pedagogy practice, its intentions, and lived experiences; how and when its use is deemed successful.

*Affect*
Cultural displays of emotion, spatial artifacts, language and syntax, culturally specific mannerisms, interfacing with the researcher, clothing and the wearing thereof, etc. in relation to a topic.

Resonance

The impact of liberatory pedagogy on the educational activist internally (how it feels), in the spaces that they educate, the perceived or shared impact with those who are also in those educational spaces, and the perceived, witnessed, or created production of metacognitive or material resonance in and outside of specific educational spaces.

Navigate

The ways in which an educational activist attempts to maneuver around challenges, leverage opportunities, take care of themselves, handle issues of safety for themselves and others (economic, physical, psychological), develop content and curriculum, present themselves (language, clothes, hair, etc.), stay abreast of evolving liberatory practices, maintain a learning atmosphere and dynamics in educational spaces, hold relationships with colleagues and audiences, handle consequences of their pedagogical use, and if they educate subversively or explicitly with liberatory pedagogy, etc.

Background and Historical Context

Approximately 50 years have lapsed since Paulo Freire's iconic work Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968) was published. This text paved the way for educators who were privy to his breadth to feel empowered to become and remain radical educators in and outside of the compulsory formal institution of education. Generational proliferation of
obfuscation regarding his knowledge within the institution of education and teacher 
education historically was and is still evident. It is important to remember that the 
ontologized, epistemological, enfleshed, and embodied realities of those within social
justice movements and struggles of resistance against endured injustice before Freire’s 
work cultivated a way of knowing. Not only was a cultivation of ways of knowing 
produced, ways of being for the marginalized were produced as well. These productions 
undoubtedly informed the theoretical positions that made Freire’s manuscript possible.

The text catalyzed the realization that there was a need for critical and provoked 
questioning of the status quo. Through this manuscript one becomes aware of oppressive 
mechanics and how it functions. However, there are analysis gaps in reference to action 
beyond anti-dialogics (Freire, 1968). The more mainstream adoption of critical thought 
practice and general, but not pointed, interrogation diluted Freire’s (1968) poignant call 
for liberation and action, especially in dominant fields. Pedagogy without a call to or 
expectations and outcomes of action will not sustainably rupture the systemic
connectivity of oppressions that relish in the "poetics of ambivalence and a politics of 
violence" (McClintock, 2013, p. 28). By this, McClintock (2013) discussed the ways in 
which those in the position of oppressor create a game with the lives of those they 
oppressed in a way that they stake claim to terror, exploitation, and ownership of all they 
desire for their own pleasure and justify it by institutionalized and socialized structures of 
defined normalcy or false victimhood that is maintained due to the power they have 
amassed without consent though coercion, rape, colonization, and murder. Now,
educators must discover the ways in which critical thought can create liberation beyond the myopically-scoped auspices of a European informed logocentrism (Stahl, 2002). These logocentrismss breed expected inoculative dynamics of colonized institutions as well as normalized and oppressive pedagogy, curriculum content, and negative socio-spatial implications locally and globally.

In the same way that liberation, freedom and emancipation, or equality and equity do not mean the same thing (Espinoza, 2007), in this research, liberatory pedagogy is not synonymous with critical pedagogy (Ellsworth, 1989). Liberatory pedagogy is a proceeding movement of fundamental interdisciplinary fusions forward on a continuum that is catalyzed by critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy originated as a pedagogical approach developed in order to question the staple status quo of learning, comprehending, processing, and participating within and functioning on the assumed periphery of the environment(s) in which one is situated (Freire, 1968). In critical pedagogy, the aforementioned is approached by critically examining the root and purpose of particular social dynamics that have and continue to negatively impact those with marginalized identities. Critical pedagogy is an antecedent to liberatory pedagogy. Liberatory pedagogy recognizes the interconnected, diffractive, and dialogic power of all liberation-based and oppressive disciplinary contributions, perspectives, and entanglements and actively seeks solutions of amelioration for the oppressed. In addition, it moves beyond the discursive and seeks to catalyze methods and actions dedicated to the manufacturing of materialisms and ideologies that contribute to a shifting narrative and ecosystem of
socio-spatial liberation for all (Dillon, 2008; Ferrando 2013). In essence, critical pedagogy examines, while liberatory pedagogy demands that one imagines and acts. Liberatory pedagogy provided space so that one may dream of realities beyond the ones at present and work towards those dreams’ future actualizations. Grosz (2010) refers to this positional and ontological transition as “freedom from [oppression]” toward “freedom to [liberatory postmodern feminist materialisms]” (p. 141-143). Liberatory pedagogy expects us to produce iterations of those dreams until all are liberated from oppression.

Over history, repetition and renditions of oppression continue. COINTELPRO (Churchill & Vander Wall, 1990), was a federal program designed to undermine the efforts of liberation organizations during the civil rights era. Similar government surveillance and terrorism tactics continue forward as can be evidenced by the evolution of the term Black Extremists to Black Identity Extremists (Dennis, 2017). The introduction of the Black Lives Matter Curriculum (Black Lives Matter at School Coalition, 2019) is being used, however, as a pedagogical term furthering the counternarrative of political ideology under the guise of Black visibility as it pertains to safety, reduction of harm, and shifting epistemologies as well as ontologies of aspired for liberation or at the very least the manifestation and the sustainability of Black inclusion under the umbrella of inalienable rights. The pursuit of liberation among people of color has often been seen as “un-American” in a nation that failed to value the racially minoritized (Antliff, 2017, p. 95).
Liberatory pedagogy gained significant visibility with Civil Rights Freedom Schools (Perlstein, 1990), the Black Panther-funded Oakland Community School (Huggins & LeBlanc-Ernest, 2009), and Fund Freedom Schools (Jackson & Howard, 2014). However, many social justice leaders, writers, and scholars began, incited, and continued working towards liberation in various fields before it was deemed or documented as a legitimately contested history or valid counter-narrative against hegemony (Baldwin, 1961; Biko, 1978; Collins, 1993; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1993; Fanon 1965, 1970; hooks 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mohanty, 1988, 1989, 2003; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1981; Morrison, 1993a; Shakur, 1978). These perspectives have experienced considerable exclusion across disciplines but have still provided foundational roadmaps for narrative and common practice development of transdisciplinary and multi-directionally historical pedagogy that is bound by iterative learning (by all parties) and is couched in and makes space for transformation and flux in the context of socio-spatial shift and re-examined epistemological interpretations.

Liberatory pedagogy DNA is engrained with an endarkened epistemology (Dillard, 2000, 2012; Hurtado 2013) and a Theory in the Flesh (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981). Endarkened epistemology does four things: (a) it reclaims, uplifts, and acknowledges the agency, story, contributions, reality, and interpretations of people of color; (b) it refuses to accept oppressive, yet subliminal, semiotics of the theoretical and material productions of the word enlightenment; (c) it literally rejects and refuses to ignore the racism and colorism of semantics by calling out the social implications of the
word *enlightenment*; and (d) it creates and builds a foundation of analysis that grows and evolves from the root of Black and Brown feminist thought. The Theory in the Flesh, is theory wherein "the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a “politic born out of necessity" (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981, p. 23). In essence, Moraga & Anzaldua (1981) believed that theory is born from the need to understand one’s self and how one will navigate and survive within systems that were not made for one’s safety in a social environment that seeks to destroy one’s existence in its entirety. One must essentially develop of theory of self that makes space for one to not only survive but to see themselves as worthy of a life that is allowed joy. Education, existence, and extinction, as well as every dimension of society, is political. Those who have moved beyond critical pedagogy and towards or into liberatory pedagogy hold an understanding of biopolitics (Lemke et al., 2011), educate from the *a priori* notion that the body is inextricably personal and political within society, and recognize that those who disagree fail to realize the location and implications of their own body.

**Problem Statement**

As beings become interconnected even further within society in social, political, environmental, and technological dimensions in natural and manufactured ecosystems, the imperial and colonial impacts from how societies were and are educated show in societal manifestations on a local and global scale. Though groundbreaking pieces of work have provided the opportunity for multiple disciplines to contemplate how to
define, expand, and identify gaps and usefulness concerning the notions of resistance, resilience, equity, equality, freedom, and liberation, these contemplations have persisted to be optional rather than inherent. The marginalized educational activist voices of those who carry on the legacy and belief in the inherent need for transformational proactive and responsive epistemological and ontological liberation through liberatory pedagogy has not been broadly explored within or across disciplines in ways that help educators or students (understanding the fluidity of roles between teachers and students) map, understand, or ponder the implications of using liberatory pedagogy. Nor does the existing research or literature explore or share liberatory pedagogy’s difficulty in navigation or the possible influence it may have to yield feminist materialisms through interconnective analysis. Without these voices, there is no guidance on why one would use liberatory pedagogy. There is such a limited amount of updated pieces of literature models or r/evolutionary theories on how to use liberatory pedagogy that have been written within the last decade, specifically within the last five to seven years, that continues the story of evolution, mechanisms, and impact of liberation broadly or liberation and its connection to pedagogy specifically. As such, this research is intended to fill that gap. There is minimal support for how educational activists in formal and nonformal spaces navigate through liberatory pedagogy use in hopes of creating new imaginings. The notion of formal and nonformal education has been in constant collision over whose location of work is most valuable. However Sumida Huaman & Valdiviezo (2014) state that both are valuable; however, there are cultural components necessary for
marginalized communities, particularly native and tribal communities, to build holistic efficacy rather than formal educational aspects of efficacy that do not attend to cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Instead, these aspects of efficacy tend to place emphasis on asset-based ideologies under the pretext of state defined success for the ability to thrive culturally rather than to simply survive academically. These narratives of cultural wealth also pertain to the axiology of ways of being and ways of knowing among communities of color that mainstream education ascribes minimal value to (Wildman & Inayatullah, 1996).

Though there is significant literature about the perspectives of students and teachers of color—the majority of the literature focuses on succeeding within a paradigm of governmentally designed models of schooling that reproduce oppression (Buendía, Gitlin, & Doumbia, 2003; Cheruvu, Souto-Manning, Lencl, & Chin-Calubaquib, 2015; Dickar, 2008; Flores, 2016; Harper, 2013; Hayes, 2014; Hikido & Murray, 2016; Jennings, 2015; Lam, 2015; Matias, 2013b; McCready, 2013; Montecinos, 2004; Pritchard, 2013; Richardson & Villenas, 2000; Vargas, 2002; Vilson, 2015).

There is little information on the stories of educational activists of marginalized identities discussing why they use liberatory pedagogy on a common definition framework. Lastly, there are no models that can be used in teacher education on liberatory pedagogy use considering the absence of the narratives of those who use it. If education needs a r/evolution, and if there are and have been revolutionaries already located in educational spaces, then the responsibility of ensuring that information
concerning liberatory methods, models, practice, and history is respected, gathered, shared, and adjusted properly across disciplines and not erased, lies not only with the marginalized communities who generated them, but also with the broad spectrum of educators, researchers, and scholars who want to see liberation come to fruition as well. The problem is, the information continues to have limited accessibility in the field of education. This research sought to ameliorate that absence.

**Purpose Statement**

In full acknowledgement of the absence of narratives of those who use liberatory pedagogy in praxis, this literature sought to fill that gap. The dynamics of methods, models, praxis, history, and resources were explored through research questions to determine the overall kinetics of liberatory pedagogy. In addition, this research sought to explore how the use of liberatory pedagogy among the participants manifested within society generally, and within the field of educational pedagogy specifically. Liberatory pedagogy spans formal and nonformal educational spaces, subjects and contexts. The purpose of this research was to explore how educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines embody liberatory pedagogy and describe why they practice liberatory pedagogy, how liberatory pedagogy functions and what it could or does materialize when adopted.

**Significance**

When freedom and equality continue to be the narrative of a rhetorical end goal and consistently produce “the substance of things hoped for, [and] the evidence of things
not seen" (Dillard, 2000, p. 679) and, despite faith for the marginalized, the historical exclusion of the words’ applicability indicate the static nature of propagated progress under the Eurocentric guise that demands subjugation, silence, and contentment with piecemeal solutions that do not build upon one another in pursuit of the wholeness of liberation and its materialisms (generatively, interactively, or iteratively). Baldwin (1968) synthesized this sentiment on the Dick Cavett Show from a United Stated context and Black perspective when he poetically described how rhetoric, expected compulsory allegiance, the presence of oppression under the veil of supposed freedom, and the implications of liberation’s absence impact marginalized communities’ livability and levels of trust. He posited:

I don’t know what most white people in this country feel, but I can only conclude what they feel from the state of their institutions...I don’t know whether the labor unions and their bosses really hate me—that doesn’t matter—but I know I’m not in their union. I don’t know whether the real estate lobby has anything against Black people, but I know the real estate lobby is keeping me in the ghetto. I don’t know if the board of education hates Black people, but I know the textbooks they give my children to read and the schools we have to go to...Now this is the evidence...You want me to make an act of faith, risking myself, my wife, my woman, my sister, my children on some idealism which you assure me exists in America, which I have never seen. (Season 1, Episode 4)
This research discusses what it means, looks, and feels like to use liberatory pedagogy so that narratives match realities for the liberation of marginalized people, and thus the liberation of all. Educational activists of marginalized identities have experienced and are constantly navigating through the violent oppressions placed on them and have the ability to be conscious of the insidious and explicit ways in which oppression can present itself and surface within the learning processes of the public. Being aware of these means of oppression through lived and academic experience gives educational activists a perspective that is not yet fully understood or known broadly in reference to dynamics when utilizing liberatory pedagogy in different fields (Shor & Freire, 1987). What is also significant about this research, is that it provided an opportunity to understand how liberatory pedagogy functions from the perspective of those who implement it; those who embody social justice principles, define themselves as activists, and utilize and live by the fundamental principles of liberatory pedagogy as a marginalized educational activist. The new voices and updated methods of liberatory pedagogy could add significantly to the repository of pedagogical tools for those seeking to replace esoteric practices drenched in oppression and lacking fundamental anti-oppressive *a prioris* inaction.

There is a significant amount of research that has discussed how to navigate, through double or multiple marginalized (Du Bois, 2006; Silvers, 1999) consciousnesses, within educational systems for marginalized educators and students (Armstrong & McMahon, 2006; Blackwell, 2010; Bryan, 2012; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010;
The discussion of resilience and mere navigation as a tool of survival has surfaced, but it concerns itself with seeking efficacy within oppression and the literature fails to afford educators, and therefore students, the autonomy to imagine other realities beyond the ones they exist in and are oppressed by.

The concept of resilience consistently places the onus of surviving on those who are marginalized as opposed to placing the onus of providing proactive and responsive functions to eradicate oppression within them altogether on educational institutions and education-affected systems. It is not that this research is not important, but it fails to extend hope of the co-creation of something else. What is present now in research is how to survive and maneuver within oppression, not necessarily how to dismantle, liberate through education, or co-create realities anew. This research sought to contribute to educational research and larger communities with not only narrative and shared guidance of those interviewed, but to also be subversive and/or explicit through investing in the radical notion of hope (Giroux, 2004; hooks, 1994).

Rationale/ Reflexive Statement

Understanding what is honored in liberatory pedagogy must be uplifted and must be ensured in liberatory education and its processes. Therefore, this research sought to ensure that that honor is maintained. This research is not structured in a way that requests that marginalized persons prove their marginalization in order to have their voices and
experiences deemed valid. In reference to a continued requirement in mainstream and hegemonic conversations revolving around the burden of proof, and this dissertation’s lack of interest in the production thereof, Toni Morrison stated the following:

The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language and you spend twenty years proving that you do. Somebody says your head isn’t shaped properly so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Somebody says you have no art, so you dredge that up. Somebody says you have no kingdoms, so you dredge that up. None of this is necessary. There will always be one more thing. (Portland State University, 1975)

Therefore, this research aspires to not only rely on written histories and analysis, but to also respect and validate academic thought, oral history, poetry, biography, autoethnography, language, music, dance, interpretations, traditions, artifacts, physical feelings, emotions (rejecting false dichotomy), and physiology (Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, & Tyson, 2000). The marginalized hold more than one technology of language, and subversively communicate and comprehend each other’s joy, tribulation, pain, fatigue and hope with one another, beyond singularity. We, as the marginal other, (Ball, 2012) define and practice language beyond that which is simply spoken, despite the coercive removal of our tongues, in ways that could never be empathically understood. The historically othered (Ball, 2012) communicate by means that the privileged have never
had to develop. For these reasons, due to these erased histories, and because liberatory pedagogy calls for those who are marginalized to lead the transformation of the socio-spatial and thereby, the liberation of themselves—I, as a marginalized person in the position of the researcher will only be interviewing those who identify as educational activists across disciplines and who hold marginalized identities and intersections (Crenshaw, 1991). Through this, one will gain a greater understanding of liberatory pedagogy from those who have processed, are processing, or are practicing it.

**Research Questions**

To adequately and responsibly convey unfiltered participant responses and respect the cultural and pedagogical value of their stories, the method of narrative inquiry was used as a methodology. The Theory in the Flesh, Third Space Theory, and the concept of Radical Geography were used to explore the following:

RQ1: In what ways do the identities of educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines matter in relation to their use of liberatory pedagogy?

RQ2: In what ways do educational activists of marginalized identities navigate the use of liberatory pedagogy?

RQ3: In what ways do educational activists of marginalized identities believe that liberatory pedagogy use does or has the ability to materialize different realities?
Summary

In essence, oppression has always killed and is still killing marginalized populations. It is well documented that -isms create transgenerational trauma and health issues (Kodjak, 2018; Leary & Robinson, 2005; Bombay, Matheson, Anisman, 2009; Schwab, 2010). Stemming from genocide of marginalized communities, the criminalization of their bodies continues on in more duplicitous ways that also lead to death and accentuated disparities (Balingat, 2018; Institute for Policy Studies, 2018; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017) Within a capitalistic system that disenfranchised marginalized communities in ways that made it generationally impossible to generate wealth, job insecurity continues to be a driving force in maintaining that legacy of economic oppression, especially in the field of education (Anonymous, 2017; Graham, 2016). Though this research focuses on formal and nonformal learning spaces, in 2016 it was reported that in 2012 within K-12 public school arenas, 82% of the teachers were white (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In 2015, it was reported that 77% of professors in post-secondary spaces were white (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Many scholars have focused on how to build cultural competency for white educators, but the investment in educators, especially educational activists of color, continues to be ignored and their value to the classroom as well as their own healing through collaborative liberatory methods continues to become decentered (Boutte & Jackson, 2014; Cooper, 2003; Cross, 2003; Goldenberg, 2014; Howard, 2016; Marx & Pennington, 2003; Matias,
As investment continues to be decentered, attempted murder, murder, brutality and dismissal of injustices in marginalized communities continue to increase through socio-political shifts (Bui, Coates, & Matthay, 2018; Adams, 2017). The displacement and neglect of bodies and the spaces marginalized bodies exist in continue to be proliferated as well (Sadler & Highsmith, 2016; Pulido 2016; Squires & Hartman, 2013; Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017). If epistemicide (Grosfoguel, 2015; Fataar & Subreenduth, 2015) and educational obfuscation carry on without interruption, the aforementioned cycles of community destruction, warranted distrust, and its past and present betrayal will continue on as well (Smith & Freyd, 2013, 2014; Collins, 1991).

The educational activists of marginalized identities within these third spaces are thought to have the ability to utilize their standpoint to co-create, liberate, rewrite, and facilitate the transformation of geography through the reconstruction of post-humanism (Harvey, 1972; Harvey & Braun, 1996; Iveson, 2011; Mitchell, 2003; Roberts, 2003) through liberatory pedagogy. Educational activists seek *buen vivir* (Gudynas, 2011; Walsh 2010), the South American term for good living or living well for all communities through justice-based transition. Therefore, this research identifies the need for more research to be conducted to determine why and how liberatory pedagogy is used, as well as what the expectation and outcomes of liberatory pedagogy are or are imagined to be from the perspectives of educational activists of marginalized identities within and across
disciplines. Lastly, the limitations of literature lie in its inability to explain how pedagogies connect to activism though its mechanisms remain dislocated from educational canons where action is inherently coupled with pedagogy at its foundation rather than an addition to it within particular instances instead of continued praxis for manifestation of liberation when identity is a vehicle to hope and mobilization.

In the following chapters, a review of foundational and current literature and methodology pertaining to the problem statement, purpose statement and research questions was presented. The methodology for pursuing this research endeavor, the findings, and the discussion will also be presented.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

There is a gap in literature that does not tell the stories of marginalized educators seeking liberation and there is a lack of validity extended to those who use the word liberation. Literature in different fields will seldom use the term liberation, but education fields continue to use the term critical without the expectation of materialisms. This research sought to fill the aforementioned gap of understanding of what occurs after critical thought and to understand on a deeper level what liberation is and how it relates to pedagogy in praxis. This research was not aimed at proving oppression’s existence but moreover, sought to explore the unique ways liberatory pedagogy functions and what it materializes from the perspective of educational activists of marginalized identities that fundamentally acknowledge its presence. Therefore, this dissertation moves forward with two guiding fundamental understandings: (a) that disparities and devalued axiology of personhood exist due to marginalization and (b) those who fight and have fought for their humanity, dignity, and access are only fighting for these natural rights because oppression systematically structured its dynamics to exclude them.

To adequately and responsibly convey unfiltered participant responses and respect the cultural and pedagogical value of their stories, the method of narrative inquiry was used as a methodology. The Theory in the Flesh, Third Space Theory, and the concept of Radical Geography were used as a framework to explore the research questions.
In searching for relevant literature, it was important to not close off the search to any field. A lot of foundational literature is from the eras of revolutions and social disruption. Therefore, this section articulates the evolution of the application of the term liberation as applied to theoretical thought and how scholars and activists sought to materialize liberation. Following the foundational literature section, current literature that is derivative of the foundational literature is presented. This section is meant to give more background on how liberation pedagogy has evolved but also how the Theory in the Flesh, Third Space Theory, and Radical Geography use different fields to work together for a global reimagining through methods that can be transferred to educational spaces.

Though there is thorough and evolving literature on critical pedagogy and how it flirts with liberation (Luke & Gore, 2014; McLaren & Rikowski, 2016; Morrell, 2015), there remains a significant gap in past and recent related literature that explicitly identifies and explains educational activism and pedagogical means of bringing liberation to fruition in the context of education within and across disciplines (Payne, 2012). To explore the possible ways in which the aforementioned literary gaps can be filled, the research questions are as follows:

RQ1: In what ways do the identities of educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines matter in relation to their use of liberatory pedagogy?

RQ2: In what ways do educational activists of marginalized identities navigate the use of liberatory pedagogy?
RQ3: In what ways do educational activists of marginalized identities believe that liberatory pedagogy use does or has the ability to materialize different realities?

**Theoretical Framework**

**Theory in the flesh.** Moraga & Anzaldúa (1981) wrote about the theories that exist in the flesh, a congruent analysis to Standpoint Theory. However, Standpoint Theory gained academic access and more legitimized consideration when discussing the strong objectivity and ways of knowing by those who experience and discuss oppression. This research pulled from Moraga’s (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) poetics and visceral narratives to pay respect to the foundational mother of marginalized self and community-recognized positional value, multi-field dialogics, and bodily validity that is not contingent on oppressor permission. Harding (1992, 2003, 2004; Hekman, 1997; Swigonski, 1994) furthered this notion by positing that the manner by which a marginalized person or a people experience and exist in society creates an advantage for them to offer a more strengthened objectivity in analysis of society’s dynamics as opposed to those who are privileged by that society's socially and spatially constructed mechanisms. Bhabha (1994) stated that, "The range of contemporary critical theories suggests that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement—that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking” (p. 172). The Theory in the Flesh is theory wherein "the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981, p. 23).
Theory in the Flesh addresses the ways in which multiple marginalized bodies cannot afford to have the truth of their realities veiled. Moraga & Anzaldúa (1981) explained that the use of the Theory in the Flesh allows space for one to embody and influence spaces where there is an adamant “refusal of the easy explanation to the conditions we live in” (Scary, 1985, p. 23) and challenge hegemonic societal inoculation to “bod[ies] in pain” (Scary, 1985, p. 23). Scarry (1985) believed that the ease in which society veers towards understanding oppression by simple reduction without taking into consideration root causes of why it is so easy to be unconcerned with identities that one does not hold, perpetuates the inoculation of the pain of the oppressed. hooks (1994) also supported the aforementioned validity of one’s objectivity in recalling Mackinnon’s words that stated, "we know things with our lives and we live that knowledge beyond what any theory has yet theorized" (p. 75) within and outside of educational spaces. With this citation in hook’s work, she explains how the way the oppressed navigate their lives contributes to the repository of knowledge one exudes in their ontology as a method of survival based on epistemology of the dynamics of oppression wherein some ontologies remain the same and other’s shift based on the fluctuation of cultural and social environments and contexts. These forms of navigation are ones that hooks (1994) believes are constantly lived and exist to inform common knowledge of the oppressed that have not yet been developed into theories.

In reference to this exploratory process, the educational activists of marginalized identities were presented with questions that expand on what it means to be marginalized
and use the theories in their flesh to create learning spaces conducive to liberatory epistemologies and ontologies impacting or radically redrawning geographies. This research attempted to utilize the perspective of educators with marginalized identities across disciplines to glean a clearer understanding of how marginalization impacts and has the ability to aid in the co-creation of liberation and transformation of learning in educational spaces and society from those who are within, experience, or work outside of but are impacted by institutional harm and betrayal (Collins, 1991; Smith & Freyd, 2013, 2014). The rationale for speaking to educators specifically or marginalized identities, is fortified by the words of Malcolm X (1964):

>If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, there's no progress. If you pull it all the way out that's not progress. Progress is healing the wound that the blow made. And they haven't even begun to pull the knife out, much less heal the wound. They won't even admit the knife is there. (1:39-1:57)

If the marginalized are the ones who hold and bear wounds, whose generations have held these wounds, that notice and feel the gunshots, the knives, the metaphorical and actual weapons used against us—is it not us who should lead the liberation of ourselves and others through the transformed dynamics of the educational spaces that reified, institutionalized, made, and deemed oppression of the marginalized required, acceptable, and invisible to those who benefit from the pain of the oppressed as they continue "killing people without ever looking at the corpses" (Shakur, 1978, p. 268)? By this, Shakur (1978) discussed the ways that oppressors become inoculated to the death of
the oppressed so much so, that their concern in acknowledging the carnage they leave behind remains absent as their harm continues. Shakur believes that the absence of the acknowledgement of murder fuels its perpetuation. The marginalized are taught how the system is meant to function and works in the rhetorical sense. The marginalized know how the system excludes them. The marginalized witness how that rhetoric and systemic function is only accessible for those it privileges. The privileged do not know how the system oppresses on a visceral level, and that emotion and knowledge cannot be empathically transmitted. Knowing that the colonial ideology of purity (Shotwell, 2016), typically results in the genocide of any variation of being that strays from coercively engrained hegemony, Theory in the Flesh pushes one to be generative (Pence, Kuehne, Greenwood-Church, & Opekokew, 1993) from a perspective that understands the narrative of epistemicide and holds ethics in praxis that could be more equitably informed.

Theory in the Flesh positions itself to objectively know that the marginalized are the ones who must define and find their liberation beyond what they were told was human. This is necessary in order to ensure oversight is identified during geographic re/construction and corrected by those who have battled contested histories (Sandoval, 2000) and who have been oppressively overseen and experience (d) subjugations physically, psychologically, spatially, environmentally, and physiologically (Sullivan, 2015). The question remains, how do educators of marginalized identities facilitate the production of sustainable materialism(s) of imagined hope through liberatory pedagogy?
Third space theory. Third Space Theory, first identified and defined by Bhabha & Rutherford (2006), concerns itself with understanding hybridity within space and what it means to exist within multiple spaces at once spatially and/or theoretically (Gutiérrez, Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Turner, 1997; Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). Bhabha (1994) explained that culture and the creation thereof take place within the third space. Third space theory discusses being beholden to the operation of one space, imagining another, and existing in the middle location of the two—which, in this research, required an admittance that overall educational transformation has yet to fully materialized from the perspective of the marginalized. Third Space Theory assists in understanding the dynamics within educational spaces, understanding that other realities are inhabited by those who are present.

Understanding metacognition, reflection, reflexiveness, and diffraction as foundational concepts that produce social materialism and liberatory cultural production, Third Space Theory is used in this research to determine what occurs within the imagining and attempted creation of alternate realities through the process of education with practitioners of marginalized identities (Bell & Desai, 2011; Hughes, 2015; Kenway & Fahey, 2009; Samson 2005). Third Space Theory is also used to explore how empowerment is sustained and how metacognition, reflection, reflexiveness, and diffraction interplay in ways that maintains the efficacy for educators to hold spaces conducive to co-creating and imagining with others (Gutierrez et al., 1995; Van der Tuin, 2014). Stewart (2010) explains that, “bloom spaces” (p. 339), —an alternative reference
to third spaces—are used for trial and error, practice and real time improvisation to real time and salient problems that require contextual solutions. Educational spaces create an area for one to essentially, bloom, to whither, to be watered, nurtured, and to bloom again. It is an iterative process, but so are pathways to liberation and pathways to developing a liberatory pedagogy approach.

In this, Third Space theory moves beyond concepts of Du Bois’ (2006) concept of double or multiple marginalized consciousness (King, 1988; Silvers, 1999) or resilience, wherein researchers mainly examine how to survive the world, but not how to change it (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011; Brown, 2001; Ferreira & Ebersohn, 2012; Hoerr, 2013; Jackson, & Martin, 1998; Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2013; Laursen, 2015). Third Space Theory examines what Anzaldua refers to as the *nepantla* (in-betweenness) (Abraham, 2014; Anzaldua, 2013) and the broader understanding of the *conocimiento* process in ways that can be applicable to the navigation and evolution of educational spaces as well and useful in understanding what these spaces can or do produce. Third Space Theory prompts a conversation that can answer the questions of what tools, resources, and pedagogical approaches are necessary in spaces seeking liberatory and transformational outcomes. Third Space Theory in this research is used to refer to not only the development, dynamics within, and creation of an intentional third space, but also to the pursuit of a more in-depth understanding of what spaces outside of a third space can be influenced by its existence when approaches are informed by the strengthened objectivity of marginalized educator positionality (Harvey & Braun, 1996).
hooks stated (1994) that an educator's position requires the facilitation of "teaching new worlds" (p. 167) and Mohanty (1989) stated that it is an educator's liberation-based duty to "transform educational institutions radically" (p. 185). Third Space Theory explores how educational activists of marginalized identities use the third space to transform socio-spatial structures and perceptions that have the ability to co-create new realities.

_radical geography in the posthuman era._ The presence of educational leadership informed by the Theory in educational activists of marginalized identities’ flesh of a marginalized educational activist comes with systemic challenges of access and autonomy. Though marginalized presence itself presents as a feminist materialism, it has yet to come into its full potential as the opportunity of access is not often afforded to educators of marginalized identities due to systemic barriers. This research recognizes that having the ability and the space to _imagine otherwise_ (Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017; Hughes, 2015; Samson, 2005; Jones, 2004; Samson, 2005; Kenway & Fahey, 2009) within education focused spaces despite barriers, has remained an ideal goal for many educators of marginalized identities that has only come to fruition for a few.

In the era of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960’s and the 1970’s, Peet (1977), discussed the inciting for the overhaul and transformation within the field of geography that he and his colleagues wanted to see. Not only does Radical Geography deal with the urging of fields to expand and discuss human dynamics as well as social conditions’ impact on society in conjunction with the physical and natural
environment; it also pushes those within the field to see human disparities and solutions as a required part of their work.

Radical Geography in the post humanism era seeks equitable and socially just materialisms from the way that they carry out their methods to the way they teach those within their field (Smith, 1971). Radical Geography necessitates imagination in learning spaces, but also demands accountability in materialism beyond the historical human concern or lack thereof of ecosystemic impact socially or in physical space. Radical Geography also understands that new imaginings require improvisation, and an overall goal, but it does not see minutia as its foremost concern because of the everchanging state of being, problems, and presentation or pathways to solutions. Therefore, the field recognizes its ambiguity, but it is because of the flexibility and the sought minimization of authoritarianism necessary to retain spaces is conducive to try and fail without reverting back to ignoring oppression for the sake of keeping a field in a false state of and belief in the notion of purity when liberation requires cross-disciplinary dialogics. In 1971, Zelinski is quoted by Smith (1971) at a Socially and Ecologically Responsible Geographer (SERGE) meeting stating that “our current mess is indivisible, it is as much a matter of political, racial, ethnic, economic, corporate, judicial military, educational, and other injustices and stupidities and some exceedingly basic attitudinal problems as it is of a physically contaminated habitat” (Smith, 1971, p. 155). Therefore, in relation to this research, the concepts of Radical Geography in the post humanist era concept were used to analyze and explain how the process of teaching innovatively, adjusting solutions,
questioning power, and creating new feminist materialisms are negotiated with educators who are also trying to co-create new worlds, new geographies, and new humanisms through liberation-based post-structural and/or radical means. Radical Geography teaches one to create a new world, and it is also understood or posited that this method of learning, unlearning, and creation can impact the world in a positive or more positive trajectory, mainly because it is understood how the action or inaction of human beings can create unnatural disasters cyclically (Cross, 2003; Levitt & Whitaker, 2009).

Lastly, drawing upon Radical Geography and post humanism (Altvater et al., 2016; Haraway, 2015), this research sought to explore how one’s Theory in the Flesh based objectivity not only informs the development and cultivation of educational spaces, but sought to explore what new productions of knowledge, new humanisms, and materialism this process is hypothesized to produce, is in the process of producing, or has produced through the use of liberatory pedagogy that seeks transformational education (Braidotti, 2016). The interlinking of the aforementioned concerning Radical Geography is explored in the hopes of understanding how the symbiosis of Theory in the Flesh as well as Third Space works to impact educators and students who embody and exist within the process of transformation beyond the propagated rhetoric, limited scope, perpendicularity, colonization as well as epistemological extermination of what humanity or what a human ontologically is or posited itself to be in contrast to imperialist narrative, action, and socio-spatial materialisms within geography at present. A component of learning and liberation for marginalized communities, involves the unlearning of
oppressive narratives and practices in ways that are not guided by oppressive principles of dehumanization (Cross, 2003).

The process of didactic and autodidactic learning grown within learning environments surfaces the notion that without shifting the geography through teaching and learning how to define one’s humanity beyond an ostensible narrative of exclusion and devalued axiology, the proliferation of societal suffering will continue. The modern definition of humanism, the tenets of humanity, and geographical equity is one contingent on willful ignorance and rhetorics of absolution solely for those that benefit from exclusion. Deckha (2008) believed that the lack of competency even concerning intersectionality, made it difficult to explain how marginalized identities, especially racially marginalized groups, were never a part of the human narrative because they were never seen by white supremacist culture as the same species as those who were and are considered a human. The inherent categorization of marginalized groups to “animals” complicates conversations about liberation and advocacy, especially when discussing social and natural ecosystems simultaneously and the failure of social justice movements and critical thought hubs to admit the dehumanization or a-humanization rather, of marginalized groups before it moves forward to contemplate on other topics. Deckha (2008) also goes further and explains that because of the automatic a-humanization of the marginalized, the advocacy of those who call themselves allies often begin at the pivot point of arguments typically made for animals rather than the advocacy narrative used for humans. As this a-humanization and dehumanization continue cyclically, marginalized
agency continues to get traded from one hegemonic owner to another until a new(er), supposedly more interesting topic arises to neoliberal pursuit, leaving the oppressed in another location of oppression with narratives are pushed and circulating in society of their (false) freedom until hegemony convinces themselves that it is true. Therefore, this research moved beyond the definitions and unapplied label of human as it is conceptualized by oppressors, and focuses instead on the posthuman era, where the oppressed define their own identities and liberation.

The acknowledged need to redefine humanism and its productions are informed by and born from coitus had between systemic exclusion and the absence of humanization toward marginalized populations. In reference to this, Leonardo (2004) further explains the foundation of exclusion in society:

Of course, slavery, patriarchy, and industrial capitalism were inscribing forces surrounding their discourse of freedom. In short, ‘humanity’ meant male, white, and propertied. For this reason, any of their claims to universal humanity were betrayed by the inhumanity and violation of the ‘inalienable rights’ of people of color, women, and the working class. In this case, domination means that the referents of discourse are particulars dressed up as universals, of the white race speaking for the human race. (p. 139)

Though originally housed in natural environment humanities and bioethics feminisms (Haraway, 2015; Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, 2016; Zalasiewicz, Williams, Haywood, & Ellis, 2011), Radical Geography in the posthuman era in relation to radical
geographies in this research focuses moreso upon what humanity and society could be
beyond the construction of social systems and ecosystems that thrive off of the
marginalization of others. Radical Geography in the posthuman era explores how the
world as it exists, is the nonphenomenological and direct constructed result of the
interconnections among social, spatial, economic, natural, biological, technological,
political, and institutional systems and the intentions of human inaction and hierarchical
access to enact those intentions. These aforementioned components catalyze the motions
as well as directions of ecosystemic interplay and implicate social hierarchy for its socio-
spatial outcomes (Braidotti, 2016; Deckha, 2008). Posthumanism also rejects the
“sameness” rhetoric that dilutes the unique identities and attributes that exist and can
exist within the world without degradation and acculturative coercion that exists under
the veil of false and charlatan posing altruistic ideology (Williams, 1991). Radical
Geography in the posthuman era understands and exposes the spatial, social, and
geopolitical implications of humanism definitions and ontology. As Fanon (1970) stated
"mankind is digging into its own flesh to find meaning" (p. 3). Radical Geography in the
posthuman era offers a critique suggesting that existence inside of nefariously motivated
constructions perpetuates the juxtaposition between rhetoric and reality in ways that
shows a need for new words as well as new realities to be created (Ferrando, 2013;
Ritchie, 2015). These constructions are strategic definitions, suffocated possibilities, and
nonparadigmatic modes and levels of access between bodies designated for
marginalization or privilege regarding who is viewed as “most” human, or human at all.
As stated earlier, education has been used as a tool to mold persons and has particular goals and specializations in mind for said persons. However, educational transformation through liberatory pedagogy creates an opportunity to co-constitute the authoring of self, development of self-awareness and self-actualization, and reconstruction of space (Weber & Kurt, 2015). In this research, the product of Radical Geographies in the posthuman era explored how imagination moves towards and into actionable creations of alternate realities, humanisms, materialisms, and embodiments (Ferrando, 2013; Snaza et al., 2014; Snaza, Sonu, Truman, & Zaliwska, 2016; Snaza & Weaver, 2014). These alternate realities, materialisms, and embodiments are informed by the belief in as well as the application and implementation of new social and spatial humanism definitions and vibrational affects that have the ability to evolve within an environment or ecosystem. Radical Geography in the posthuman era understands that spatiality, positionality, and the post-human ontology are inextricably interconnected.

Through designated educational environments and with the perspectives of educators of marginalized identities, Radical Geography in the posthuman era explores new realities, post humanisms and ontologies thereof, and anthropocentric shifts theoretically and academically with aspirations of actualized socio-spatial shifts. Though the aforementioned is pivotal, the notion of imagining otherwise and seeking the materializations of liberation through geographic shifts and post humanisms is not unique to academic, social, and theoretical fields. Literary radical geographic futurism imaginings have lived in science and realistic fiction literature in a way that demonstrates
the values of subversive hope (Giroux, 2004; hooks, 2003). These fictions hold value in imagining realities beyond our present and outside of its accepted conventions and templates. They also incorporate and explain how the dynamics of oppression operate and impact bodies, time, and spaces influenced by the imaginings and struggles that may exist in the future due to the past. There is rarely a clean slate narrative with these authors of marginalized identities. Anzaldua’s (2003) concept of Arberrato reiterates that the beginning must occur through the process of an ending. Radical Geography in the posthuman era realizations as well as futurisms have been explored, imagined, and articulated through the works of many authors (Butler, 2004, 2012a, 2012b; Chaviano, 2008; Erdrich, 2010; Gomez, 1993, 2016; Hopkinson, 2001; Johnson, 2013; Lo, 2010; Mohanraj, 2005; Okorafor, 2011; Samatar, 2011; Ward, 2012). These writings have the ability to serve as roadmaps and pedagogical tools of liberation for imagining and pursuing one’s post humanity as well as Radical Geography reconstruction and production outside of oppressively designated definitions and dynamics.

The "Why" of Liberatory Pedagogy

Impetus and methods of liberation. Fanon (1970) offered vehement perspective on the necessity of liberation in ways that allows those who come to his work to build analysis in understanding the ways in which the concept of predefined freedom coerces the marginalized to wear metaphorical masks of assimilation in order to survive as opposed to being liberated. These masks are also a form of violence. Fanon (1965) offered narrative that prompted the marginalized to realize the internalized oppression
that oppressors benefit from in the automation of structural degradation of the marginalized body. Due to these masks, Fanon (1970) explained that liberation is not possible as long as they are worn. Fanon (1965, 1970) catapulted the conversation of liberation and outlines the reasons why it is necessary for the marginalized to achieve it. Though the broad analysis from his lived and academic experience-based analysis was foundational, he only spoke about what skills and tools would be necessary for revolutionary liberation psychologically and what violence would come from socio-spatial shifts. Methods remained absent. Fanon (1965) expanded on the definition of violence and prepared the revolutionary to anticipate violence, in multiple forms, that will transpire from that resistance. He did not necessarily discuss the means by which one could approach that revolution within different fields or articulates if it is at all possible to achieve liberation without violence, though he makes it clear that liberation is not possible without loss. Overall, though it would require practice and restructuring, the core of his arguments have applicable qualities that could be constructively engrained in multiple uses and spaces. Dussel (2003, 2013) also developed groundbreaking work that explained philosophy and ethics of liberation in a way that created a roadmap and explication of the pitfalls and opportunities of pursuing liberation with traction and accountability. Dussel’s (2013) work has often been overlooked in comparison to Freire, but his approach is one that lends itself useful to the repository of liberation methodology.
Smith (2013) also explicated the psychological and physical violence of colonization and introduced methods by which researchers and educators can decolonize the ways they conduct, interpret, evaluate, and uplift the voices of the marginalized in their research, while Epp and Watkinson (1997) discuss the specificity of systemic violence in education overall. Smith (2013) viewed the colonized as experts on colonialist operation and impact(s). She shed insight upon the rationale that necessitates the action of decolonization mentally, through method, and analysis by relying on one’s marginalized epistemology in order to preserve the value, culture, and dignity of those who oppression sought to murder through various forms of genocide. Smith (2013) argued that imperialism and the buy-in thereof is the reason for oppression and that through this oppression, marginalized populations are left to search and reconstruct their own humanity by reclaiming their histories. This reconstruction and reclamation is understood to involve significant struggle. While Smith (2013) discussed specific reasons why and how researchers could and should evolve their methodical practice in their fields of interest, Sandoval (2000) expanded on the methods and modes that those who are marginalized can navigate through societal oppression, assumedly in various dimensions and aspects of one’s life. Sandoval (2000) identified the semiotics of oppression and focuses on decolonization and discussed the restitution of power that is possible in reference to the reclaiming and the investment in indigenous and cultural language validity. Sandoval’s (2000) analysis of language connected to Asante (1988), Wa Thiong’o (1989), and Morrison (1993b) in ways that moved beyond Saussure and
Barthes (Silverman, 1983) and places the agency of interpreting the power of words, semantics, and semiotics back into the hands of those who are socially and structurally oppressed by hegemony. The manner in which Sandoval (2000) highlighted the neoliberal distraction of defined progression, mirrors the arguments made by Freire (1968) in regard to the manipulation that oppression utilizes for the disruption of critical thought. Sandoval (2000) attempted to discuss hope despite political realities and hegemonic research practices in ways that shared arguments similar to Smith (2013). Though Sandoval (2000) held a robust analysis, the conversations around “democratics,” practice the use of semantics with oppressive semiotic meaning for the oppressed. Much in the way that true equality has not materialized, democracy rhetorically and structurally has too failed the marginalized and reproduces a rhetoric that produces unfulfilled dreams that continue marginalization because of its political loopholes and majority versus minority practices. Harney & Moten (2013) push back on democratics as well in stating that liberators, or fugitives, do not support or promote democracy, but rather, “we surround democracy’s false image in order to unsettle it” (p. 19). An additional critique is in reference to Sandoval’s (2000) perception that love produces transformation. The investment in that belief and the expectation of what that belief in love can produce has limitations. The idea of love being transformative is similar to Freire’s (1968) position on the power and need of and for mutuality, for the oppressed to liberate the oppressor by not becoming them after gaining power, and Anzaldúa’s (2003) concept compromiso between the oppressed and the oppressor. To explain these limitations, Williams (2009)
stated that, “you needn't learn to love unless you've been taught to fear and hate” (p. 121).

