

“THERE’S ALWAYS PEOPLE IN THE ROOM FOR WHOM THIS IS NOT MERELY  
THEORY”: EMERGENT PEDAGOGIES

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## ABSTRACT

### “THERE’S ALWAYS PEOPLE IN THE ROOM FOR WHOM THIS IS NOT MERELY THEORY”: EMERGENT PEDAGOGIES

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Colleges and universities are generally regarded as a place for students to expand their skill sets and knowledge in preparation for specific fields of work. Many academic institutions and disciplines are also focused on recruiting and retaining students from socially marginalized communities, while also claiming to be places students can learn to make a difference in the world. In practice, however, these institutions and systems often prioritize profit over providing adequate and sufficient resources, care, and support of students and educators and their teaching and learning conditions. Within them, though, are often also educators who use their knowledge and positions to encourage and empower students to directly deconstruct unjust systems and confront their causes while also making sense of their lives, and reimagining how things could be. These faculty members offer an entry point into the evolving pedagogies that emerge from the contradictions of these conditions, pedagogies that tend to trauma and grapple with grief, pedagogies rooted in liberation from all forms of domination. This research project, situated at two state universities on the west coast, studies 14 faculty across humanities and social science disciplines and how they address these issues within their classrooms, their campus, and their communities. These interviews, occurring from November 2019-January 2020, offer a look into how these faculty navigate the limitations of capitalist-

driven learning alongside the possibilities of education rooted in connection and humanization.

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Thank you Goudi'ni for holding me these past few years and thank you to the original and eternal stewards of this region, specifically the Wiyot, Yurok, and Hupa peoples, who have been caring for these lands long before they were ever called humboldt and who still are.

Finally, I want to acknowledge here that I didn't use trigger warnings throughout this paper, though it's centered on trauma. Throughout my own narrative, my interviews, the literature review, and discussion on the findings, there are many potentially triggering things are discussed, including but not limited to: sexualized violence, rape and incest; racism, anti-Blackness, anti-Indiginity, and other forms of white supremacist violence, homophobia and transphobia; self-harm, death, murder, suicide, and others not included here. Please read with caution and with care. Thank you, too, for being there.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

About Leaving (abcs revisited)

Before you go, be sure to sweep the old room of  
 Cat hair, any other traces of your life here.  
 Dozens of boxes to move in the meantime.  
 Ensure your closet hides nothing anymore.  
 Forget where you put the keys and Uhaul  
 Guide, find them  
 Hidden behind your right ear, where you left several dozen goodbyes.  
 Importantly,  
 Justify your departure to the confused but comfortable  
 Kid still wrapped so tightly inside your  
 Ligaments. Don't  
 Mention the fear, the hundreds of miles of  
 Narrow roads, none yet  
 Obstructed by the growing flames,  
 Plumes of smoke down the coast.  
 Quietly gather the last of your things, check your little  
 Red backpack one last time, sitting next to your  
 Sleepy cat waiting in the passenger seat.  
 Turn out of the old apartment complex, the  
 Uhaul a smoother ride than the  
 Visions in your mind.  
 Wet your eyes.  
 eXclaim to the sky your sincerest goodbyes, do  
 Yourself a favor and don't choke back your cries,  
 Zip up the 101, and drive;  
 3 fires ahead, how many beyond, how many behind?  
*August 2018*

This is my story, and this is also so much bigger than just me. For starters, I or me  
 wouldn't *be* if it wasn't for my relations to other human and nonhuman relatives, so  
 simply calling something mine fails to fully encapsulate the critical ways my relations  
 shape and are shaped by me. Yet attributing my selfhood strictly to my relations doesn't  
 inherently take into consideration how power in its many forms constitutes my relations  
 to individuals and institutions, and their relations to me, my life, and my identities, which

are guided by combinations of care, indifference, violence. Part of the core of this story is about the messiness of survival; it is ongoing and evolving.

This story has several timelines that overlap, intersect, and run parallel to the others, nonlinear yet clear; these timelines show queer little me probably 8 years old in our suburban house tucked at the end of a cul de sac. It was there, on the Council of Three Fires homelands ([potawatomisheritage.com](http://potawatomisheritage.com)), where I'd lie sleepless in bed, seeing stars through my blinds, in awe and terrified at the prospect of death, of dying. Those thoughts left me feeling scared and curious, coupled with imagining the expansive, endless universe we lived in, the light years of time and space that existed long before I did, and will exist after I do. I wondered where I