In other words, Williams (2009) believed that not knowing how to love and having to learn how to do so indicated the socialization that one has experienced to be oppressive in ways that are either fueled by fear or hate that is so engrained that the process to untangle one’s self from its grip will take an extensive amount of time.

Who has been taught to hate and in what ways do the marginalized and oppressed wash themselves to rid themselves of hate born from privilege or byproducts of trauma experienced by the marginalized? The privileged must unlearn the hate they inherited and, in this work that one may or may not do, the marginalized are more commonly asked to trust that the privileged may unlearn hate. The marginalized are also asked to facilitate the growth of the privileged while undoing their own trauma and reliving it again in edification in ways that have added more to the oppression of the marginalized in the past and present while building futures that continue to expect their labor and for the privileged to be appalled when it is not freely given in uniformity. This request to trade fear for trust places the onus of mutual and collective transformation on the oppressed and thereby perpetuates the oppressive ideology of extractive labor. If one is not ready to invest work in liberation-based transformation, the marginalized are once again asked to wait in ways that continue to privilege the privileged and oppress the oppressed. Waheed (2018) held resolute position on the limit and expectation of love by expressing that:

Someone can be madly in love with you and still not be ready. They can love you in a way you have never been loved and still not join you on the bridge. And
whatever their reasons you must leave. Because you never ever have to inspire
anyone to meet you on the bridge. You never ever have to convince someone to
do the work to be ready. There is more extraordinary love, more love that you
have never seen, out here in this wide and wild universe. And there is the love that
was ready. (para.1)

Waheed (2018) held the understanding that there are different forms of love and
that not all of them are healthy or should be unconditional. Though *compromiso*, as
Anzaldua stated (2003), was one of the 7 stages of the *conocimiento*, I argue that
compromise means the collection of stories and struggle among them but it does not
signify the automation of one's subjugators to subjugate the oppressed for their comfort
around the privilege they reap, while the oppressed wait to be liberated or once again
plead for their humanity as we, the marginal *othered*, have done for so many centuries.

hooks (1994, 2003) alluded to what prompted her to transgress away from
traditional westernized practices of pedagogy. Though her analytical personal narrative is
useful to hold as a reification that others are contemplating pedagogical transgression
from the hegemonic mainstream, the essays presented offered her valuable perspective
and experiences but did not create a more in-depth understanding of how others learn,
develop, and practice these transgressive pedagogies from diffractive marginalized
making visible the catalyst and process of transgressive pedagogy when she speaks of the
in-betweenness of the *nepantla* located within the *conocimiento* stages of iterative and
adjusted liberatory navigation. The *nepantla* is only one component of an overarching analysis regarding the process of *conocimiento* for liberation. The seven stages of *conocimiento* are:

1. *Arrebato*: The epistemological collision catalyzed by realizations of false realities and rhetorics.
2. *Nepantla*: Where one is torn between opposing ideologies.
3. *Coaticue*: The emotional, physical, and psychological price paid for self-awareness, consciousness of the knowledge being gained, and the decision of whether to continue learning or not.
4. *Compromiso*: Wherein one holds conversations with those inside and outside of their societal positionality and asserts as well as expresses the value in one’s perspective that was once perceived to be devalued.
5. *Coyolxauhqui*: Similar but not identical to the concept of diffraction, it is the gathering and combining of one’s own and their peers’ stories to determine what multicultural reality truly is or could be.
6. *The Blow Up*: The clash of realities, wherein a pilot of how and what can be created begins to clash with others’ perception of action and analysis. This stage is when communities struggle to work together in order to move forward without exclusion.
7. *Shifting Realities*: The final stage wherein the productions of knowledge inform and actually lead to the expected materialisms in space that transform the ways in which beings in society live and function in the ecosystem.
The questions that remain from this process are: (a) if it can be used in education spaces, (b) how can it be used in educational spaces, and (c) how do educators of marginalized identities pursue its initiation, investment and follow through in ways that seek to bring liberation of all to fruition? The dynamics of education and its institutions are constructed on a foundation that generationally perpetuates limited possibilities for the marginalized based on race, class, sexuality, gender, ability, and documentation status of the racialized (Kumashiro, 2000). Education is stated to be many things—a place to emphasize a love and understanding of knowledge, a place to create adequate civically engaged persons, a place to rank and file persons into specializations for cultural production and governmental economic stability, a place to ensure the creation of a middle class through rank, file and exclusion, a place to decrease crime and health disparities, a place to assimilate or acculturate, and a place to maintain systems of power, privilege, and marginalization (Tyack, 1974). But when it comes to understanding that education is implicated in how those within society create the world and the generational "citizens" of it, Shakur (1978) explained education’s role clearly, "The schools we go to are a reflection of the society that created them" (p. 181). Optional education, before institutionalization, was built upon exclusion and perpetuated the growth of systemic connections and materialism that oppress the marginalized. As compulsory education became institutionalized, it curricularly and operationally proliferated oppression and eugenics based on subhuman perceptions of the historically oppressed in ways that
engaged with and informed the social interplay of social systems and educational fields that produced present socio-spatial realities.

The discussion of freedom has expanded through various fields as we move beyond the official capacity of the Civil Rights movement (Bonilla-Silva, 2001), but the academic discourse, pedagogy, and actualization of liberation through transformational education practices has not gained significant traction. Research has focused on reform and incremental change through policy impacted by the rotation of political or elected appointments in bureaucracies and inadequate educational representation of those that it marginalizes. Though some civic strides have been accomplished, there has seldom been substantive discussion or intention to have the byproducts of oppression named and rectified, or for adequate restitution to be provided to those most impacted by educational settler colonial imperialism of epistemology and ontology. The ostensible social progression often uplifted has not structurally shifted education or its interconnected systems in ways that pursue equitable societal culture shift in narrative, institutional or systemic deconstruction, or mechanizations concerning or tangentially associated with education. This dissertation attempted to gain more in-depth narrative of what Burroughs described as the marginalized consistently imagining, pursuing, and “specializing in the wholly impossible” (McCluskey, 1997, p. 403) through educational activism that seeks to ameliorate marginalized bodies being used as disposable socio-political playgrounds, despite perceptions of impossibility or futility. The institution of education has proliferated and institutionalized cycles of structural and systemic oppression and molds
the perspective of capital and potential seen within a pupil (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). This oppression intergenerationally impacts marginalized youths and those who seek to liberate themselves from the trauma educational institutions have created.

The question of who gets to teach, who they get to teach, and the systems to which they are beholden to has been a topic of interest, but the ways in which we educate teachers to bend to systemic expectations of oppression and continue to implicitly and explicitly marginalize marginalized educators has surfaced a gap that continues to grow. The ways that marginalized educators are expected to normalize and automate their oppression (Fanon, 1970; Ogbu, 2004) and the oppression placed on marginalized pupils within educational spaces and society has been discussed in research, but what the catalyst of the transition from restorative to transformational education practice has not.

Some regulatory policies, implementation, and administrative processes for educators have barred the implementation of new or culturally connected (Ladson-Billings, 1995) methods. It is bewildering as to why progressive education conversations have consumed themselves with attempting to mend or reform an institutional body that was built upon the condition that bodies of the oppressed cyclically remain in inequitable positions with marginal axiology (Gillborn, 2005).

We continue to educate based on narratives—drenched into false verisimilitude—of American exceptionalism, justified colonization, and rationalized imperialism of not only space but the educational development of the mind as well (Fanon, 1965, 1970). As stated in the introduction, the concept of freedom (which is defined and interpreted
semiotically by those the one experiences it) is simply located within a different region of
the same oppression many have been and are still brutalized by when liberatory
transformation is not discussed or is deemed to be unrealistic. However, is it necessary to
stay located within dynamics and systems of pain simply because it is what the
marginalized are most familiar with or to continue to be bound by structural systems that
allow those who are privileged by it to inoculate themselves from realizing or
neoliberally ignoring the trauma it produces? Is it realistic to believe that the
marginalized can thrive or continue to survive with what the cultural and natural ecology
is at present? If education is the method by which oppressors have used to perpetuate
epistemicide, knowledge “banking” oligarchical control, ignorance, spurious competition,
educational extortion for social mobility, false systems of meritocracy, or animosity and
oppression as a baseline of normal and accepted structure, it can also be a method used to
eradicate ignorance and pursue the actualization of liberation.

**Enfleshment of liberation.** Ball & Olmedo (2013) discuss the methods by which
one must care for themselves despite being under authoritarian control. Resistance shows
up in multiple ways, and Ball & Olmedo believe that taking care of one’s self in whatever
way one is able, is a subjective but important view of resistance especially considering
the neoliberal bribe of momentary satiation that continues to perpetuate suffering.
Educational activists of marginalized identities will constantly be faced with the question
of how to care for themselves when resisting or if it is even possible. At times, taking
care of one’s self and neoliberal options will subjectively align for some while they will exist in complete paradox for others.

Harney & Moten (2013) believe in what they define as, the *undercommons*. With this concept Harney and Moten explore the ways in which fugitive planning surfaces in spaces of resistance. Harney and Moten specifically focused on the Black epistemology but took an intersectional approach to their analysis that posited that fugitive planning exists on the outskirts of subversion and flirts with multidirectional radicalism always, albeit it in different modes and methods. Harney & Moten acknowledge the importance of being subversive in initially planning for transformation. They believe that without it, the initial framework of liberation cannot be constructed without interruption or hegemonic destruction. However, Harney & Moten believe that to be a fugitive means that you understand your crime, your disobedience will, and has been met with punitive consequences. Though fugitive planning seeks to pursue liberation without permission rather than request liberation, Harney & Moten admit that this pursuit and planning is at a cost of always being figuratively *on the run*. Being viewed as a fugitive rather than a revolutionary, Harney & Moten are not concerned so much with getting caught as much as they are concerned with co-conspirators carrying on the construction of a new liberatory legacy even if the price is martyrdom. Harney & Moten also explain the ways that this fugitive act takes place, and defines the aesthetic of Black tradition, specifically in the sense of the fugitive embodiment. Harney & Moten (2013) are specific about what they are planning for, learning for, teaching for, what they want and possibilities:
If you want to know what the undercommons wants, what Harney & Moten want, what Black people, indigenous peoples, queers and poor people want, what we (the “we” who cohabit in the space of the undercommons) want, it is this – we cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgement generated by the very system that denies a) that anything was ever broken and b) that we deserved to be the broken apart; so we refuse to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls. We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming. What we want after “the break” was different from what we think we want before the break and both are necessarily different from the desire that issues from being in the break. (p. 6)

Much like Ball & Olmedo (2013), Nguyen & Larson (2015) urged marginalized people to never forget about the bodies in which we live. They do not focus as much on care and subjectivity as resistance, but to explicate the usefulness and the validity of embodiment of not only identities that inform epistemology and ontology, but also to consider what role embodiment has on the ripple effect of affect theory and vibrations that impact curriculum and geography of students, educators, administration, and new worlds.
On the notion of identity embodiment, it is important to uplift the destroyed epistemologies and the separation that Harney & Moten state (2013) “make it hard for us to find each other” (p. 6). Pan-indigenous studies have brought forth uncovered and new knowledges on a global context that decenters Eurocentric, obfuscated, and gatekept productions of knowledge. Texts such as Hall, Dei, and Rosenberg (2000) produce, in anthology form, a manifestation of *Sankofa* and new imaginings with the assistance of the recovered past narratives of indigenous knowledge from racial groups from around the world that have been impacted by spatial and intellectual imperialism. These productions of recovered knowledge have a ripple effect of embodiment that can assist in the growth and development of marginalized educational activists in their pedagogical approaches and all they have the ability to influence.

Even understanding the impacts of imperialism for an educational activist of marginalized identities can constantly be difficult. Jansen (1990), a South African educational activist who grew up and taught in the Apartheid era, sought to find a pathway to develop liberation pedagogy that forced subjects to meet geography and social forces in South Africa. At the time of his teaching, he stated the following:

I reflected deeply upon my biology teaching. What is the use of teaching students the intricacies of the DNA model when most will never enter a university to explore its structure? Or to teach about the beauties of cellular structure when many of them lack the basic health necessities to survive physically under apartheid? Or why bother to teach about the natural balance of the ecosystem
when their own ecosystem—District Six—was destroyed mercilessly by the same agents who wrote the textbooks! (p. 65)

Navigation is difficult; difficult when you embody marginalized identities, when your reality is close to your student’s reality, when it is starkly different from your student’s reality, when you work in a system and are extorted for compliance, and when you work outside of a system and are ignored because of limited platform. Jansen (1990) goes on to explain that even his most devout form of resistance was compromised because he saw those who resisted oppressive systemic and forced oppressive pedagogical demands get fired when the use of subversion was not enacted. These educational activists were always replaced with racist, white educators or those willing to comply with oppressive educational systemic demands. He could not figure out who lost in these situations—the students, the educators, their children, their country, or their land? Essentially, maybe everyone lost a piece of themselves no matter what their decision was—resistance, compliance, subversion, disengagement, or automation. Jansen felt as effective as he could be in a system that displaced his people, beat them, and killed them, but felt at a loss when he contemplated leaving or staying no matter the method of liberation he thought of pursuing. To Jansen, he lost a piece of himself in staying in academic institutions and he would have lost a piece of himself leaving. Jansen decided to find ways to make peace with his paradoxical predicament and reached a space where he had enough power to teach how he felt he needed to—but the people he felt he wanted to teach the most became further out of reach the more power he obtained. Thus, the
conundrum of academia and making decisions to stay, to leave, to teach the state-sanctioned curriculum, or to find a path towards liberatory pedagogy with no guidance beyond lived reality remained and the journey to develop and implement curriculum and pedagogies of liberation continued with its gaps in tow for Jansen and other educational activists like him.

Though the experience of educators of color and teacher education has been captured in literature, what this means in the context of curricular implementation in multicultural spaces and its difficulties (Montecinos, 2004; Richardson & Villenas, 2000) as it pertains to liberation is limited to a considerable degree beyond contemplation, multicultural teacher implementation (including whiteness), or critical examinations of its importance (Lam, 2015). Liberation through education has been framed under the notion of humanization in del Carmen Salazar’s work (2013) but Dechka (2008) focused on the perspective that the narrative that humanization cannot be applied if people of color were never considered human or fell under the umbrella of who gets freedom at the very least and liberation at the very most (Leonardo, 2004).

Although, there is some literature that critiques other marginalized identities within education as it pertains to perpetuating whiteness with the notion that holding a marginalized identity, such as being a white woman (Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & DeFiore, 2002), or a queer-identified person (Hikido & Murray, 2016), excuses one from susceptibility to practice as well as perpetuate whiteness. The implications of invisibilization by white educators are proven to be perpetuated in learning spaces that
have the absence of teachers of color and the continued uplifted narrative of the gaps that need to filled in educational pedagogy praxis remains ignored. These identifications of teacher effective inadequacies have been uplifted by educators of color in multicultural spaces that go ignored or intuitionally silenced (Dickar, 2008; Matias, 2013a), which produces an outcome of exclusion and isolation with the educational field (Cheruvu et al., 2015) as they feel a sense of entrapment and weight of assumed responsibility to either sustain or educate white educators on oppressive hegemonies that impact their body and their abilities within praxis (Gist, 2017; Harper, 2013; Kohli, 2014). In addition, the perspectives of queer educators of color and queer students of color continue to be overlooked concerning the impact of intersectionality, let alone the obtaining liberation in learning spaces or the belief of its possibility (Jennings, 2015; McCready, 2013; Pritchard, 2013).

The “How” of Liberatory Pedagogy

Counternarrative creation and processes of liberatory change. This research sought to understand the field of education as a liberatory and transformational tool for dismantling the multidimensional accepted praxis of oppression. It sought to explore the ways in which educators are creating formidable environments, and it sought to explore what the Yoruba tradition refers to as Ase. Ase refers to the creation and harnessing of the power to produce cultural, systemic, and geographic change (Garrison, 2009; Hunter, 1996; Jones, 2004; Vega, 1999). This research explored how the power of Ase, through liberatory pedagogy, pursues multidimensional transformation. Le Espiritu (2008),
however, implores those who pursue this transformation to understand that "to recognize the interconnection of race, gender, [dis/ability] and class is also to recognize that the conditions of our lives are connected to and shaped by the conditions of [others’] lives" (p. 140) and to never forget that if one person fails to become liberated, then none of us are.

*Asē* requires an expanded understanding of the implications of epistemicide and the comprehension that stolen knowledge must be retrieved, if possible, in order to increase cultural efficacy. The Ghanaian term *Sankofa* (Temple, 2010), meaning *go back and get it*, is used to explore the practice of retrieving what was lost due to imperialism, colonization, and epistemicide (Paraskeva, 2016). Though the concept of *Sankofa* is a valuable process, it is important to note that it is a difficult concept to realize when histories have been destroyed or beaten out of the marginalized for assimilation purposes. It is also worth remembering that sometimes these journeys take place and retrieval is impossible—leaving a traumatic void that can never fully be satiated.

Though some voids may never be fully filled, the phrase and Adinkra symbol for, *Nea Onnim No Sua A, Ohu* (Akoto, 2013; Danzy, 2009), meaning *one who does not know can know from learning*, can expand on the belief and acknowledgment that educators can and attempt to create an environment wherein continuous learning can be used for the deconstruction of oppressive curricular content, methods, and pedagogy. *Ase, Sankofa & Nea Onnim No Sua A, Ohu* can be used to speculate how the process of constructing alternate realities through education are pursued for spatial and systemic actualization of
liberation through cultural, structural, spatial, and knowledge productions with confidence and efficacy. These concepts create a path to venture towards an actionable response to the African proverbial problem of oppressive histories, stories, and anticipated futures (without disruption) which stated, “Until lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter” (Beckman, 2014; Harris, 2009; Nouwen, 2012). In regard to histories Okri (2014) redefines the semiotics of “invisible” and expounds on the ways that not being under the auspices of oppressive imperialism and existing autonomously or living invisibly, produced a sense of efficacy and liberation that is difficult to return to after visibility by oppressors produces devaluation and destruction of ways of being and knowing. Okri (2014) stated,

His mother was invisible too, and that was how she could see him...Their lives stretched back into the invisible centuries and all that had come down from those differently coloured ages were legends and rich traditions, unwritten and therefore remembered. They were remembered because they were lived. (p. 5)

If we do not live histories and traditions, we do not remember them. Adding to way social consciousness is not enough in pursuit of liberation (Marx & Engels, 1932). In this statement, the sense of self beyond and before oppressive valuations of a body is realized and remembered. Educational activists of marginalized identities can be conscious of those who are “invisible” and facilitate liberation through visibilization that is free from the caveat that one being conscious of another’s existence requires someone’s subjugation.
Researchers have explored the social aspects of being marginalized within a white supremacist higher education system (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Cabrera, 2014; Gillborn, 2005; Leibowitz, 1971; Trainor, 2002; Twine, 1998). However, there are research gaps in exploring how education, in and of itself, is being used for and by marginalized populations to co-create transformation and liberation within themselves and the spaces to which they educate. There is limited information, however, on how Ase, Sankofa, Nea Onnim No Sua A, Ohu, or the transition between harm to safety of the invisible is approached, navigated, deconstructed, or how these concepts pursue structural and social-spatial liberation.

**Pedagogical evolutions.** Much like light wave disperses through a prism, or how sound waves bend through an entered small orifice and reverberates, or any wave can hit a barrier and go in a different direction, pedagogy has since moved in different ways and waves since the inception of critical pedagogy. Liberatory pedagogy is no different. As evolutionary processes of pedagogies have and continue to surface, some serve as amplifications while others serve as other directional approaches that are impacted by, but do not pass solely through, the Freirean space and/or present themselves in the same way as other approaches. This can be seen through critical pedagogy’s diluted perspective of simply questioning structures and systems instead of investing in shifting them. Furthermore, liberatory pedagogy acts more as a splintered, colored light beam among all the forms of light that show themselves after meeting with the prism that can metaphorically considered to be critical pedagogy. In this difference, liberatory pedagogy
continues to act as a multifaceted and multidirectional approach not stably housed in any regulated school of thought beyond investment in social and systemic shifts conducive to the liberation of marginalized communities. Liberatory pedagogy accounts for fluidity and multipronged collective and collaborative approaches.

Ladson-Billings (1995) coined the term “culturally relevant pedagogy.” In the pedagogical practice and conducted studies that brought her towards her conclusion of its usefulness, Ladson-Billings brought together educators respected by the community and the students to create and implement pedagogy and curriculum relevant to the culture of the students and allowed them to work together to define what student “success” would or could encompass. It was deemed a significant success, however, the ability to have educators that are respected by both students and community members sets a fairly unattainable initial aspiration of replication when rapport has not been built. Ladson-Billings (1995) brought together educators that were reported to have exhibited pedagogical “excellence” and that leaves much to be desired in the realm of understanding how that excellence and those relationships can be cultivated among newer educators invested in the success of marginalized students. Without a longitudinal study, it is fairly implausible to understand how educators with 12-40 years of experience arrived at a place for the implementation of cultural relevant pedagogy to be successful. Not only this, the Ladson-Billings (1995) study focused primarily on African-American students, and though there is nothing wrong with this approach because of neighborhood demographics and unique cultural barriers, it leaves information to be desired in how this
approach may work with racially marginalized students of multiple identities in specific racial groups or with multiple racial groups in the same space. Lastly, Ladson-Billings’ (1995) study suggests that the educators felt like a part of the community, but this may be because the community already respected them. This pre-existing respect makes it difficult to understand how the race of the educators played into the dynamics of a community and classrooms receiving a new pedagogy implementation. Ladson-Billings (1995) mentions that there were Black and white educators but did not discuss how their identities impacted the results of culturally relevant pedagogy generating the curricula and instruction methods even when considering the educators’ relationship with the community. Put more simply, we still do not know what went into building that trust with students in community in relation to the race, the educators’ and the community.

Paris (2012, 2014) humbly critiqued Ladson-Billings’ approach 17 years later and calls for an update from the term “culturally relevant pedagogy” to “culturally sustaining pedagogy.” Paris’ critique was one that uplifted the fluidity of culture and suggested that pedagogy can only be relevant if it is steeped in historical and ever-evolving present cultural ontologies, situations, and stories. Therefore, the educator cannot simply work off of the same curriculum every year, nor can they produce curriculum ethically without the guidance of their students. In Paris & Alim’s (2014) work, they furthered Paris’ (2012) initial critique and described culturally sustaining pedagogy as one that is guided by cultural competence, but also by students’ lived stories, affects, and experiences. Paris & Alim (2014) acknowledged that youth leading and guiding pedagogy, along with the
educator working collaboratively with them for constructivist learning outcomes, is highly pivotal in the pursuit of the students’ own self-determination. However, they also mentioned that another staple tenet of the culturally-sustaining pedagogy is to ensure that youth do not reproduce inequity as well and to use this pedagogical approach to intervene, thereby sustaining where the culture of the marginalized has been located historically and presently wishes to be uplifted is sustained, respected, and valued. Though intervention is discussed, research still lacks a clear understanding of how liberatory pedagogy works outside or alongside educational institutions with youth that have been rejected from its doors, with adults that have already been traumatized by being within them, or with those who have acted as bystanders to trauma infliction. Much like in Ladson-Billings work (1995), Paris & Alim (2014) understood the importance of the students’ identifying what the evaluation of “success” is and urged educators to build curriculum that retains cultural relevance, efficacy, self-determination, and integrity.

Though Paris & Alim (2014) focused much on self-determination and collaboration, they focused mainly on youth and not much, or at all, on the journey of teachers’ navigation of culturally sustaining pedagogy use beyond rationale of its use. Paris & Alim (2014) rooted their examples of culturally sustaining pedagogy execution under the framework of music, hip-hop specifically, for racially marginalized youth. Akom (2009) however, came before Paris & Alim (2014) in developing “critical hip hop pedagogy” wherein youth participatory action research was used to engrain action into the pedagogy. Akom (2009) often discussed their classroom as an incubator of thought that lead to action as a
liberatory practice. He does however mention that all those that were positioned as the “teacher” were of racially marginalized identities and that their lived realities impacted socio-political discussions had in the class. Again, this narrative makes it unclear on how to navigate cultural literacy using challenges in diverse racially marginalized spaces, especially because hip hop is often, but not always, considered a Black cultural production as are the affects thereof, though they do not go in depth in explaining challenges or the evolution of shared use through culturally-sustaining practices. Paris & Alim (2014) do however, discuss the insertion of Reggaetón and the cultural inclusion of clothing and traditional ways of being as non-Black students engaged in hip hop and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) influenced culturally sustaining pedagogy curricular content. Paris & Alim (2014) discuss how educators must evolve to how youth are evolving the use of cultural heritages at present as well. This approach does, however, highlights that art-based learning holds effective traction in the field of education as a teaching method.

Ladson-Billings (2014) responded to Paris’ (2012) critique and agreed that cultural relevant pedagogy needed to be remixed. She also felt disappointment in the watered-down interpretations of her initial culturally relevant pedagogy intention and believed that many educators thought that the randomized insertion of a culturally relevant text without meaningful engagement or cultural competencies were enough to shift the realities of students or space inside or outside explicitly delegated learning spaces. These educators did not embody culturally relevant pedagogy or concern
themselves with socio-political events or implications of society, which also led her to believe in the necessity of a remix. Ladson-Billings (2014) further discussed the gap in understanding the pluralism of cultures within the pedagogy and the ambiguity of building pedagogical pathways to attend to multiple marginalized identities. Ladson-Billings (2014) uses poetry and performance in her remix as her research platform to explore how performance, uplifted in space pertaining to stories, “cross-pollinated” (p. 80) into the curriculum creation of students in a teacher preparation pre-service program in a way that increased efficacy of not only the students but crossed lines into classrooms without prompts. Ladson-Billings (2014) also mentions that the demographics of her class did include white students, and that this through the implementation of her hybrid pedagogy, white students admitted that they had noticed in ways they had not before that their peers were minorities, alluding to the fact that the color-blind rhetoric may have been dissolving. However, it is peculiar, yet possibly hopeful, that they did not structurally see themselves as the minority, but there was not enough student information to fully confirm that hope. This model shows how teacher education can work through implementation of the pre-service teachers’ own growth. Gay (2000) and Howard (2012), much like scholars that have conflated critical and liberatory pedagogy, seemingly have conflated culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy. The only distinction that could be gleaned was that culturally responsive pedagogy attends to situational crises housed in institutional definitions of success, even though Ladson-Billings (1995) critiques this approach citing that it has the problematic propensity to
recreate inequities established by the very structurally racist institutions wherein the crises were historically and in present day are rooted when discusses success versus cultural relevance and value. In essence, culturally responsive pedagogies act as triage of systemic and institutional harm. Culturally relevant pedagogy seemed to be situated more in the salient issues of inequity and oppression and sought to eradicate them through relationships with students, community, curriculum, redefined and self-determined modes and means of success in conjunction with learning objectives wherein students are asked to engage in higher cognitive levels of learning that they are collaboratively a part of creating. Though these approaches have all proven useful to some degree, the navigation of being an educational activist of color is glaringly absent. This absence may be because all of these pedagogies are explicitly intent on eradicating deficit language or narratives from their practice; however, obfuscating or not inquiring about educator experiences seems remiss. Though all authors somewhat alluded to their investment in pedagogical works that shifts from mainstream paradigms, there is not enough reflexive information present on the educators and their teaching, collaborative or leading experiences in relation to pedagogy approach, and instructional method even with literature that explicitly uses the term “liberation” as a praxis. This may be because of authors attempting to uplift their investment and avoid being questioned continuously about their objectivity. This may be a subversive act as well, but again, there is not enough information present to make that assertion, and maybe it was meant to be vague for the very reason that subversion is not explicit in nature to those who do not plan with the
specific subversive community that may or may not operate in intentional obscurity to thwart opposition that could catalyze due to visibility.

All of the aforementioned researchers did make it clear that these pedagogies are not possible without the engrained ontology and epistemology of dissecting ever-evolving socio-political events and dynamics in ways that surfaced in the adjustment of curriculum. However, being aware of the socio-political climate and making adjustments to curriculum and educational space dynamics are easier to identify as needs than they are to navigate. In Perlow, Wheeler, Bethea, and Scott’s (2017) recent work, the narratives of Black women educators were shared in the form of their anthological stories and journeys of implementing their own self-defined liberatory pedagogies. They make explicit the pain, trauma, healing, fatigue, and hoped for transformational shifts they navigate every day before, after, and during liberatory pedagogy implementation. Hudson-Vassel, Acosta, King, Upshaw, and Cherefree (2018) was the only recent study found wherein navigating liberatory pedagogy development and implementation was explicitly discussed. The research had two Black women teaching in a southeastern university discuss their trials and tribulations with implementing liberatory pedagogy in their classes about race and education.

Often the participants either discussed in interview form or in a journal their levels of fatigue and lack of preparation to manage their fatigue during white student disengagement and displays of privilege due to the educators’ identities. The educators often questioned whether it was worth it to accept students not reading or pretending to
misunderstand because it did not seemingly benefit them to do so. The ways that the
interviewees discussed their frustrations were similar regardless of structure of the
classroom, though the interviewee that maintained her role as the leader of the class had
classroom with white students. In the conclusion of the study, both interviewees
expressed their exasperation and wondered if they even wanted to teach anymore, not
solely because of the classroom, but because of the state of society supporting push back
intended on sustaining the space as one of white hegemony rather than one of liberation.
No one is quite sure how the racially marginalized students felt about the classroom
dynamics, but the teachers often wondered if they were doing those students a disservice
by preserving their composure in order to keep teaching.

The teachers also discussed what they should do when white students
disengage— to leave them learning nothing or urge them to care—once again fighting for
the humanity of the marginalized and themselves both in and outside of the classroom.
This fatigue felt by the educators impacted the entire process of developing liberatory
pedagogy, so much so that new imaginings were initial hopes, but the participants never
got an opportunity to witness any shifts or materialisms due to the classroom dynamics
and the difficulties in the management thereof. Each approach used inside of an
educational space for liberation and self-determination in this research was automatically
complicated by the demographics of the professors and the demographics of that space; a
space that initially held the forthright intention of dismantling white supremacy and
increasing cultural literacies. Though these pedagogical narratives and research projects paint a fuller picture of transgressive pedagogy, questions remain in reference to the ways that liberatory pedagogy is practiced, why it is practiced, who practices it and how that enfleshment impacts its use, how it is navigated, what materialisms come of liberatory pedagogy use, as well as which resonant impacts of liberatory pedagogy are absent from the educational literature cannon.

Not only this, the educational approaches to education as it pertains to ELLs (English Language Learners) is being pushed forward in the academic cannon but the orientation of this type of pedagogy is towards one of whiteness and its reduction of harm, but not necessarily the liberation of racialized people (Flores, 2016). What does it essentially mean for educators of color to not be concerned with the competency of oppressive white educators whether they are conscious of it or not? Or, at the very least, what does it mean to engage with white educators with a continued centering of the needs of students and communities of color without seeking to spend more time educating about oppression than making demands of those needs when engaging? The limited amount of academic literature that includes people of color remains sparse from the perspective of the educator and from the perspective of pedagogy, recruitment and teacher, representation, support, retention (Hayes, 2014; Vilson, 2015). Other gaps in the literature are explorations of marginalized self-identity as well as the students’ experiences and learning space navigation (Brown, 2014; Dickar, 2008; Kohli, 2009; Miller & Endo 2005; Vargas, 2002). These navigation pieces of literature however, leave
out the aspired-for outcomes and the orientation of their work as it leans towards inclusion within aspiring for outcomes that equate to the allocation of axiology extended to whiteness or the liberation to self-define the outcomes for communities of color. These navigations in literature continue to focus on pain and survival rather than possibilities and pursuit of liberation as well as joy through pedagogy.

There does exist, however, literature that orients itself toward different pedagogies to attend to teaching students from the positionality of asset-based foundations towards marginalized communities of color, borderland (Chicana feminist literature specifically), and indigenous narratives (Elenes, 2001; Villanueva, 2013) as they concern ways of being and ways of knowing in education broadly (King, 2015). However, it does not necessarily explore its applicability of the expanded definitions of indigeneity across racialized indigenous communities beyond. Other pedagogies, such as Nepantla pedagogy (Prieto & Villenas, 2012), take an asset-based approach to becoming a cultural worker at the borderlands of the United States and Mexico as a form of responsibility, but the narrative of this work remains neutral upon who can implement it while discussing how it is the responsibility of teachers and students to cross their own personal and metaphorical borderlands in order to make cultural pedagogies of any kind effective. There is also literature as it relates to the convergence of educators of one marginalized race teaching a group of students of another marginalized race in the context of ESL (English as a Second Language) (Buendía et al., 2003).
Though the amount of literature on these preceding pedagogies is well-documented and expanded, what they mean for the implementation of educators of color that are working to decenter whiteness is also a topic that is limited in literature. It is discussed in Dillard et al. (2000) concerning how teaching from a spiritual positioning in one’s soul informed by intergenerational blackness is how implementation of education can take place in a liberating way. Pour-Khorshid (2016) also discussed educators of color focusing on pedagogies and practices of healing, embodiment, and activism in the format of a *testimonio* of action for community, politicized teacher development, a community reclamation of worth, (Yosso, 2005) and an explanation of why marginalized communities of color not only deserve but pursue liberation through collective community building among educators of color within communities of color rather than a request or an appeal to whiteness and its permission to heal and hold liberation. There have been pedagogies pushed as it concerns refusing to engage due to the positionality of educators of color wherein educators practice pedagogies that not only decenter whiteness, but also center themselves in their bodies to disrupt the colonization of their bodies, their efforts and energy, and the questioning of their professional, academic, and lived qualifications due to their identities of color (Tuck & Yang, 2014). In addition, the literature connecting liberation theory, teachers of color, and pedagogy remains limited beyond Freire’s (1968) work with an absence of the evolution thereof. Thus, the lack of liberation as it is constructed in nonformal and formal education contexts remains absent from literature.
The “What” of Liberatory Pedagogy

Collision outcomes of liberation planning and implementation. Bourdieu and Passerson (1990) affirmed that they believed that schools were sites of reproduction as opposed to innovative thought. Essentially, they posited that the way we teach and learn in schools are conditioning methods to reproduce the society that we live in, knowing that the society that we live in does not function to the health and benefit of those it marginalizes. Mills (2008) expanded on Bourdieu and Passerson’s perspectives but explained that if reproduction is possible within schools, then so is transformation. O’Loughlin (1995) corroborated this in stating that, though educators are wary to admit it because they are also being extorted for systemic compliance in standards of learning policies, they are complicit in the automation of the oppression we see within our geography.

Knowing that educators are the conduits to the transfer and dissemination of faulty information or are expected to be, O’Loughlin (1995) implored educators to push for imagining in classrooms without mandatory rose-colored lenses that make it impossible for them or their students to see fault within the constellation of assemblages that have been institutionalized. Giroux (2003) furthered this conversation on educational reproduction outside of classrooms and in the greater sphere of broadened politics. As stated before, the personal has always been inextricable from the political because of policies that were placed on marginalized bodies, but Giroux asks readers to find or develop a pedagogy for discussing politics that is not oppressive. Giroux wants educators
to discuss fundamental inadequacies within systemic and structural culture that could and
does influence the ways that policy impacts not just education, but the broader global
world. However, as much as we discuss transformation, liberation, and pedagogy, one
cannot assume that asking for permission or taking radical positions without permission
is not without consequence, nor will asking for permission and it being conditionally or
bureaucratically granted bring about immediate change. Therefore, Suissa (2006) takes
time to explicate the necessity of anarchy in education—anarchy being the dismissal of
oppressive systemic and institutionalized oppressive mechanisms and procedures. To
Suissa, the systems of education was never meant to be disentangled from its insidious
and nefarious intent and impact. They argue that anarchy and system abolishment, or at
the very least, the ignoring of oppressive systemic dynamics and compliance or
allegiance thereto, is required for transformation. Yet, Suissa does not discuss how to
ensure that those marginalized within the system are insulated from precarity. This may
be so because anarchism does not and has never guaranteed continued safety, in whatever
way one defines the term, even if a community is present to support one another with the
resources and/or leverage they have. The awareness of precarity is not lost the
marginalized. Biko (2015) supported the presence of this awareness when he stated that
“in a bid for change, we have to take off our coats, be prepared to lose our comfort and
security, our jobs and positions of prestige, and our families” (p. 97). Harney and Moten
(2013) alluded to the reason for the hypervigilance of precarity in the context of the
relationship between the fugitive educator and the academy. Harney & Moten stated that,
“her [the educator’s] labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings” (p. 26). In this, the awareness of that inability to structurally bear what the academy professes it superficially wants, or wants to exploit without materialisms, goes against the grain of its cyclical oppression and creates a fugitive out of the exploited educator.

From the moment that liberatory pedagogy begins to be utilized, whether it be explicit or subversive, the approach is always seen as “Un-American” within the United Stated context (Antliff, 2017). The rhetoric of what it means to be American and live in the United States has never paradigmatically aligned to the realities of the oppressed. Knowing this, Antliff posited that even subversion comes with consequences that makes those who resist oppression terrorists when they simply seek to bring forth the very principles that the country attempts to push the image of whilst it perpetuates the destruction of marginalized people.

Patel (2016) believed that pedagogy can be subversive, but that overall pedagogy for those who hold marginalized identities is an approach of resistance, not just for them but for everyone that they impact and affect. Moreover, Patel believed that pedagogy is also a tool for survivance. The term survivance can become complicated however, it is not linear. Some educators accept being extorted for the retention of their jobs and some educators push for explicit liberation because they know the survival of the world, their students, and themselves depend on it, no matter the consequences.
The spaces that liberation pedagogy takes place and the implications of that pedagogical approach can be lifted from Crampton and Elden’s (2016) piece wherein they discuss the issues of power, space, and knowledge. Crampton and Elden believe that the ways that spaces are constructed, shared, and navigated dictate the ways that power manifests and directs the forms of knowledge that was disseminated or built. O’Loughlin (1995) believed that through the process of getting students to realize their agency or to question status quo, educators still feel a sense of power is necessary to hang over the heads of their students and can be exhibited in an educator’s apprehension to explore the disengaged behaviors of a student. Instead, by use of punitive threat, educators often use that power to control a student’s body, mind, and behaviors. We reinforce what we seek to deconstruct because we have not yet built the tools to navigate that conflict. Third spaces act as spaces of hybridity for not only knowledge production, but human development for student and educators.

Educational activists do not always get to pick their audiences and these audiences have been preconditioned before an educator meets them to oppress or be open to fallibility. Audience or community roles should be willing to deconstruct problematics, but without their willingness, equity and liberatory pedagogy traction becomes difficult in multicultural spaces where the expected dynamics of the classroom or education space (or world) is to cater to white supremacy under the guise of the terms “inclusion” and “multicultural education” in the specific context of equity work that perpetuates whiteness (Picower, 2009).
In this, Gutiérrez et al. (1995) discuss the ways in which educators and students develop scripts, counterscripts, and an underlying lived reality within classrooms after the desegregation era. They believed that the educator has a script and so do the students, but also believed that the scripts could converge in a third space in a way that makes learning and teaching more conducive to all parties involved. They encourage educator and student to co-construct a new classroom geography that determines what “knowledge” is or can be defined as. Though their piece does not heavily highlight systemic influence of scripts in general, they do mention the usefulness of this approach with classrooms heavily populated with students of color. Harry Belafonte recalled a conversation wherein Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, “I fear I have integrated my people into a burning house” (C-SPAN, 2006). What he meant by this was that the house was set on fire just because marginalized bodies entered it, but they would be the only ones that burned. They would be the ones forced to assimilate, to be subjected to oppressive narratives, to be denigrated and be forced to develop counter scripts (of compliance or disruption) for internal resilience, efficacy, and survival even if it meant that external matriculation is not plausible because of historical influence on the perception of their affect. Therefore, a culture of resilience was born within educational spaces because of that need to survive. Resistance takes the form of underlife and distancing from institutions that coerces the marginalized to live by inapplicable scripts of their realities. But what would it look like if educators were representational and utilized liberatory pedagogy that did not force the
othered to develop a subversive counter script just in order to survive, at their own external systemic detriment?

Resonant effects of pursuing liberation. The crystallization of a geographer factions moving more towards social justice in Radical Geography became concrete when the *Antipode* journal was created in 1969. It challenged academic tradition and convention but also operated within it at the same time. Operating through a paradox deepens discussion into what forms of radical transformation can or are “allowed” to look like without misappropriating the word. *Antipode* honestly calls itself out in an article in its first issue: “We are soliciting articles for a journal that in future issues may damn articles and journal alike. For the moment, traditional communication media are being used for the dissemination of non-traditional ideas” (Stea, 1969, p. 1-2). *Antipode* held as well as holds a resolute stance that their goal is:

…radical change—replacement of institutions and institutional arrangements in our society that can no longer respond to changing societal needs, that stifle attempts to provide us with a more viable pattern for living, that often serve no other purpose than perpetuating themselves. We do not seek to replace existing institutions with others which will inevitably take the same form; rather, we look to a new ordering of means in accordance with a new set of goals. (p. 1-2)

It is possible that the explicit existence in a paradox—placating, being beholden to, and dismantling the very things that allowed a platform to be had is necessary for one
to notice the beneficial *and* inequitable path to the amplification of a voice is dubious. Across disciplines, geography specifically, the journal has endured and honestly calls in others with dialogue to negotiate the ever-changing shifts that happen in the built and natural environments in an effort to understand how these shifts impact people and how people impact each other. Radical Geography understands that solutions attempted for one context or space may not be applicable for another. Education and pedagogy mirror this. Colleagues who originated Radical Geography had to learn from different fields and unlearn the oppressive nature of their own field. They also had to remind themselves of the field’s obfuscation as well as dismissal of human dynamics and causes of suffering by only discussing geographic consequences but not social force causes.

In understanding what goes on in a third space and the impact thereof, Gershon (2013) discusses resonance and vibrational affect. Though Gershon specifically discusses sound theory, the metaphors used are transferrable and applicable in ways that actor-network theory (Michael, 2017) falls short of in terms of power and position. Gershon explains that whatever we do—sound, movement, action, stimuli of any kind—has a vibrational affect. In addition, the materialization of possibilities that are invested in has proven to gain liberation. The radical materialization of possibilities that exist within the context of liberation can be identified through the liberation of Chèran wherein the citizens of the city resisted corruption and deforestation through organizing (Agren, 2018).
Think of liberatory pedagogy as a ripple effect. Whatever and however one teaches sends out vibrations that impact body, mind, and space. Critical pedagogy calls for only vibrational thought inquiry, while liberatory pedagogy expects and makes space for those vibrations to extend into actions that impact and is aware of one’s impact on social and natural dynamics within and unto geography. It asks us to be accountable to ourselves and our own vibrations in and outside of explicitly identified educational spaces.

When discussing identity however, Gershon (2016) makes it clear that affect and response to one’s affect, especially one of marginalized identities, can dramatically impact the ability for an educator’s approach to not only resonate, but for their position and their approach to be trusted and treated with dignity. All of these notions of Radical Geography urge those who cross the threshold of its entrance to realize that role and navigation is fluid improvisation—educated and informed—but improvisation nonetheless. In piecing different attempts together in trial and error with education or analysis of outcomes, DeLanda’s (2016) use of the concept of assemblages lends itself to discuss the implications of how we essentially put things together for a particular purpose. However, because postmodernity pushes us to see ourselves as more than just what the production of our labor produces or what systems of oppression continues to fuel, Puar (2017) highlights that there are some assemblages we become a part of that perpetuate the very things marginalized groups sought freedom from. Structural oppression, as Puar posited, has a way of buying complicity with neoliberalism or
extorting marginalized populations for compliance and continued automation without
disruption of oppressive modalities. So, what does it mean to not be neoliberally bought
as a leader or an educator? What does it mean and what are the consequences of refusing
extortion? Are there ways to act subversively despite ostensible acquiescence to
extortion? And in that alone, can subversiveness be categorized as liberation if not
explicit? What is the line between navigating the system long enough to change the
geography of education or the world without becoming a component of an education-
based terrorist assemblage (Puar, 2017)?

Anderson (2011) combines geography and assemblages specifically by discussing
the distinction of critical and radical geography. The researcher does not advocate for one
school of thought over the other. It is, however, irrefutable that they are exploring critical
and radical perspective of associations and ideas of assemblage implications on
geography similar to the way that the distinction between critical and liberatory pedagogy
meet and then explicitly diverge. Peake and Sheppard (2014) attempt to conflate the two
terms, but this position is not supported by other scholars, much like the terms freedom,
emancipation, and critical and liberatory pedagogy diverge.

Anderson (2011) explored the different forms of assemblages, whether it be
terroristic as Puar (2017) explains in homonationalist queer contexts, or in trial and error
sought functionalities and geographic impact of those assemblage tests. The same can be
said for educators that attempt different assemblages of themselves, their students, and
their roles in a large system and world of education and learning in general. Chouinard
(1994) discussed 14 years ago that Radical Geography may be the only option left to understand the world, its imaginings, and the growth of its field since the 1970s. In essence, Chouinard explains that traditional geography can no longer exist as it has because people are the central components to all geographic (human and physical) dynamics that catalyze a ripple effect, resulting in the creation of the realities in which we live.

What was once deemed as radical to Chouinard (1994) has now become understood to be liberally progressive in ways that, to the researcher, align too closely to the machination of authoritarian systems that create a human-influenced geography of complacency and modernity-based stalemates. The fear of radical traditions concerned Chouinard, however, because there was no proposed course of action that was sustainable or stable. However, a question remains: do solutions have to be static if other evolving or multidirectional solutions for the world(s) we wish to create are contextually better and presented over time? And if they do—for the sake of what and who? Chouinard also recognized this and explicitly asserted that refraining from comingling with other radical traditions and populations will recreate an elitist position of fields that uplifts conditioned buzzwords and phrases. These buzzwords or neologisms are feared to exclude the very entities and bodies that the field claims to advocate for and accentuate the academic tradition of innovative gap-filling research fandom and salivation with no actions towards eradication of oppression or disparities. Meanwhile, realities remain realities for those
whose narratives are exploited or ignored and thus Chouinard felt that radical engagement is necessary to properly convey plight and solutions thereto.

Olson and Sayer (2009), however, adamantly disagree with the allowance for continued fluctuation of geographic solutions and roles of actors. Olson and Sayer believe that the adoption of a normative perspective is necessary in order to collectively align us on a common denominator of how we want to see the world evolve. They fear mayhem and advocate for stable compromise. Radical notions, to Olson and Sayer, do not provide implementable solutions across human or physical geographies and, in turn, seem like a fruitless endeavor or approach. They urge other radical geographers to engage with them to define and concretize a normative operationalization of the work they and their colleagues pursue as opposed to being drawn in by the term “radical” without the responsibility of producing what they feel are adequate conclusions that fit into an assemblage constellation that can be reproduced throughout society. However, Olson & Sayer completely ignore the detriment of systemic incrementalism that has historically failed to bring liberation to fruition for marginalized populations.

Folke (1972) posited that Radical Geography has to be Marxist. Folke believed that Marxist engagement with Radical Geography would yield structural change within systems that already exist. Essentially, Folke argued for systems that operate and function to the best of its abilities for the most marginalized and a system that equitably redistributes resources of all kinds among the population. However, Springer (2014), 42 years later, discussed why Radical Geography has to be anarchist. Springer was
uninterested in trying to maintain systems that have proven themselves to not function for the marginalized. Springer went further and attempted to admonish Marxists who continuously engage and negotiate with systems and reduce narratives down to productions of labor and economy. Springer did not ignore capitalism’s role in oppression but believed that radical transformation must have radical actions at all entry points of systemic marginalization in an attempt to dismantle the system in and of itself. Much like Chouinard (1994), Springer believed that being radical was all that was left, but the means that this information is conveyed, again, goes back to *Antipode*’s initial journal statement and the paradox in general for those to be radical, for educators to work for liberation, within or in relation to systems of oppression in a way that can be viewed as complicit to the very things they seek to deconstruct. Springer is no exception by way of disseminating their perspective in a peer-reviewed journal for a platform. That in and of itself is not necessarily anarchist or, to some, maybe it is? Does Springer’s narrative, Folke’s (1974) argument, or Olson & Sayer’s (2009) perspective just sensationalize for academic clout without radical geographic outcomes? Are critical or liberatory pedagogy educators having the same argument or struggle with the same nuances of seeking transformation?

Beckett, Bagguley, and Campbell (2017) discussed what would be most aligned to the expectations of results by an educator in terms of liberatory pedagogy use. When discussing Radical Geography, it has been made clear that it is not a school of thought unto itself, nor does everyone in the field agree on what should be done about the ways
that human and social conditions should be uplifted or how negative issues involved with Radical Geography could be mitigated, especially in ways that mitigation would place responsibilities on those in space and within their networks to attempt to play their actor role in eradicating suffering. Beckett et al. (2017) make it clear that no one is seeking a utopia, though they do not refute the presence of dystopias. They essentially explain that there are such things as “heterotopias” (contextual spaces that are not impacted by oppressive hegemony) whose productions are contextually based on the unique marginalization that people experience due to the abuse and inequitable distribution of power within society. Change in heterotopic space will look different for the different circumstances to which different people live through and in.

Therefore, when we discuss what Radical Geography can look like through liberatory pedagogy, heterotopia is a burgeoning concept that could explain how one modernistic machination solution does not have to be set into motion in ways that continuously marginalize groups of people and destroy the natural environment as well through a faulty cost benefit analysis. However, understanding heterotopias’ conceptual birth would not be possible without spaces provided to philosophize about alternative solutions to faulty modern solutions that dissolute quality conditions of life. How can education and educators approach their teaching methods to make heterotopias possible and what does that mean for privileged populations whose heterotopia could be contingent on the oppression of others through a misappropriated application of marginalization’s definition? How do educators manage and navigate that
perpendicularity, especially in multicultural spaces? If we want to know what can come from liberatory pedagogy socio-spatially, Radical Geography offers us an opportunity to look across disciplines and constructively infuse those analyses into the development of a liberatory pedagogy approach. This, however, cannot start if spaces are not used that very purpose. Without such spaces, resonance cannot build, reverberate, or transform into materialisms.

**Summary**

This review examined what that process looks like for educators that wanted more; more than what is present for their students, for themselves, for their communities—understanding that limited emancipation is not liberation when there are no substantive societal productions that indicate liberation’s presence. Educational activists who decided to take the route of dismantling oppression to eradicate its teaching, have to remember Shakur’s (1978) words or a variation thereof and understand that in order to fight for liberation one must “fight against two groups, institutions and yourself” (p. 12) so that it could be possible to fight for liberation of not only others, but themselves as well.

Liberatory pedagogy seeks to produce new pedagogical and geographic materialisms for the embodiment and enfleshment of the posthuman by providing a space for productions of knowledge to be born, to be nurtured, and to mature. The third space provided an opportunity to navigate, develop, and practice liberation through liberatory pedagogy and rhizomatic learning (Cormier, 2008), but it also allows space for one to
rewrite oneself, for others to rewrite themselves, and for one to redefine one’s own liberated post humanity, role, and contributions to the development and cultivation of geography. The catalyst and importance of this rewriting and redefining is eloquently expressed by Anzaldua (1981):

Why am I compelled to write?... Because the world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me. By writing I put order in the world, give it a handle so I can grasp it. I write because life does not appease my appetites and anger... To become more intimate with myself and you. To discover myself, to preserve myself, to make myself, to achieve self-autonomy. To dispel the myths that I am a mad prophet or a poor suffering soul. To convince myself that I am worthy and that what I have to say is not a pile of shit... Finally, I write because I'm scared of writing, but I'm more scared of not writing. (p. 168)

In the following chapter the methodology of this research is presented. The methodology will discuss the methodologies used in this research as well as the rationale for their use. The research procedure and interview protocol is also presented in chapter three along with interview protocols and instrumentation. Chapter three will also describe the means of recruiting a sample population. The data collection and the analysis approach thereof are also presented. Lastly, the ethics and trustworthiness of the research is explained followed by the location of the author, the role of the researcher and the research’s limitations.
Chapter III: Methodology

One day, my 8-year-old self-asked my gramma, before she passed away, “gramma, you wanna live forever? I want you to live forever.” She stopped the motion of the porch swing, took a bite of her salted tomato, contemplated as she chewed, spit, and said to me, “Naw Totsee, I don’t wanna live forever. I dun’ seen shit repeat itself three times now. I’m tired.” In that moment I didn’t understand. Now I do. She was teaching me that the world has not changed. Every time the narrative stated that the world has evolved for the better, those who have always experienced degradation, are still left on the margins. She was our family’s source of wisdom, of stories, and I wish I wrote them down, could share them often. I will not make that mistake now that I’m older.

There’s a sense of loss, a void, I feel being an African-“American” from Alabama, transgender, queer, and diagnosed with a personality disorder. I have been and still am dehumanized and then asked to have a sense of patriotism when erased history, pseudoscience-based inferiority rhetoric, and coercive re/location robbed me of my epistemology and connection to the world globally in a way that makes it difficult to build bridges across marginalized positionalities. Even in the words I use to write this, I feel a loss, a loss of a language I never knew, a form of efficacy that I can never hold. I remain conscious of my Black southern dialect and how people initially believe that dialect can indicate levels of competence, that my dialect equates to ignorance, that it isn’t a valid or educated way of speaking or writing, and therefore rendering me unworthy and invalid as well. I’ve changed myself so much trying to be respected and
thus, disrespected myself. This was my first stage of unlearning and removing colonization from my own body and from my cultural affects. I am aware of the hair on my chin produced from testosterone shots, and the incongruence that creates a befuddled face when people figure out that I decided the keep the name my mama gave me. I know how it resonates with me, how it resonates with other people, how that resonance can and does impacts the geography and trajectory of my life. I am aware that my sexuality is still not approved of in places I call home and is approved in places that are new to and wary of sharing space with people who have a skin tone such as mine. I am aware of the piercings in my face, the tattoos on my skin that make people think I have nothing to offer in the spaces that I occupy. I’m aware that the way my cycles of mania and depression work makes it hard to maintain community with those I want to be present with and for. I am aware that my weight is not one that is considered desirable. I am aware of all these things. Though I am exhausted of debating whether it’s worth my energy to prove myself worthy, I’m still here. In the loss that I feel, and have felt, I’m continuously working to come into my own understanding of who I am without pressures of expectations in accordance to hegemonic ideas of who I should be and what I’m worth. This isn’t an auction block.

For now, I’m concerned with amplifying voices. I am concerned with attending to loss by discussing futures. It would be a lie, if I didn’t say that writing this alone, makes me feel a sense of precarity. The world makes us into examples, when the marginalized act too free. Oppression makes sure I bear witness. I step out on faith alone, regardless.
I was 23 the first time I heard the names Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Octavia Butler, Gloria Anzaldua, Cherrie Moraga, and Patricia Hill Collins from a white professor.

I cannot sit idly while researchers benefit and profit from the pain of Black, Brown, queer, varying abled bodies, while being incapable of knowing how it feels to fight for your livelihood. I must highlight the ways that those who do not live and breathe the realities of marginalization are titled revolutionaries that convinced themselves that they had discovered something that the marginalized have been telling folks for centuries. They dismissed us, called us too biased to have substantive theory and analysis. I’m tired of this cycle. So, I’m trying to change that. I have the access, so I’m not going to use it to knowingly perpetuate oppression. Disruption sometimes comes with a heavy price. One allowing themselves to finally gets to explore and share specific stories that are a larger part of a liberatory narrative, that I too am located somewhere within is metaphysical. This research seeks to not just figure out what people are trying to build, but how I can build with them. This is symbiosis that refuses to replicate extractive ontologies.

This is personal, political, ecological. This is not just research. This is my life, our lives, our bodies, our futures. This is the power and art of our stories, and they deserve to be preserved, respected, and shared.

Research Methodology

Due to the nature of this research that sought to explore rather than prove or test a hypothesis, qualitative methods were used to uncover and uplift educators’ voices in
ways that show the true nature of their relationships with liberatory pedagogy. The goal of centering the participants’ stories is one pursued because just as pedagogy serves as a model, it is also stated that “lives don’t serve as models, only stories do” (Heilbrun & Pollitt, 1998, p. 37). If the perspective of Heilbrun & Pollit (1998) is considered, it can be deduced that this research could benefit from participant stories of their lives rather than the observation of their lives, to provide models for liberatory pedagogy praxis as it pertains to the research questions. To continue with the overall reduction of oppressive hegemonic research data collection within research, the tradition of storytelling, and its’ value among marginalized communities, narrative inquiry and found poetry was used as the qualitative orientation of this research. Denzin & Lincoln (2011) stated that qualitative research allows a way for the audience to analyze and understand the data from an organic process (p. 3). Attempting to gather stories on pedagogical dynamics in a quantitative scale is not appropriate or naturalistic.

This research intended to delve into the individualistic ways in which lives can be experienced as storied rather than anecdotal stories alone (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The most appropriate mode of surfacing stories regarding pedagogy kinetics is using qualitative research methods, specifically through narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry, which is housed in qualitative methods, is the most befitting approach to honoring the full story of each participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry relies on criteria rather than validity, reliability, and generalizability (Short, 1991). Narrative inquiry also allows the researcher to move back or share space in the research process by
engaging in what Elbow (2009) refers to as the *believing game* wherein others represent or tell the stories of their experiences in a centered, grounded, and validated way (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) with the reader absorbing the narratives positions themselves to believe that story teller by understanding the story from what they determine to be the storyteller’s vantage point as opposed to immediately absorbing stories from a perspective of cynicism and skepticism. Narrative inquiry increases comfort or shares discomfort in the research process in ways that make space more conducive to yielding more honest responses and ethical participant-researcher dynamics through the development of relationships that are humanizing and immersed rather than superficial (Behar, 2014). Bochner & Riggs (2014) stated that, “… the goals of much of narrative inquiry are to keep conversation going (about matters crucial to living well); to activate subjectivity, feeling, and identification in readers or listeners; to raise consciousness; to promote empathy and social justice; and to encourage activism—in short, to show what it can mean to live a good life and create a just society” (p. 201). The parallels between Bochner & Riggs (2014) and the purpose of this exploratory research align at a degree of congruence that support the rationale to use the approach of narrative inquiry. Once participants were identified, preliminary phone interviews or correspondences were conducted to confirm that participants met the research criteria. During the initial modes of contact with participants, demographic identity information was collected through outreach forms and narrative semi-structure interview probes (open ended for self-disclosure choice).
Creswell & Creswell (2017) believe that qualitative research should be composed of an array of sources (p. 179). Therefore, this research used five forms of data: correspondences, audio recordings, transcripts produced from audio recorded interviews, field notes from in-person interview observations, and participant created *found poetry* from the member checked transcripts. Multiple data sources coupled with the narrative inquiry methods extends the latitude of storytelling beyond transcript words alone (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The representation of these stories through a multitude of data sources extend the opportunity to have a relationship with the data in what Eisner (1997) stated as an opportunity to “engage in transforming the contents of our consciousness [or subconsciousness] into a public form that others can understand” (p. 4), or learn to understand.

In reference to rationale for field notes use, Wiggins (2011) stated in their research on musicianship and pedagogy that “[they were] struck by [the participants’] rich kinesthetic descriptions and, in many cases, with [their] physical gestures and movement that punctuated and accompanied their words” (p. 2). This research sought to ensure that the collection of stories gather the breadth of affect and that it is recorded in ways displayed properly through field notes. Field notes were included in the means of story collection for more in depth interpretation of the centered stories and an opportunity for a more robust repository of data if deemed necessary to include as support or complement to the other forms of data in the findings, discussion, setting and/or context.
This was done to ensure that a holistic story that makes it more possible to identify and understand the multidimensionality of participant stories and poems.

**Participants**

The sampling was purposive and criteria based. All the participants did not identify a uniform or comprehensive list of their identities through narrative inquiry, but instead were left the space to self-identify however they chose through the interviews as well as the recruitment forms. Some conversations with participants continued and were written down in field notes but were not captured through recordings. The recruitment, setting, participant dynamics and interview dynamics were also written down in field notes and is included in the appendix (Appendix F). Within this group of five participants, their race, gender, age ranges, fields of work, location of work, and dis/abilities are listed in Table 1 (Appendix B).

**recruitment process.**

The participants were recruited from nonprofit organizations, colleges, afterschool programs, and P-12 schools and affiliates thereof who may be working independently. Outreach to participants occurred in person and virtually (at conferences, social justice and education meetings, social networks, online forums and groups, symposiums, etc.) to those who focus on education and liberation in their work. In addition, all the participants practiced in different fields. Once responses were received, participants were selected through review of liberatory pedagogy conceptualization as defined through this research.

**Selection.**
From the initial recruitment process which included an advertisement (Appendix E), there were nine respondents who agreed to be interviewed and signed an informed consent form (Appendix F). Four participants were excluded from the research due to lack of alignment to the criteria. This occurred once the narratives were compiled.

The decision to exclude participants from the study included:

a) one participant did not meet the criteria for believing in the plausibility of liberation
b) one participant did not meet the criteria of providing a storied narrative
c) one participant was excluded from the study because they did not meet the criteria of collaboration or decision making that includes the agency of the marginalized
d) one participant was excluded because they failed to member check their data, produce a found poem or sign the informed consent form

In total, with attrition and those who did not ultimately meet requirements of participation in this research, there were five participants from the original nine who agreed and completed the narrative inquiry semi-structured interviews, the found poems, and returned their informed consent forms and approved transcripts.

**Descriptions.**

The participants identified as educational activists of marginalized identities.

Sothyia Vibol was a Cambodian woman in her 20s that teaches as a restorative justice educator in a predominantly Black high school. She is also seeking her Masters of
Art in Teaching with a Social Studies endorsement at a predominantly white university located in the Pacific Northwest.

Joaquin was a queer transmaculine Afro-Latinx (Puerto Rican) in their early 30’s. They were a Prison Abolition educator specifically among LGBTQ+ populations of color, Healing Justice body work educator, and a LGBTQ+ health educator. They were in a PhD program of education at a predominantly white university focusing on curriculum and instruction. Additionally, they were a teaching assistant located in a university in the Midwest United States.

Jorge was a self-identified Latinx male in his 40s. He worked as a charter school math and science educator among displaced youth of color who were predominantly on probation in the Southwest region of the United States.

Ita Viiko was a heterosexual Latina Oaxacan woman in her 60’s who was a Mixteco language preservation educator. She was living part time in the Pacific Northwest and part time in Oaxaca. She solely spoke Mixteco and Spanish.

Egqumeni was an African-American community farm school educator of Geechee descent located in the Pacific Northwest. In their 30s, they worked at a community farm non-profit organization focusing on farm education with schools that were predominantly POC (people of color) and with culturally specific community organization groups.

**Setting and Context**
Creswell & Creswell (2017) believed that qualitative research should hold the researcher as the instrument and be conducted in a natural setting (p. 180). To satiate this need for the researcher to be the main instrument, I, the researcher, was conducting the interviews in person and generating field notes as the interviews transpired. The participants were asked to pick a location for the interview that was comfortable to them to create a natural environment and create a space where the collection of data is gained in a “natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study” (Creswell 1998, p. 44). The only limitation on location was that it must be a space with minimal background noise interference to ensure clearly that the audio recording of their voices through the recorder can be heard clearly enough to allow for transcription. The settings ranged from coffee shops, participant homes, participant classrooms, and conference rooms at participant places of employment. All of the interviews that were conducted were in person and three of the interviews required non-local travel.

**Data Collection**

**Interviews.**

The participants were asked open-ended questions that are geared to gather stories in reference to the research questions and make space for a shared story to begin with minimal interruption by the researcher. If some responses required more clarity or a deeper explanation for situations or different contexts, the use of probing questions was utilized to ensure that the open-ended questions are sufficiently responded to in relation to the research questions. Questions asked pertained to motivations for practicing
liberatory pedagogy, space and curriculum cultivation, resources, tools, relationships, advice that could be given for those who want to practice liberatory pedagogy, and witnessed or expected outcomes of liberatory pedagogy’s use. The full list of interview questions is located in Appendix C.

**Field notes.**

Field notes were taken as interviews were conducted. Field notes included notes on the space as well as the cultural and behavioral affects that the participants display when sharing their stories to further explore the breadth of cultural affect and resonance when discussing liberatory pedagogy and to determine possible surfaced dimensions of praxis embodiment. The interviews, which lasted no more than two hours, were audio recorded and electronically transcribed into a Microsoft Word document from the recordings. After the interviews are completed, the participants were given their transcripts for member checking.

**Found poetry.**

After the transcriptions were approved, the participants were asked to produce found poetry from their transcripts that respond to the poem prompt (Appendix D) by self-selecting and highlighting sections, phrases, words, or sentences of their transcripts that resonate with them when thinking about their pedagogical practice. Participants completed the research process after they return the text selections from their transcriptions and their informed consent forms. The researcher then arranged the selected text to produce a found poem from each participant.
sources of data as it relates to this research, the transcripts were used not only for member checking but they were also used to produce found poetry. Found poetry is described as a “literary equivalent of a collage” (Wiggins, 2011, p. 6). This research produced respective found poetry of the participant based on the transcripts. This approach allows “both researcher and participant [to] provide a more collaborative analysis of interview data, resulting in a multifaceted reflection of teacher practice” (Burdick, 2011, p. 2).

Butler-Kisber (2005) as cited in Sjollema, Hordyk, Walsh, Hanley & Ives (2012) “describes found poetry in a research context as the process of taking words, phrases, or whole passages found in data, usually narrative-style interview data, and reframing them as poetry by changing the spacing, line breaks, and by adding and deleting certain words. Langer and Furman (2004) believed that the found poem may be useful as an alternative means of presenting the participant’s voice as the primary transmitter of data (p. 208).”

The validity and use of poetry is not only a form of data collection but an art literate pathway to analyze, discuss, and transform research and research methods through and across various disciplines (Glesne, 1997; Öhlen, 2003; Patrick, 2016; Prendergast, 2003; Reilly, 2013). The transcribed narrative transformed into poems showed the resonant and difference between storied life, points of emphasis, and the interpretation of lived experience respectively. Connelly & Clandinin (1990), the first researchers to use the term narrative inquiry in educational research, stated that “we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (p. 2).
Though Conle (1996) stated that through narrative inquiry that is context based, the researcher has the ability to uncover what resonates with the participants as well as the researcher in understanding pedagogy and praxis engagement. However, found poetry gives the participants the opportunity to state what resonates with them for themselves, which has the ability to strengthen the interpretation of the participants’ narratives.

**Data Analysis**

Narrative analysis as it relates to storied lives is a means by which “interpretive tools are designed to examine phenomena, issues, and people’s lives holistically” (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. xi). Narrative analysis functions to “create a richer aesthetic through a retelling” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 158) using multiple forms of conventional and non-conventional data. Saldaña (2015) also stated that “narrative analysis is particularly suitable for such inquiries as identity development; psychological, social, and cultural meanings and values; critical/feminist studies; and documentation of the life course – for example, through oral histories” (p. 158).

Saldaña (2015) stated that “Narrative coding is appropriate for exploring intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions to understand the human condition through story, which is justified in and of itself as a legitimate way of knowing” (p. 132). Due to the interaction level with one’s self and those to which one interfaces with whilst practicing liberatory pedagogy, narrative coding was deemed the best applicable coding method. This method provides an opportunity to uncover a way of knowing as it relates to understanding the kinetics liberatory pedagogy. “Andrews et al.
(2008) emphasized that not only are there ‘no overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation, or the best level at which to study stories’, there is not even a consensual definition of ‘narrative’ itself” (Saldaña, 2015).

Therefore, the modes and methods used to collect, code, and analyze the data are contingent on what fits best for the purpose, scope, and the aim of the research being conducted. In this research, the best pathway to explore the scope of this research was to code based on the theoretical framework in relation to the research questions finding themes within and across participants. Saldaña (2015) stated, “Narrative researchers should also be attuned to story structures from the non-European cannons and how that influences and affects a retelling.” (p. 158). Attuning one’s self to structures made it easier to place the participants’ story components of liberatory pedagogy into each code for their retelling more accurately and efficiently.

Following Creswell’s (2003) procedures and stages for coding qualitative data and to familiarize myself with the data, I listened to audio recordings and read through transcripts two times. On the third read-through, I began to label text segments by key ideas, which I coded and produced deductive themes through dual coding. I initially read through the text data, dividing the text into three categories - Theory in the Flesh (RQ1), b) Third Space Theory (RQ2), and c) Radical Geography (RQ3). The development of the codes was done by transposing the theoretical framework into three different overarching themes as they relate to the research questions to adequately respond to the purpose and scope of exploration this research intended to pursue. I then proceeded to re-label
segments of text to reduce the redundancy of codes (See Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 in Appendix B). Table 2 identifies the initial codes for Theory in the Flesh, Table 3 identifies the initial codes for Third Space Theory, and Table 4 identifies the initial codes for Radical Geography. Next, I identified any codes that were related and grouped concepts into broader categories (See Table 5). Table 5 identifies the deductive themes that the initial codes were collapsed into across initial codes (Appendix B). Finally, I grouped the categories into overarching themes that were explored in this study. After the data was analyzed in relation to the defined manual narrative coding process, the respective meaning of the individual participant responses as they related to the codes were analyzed.

The found poems were used as data (generated by participants’ transcript selection) that responded to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3 but were presented in their totality without interruption of the researcher. The found poems served as data and they were used in data analysis. The highlighted text selected by the participants were used as data for findings and were presented without researcher interruption, beyond the organization of highlighted text selected by the participant. The found poems were then used in data analysis and the analysis related to the codes that were present in the poems’ content. The poems as data used in the findings were meant to minimize gaps that may be present due to researcher positionality in and to share power within the research findings with the participants in a modified form of co-construction. The found poems in data analysis was
used to discuss the importance of the participants’ selected texts and to discuss ways in which the poems surfaced what was deemed as critical for the reader to be aware of.

The use of narrative inquiry, narrative coding, and narrative analysis is “confronted by the troubling fact that what a story means to an analyst may be quite different from what a story means to the storyteller” (Bochner & Riggs, 2014, p. 205). Knowing this, therefore the data gained from the participant highlighted sections of the transcripts that the participants returned were organized to create a found poem by the researcher but generated by the participant. These poems extend not necessarily a full meaning of narrative, but the components that the participant wants to make sure is presented in response to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. This research moves forward with understanding the subjectivity of the researcher, the reader, as well as the participant positioning and utilizes that understanding as a benefit, rather than a limitation that contributes further to the multidimensional ways in which liberatory pedagogy moves, is understood, and is modeled through kinetics via captured snippets of storied lives. This occurs by “encountering stories experientially—thus privileging the standpoint of the storyteller… how a story makes sense is…an ethical and relational [question]” (Bochner & Riggs, 2014, p. 205).

Role of the Researcher

In this research, there is peripheral pre-existing or tangential relationship between myself and with two participants interviewed due to the field of work that I am in, in dismantling oppression spaces nationally. I knew one participant and was able to recruit
another participant through a colleague. The other three participants I did not know at all. It must also be reflexively stated that I am a member of the group to which I was interviewing and identify as an educational activist of color who believes that these narratives of experience were useful contribution to the field of education. However, I do not, nor did I have power over anyone that was interviewed. I am confident that there is no conflict of interest in this research endeavor because of the recruitment, member checking and informed consent process. I act solely as a researcher intent on exploring, collecting, and sharing stories that contribute to existing as well as future literature. To account for possible hidden biases, I have chosen to bracket any identified areas of possible bias and notate the processing of those brackets that could influence analysis. Therefore, I was using a journal to take analytical notes to minimize researcher bias (Gearing, 2004; Tuffarord & Newnan, 2012). In addition to bracketing, member checking was also utilized to ensure the validity and accuracy of the results by returning the transcripts back to the participants to confirm accuracy and give permission to use the data in this research.

Limitations and Standards

A limitation of this research is that I was not able to be in educational spaces to observe or participate in the participants liberatory pedagogy use. The research relied on the solely on the participants’ stories and did not account for other perspectives to produce a comprehensive view. Therefore, there is missing information regarding observation of liberatory pedagogy in action in moments or over time. This research also
reaches its limits in its inability to interview those who have been in educational spaces led by the participants. In addition, I am not able to be in educational spaces to observe or be a part of the audience to witness the participants liberatory pedagogy use to respond to the research questions. Due to the scope of this research, the paper only focuses on the participant perspective, the narrative of audience members and community members is absent. Lastly, the ability to witness the actual construction of materialisms, metacognitive or material over time is also a limitation.

One way that this research maintained credibility was to ensure that the participants adequately met the requirements of the purposive sampling method. In addition to this, this research exploration consistently asked the same initial prompted open-ended research questions of each participant (Appendix B). The participants were vetted to confirm their self-identified roles with whatever organization or community with which they were affiliated. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure alignment and accuracy to confirm reliability. After the interviews are conducted, the participants were given the transcripts from their interviews to confirm the accuracy of the captured interview to ensure dependability. Lastly, confirmability was proved through the participants using their transcripts for member checking to select text that was used to create their found poems in an attempt to confirm the consistency of their responses to the research questions in different formats.

To meet the ethical requirements of working with individuals as participants, the process of ensuring those ethics were pursued. Through the IRB’s approval, a standard of
institutional ethical integrity was met. Data was recorded and transcribed. The recording and transcriptions was kept on encrypted files on the researcher’s computer.

Sensitivity to data collected had security measures in place to ensure that tampering did not occur. Data was kept as confidential and encrypted on the researcher’s computer. Pseudonyms were used. The data was encrypted. An informed consent (Appendix F) form was given to the participants to allow for future use of the data when the researcher needs to reference the initial files. These consent forms were secured and locked in a file cabinet. If at any time after the completion of the dissertation, the participants want the raw data, the researcher complied with their request and cc the committee chair for accountability purposes.

Summary

The participants were asked to respond to open-ended questions during semi structured interviews that allow for their responses to answer the research questions. Field notes were taken during the interview process. In addition, the responses of the participants were audio recorded, transcribed, and member checked for accuracy and the participants produced found poetry from their own transcriptions. The data was coded and analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework and the review of literature. In the next chapter, the findings will be presented.
Chapter IV: Findings

This chapter presents findings from research that explored how educational activists of marginalized identities embody liberatory pedagogy. It describes why they practice liberatory pedagogy, how liberatory pedagogy functions, and what it materializes when adopted to address the three research questions:

RQ1: Why do educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines use liberatory pedagogy?

RQ2: In what ways do educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines navigate the use of liberatory pedagogy?

RQ3: What do educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines believe can and does materializes from the use of liberatory pedagogy?

As stated in Chapter Three, the findings will be presented as cases, beginning with a brief biography of participants. The Art of Liberatory Pedagogy (found poems), the “Why” of Liberatory Pedagogy, the “How” of Liberatory Pedagogy, the “What” of Liberatory Pedagogy will be the following sections below each participant. Found poems were uninterrupted and presented in their entirety. Each case is then organized by alignment of the literature and themes within each case that emerged from the questions. Themes aligning RQ1 and Theory of Flesh were identity and personal histories, connection to the community, identity informed liberatory pedagogical praxis, and embodiment. Themes aligning RQ2 and Third Space Theory were space cultivation, relationships, tools, and resources. Themes aligning with RQ3 and radical geographies
include materialized geographic shifts and aspirational geographic shifts. Lastly, the conclusory findings across cases by themes were presented in the overall findings and summary portion of this chapter.

**Sothyia Vibol**

**Biography.** Sothyia Vibol identifies as a first generation Cambodian. Her family are refugees of the Khmer Rouge. Her darker-skinned complexion has been identified, by her, as a part of her identity that has been the victim of colorism concerning the levels of respect she received in comparison to eastern Asian populations within the field of education. She works in a high school during the school year as a teacher mentor and as a pedagogy and curriculum support as it relates to restorative justice. She was employed with a community organization, Liberation Academy. Liberation Academy provides educational supports for underrepresented youth through a contract with the school district. They offer classroom assistance to teachers when it comes to resolving classroom conflict from a restorative justice framework through guidance that focuses on classroom management, curriculum development, and pedagogy. The organization also manages the Freedom Schools, the summer literacy program taught in that high school. Sothyia Vibol worked during the summer in the Freedom School program. She was also currently enrolled at a predominantly white university pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching seeking a social studies endorsement. At the time of the interview, she was student-teaching in the high school where she does restorative justice work. The school was a predominantly Black high school with a 70% white teaching force and only three Black
teachers. She described herself as an educator and a poet. For clarity, when the restorative justice role for Sothyia Vibol was mentioned, she was working as a staff member of Liberation Academy as an implementation of services defined with Liberation Academy and the school district. When Freedom Schools was mentioned, she was working in the summer literacy program that Liberation Academy runs. Lastly, when the high school was mentioned, the findings will specify that she was serving in a student-teacher role.

The art of liberatory pedagogy.

These institutions.

**(violate).**

*Find a balance of what*
*by birth*  
*(I want to do).*

*Versus what I’m pulled to do at this moment*

**SO**

*share*
*how important it*
*is*

to be
*(love in actions)*

to fight, to walk out
*this*
*is*
*(how we do things. . .)*

*it’s valuing ourselves*
*(all the time)*

*it’s making sure we assert that value*
*(protest)*

*in this toxic world*

*. . .that doesn’t value. . .us*

*(because in other classes. . .)*

*it’s not the same.*
I am an educator

(I’m not here for respectability politics).

. . .the bullshit
I just realize that
that space.

turn it into

A
Transformative space instead of . . .

Watching

other people

(not do it well).

how deeply I’ve been pulled into this well
. . .it’s so important

for me to come out of this

. . .even the pain, right?

the challenges that we experience. . . are the sources for inspiration

doesn’t allow creative energy to grow

(. . .It doesn’t allow for them to be free…).

build solidarity. . .be myself. . .be free. . .
and then at the same time...
fit in within this narrative?
diminishing. . .

who I am and. . .

my light. . .and

my spirit. . .

(draw boundaries).

say

(“no!”).

. . .because what really matters. . .
how I show up in the classroom

my responsibility is

the community ...
in order for you to trust me, I have to show you who I am and hope that we can build a relationship

learn from each other

. . .and if something goes wrong ...you call me out on it . . .
I will do better. And I was better.

. . .a walking contradiction
with higher ed. . .

 Teachers don’t need to listen to us or respect us us. . .don’t
have advanced degrees
....trying to . . .convince the people . . .who you are
diametrically opposed to in real life . . .you just wouldn’t want to associate with them
(Ever.).

how incredibly important and (painful). this is...
with the teachers . . .with your colleagues. . .and it’s the same thing we ask of our students

it almost feels impossible to chip away
at
(anything).

I could do amazing things within the school community
and yet. . .be receiving backlash from the

institution for the things that the community is asking us for

. . .I couldn’t handle
. . .being in the space that continued to devalue who I am. . .

while we’re doing the right things for
the (community).

working here every day is . . .a

(grounding). . .

reminder of why it is important to endure.

see how. . .here. . .
none of the teachers....
had to go to any sort of cultural competency. . .

(baseline training).

No trauma informed practices. . .
see how that manifests in their classroom.

Every

single . . .when students are kicked out . . .and . . .
they come into
(my). classroom
because . . .that’s one of the safest places for them to
(be).
...you see
it’s...the role of the...educator to walk with them...
there’s a lot of teachers
right now
that don’t see the value...in...
(introspection and
reflection of self).
that
(process).
...they don’t...
(they can’t even...
Teachers make their own decisions...They have agency...and they’re choosing not to take the advice that we’re providing....

seek to understand other perspectives.
a healing space.
   beyond academics...beyond teaching
   (content...).
(students).
   To come into class...
   be in touch with who they are...
   (their heart).
   space.

(Advocating). working with our students. towards finding...other means of creating change
Which do not depend on the school
create circumstances
Teaching students to advocate
(for themselves...).

We have come out of it an entirely new.
...and how did the lesson go...that’s not deep
right?
It’s...how did I deliver this...how did I come off to students...
where are my growth areas?
...what are my values?
what are my students’ values...?
how does that maybe conflict?
understand
be a more loving and responsible and restorative educator.

love lacking education.

does translates into inability to affirm that in other colleagues and even if if for me like I . . . I'm still going to put in the effort...

tell you what it is that needs to be done because

ultimately....

I may not like, love you

. . . I care enough about you to be . . . saying something because ultimately my care and my love is rooted in the students...

if you are on the periphery of that then I will have to...

engage you

. . . if you call yourself an educator ( . . . if . . . )

if you put your students at the center.

. . . think about how teachers got a job at this school

Without having to . . . understand who they are

the culture they bring . . . into this space.

Because they don’t see themselves as having any culture.

the way that they inhabit space itself is dictating how . . .

students perceive themselves in that space.

I feel discouraged because I wonder if

us being there . . . is in the capacity . . . is really changing ( anything ) in that school

building . . . and . . .

we’re also not being backed up

Cambodia . . . refugees, they survived Khmer Rouge . . . genocide.

. . . carried a lot of that trauma carried on to me . . . and other family members . . .

my process now . . . is undoing all of that...

. . . my childhood experience in education so connection . . . community . . . neighborhood . . . rooted . . . this space.

. . . never leaving.

. . . familiar places and spaces
experiences

trust.

I am Asian, they think of . . . their experiences with many Asian folks

anti-Blackness

show and prove myself to my students

this is anti-Blackness- this is what it looks like in some communities. . .and . . I’m trying
to hold myself accountable in my community accountable for how that is
manifested. . .and that’s

my shit to own.

here I am. . you can. . trust me. . you can not. . but I’m going to continually show you
who I am each day and hope that you can see my heart

. . .my identity in this space is one which

(a guest).

And I fully acknowledge that

We are gonna talk about revolution...we are gonna be talking about
dismantling what these systems are. . .within ourselves and
(outside of us). . .and. . .not everybody. . .and especially a district. . .is going to be open
to that...and I’m excited.

predominantly white teaching force...

The only way I can truly make use of my time here. . is to be me. .

Unapologetically.

I’ve worked so hard to get here. . . I can’t let...

. . .all of these constraints. . .get in the way of who I’m supposed to be in that classroom

. . .it gets tense. . . they know where I stand...

. . .they know what I will say. . .

A self-fulfilling prophecy.

To actually operate out of integrity

right?

. . .for the collective good. . .

mediate through...

cannot constantly unsafe speak out when I want to. . .feeling the freedom to do so

once I have colleagues who support

the . . .the work that we’re doing. . .it can be seen by our students...

if anything were to happen . . .

I know that they would all. . walk out of class. . .and organize each other. . .because they

. . .they are so interconnected and...so willing to. . .stand up...

for what they believe in

it’s
personal to them . . .

Locally, nationally, globally . . . what that means for humans to connect with a part of themselves that this world and the systems were designed to disconnect us from our heart our spirit

All of this...
Education is a means to getting in touch with who we truly are

So my vision is to create

The Ella Baker Academy for Gifted Revolutionaries.
I remember my team and I talking that summer and I said “this is gonna be a real school one day . . .”
... “this is gonna be our school” . . . Ella Baker invested her time and energy in younger folk and (trusted), that they had the answers
That they had the innovation . . . build upon that intergenerational leadership so they have the skills . . . to move efforts forward...
. . . even . . . when we’re not around (. . . seed planter . . .).

best selves

...The culture is shaped by organizing that takes place in this city . . . and the constant need to assert ourselves in such extremely white spaces . . . needing to make sure that we are visible in spaces . . . shapes how we teach our students to assert themselves too. . .

It’s up to the discretion of the educator . . .
. . . bring in the conversation of revolutionaries an expanded knowledge.


Alton Sterling . Philando Castile, Korryn Gaines all within two weeks... murdered.

get in touch with the things that . . .
They’re not taught in school
the curriculum... Will naturally build your relationship with the students...
. . .voice...usually stifled...use it as a big platform.
built a deeper sense of community
And so they come into the school building with this new sense of confidence

. . .But if you are unwilling to engage in that process
you're not going to find yourself in a liberatory space...
. . .you have to be willing to transform and be transformed.
if you're not willing .... it's not gonna work.

This process isn't meant for everyone
that's what liberatory education means

. . .it's very fluid...and...the way that you enter it
. . .is not...not gonna be the way that you leave...

..."I wanna be a teacher because of you"
“I believe in your vision...”
“ I want to work at your school... it’s gonna be our school”

I don’t this for the recognition. . .
. . .in your lifetime. . .

got in touch with. . .who you are...
deep down inside
find. . .who you are inside that you’ve repressed. . .
you’re inner child who needs caring for. . .and how. . .flourish.

their inner child. . .that just needs to be. . .cuddled...
. . .the moments when they are most upset. . .I can see..
their baby self...
it’s just. . .

so visible. . .and that’s the time at which
we have to be the most responsive and loving. . .and nurturing. . .to who they are. . .and so
I told my student. . .who wants to be a teacher

know who you are. . .
tap into that wealth. . .of knowledge
the self-knowledge...
. . .that is going to drive you to understand. . .how you can transform space. . .
The “why” of liberatory pedagogy—theory in the flesh.

**Identity and personal histories.** In the high school in her student teaching and restorative justice staff role within Liberation Academy during the school year, Sothyia Vibol stated that her identity affects the ways in which she interacts with the students. Due to the trauma of anti-Blackness that pervades society among white people and people of color, her decision to hold herself accountable to the Black communities pushed her to view herself as a person whose “identity in this space is one of which I am a guest.” Sothyia Vibol discussed the ways in which she uses her identity to hold herself accountable to not perpetuating anti-blackness. She spoke about how she recognizes the harm that has been caused by Asian communities when interfacing with Blackness and explained her rationale for her positionality in the school and with the students on an interactional and metacognitive level. In this she stated:

...and they [Black students] perceive me…it sucks because when they see, when some students see that I am Asian, they think of their experiences with many Asian folks who have anti-Blackness and so part of my process at [the school I work] is to show and prove myself to my students how, like this is anti-Blackness, this is what it looks like in some communities and I’m trying to hold myself accountable in my community,
accountable for how that is manifested and that’s my shit to own and here I am.

The interplay between Sothyia Vibol’s identity and Blackness demonstrated how she was incited to work with her Asian community to process their harm so that harm is not projected or transferred onto Black people because of the trauma experienced by Asian communities or societal incentivization to perpetuate anti-Blackness. She explained how her and her family’s trauma surfaces and transfers onto Black communities:

My family is from Cambodia. . .my parents were refugees, they survived the Khmer Rouge genocide. . .and they carried a lot of that trauma into, you know, how they lived here in the U. S. and how that has carried on to me and other family members. . . I’m trying to do right by my people by working in solidarity for Black students and families who don’t have that relationship to other Asian folks.

Essentially, her words demonstrate that she wanted to acknowledge harm done within the interaction of Asian and Black identities in the neighborhood and in the school—specifically, in hopes of building solidarity, trust, and accountability for one another. These actions demonstrate how she was working with her community to reduce harm and transference of trauma. In that, her actions indicated that she worked with her racial and ethnic community and with her students for the efficacy and healing of the
community as a whole in that area of the city and not specifically for the students when they are in the space of the school.

The state of demographics in the high school and in her graduate program mirror the U.S. Department of Education report (2016, 2017) that identified that the teaching force is more than 3/4 white. The lack of representation among educators of color influenced her decision to become an educator in a way that combined liberatory pedagogy with the ability to practice the pedagogy with formal power and the insurgent absence of permission.

Sothyia Vibol stated that she does not hold as much power as she would like to in the classroom. She also stated that her investment in pedagogically redistributing power within it remained as she finished graduate school and became a teacher who holds learning space power in a formal sense that adds to her teaching access in addition to nonformal spaces. In the high school in her restorative justice staff role within Liberation Academy during the school year, Sothyia Vibol said that she remained on the margins in the classroom and did not hold the power necessary to disrupt and reroute content and pedagogy to co-construct space with students. Though she worked as classroom support within the high school during the school year and as a student-teacher in the same school, her voiced aspiration to shift her roles in the classroom from classroom support to an endorsed teacher was influenced by her belief that power must be shared among all within the learning space. She shared that this pursuit of additional credentials was decided upon when she witnessed the lack of teacher willingness in the school to
authentically engage with how to navigate restorative justice practices. Until then, she stated,

I’m coaching teachers or I’m coaching college students…who do a horrible job, and I just realize that I needed to be that person who had that space and could turn it into a transformative space instead of watching other people not do it well.

When speaking of the fatigue in coaching, her words indicated that her investment being placed in educators and administrators that are uninterested in increasing the efficacy of the students was becoming a misappropriation of her time that could be spent in the classroom directly with students. In that pursuit, Sothyia Vibol said that she could instead spend time building her skills and gaining her credentials to be the person in the classroom supporting students instead of using resources to convince or teach current white educators how to reduce harm or be transformative while the students suffered as the teachers and administrators worked through topics that they have never had to examine, in regard to their racism and biases, because western education rarely, if ever, required this of them. Sothyia Vibol’s narrative indicated that she knew how to do the work. Instead of coaching people who have never thought about their effect on students, she wanted to spend her time pursuing a pathway of becoming the central teacher in her own classroom.

Sothyia Vibol stated that she took issue with the demographics of the educators in the teaching force broadly and the teaching force in the high school where she worked in both of her roles as a restorative justice staff member and a student teacher specifically.
She described the fact that the teaching force and the lack of representational teachers of color fueled a propensity and susceptibility for harm. More specifically, Sothyia Vibol discussed how the school and school district existed in complete cognitive detachment or dismissal of the implications of their pedagogy within the community of the school and how identity influenced the trajectory of students in a restorative justice context. The school has a 97% student of color population and a teaching force that is 70% white, with three Black teachers, three Eastern Asian educators, and zero Latinx teachers—which is especially important because it highlights that “even the Spanish teachers are white.” Her experiences and the experiences of her students made her vigilant and incited her constant preparation to not only develop her liberatory pedagogy to undo curricular harm, but to also prepare for how to intercept harm. One of the ways she was trying to intercept harm was to become an endorsed teacher. In this she stated, “I understood that my process in school is now to just get in. . .to do the work. . .and get out. . .because what really matters. . .is how I show up in the classroom. . .”

Sothyia Vibol stated that her goal was to intercept harm that teachers may have a proclivity to lean towards out of socialized automation or explicit lack of concern regarding their affect. Sothyia Vibol’s identification of the lack of metacognitive engagement and proclivity to cause harm was present because of the teachers’ and administrators’ concept of authority, value, and the disconnect between understanding their students—specifically the conditions of their lives—and the effects of holding marginalized identities.
Without having to understand who [the students] are and the culture they also bring into this space. Because they don’t see themselves as having any culture when actually, you know, the way that they inhabit space itself is dictating how students perceive themselves in that space and, at least for [us], I think that when our staff was coaching different teachers, those are the hard conversation that we have with them, especially coaching teachers on why they single out certain students and why they give preferential treatment to other students and there are moments when they will look back and say ‘wow, I didn’t even think about that’ and in your mind [you’re like]…‘why’?

Sothyia Vibol said that her decision to be a part of a racially representative teaching force that practiced liberatory pedagogy was also influenced by her identification of the lack of responsibility that teachers and administrators felt when it came to learning how to work with a population they are not a part of. She stated that there was a lack of investment with administration and teachers to determine how they ensured that they were consistently focused on the success of students rather than the punitive harm placed on students. Sothyia Vibol says she pushed for those school culture shifts because the students’ fates were constantly affected by the systemic interplay between educational institutions and systems that diminished the capacity for liberation of the body. In this, she stated that the pervasiveness of whiteness allowed educators to teach and administrators to determine the consequences of students when what was
considered to be a behavioral issue arose. She stated that she often wondered why it was that teachers would focus on what they perceived to be disruptive with no racial analysis as well as why the teachers and administration never perceived themselves as perpetrators of harm in ways that would require them to hold themselves accountable.

Sothyia Vibol’s identification of the lack of effectiveness and resistance around building an intersectional and racial analysis demonstrates how her decision to become a teacher was influenced. She stated that she grew exhausted from witnessing people have epiphanies of fundamental forms of oppression that had to be called to their attention, rather than recognized responsively or proactively understood in their pedagogy in a way that would prompt the teachers would then shift their ontologies and epistemologies. Her words indicated that the fatigue of working with the unwilling or privileged educators who did not understand fundamental aspects of oppression would take more time than the Black students had to be effective. Sothyia Vibol mentioned that she still worked with teachers and administrators to protect students but it was never for them, it was always for the students. Even so, she had to absorb the trauma she was trying to protect her students from. In this she stated,

And even if—if for me, like I said, to oppose absolutely everything you say, I’m still going to put in the effort to talk to you and tell you what it is that needs to be done because ultimately, I may not like…love you. . .I [do] care enough about you to be saying something because ultimately my care and my love is rooted in the students which means if you are on the
periphery of that, then I will have to engage you because if you call
yourself an educator then you put your students are the center. And if
they’re at the center, then whoever else is somehow connected to them,
[these] are people you also have to deal with and connect with [to] make
sure you’re advocating [on] the students behalf and so, in that way, I feel
accountable to my students to build those relationships with other teachers
because they are coming to me for support and advocating as well and so I
feel that responsibility. To be the best educator means that I have to have
those hard conversations because they [the teachers, administrators] just
can’t…they don’t get it.

Sothyia Vibol’s career decisions illustrated how liberation cannot wait for people
to understand oppression, how it operates, and how to interrupt it when there are already
others who do because those in learning spaces are suffering with the circuitous efforts of
extending support that is rarely operationalized effectively with people that want to shift
culture in name but refuse to relinquish power in order to do so. Sothyia Vibol also stated
that there were some teachers that understand the importance of her work. One teacher in
particular wanted Sothyia Vibol to take their job. Sothyia Vibol stated that this teacher
wanted to move out of the way to let Sothyia Vibol do her work.

Connection to the community. Sothyia Vibol’s narrative indicated that the
connections with the students, being racialized, marginalized, and witnessing how
precarity lingers is an emotion that both she and the students felt because she is
connected to the community. Though she does not share the same identities as the students, the students’ knowledge that she lived in and grew up in the neighborhood made space for the growth of trust despite the tension understood to exist between Black and Asian communities. In this she stated,

. . .because right now, [the area I grew up in] is one of the cheapest places to live…it’s also one of the poorest places to live…I see how my connection with the community, with the neighborhood, being rooted in this space and never…never leaving. . .having the. . .connections with students about, like, familiar places and spaces and experiences of going to the same schools all automatically, like opens up another level of trust that I have with my students because they see me as somebody whose from this space. . .while I am Asian, right?

Sothyia Vibol’s words suggest that the extractive nature of regional planning as it relates to gentrification neglects lower-income areas until they are seen as lucrative. Then, those with power displace residents of those areas through a system of neoliberal capitalism. This demonstrated that harm done from gentrification affects not only her students, but as someone who had lived in that neighborhood for her entire life, they felt that pain together, mourned together, and witnessed the value of what their lives are as low income people of color:

Yeah . . . so up the hill from the school. . .about three minutes away is . . . a little town I guess . . . neighborhood . . . That’s where I grew
up…[this town] is [an] unincorporated [metro area] and so it’s not. . . owned. . . not under the jurisdiction of either…[city that it exists between]. It sits in between the two and so. . . it’s just a part of [the] county. . . Which means that there are no resources that go to that space. And it’s been like that for decades. And. . . both cities have fought for annexation for it. . . but at the end of the day, there’s just no resources to even be able to shape what that looks like and the day that it does happen, which I know it will in the next ten years, because they did the same thing in [this area] that it will get annexed, and it will get gentrified.

Sothyia Vibol’s narrative indicates that though she and the students are from the same neighborhood and she is connected to the community, the marginalization she and her family feel as Asian people is not at all the same in degree or experience when compared to the way that the Black community experiences marginalization and neglect. She described how the history of neglect in the neighborhood for her and her family is younger and different from that of the Black people that have lived in that neighborhood because of the pervasiveness of anti-blackness in the predominantly white city and the Asian community specifically in that neighborhood.

Sothyia Vibol stated that gentrification of the city has affected the community of the high school. Thusly, gentrification proliferated the message of disposability of marginalized population. Sothyia Vibol’s recognition that this societal harm affected the students and their sense of safety as well as their concepts of loss about the realities of
witnessing a community they both have grown up in and live in being destroyed. This indicates how she and her students witnessed the effects of gentrification, digested loss and neglect, and how it was felt in the community with those emotions spilling over into the classroom. This also demonstrated that, from shared experiences, their sense of community created a sense of vulnerability and trust between her and the students. Her narrative also indicates how trust was built between her and her students through commonalities of racially marginalized identities, the disposability that gentrification directs at their bodies, and shared proximity to feeling the effect of gentrification and its implications for their community.

**Identity-informed liberatory pedagogical praxis.** Sothyia Vibol’s identity informed her pedagogical praxis because of her learned process of healing. She stated that the ways in which she heals is by being “deeply critical” of herself and being introspective:

> . . .you gotta get in touch with who you are, like very, very deep down inside. Your inner child. . .and like really, really find who you are inside that you’ve repressed who needs caring for and how that might look because that. . . is the root of motivation to be able to provide that space where your inner child can flourish

The processes of letting her identity inform her praxis demonstrates how ways of being influenced the approach to her praxis in that it allowed her to notice behavior as a symptom of a greater issue. She worked with students to explore the root of the pain in
similar ways as she had, albeit directed by students in learning space and facilitated by her. Though she stated that she knew how to find ways to connect with students because of her own experiences and relationships with them, she remained frustrated that other teachers and administrators in the high school refused to see the students as youth, or the very least, human:

…‘I don’t get why teachers are afraid of their students. I don’t get why they get upset.’ [Students] throw a tantrum. That’s what it is. Why are you afraid? Why are you picking our students out when actually that’s their inner child that just needs to be cuddled?

Sothyia Vibol’s ability to identify trauma in marginalized communities illustrates how she connected with students rather than punishing their behavior. Sothyia Vibol stated that it is necessary to connect with students to determine what students’ underlying issues are so that the classroom can be oriented to support the pain, trauma, frustration, fear, or joy that many marginalized populations are not allowed to fully experience in a world that devalues them. She said that students are often seen as “problems” that are met with fear because of stereotypes that rob youth of any space to be human or have a childhood. Sothyia Vibol’s pedagogy was a demonstration of how she made space for students to be their full selves and to be supported through things they need to process through. In contrast, Sothyia Vibol identified how other teachers were so socialized to lean into the stereotypes of Blackness that they took their unwarranted fear and not
only robbed youth of support and a childhood, but these teachers also used their power to contain their unfounded fears through punishment that hindered the success of the students.

**Embodiment.** Sothyia Vibol discussed how her engagement with the summer literacy program transformed her because of her willingness and openness to be transformed. The vulnerability to be transformed demonstrated her willingness to negotiate power in order to step into a power of liberation that had the ability to facilitate and support the liberation of others. This willingness to transform also helped Sothyia Vibol understand more deeply what the expansive value of education was as it pertained to the goal of liberation:

...my involvement in freedom schools really transformed my entire being. . .my very first time, and I just understood what the value of education is. . .like locally, nationally, globally . . .what that means for humans to connect with a part of themselves that this world and the systems designed to disconnect us from our heart, our spirit. I feel like all of this is very spiritual. Education is a means to getting in touch with who we truly are. . .

Sothyia Vibol stated that if one is not willing to break open in the process of “becoming,” then the apprehension will impede or make impossible one’s transformation through those learning spaces. Her decision to “break open” and transform was based on
her refusal to teach or attempt to hold space for a process she has not experienced and, (the undoing of her trauma in life and within school specifically:

. . so my vision is to create that space for our students to be those best selves in a space. . . our classroom theme that we created for that year was the Ella Baker Academy for Gifted Revolutionaries. . . and on one of our walls was the wall of revolutionaries and every day we would talk about a different revolutionary thinker, organizer, educator and I just remember how open all of my students, and even [students] in the other classes. . . how open they were to absorbing that knowledge that they don’t learn in class.

These forms of embodiment allowed Sothyia Vibol to make space for furthering her healing process in a holistic sense that combined the personal and the political within the learning space and within society, her connections to community, and the ability to practice and facilitate what it means to embody the joy and the pain of working through resources that one never knew existed.

**The “how” of liberatory pedagogy—third space theory.**

**Space cultivation.** Sothyia Vibol’s willingness to engage in liberatory pedagogy demonstrated how her work was not just for community, but was also for herself as a part of community to build a “process. . . undoing all of that and particularly undoing my childhood experience in education. . . .” This engagement required continued work and
practice for her to produce spaces that allow for marginalized people to work through their trauma and show up as their full selves. She described:

I think it’s just that...in the field...of education...if we’re really talking about what liberatory education looks like for...not just our students, but for our families, right? Because when our students go home to their families, they’re showing...they’re expressing who they are at school...and they’re connecting with people...with people outside of the school walls...and so to be able...to transform these spaces...requires that we show up as our best selves...everyday...that we show our students...what it means to...just love...and hope that, that in some way can resonate...right? Yeah, liberatory education is love in actions. Loving radically in the classroom so that [students] can see how valued they are and how brilliant and bold they can be despite the constraints.

Despite the constraints of the institutional learning spaces, Sothyia Vibol stated that her goal within those spaces was to cultivate an environment where trust, safety, and love are at the foundation of the class. Knowing that students did not receive an abundance of care and love in relationship to educational institutions, her pedagogy exemplified how she sought to work towards the creation of a space that felt supportive and nurturing to the students. She acknowledged the small window of time that the students get to be immersed in a space of safety and the emotional rollercoaster of what it meant to be harmed before entering into a supportive space and to put armor back on
when they have to leave the space. In this, she aspired to make the experiences more positively consistent rather than consistently disheartening for her and her students, stating,

I want students to come into the class and be in touch with who they are, their heart space…be allowed to be in touch with that because they’re not allowed to be in touch with that in most schools, and I feel discouraged because I wonder if ..us being there….in the capacity that we are is really changing anything in that school building and we’re also not being backed up, or that teachers or admins are not supporting us in the way that we would really need to blaze through and shape the school community in the way we know it can be because it’s one of the greatest places to be. I love stepping into that school every day because I get to spend time with 170 brilliant- *laugh* beautiful, like loving students and yet, I know that their experience in the classroom. . .it feels like an isolated experience, right. . .because in other classes it’s not the same.

Though Sothyia Vibol stated that she feels that the work she did was fulfilling. Yet, her narrative also demonstrates that with limited power and despite working with unwilling teachers and administration, Liberation Academy continued working with other administration and teachers because they were willing to try to engage with the tools that Liberation Academy was bringing forth. However, these two factions of the willing, the unwilling and people who fell in between created an environment of tension between
hopeful students, staff, and teachers willing to utilize the organization’s services and the unwilling. However, Sothyia Vibol described how this one form of protection in the form of a contract was not enough to do the work that she felt was necessary. She stated that the school was unwilling, most of the time, to take the suggestions of Liberation Academy and that that Liberation Academy were often met with unwillingness to try different paths of classroom management because of teacher and administration hubris and pride. Without the school’s humility, without the acknowledgement of Liberation Academy’s expertise, without the full support of the school district, the experiences of the students will always be disjointed. Sothyia Vibol stated that she wondered if being in the school in the capacity that Liberation Academy is in is a good investment of time when they could have been spending that time finding other ways to support students without hindrances. She also stated that she struggles with that because the contract was the only way that Liberation Academy can connect with and support the students during the school day within the school.

*Relationships, tools and resources.* As Sothyia Vibol moved between the spaces of the high school, the summer literacy program, and graduate school, she demonstrated how her relationships shifted in ways that are contingent on mutual investment for liberation or the presence of some protection via interception of community members while planning. In reference to graduate school relationship building, her narrative shows how she made the conscious decision to only attend to academics. Her interaction with students and professors at the school as a person seeking liberation through education in
predominantly white spaces has been one of toxicity that she can only bear in its explicitly necessary forms for her matriculation.

. . .I am one of the visibly darkest people in the program, which adds another hypervisibility to it. . .and the only southeast Asian person in the program and so. . .while we have lots of API folks, who are east Asian folks, our experience is way different. . .I. . .I can’t open up in a way that I would want to build solidarity because everybody is just at different levels. . .and so I am just isolated. . .and constantly trying to be, be myself. . .be free. . .and then at the same time fit in within this narrative. . .it got really toxic. . .and I found myself diminishing. . .like who I am and like. . .my light. . .and my spirit. . .to try and make it. . .and eventually I….I….I literally broke. . .I have lupus and so you have to regulate your body in a way that other people wouldn’t necessarily have to think about, right? You can’t overwork, it’s just like. . .the slightest imbalance really tips everything else and. . .I was going through major, major depression and anxiety this past summer, which I’ve experienced a lot for the past 15 years, but this . . .like opened up so many wounds.

Sothyia Vibol stated that seeing graduate school as a vehicle to gain more power in formal educational spaces that she hoped to redistribute among her students to lay the foundation of what it meant and what it looked like to co-construct space and co-constitute its dynamics. Sothyia Vibol’s interview surfaced how her decision to stay in
school was because of the boundaries she had drawn around forms of disengagement, especially when her health and mental well-being were clearly in peril. In reference to her relationship to those in her graduate program, the institution she attended as a whole, and the boundaries that surround that relationship, she stated:

And I felt myself trying to fit within a box that . . . it wasn’t made for me. . .and so . . . there was a week during summer program where I asked all of my instructors . . . I said . . . I cannot like . . . I cannot physically be here right now . . . I will do all the work from home- but I cannot be around this toxicity like. . . I literally feel it in my body. . . and I got that week off and had the chance to reflect on the things that I was doing wrong. . . ways in which I was acting out of my own. . . character. And I understood that I needed draw boundaries . . . I just felt all of this kind of . . . these old wounds that were festering kind of . . just. . . disintegrating. . . and . . and I can’t be the one to call white people out on their bullshit all the time. . . even if I know that I’m the only one that’s gonna do it. . . like . . . I’ve built enough . . . relationships with other people. . . and I don’t need to be like . . . it’s your job now. . . like . . . I can’t do that. . . you all have to own up to your bullshit.

Sothyia Vibol demonstrated how trust can be built in a way that assisted in the strengthening a symbiotic relationship between the students and staff of Liberation Academy of respect and care. This demonstrated how building and sustaining trust as
well as respect, making space for self-value, validating the pain of others, unpacking root causes to pain, political education, supported advocacy and organizing for community identified needs, assisting students in making connections to see the outcomes of liberation through resources that show the manifestation of possibilities otherwise unfathomed, and co-constructed space contributed to the effectiveness of Sothyia Vibol and Liberation Academy. Sothyia Vibol’s interview showed how relationship between the two are reciprocal rather than unrequited and abusive which contrasted with the relationships the students had with other educators and administrators is one absent of love or trust. The witnessed devaluation of students and the love absent within the lives and classrooms of her students perpetrated by other teachers prompts Sothyia Vibol to bring hope and love into learning spaces. This love and hope are components of pedagogy that Sothyia Vibol hopes can be grown and sustained to combat many of the experiences students have with other teachers. In reference to what she sees in learning spaces among others in the education field she stated,

I will say, there’s a lot of love lacking in education and I think that because there isn’t a lot of love that exists within people to share with their students, to affirm their students, that also translates into their inability to affirm that in other colleagues.

The lack of love that Sothyia Vibol articulated was a demonstration of how important understanding the trauma in one’s own body is pivotal so that one’s pain is not transferred to others within a community, especially upon
students who are experiencing their own trauma as well. Instead of being in a position to assist or support the students, those who let the implications of the absence of love in their own lives devalue students in ways that make it difficult for love, joy, or pain to breathe or heal for the students or the educators. Sothyia Vibol’s narrative indicates that if one is missing love in their existence, if they don’t assess that void, or heal it, then their pain builds a non-consensual relationship with those they are in closest proximity to in spaces where they have more power than those their bodies intend to subjugate.

The ways in which Sothyia Vibol stated that she witnessed the collision of what she called “camps” of opposing ideologies in the school. Within the school and the school district there are two of these camps: one whose members believed in Liberation Academy’s mission to transform learning spaces and utilize their services and the other whose members are reluctant or refuse to use the organization’s services from the vantage point of hubris, pride, or a belief that the organization’s mission is implausible or unnecessary. The creation of alliances was a component of how she navigated the implementation of liberatory pedagogy in the high school. Sothyia Vibol shared how alliances were built between and among different “camps” of restorative justice acceptance or reluctance as well as how difficult maneuvering among these camps proved to be:

…it requires trying to convince the people who you are diametrically opposed to in real life, like you. . .you just wouldn’t associate with them—
ever. And yet now, you’re trying to convince them why you should believe me and why you should be allied with me in this. . .and it just gets so confusing because you wonder how much, how much change you’re affecting by building relationships with the people who you know are way, way far behind in innovation. And so. . .at least in our experience in that school, [Liberation Academy has] fought to be in there every single year. Like, there’s not been a year where [Liberation Academy’s] contract [with the school district] hasn’t been disputed [by the school and by some staff members of the district].

Despite the “camps” that existed in the high school during the school year, her work in Freedom Schools, the summer literacy program, demonstrated how different spaces gave her more latitude to make learning spaces ones of care and growth with less constraints than the regular school year. Sothyia Vibol described how the curriculum of the summer literacy program was already constructed as a guide, but the implementation and means of engagement was up to the educator. Thus she stated that she found ways to connect representational literature directly to the lives of the students and provided resources for students to learn the multiple methods of resistance of oppression and mobilization towards action. She described why this was important to the imagination and efficacy of the student, saying,
… we share with our students how it is important to be able to fight for the things that we want because it’s valuing ourselves and it’s making sure we assert that value in this world that isn’t. . .that doesn’t value us.

The impacts of working with students to assert their value were illustrated when Sothyia Vibol stated that a student she previously taught in Freedom Schools told her that they wanted to be a teacher just like her. Understanding the different spaces where she teaches, she extended some advice to the student in relation to how to navigate challenging and cooperative spaces so that they could cultivate spaces that learning space had the infrastructure to support students to flourish. She also told the student that they should also be prepared for challenge and resistance liberation and well as engaging with those who do not concern themselves with liberation’s fruition, and to put the student at the center of their motivation. Despite this, Sothyia Vibol urges to student to not compromise in learning spaces that are inherently oppressive by design. She stated,

. . .know who you are. . .and how you love. . .because in this field. . .we don’t have love. . .you have to make it…With the ability to tap into that wealth. . .the ability to tap into. . .that wealth of knowledge. . .the self-knowledge that is going to drive you to understand. . .how you can transform space. . .and then on top of that . . .be prepared to engage with people in conversations. . .that. . .are inherently harmful. . .and know that. . .you are rooted. . .in centering the students as the focal point for which
everything else comes out of. . .then you will find the answers. . .that you
need to find and it all.. It all starts with that introspection…

This advice demonstrates not only the relationships Sothyia Vibol has built with
students and her pedagogy’s effect on previous students but also demonstrates the ways
in which she was aware of oppressive systems’ existence while she was teaching in them
at the high school, making space for liberation to breathe at a higher capacity in Freedom
Schools, and as she completed her student teaching to gain power in an oppressive
system to eradicate it. In this, her advice acknowledged “what is” and “what could be”
and she informed the student of the skills they should prepare to build as the construction
of new realities take place.

The ways in which she demonstrated how she implemented the curriculum is
coupled with her pedagogy and her authentic engagement with students in the learning
space. The pre-constructed curriculum of the summer literacy program, Freedom
Schools, provided methods to increase literacy implemented through means of collective
action and planning. Sothyia Vibol’s narrative shows how the positively surreptitious
effectiveness of the curriculum taught the students how to build community,
accountability, and trust through the way in which the curriculum was implemented and
the ways the assignments were constructed within the learning space.

So. . .for the high school level there’s a new chapter book that we read,
every single week. . .and so. . .there. . .they go through a scaffolded
reading experience. . .and each day, we have a passage from the book that
they’re supposed to read and they read in partners. . .and then they. . .they first read in partners and then they come together and chat about what happened in different chapters, because nobody’s reading the same chapter. . .and we just have a rich discussion about it and we talk about the themes in the books. . .we talk about the challenges we see that are connected into uhm present day events and all of the books that are chosen are centered around stories of people of color. . .and so. . .it is. . .culturally infused curriculum. . .it’s not. . .it’s not white. . .at all….like we are not teaching what they would learn in school. . .we bring in the conversation of revolutionaries . . .that was me wanting to make sure in that space. . .that students will walk away with . . .with an expanded knowledge of the amazing people who helped shaped our society unto this day. . .and like one of my colleagues. . .his classroom theme for that time was the new Black Panthers. . .

In contrast to Sothyia Vibol’s experiences and the positive affects she uplifted when Liberation Academy worked in the summer literacy program, her experiences with the high school teachers and administrators during the school year are a stark contrast to how the students and the community view Liberation Academy. Sothyia Vibol stated that she believed the teachers and administrators in the high school view Liberation Academy as a menace in that they believed that Liberation Academy was a negative influence on the students. However, Sothyia Vibol maintained that the Liberation Academy supported
self-directed student actions, but they did not dictate or pre-construct them. In reference to the ways in which the summer program literacy curriculum works and how the administration thought of the implications of the learning space, she stated:

...and so the stuff that he talked about in there was very revolutionary...

.*laughs*. . .and so the new black panthers and Ella Baker [the theme of her room]. . .yeah and we were. . ..*laughs* gonna stage a coup. .

.teaching students to advocate for themselves. . .supporting them in leading marches and leading town halls. . .I think that. . .because of that. .

.we also get. . .a reputation. . .for. . .like of being the agitators.

Being considered agitators by the school demonstrates the lack of investment the school and the school district had in the liberation and autonomy of the students. It also demonstrates the ways in which the school and the school district wanted to sustain an authoritarian relationship with the students that required the students to ask for permission to advocate for the things that directly affected their lives but not the lives of their teachers and administrators. In addition, this illustrates how the students were not thought to have the competency to make their own decisions. It is also a failure of the teachers and administrators to realize the growth of efficacy in the students that was created and supported by the summer literacy program. Lastly, this perception of Liberation Academy as agitators shows that the high school did not believe that students were competent enough to know what they wanted for their own futures
and believed that the organization existed to direct students to revolt rather than supporting a shared goal.

The decision Sothyia Vibol made to adjust her curriculum to meet the needs of the students illustrated why and how she wanted to focus on the value of the students and their pain instead of dismissing it under pressure to produce any forms of predetermined outcomes. Her willingness to engage with the students holistically provided an opportunity for the students to process through emotions that were seen as hostile or incongruent to the expectations of the stereotypes placed on their bodies. This rerouted learning space curriculum and learning space dynamics proved a sense of safety and trust to all those in room could feel in the room with one another.

. . .And you know that was the summer when Alton Sterling was murdered, when Philando Castile, Korryn Gaines, all within two weeks. . .and I remember having. . .really, really. . .hard conversations with students and us. . .mourning together. . .in that space. . .and how freedom schools for us is the space where. . .if today is not the day. . .to. . .go through the activities we need to go through because. . .there’s something more important we need to talk about. . .then we can change that space. . .and. . .and make it a healing space...

The “what” of liberatory pedagogy—radical geography.
Resonant impacts. Sothyia Vibol’s pedagogy narrative shows how she believes her pedagogy influenced students to become teachers using liberatory methods, but the outcome of her pedagogy and liberatory ontologies have insulated students from the full brunt of teacher and administrator harm. She discussed how trust in an educator fed the belief in the manifestation of change. Her narrative also demonstrates how those she has built trust with began to see themselves as the change agents of their own futures and the futures of others.

I wanna follow your footsteps …I wanna do exactly what you’re doing, and you have inspired me to really reconsider what education could look like. Not because for the purpose of working in a school building, but because I believe in your vision and I want to work at your school, it’s gonna be our school.

Sothyia Vibol’s narrative also illustrates that the presence of the organization in the school was also a geographic shift in that the organization had access to mentor the students and coach the teachers and administration, but that the relationship was contractually out of the hands of the school and was in the hands of the school district. She explained that the district could be influenced by the school’s suggestions, but the school could not make the decision to end the organization’s contract due to resentment and authoritarian threat.

Sothyia Vibol’s interview also shows that the summer literacy program produced the space to uncover obfuscated representational histories and literature while investing
in the increase of literacy that was discussed as a means of liberation. The flexible use of this curriculum provided the opportunity to tailor the learning space to the proactive or responsive needs of the learning space community, which shifted the hegemonic geography of the space and reified its foundation and investment in how collective liberation can manifest on multiple levels.

….and so. . .yeah. . .it . . .it is. . .freedom schools is. . .the space where our students can really get in touch with the things that . . .they’re not taught in school, how to advocate for themselves, how to use their. . .voice as a big platform, that is usually stifled, right. . .in school. . .and so they come into the school building with this new sense of confidence. . .uh. . .this . . .the untouchable- laugh. . .nature. . .they’re like *points finger* “no, you’re not. . .you’re not going to mess with me. . .teacher”

From these histories being uncovered and models of liberation and resistance introduced, the students were autonomously using these resources as guides that could be modified for issues that affected them. From this exercise of autonomy, it was evident that student efficacy and belief that alternative realities are possible increased with representation, trust, and the process of valuing the students.

\textit{Aspirational geographic shifts.} As Sothyia Vibol continued in her graduate program, the aspirational goal of gaining more power in formal learning spaces became more pronounced. The aspiration of this degree obtainment was the shift she hoped to
bring in how power is shared and how communities are supported outside of harmful paradigms. Through her work with the teachers and administrators the aspirational goal was, at the very least, that these parties would value students more or become aware of the root of their reactions in school and in the classrooms so that the negative outcomes of behavioral responses and perceived substandard academic ability can decrease or be eradicated. Finally, though she remained hopeful that her colleagues, the students, and the community could further plan for liberation outside of harmful institutions, the main aspiration was to make the summer literacy program “freedom school a real school.”

**Joaquin**

**Biography.** At their request, the pronouns of they/them/their will be utilized when referring to Joaquin. Joaquin grew up as the darkest person in their family and the only person mixed with Black heritage. They experienced a significant amount of anti-Blackness in their household. Joaquin is originally from the Northeast region of the United States and went to undergraduate school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States before relocating to the Midwest to attend a predominantly white graduate school. Their work focused on curriculum and instruction with a specialization in LGBTQ+ incarcerated youth of color as well as prison abolition and how it relates to the abolition of institutions that work in collusion with prison systems. They previously and actively worked in and educated others about body and healing justice, prison abolition with focus on LGBTQ+ youth of color, and LGBTQ+ health. At the time of the interview, they were
a teacher assistant within their graduate school department. Joaquin uses the pronouns they/them/theirs and he/him/his interchangeably.

**The art of liberatory pedagogy.**

*Black*
*trans*

*extra special*
*imaginative in order to survive*
*. . .we’ve had to be*
*Black queer  trans*
*A manifestation*
*We survive*
*everything you thought about gender*
*I am*

*and am not*
*everything you thought you knew*
*and everything you couldn’t have fathomed. . .and*

*I am. . .wisdom in the room*

**This is where freedom lives**
*I’m holding space for people to find those connections for themselves*
*I made the connection between this healing stuff and this justice stuff*
*healing justice work*
*Our abilities to heal are directly connected to state violence*

**Hurt. People. Hurt people.**
*How do we have agency around healing*
*get the access that they need*
*being able to calm down*
*be in their bodies*
*open them up to not be fear first*
*and then*
*when you’re not fear first*

*you can think about*
*liberation*

*how we teach about gender and sexuality informs criminalization*

*Academy isn’t my work*
*but my work lives somewhere*
*Don’t nobody wanna fund our work*
Nobody does what I want to study

We don’t have political alignment but we’re all like
“education is political”

What are my political commitments?

My commitments to pedagogy

I cuss too much in class
If you don't like me asking questions, then
I'm not going to class
I don't really want to be in a place that is going to try to police me constantly

Freedom is a place where people can show up their whole selves

You got me fucked up
Respect my hustle
fought to make that happen
Imma look out for you
Have my back

This person's pedagogy is expansive enough that he let me, and my expertise be able to show up because we're supposed to be investing in each other's pedagogy

Find your people
They showed up for me in ways that he didn’t have to
That’s why we’re a movement

It’s always been about relationships
Mentorship

cause I only got into this work
because people brought me into this work
people invited me into this

opportunities. conversation.
people giving me a chance.

I'm not asking you to pretend that gender doesn't exist
I am asking you to make this inclusive of any gender to be welcome here
I'm asking you to allow for others to have some agency as opposed to If you can't have it none of us can have it.

You don't have to think about what's at stake in the way that I do and you think we're alike because you read me as a Black man and you think we're the same . . . Let me tell you we are not

nah

being a Black trans person could be my rise or my demise at any moment Harm is not a binary It's forced me to think about ... what does justice mean to me?

Humanizing myself, because we're constantly dehumanized Giving myself that space making space for other people.

I'm trained as a facilitator and not as a traditional teacher. So... my background is literally holding hard conversations

I'm really meta when I teach people respect my work because of the way that I teach.

I don't have any type of solid discipline experience but I do have a lot of experience in just trying to be in the practice.

What do I have to do to be able to teach white people and not like cuss them out all the time

Embodiment practices that I had that helped me build compassion

Compassionate
holding space for
when people show up in their fear shit
Allowed me to do a lot of healing around myself
Rationalizing, you know
all the like fucked up things we do in the name of being . . . safe.

Prison abolition is essential for our liberation
liberation requires all of us to show up
it's a different orientation of
what it means to be in community with each other

because it's one of the biggest institutions that doesn't even just deal with harm but makes us think about
who gets to be valued

what does it mean to not belong anywhere?

liberation lives in that place where
we get to just be who need to be
get our needs met and don't have to
fight
to be

You are always a teacher and learner at the same time
...because you're doing it
I trust
that there's a purpose.

Be willing to be transformed in the service of the work
Communities of accountability
she calls them
these are the people that I'm doing work for.

The “why” of liberatory pedagogy—theory in the flesh.

Identity and personal histories. Joaquin’s immersion into liberatory pedagogy work illustrates how it was informed by their awareness that there were two philosophies in education and in the academy. These two philosophies existed on opposite ends of a
spectrum. Through Joaquin’s narrative, it was gleaned that one philosophy was steeped in neoliberalism while the other was invested in stopping cycles of educational harm.

. . . I feel like there’s two types of educators—like the type who are like well everybody goes through it, so you gotta do what you gotta do. . .

Which is like. . . what the academy loves to do. . . and then there’s people like—ok I’m gonna make sure you never go through what I’ve gone through. . .

Joaquin demonstrated how their lived experience of interacting with those who thought pain was a rite of passage rather than trauma inducing was used to do what they believe Black trans people do naturally—operate from the ability to, willingness to, and invest in the power that comes when one takes a leap to imagine otherwise (Bell & Desai, 2011; Hughes, 2015; Kenway & Fahey, 2009; Samson 2005; Tucker-Raymond & Rosario, 2017) for the liberation of themselves and other intersectional communities.

Joaquin also recalled playing sports on racist teams and the internalized homophobia and misogyny they experienced as a member of the teams. They also recalled the traumatic experiences that were the result of their enrollment at predominantly all girls’ schools that was racist as well while navigating gender identity at the same time.

. . . I wanna create learning spaces that didn’t have the shit that like . . . I had a horrible time in school. I went to an all-girls high school, I went to an all-girls college, like and I went to white schools. . . Ya know and I went to a tiny. . . my high school had 32 girls in its graduating class, I was
one of 5 black girls. . .so I like ending up going to all these super white spaces and was like, figuring out like how do I function. . .because of that, I just had horrible, horrible times in schools. . . you know I grew up a dancer, I grew up an athlete, and then when I like..left I played sports in college for like a year and my team was really fucking racist. . . And I was like I wanna do things with black people. . . and I was just committed to like- if I’m gonna be an educator—to like always create space [so] those things that happened to me don’t happen to young people.

Not only did Joaquin state that they had a difficult time at school, they also stated that their life at home was difficult as well due to the identity intersections that they held living in an anti-Black Puerto Rican household as a light-skinned person. The different ways that their marginalized identities impacted them were compounded and carried across spaces that typically project an image of safety, in Joaquin’s case—school and family.

And this other thing was like my dad’s black and my mom’s Puerto Rican and I grew up with my mom. . .And so I also grew up in an anti-black Puerto Rican house. . .Where I was- I’m the darkest person in my family. I’m not very dark, right? I’m dramatically darker than everyone else on my mother’s side of the family and so being like “the black person”, being “the queer” in my family. . .right?
These experiences illustrate how Joaquin made a conscious decision to start doing things with more Black people and educating from an intersectional way which helped them and others come into themselves. Furthermore, Joaquin’s words illustrate how their identities and experiences catalyzed their interest in pedagogies that minimized or eradicated the propensity for cyclical harm to continue for people of color, particularly Black and Brown queer, trans youth.

*Identity-informed liberatory pedagogical praxis.* I asked Joaquin what stops people from focusing on liberation rather than reform—where many are conditioned to think that what we have at current is all we could ever have. Joaquin responded that people of color have consistently worked in the location of building and sustaining things that are considered implausible just for mere survival in the face of intergeneration trauma and societal oppression.

. . .Well I think that’s why Black people are special, I think that’s why Black trans people are extra special because we’ve had to be imaginative in order to survive, because all this shit is stacked up against us. So to get creative, to figure out what to do, we had to flex some muscles that they’ve (white people) never had to. They don’t even know they have that muscle. . .

This outlook also illustrates what fueled the work they continue to do in reference to the actualization of what is commonly thought to be impossible from the positionality that if they can exist in a world that seeks their death, then so can liberation. The
unwillingness to waiver from the belief that the co-construction of new realities, better realities, could exist is informed by the resilience and existence of marginalized bodies, but also is accompanied by the belief that institutions, as they exist, will always cause harm. They were essentially willing to get rid of things, entities, and establishments that do not better the lives of the marginalized. That willingness displays the spirit of revolution.

...I always think of that, like how much of my lived experience has informed me that there’s no other option. Abolition is the only way. And when [people] are like, ‘kids right now are sitting in classrooms, we can’t just like burn it down,’... the thing is- the only way that the kids that look like me are gonna be able to get things that work is if we burn it down.

Joaquin’s experiences motivated them to pursue what many believe is impossible because their very existence is supposed to be impossible if society was able to succeed fully in its oppression. Through fighting to see themselves survive, they continued to fight to see others survive and to mobilize for the abolition of institutions that perpetuate the death of people of color that are often deemed as undesirable and subhuman.

No reform, no nothing. It’s inherently structured to push them out...I think there’s a lot of fear. I think there’s a lot of assumptions of what, a lot ageism honestly, but a lot of assumption on what young people do and don’t know...
In Joaquin’s words, they demonstrated how they believe that reform is not a pathway to liberation within institutions that were never meant to hold and support the freedom and efficacy of marginalized bodies, let alone their liberation. Joaquin’s words also show how the wealth of wisdom from young people is often devalued when they are the ones experiencing oppression in real time within institutions at such a young age. This narrative acts as a form of advice to listen to youth when they identify places and spaces of harm. In this, Joaquin modeled valuing that knowledge by advocating with youth, being mentored by them, and mentoring them.

**Embodyment.** Joaquin’s narrative demonstrates how pedagogical praxis and interaction with community is informed by the way they understood and processed through their own trauma. The pathways Joaquin took—such as yoga for healing—to process through their own trauma in their life was shown to be something that was often utilized as a common practice that grounded them not only in their body but, subsequently, in the way that they taught.

. . . And that was the thing that like- and I was like oh shit, it affected me so much that was going across town for twenty minutes and then we went to my first class at a yoga studio and it was a queer trans yoga class and after that, I was hooked, and I think if I, if I, if it wasn’t a trans and queer specific space I don’t know if I ever would have went back. . . And it was
like, to have a trans person and it was like the first time that I was like feeling my body.

Joaquin’s story also shows how they realized not only negative impacts of their life experiences that were a result of others’ treatment of them but also focused on the harm that they have caused to others in their life. An example of this was recalled even with a previous partner when their partner wanted to hold hands in public.

yeah, I was like, I can't, I was like, you might be able to do that with your little white boyfriend. And you know, and I just didn't. And it was hurtful to him and I just . . . was like, this can't be hurtful because this is about safety, right? And so just like rationalizing, you know, all the like fucked up things we do in the name of being safe, right?

Joaquin’s interview showed recognition of harm they have caused. They took time to understand the logic that went into it and whether it was malicious or informed by a sense of protecting themselves. In this, Joaquin recalled a time when they chose their idea, at the time, of safety over perpetuating harm within their own relationships with other. They recalled when they refused to hold their partner’s hand in public because they were both perceived as masculine.

And so the embodiment piece of being in my body, like, allowed me to, like, slow down like kind of just, like, learn. . .I had a lot of anxiety and like, being able to, like be present with myself. I couldn't be alone when I
was younger myself. Like, it took me till I was like, 28 before I could, like feel good about being by myself for long spots of time...you know, so like that kind of shit. And that embodiment really helped me because it helped me see like, what I was projecting and what was my reality.

The examination of how blackness, masculinity, and queerness in space dictated survival guided them to protect themselves at all costs even if it was at the emotional detriment of a community member. However, this safety was not one of selfishness, but fear-based love of a community member to survive as well, even if the consequence was emotional trauma. Joaquin decided instinctively that emotional trauma was a better option than death. As a consequence of processing through and rerouting the understanding of their actions, they practiced their pedagogy by extending the compassion they were extended.

One example of the embodiment occurred when the concept of comprehension shifted from metacognition to understanding through the body. This happened within the university when Joaquin had a professor come in to a class to teach a book they had recently written about whiteness. Joaquin’s examination of their own embodiment made them realize that the reason that they could not fully engage with the literature was because they were trying to absorb information that their body already knew and that made the topic difficult to digest intellectually.

I started reading that book. And I was kind of thinking through it. And I realized that I was still getting frustrated because I was trying to
intellectually understand whiteness. Like, trying to be like, okay, what's their position? Like, why do they hate identity politics? Where did this come from?

The first chapter discussed “those white people.” In the book, the professor positioned himself as also being one of “those white people.” Joaquin remembered being shocked because that was the first time they had heard any professor do that. Joaquin continued to read the book and realized that it was difficult to read because they were trying to understand something that their marginalized body already understood. Their decision to utilize their ways of understanding through the body offered a pathway that was traditional to ways of being that allowed them to feel rather than intellectualize whiteness. Joaquin essentially found a way to engage with understanding whiteness and tapping into their experiences by deeply exploring the ways in which whiteness chose their body as a target.

...and then I realized that whiteness thrives on that disembodiment and so if I intellectually try to understand it, I’m always going to be upset. So basically, I was trying to think about like, what are like embodiment practices that I had that like helped me build compassion because when I started yoga, that was the thing that allowed me to do a lot of healing around myself.

In essence, Joaquin’s interview showed how they were trying to understand a text that their body has been creating curriculum for far before they entered into their graduate
program. Their story surfaces how the body built pathways to understanding and navigating life out of necessity. Their narrative also shows how sources of healing and embodiment transferred from space to space in a constructivist way through an embodied acumen of understanding rather than a paradoxical and counterintuitive means of disembodiment that distanced experiences with oppression as an object of discussion rather than an intergenerational experience, specifically in the context of the academy.

The “how” of liberatory pedagogy—third space theory.

*Space cultivation.* In Joaquin’s classes they stated that they often felt a responsibility to challenge oppressive narratives. They also stated that there have been times in their student experience when they got to be a part of a liberatory space when they once thought it could not or did not exist in their university environment. In one recalled moment, Joaquin shifted the narrative of gender and sex conflation.

… I said something about…we were talking about the feminization of education history and the feminization of the fields or whatever, and I was like, well you know not all women have uteruses. And [a classmate] stops and goes. . . ‘you said not all women have this thing. What do you mean by that?’…He asked, ‘what do you mean’ instead of that ‘what do you mean, that's not true.’ I was like, ‘can I go to the board for a second’? and the professor was like ‘sure.’

The appreciation of inquiry as opposed to immediate dismissal of the counter-narrative produced a peer learning space. This peer learning space was one where
learning was no longer linear or immediately susceptible to hegemonic dynamics occurred through a professor’s willingness to acknowledge the knowledge that existed in the room without the professor feeling that their position was threatened.

. . . I drew that gender bread person…I said let’s talk about the difference between gender and sex…I gave a mini trans 101 and the professor was like ‘this is great’…I was like [the professor’s] pedagogy is expansive enough that he let me, and my expertise be able to show up because we're supposed to be an investing in each other's pedagogy when like that other professor would never let that happen even in a class about queering curriculum.

Switching roles from student in the aforementioned space, to teacher is a demonstration of how Joaquin pushed themselves to assess their boundaries and commitments to becoming a pedagogue. In this, Joaquin believed that for them to teach social justice and not “cuss people out all the time,” and “not just shut down” they had to acknowledge that the larger society can change. They knew they made a conscious decision to “consent to teach white people” because of their own philosophies concerning pedagogy, teaching, and learning. To navigate this consent, Joaquin demonstrated how to enter learning spaces while maintaining their values and using them as a guide to inform their reaction to particular classroom dynamics. This navigation is how Joaquin managed the culture of the learning space and cultivated its environment with the knowledge that they must take into account what existed within and outside of the space. In reference to
disengagement from collision of learning spaces and the catalyzed, I asked Joaquin if there were any times where they refused to engage with someone. Joaquin responded first by telling me about a class they taught as a TA called *Adolescent and Child Development* where they used an accessible introductory book for the course by Eric Toshalis called *Make Me*. In recollection of this class Joaquin stated,

… if I see that someone is willing to make a connection, I will try. But yeah, those people who are like non-negotiable… I'm not going to actually be invested to have a conversation…I don't really do ground rules, but my one rule is the devil. The devil doesn't need your advocacy. You know, I'm just like, don't bring that shit here…if you're going to have the audacity to say that racism doesn't exist that's gotta come out your own mouth, you know?

Joaquin’s narrative uplifts ways in which the levels of ignorance can be nurtured into conscious cognizance without exploiting, demanding justification, or being purely extractive of the articulated lived realities of the marginalized. Joaquin recalled the dynamics between them and a white student concerning the students’ writing assignments. They remember being open to engage with the student because they seemed generally interested in the fundamentals of recognizing oppression’s existence and one’s complicity in its perpetuation; however, the student’s aesthetic of intrigue was matched with the laziness of their analysis.
. . .in every one of his essays they'd have these reflection essays and he would be like ‘does systematic racism exists? I'm not sure. The research isn't clear.’ At some point I was just like, actually, you have to do this paper over. Like, if you're going to make statements like that, then you need to cite your sources and make a definitive argument. And what you'll see is that when you look to find a source, you won't be able to find one because it’s not true. So like, you can probably find some like right wing thing but for the most part, if you're looking within the academy—racism exists.

In determining how to navigate classroom spaces to get students to understand fundamental dynamics of topics such as racism, Joaquin remembered and shared how—in an assignment or classroom format—they would provide critical feedback while also realizing the finite relationship that they would have with students. The ability to build relationships and engage with students through dedicated time was shown to be beneficial depending on labor distribution for Joaquin. Per Joaquin’s narrative, when relationships are far more extractive than symbiotic or collaborative in analysis or in action, the investment in moving toward one’s own energy depletion is ill advised.

*Power of refusal.* Returning back to the question of whether or not Joaquin ever refused to engage with people who became contrarian against or malicious toward fundamental principles of liberation, Joaquin discussed the importance of resisting invasive and extractive dialogue. Joaquin’s narrative also highlighted how
representational literature supported their analysis of how to reduce fatigue as a person of color in the academy.

…I also think that there's power in refusal. I mean have you read that like Tuck and Yang piece about refusal? They're like these two Brown educators and have a conceptual article about refusal and how refusal is how they reframe their access to power in the academy. It's not just saying no I don't want to do it. It's saying I refuse and there's a reason.

Joaquin continued to discuss how the power of refusal and its necessity among marginalized educators of color. Joaquin stated that marginalized educators of color who function within the academy need the power of refusal not just for survivability, but also for energy preservation. Finally, Joaquin discussed how the power of refusal acted as a detour away from racist and exploitive expectation as well as student and colleague interaction. They explained,

‘I got the PhD, I'm not going to go there with you.’ And I think [this practice of refusal] really started with white people, because they think everything's for them. So I do think there's power of being like ‘nah’, because then that's the first time a lot of white people get told no…especially about race.

In this statement, Joaquin illustrated how they used literature produced by scholars of color as a support to refuse interrogation on a skillset that they, per the academy, are an expert on. Joaquin demonstrated how these literary tools are ones
that can be used to preserve energy and integrity while refusing to have your academic, lived, and professional experiences undermined because their accuracy makes white people uncomfortable and disrupts the unspoken oppressive hegemony of the academy. Even in this, Joaquin stated that oppressive hegemony works in ways that attempt to circumvent the power of refusal when colleagues insinuate that it is the burden of the oppressed to educate them.

. . . because they're like, well, if I'm supposed to learn, how am I supposed to learn [if you refuse]? I think having really clear boundaries about this is where and how you get that learning and it's like, you don't just get to like pick any Black person's brain.

From this, Joaquin explained that simply because a person states that they do not understand the narratives of oppression does not obligate the person of a marginalized identity to educate those who do not understand. Moreover, Joaquin's narrative illustrates how they reoriented back to the power of refusal and moved away from the surreptitious extractive nature of whiteness that pervaded and colonized the body as well as the mind of the marginalized.

*Relationships, tools and resources.* In the classroom, the way Joaquin stated that they engaged in relationships was done through an assessment of commitments and delineation of whether work being requested of them was truly their labor to do or if the relationships they had with people who understand the expectations of liberation were better-suited to take on that labor. Joaquin stated that when it came to students who were
white and did not understand systemically what they perpetuated, they could only help these students in class. In recalling an instance with a student where they decided to transfer labor Joaquin stated,

…okay, like, this is so much. I'm actually not the person to talk to you about this.

. .and I was like, ‘Great. I got this white dude I know who's in the social studies cohort who's anti-military and is a veteran, so he's from Minnesota. He's the white man to actually talk to you about this.’

Beyond the scope of the class, Joaquin stated that they chose to draw boundaries and transfer labor to those who are more adept in assisting the students beyond classroom time in ways that Joaquin would find exploitive due to their identities and the way they were received when challenging students to un indoctrinate themselves. Nevertheless, Joaquin stated that they had to ask themselves what the purpose of trying to connect with white students to dismantle their ontologies of oppression was.

. .I was just like, what was I trying to get to him to see? That like, your ideas have impact on people's real lives? . . I think he walked away with being like ‘oh I shouldn't do that’ which is not the same as ‘how do I do that better?’” So I got to this place where I’m just like…I can't do this work for you. I'm your TA for one class and the class is over. . . I have to draw the line because we don't actually have enough of a relationship for me to keep going with this.
However, through drawing boundaries Joaquin demonstrated how they were constantly trying to construct in ways that feel principled. They found ways to attempt to educate the student before making the decision to transfer labor to someone willing to engage with the student beyond the duration and scope of the class. In this, Joaquin exercised the decision to take care of themselves as opposed to exploiting themselves. When I asked Joaquin about what advice they would give to anyone aspiring to do what they are doing or have done, their reply focused on how to “find your people.”

…relationships. I only got into this work because people brought me into this work. People invited me into this work. Adrienne Maree Brown talks a lot about her Emergent Strategy … you know, we, we want critical mass, but it ends up being so shallow and we actually need people with depth…

The emphasis on finding community no matter what spaces, contexts, or work one is housed in was twofold. The emphases of “finding your people” that Joaquin’s story identified was to uplift that liberation cannot be achieved nor is it accountable work when it operates in a silo.

What are the ways that we can practice interdependence? What are the ways that we can practice political education in our communities that allows people to be invited into the work…of the opportunities that I’ve ever had been based on being in conversation with people and people giving me a chance. And then me just like, shooting my shot… I always look for mentors, and I always look to mentor…that I’ve challenged, who challenge me …you are always a teacher and
learner at the same time. Anytime you think that you're not a learner anymore, that's what you fucked up...collaborators...The academy really wants you to be siloed...doing collaboration on purpose has been really big for me.

The second point of emphasis concerning “finding your people” was that the journey of healing, growth, attending to pain, and liberating one’s self—even with your unobstructed willingness—benefits from support. Joaquin discussed how fallibility and vulnerability are critical components of introspection necessary to understand abolition and liberation.

...being open to being wrong...I really love the quote of like, ‘you have to be willing to be transformed in the service of the work’ and I've just met so many people who were just, like, unwilling to be transformed...so much of what I've learned since understanding what prison abolition is and what it means and how it connects to the things I'm passionate about was just learning about undoing my own stuff...

From Joaquin’s work within a collective, they demonstrated how they understood the different positionalities that community members had in regard to safety. However, at times, Joaquin was frustrated with the amount of time it took for communities absorbing violence to entertain the absence of the government-sanctioned entities that perpetuated it. Joaquin recalled a conference they attended that further illuminated the different positionalities on safety.
. . .this was like, 2015 so it was like just now all these people who are like they really don’t want to call the police. And I was like, wow, it took 15 years for people to be convinced enough to be like maybe we should start thinking besides the police, right? So I was like, well damn, like the fact that like, it's taken this long to convince people . . .to have those conversations. . .it just like blows my mind where . . .so many. . . they're actually so many black and brown people who are really, really committed to the police. . .

Joaquin’s narrative informs the ways in which they practiced political education outside of the academy. Their positioning within the academy, in collectives, and with community organizations extended pivotal opportunities. These opportunities were ones in which Joaquin took what is being discussed currently, in terms of institutionally-supported terrorism, to further interrogate and politically educate those they are in community with. The community members they worked in solidarity with ethose who wished to now become a part of a conversation such as alternative means of community safety. When Joaquin interacted with the community, they did so with hopes of deconstructing current realities in the context of safety and producing alternate realities through collective planning and analysis building. This collective planning and analysis building, in turn, brought deeper questions to the fore concerning the intentions and implications of state violence and its constructed narrative of who is deemed violent as well as valuable.
. . .you know all this shit right like and it's taken this it's taken this level of violence . . .this viral violence to even get people to even start to think about. . .not calling the police right. . . and so it's just like the fact that this is not new this has always been happening to us but now because people say it out loud, like it's this new thing. . .but as a black anarchist, I think about displacement as a central theme [to police surveillance and prison institutional power]. Like, what does it mean to not belong anywhere. . .what is it. . .when you don't belong to anybody. . .What does it mean about law and order. . .when you don’t belong anywhere.

Not only did Joaquin demonstrate how they practiced their work in spaces beyond the academy, Joaquin also cited multiple pieces of literature and activists such as Mutulu Shakur, Erica Meiners, Tuck and Yang, Adrienne Maree Brown, Alexis Pauline Gumbs and Eric Toshalis. They used these resources to develop the analysis that affected their pedagogy for liberation in formal and nonformal spaces. Joaquin learned how to build resources from knowledge of the literature and political education, but they began learning how to develop curriculum from their body. Joaquin recalled being in undergraduate school and being frustrated with peers of the queer community about how there were no resources for them concerning sex education and that their group was removed from being concerned about the sexual health of the queer community. Joaquin stated that there was no guide that was accessible to them as a student nor for other
students who shared the same identities as they have. From this absence of resources was not solely applicable to sexual health, but also jobs and other dimensions of life,

Like I did student groups and shit like that and I was like always hanging out- just started a group for queer people of color at my college and was like we need —we don’t know nothing about sex. . .We don’t know nothing about like getting jobs, we don’t know nothing about . . .nothing. . . And we can only tell each other, so it was a space where it was just resource sharing. . . And so then I was like, wow this is like dope ass information, so I had facilitated groups. . .

In relation to curriculum, it was evident in Joaquin’s words that it is possible to produce canonized, evolving resources out of a necessity that is informed by the lived experiences of the marginalized. This is illustrated by the students compiling information from their own unique experiences and creating a resource that they all could use. It was generated from the individual experiential knowledge and contributed to the project. Through this, they also learned how to facilitate the curriculum they were a part of creating. These skills transferred to their pedagogical praxis and job attainment as well.

The “what” of liberatory pedagogy—radical geography

Materialized geographic shifts. Joaquin stated clearly that the push for prison abolition is not new. They knew that higher-profile social intellectuals like Angela Davis brought the conversation to the fore most recently. However, they stated that marginalized communities who could never interface with the police because it would
mean imminent death or debilitating trauma have often found ways to locate alternatives to police, prisons, and any other institutions that prides itself on providing a safety never materialized.

…people have been practicing different ways to deal with this for a long time. Because if you're Black and trans…nobody cares about violence that's happened to you…you can't call the police …the whole like #MeToo thing, all these trans and GNC people are left out of the conversation because we can never call the police. We can never ask for accountability in that way…the state always criminalizes us. . .we always been imagining what a world without prisons will look like. We're always having to imagine in a way that people take for granted. I always think about how being a Black queer trans person is a manifestation of that —everything you thought about gender, I am… and am not. Everything you thought you knew, and everything you couldn’t have fathomed. . .and I am .

Be that as it may, it should not be interpreted that because one can survive, that they need nothing beyond *survival* and that their survival is anything short of a miracle based on how many marginalized populations do not survive. Joaquin uplifted that the ways that society have understood logic concerning accountability has always been punitive to an extent that devalues people in its disregard for rehabilitation. Joaquin stated that implications of prison’s repeat
trauma in and outside of the buildings. They continued to discuss how prisons are states of mind and not just brick and mortar walls of captivity:

You know, and I think that in itself... like is why I feel like prison abolition is essential for our liberation, because it's one of the biggest institution that doesn't even just deal with harm, but makes us think about, like, who gets to be valued... what does it mean to not belong anywhere...to not belong to anybody? What does it mean about law and order? ... They just think it’s a building, they just think it’s a place...consequences and accountability and punishment are not the same thing...we conflate them...So if anybody gives me the time...let me tell you the real deal about prison abolition because it takes it takes a conversation, instead of like, ‘what we would have instead of prison?’

Joaquin presented this reframing and demonstrated how it is a pathway to deeply understand the different ways that we view safety and the rationale behind it. Refraining from exclusion is also meant to determine if there is a resource-based, valid rationale for actions that are often met with disproportionate punitive results among varying communities. Lastly, veering away from the practice of exclusion creates space to invest time, in not trying to determine what will exist without prisons (and how it associates with schools), but to deeply think about how one can reconceptualize and grapple with the purpose of consequences,
accountability, and punishment as well as truly asking why the existence of a punitive institution is thought to be absolutely necessary.

**Aspirational geographic shifts.** As Joaquin continues their work on carceral logic and prison abolition, they stated that they must tear down cognitive processes that validate the replication of prisons in different manifestations and spaces—especially within marginalized communities—that perpetuate trauma across generations. Joaquin spoke about how they were introduced to that form of analysis.

...I think it's also a larger reflection of like, the way that we reproduce the prison industrial complex in our everyday lives when we shut people out or when we ice them. I think that's what I learned the most about the transformative justice organizing that I was doing.

Joaquin’s narrative also demonstrates how the analysis of the eradication of carceral logic and prison abolition concerns itself with what different levels of community accountability are and how to intervene on a community’s constructed paradigms of the very things that would be abolished. In this, Joaquin recalled their introduction to this deeper analysis that connected their previous organizing to a community organization that worked on sustainable transformative justice methods.

... I got connected to in transformative justice came out of Generation Five, which is a collective in the Bay and their mission is to end childhood
sexual abuse within five generations…part of that is a transformative justice approach, where they’re not only attending to the harm but also attending to the conditions that created the harm and transforming those. Joaquin also explained that carceral logic extends further than prisons and affects educational systems directly through its pipeline and through how authority interacts with the marginalized and how the cycle continues to subject them to harm. They stated that interrupting carceral logic catalyzes one to ask deeper questions regarding prisons, harms, and accountability, stating, “And so their principles are based in like this larger transformation and not just a response… and so because of that, it really forced me to think about, ‘what does justice mean to you.’”

Furthermore, Joaquin stated that the focusing on conditions is far more important than focusing on what could be created as a replacement to what is sought to be abolished. In this, Joaquin illustrated how focusing on conditions could shift the rationales for harm if resources for what communities need is provided and it could also impact the ways that communities seek to hold each other accountable. Joaquin demonstrated how adamant they were to not fall susceptible to discussions of prison or educational paradigmatic institutions and they also demonstrated how to reposition the conversation from replacement to conditions so that the onus was placed on society’s shortfalls rather than marginalized populations’ means of survival.
So, I'm always just like… you're so focused on the actual institution that you're not thinking about what are the conditions that allow for prisons to not exist… and those conditions would mean that we will get the things we need. . . which means, that violence would look differently. And that doesn't mean that like, there's not gonna be still some people who are going to do fucked up shit… But I think we would have different mechanisms about how to even approach it or what we would even read of that type of violence… that we would actually think about rehabilitation, because jail and prisons do not rehabilitate.

As Joaquin continued with their work on carceral logic and prison abolition, they shared that prisons are far more than buildings and that we must work veraciously towards tearing down cognitive processes that validate the replication of prisons in different manifestations and spaces, especially within marginalized communities that perpetuate trauma across generations. Joaquin also shared that carceral logic extends further than prisons and affects educational systems directly through its pipeline and in how authority interacts with the marginalized and continue the cycle of subjecting them to harm. Joaquin stated that they are not under some misconception that when abolition occurs, that everything or anything will be “perfect,” but they do believe that after prisons’ abolition there will be better ways and means to dealing with harm and accountability than what is in place at current.
Jorge

Biography. Jorge worked as a math and science teacher at an alternative charter high school housed in a community organization center that was soon-to-be displaced for city transit routes. Jorge is a Latinx cisgender male. He was previously incarcerated. Jorge was originally from a neighborhood not far from where he taught that mirrored similar dynamics of gang activity, violence, and disposability (educators and administrators refusing to support students who were struggling) of children of color. The alternative school primarily housed students of color (Black and Brown) who are currently on probation or parole. Many of the students were part of and seeking refuge from gang activity in the area near the school’s location. The alternative school was a charter school and it was a part of a charter school network across the state. Jorge previously worked for the government run school district in the same county he now works. He left due to the ineffectiveness of the districts model for marginalized students.

The art of liberatory pedagogy.

How do you teach math and science...
How can we use mathematics to become an organizer
Organizers
we capture students that been pushed out from school
They’ve been kicked out from the district
For a while, yeah
From school to school and...
They have nowhere else to go

Ex-gang members
current gang members
They’re not just learning the academics but hope.
We do a lot of circles
have a career counselor
portfolio requirements
instead of a test

*Integrating the social justice*

*The Authentic Performance Test*
A project
In which
They have to demonstrate the math skills
Mhm
Tied up to social justice

*The Culminating Action Project*
Especially in this organization...
we do a lot of actions

*Working with this population*
Transformative justice
For me
The most Important thing

And I don't think you could survive as a teacher...
They have to get to know you

We don't have a D or an F
The 30% percent was the project
30% of their grade
The other 30%
content studies
10%
Attendance
participation
and then

Leadership. social consciousness.action
It’s a collective effort

*We don’t FAIL*

Anybody.
The “why” of liberatory pedagogy —theory in the flesh.

Identity and personal history. Jorge’s narrative illustrated his identity, history, proximity to the predominantly Black and Brown neighborhood. His narrative mirrored many of his students, allowing him to connect with them in ways that he was never able to intentionally do due to the constraints and the culture of the school district he once worked for. This connection, as Jorge stated, did not only pertain to academic success—he focused on hope as an outcome of the work that he does. He explained,

When I heard the description of what the schools gonna be I was sold. . .I really enjoy working. . .especially for me it’s like. . .I really enjoy working with like ex-gang members or current gang members because it to me it’s like they’re not just learning the academics but I'm giving them hope. . .I think sometimes, it gives a little hope because they’re living day by day they have no concept of like future. You know they’re just on survival mode.

Jorge stated that their experiences with neglect allowed them to see and want to stop the institutional harm being done to students within structures that, to him, were more concerned with time than the students’ well-being. From disappointment with the public school system in which he was once employed and the harm that he witnessed, Jorge left when the opportunity to teach at a school that focused on social justice arose. When discussing his connection to the students, Jorge stated,
...myself being a person of color I went through my own struggles, uhm. I been incarcerated at one point, you know uh I was given the opportunity to change my life and become a teacher, so there is some personal connection to the job.

Jorge described that his frustration with the previous school district when he expressed how foolhardy it was for the school to expect him to follow the scope and sequence explicitly when students were not comprehending the current lessons. Through Jorge’s resistance, he conveyed to administration that students were not able to move on to the next section of content because they did not understand the preceding curricular components in the classes he was teaching.

...from my experience working in public school. I’ll tell you—this is what needs to be done at this specific time and [and the administrations says] you gotta move on. Well for me in math, especially here, if I see a student struggling with fractions, I'm not just gonna, if the majority of them, if I feel like the majority are still gonna struggle I'm not just gonna like move on...to the next topic, because I already know that I'm putting them into a situation which they’re gonna. . .without knowing fractions I won’t be able to teach them, you know. . .percents. So why am I gonna . . .*laughs* [move on]...to them and that’s something they don't think about in public schools, like well ok you wanna satisfy this curriculum, but what if the students are not at that pace?
Jorge’s stated frustrations intensified when the administration did not understand or care to understand how this method of mandated teaching was harming students. Lacking the space, room, or time for the students to learn put them at a disadvantage the administration did not perceive. Jorge stated that the compounded effects of the forced sequencing of curricular concepts coerced students to drop out and incentivized him to leave the public school system as well.

Identity-informed liberatory pedagogical praxis. Jorge’s interview showed how identity played a significant role in his path to practicing liberatory pedagogy. The lived reality of being Latinx and formerly incarcerated as well as working as a teacher within formal education is a form of representation that many of his students had never thought was possible. He said,

For me, the most important thing, working with this population, and I don't think you could survive as a teacher is that they have to get to know you. . .I mean, really get to know you and they get to know you good and the mistakes you have made in the past and you have learned from them. . ..So, they know a lot of stuff that regular, that I feel like they know more than other staff members know about me.

The vulnerability he practiced in the space with his identities in tow, demonstrated how sharing his story created a space for students to, according to Jorge, feel understood through a process of building trust. The value of trust and vulnerability
that Jorge identified allowed for processing through stories or emotions because he modeled it.

**The “how” of liberatory pedagogy—third space theory.**

*Space cultivation.* Jorge’s narrative demonstrates how the climate that exists outside of the learning space in the students’ neighborhood and daily lives, makes the recognition of the hybridity and the holdings of multiple realities clear. Jorge stated that the hardships of the students’ lives before they entered the school, when they were in school, and when they left created juxtaposition to dreams and realities wherein the students cultivated a way of believing realities existed beyond their current reality. Jorge demonstrated how the cultivation of the spaces he inhabited allowed students to share their fears in a safe environment that was constructed to accommodate the needs of the students without reprimand. For example, many of his students did not have documentation. After the 2016 election, his students expressed fear and frustration about this, but because of Jorge’s learning space cultivation, the students were able to utilize their organizing and life skills—their curricular constructivism— to say that they need to do something to challenge oppression even if they were the direct targets of it. Jorge stated that the students’ fears were accompanied with the belief and pursuit of actionable responses.

…what’s currently happening with the senate and the confirmation—it really bothers me, and like another thing that really hurt our students was the fact that when trump was elected—a lot of our students don’t have
papers and they were like—so anxious and we started talking about it and I just stopped talking about math and the whole day we were just talking about ‘this is what we gotta do,’ this is what we gotta do, this is what we gotta do’ and ‘you gotta tell all these people—we have to organize somehow, people might be deported and we gotta and we have power, and we gotta use our power.’

When there is the presence of something apparently daunting happening with a student or in society, Jorge stated that students can raise any concern in classroom “circles.” He shared that there are morning circles, identity group circles such as LGBTQ and recovery, and big circles with the entire group together.

. . .we do a lot of circles. So that means we talk about anything. We can talk about—we have, we have… we also have big groups, like the whole group, like a . . .morning, morning circle to check in and we might have something to think about and people have to like share what, like whatever we’re bringing and then we separate them into groups, so we have the LGBT group we have the recovery group, we have the men’s group in circles.

Often the students chose to mainly talk about relationships. When disruptions occur in classroom settings, Jorge illustrated how he pauses the instruction and the entire class starts talking about what’s going on with them, “real talk”, as he called it.
So, they talk about. . .A lot of times they talk about relationships. . .. You know, building relationships. Or they talk about what’s currently happened to them, just among peers. So, it’s a way to communicate with, among each other.

Jorge demonstrated how he reoriented the classroom members as a form of curricula in order to make the space more conducive to learning. The daily activity of “circles” set a culture of freely talking about life. Because these circles were built into the daily practices of the class, it did not inhibit class, because it was a part of it. This practice also subverted the school culture that Jorge was immersed in at his previous position where time was the central theme to the operation of the school.

**Infrastructure.** It is required by the charter network be connected to and housed within a community organization in order to exist and function under the mission of the school. The school’s partnership assisted in organizing, actions, and planning, among other forms of school support. They also helped students connect to resources that they needed both in and outside of the school’s walls such as a career counselor, mental health practitioners, health, food, and housing. The school also had partnerships with colleges. College students worked with high school students and supported the transformation justice specialist.

More specifically, Jorge stated that the school that he worked in did credit recovery. Jorge shared that he and other teachers worked with the students and the career counselor individually for student success. With student input, the team helped students
with life and career planning. The students were required to research their aspired college, career, or life plans to determine what they will need as far as certifications, apprenticeships, financial aid, and degrees. Once completed, they place it in their required portfolio.

While Jorge’s narrative shows how the school tried to support student success in the realm of career readiness, Jorge also discussed what additional harm needs to be attended to when trying to practice liberatory pedagogy that falls outside of career readiness and focuses on how to help students heal from institutional neglect that they have experienced. In this, Jorge stated that students are so deep in trauma that one has to start at the root of their trauma to make sure they can succeed academically and in life.

Jorge stated that when many students arrived at the school, they have IEPs (Individual Education Programs) due to behavioral incidents and some also have mental disorder diagnoses from psychiatrists due to trauma that the public school system did not accommodate for well. When Jorge started working with the students, he said that he noticed that because the students were doing so well in his class, he would have never thought that they had IEPs at all.

as far as like my class like I have a lot of IEP students that, I'm used to it, there are ones that have IEPs, and they do well in my class. . .I woulda never thought…If they. . .wouldn't have given the paper work to me, I would have never thought they were on IEPs—so yeah, I'm sure there is students that were not diagnosed correctly.
Whether this is confirmable or not, Jorge’s comments do illustrate how he is familiar with students being limited by intellectual expectations based on behavioral patterns in ways that diminish the student’s capacity to reach their full potential, because the system neglected and disposed of them. Though Jorge stated that he believed that despite his observations of students and his belief that the students were not diagnosed properly, the teachers had no control over declassifying the students as IEP recipients. Despite that fact that students could be re-evaluated every three years, Jorge’s belief was that they might not have needed the IEPs in the first place and were likely identified as a way to determine their academic ability, which was based on their behavior. In this, Jorge stated that the school had to find ways to build up the efficacy of the students so they could support the students in achieving futures that they were told were not possible for them to achieve.

Jorge’s narrative demonstrates how in liberatory spaces, the teachers, the staff, and the students all have the opportunity to be transformed and begin to practice what liberation could look like. In this, Jorge stated that he had been affected by witnessing what ontologized liberation mechanisms are and could be.

. . .they were talking about no police, we should have no police, we should have no prisons. Like what do you mean? But there are like people that are really crazy, people need to be in prison. Why do you want to abolish all prisons? You know? So, I didn't understand them.
In this, Jorge recalled how he, at that time, believed that the school was too radical for him. He followed this admission by also stating that as time progressed he realized that they were talking specifically about the system that abuses and harms marginalized populations and not the crimes that had been committed.

After a while, you just have to educate yourself, because I understand what they’re talking about—they’re talking about the system itself. Not necessarily you know, the crimes. They’re talking about the system. You know, if you created a system that could abuse, which is constantly abused, then how can you trust the system. So that’s what we’re talking about…but I understand... see I understood a different way. My perspective was a different way, but I understand what they’re talking about now. It just takes time and being educated. So, I learned a lot about organizing myself and from the guests that we have.

Jorge discussed how he was able to see what resistance looked like in the face of authority. Though there are different biopolitical implications of those who practice acts of resistance, a white colleague of Jorge demonstrated what resistance looked like in the face of police officers attempting to enter the school. In Jorge’s told story of this account, he stated:

I’ll tell you—we, in this building, I seen police come in and we tell them… say ‘I'm sorry you can’t come in with a gun. If you want to come into the building you need to remove your gun. We’re gun free.’ They said, ‘I'm a police officer’
... [we say] ‘You are you are a guest . . .unless you have a warrant - this is the policy.’ They’d rather leave than to remove their weapons . . .We’re like ok, "byee." . . . I wanted to see [the police officer’s] reaction. He was like ‘what? Are you kidding me?’ . . .I felt like he was... thinking ‘do you know who I am? Do you know how much power I have?’ [and our position was] . . .Obviously not here. . .I was amazed.

Jorge recalled that event and knew then that the school, the organization, and their network were serious about the principles, ethics, and values in action that they spoke to the students about and what they discussed as a network of organizers and educators.

Jorge saw them set boundaries despite the biopolitics of oppression that expected something different in relation to the race of the educators and the student body. He stated that witnessing the act of resistance helped him believe what new possibilities were and could be in the face of authority. In this context, Jorge witnessed how resistance could materialize with entities that have negatively affected not only his life but the lives of his students.

Relationships, tools and resources. Jorge’s narrative illustrated how his introduction to the charter school network came about through a colleague of his who also worked in the same school district previously. His colleague, Raul, left the school district because he could not remain idle while he saw that students were not receiving the chance to learn math properly and with adequate attention.
. . .he worked for another big school district and so you know, he realized that a lot of students were not- they needed more than just numbers in math or like formal math. There was . . . a lack of how am I gonna use this is real life . . . he worked in . . . underrepresented schools. . . . there was a lot of social justice needs in the community, so he. . . he…. started a new charter that really focused on social justice.

Jorge stated that due to the injustice placed on marginalized students, Raul decided to design the school and he created the school to focus on social justice. From there, Raul began to invite others to work there. This relationship demonstrates how relationships affected the trajectory of Jorge’s life from being invited to being transformed to believing liberation is possible to working with colleagues and students to see it come to fruition through his scope of work.

Jorge asserted that he continues to try to find ways to connect math and science to real life problems so that students have more confidence, in conjunction with their organizing, to shift the communities that they live in and more adequately advocate for themselves. He shared that he reached out to the teacher network of the charter schools for advice when the lesson was hard to tie to social justice; they communicated through resources. Jorge stated:

Yeah, we share information. So sometimes I’ll be like, you know. . . I’ll take it to some other math teacher and be like I’m trying to do this. . . have you ever done anything similar? So we connect with each other and
actually we share a lot of our old projects and we put it in a big folder in
which everybody has access to that. That’s a way to communicate.

Jorge gave some examples of how curricula connected to social justice
issues. Jorge explained that the way that he constructed curricula was always
connected to community issues in the neighborhood or with issues that directly
affected the identities of the students in the class. This also demonstrated how
space can be created with students of multiple different backgrounds where
students get to learn how to advocate for one another even if they do not share the
same identities that are or would be directly affected.

...there might be an issue we want to focus like uhm uhhh, I don't know,
maybe some research on what are some community concerns and you’re
like, like within your neighborhood- so they have to do some interviews
and they have to take surveys and they have to accumulate those numbers
and analyze it. . .an idea we have for instance in the science class- is go to
the site where they want to build the prison. . .and do some you know like
- soil samples …Where they want to build it, let’s find out what’s the deal
over there.

Jorge explained that there were times where, despite connecting with colleagues
in the school network and looking through their shared folder for curriculum ideas, he
just could not make the connection with some concepts. That did not mean that he did not
make sure the students knew how to do the math problem, for example, but that it made it
difficult for the students to understand what it could be used for in terms of their liberation. As a result, Jorge realized that his students were becoming disinterested to the extent that they were not learning how to do the work.

...the curriculum is based also not just learning mathematics but how can we use mathematics to become an organizer... So that was one of my struggles, I wanted to connect parabolas to...you know something else. And sometimes I couldn’t do it like perfectly... it doesn’t have to be like that as long as they are using the mathematical skills at any level. As long as they know how to do it.

Jorge revealed that that, however, did not stop him from trying another time to make those connections through curriculum. Jorge stated that his main priority when he could not figure out a way to connect social issues to core competencies, was to ensure that the students understood how to do the work despite the lack of excitement that typically surfaced when the connection was not yet able to be made to a community issue. The lack of excitement that Jorge identified when the content could not be connected to community issues did allude to the level of excitement the students typically held when they know how they can organize with tools that are learned in Jorge’s class.

The “what” of liberatory pedagogy—radical geography.

Materialized geographic shifts. One of the most radical geographical shifts that Jorge spoke about was the grade construction. Jorge stated that the way the school evaluated grades was based on different projects, all tied to social justice organizing,
research, and actions. This demonstrated the students’ ability to work at their own pace but with a level of accountability to the class, the school, and the community organization. That flexibility allowed the students to take care of things in their life that were often a barrier in ways that was not commonly accommodated for in their previous schools.

Jorge stated that the way the grading system was set up was complemented by the grading scale. This was demonstrated by their grading scale which was a scale of A through C. This illustrates how the scale was designed to remove the possibility of the students failing. Jorge shared that the school instead gives the students an “incomplete” and lets the students continue on at their own pace so that they can gain and comprehend the knowledge necessary for their success without punitive outcomes. Jorge’s interview also showed that the ways that grades are restructured and time is extended for their students in a way that is in direct contrast to the school Jorge was previously employed shifts the geography in terms of educational and professional access. Jorge stated that the students that were failed by the public school systems carried the impact of their GPA’s inability to assist them in gaining access into a significant amount of colleges, trade schools, internships, apprenticeships, and employment. This demonstrated how in a capitalist society, the students’ lack of access could mean the lack of resources to meet their sustenance needs and their future goals. The formula for the school’s grading scale was:
- Student demonstration of leadership, social consciousness, and action in the classroom – 30%
- Culminating action project and authentic performance test – 30%
- Content studies – 30%,
- Participation – 10%

In conjunction to variant methods of grades and grading scales, Jorge stated that students had in the school with the career counselors assisting them in planning for futures they never thought they could have before they entered the school. The partnerships that are the inherent structure of the school demonstrates the collaborative nature of investment for student success.

...Yeah, so we do have a career counselor here on site. He comes, I believe it’s on Wednesdays and Thursdays and he pull students either seniors or close to becoming seniors uh and he talks to them about plans so, uhm so we want to support them in any way they want. So, they want to go to work- we tell them the realities of what’s needed at a job. So, they do a lot of maybe resume training or they do one on one interviews, or mock interviews, or just leads. A lot of times it’s just leads. There might be a student that needs to go to school and work, so he connects, he has connections with that so like a lot of referrals.

Jorge stated that the career counselors connect the students, during school hours, to an additional specialists that are invested in and support the
manifestation of what success means or looks like for students that often, as Jorge stated, never thought about a future due to the conditions of their lives. Another demonstration of how the school invests in the success of the student is in how they embed career, college, or life readiness into the students’ curriculum.

...we have portfolio requirement- so instead of uh a test, our students have to demonstrate progress for their time that they’ve been here. Part of it is. . .uhm they have to, so their goal is to work directly, or they want to go to school, or want to get a skill - they have to do the research. . .For instance, they want to be a uhm - a cosmetology, they have to, there’s assignments related to what’s required for cosmetology. . .what schools are. . .offer cosmetology in the area so they have to apply the schools I think but I think there’s. . .three. . .three application processes. They have to apply for financial aid, so there’s a class based - they’re actually doing assignments. Résumés, [students] have to write résumés, cover letters, so...

In addition to this support, Jorge shared that the school and the community organization provided accommodation and safety support. In this, students were often picked up by the school’s bus if they felt that it was unsafe to walk. The infrastructure of the school illustrates how its’ space promote and supports safety and serves as a model of how the students’ cultures are valuable. In this, Jorge stated that the students have a space to do graffiti inside one of the gyms so that they do not interface with the police and they created a shrine for community members that have fallen victim to police brutality or
neighborhood violence (demonstrating the value in the lives of community members) among many other things. Students also are allowed to bring their children to school. These supports demonstrate how missing days does not mean that the students will be left behind in understanding the material.

**Resonant impacts.** Much like the way Jorge discussed the infrastructure of the learning space of the school that supports ontologized liberation regarding police presence resistance, the resonance of that instance of resistance also illustrates the how infrastructure overlaps with resonance. The resonant impacts shown in Jorge’s narrative are indicative of how he was amazed and served a resonant impact of resistance for liberation that affected him in a way that increased his belief that liberation was more than theoretical.

In addition, Jorge mentioned that when discussing prison abolition in a workshop with colleagues, he was confused as to why people would want to get rid of prisons, even as a previously incarcerated person. This idea of what could exist without prisons and what that could mean for public safety was a discussion that Jorge had never been a part of. The identified impacts of that conversation was shown to increase his efficacy to continue and strengthen his liberatory pedagogy from a deeper understanding that resonated with him regarding critique and resistance of harmful institutions instead of focusing merely on individually perpetrated instances of harm.

These conversations resonated with Jorge in that he began to understand that institutions are constructed to cause harm to marginalized communities rather than
offered protection to people in marginalized communities. This resounded and affected his ability to practice his liberatory pedagogy with a deeper understanding of not only what systems he was a part of, but how a deeper analysis could impact the way that he teaches others who share a similar experience as he himself has. In this, Jorge spoke about how he has seen students return to the neighborhood as change agents and how he hopes the way he teaches continues to influence that reinvestment of hope.

…not everybody’s gonna get involved in the community, but I seen a lot of people go to college and come back to the community and make a difference. And that’s the . . .even if it’s just one person, that I made a difference in one person’s life…

In addition to resonant impacts regarding Jorge, there were also resonant impacts that Jorge discussed regarding the school’s students. The many ways that the school encourages students demonstrates that it is not purely devoted to success when it pertains to matriculation into higher education. In this, Jorge stated that everyone does not want to go to college and to Jorge that is fine, he just wanted the students to be successful and safe in whatever decisions they make for their future.

Aspirational geographic shifts. Jorge stated that the school was being displaced due to gentrification. He also shared that the city was building a stadium nearby and there will be a transit line placed in the location that the school has been in for over 15 years. With this, Jorge’s stated aspiration is that despite the school moving, the spirit of the school will continue on with its mission.
Ironically, at the time of the interview, Jorge discussed a current student’s project that directly connected to this issue.

we had somebody who was actually working with one of our students to talk about that, gentrification that’s happening in . . . especially with the new stadium that they’re building there- this is not the only place that’s been . . . I mean a lot of people are being dislocated.

Lastly, Jorge stated that the aspiration of those in the school is to practice interception in the judicial system. These interceptions, as Jorge stated, will serve as a way to attempt to stop students from being incarcerated and introduce them to a space of care and support that can increase student efficacy.

. . . basically the students that we capture are students that been pushed out from school - either uhm because they’ve been kicked out from the district, from school to school and they have nowhere else to go.

Or because they are just falling behind so much, and greater so, some have had some issues at home, so they dropped out . . . Our school is from 15-24 year olds, so that’s our population. . . We do recruitment with, we go talk to judges. So, they can refer to students and I know right now, that’s what they’re doing too they’re trying to, see if they can request any funding because they want to really focus on the incarceration population. . .

The school is working to either connect to probation officers or court systems. These connections are meant to offer their school as an alternative option
to incarceration, shifting not necessarily the amounts of times the future students
(since their interception would take place in these systems) would interface with
the court system, but at the very least they would be introduced to a safe haven
and have the ability to reduce the amount of marginalized students being
incarcerated.

**Ita Viiko**

**Biography.** Ita Viiko was an indigenous Mixteca woman from a southern state
within Mexico. At the time of the interview she lived in the Pacific Northwest of the
United States part time and was a Southern State in Mexico part-time. Ita Viiko worked
in language justice with a focus on language and culture preservation. She primarily
worked with youth. She was retired because the government only allows one to teach for
30 years. She also identified as a teacher and a poet.

**The art of liberatory pedagogy**

*I write it, I speak it, I read it*
*they do not write it*
*and they do not read it*

*Rescue*
*for 30 years*

to converse
children
to learn, to talk
*hablando niños*

*SPEAK children!*
6, 7, 8 up to 15 years.
*Mestizos. . .Maestra*

*vivir indígena*

*Talk. Mother. Tongue.*
Maestro indígena
En 1980, el gobierno estatal contrató a muchos jóvenes.
Oral, escrito
Contrataron, rechazaron.
Mixteco . . . muchas lenguas indígenas
Mixteco, Triqui, Zapoteco, Náhuatl, Chatino
Mezclas

Me enseñaron en casa
No te olvides del idioma.
Hablo mi lengua materna.

No quería hablar

coordinador
la primera en las comunidades
Padres, se avergonzaron.

. . . practicar, enseñar
Si funciono

Pueblos... lejos
Miles

Maestros rescatando
Bailes, comida, fiestas.
culturas indígenas
Oaxaca
Enseñando
Estado, gobierno estatal

Enseñanza, Gratuita
maestros, maestros, pueblo
municipio, nuevo presidente

niños indígenas
perdiendo
rescate
Cirugía... por mi situación de salud... jubilada
te retiras

30 años
I no olvido
Costumbres, costumbres tradicionales
ropa regional

Lingüistas, código, alfabeto
Habla, no escribe
B y V
do
K
"Ve´I."

Lo escribo, lo hablo, lo leo.
No lo escriben y no lo leen.
rescate

envian niños
profesores bilingües
dos lenguajes
en el camino
caminar 4, 5 horas
recordar

profesor
vivir juntos
comunidad en vivo
recuerda

visitarn las escuelas
pobre
sin zapatos
colección
lápices o dinero
Feliz, inculca la memoria.

llorar hermosas comunidades
30 años
de la tierra
Estudiantes
profesionales
médicos, ingenieros, abogados, profesores

orgulloso

inclinan sus cabezas
toman la mano
saludo especial
lengua materna habla mi lengua
Reafirmar

Preparar danza, poesía, vestuario, instrumentos.
en medio de la comunidad

inspirar
invitación
traducir
existe

gobierno
municipios
Has querido negar mi existencia.
indígena pisoteado
vive
comunidades

No niego indígenas, sino que defiendo.
Soy indígena
tierra, aire
Del agua y del sol
Superviviente
esclavos
racismo, mitad sangre
encarcelado porque soy indígena
Justicia

Nosotros

revolución y amor.

respeta mi cultura.
Teacher, indigenous
In 1980, the state government hired many young people.
Oral, written
they hired, they rejected.
Mixteco . . . many indigenous languages
Mixteco, Triqui, Zapoteco, Nahuatl, Chatino
Mixes
I was taught at home
Do not forget about the language
I speak my mother tongue.

I did not want to talk

coordinator
the first in the communities
Parents, they were ashamed

...to practice, teach

Yes it worked

Villages . . . far
Thousands

Teachers rescuing
Dances, food, parties
indigenous cultures
Oaxaca
Teaching
State, State Government

Teaching, Gratuitous
teachers, teachers, village
municipality, new president

indigenous children
losing
rescue
surgery... for my health situation... retired
you withdraw

30 years
I do not forget
Customs, traditional customs
regional clothing

Linguists, code, alphabet
Speaks, does not write
B and V
C
K
“Ve’I.”

they send children
bilingual teachers
two languages
on the road
walk 4, 5 hours
to remember

teacher
live together
live community
remember

to visit schools
poor
without shoes
collection
pencils or money
Happy, inculcate memory

cry beautiful communities

30 years
of Earth
Students
professionals
doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers
proud

bow their heads
they held the hand
special greeting
mother tongue, speak my tongue
Reaffirm

prepare dance, poetry, wardrobe, instruments
in the middle of the community

inspire
invite
translate
exist

government
municipalities
You have wanted to deny my existence
indigenous trampled
lives
communities

I do not deny indigenous, but defend
I am indigenous
earth, air
Of the water, And the sun
Survivor
slaves
racism, half Blood
jailed because I am indigenous
Justice

We

revolution and love.

respect my culture.

The “why” of liberatory pedagogy—theory in the flesh.
Identity and personal histories. Ita Viiko stated that her work in language and cultural preservation was made possible by her parents ensuring that she learned their indigenous language. In this she stated “. . .because I grew up, my parents taught me to speak the Mixteco. So, the first thing learned at home was Mixteco. At school, was where they taught me to speak Spanish.” Without her indigenous identity and her family’s intergenerational decision to preserve the language, she would not have been able to harness her family’s wisdom as a guide and a source of pride that made her choose to remember it and create the possibility to preserve culture within her own community. She stated that she witnessed many people in her community become so ashamed of their language that they would forget it on purpose. In her positionality to preserve her language as a teacher, she demonstrated how she was able to rescue herself and her community. It was also shown through Ita Viiko’s narrative that her connections to the community allowed her to connect with a city coordinator that connected her to her position.

The “how” of liberatory pedagogy—third space theory.

Relationships, tools, and resources. Ita Viiko’s narrative highlighted that she did her work with limited resources, but through clothes, song, dance, poems, language classes, food, and parties, she was able to find different ways to teach students and also increase the pride they felt in themselves. The creation of new ways to preserve language was made possible from the presence of the program and, in turn, it created a way to maintain culture in time immemorial with the assistance of linguists as well as through
the teachings of educators such as Ita Viiko to share that writing and reading skill to younger generations. At times, sacrifices for educators were relative to context. For example, walking hours and miles to teach students was an investment that Ita Viiko stated she was aware of and one that she was willing to take on to see children become proud of who they were. In a way, that made it possible to manifest revolution with new materialism while also demanding respect from all those who say they do not exist. The work that Ita Viiko did exemplified pedagogical ontologies that made it clear through reading, writing, clothing, poems, speaking, advocating, and mobility with pride that an indigenous culture that many tried to eradicate still existed with pride.

I feel happy because many of my students are now professionals. Some are doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers, and I feel proud because I say ‘yes!’… they took advantage…instilled their culture…they took advantage of everything that one has instilled in them from the beginning. Because the indigenous teachers have another kind of very respectful greeting in the community, that respect…they have to say hello when you arrive, I mean the children already start doing *bows head* when [teachers] arrive…they greet you… and they crouch their head…they grab your hands and kiss your hand. It is a special greeting from the indigenous people. And I, I feel very good because I still find them and they speak to me in their mother tongue, and they call me teacher and say ‘thank you, thank you’ because I did not want to speak my language anymore, but
thanks to you. . .you were a bit strict with us but yes, we feel good because we reaffirm our indigenous language’.

In reference to the pride built and maintained in relation to indigenous heritage Ita Viiko’s shared that her work with the community, the community’s willingness to be open to be taught their indigenous language and see value in it, was possible because of her persistence and ability to bring a sense of community by indigenously being a part of the community. It was observed from Ita Viiko’s narrative that the relationships she built with the community members continued and she stated that when she returns she is welcomed wholeheartedly because of what the community members in the close and distant cities feel she did for them in assisting them with retaining, preserving, and priding themselves on their culture.

The “what” of liberatory pedagogy—radical geography.

Materialized geographic shifts. Ita Viiko shared that not long ago, it was impossible to write in Mixteco because there was no written language for it—it was only spoken orally. Ita Viiko remembered that they went to a city in her state and there were linguists there that helped the teachers create a code for letters and helped them create an alphabet so that they could write in Mixteco. They shared it with the students they taught. Ita Viiko’s interview illustrated how the ability of the linguists to work in partnership with the indigenous teachers created the manifestation of new materialisms that expanded the different ways that the Mixteco language could now be preserved.
Ita Viiko talked about how the language was not really written in a formal way but she presented the ways in which the linguists and the teachers worked together to produce the written language:

B and V …we do not use the B to write, we use the V…. the C and the letter K, we use the K and the C we do not use it in Mixteco to write it. This is the alphabet that they give us, because there is one, for example, to say ‘house’ we say ‘Ve’I.’ Then there is a letter that cuts like the T and has a little dot and is ‘Ve’I.’ So that's the difference because it's not the same thing between how you speak it and how you write it. Yes there are many people who speak it [Mixteco] but they do not write it and they do not read it. . .and what we did in school was that they gave us an hour, an hour to talk, to write, and talk with the children.

In essence, Ita Viiko’s interview illustrated how she pursued liberation through the preservation of language and culture and hoped that this preservation work would produce a holistic, indigenous community efficacy hoped for, but at a scale not yet seen within the country. However, this did not mean that Ita Viiko’s did not see the impact of her efforts nor had she stopped investing in her community.

Ah! An important moment I remember is the children…they play, talk, or laugh. Because I always, well we, the bilingual teachers, we are not on the road where there are cars. You have to walk 4, 5 hours, without a car! You have to walk! . . .people in the villages are very fond of you when a
teacher arrives, and they are very happy to live with the people, because I lived in the community. . . . And that is what reminds me a lot of the people… their customs, their food and to see the smiling children even if they are poor, without shoes. Well, that was made me very happy to see them, yes, because of everything we instilled from the teaching in the children. I always remember because now that I retired, whenever I went to [the state], I was going to visit the schools… and that is why sometimes I collect money… or sometimes I sell soda or beer cans… to take some pencils, or send money to these schools where I traveled… and I feel very good when I see that those who were my students are now married… but when I arrive, they say ‘ay teacher, teacher’ and so, they start crying and, well, we start crying because it is something that is… it’s a nice thing when teachers arrive in the communities they give you everything.

This quote demonstrates materialisms of her efforts and continued contributions to the community. It also demonstrates a mutual respect and appreciation between the community and herself as a community member that has shifted the landscape of new generations that can now pass on their language to their children. In this, Ita Viiko remembered the specific materialisms of her effort to preserve culture and also the dynamics that materialized while on her journey to preserve their culture with the community’s support and their combined resources.
Aspirational geographic shifts. When Ademir, the interpreter, asked Ita Viiko about the importance of her poetry that she performs, she stated that she used it to demand to be seen within other communities and with the government. Much like Okri (2014) discussed how those made invisible can be seen by those who have also been made invisible, Ita Viiko demonstrates how—despite the possibility of harm, she demanded to be seen because there was no sustainable safety in being visible or invisible. As such, she made a decision to be visible at the highest levels she could reach to pursue liberation by artistic means that are culturally important to the community she is a part of.

It’s important because we were going to the state level to demonstrate that our culture still exists. . .Because the government sometimes said ‘no, there are no indigenous people’ and they have been trampled on. . .that is why we announce that we still live and are alive in the communities…and that [they are] bilingual teachers.

She said she loved her poetry and remembered a poem that she recites often for groups about being indigenous. She shared that she really liked this particular poem because it truly expressed the lives that indigenous people live in their communities.

. . .a lot of indigenous people are in prisons and because they cannot speak Spanish, they are held in prisons and this gives me a lot, a lot of sadness with this poetry because many people who do not know how to defend [themselves]. . .when you wake up. . .it's not so easy to be humiliated, then, it's like racism, yes. There are people who talk about, they do not
have another language (Spanish) but they are mestizo, they speak only one language, and they are the ones that [harm] the indigenous people. . .yes.

She offered to perform it in Spanish because in Mixteco there was some that she did not remember fully at that moment. Ita Viiko rose from her chair and took a few steps back while facing Ademir and I. She took a deep breath, dropped her head, and let her head rise once again. At that moment, Ita Viiko released her poem at a volume that was passionate, intentional, and served as a physical manifestation of what liberation was to her. The use of her poem demonstrated the ways in which poetry has the ability to tell histories of fight, pain, and trauma. She began reciting (in Spanish):

I am indigenous
I am indigenous
You have wanted to deny my existence
But I
I do not deny yours
Because I'm
Made of this earth
From air
Of the water
And the sun
I am a survivor of my ancestors
That they have inherited me
A culture
A tongue
A way to respect my brothers
Because we were born to be brothers
And not slaves
We also do not want to be a master
We made the revolution
But you take advantage of it
And they say
That my culture
Does not exist
I'm in jail
And they say I'm a criminal
Justice
Justice?
Justice does not exist (crying, wailing)
Because I am indigenous

Ita Viiko finished by saying, “This is my poem.” Though her poem illustrated a materialism, the aspiration that was embedded in the poem came to the fore. The hope that she had is that the humanity of indigenous people would be seen by those who colonized the land and the people. Ita Viiko’s interview illuminated the mistreatment of
her community as well as the institutional harm it faces due to incarceration, language accessibility, and preferential treatment towards Europeans with not consideration of her indigenous community in the job market. In this, Ita Viiko stated that she aspired for a future where her people were valued and given space to value themselves through the preservation of their language and culture without shame.

**Egqumeni**

**Biography.** Egqumeni graduated from an arts academy high school and attended a predominantly white liberal arts college. Egqumeni held a lot of frustrations toward this monocultural experience that continued to his graduate education in natural medicine with a global health focus. Egqumeni had done work abroad and domestically through school and on his own as a farm apprentice, volunteer, and community educator, working in permaculture with Black communities in South America. At the time of the interview, he worked at a community farm. Egqumeni grew up in the Black church with a grandmother who was a minister and a grandfather who was a barber; two positions that were extremely community-oriented and respected within his Black community. Egqumeni’s family has been in their Pacific Northwest town for generations but were slowly being displaced by gentrification. The organization he worked with was slowly shifting from being predominantly white to being more diverse in terms of people of color. The organization was shifting its focus to communities
of color that had been neglected in farm education, respect for the land, and land cultivation.

The art of liberatory pedagogy.

You're asking me to, like, describe the work I do.
And it's hard
because
the work I do...
I learned from watching my elders in the community...

That doesn't really have a title or position description

My family's from the church
I was raised like...
...we never got anywhere on time

*laughs*
if you're a Black person
you understand

it was like somebody holding space and being like

I see you.

you're not gon get that from everyone.
I feel like that was, kind of...that's the way that I learned how to do the work

love on the community
keep our legacy alive
remember who we are
It just is what it is...
this is where I come from.

“this is slavery”

How can I do the work this work with my people
frame it in a way where its accessible

if you want to serve somebody
you have to offer things that are tailored to them.

I’d rather be the person that pops over to ya house
sit on the porch
all the kids walk by
and see you sitting on the porch
than be talking to somebody in the classroom

I just feel a really big responsibility to Black folks

You're not able to give Black students everything they need to succeed within the confines of the school.
I've just grown not to expect those things
I'm mad about it.

*sigh*

showing up authentically
ready to do the work
claim
claim this place
claim

my family's history and legacy in this part of a country doesn't really get recognized people don't think that there are Black people here

much less Black people that have been here for a long time and coming from the hilltop where it's not . . . it just wasn't safe when I was growing up. . . it's still not safe in a lot of ways and now folks are displaced and gentrified to other places

they want to be finding a solution of where is... not just like the next place we gon live but the next place we're going to thrive and build our community.
what we setting up for our kids
our little cousins
because I see my cousins right now that are growing up in the city

half the families can't even stay there and they move to another place
and then when they're coming to the hilltop it's just not the same experience that it was before
its losing Black folks.

And it's losing the way that Black folks hold space for each other.

. . .its losing
you know
. . . it's losing

what I want to see come out of my work is...

That's a good ass question

more folks from my community building community rural areas

having more access to the environment and land resources and actually controlling the land the places that we live the food that we eat be more involved

not looking to other folks to do stuff for us but do it for ourselves.

don't ask young people for advice
* laughs*
Nah, you know but for real speak with the elders speak with folks that that have been doing the work that made their lives the work.

Don't think that you are going to get any recognition for it
Don't think you're going to get paid at a higher station in life or more Instagram followers from doing this type of work.

know that it's a very slow and gradual type generational process and you may not see the fruits of your labor within your lifetime
decide how important the work is to you and if you're willing to do this type of position where regardless of if you get celebrated or recognized regardless of if you have food to eat when you go home or if you have a roof over your head

and if those things for you are non-negotiable
You should really think about if you want to do this type of work the way you want to do this type of work because people have been doing it forever.

we have been doing it forever
our ancestors have been doing it and have passed it down to us.
And... there's no glory in it other than the satisfaction of being in service to other people.

The “why” of liberatory pedagogy—theory in the flesh.

Identity-informed liberatory pedagogical praxis. Egqumeni stated that he grew up watching the ways that his grandparents gave community members advice and money, always checking in with people to have conversations if for no other reason than to make it clear that they were present and around to share space with them. Egqumeni recalled
that he learned ways of being that later influenced the development of his tailored curriculum. He stated that his focus was oriented towards mending the relationship that marginalized communities had with the land so that they can be liberated through the teachings of how to work it. In this initial orientation, Egqumeni stated how he began to notice how community could act as or influence curriculum:

I really got to see them…their role was just to like love on the community and to steward it…to be elders…to keep our legacy alive and I remember to remember who we are… so I feel like that's kind of the messaging that I got when I was a child- never to do a career for the money…never to think about my own success or my own progress, but to think about what I could do for my community…for my people. So I was always kind of attracted to stuff like that.

Egqumeni discussed how cultural ways of knowing informed the ways in which one understood how to “hold space.” Egqumeni’s recollection of what it meant to hold space was a source of laughter in the interview when he recalled that his family “never got anywhere on time” because of the importance of holding space for those within the community.

…if you're a Black person, you understand it was like somebody holding space and being like, I see you. You're not gon get that from everyone. I feel like that's the way that I learned how to do the work. And I don't believe its work. But I don't really think of it as like…I'm a such and such
or so and so I'm a community member trying to like... try to create a change.

This way of holding space demonstrated was a skill. This skill was one that Egqumeni stated that he believed transferred to the ways in which he practiced liberatory pedagogy and managed learning space dynamics in education environments. Not only that, he shared that his observed and learned ways of connecting with community in a way that felt comfortable and authentic also informed the type of teacher he wanted to be and the spaces he wanted to teach.

So I took a teaching class and was like, teaching is not for me... I would rather be like your Sunday school teacher. *laughs* Not the same content but like... Yeah, I would rather be like the person that pops over to ya house and like you have to sit on the porch, and all the kids walk by and see me sitting on the porch... than be like talking to somebody in the classroom. So I just wanted to do [it] more informal[ly]... I wanted to... I think maybe, I just feel like a really big responsibility to like Black folks. . . this is really important to me. You're not able to give Black students everything they need to succeed within the confines of the school, so I felt like I'd be able to be more effective as an informal educator.

These witnessed ontologies illustrated how he believed that those within his family, specifically, and his community broadly, pushed him to pursue liberation because of his connection to land, community, and Blackness. Egqumeni stated what truly
catalyzed his entry into food and land justice work was literature from a course in college that produced representational literature of Black liberation and internships, but also described the difficulties that arose in taking information from one space with no cultural context and attempting to recreate those models within communities of color.

...what really got me into this food justice and garden work is... I took that class and it was my first introduction to like post colonialism to surrealism. I remember reading like, Paulo Freire and Aimé Césaire, and Franz Fanon and learning critical race theory. And that was the first time that I felt like I had the language to talk about my experiences, you know, so then I felt like ‘Ha! This is what it is! Everybody oughta know this! I need to spread it!’

Initially, Egqumeni was introduced to liberation theory through literature but his narrative highlighted that something was missing when he tried to separate these theories in literature from the skills he needed to learn for farm education. He stated that he soon realized that he would have to tailor what he learned from people who did not share trauma with land and make the teachings useful for community members like himself in order to feel comfortable with working through that trauma. He shared that, though he had begun the decolonization of his mind, he had to go through the process of decolonizing his body as well. This decolonization processes prepared him to learn how to farm and oriented him towards what would later be used to transform his body into a source of embodied curriculum. In this he stated “I was like I've been doing all this head
stuff and I need to do some body stuff . . . you know, get into my body . . . bring the decolonization into my body”.

Egqumeni stated that he knew the material to teach to his community from his apprenticeships and internships. However, he also shared that he needed to remember his body as an intergenerational materialization to undo what the internships made him susceptible to lose when education is not connected to the soul and identities housed within that soul.

So I signed up for this farm internship at this place called Garden Raised Bounty in Olympia. . . all white. I'm doing farm hand stuff there and doing farm education. I was like, ‘Oh, this is fun. I get to like, wake up early in the morning, go straight to work, move my body all day.’ I was like ‘this is dope. I think I want to continue doing this.’ So, that summer I moved back to [home]. *laughs* and I'm like Okay, I started this in Olympia, Imma keep doing the same work here and it's gonna be the same… and it was completely different. I started working for the [community garden in my hometown]. I wrote my little cover letter with all my academic buzz words…and went in and started teaching people from my own community…people from my family…from youth at schools that I went to, and they were like, ‘what the hell is this?’ . . . Like, ‘there's no way are we out on this farm!’
Egqumeni’s interview revealed that, through the practice of remembering, he realized that he needed to use endarkened epistemologies (Hurtado, 2013). These endarkened epistemologies demonstrated how they could be utilized to connect with communities he was a part of and to learn from those with endarkened epistemologies globally in places ranging from Soul Fire Farms—a Black and Brown led farm education program—to Bahia, Brazil.

**The “how” of liberatory pedagogy—third space theory**

*Space cultivation.* I asked Egqumeni what advice he would give to people trying to do what he has done. Egqumeni’s reply encompassed not only the valuation of communities that have experienced and still experience marginalization intergenerationally, he also stated that the affirmation and valuing intergenerational wisdom is paramount.

...go talk to the elders in your family or in your community. ...don't ask young people for advice *laughs* ... but for real, I would tell that person to speak with the elders... speak with folks that that have been doing the work... and that made their lives the work.

Egqumeni also stated that through this work, one had to release any expectations of security or luxury. In this, he stated that the expectation to be spoiled with admiration or grandiose monetary compensation were frivolous and that liberation in his field of work took understanding that there is a process towards liberation and that it does not happen instantaneously.
Don't think that you are going to get any recognition for it. Don't think you're going to get paid over at a higher station in life or more Instagram followers from doing this type of work. And know that it's like it's a very slow and gradual type generational process and you may not see the fruits of your labor within our lifetime.

Lastly, he emphasized the importance of remembering why one oriented themselves towards this type of work and urged anyone interested in farm education or the stewarding of the land to be guided by the ethics and philosophies that they committed to. He stated that one must do this work from a place of being called to do it and being invested in what it can do for community in healing and self-determination.

...you have to decide how important the work is to you and if you're willing to, to do this type of position where like, regardless of if you get celebrated or recognized... regardless of if you have food to eat when you go home, or if you have a roof over your head... and if those things for you like that's not negotiable...you should really think about if you want to do this type of work and the way you want to do this type of work... because people have been doing it forever. . . like we have been doing it forever... our ancestors having been doing it and have passed it down to us. And. . . there's no glory, other than the satisfaction of being in service to other people.
Egqumeni’s words demonstrate the humility one must have to be in farm education and the trust one must have with their ancestral lineage to guide them in doing farm education work for liberation. His ability to be immersed in programs that he transferred skills from and to be in spaces that connected him back to a depth of Blackness felt, but never seen demonstrated the ways in which he used his resources to bring liberation to himself and to others in his community. For Egqumeni, liberation was created through healing trauma with land, building skills for food autonomy, and self-determination that was concerned with the systemic disconnection to both the aforementioned.

**Relationships, tools, and resources.** Egqumeni stated the difficulties that arose in his first attempt to bring farm education to his community. He stated that when he began working at the community farm, there was nothing about the curriculum or the orientation of the farm to build the efficacy of students of color or attend to intergenerational land trauma.

… so like the farm school [at my organization] at the time was mostly white so our educators were white in a [predominantly POC, specifically Black] school district. . .before there just wasn't cultural resources… they took the generic curriculum and taught it to everyone.

Egqumeni stated that shifting the focus of the organization in farm education was challenging. However, Egqumeni’s narrative showed how these
difficulties gave him the opportunity to figure out what he needed and where he needed to go to do work.

...Since then I haven't really been able to make any changes to the curriculum cause you know like that's a whole process... I've just had been incorporating some different teaching tools for my educators and then incorporating more visual tools for kids, so I could give you like the whole run down cause it’s like reportable stuff.

The work that he stated that he pursued was based on what he wanted to bring back to his communities. His work also demonstrated how he could teach in a culturally relevant (Ladson-Billing, 1995) way to maintain engagement and help his audience actualize collective liberation.

...so some changes that we made this year since I started...we begin each day with an indigenous land welcome and we have some teaching tools to talk about Clackamas and Chinook folks. Willow Dome now has a new place name on it, its e'-na stick... that’s how you say willow in Chinook as well as the cedar tree has a place name in Chinook... the wetlands has a place name sign that's in kaya-puyah and I gave my educators the tools to be able to talk about those things and tie them back in the curriculum...

Egqumeni demonstrated his ability to exist in multiple spaces and shift the Third Spaces he existed in as he learned the culture of those spaces. Existing in multiple spaces displayed how this existence gave him the confidence to build and
invest in the creation of the culture within the Third Space of his own communities much like Bhabha (1994) and Bhabha and Rutherford (2006) discussed.

…the staff are training on using mindfulness techniques in classrooms for peace in schools… we do restorative justice training with [an organization in town]… and we teach on how to interrupt moments of hate in the classroom… trauma informed practices with the school district… the trauma informed practice officer and their coordinator comes out to facilitate some workshops and we talk a lot about like the demography of the [eastern regions of the city] and how that actually affects the students' experiences when they come here.

I asked Egqumeni what he felt was missing and he responded “[a] diversity and equity lens. . . I'm a believer in like, if you want to serve somebody, you have to offer those things that are not tailored to them.” He stated that, without culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in relation to land with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), a lack of traction would be realized, especially with Black community members who felt that being on a farm was too closely connected to the trauma of slavery. This was evident when he stated that participants in programs that he was facilitated said things such as “this is slavery.”
...we've incorporated some ethno-botanical cards... so you're walking around the farm and you'll see different crops, there's some cards next to them that have the names of the crops and the languages from the region where they're from and then some cultural facts about the about the actual crop itself...check out the bees and we have a lot of info about East Africa...our visual materials are printed in nine different languages... the ones spoken in the school district [we work with]...

Egqumeni’s work on the far east side of the county demonstrated the partnership between a farm and a school district with attention given to the communities that existed within that school district when building the curriculum. The area of town the school was low-income and predominantly POC (people of color). Egqumeni stated that he worked with fifth graders at the school district and youth from other elementary schools in the area. The students came to the farm as a part of a core hands-on, science curriculum credit satisfaction process for the students’ matriculation.

...So you see like math and science...math and science [teaching materials] are up with nine languages...you go into to the main classroom and there's a plant part poster that is printed in nine different languages...we have a basement multicultural children's library so new books.

This approach and partnership with the school district demonstrated how the extension of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) to youth
served as an attempt to interrupt the intergenerational trauma and the byproducts of colonization.

Egqumeni’s work was also demonstrated to be culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) in relation to the program’s ability to extend course credits to participating students. The liberatory components of his work involved the development of the curriculum for community groups, field trips, and organizing events such as an international food market where his organization gave youth tokens that could be redeemed for fruits and vegetables, in conjunction with auxiliary services.

Egqumeni stated that he was working with the organization’s leadership and staff to move the direction of farm education to more culturally-specific organizational partners that were being pursued in a partnership capacity in the interest of moving communities from trauma and epistemicide into liberation through a relationship with the land. Students from marginalized communities were visiting the farms more than one or two times a year and participated in programming focused on cultural engagement and connections to food and land. In addition, to explain how pursuing liberation-defined means can impact the possibility of liberation in other contexts, Egqumeni explained how he was not just working on food justice but really working on anti-displacement through food and land justice by also attempting to develop community land trusts.

Egqumeni mentioned that he did have mentors that had, over time, become some of his best friends. Egqumeni shared how important it was to have a “go to” person—a person whom you appreciate because of the way that person leads. Egqumeni felt that he
had more connection with leaders who tended to lean away from unnecessary attention and that did not require adulation to work in the community effectively in a way that allows them to carry on with supporting Black people in the community. He mentioned mentors but also shared that their family and elders within their family were their rooted homes of wisdom.

**The “what” of liberatory pedagogy—radical geography.**

*Materialized geographic shifts.* Egqumeni’s work illustrated how it shifted the geography of the organizational impact on marginalized communities. His work also demonstrated how one could reorient the organization towards racially marginalized groups as opposed to field trips of entertainment for others that serve as an opportunity for healing with marginalized communities. Lastly, he demonstrated his connection to culturally-specific groups in order to build relationships between the organization and the community as well as how those connections led to the development of culturally-specific resources that the organization was using across programs that have the ability to impact how others receive and utilize farm education.

*Aspirational geographic shifts.* Egqumeni stated that the goal for his work was to build capacity. This capacity was not just for himself but was moreover the built capacity of community skills and community belief in the power of food and land liberation. He stated that he hoped that he could work with communities that invest in the autonomy and liberation of Black people through land and food.
...claim this place...claim like my family's history and legacy in this part of a country that like doesn't really get recognized, people don't think that there are Black people here...much less Black people that have been here for a long time.

Egqumeni stated that his hometown was a place where he was witnessing his community be harmed, be displaced, and lose hope. Egqumeni shared how he believed this lack of hope was further diminishing the ability for community members to dream beyond what keeps happening to them in space that harms them.

...and coming from [my hometown] where it's not...it just wasn't safe when I was growing up. And it's still not safe in a lot of ways and now folks are displaced and gentrified to other places...

Despite witnessing this community loss, Egqumeni stated that he felt that there were possibilities for futures. He believed that those futures could exist outside of current realities that threatened the ability to carry out common ways of being such as “holding space” for one another.

...they want to find a solution of like where is not just like the next place we gon live but the next place we're going to thrive and build our community... what are we setting up for our kids and our little cousins, you know, because I see my cousins right now that are growing up in [the city] like half the families can't even stay in [their hometown] and they
move [away to another town]… and then when they're coming [back to the area] it's just not the same experience that it was before…its losing Black folks. And it's also losing the way that Black folks hold space for each other…

The outcome of liberation through sustenance and community reliance is something that Egqumeni stated that he wanted to ensure comes to fruition. He also shared that he continued to gain more skills concerning different ways to obtain this community autonomy, collective liberation, and to actively fortify the community against the displacement that family in their hometown are becoming intergenerationally familiar with.

. . .what I want to see come out of my work is more folks from my community building community in rural areas and having more access to the environmental and land resources and actually controlling the land…places that we live…the food that we eat. . . just be more involved and not looking to other folks to do stuff for us, you know, but do it for ourselves…

Egqumeni’s stated that his hopes were to see the autonomy of his community thrive despite and in spite of historical trauma. He stated that he believed that other possibilities could materialize through forms of land reparations as well as skill building that can concretize the necessary tools needed within community to be self-sustaining without the interference of hegemony.
Overall Findings

Among all of the participants, culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2000), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000), and culturally responsive sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) were utilized. However, the absence of liberation among these pedagogical methods surfaced a gap that all of the participants were invested in filling. In this, the incorporation of culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogy was evolved into liberatory pedagogy wherein all of the participants developed culturally relevant and sustaining resources as well as curriculum and pedagogical approaches to respond not only to situational crises defined and designed by the state in ways such as standardized tests, grades, and the definition of whatever good behavior is conceived to be when applied to students of color, but also attended to the situational crises uplifted within marginalized communities, thus understanding the community as a source of curriculum (Cormier, 2008) and sharing space to co-construct community shifts. The development of the skills and resources necessary to arrive at and further the aforementioned evolution of liberatory pedagogy were all done in the third space (Bhabha, 1994; Bhabha & Rutherford, 2006) or the undercommons as Harney & Moten (2013) conceptualize where the planning as a fugitive took place among those who took on different roles and approaches of subversiveness, explicitness, or insurgency that are housed under the scope of liberation. In this fugitive practice within the undercommons, the participants invested in this work due to their ability and willingness to imagine otherwise (Bell & Desai, 2011; Hughes, 2015; Kenway & Fahey, 2009;
That is, that different realities could exist and to imagine how to make those new realities, geographies, and materialisms come to fruition. With all of the participants, the process of gaining knowledge while planning futures aligned to the *conocimiento* process (Anzaldua, 2003) partially for one participant (Ita Viiko) and fully for others (Jorge, Joaquin, Equmeni, and Sothyia Vibol) but prominent across all participants in relation to the process of the *Arrebato, Coatlicue, Nepantla, The Blow Up, Shifting Realities*.

Sothyia Vibol and Jorge, in this vein, focused solely on the situational crises identified in communities in order to equitably attend to the harm their communities are subjugated to by the state. All of the participants focused on how to interrupt and redirect the trajectory of what that intergenerational means for marginalized communities. This focus hone in on how marginalized communities to react to harm, rather than convincing the structure of whiteness to shift their behavior through pleas. Instead, all of the participants’ pedagogies oriented themselves to demand that harm, or *unnatural disasters* (Levitt & Whitaker, 2009), created by violent epistemologies of colonization, imperialism, and heteropatriarchal white supremacy (McClintock, 2013), be eradicated from the lives of the marginalized and to pursue the means by which it can be. The participants all shared the use and practice of Sankofa (Temple, 2010) to recover lost histories due to epistemicide (Fataar & Subreenduth, 2015; Grosfoguel, 2015; Paraskeva, 2016). All of the participants also built hope and efficacy of possibilities with their students and the practice of *Nea Onnim No Sua A, Ohu* (Akoto, 2013) to develop new
contemplations from hope that have the ability or have already produced new materialisms and knowledge in a way that the stories of the lions (Beckman, 2014; Harris, 2009; Nouwen, 2012) can be told rather than the hunter’s.

The pedagogical impetus, implementation, and materialism of all of the participants’ praxes of liberation housed literary and action based models that served to fill gaps that exist within the field of education, across multiple disciplines, as well as society as a whole. Gaps that all of the participants filled in the absence of liberatory praxis across multiple disciplines, formally and informally in educational spaces, and was done through providing information that lent to the definition of liberation pedagogy in epistemology and ontology. All of the participants also took the liberatory method into their own bodies, informed from their own endarkened epistemology and the Theory in their Flesh in ways (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) to integrate and pull from resources in their bodies and in their communities to move into an ontology that catalyzes liberatory pedagogy impetus, navigation, and actual or aspired materialisms. The belief that hopes could manifest into liberatory materialisms lived at the crux of the practice of liberation in general—the unwavering belief that marginalized communities can be liberated at all is evident in all of the participants’ narratives. All the participants believed that the manifestation of liberatory realities for the marginalized were plausible because of the fact that they as marginalized beings have not only found a way to persist, they have also found creative ways to exist without apology despite the peril that they know they may encounter in the ability to live as well as sustain job security.
In this, all of the participants believed that safety, in all of its definitions, is not ever guaranteed with the work that they do or the bodies that are in, but also in their daily lives. This is evident in Ita Viiko’s awareness that though language can be preserved, indigenous communities are still seen as subhuman. This is evident in Sothyia Vibol’s story because black people are still being murdered. This is evident in Jorge’s story, because sometimes the neighborhood does not allow students to come back to school. This is evident in Joaquin’s story because Black and Brown queer and trans youth are still fighting for visibility, safety, and navigating the precarity of hypervisibility. This is also evident in Egqumeni’s story because his family and the community he is from continues to be displaced.

From this, it was identified that all of the participants utilize their pedagogy as a tool of survivance in terms of building efficacy that leads to liberation but also in the form of believing that without liberation, survival, and the ability to thrive is impossible because the diminishment of bodily value and bodily care (Ball & Olmedo, 2013) kills the body, the mind, and the soul if it is not interrupted and if the marginalized do not take or make the opportunity to affirm their own value (Dussel, 2013). The explicitly stated spirit embedded in the core of the participants’ work (Ita Viiko, Egqumeni, Joaquin, and Sothyia Vibol) manifested an understanding of some things tangible and other things embodied from the Theory in their Flesh (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) and their Endarkened Epistemology (Dillard, 2000, 2012; Hurtado 2013).
The ways in which the spirit or the soul is used as a resource of navigation among the participants relate to the work of (Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, & Tyson, 2000) where what compels one to pursue liberation, understand pain and trauma because it is a part of their reality due to their identities, and the belief that some manifestation of liberatory change can produce, not a utopia but rather heterotopias Beckett, Bagguley, and Campbell (2017) that can attend to community specific needs. All of the participants work heavily relied on educating and collectively working with community, to pursue liberation through imagination and in determining, creating, and constructing the conditions necessary to achieve liberation. This notion of work aligns to the work of Bell & Desai (2011), Hughes (2015), Kenway & Fahey (2009), and Samson (2005) as it pertains to imagining, but Mariame Kaba’s words (Macaré, 2015) as it pertains to imagination, planning, and materialism:

I chose to imagine a world without prisons because it’s a central focus of my organizing. I am actively working toward abolition, which means that I am trying to create the conditions necessary to ensure the possibility of a world without prisons. It was wonderful for me to have a chance to write about a place and time where we’d already succeeded in ending prisons. (para. 12)

The spiritual practice (hooks, 1994) and radical hope (Giroux, 2004; hooks, 1994) of liberatory pedagogy produces an outcome with all of the participants’ work “specializing in the wholly impossible” (McCluskey, 1997, p. 403) with the totality of
themselves in mind, spirit and body in with the goal of liberatory materialisms. The liberatory materialism that all of the participants discussed and pursue relate to the way that Grosz (2010), Ferrando (2013) and Benett, Cheah, Orlie, and Grosz (2010) discussed the production of feminist materialisms. All of the participants’ discussions also related to the way in which Stea (1969) discussed the implication of materialisms and the need to refrain from recreating paradigms of oppression under the veil of progression. Despite these possibilities and materialism, the participants all had different relationships with power in partnership.

All participants were housed under a purely or modified form of Marxism or an anarchist strategy of radical geography shift. All of the participants had some relationship to the state. Eqquumeni had a relationship with the state through the hands-on science class that gave credits to students. However, the anarchy that existed in him working with community specific organizations and building curriculum and organizational spaces that can sustain the infrastructure he was trying to build was pivotal in finding a way to connect with marginalized students in a way that was more far reaching to marginalized families than the smaller scope of gaining science credits. Ita Viiko worked for a state-sponsored program that made it possible for her to be compensated for preserving her culture, Sothyia Vibol worked in contract with a school district and attended graduate school to be able to work in public schools, but she also taught in the summer literacy program where she, as an educator, had the latitude to teach from a liberatory pedagogy approach in partnership with her colleagues at Liberation Academy that all believed in...
the possibility of liberation and supported each other as colleagues as they all supported
the efficacy and literacy of their students. Joaquin worked within higher education, but
also worked through anarchy in collectives, healing justice, and body work, and with
community organizations to tend to harm and accountability with communities outside
and without the interference of the state. Their overall belief is that educational and
prison systems as institutions should be abolished and used each location they were in to
inform the other for that goal. Jorge worked at a charter school, but a charter school that
still must abide by state regulations to some extent. Nevertheless, anarchy comes into
play when one focuses on the ways in which the school is connected to a community
organization, the curriculum is connected to community needs, the schools holds an
infrastructure to attend to student needs, and students are supported in mobilizing for
shifting the outcomes of their own communities in a way that is embedded in the
curriculum and culture of the school because they do not have to abide by particular
policies that are punitive in public schools.

The decisions to work with institutions often worked in learning spaces wherein
the term partnership was often used, but the power within the partnership continued to
exist significantly in the hands of the state due to the state’s power within society.
Sothyia Vibol found that though working in a high school but having a contract with the
school district was beneficial, the relationships that resistant teachers had with the school
district tightened the tension within the school that made it increasingly more difficult for
her to practice her pedagogy. Ita Viiko was a part of a partnership with the state, but
instead of the community deciding when she was no longer an effective teacher, the state
got to decide and she also found herself going to the capitol to push for visibility of her
community instead of the state supporting her and her community through far more than
a language preservation program. Egqumeni identified that the curriculum used within
the school system for science credit needed to be updated but did not have the power to
do it himself and that the process to update the curriculum would be a long process where
he had little to no power to influence. Joaquin worked in a university, but they stated that
they believed that as they practiced their pedagogy, people with more power than them at
the university felt Joaquin was getting too comfortable—an institutional perspective that
could influence their matriculation and their academic clout. Lastly, Jorge’s relationship
with the state as a former public school educator was one where he identified the
systemic breakdown that was failing marginalized students, but the limited amount of
power he had, did not make space for his voice to be heard, nor did it make space to work
in collaboration with others to reorient the school’s goals to attend to student needs.

These partnerships with institutions that operated as organisms were often ones of
a parasitic instead of a symbiotic nature for the aesthetics of equity rather than the work
to produce it (Morgan, 2006). Regarding Ita Viiko, Joaquin, and Jorge—the inequitable
distribution of power and harm placed on them by institutions or organizations they
worked for moved them to gain skills and tools they need to pursue liberation from
another location or moved into roles more conducive to the manifestation of liberation.
As Waheed (2018) urged, those who seek relationships with others who are not ready to
do the work necessary must leave when they realize those they sought to work with must be convinced to be concerned, in this context with the liberation of marginalized bodies, no matter how much love of collective liberation is professed.

Most commonly, the participants (Joaquin and Sothyia Vibol) had a somewhat tumultuous relationship and had a definition of liberation that expanded beyond the limits that it may have existed in learning space, making it clear that their partners were not ready to fully invest in the materialization of liberation. This lack of infrastructure relates to Harney and Moten’s (2013) work wherein they cite how institutions parade as if they are already or are willing to work towards the liberation or at the very least equity for marginalized populations, but that they refuse to find a way to bear the shifts of what the participants bring. This reorientation of this research to emphasize participant voice through their own identification of what resonated to them in their work made space for all of the participants to support their overall narrative with a spiritual and soul informed presentation of their pedagogical praxis as (Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, & Tyson, 2000). The found poems produced themes such as the importance of interrupting grading regulations, the limitations of working with oppositional forces, the power of refusal, the need for practitioner introspection and embodiment, attending to the different needs of communities, and the necessity of collective mobilization of marginalized population wisdom to emerge.

All of the participants explained what resonated with them most in their work and in their narratives that was considered by the participants to be integral and necessary for
liberation in general, but for liberatory pedagogy specifically. Some of the poem’s pieces with the participants Jorge, Joaquin, and Egqumeni were discussed by the researcher in relation to findings, but the text selected for the poems in the other two participants were not focused on by the researcher’s own initial findings in the ways that the participants’ highlighted text did for the other two participants (Ita Viiko and Sothyia Vibol). This, in turn, indicated the limits of researcher analysis in terms of what is most important to an interviewee.

The researcher’s findings did not always focus on the highlights of what the participants felt were the most resonant components of their work due to their positionality and narrative of the researcher rather than immersion of working alongside the participants. This occurred because the researcher can only glean what resonated with the participants based on their stories but could through this process it as identified that the participants have an ability to stress the weight of particular pieces of their stories that exemplifies their relationship with liberatory pedagogy. However, these gleaned findings alone are coded findings absent of the participants’ specific and explicit highlights of their work, creating responses to resonance without question of significant importance to the participants that they wanted to uplift.

Pathways of and to Liberation varied in Marxist and an Anarchist approaches to their work among participants (government funded, school district contracts, alternative charter schools, non-profit organizational autonomy, trust, vulnerability, accountability). Ita Viiko, Sothyia Vibol (in context of the school partnership) can both be considered
Marxist or Reparatory. Pedagogy was considered a spiritual practice in ways that expanded on hooks (1994) introduction and ontology of the term (sense of soul, ancestral and learned ways of being from survival, intangible, embodied, inherited, decolonization of the mind and the body, holding space) explicitly by Sothyia Vibol and Joaquin. Participants took on different ways to gain or retain the skills they needed to do their work (apprenticeships, graduate school, networks of your people, collectives, recovering histories and retaining new narratives, connecting relevant topics to students to assist in mobilization, literature, practice of refusal, review of personal and political commitments, curriculum connected to community issues, accommodations in classrooms, song, dance, etc.).

The central theme among all of the participants in decentering of whiteness was the underpinning of classroom discussion, navigation, content, and pedagogy style addressing fundamental that lay the foundation for the impetus of liberation—the admission and understanding of oppression towards marginalized populations as non-negotiable, especially with working in learning spaces that were inhabited predominantly if not fully by communities of color, which all participants did within a location of their work. Identity, Space, and Outcomes are inextricably intertwined with one another and often, if not always overlap much like a Venn diagram across different contexts. The notion of leaving to pursue heightened liberation was a theme across all but one participant, Ita Vioko because the government program she worked for aged teachers out after 30 years of service. Hope, patience, and imagination were common themes and a
belief system across all participants in curriculum development and pedagogical praxis. All participants recognized their work could not be done in a silo and inviting others into the work and developing authentic relationships was pivotal. One sole model within or across disciplines for liberatory was identified as irresponsible because different communities contextually have different needs that should be attended to. All of the participants were either at the time of the interview or previously deciding or had decided whether formal, nonformal, or a combination of the two was their space to inhabit as far as learning style and spaces. In addition, all of the participants focused on root issues as opposed to symptoms to seek out liberation through education and pedagogy specifically.

The most comprehensive finding overall was that liberatory pedagogy is not a process, it is instead, an iterative and generative existence—it is a kinetic art of wholeness. The existence of the practitioners in their totality was liberation. In this, the marginalized bodies of educational activists across discipline are and become a materialized convergence of identity, space, and geographic shifts that bring forth liberation, which is liberation. Understanding that liberatory pedagogy is not a process made space to understand it as something that was not diffractive or splintered based on context, but is instead, a pedagogy of wholeness—a wholeness of self, a wholeness in space, and a wholeness in actions that manifest liberation. Even when the activists felt things in their practice or in their selves were incomplete, the wholeness lies not in deficit but as an asset that contributes to a wholeness of awareness that readies them to tend to themselves with care and accountability that is necessary to do their work.
Summary

In summary, all five participants provided a rich amount of data in the format of correspondences, audio recordings, transcripts, and found poems as it pertains to the participants’ storied lives and their practice of liberatory pedagogy in reference to their specific field(s) of work. Chapter Five will utilize this data to identify themes across participants and discuss the implications as well as the limitations of the research, and recommend future research as it pertains to the topic of liberatory pedagogy and its kinetics.
Chapter V: Discussion

In this chapter, the discussion is organized by the theoretical framework components and the subsequent research questions. In the discussions of each research question, surfaced themes were uplifted. These themes were supported by selected participant narrative examples that were presented as findings in chapter four to show the manifestation of stated themes. Discussion in this chapter is also supported by relationships to literature. Lastly, this chapter includes, implications on educational practice, limitations, implications for future research, and the conclusion.

Theory in the Flesh—The “Why” of Liberation Pedagogy

*Black trans people are extra special*

*because we’ve…*

*had to be imaginative in order to survive*

*being a Black queer trans person is a manifestation of that*

*everything you thought about gender*

*I am and am not*

*everything you thought you knew*

*and everything you couldn’t have fathomed…and*

*I am*

-Joaquin

**Research question one.** The first research question asked, *In what ways do the identities of educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines matter in*
relation to their use of liberatory pedagogy? Findings from the study reveal that: (a) most participants’ identities were the reasons why they were in the roles they were in. They sought to manifest radical geographies with informed contextual liberatory orientation; (b) identity helped to build trust, vulnerability, authenticity, accountability as well as knowledge repositories, and was the reason as to why and how they were guided in pedagogy and praxis by their soul and spirit in ways that gave birth to hope for those in the community that they seek to work with; (c) identity was useful for navigating learning spaces and used to proactively develop pedagogical approach and responses; (d) the recognition of trauma that was in their flesh connected to the trauma of the students and guided the way that the participants approached their work; (e) participants wanted to stop the cycle of educational harm themselves through pedagogical praxis; and (f) identity influenced he ways that participants relearned to trust their ways of knowing and ways of being.

Identity. All of the participants made it clear that having racially marginalized identities and intersections thereof pushed them to believe that a better reality could be constructed. Therefore, they advocated for themselves, the people in their communities and others for whom intersectional marginalization was a part of their daily lived realities. The participants’ urge and retained commitment to practice liberatory pedagogy was fueled by their endarkened epistemology (Dillard, 2000, Hurtado, 2013). It was also fueled by their understanding that their bodies existed as theories not yet placed in the
canon of literature (hooks, 1994) but were known and understood in marginalized communities.

Just as Okri (2014) explained that the child in his work was invisible, as was his mother and because of their shared identity she could see him, Jorge, Joaquin, and Sothyia Vibol felt similarly invisible to community, society, and educational systems. This lived experience of invisibility allowed Jorge, Joaquin, and Sothyia Vibol to see and assist students that were made systemically invisible. Additionally, Ita Viiko had the ability to learn her people’s native language from her parents in her home and from their endarkened epistemology (Dillard, 2000, 2012; Hurtado, 2013). Lastly, Egqumeni’s cited need for a process of healing among communities of color and land was catalyzed through a “politic born out of necessity” (Moraga & Anzaldua, 1981, p. 23) required to move through and towards liberation. He could see the gaps present when farm education approaches were racially exclusionary, not culturally relevant, or culturally responsive to the health of communities of color, specifically Black communities.

*Trust, vulnerability, and authenticity.* Participants, specifically Sothyia Vibol and Jorge, often cited how vulnerability and authenticity were crucial to their work. In Jorge’s work, the collaborative nature of the projects within the class, within the school, in partnership with the community organization, the talking circles, and the impromptu, as Jorge called them, “real talks” creates the opportunity for students to express what is happening in their lives. In Sothyia Vibol’s narrative she uplifted how the fluid objectives of the class in the summer literacy program are dictated by the needs and realities of the
students, specifically concerning healing and organized plans of action that lead to connections to literature read within class organically. These opportunities existed so that students could bring their whole selves to the class, support each other, and resolve conflict so that the students could fully learn. They also extended opportunities for students to connect curriculum to action that can positively influence their futures from the enactment of their constructivist learning and self-agency and self-determination. The ability to have these discussions support lays a deeper and stronger foundation of relationships and trust between the students and instructors. If the students do not trust the educator, the healing nature of dialogue will not gain any traction. Therefore, Jorge and Sothyia Vibol are honest about their pasts, their cultural relationship to the students, and their present reality as an approach to demonstrate vulnerability, pain, frustration, and fallibility so that students can feel comfortable to do the same.

In reference to social interaction, Sothyia Vibol and Jorge knew that they could not be effective in the classroom without the trust of their students and the students’ trust of each other. They both work with predominantly students of color, Sothyia Vibol’s interaction is with Black students and Jorge’s interaction is with Black and Brown students who have interfaced with the court system—most of whom are still on probation, who have been harmed, who have caused harm, and have been thrown away by a multitude of people in their lives. In Jorge’s case, these are students who were thrown away inside of and across schools so often, that schools take the first steps necessary to throw them out of society. In Sothyia Vibol’s case, her students had no
support that recognized the incongruences of representation of educators and administrators of color and the importance of what restorative practices mean as an intervention to the school to prison pipeline as well as educator discipline rooted in anti-Blackness was constantly ignored or minimized. One may not be surprised by the discarding of marginalized students if Shakur’s (1978) words are referenced in that “the schools we go to are a reflection of the society that created them” (p. 181). These are the students who were happily forgotten because they were never seen as human from birth, students whose societal interactions become the self-fulfilling prophecy of their worth and the justification of their disposability (Deckha, 2008). Trust is not an easy thing to build alongside trauma, but Jorge worked to build up trust and process trauma with students at the same time. Jorge realized his specialization was not mental health, but his intimate knowledge of how trauma typically surfaces with youth in the neighborhood gave him a skill of sorts to be able to hold space and conversations with students that was coupled with other partners who also work within the school such as MSW (Master’s in Social Work) interns, case workers, and transformational justice specialists that work alongside him.

**Proactivity.** All of the participants were catalyzed to practice liberatory pedagogy because they dared to dream or to imagine otherwise (Bell & Desai, 2011; Hughes, 2015; Kenway & Fahey, 2009; Samson, 2005) realities beyond what has and what does exist while contextually attending to what the manifestation of liberation means or how it could look that is contingent upon the needs of community members based on the fields
the participants and the relationships they proactively know they must build that is informed by their intergenerational ways of knowing how oppression cyclically presents itself. For example, Joaquin’s ability to navigate, to see, to exist, to connect dots are all attributed to who Joaquin is, in a body that by all accounts of history should not exist because of the level of erasure and violence placed on them and those who share their identities. Joaquin connected dots and worked towards “specializing in the wholly impossible” (McCluskey, 1997, p. 403). They, in vitality, are the manifestation of the wholly impossible. They made it clear that they do this work so that no other student has to go through what they went through (Sleeter & McClaren, 1995).

Trauma. All Participants cited that their trauma was a source of their pull to practice liberatory pedagogy. Theory in the Flesh (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) that comes from Sothyia Vibol’s understanding intergenerational trauma of genocide, displacement, and identifying as a guest in her neighborhood and at work is compounded by the theory in her flesh of what it means to be a dark-skinned Asian person in her graduate program. In her program, the complexity and hierarchy of the model minority myth in a space that caters to white supremacy and favors lighter skinned Asian demographics constantly surfaces and at times, to a point that the toxicity of the space made her ill and further exacerbated her lupus diagnosis.

Further, Joaquin’s acknowledgement that they could not fully do the work they do now without working on their body and healing connects to Ball & Odelem’s (2013) work that emphasized the crucial importance of healing and body awareness as a form of
resistance and effectiveness in space. From this, as they move through spaces where their pedagogy is practiced, they feel more equipped to navigate the space to make sure that educating their audience is possible, and they do so by being grounded in who they are.

Egqumeni’s relationship with blackness and farming is a complex one, with trauma from the epistemology of slavery and the lived experience of its intergenerational social implications and the interactions with white supremacist culture that informs expectations, axiology, and biopolitics of the Black body (Lemke, Casper & Moore, 2011). Egqumeni wanted to change that.

**Cycles of harm.** The participants revealed that they felt that the reality in place did not make space for them and will forget them cyclically as it always has. They pursued liberatory pedagogy because oppressors have no vested interest in making liberation come to fruition.

For example, through internal work Joaquin realized that harm had been caused to them and that, they too, had harmed people. Through this retrospective gathering of stories that flowed into his restorative justice practices with communities’ members who had been harmed and caused harm, Joaquin entered the *cotolxauhqui* and *the blow up* phase of the *conocimiento* (Anazaldua, 2003). This bodily reconciliation that flowed into shifting ontologies similar to Shakur’s (1978) perspective that to truly do liberation work “one must fight against two groups, institutions and yourself” (p. 12). Thus this work requires a “politic born out of necessity” (Moraga & Anzaldua, 1981, p. 23) by way of endarkened epistemology (Dillard, 2000, 2012; Hurtado, 2013).
Moreover, Jorge’s school experience forced him to absorb how much the world did not care about low income people of color, the *othered* (Ball, 2012). In space and over time, Jorge constantly interfaced with institutions that are constructed to never let people that look like him forget the power they have over the marginalized to impede their mobility. Working in the public school system only showed Jorge the mechanics in operation that did not support him and oppressed his students. These mechanisms showed Jorge the “politics of ambivalence” (McClintock, 2013, p. 28).

Though Sothyia Vibol and her colleagues have experienced similar challenges to their students, it was clear that they were victimized by trauma again with the “absence of a concrete social commitment” (Dussel, 2013, p. 235), absorbing and navigating through harm and trauma. This devaluation and flippancy to Sothyia Vibol and her colleague’s presence by the high school administration and teachers mirrored how they were treated as students by people in the same positions as the perpetrators of trauma while currently trying to create a better dynamic for their students today. In this instance, the Theory in the Flesh (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) is one that exists in a way of absorbing harm, fighting against it, and trying to reach educators and administrators who practice harm, so they can work with them to stop. It was clear to the students that the educators and administrators thought that restorative justice was for the students, but educators and administrators did not realize that it was being used to show them how they are at the root of catalyzing and perpetuating trauma as well.
Jorge stated that he believed he got a second chance and used it to become a teacher, but it was clear he did not want to become the teacher that perpetuated oppression on behalf of the institution, who watched students fall into the pits of pipelines all too eager to devour marginalized students of color and students of color with multiple marginalized identities. He did not want to automate the oppression of others and himself (Fanon, 1970; Ogbu, 2004). In this, Jorge moved into the *nepantla* of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2003). He was torn between trying to find a way to make one ideology work and looking for something else. What he was looking for, in this time however, did not live in the location of the ideology used in his public school.

*Ways of knowing and ways of being.* The ways in which the participants used their bodies and their communities as a source of curriculum is evident in the work of all of the participants, especially in the ways that identity and the experiences around these identities must respond or be proactive about community shifts that occur due to marginalization, much like Cormier (2008) references generative curriculum. Collins (1991) discussed the positionality and identity of one’s self shifting curriculum from ways of knowing and being and the ways in which Nguyen & Larson (2015) discussed the expanded possibilities of pedagogy and its effectiveness once the value of embodiment and what can come from, being in one’s body, in this context of marginalized identities, can be an approach that is utilized as a tool of liberation is accepted and pursued. For example, Joaquin discussed how they began to trust their own ways of knowing and being that served as supports in how they do their work after they
began practicing body work and this in turn helped them use embodiment as a pedagogical tool of praxis.

Third Space Theory—The “How” of Liberatory Pedagogy

I found myself diminishing...who I am and...my light...and my spirit...to try and make it...

I needed to draw boundaries...

There’s something about these institutions...that just violate all of your....

...personal space your boundaries your ability...to even say “no” at times...

I understood that my process in school is now to just get in...to do the work...and get out...because what really matters...

is how I show up in the classroom

my responsibility is how I’m held accountable in the community ...

-Sothyia Vibol

Research question two. The second research question asked, In what ways do educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines navigate the use of liberatory pedagogy? Findings indicate that: (a) liberatory pedagogy for participants was identified to be a spiritual practice rather than solely theoretical or intellectualized;
(b) the responses to transformation and flux in the space was informed by the skillset that participants learned from the their personal and community’s experiences and growth; (c) relationships created resources and tools that were adapted and constructed based on lessons learned; (d) curriculum and instruction were constructively recreated and connected to the realities of the students through content that made space for not only the personal and experiences, but also assisted students in becoming their own autonomous change agents to community change; (e) infrastructure and *finding your people* helped to support liberation with colleagues/co-conspirators, programs, or practices; (f) resistance is necessary, no matter the consequence, whether it is subversive, explicit, or insurgent when it serves as a threat to liberation; (g) decentering whiteness and oppressive hegemony made more space for those in the learning space to *hold space* for each other without narrative colonization or distraction; (h) accountability to community was a process that was embedded in liberatory pedagogy work to those in the learning space, to one’s self, and to the community that one served.; (i) one model of liberatory pedagogy overall or per field was deemed irresponsible by participants due to different community contextual needs; (j) determining if working in formal, nonformal, or both forms of learning spaces was a decision that was in the midst of being decided or had been a deliberation in the participants’ growth as a liberatory pedagogue; (k) at times departure from one learning space to another was an action identified as necessary for participants to seek and actualize liberation through their pedagogy; (l) participants had different pathways to how they were introduced to, sought to gain new skills, or navigated the
work that they do (apprenticeships, internships, invitations, graduate school, government programs, etc.); (m) the cultivation of space when liberatory pedagogy is used is inherently collaborative, interconnected and networked across and within fields and disciplines that attended to root causes of oppression rather than symptoms alone, and shifts outcomes based on the needs of those in the space; (n) participants found ways to remove socio-economic, organizational, or institutional barriers that impeded student success; and (o) partnerships were common among participants, but some partnerships created an imbalance of power to entities that have more systemic power than the participants had at their disposal.

**Spiritual practice.** Four of the participants—Sothyia Vibol, Egqumeni, Joaquin, and Ita Viiko—believed or alluded to a powerful sense of spiritual guidance that they could not necessarily articulate nor were the spirits tangible. The spirits and souls in their flesh and core did, however, have the ability to manifest change, nurture evolution, and influence the transcendence of the participants as well serve an incitation and guide to practice liberatory pedagogy. Much like Dillard et al. (2000) and hooks (1994) discussed, the soul of teaching as a form of liberation and for liberation is a practice that cannot all be intellectualized, but must be embodied with close attention paid to the soul as a reference point. From this guidance Dillard et al. (2000) discussed how the soul witnesses the outcomes of the influence of pedagogy that it catalyzed and the openness of the educators’ willingness and devotion to trust their body, to ontologize methods and means of liberation. With the participants, specifically Sothyia Vibol, Joaquin, Ita Viiko, and
Egqumeni, their narratives surfaced a sense of soul guidance and witnessing that resounded in ways that reflected the culmination and the reverberated echoes of ancestors and new awakenings that guided, compelled, and sustain them during the continued praxis of their liberatory pedagogy. This guidance, profoundly immense calling and deeply visceral experience of existences as it is counseled with liberatory pedagogy connects to the work of Dillard et al. (2000), but fills the gap of what this means today, rather than 20 years ago, across multiple fields (nonformal and formal) and scopes of work that are connected to the soul and specific identities in various culturally intertwined ways, not previously accounted for in literature.

**Transformation and flux and holding space.** Even with proactivity, all of the participants realized that transformation and flux were parts of the adaptive nature of liberation pathways and that they must prepare for the presence of outcomes that may become unintended consequences to their planning. Much like Harney and Moten (2013) discussed, it is unrealistic to ask the marginalized communities what they want to precisely build. This request is unrealistic because though the fundamental principles of liberation remain foundational, the seized latitude to plan is in its infancy and through iterative community evaluations, construction of new realities may shift. The participants all felt that these iterative exchanges require community evaluation, continued learning for them, community wisdom, review of commitments, and must be accountable as well as collaborative. The participants all felt that education was one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, tool at their disposal.
For example, Sothyia Vibol explained about how sometimes they interrupted curriculum just to talk about these current events, how they are connected to historical events, how nothing has changed, and they talk about how to make actionable change in their realities. Learning is not linear and those at Liberation Academy who teach at Freedom Schools understood that in the way that learning constructed to leave space to trust the educator and their willingness to be malleable, to welcome useful disruption, to take lead and take direction from the students. This level of anarchy within learning spaces (Springer, 2014; Suissa, 2006) disentangles itself from the oppressive traditionalism of pedagogy.

For instance, Jorge knew that the students would not be able to perfectly support each other all the time in class. At times of disruption, other students who wanted to move forward would ask Jorge to kick students out of the class. However, Jorge only removed students from class as an absolute last resort. Jorge wanted the students to understand the dynamics of classroom community support and to understand that solutions to disruption should not be focused on creating further marginalization as opposed to tending to the students’ needs that result in class disruption. Jorge attempted to get the students to refrain from mirroring the very people that pushed them out of spaces to other schools, districts, classrooms, homes, etc. Much like Le Espiritus (2008) tried to convey that the conditions of our lives are shaped by the conditions of others, this in context is also true in the classroom. When a student of a particular marginalized identity does not have an additional marginalized identity that is causing a supposed
disruption, their perch and social station, informed by oppressive societal mechanisms, makes it easier to incite exile of the other student. This exile is pursued because the condition of that student whose exile is being contemplated is not the condition of the inciter. Therefore, the exilee is seen as an inconvenience rather than an indication that there should be more collaboration to ensure the liberation of everyone in that space. Society has historically informed us that this behavior of abandonment and thought process is acceptable to perpetuate, even if it happened to us.

**Finding your people.** Whether it was Joaquin stating that they got into their work by invitation and began to extend those invitations to other or connecting with professors that supported them through their academic journey, or whether it was Egqumeni growing up among community wisdom that he used to inform his work or pursuing apprenticeships with those who shared his identity, whether it was Jorge being invited to work at his current school, whether it was Sothyia Vibol connecting with teachers who were willing to invest in liberation, or Ita Viiko connecting with a coordinator that helped her gain her position to preserve her community’s culture; the participants found solace in finding community that served as a resource, co-conspirators, and support.

Egqumeni’s narrative provided an example. He is from a town in the Pacific Northwest of what is now known as the United States, a place where he states that Black people are thought to not reside. Yet, he exists and his family has been in this town for generations with his endarkened epistemology intact (Dillard, 2000, 2012; Hurtado, 2013). The neighborhood he grew up in taught him about community through the vehicle
of family members holding roles that function as cornerstones to the Black community: the barber and the minister. Egqumeni was always interested in food and health as it related to liberation.

The way that Egqumeni practiced his pedagogy with this knowledge was an approach that had to be tailored by working with others on their *nepantla* phase of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2003). In this phase of knowledge growth as it pertains to farming and farm education, Egqumeni facilitated moving through its connection to trauma and he worked in the third space of education to collaborate with community to reimagine how something associated with an abundance of trauma could be reclaimed and transformed into a pathway to healing and community self-sufficiency.

As Joaquin continued to explore other places of work—the yoga studio, the non-profit organization, the university—most positions proved to exist on a plane of duality wherein gratification for purposeful work too commonly paired with economic precarity, exhaustion and/or exploitation. However, Joaquin found ways to connect to their people doing their work through academic and community literary as well as issue-focused, collective-based resources. Joaquin was able to find other people within and across their communities through their activism and organizing with collective and community organizations that ameliorated the challenge of structural barriers and pathways of connection that lead to relationship and analysis building as They had the ability to find a way to find other people in the way that connects through literature and physical space to ameliorate for the disconnection and structurally created barriers to find one another in
what they articulated by Harney & Moten (2013) as barriers that “limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls” (p. 6).

Lastly, Joaquin disagreed with his cohort members often in the form of the Arrebato of the conocimiento collision that Joaquin knows all too well from his life and work experiences (Anzaldúa, 2003). However, for the most part, they have no need to interact with them on a deeply meaningful level. The program took a general position that education is political but does not discuss how and in what ways it is political, thus missing an opportunity to expand the breadth of educators’ political positioning and the opportunity to understand and be cognizant of how that position shows up and plays out in educational spaces. With the surface level discussion of education being political and the increased discussion of social justice in a general sense surfacing more frequently, some professors left because they did not like the way they were treated when they excused themselves from even broaching any teachings of social justice. This self-decided abstinence exemplified the use of educator’s positionality to be used as one of oppression and the privilege that comes with deciding that teaching for the liberation of the marginalized is cause enough to walk away from a professorial position at a university where the discussion concerning social justice is one steeped in mediocrity.

Location (formal or nonformal). In the participants’ stories, many were contemplating where their work should occur. Egqumeni held steadfast to believing his work had to be nonformal in order to flourish. Joaquin worked in multiple locations of
formal and nonformal education to gain resources, access, and work in community with those to which their research and skill building was accountable to. Sothyia Vibol was contemplating whether working for a nonformal educational organization in a formal education space was worth the effort or if she should work with her colleagues to create a new school, even though I cannot assume what the operationalization of what making Freedom school as a real school would entail or be described as in respect to formal or nonformal education which calls to question whether liberation can be housed in formality sustainably.

**Resources and Sankofa.** Though uncovering histories and building new narratives with marginalized communities are at times difficult, it is not too difficult for these practitioners to work on and towards. For example, Egqumeni sustained, retained, and recovered culture through the practice of Sankofa (Temple, 2010) from the lessons taught from elder epistemologies. He recovered knowledge that was lost due to hegemonic erasure and extended that recovered knowledge to youth so that the knowledge was not forgotten.

Witnessing dematerialization of her culture pushed Ita Viiko to practice her work in alignment to Sankofa (Temple, 2010) wherein what was culturally passing away was revived and solidified by people who till remembered even though she did her work with limited resources. Through clothes, poems, language classes, food, and parties, she was able to find different ways to teach students and also increase pride. Countering the notion that Fanon (1970) and Ogbu (2004) described, concerning how oppressive
hegemony expects the compliance of the oppressed to harm themselves in the name of their oppressor, Ita Viiko’s sense of pride overshadowed emotions of shame that oppressed people were expected to impose upon themselves.

**Infrastructure.** Without an infrastructure of support that is conducive for liberation to thrive, the expansive possibilities of outcomes for liberatory pedagogy is not crushed, but they are diminished. All of the participants, in some way, were in infrastructures that were supportive such as Jorge, Joaquin (in community organizations, collectives, and one class), Sothyia Vibol ins Freedom School, Egqumeni’s organization which reoriented its priority to communities of color, or Ita Viiko’s latitude to find a way to teach and preserve language (albeit with limited resources). However, specifically in formal education spaces for Sothyia Vibol and Joaquin—it was difficult to navigate oppressive infrastructures that were not invested in the liberation of marginalized communities and structural shifts. As a result, they both were always struggling to teach, even if they never gave up in their efforts.

Joaquin talked about two camps in education. One camp was described as one that positioned itself within a belief that “this is the way it is and when you get through the system, you’ll be fine.” The second camp was described as a space where others who interrupt in real time and break down mechanisms that continue to harm people in education and through the process of becoming an educator. Upon noticing this, Joaquin would highlight this discrepancy and be met with the authoritative response of “this is how things are.” The acceptance and acquiescence to the way things are supports Harney
and Moten’s (2013) position that Joaquin’s labor is “as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what [they] bear but cannot bear what [they] bring” (p. 26). In this and despite this, Joaquin pushes for the university to bear their challenging and reconstruction of space even and especially if it bursts with the expectation that from this action of challenge Joaquin’s academic survivance may not be sustainable (Patel, 2016). Crampton and Elden’s (2016) work that discussed the implications of space, power and the politics born from the use of that power connects directly to Joaquin’s narrative when Joaquin stated that “the way that space is constructed dictates the power that it manifests in and outside of the institution of education.” Often Joaquin is met with those in their university environment who are of the former position rather than the latter. Despite the challenges in the university setting as a doctoral student, Joaquin did have support from some professors that had assisted him. Joaquin’s offered in narrative that you must “find your people” as advice to surviving the academy was that you must so you can be in a better mental and community space to get through what you need to do while you are in a program that forces you to intermingle with oppression and liberation on a constant basis.

The position that Sothyia Vibol holds, makes difficult to change policies or practice. These policies and practices, much like Ladson-Billings (1995) discussed, attempted to bar anything culturally relevant, even the eradication of harm towards Black bodies. Liberation Academy staff could only make suggestions. In addition, depending on how the teachers and administrators felt about Liberation Academy’s presence in the school was based the teachers’ and administrators’ perception of if Liberation Academy’s
suggestions were taken as valuable or as a threat to their hubris. Many times, Sothyia Vibol’s specializations within restorative justice rendered her professional suggestions insignificant and she was rendered a devalued classroom assistant as opposed to a peer.

Collaborations and collaborative learning processes. Collaborations and collaborative learning spaces were specifically uplifted in Jorge’s and Egqumeni’s narratives. The collaborations in Jorge’s story were partners that invest in holistic student success and student directed actions. In Egqumeni’s story, school credit as well as culturally specific organization relationship and curriculum building influenced how work of their organization was transformed and made transformative for communities of color and community trauma. These opportunities existing show how students can bring their whole selves to the class. These collaborations also show how students and partners supported each other and resolved conflict so that they could fully learn. The ability to have these discussions or to support them required relationship of trust between the students and Jorge as well as other instructors. If the students do not trust the educator, the healing nature of dialogue will not gain any traction. Therefore, Jorge is honest about his past and his reality as an approach to demonstrate vulnerability, pain, frustration and fallibility so that students can feel comfortable to do the same.

Sothyia Vibol shared that she was less concerned with appeasing the administration and more concerned with being accountable to the community and in this, this is probably why the community and the students respect the organization and would fight for them to stay. Even though Ladson-Billings’ (1995) research did not discuss how
the community or students would fight for the teachers to stay if they were pushed out, she does discuss the importance of educational effectiveness when the community trusts and supports educators.

In Jorge’s case, the school typically resolves conflict with restorative and transformational justice specialists and MSW interns. However, in Jorge’s narrative, he referenced peace officers that act as unarmed security. The paradigm to student resource officers and the harm they cause that has the propensity to lead students to the school to prison pipeline leaves some room for critique and adjustments. These critiques arise in the inquiry of why peace officer presence was necessary. Not only this, peace officers’ presence in the pursuit of liberatory pedagogy presents itself as unnecessary, paradoxical, and counterintuitive to the intent of the school’s mission. This school infrastructure approach may be the school’s option for community accountability, but the question must be asked as to whether the entire school community agreed to this option of peace officers. Was the decision a liberatory consensus of sorts? This is a lingering question. However, he says that as we construct new realities within our geography, the difficulty in disentangling what safety means often relies initially on things we have been socialized to believe sustain safety. However, Jorge’s witnessing of how the community organization protecting the safety of the students from police officers inspired him to see the manifestation of possibilities and productions of resistance.

I assert that the model of peace officers is not one that is suggested for replication without liberatory processes and agreeance of power distribution and duration. However,
the ways in which the community organization and the school partners resisted police abuse of power within the school in Jorge’s story, to protect the students’ well-being is a practice worth pursuing. However, what resistance looks like and the implications of its use is different for intersectional Black and Brown bodies. The discussed form of resistance—supported by knowing the rights of the students—relies on the hope that the police officers would not exert their power to falsify a reason for entry; because of the identities of those who were or would be resisting the police, resistance could end in the very real possibility of incarceration for supposedly obstructing whatever justice is defined to be based on power in space, or death. When we look at partnerships it is important to figure out and strategize about the roles of those with whom we co-conspire. At times, safety just is not possible, and this is always a price that liberation may have to pay, unfortunately. The ability to create perfection from initial attempts made towards positive transformation has challenges.

**Resistance and locations of work.** As Joaquin stated in their narrative, the ability to resist was inherently necessary because of the sheer nature of society to oppress within and outside of the academy. This resistance was also present in Sothyia Vibol’s story. For example—though Sothyia Vibol was nearing the end of her graduate school program and it had taken its toll on her spirit and her body. When she first started the program she would challenge the professors and her classmates when they perpetuated white supremacist culture but after time she grew weary and decided to preserve her energy. The cost however, of preserving one’s energy when it comes to white supremacy in space is the
perpetuation of it and one’s body continuing to absorb its perpetuation even though one is not wasting their breath on it, it extracts one’s energy anyway and that is exactly what happened to Sothyia Vibol. Her lupus symptoms flared and being in the class with the perpetuation of white supremacy began to make her ill. She made the decision to tell her professors that she would turn in the work but that she could not physically be there—a decision often met with dubious results. This decision relates to the work Ball & Olmedo (2013) and Nguyen & Larson (2015) wherein they discuss the importance of taking care of your body as an act, not of just self-care, but resistance. This physical exacerbation of her pre-existing condition could also be considered the *coatlicue* within *nepantla* serving as the emotional, physical, and psychological price paid for self-awareness, consciousness of the knowledge being gained, and the decision of whether to keep learning (Anzaldúa, 2003).

In addition, Joaquin challenged classmates and professors and broke down the notion of what power meant when disruption and discussion are necessary as opposed to the digestion of foundations of knowledge that are problematic. Much like O’Loughlin’s (1995) work, Joaquin exhibited what it looked like for students to take power that professors or teacher are unwilling to relinquish for lateral learning while the professors or teachers pride themselves on their edginess in their approach to discussing critical theory while their ontological and pedagogical praxis proves itself to be nothing less than paradoxical. At times, the things that Joaquin challenged was the dissonance professors have between the theories that are used in class and that the professors, some of
intersectional marginalized identities, are often published on being in complete contrast of how the classroom dynamics play out and how power is constructed and hoarded in a way where the professors’ viewpoint has been socialized to automate their own oppression from expectation that causes a conditioned ripple effect to place that same expectation on other marginalized communities (Fanon, 1970; Ogbu, 2004) especially in the context of audiences that have the ability to reproduce systemic oppression through education (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1990). This automation connects to Suissa’s (2006) push for the need of anarchy in education to disrupt the expected functionality of oppression that is intent on assembling the educational militarization and continued weaponization that mirror their oppressions through conditioned to become a part of and function as terrorist assemblages upon population with more marginalized identities than it’s perpetrators (Puar, 2017).

**Decentering whiteness.** Liberation’s focus on marginalized communities, specifically intersectional communities of color calls for the decentering of whiteness and liberatory pedagogy asks as a conduit to bring that liberation to fruition. All of the participant’s work decentered whiteness. For example, Sothyia Vibol was well-versed in histories that have been hidden, because she did the work to find them and extend them to community. In providing space and representational literature in Freedom Schools as opposed to the insertion of text without meaningful engagement (Ladson-Billings, 2014) to self-determine, students learn to advocate and mobilize for themselves and get the people and resources they need to do so. Freedom Schools in this context, are the
undercommons that Harney and Moten (2013) allude to of fugitive planning (p.106). This is the building of new possibilities through groundwork of imagining possibilities from representation and the uncovering of hidden narratives living side by side of current affairs and resources. Revolution was something that the students saw as possible through this literacy program because of how they interfaced with the organization and how the curriculum was taught and intentionally broken apart in ways that created an environment where no one was able to learn the full story if someone did not do the work to read, discuss, and share. This intentional construction of curriculum made the students accountable not just to themselves but to each other in comprehension and analysis.

As a pedagogue, Joaquin talks about what it means to teach, who they will teach, how they will and will not teach and they are very intentional about their practice. They consent to teach white people, but they also make sure that they are holding true to their personal and political commitments while doing so. Joaquin has found their own way to use culturally relevant content (Ladson-Billings, 1995), despite the pluralistic multiculturalism (including whiteness in its definition) of some educational spaces they worked in (Picower, 2009), to culturally respond (Gay, 2000) to put situational crises identified as crises inside and outside of formal education regarding the impact they have on the educational field and the geography it inherently has the power to re/produce. For instance, they will not play devil’s advocate with anyone, he knew where their expertise resides and the level of disengagement it can catalyze in a way that directly aligns to the narrative and experiences cited in Hudson-Vassel, Acosta, King, Upshaw and Cherefree’s
work (2018) because of the disruption to oppressive hegemony through pedagogy, the identity of the educator and pedagogue (Gershon, 2016), and the eradication of script propensity (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). Joaquin knew that racism, as its impacts are inherently intersection are a distraction that he refuses to placate (Morrison, 1975). If you are earnestly wanting to learn, they will try their best to teach you. If you want to argue for the sake of arguing as if people’s lived realities are not impacted by your words, they will not teach you because you are not actually interested in learning.

Beyond white people that Joaquin stated they consent to teach, Joaquin held all communities accountable for their words, such as students of color not wanting to talk about race as if not talking about it will make systemic racism go away. They challenge students of color too to decenter the pervasiveness of whiteness and is fine with doing so in mixed company, though they understand the implications of doing so, which was a component of what Paris and Alim (2014) struggled with albeit in a different context of Black and Brown youth rather than multicultural spaces that include whiteness. They also commit to learn and teach their cohort members or at least offer a differing opinion, teach their professors when they are being oppressive, and they pauses to see if the professors he interfaces with will use, as Joaquin stated, the “wisdom in the room” not just his own. They do not hold their tongue and through his utterings and they are liberating themselves without permission and with conviction.

**Departure.** Often participants were tasked with leaving, whether it be Ita Viiko’s case of being retired by the state by program policy mandate, Sothyia Vibol’s aspiration to
leave her location of work and create a new school with her colleagues, Egqumeni’s
decision to leave desk jobs, Joaquin’s ongoing process of figuring out whether they
should work in the academy, or Jorge’s decision to leave public school due to its harm
and ineffectiveness, all of the participants practiced or are contemplating departure. In
addition departure can materialize as positional precarity or loss as Biko (2015)
discusses.

For example, Sothyia Vibol’s acceptance that job precarity would always be
present, allowing her the space to do work that she feels proud of and fulfilled by without
seeking out piecemeal of representation of justice. In her current position, she knows that
there is always a possibility that someone will try to get her to lose her job, or that the
organization will no longer get funded and that these notions of job insecurity could
continue on into when she gets her teaching license and endorsement. These realities of
loss are echoed from Biko (2015) when he informed the revolutionary, the seeker of
change to be prepared to experience loss in order to seek or see the manifestation of
change. This rings especially probable when she pushes or challenges administrators and
educators to adjust something that they have done. Though restorative justice and
mentoring students ostensibly seems like something schools and school districts are
invested in, often the money serves as optics when the labor that Sothyia Vibol and her
colleagues brought “is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The [school] needs what she
bears but cannot bear what she brings” (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 26). She stated,
however, that the students and allied staff would support her and fight for her and this is
because of the way she authentically shows up and advocates with students and colleagues for a more positive space for students to exist.

**Multiple models and strategies of change.** Through this research, it was determined that across and within multiple different fields, one model of applicability was not present, nor was it advised. This is reified by the notion of heterotopias (Beckett, Bagguley & Campbell, 2017) and supported by Joaquin’s explicit statements that different communities need different things and was exemplified in Egqumeni’s approach to connect to multiple culturally specific groups and build curriculum based on their identities as well as connection and trauma with land, specifically Native populations of what is now known as the United States, Black Diaspora populations and Latinx populations. These approaches also connected to what kind of educator participants wanted to be.

For example, Egqumeni learned what kind of educator he wanted to be from the way he saw his community member elders teach community members without a classroom. Egqumeni’s perspective on the type of educator he is and how he made the decision to be an educator in his own way is not necessarily housed in a politic of anarchism (Springer, 2014; Suissa, 2006) but more so a politic of intergenerational wisdom through models of cultural sustainability that mirror some components of Paris (2012) and Paris and Alim (2014). Jorge’s culturally relevant pedagogy was also associated with the way in which the students trust him, Ladson-Billings (1995) spoke more about full parent and community trust, but though the community respects the organization and the school,
there was not enough information shared in Jorge’s story to know more about trust beyond the students. In reference to culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000), Jorge worked with the students to attend to the crisis of graduation and recidivism, but in a way that was less concerned and did not have to adhere to the strict parameters that are often associated with high school graduation rates, especially in public school institutions. Jorge’s liberatory pedagogy surfaced in how he combined ingredients from the two aforementioned approaches. Jorge moved the students and himself toward reconstructed ontologies based on new epistemologies and action that centers the belief in the collaborative power and individual worth and direct steerer of one’s own liberation and the liberation of their communities.

In reference to course curriculum, grading, content construction, and instruction, Jorge talked at length about how the grades are constructed. The grade model was created by the charter school network, but was one that he believed in adamantly. The grading model focuses on content comprehension, but this is not the end of instruction. All the components of the grades build upon each other. When the students understand the content being taught, the classroom participates in a class wide project to use the skills they learned to find solutions to social problems and everyone has a role that allows the students to demonstrate their content competencies in a hands on way whether it be community surveys of neighborhood satisfaction to understand statistics, or soil samples at the location that the government wants to build a new prison to understand the health implications of the results. Jansen (1990) talked about how teaching for liberation was
difficult because he was teaching students content used to oppress them without being able to connect science to social oppressions being experienced by the students and their community without losing his job. In nearly 20 years, Jorge has found a location where he can teach content, connect it to community issues and injustices, and not only keep his job but be expected to make these connections.

Ita Viiko shares these stories to challenge dominant narratives and its practice of erasure. Her stories act an educational and cultural guide and tool. Through these stories of experience are not only a guide and a tool, they are also a governmental advocacy tool, and a way of preserving painful parts of culture. The preservation and ability to recall pain, harm and joy, and tell stories of it acts as a way to urge others to abstain from its perpetuation. Through this urging and this story telling, she enters the phase of cotolxauhqui of the conocimiento (Anzaldua, 2003). It is extortion that leads to extinction no matter what decision of concessions are made. This shows the necessity of Ita Viiko’s work in ways that made it clear through her story that she was far more than a teacher in the traditional sense of eurocentrism but a community teacher in multiple ways that are familiar to her culture. Even being paid by the state through what can be seen as a form of reparations, it's clear that it was not nearly enough for all of the work she has done and the work she continues to do to support learning through the praxis of language and cultural preservation. This form of reparations is one wherein policies that were once constructed to prohibit or exclude marginalized culturally relevant content and pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995)- in this case indigenous language education- were now being
overturned even though the way in which Ita Viiko worked was not a part of formal education as a core component of curriculum but an addition to it.

The curriculum Egqumeni worked with required him to work with the school districts to make sure that the competencies are met, but he knew it needed to be updated. The level of bureaucracy and governmental control hindered the full effectiveness of educational content through the extortion of grades necessary for matriculation. From this, it is clear that Folke’s (1972) position on Marxism and its relationship to education intends to connect to and center marginalized community, but its reach still uses its power to dictate competencies and pathways to building those competencies while relishing in the optics of partnerships that uses standardization policy to detract from the impact of equity initiatives and the autonomy of the marginalized. This standardization and policies about curriculum make culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) difficult to achieve without abandoning it either in part or in its entirety. The program has the ability to be separated from the schools, but access would become difficult and this separation would also make it difficult to culturally respond (Gay, 2000) to the situational crises of science disengagement, grade disparities, and interest divestment with communities of color that is perpetuated by systemic racism. One must question that if the curriculum were solely up to farm educators of color that teach in a culturally relevant way without state interference, would the achievement levels and engagement with the subject increase?
With Egqumeni, defining the work he did was less important than the ontology of it. He focused more on his role and ability to connect with community and he believed that education is not possible without that connection with communities that have been discarded and whose relationship to and knowledge of land that is symbiotic had been disrupted by white supremacy. Egqumeni continued to do work with and for those disrupted communities, especially in his position working with culturally specific community organization groups and elementary school students in districts heavily populated with communities of color through a hands on and culturally relevant way (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Regardless of school and community organization partnerships or the curriculum that bridges the two developed by the government, Egqumeni was culturally responding (Gay, 2000), not just to the situational crisis of community of color achievement by the standards of the state, but instead responding to the crisis of disconnection to land and knowledge dissipation of farming competencies. Lastly, to Sothyia Vibol, education was at a stalemate and though she was gaining the tools she stated are necessary to get closer to the creation of a school, she knew that what we have now is not sufficient. They are only efficient at marginalization and the only option from here is radical shifts in geography. She is preparing for that, it will just take a little more time (Chouinard, 1994).

**Life development.** This research tells the story of how participants came to the work, but it also discussed the development they went through to be the liberatory pedagogue they are today such like Egqumeni’s apprenticeships with Black and Brown
farmers and his apprenticeships and internships in Black indigenous communities in Latin America. In addition, Joaquin held multiple jobs at once to do the things they loved and that sustained them spiritually and analytically. This approach is not for everyone, but capitalism—or any oppressive structural harm—has a way of digging its hooks into marginalized bodies where the fear of losing security makes us believe we never truly had it (Fanon, 1970).

In addition, Ita Viiko’s cultural skills increased due to her identity and allowed her to be a part of a 30-year preservation project where the crisis of indigenous language dissolution was attended to through culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000). This response to a culturally specific crisis kept not only the indigenous language in community homes in villages of limited resources, but it also retained the culture in and of itself from being forgotten. Being who she was and holding the identities that she held, allowed her to be the educator she was for a third of a century.

**Eradicating structural barriers.** The goal of liberatory pedagogy is to break the cogs of structural oppression. This was pursued in many different ways among the participants. In Sothyia Vibol’s case, the very purpose of restorative justice processes was to be culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) to the disproportionate behavioral interventions outcomes that students of color, particularly Black students, were experiencing that impacted their mental health, absenteeism, graduation, and drop-out rates. For educators and administrators to not fully invest in the process and to instead exert the abuse of their power indicates not only the need for their removal but an overall unwillingness to shift
their practices and policies within the school that attend to trauma, resolution, and the overall success of their students.

Jorge’s place of work makes minimizes structural barrier and attends to things that often impeded student success continue to be successful are:

- Probation violations due to transportation or understanding their regulation compliance expectations
- The public school systems expected praxis of failing students and pushing them out of the system through the process of disposing
- Lack of care for the holistic student
- Lack of documentation,
- Lack of housing
- The need to work
- Childcare
- Police harassment and brutality
- Racial profiling
- Gang affiliation (or aspirations to exit one’s gang) that makes mobility in space difficult at times Trauma (societal and familial)
- Sustenance needs

One of the most important parts of the school culture in Jorge’s school was that the school refused to fail any student. To create an institutionalized practice of granting
students more time to understand the curriculum effectively, the school gives students an *incomplete* for any performance under a C so that students are not impacted by GPAs that bar them entry into some careers they are interested in. They had a modified credit system because of the structure of their curriculum where students learn and demonstrate competencies on a shorter timeline if the students attend and pass the courses within the quarter system used by the school. The school does not punish the students for life happening to them. Even if the students cannot recover credits on this condensed timeline, or do not pass a class the school still lets students have time to succeed.

It was very clear that the people at Jorge’s school and the community organization practiced what they taught the students and practiced what they preached themselves in a way that allowed them to keep students safe, untriggered, and to foster an environment where students could continue to cultivate their content competencies and their organizing skills without interference. Jorge did not agree all the time with the discussions the school and the community organizations have but he puts it in a *parking lot* of sorts and takes what he thought was useful and lets the rest sit into the parking lot until he is ready to re-evaluate its usefulness. This could also be considered as a deeper process of *Nepantla* in a new location (Anzaldua, 2003). This metacognitive action does two things: (a) it does not dispose of information but rather creates a space and place to determine how he may want to interface with it in the future, and (b) it does not assume that all liberation rhetoric will have a unanimous vote. When we have the space to freely think—there are some fundamentals we may agree upon, but some details will not always
align in particular moments of time. With this, Jorge has interacted with ideas that he once thought were outlandish, such as prison abolition, but he shared that it just took him some time to learn that the discussion of prison abolition was less about individual crimes or legal infractions but that the discussion was moreover about de-establishing institutions that abuse power and disproportionately marginalized people of color. In the third space, and through *Nea Onnim No Sua A, Ohu* (Akoto, 2013; Danzy, 2009), Jorge was learning, teaching, restructuring, reaching out, demonstrating fallibility, demonstrating resilience, and working with students to create new imaginings.

**Partnerships.** Partnership in the participant’s stories were sometimes fruitful and at other times tumultuous. Egqumeni’s relationships with culturally specific organizations were fruitful, while his relationship with the school curriculum was becoming frustrating but he remained invested in seeing it shift. Partnerships often were also imbalanced in power which impacted the capacity for liberatory pedagogy to be as effective as it could be. Despite the partnership weakness, Sothyia Vibol remained willing to work with teachers and administrators in order to make a better environment for the students, an environment where the teachers and administrators could not agree on if they all want Liberation Academy in the school at all. This lack of unanimous decision making concerning the organization’s presence in the school causes a childish game of taking sides wherein, if educators or administrators agreed on the presence of Sothyia Vibol and her colleagues, they would be shunned by others that opposed the organization’s presence. This selfish and pompous reaction perpetuates “killing people without ever
looking at the corpses” (Shakur, 1978, p. 268). Sothyia Vibol worked with people she is fundamentally opposed to in ethics and strategies of change trying to find a way to make the school a healthy environment. In a sense, this somewhat seems like a conditional acquiescence, but instead it can also be considered the *compromiso de conocimiento* (Anzaldua, 2003), a step associated with an attempt of collaboration despite opposing ideologies from parties who may never truly agree with each other. She does this because the students are asked to find a way to work with these teachers through restorative justice processes as well, though the possibility and probability of the students creating scripts and counter scripts from this request to get through the day the same way that Sothyia Vibol did what she had to do to finish her program seem high (Gutiérrez, Rymes & Larson, 1995). Sothyia Vibol did not ask anyone to do anything she wouldn’t, so she tries to work with the teachers and administrators. However, it seems as if Sothyia Vibol’s willingness to work with the administrators and teachers are for the students and the students’ willingness to engage in the restorative processes are because of the trust and respect they have with Sothyia Vibol and those in the organization. In Jorge’s story, the collaborative nature within the school itself proved to be one that consistently involved the input and specialization of teachers, students, community organization staff, community partners, MSW interns, case managers, transformational justice specialists, and career counselors. Without these partnerships, the issue of capacity would render the work of a school alone nearly impossible with the staffing that were present in the school. The opportunity for educational activists to focus on liberation within the scope of their
specializations and the ability to construct a network for students to receive the holistic care that often impeded their success is paramount.

In Ita Viiko’s story, the partnership between indigenous communities that allowed the outreach necessary for this cultural preservation initiative is one that aligns to what Folke’s (1972) perspective that governmental systems can function as it relates to educational efficacy through Marxist approaches, if marginalized populations are centered. Though this reparatory approach is one that seemed to be beneficial from Ita Viiko’s perspective, the initiative’s existence may not have been possible, as it was not before, without governmental funding or the permission of the state. Ita Viiko is a part of an indigenous community where residents often leave to be in a better economic position because of limited jobs and economic precarity in the region.

The concept of reparations as it intertangles with liberation in this context as well as Sothyia Vibol’s narrative becomes complicated if the sustenance of one’s needs and the space and time to work in cultural preservation is dependent on the economic resources provided by the state. This begs the question as to whether or not community members, without investment in narrative or in fiscal resources, would have been able to sustainably preserve their culture if the narrative of the state’s eurocentricity co-signed the devaluation of indigenous culture with the expectation of proliferated self-imposed oppression informed by the state continued and there was no fiscal sponsorship. If it were possible, would its contexts of cultural preservation be intergenerational in homes, would
the villages still exist, who would be the teachers and who would be able to work for basic necessities and educate the community at the same time?

**Radical Geography—The “What” of Liberatory Pedagogy**

*I write it, I speak it, I read it*

*they do not write it and they do not read it*

*rescue*

*to converse*

*children*

*to learn, to talk*

*children*

*6, 7, 8 up to 15 years.*

*mestizos*

*talk*

*-Ita Viiko*

**Research question three.** The third research question asked, *What do educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines believe can and does materializes from the use of liberatory pedagogy?* Findings suggest that: (a) liberatory pedagogy exists within and outside of institutions; (b) liberatory education can create new realities and new feminist materialism such as new written languages and more students graduating, becoming activists, understanding how curriculum can make them more adept to be change agents of their own futures concerning societal oppression, and
accommodations that make it more possible to students to be in the learning space without punitive outcomes; (c) the belief that materialisms are possible from liberatory pedagogy fuels the planning and construction of new realities; (d) the practice of liberatory pedagogy resonates with those in the learning space and the practitioner such as understanding the prison industrial complex or being transformed through curriculum that participants facilitated; (e) resonance influences materialized and aspired for geographical shifts such as generational retention of language or student goals to practice liberatory pedagogy because of the participants interactions with them, the imagination to pursue the creation of new liberatory school, students returning to the neighborhood to continue participation in liberatory geographic shifts, or abolition of harmful institutions; (f) participants aspired to decrease trauma in connection to topics that spanned across curriculum, classroom dynamics, connections to land, reproductions of internalized oppression regarding interpersonal and institutional harm, student defined success, and hope; and (g) participants also wanted to increase and deepen understanding of root causes as to not rely on the state for safety or to know that there are revolutionaries that reflect the students’ identities.

New realities and materialisms. The goal of liberatory pedagogy as it related to this research is the materialization of new realities. All of the participants remained fully invested in their work producing new realities where marginalized communities could thrive.
Ultimately, Joaquin wanted to see the institutions of education and prisons torn down. They stated that these systems do not work or maybe they do in the very function they were intended to post-integration as a tool to further marginalized intersectional communities of color that were never constructed to accommodate or welcome their presence. They believed that different communities needed different things, heterotopias (Beckett, Bagguley & Campbell, 2017), but that the institution of education and prisons had done enough damage to Black and Brown people, specifically youth of color that are transgender and queer. These systems and institutions and their relationships of collusion failed the aforementioned populations and families intergenerationally. They continue to fail futures in a way that reify the limited scope and breadth of life. They also require people to practice Sankofa (Temple, 2010) who have the ability to build their bodies fully back up from the trauma caused by these institutions through internal and external healing justice with the necessitation of education to do so.

Everything that Joaquin did was incited and informed by their identity and experiences. Their introduction and longevity of investment in their work to manifest new radical geographies are from the resonant vibrations incited and cultivated from being invited into the work. The communal support of creating spaces and being provided the spaces where education pertaining to prison abolition, educational institution reimagining, and healing justice can take place all resonated with them enough to educate in the ways that they currently do (Gershon, 2013). They knew and made clear that they did not do their work on their own. They wanted to make sure to emphasize how
movements that seek different realities, requires community. They specifically talked about the construction of their pedagogy and liberatory methods. Joaquin encouraged others to make sure that they make space to invite others into the work. The invitations are necessary because though we are core components that move towards the manifestation of change, none of us can radically shift geography on our own. Without support and community as well as inviting others to be in that community or being willing to accept invitations into community accountability and collaboration becomes nonexistent. These relationships build efficacy in oppressive hegemonic spaces. In these oppressive spaces, with community, the demand for and reclamation of time to heal one’s self in its entirety and to contribute to community healing is pivotal for liberation. As and during healing, the actual organization and mobilization to manifest another world is done with hope as the movement’s fuel. This process of becoming is one of self and of reality and directly related to the final phase of Shifting Realities within the conocimiento (Anzaldúa, 2003).

Ultimately, Sothyia Vibol wanted to make Freedom School into a real school after a few years of teaching in classrooms. She could not work in the confines of what education is in the spaces she has been located. Therefore, Sothyia Vibol hoped to radically shift geography with the creation of an independent school that dismantles the barriers she had witnessed over the course of her life and career. She wanted to learn as much as she could, share that knowledge, and work with community members to create something that supports her community rather than exist as a pipeline to prison and a
space for perpetuating harm and trauma. Sothyia Vibol’s dream was to move from oppression towards liberation, from school constructions of pain and into locations of education born from liberation (Grosz, 2010).

The creation of new ways to preserve language was made possible from the presence of the program and in turn, it allowed a way to maintain culture in time immemorial with the assistance of linguists as well as through the teachings of educators such as Ita Viiko to share that writing and reading skill to younger generations. At times, sacrifices for educators are relative to context. For example, walking hours and miles to teach students was an investment that Ita Viiko was aware of and one that she was willing to take on to see children proud of who they are and in a way that made it possible to manifest revolution with new materialism while also demanding respect from all those who say they do not exist. The work that Ita Viiko did exemplifies pedagogical ontologies that make it possible through reading, writing, clothing, poems, speaking, advocating, mobility with pride to make it clear that an indigenous culture that many tried to eradicate still exist with pride.

Belief. New realities are not possible without the belief in their feasibility. In order to meet the criteria of being a liberatory pedagogy practitioners, belief in new realities was pivotal. The narratives of the participants proved authentic in the retained belief that something beyond what we have now is possible and they are actively working with community to produce it. For example, no matter where Egqumeni was, he built with community through farm education without expecting glory for his efforts because
his work was directly connected to mutual respect, humility, and collaboration in a culturally epistemological and embodied way. Egqumeni believed that changes between food and community could, was, and should be different, more just—liberated is a way of knowing and being that is extended to community and ingrained in the reasons why he does the work he does in the way that he does it. He was constantly guided by listening to elders who have done the work he was trying to do for generations. He knew that wisdom lives within them, so he listened and went into the community to do work with farm education from his lived experiences, with the advice of his elders, and with the trust that had been placed in him to do what is right for the community that has been built through representation, connection, and gathered knowledge. Without a sense of trust from and shared identity with the marginalized communities he works with that have been harmed exponentially, it is unlikely that his pedagogy would be as effective as it is (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

**Resonance.** Practicing liberatory pedagogy work impacted the practitioners and the communities they served. Joaquin, Sothyia Vibol, and Jorge explicitly discussed how one must be transformed in order to transform. Ita Viiko discussed how her work as a teacher also resonated with community members. For example, Ita Viiko prided herself on knowing that many of the students are successful now and appreciate her for helping them maintain a part of their culture because of the vibrational resonance that occurred from her pedagogy (Gershon, 2013). Due to her work, there were many students who taught as she did and asked her for advice. She sent money back to the communities
because they still had limited resources, but saw the value in the work of cultural and language preservation. The program that Ita Viiko was a part of was government sponsored program. In this program, the teachers were rendered ineffective by those who managed the initiative. Through this use of authoritarian practice of taking agency, the ability for a teacher to decide with community if they were still effective was a chance that was never extended, despite this, she kept her experiences in her memory, maintained contact with the community, and helped in any way she could to make sure that the legacy of her people remains a story that never dies.

From Sothyia Vibol’s presence in the school, with the Liberation Academy and Freedom Schools, Sothyia Vibol has impacted students in positive ways. For example, a student shared with her that they want to build a school with her and the organization, to make it their school. The school is meant to be “radical change—replacement of institutions and institutional arrangements in our society that can no longer respond to changing societal needs, that stifle attempts to provide us with a more viable pattern for living, that often serve no other purpose than perpetuating themselves...we look to a new ordering of means in accordance with a new set of goals” (Stea, 1969, p. 1-2).

**Decreased trauma.** All of the work that the participants were doing attended to decrease not only the communities they served and were a part of, but it also gave them the space to decrease their own trauma. In this, the participants worked with community to, not forget trauma, but to work through it and transform it into a place of conviction to produce new realities and futures rather than circumventing it. For example, Egqumeni
worked in farm education and changed a significant amount of disparities within his organization with his colleagues in the short time of a few months. He paid homage and respect to the Native land that the farm exists on. He was creating ways to connect with students in school districts in a culturally specific way with specifically with communities of color instead of educating predominantly white students in a spectator fashion because he was more invested in reconnecting communities of color with land in a different way, in a way that heals trauma and continues legacies. In addition, Joaquin discussed how they worked with communities that caused harm in order to reduce the intergenerational cycle of it.

*Deepened understanding.* Though metacognitive, it is still important that shifts within the geography of the mind that lead to ontologies and disruption of oppression are produced. With deeper understanding comes deeper geographic shifts and efficacy to belief in liberation’s feasibility, in the abolition of institutional harm’s plausibility. For example, when Joaquin discussed their perspective on institutional presence in education and in prison abolition, there were questions that came up among their varying audiences. With prison abolition, they tell people that there's a larger conversation to that question of *if not this, then what?* People are often looking for a short answer, but every short answer is incomplete and the request for a short answer for an institution that has perfected its craft of oppression over centuries is rendered absurd, intellectually lazy, and uninvested in the roles that we must all take to dismantle and sustainably build. Therefore Joaquin, started at the root of the problem with prisons. They discussed resources, trauma, etc. and
what it would look like if people received what they needed in society. They asked if these needs were met with sustenance, emotional, physical, psychological, social supports—what would people be in prison for? This perspective also connects to Harney and Moten (2013), that when we talk about anything that we want to deconstruct, as the marginalized “We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming. What we want after ‘the break’ was different from what we think we want before the break and both are necessarily different from the desire that issues from being in the break (p. 6).”

Joaquin also felt like it was easy for society to simply blame teachers when they are in Joaquin’s opinion, “being smushed from the top and the bottom.” His analysis regarding this topic connected to O’Loughlin’s (1995) perspective on exploitation of the educator or systemic compliance. The institutions tell educators to clean up their mess without admitting fault with an austere hand. The community members want the teachers to fix the sins of the institution they are a part of and the teachers are left to make a decision about what they are going to do and to which sides(s) they can or are willing to lean towards- each decision waiting with consequence. Now this is not to absolve teachers, but Joaquin does want to show a bigger picture than the one typically operated within in the field of education.

The Art of Liberatory Pedagogy.

This is where freedom lives
Though the findings and the discussion of each previous section articulates some commonalities that were surfaced from the poems. The emphasis and addition to previously articulated discussion demonstrated that without participant input in findings and the discussion, or poetics rather, as it pertains to liberation, the full pedagogical exploration holds significant gaps. These gaps are attended to in respect to pedagogical, ontological, and epistemological insight that can be utilized to inform other pedagogues and/or practitioners interested in particular fields as it relates to the development or expansion of one’s educational pedagogy and praxis. The inclusion of participant areas of transcript resonance allowed the opportunity for the researcher to share power with the participants in surfacing important findings from narrative inquiry but also in discussion and analysis of their own stories.

Implications on Educational Practice

The question for the larger educational field on how to cultivate and nurture liberation, is one that warrants an answer that may not be one that fully satiates all who are housed within the field. The latitude that nonformal education has to seek liberation with less constraints is something that warrants the question of whether formal education needs to even exist in the capacity that it does, when it is the body that causes the most
harm and devalues the remixed (Ladson-Billings, 2014), modified, and Sankofa (Temple, 2010) form of education that builds the most efficacy

The system of education has to be transformed. That transformation may very well require the dissolution of a system that shifts to a community specific practice of education that is constructed to respond to the things that communities themselves feel are important to learn. Seeking liberation and educational transformation always comes with the possibility and probability that the institution in and of itself, at least as it exists today, needs to be dissolved in order to come to fruition, as is corroborated by Joaquin in their statement of “no reform, no nothing.” This is reified by Shakur (1978) in the statement, "The schools we go to are a reflection of the society that created them” (p. 181) and in cyclical form, schools reproduce and indoctrinate generations to maintain the oppressive society that we exist in (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1990).

The expansiveness of suggestions concerning liberatory pedagogy for the field are ones that are not necessarily impossible based on infrastructure, but oppressive infrastructures have the ability to diminish the expansiveness of liberation. Though culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris 2012) were and are used to emphasize and pivot from a position of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) in marginalized communities as a pathway to build efficacy and competencies to succeed within the parameters of the educational system’s expectations, they still are not pedagogies that are willing to disrupt
the design of oppressive educational systems and mechanisms, they instead try to reduce harm.

Harm reduction implies that there is a substance abuse problem with whiteness within the system of education. Bourdieu and Passerson (1990) stated that schools are the sites of societal replication— and in this substance abuse, the system produces bodies addicted to that whiteness. It is unclear how one can move into harm reduction knowing that they perpetuate whiteness upon marginalized populations. It is plausible however, that one cannot be rehabilitated from abusive epistemologies and ontologies without the suspension of power. It is also plausible that it may be impossible to truly understand how to pedagogically fight for the liberation of oppressions to which one has never experienced, oppressions that are not intergenerationally transcribed into one’s body, oppressions whose jagged shards are present within every breath breathed that cannot be tasted in the blood of their mouth each time it strikes another blow. However, this is not within the scope of this research. It is possibly a topic that other educational researchers may want to explore in the future.

It is an expectation that philosophers and practitioners will create a responsive inquiry process in of centering whiteness despite the context of this dissertation explicitly stating its orientation to practitioners of color. In this, it should be uplifted that the use of endarkened epistemology, embodied ways of knowing and embodied ways of being are what made this research endeavor possible from openness to be interviewed and trust concerning use of the participant narratives. The preceding paragraphs not only explain
the contributory approaches that assist in the development and implementation of liberatory pedagogy but also uplift their gaps in ascertaining liberation, especially as it relates to how educators of color advocate for marginalized students of color as a marginalized person of color no matter their approach within and outside of educational institutions. In addition, the following paragraph explains how the academy has a propensity to center whiteness without understanding that, liberatory pedagogy refuses to placate it and emphasizes the inability to fight for liberation from oppressions that whiteness has not experienced due to a lack of an endarkened epistemology and ontology.

The centering of whiteness within topics such as liberation is proactively expected by communities of color and resisted through liberatory pedagogy. This is directly supported by Joaquin’s words when they stated, “[this practice of refusal] really started with white people, because they think everything’s for them. So I do think there's power of being like ‘nah’, because then that's the first time a lot of white people get told no…especially about race.” Liberatory pedagogy asserts that power of refusal and says no through the understood sheer impossibility of whiteness steeped in heteropatriarchal white supremacy to know or feel how to utilize liberatory pedagogy and be successful with its implementation. This inability, this impossibility is because of liberatory pedagogy’s ever evolving construction that is created without the master’s tools (Lorde, 1984) or their blueprints. Liberatory pedagogy is created and constructed from endarkened epistemology, ways of knowing and ways of being. Liberatory pedagogy can be cultivated from the body of the marginalized, but it cannot be taught.
In addition, it is also expected that the conceptualizations present in this research concerning liberatory pedagogy (and who can practice it) will be challenged within the educational field because of the field’s proclivity to center whiteness and act in a Munchausen by proxy savior ontology wherein whiteness is the pseudo savior of the oppression it began and propagates. This research is not concerned with, nor will it respond to, what should be done about this. It is not within the scope of its orientation or focus. Instead, this research sought to feed the growth of liberation pedagogy research and its influence in a way that continues to be informed by communities that are experts of their own experiences, by remembering that solutions are iterative and collaborative, and understanding that liberatory pedagogy practitioners are accountable to marginalized communities, not the system constructed for their systemic marginalization.

This research demonstrated that liberatory pedagogy is not a process. Its disentanglement from oppression is messy. Thus, as a message to the entire educational field—it is oppressive and unrealistic to expect that liberatory pedagogues and the communities they serve will create radical geographic shifts that are perfect simply because some oppressive parties move back or relinquish their power. It is not possible to fix global oppressions, centuries old in temporal evaluations, but they are, in fact, tasked with trying. The evaluation processes may not be what is considered typical in the western tradition, but considering that they are trying to shift from repeating oppression in different ways, that may not be the worst idea. It takes time, practice, trial, and error to cultivate space that can make the co-construction of liberation possible under the ethics of
This autonomy, self-determination is reified in Harney and Moten’s (2013) work where they are specific about what they are planning for, learning, teaching for, what they want and the possibilities of pursuing liberation:

...we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls. We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming. What we want after “the break” was different from what we think we want before the break and both are necessarily different from the desire that issues from being in the break. (p. 6)

Liberation is not contingent on permission from oppressors (Pour-Khorshid, 2016). Resistance to liberation is not something that marginalized populations are a stranger to. Much like Morrison (1975) stated “…racism is a distraction... It keeps you from doing your work (35:46).” The work of this research was to make clear to others aspiring to become or who already are liberatory pedagogues that this work is ongoing and that there are networks and people you can connect to, pathways that can help identify and attend to the conditions needed for marginalized communities to thrive according to Kaba (Macaré, 2015). To build resources, tools, and skills in the Third Space (Bhabha, 1994) and understand what it means to trust the endarkened body
(Hurtado, 2013) that informs your “spiritual practice” (hooks, 1994), guided by the Theory in the Flesh (Anzaldua & Moraga, 1981), one’s soul (Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, & Tyson, 2000) and to make clear that in order to do this work, you as a person within your body must be willing to be transformed in pursuit of its implementation in pursuit of societal transformation through liberatory pedagogy. Some may be fearful as to what we, as the marginalized, may lose that has shifted from the civil rights era, in this pursuit of liberation—but my question in response is much like Biko (2015) wherein he states we must be prepared to lose things in order to see a change. It can be argued that not much changed except that the marginalized were relocated in a different space of oppression under the false name of freedom where laws of protection were never meant to extend to those grandfathered into sub-humanism (Leonardo, 2004). In essence, what more is left for whiteness in society broadly, or in education specifically to take that has not already pilfered?

Concerning the influence on educational practice with respect to research methods, this research sought to understand how liberatory pedagogy works and to disrupt the academy’s hegemony, but two things were understood from this process. First, liberatory pedagogy functioning as a wholeness does not fit into paradigms of western academic research processes and thusly, hypocrisy and contradiction is always prevalent—the research was pushed to fit into a model that could not hold it (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 26), and through this process it became clear from coding to findings, to analysis that the overlap constantly spoke to its wholeness rather than it’s separation and
piecemeal. This research thusly, sought to explore a liberatory paradigm shift in pedagogy while exploring and attempting to explain what that paradigm shift looks like within the very oppressive paradigms critiqued (Stea, 1969, p. 1-2). Second, though this research sought to disrupt the academy, the act of pursuing and articulating this research was a disruption and a space making process to the canon of literature—but the expected western hegemonic power in and process of research, even with some shared power in the found poems, reified and was complicit to the power of the academy by participating in its process alone. In this Stea (1969) forebode how radical change cannot be a replacement but instead, much be an overhaul, a transformation, a new construction to avoid the cycles of the same inadequate outcomes for societal health:

…radical change—replacement of institutions and institutional arrangements in our society that can no longer respond to changing societal needs, that stifle attempts to provide us with a more viable pattern for living, that often serve no other purpose than perpetuating themselves. We do not seek to replace existing institutions with others which will inevitably take the same form; rather, we look to a new ordering of means in accordance with a new set of goals (p. 1-2).

These different components of Theory in the Flesh (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1981), Third Space theory (Bhabha, 1994), and Radical Geography cannot be randomly applied in actualization of liberation and in pedagogy development or implementation. Focusing on one piece at a time when learning how to practice liberatory pedagogy is ineffective. It inherently will not allow for liberatory pedagogy. In addition, because communities have
different needs, models should be adjusted, but they will not always be able to be scaled up and that may be because accountability for particular scales across fields reduce or completely diminish levels of community accountability. Transformation and liberation do not always equate to size and scale, but rather, depth, intuitive accommodation for fluctuation, and sustainability.

In addition, infusing sprinkles of liberation ideology into curriculum without modeled ontologically and continuously pursuing actionable shifts reifies the cyclical watering down and concept co-opting of pedagogies meant to uplift marginalized communities being diluted for the comfort of whiteness (Ladson-Billings, 2014). What would a liberatory partnership look like in a system whose expertise is the reproduction of oppression? The question remains after these interviews concluded—is a partnership possible where more power is in the hands of the community than that of the system? Is it a partnership? It is reparations? What are the delineating criteria, or is any association with systems and education institutions inherently oppressive?

The wholeness that is liberatory pedagogy will not allow for the examination of one identified problem area or proliferation of one identified approach of success and leave the others, that route only heightens the propensity of its failure due to the lack of full investment. Liberation yields what is invested in it—it is a relationship of collaboration, of trust, vulnerability, reciprocity, and of symbiosis among the marginalized. If the investment is piecemeal, as will be the results. The results will instead act as a feeble compress to the systemic wounds that the education system has
created, but it will not heal it, nor will it do anything to prevent the next blow. And as these blows continue from the implications of oppression with the same weight in the same places, on the same bodies, with the small number of those who are willing to extend care—the immensity of this trauma and lack of resources increased the expected probability of community exsanguination. And in this, we must attend to trauma, acknowledge harm, and heal so that we have space to dream, plan and materialize futures without the distraction of a knife in our bodies (Malcolm X, 1968).

**Limitations**

A limitation of this research is that I was not able to be in educational spaces to observe or participate in the participants liberatory pedagogy use. The research relied on the solely on the participants’ stories and did not account for other perspectives to produce a comprehensive view. Therefore, there is missing information regarding observation of liberatory pedagogy in action in moments or over time. This research also reaches its limits in its inability to interview those who have been in educational spaces led by the participants. In addition, I am not able to be in educational spaces to observe or be a part of the audience to witness the participants liberatory pedagogy use to respond to the research questions. Due to the scope of this research, the paper only focuses on the participant perspective, the narrative of audience members and community members is absent. Lastly, the ability to witness the actual construction of materialisms, metacognitive or material over time is also a limitation.

**Implications for Future Research**
Future research is needed to produce narratives from the position of the student/audience member and community members to explore and explain the community impact of liberatory pedagogy use. Fruitful areas of future research might also include liberatory pedagogy use across multiple fields to gain knowledge on the commonalities and distinctions of praxis when practitioners are in the same space. Moreover, research producing more narrative of liberatory pedagogy practitioners across similar fields that work domestically, internationally, or transnationally to determine how pan-indigeneity is approaching and materializing liberation through pedagogy will strengthen the field. This research would provide a more robust sense of how liberation pedagogy functions locally and globally and in what ways definitions are conceptualized as it pertains to the pursuit of liberation. Additionally, future research needed is an auto-ethnography of the research methods of narrative inquiry as it pertains to liberatory pedagogy data as well as a narrative comparison of how found poems produced from narrative inquiry transcripts are interpreted by racially marginalized populations of educators and by white populations to determine if the poetics of narrative is interpreted in similar or different ways to influence curriculum, instruction, and pedagogy and to explore why the collected outcomes exist.

Conclusions

Liberatory pedagogy is the iterative and generative collision and convergence that is the kinetics of artistry, Theory in the Flesh, Third Space Theory, and Radical Geography. All of these components act as an atom and the electrons within it—their
interactions, bounce off of and inform one another. Their interactions are as continuous as they are multidirectional and form a wholeness rather than in puzzle pieced format. When these bodies connect to others who also seek liberation to co-construct they are influenced by one another and morph with new learnings in pursuit of new imaginings and their sustainability. Liberatory pedagogy shifts and accommodates for new learnings, contexts, and fields by nature and liberatory pedagogy moves. It moves with the body that pursues it as praxis, it is the body in praxis, and it is ongoing, ever-present, and ubiquitous for and within its practitioners.

This research responds to the ways in which liberatory pedagogy moves. The narratives gathered provide an introductory glimpse at the impetus, the navigation, and the materialization of liberatory pedagogy. Though there were some commonalities among the participant responses, the context of the history, spaces, and places that are associated to the individual participants shifts the meaning and implications of shared commonalities rendering them distinct. The narratives gleaned and the various approaches of focusing on the participant responses extend an opportunity for those interested in the reviewing findings to hone in on not only what resonated with the participants, to explore how these stories resonate with the reader themselves, and lastly this research provided an opportunity to make connections as to why pieces of stories may have resonated with the participant and the reader.

Though this research served to fill gaps of a specific sect of field not often discussed in the same location, specifically in the canon of educational literature, much
more research is necessary, particularly with close attention paid to the biopolitical positionality of the researcher and the power shared with community. Ultimately, to increase the propensity for the materialization of liberation through education and the implications thereof, the educational activists in this research attempted to: (a) make the educational field more robust, believable, credible and visible in a way that is useful to racially marginalized populations; (b) continue the undoing of hegemonic approaches to what we deem valuable and possible in the field of education formally and informally; (c) reject the distinction and comparative value between formal and nonformal education value; and (d) materialize heterotopias to develop transformable solutions that can accommodate the community identified necessitation of their adjustment that can proactively, sustainably, and responsively tend to the specific needs of different communities.

Liberation pedagogy is accountable to communities of color. This research does not assume that all people of color are liberatory pedagogues, only that they are capable. In order to build the tools across academic, professional, and lived experiences—that development requires nurturing for growth, invitation into the work, representation of possibilities, authentic relationships, and culturally oriented and constructive skill building. In this, much like equity requires the redistribution of resources and power, the processes of liberatory pedagogy requires reclamation of resources, power and redistribution of energy investment, except that no one is asking for permission for marginalized communities to do and seek knowledge to provide what is self-determined
to be necessary for marginalized communities, which in this case, is liberatory pedagogy orienting itself to communities of color that have as Joaquin stated, “had to be imaginative to survive.”
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Appendices

Appendix A

Pedagogy Distinctions Table and Concepts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works within Constraints of Existing Systems</td>
<td>Recognizes Rules, Regulations and Practices but Dismisses them when they are proven harmful to marginalized populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions roots of white supremacy and interrogates through inquiry, the spaces and contexts in which it exists; appeals to those who profit (socially, psychologically, physically, emotionally, systemically, and economically) to recognize the harm they perpetuate from not acknowledging oppression(s).</td>
<td>Acknowledges that white supremacy in engrained in the ways in which imperialized and colonized spaces function; does not believe that those who refuse to admit this are necessary for the liberation of marginalized populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and Interrogates; no required materialisms; expects organic growth through social consciousness</td>
<td>Questions, Plans, and Mobilizes Action through trial and error for other materialisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests Latitude to Discuss</td>
<td>Discusses and Plans with or without Permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocates for the Notion of love catalyzing collective movement</td>
<td>Focuses on removing precarity from marginalized populations’ lives with or without love from those who oppress through Radical Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompted within Designated Space</td>
<td>Occurring at all times, spaces, and place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleads for humanization in hegemonic framework</td>
<td>Redefines humanization through new imaginings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological; acknowledges counternarratives and contested histories but does not validate them</td>
<td>Epistemological &amp; Ontological through pan-indigenous and coercively migrated practices; creates, retrieves, and validates counternarratives and contested histories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit; Devil’s Advocate; Veers away from initial purpose; sensationalizes inquiry</td>
<td>Explicit and Subversive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value validated and goals led by hegemonic forces with marginalized input</td>
<td>Marginalized define their own value and lead movements where oppression exists</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Educational Activist of Marginalized Identities:** A person of color that believes that they are invested in social justice and liberation of marginalized populations through education that is creating and practicing curriculum that fundamentally asserts that structural racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism exists, and uses a curriculum and pedagogy that is engrained with principles that promote, expect, and adamantly demand (explicitly or implicitly) equitable and liberatory shifts and actions in society regarding space, place, and cognition. The participants must have a pedagogy that moves beyond critical inquiry and into action or the promotion thereof.

**Liberation:** The ability for marginalized people to navigate through life unhindered by double (or multiple) consciousness, practices and socialized behaviors of white supremacy of marginalized. The ability to exist without permission and without harm caused to marginalized populations emotionally, psychologically, socially, physiologically, physically, or financially based on the marginalized identities that they hold. Liberation is collective, collaborative, and accountable to marginalized communities.

**Heterosexism:** “Heterosexism is defined as a setting-level process that systematically privileges heterosexuality relative to homosexuality, based on the assumption that heterosexuality, as well as heterosexual power and privilege are the norm and the ideal. The many ways heterosexism is manifest in the physical–architectural, program–policy, suprapersonal, and social features” (Chesir-Teran, 2003)
**Cissexism:** “Cissexism is discrimination against individuals who identify with and/or present as a different sex and gender than assigned at birth and privilege conveyed on individuals who identify with and/or present as the same sex and gender as assigned at birth. It is a form of sexism based on sexual and gender identity and expression. The term was developed by LGBT activists and critics during the 1990s, as a response to oppressive attitudes in various institutions and organizations. Cissexism is the outcome of a belief that biological sex and gender fall into only two categories in a fixed and binary system: male/masculine and female/feminine. Following from this construction, cissexism represents individuals who identify with their birth sex and gender – cissexual and cisgender individuals – as normal and healthy, while those who do not identify as such are represented as deviant and sick.” (Hibbs, 2014, p.235)
## Table 1

**Self-Identified Demographics of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Dis/ability</th>
<th>Field(s) of Work</th>
<th>Location of Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sothyia Vibol</td>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Restorative Justice, Pedagogy Support, Literacy</td>
<td>High School, Summer Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Joaquin</td>
<td>Afro-Latinx</td>
<td>Transmaculine</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Healing Justice and Body Work, Prison Abolition, Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>Collectives, Community Organizations, Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jorge</td>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Math and Science</td>
<td>Alternative Charter High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ita Viiko</td>
<td>Mixteca</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Language and Culture Preservation</td>
<td>Indigenous Communities/Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Egqumeni</td>
<td>Black of Geechee Descent</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Farm Education</td>
<td>Farm Based Community Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## KINETICS OF LIBERATORY PEDAGOGY

### Table 2

**Data Coding Criteria Theory in the Flesh**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Criteria</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants discussed their identity in relation to teaching effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants discussed the dynamics of their development in communities that they are or were a part of in relation to their previous, present, or aspirational future education roles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants mentioned forms of identity based/intergenerational trauma or support of and within their communities that were specifically related to their pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants discussed “ways of being” or “ways of knowing” as a guide to their pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants mentioned identity/community specific intergenerational or recently generated wisdom and its relationship to their pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants mentioned difficulties or benefits of holding their identities in relation to their pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants mentioned growth from their lived experience and how that growth has informed their pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants mentioned personal histories in connection to pedagogy or educational systems they felt supported or failed them. Participants mentioned how they used these personal histories as an impetus for deciding to practice liberatory pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3

**KINETICS OF LIBERATORY PEDAGOGY**

**Data Coding Criteria Third Space Theory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mentioned time taken to be reflexive, metacognitive, or discussed moments of recognized neuroplasticity in relation to their pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants discuss how and why they do not practice from what is considered a Western traditional pedagogy and in what instances these decisions to veer from such traditions take place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants discuss how they facilitate in learning spaces of differing audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants discuss the shifts in their roles and positionality between students and administrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention how they navigate challenges that they believe are informed by resistance due to others’ unwillingness to believe in liberation, its value, and its application to education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention ways they navigate or expect challenges to the implementation of their pedagogy due to their identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention ways they make space for student autonomy while connecting with them holistically through the pursuit of safety or self-determined success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention ways they make or take opportunities to practice their pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention methods of explicit, subversive, or insurgent means to practice their pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mentioned collaborations necessary for the implementation or the development of their pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention support, Resources and methods they have used to co/build curriculum or to co/manage learning spaces and environments regularly or amidst identified shifts as it pertains to sustaining a liberatory space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention funding mechanisms for their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention “principles of being” or values that inform practice amidst opportunities and challenges of pedagogical praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention their fundamental <em>a priori</em>s of liberatory pedagogy and how they inform the participants’ pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants offer advice for anyone who is or hopes to practice liberatory pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants discuss how they adjust to learning spaces that shift based on current events or connections to the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention the mental, physical, or emotional toll and/or benefits of their pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants discuss the iterations of adjusting practice based on new ideas of what those in the learning space want to materialize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mention how they learned to teach from a liberatory standpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participant mentions concessions they have made or things that they have had to sacrifice to be able to practice liberatory pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants mentions skills or tools they had to gain to develop their own liberatory pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participant mentions ways of cultivating, managing, or sustaining an environment conducive to liberation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KINETICS OF LIBERATORY PEDAGOGY

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Coding Criteria Radical Geography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Participants discuss how they pursue the creation of new realities or ways of being with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participants mention the ways they have witnessed their pedagogy resonating with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participants mention methods of their practice that have shifted the lives of their students and/or their communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participants mentions what resonates as a result of their pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participants discuss what has changed in themselves, their positions, the institutions, organizations, or communities they are a part of due to their pedagogical praxis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participants mention what they want, believe can, or expect to manifest as a result of their pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory in the Flesh</td>
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<td>Third Space Theory</td>
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Appendix C

Interview Protocol & Guide

- Request to Begin Recording
- Introduction and Greetings
  - Request to share setting decision
- Explanation of Procedure
  - Informed Consent
  - Process
- Inquiry of Comfort
- Inquiry of identities, Role, Region, and Duration in Role and Former Roles
- Research Questions:
  - Conclusion
    - Request to Share Final Comments
    - Inquiry of Any Remaining Questions
  - Reiteration of Process
    - Transcription Approval
    - Found Poetry Request and Timeline

Research Questions

RQ1: In what ways do the identities of educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines matter in relation to their use of liberatory pedagogy?
KINETICS OF LIBERATORY PEDAGOGY

RQ2: In what ways do educational activists of marginalized identities navigate the use of liberatory pedagogy?

RQ3: In what ways do educational activists of marginalized identities believe that liberatory pedagogy use does or has the ability to materialize different realities?

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me the story of why you began using liberatory pedagogy?
   • What were your motivations?
   • What were instances that influenced you?

2. In your own words, tell me about the ways you have tried to figure out how to practice liberatory pedagogy and make it work?
   • How do you develop content?
     o What are the dynamics of trying it out?
     o How do you maintain the spaces where you teach as a liberatory space?
     o Do you collaborate with anyone when designing and using liberatory pedagogy?
     o How do you know it worked or it didn’t work?
     o What do you think you need to make your use of it sustainable and successful?

3. Tell me how your use of liberatory pedagogy is impacting you and your relationship with others.
KINETICS OF LIBERATORY PEDAGOGY

- What are some challenges?
  - Do you feel safe?
  - Do you trust others within and outside of your discipline to use liberatory pedagogy?
  - Tell me about your non-negotiables when practicing liberatory pedagogy?

4. Tell me about any times where you have noticed that liberatory pedagogy has or could change space in society.
  - What do we do about where we are now?
  - What do you want to say to people who are thinking about or using liberatory pedagogy?
Poem Prompt:

Please read through your interview transcript and highly sections words, or phrases that resonate with you. When you are finished please return the highlighted transcript and the poem to me. You can add any additional commentary on the process in a separate document and send that to me as well.
KINETICS OF LIBERATORY PEDAGOGY

Appendix E

Advertisement:

Greetings,

I am an EdD student at the University of Portland. I am conducting research on how liberatory pedagogy (or pedagogies of liberation) works. I am seeking people of color to participate in this research project. I would need to interview you in person and will ask you to check the accuracy of your transcripts and then create a poem from those transcripts. The interviews would be audio recorded but you would remain anonymous. If you are interested in participating in the study, there was one preliminary phone interview that would last no more than twenty minutes to confirm that you practice liberatory pedagogy as defined by this specific research. To participate, please contact me at HarrisLa19@up.edu and we will work together to determine your eligibility. Once you are confirmed we will schedule a time for the full interview.

-Latashia Harris

Doctoral candidate, University of Portland
Informed Consent Form:

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Latashia Harris from the UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND department of education. I hope to learn how liberatory pedagogy functions, how it resonates, and what it materializes when adopted by educational activists of marginalized identities across disciplines through collected stories and poetry born from these stories. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you meet the criteria of being an educational activist of marginalized identities that uses liberatory pedagogy in their work.

If you decide to participate, you was asked to participate in an in-person interview, confirm your interview transcripts’ accuracy, and create a poem. The interviews was audio recorded.

You was given a pseudonym to retain anonymity. Your demographics, scope of work, and region wil be shared in the data results. The goal of this research is to share the stories of liberatory pedagogy practitioners in an attempt to create a more in depth and robust repository of liberatory pedagogy’s dynamics for future teacher education. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and was disclosed only with your permission or as
required by law. Subject identities was kept confidential by encrypting data files on a password protected computer. You will remain anonymous after this research is completed through the encryption of archived files on a password protected computer.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with University of Portland. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at harrisla19@up.edu or 334.546.7069. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You was offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

Signature ________________________________

Date_________________________________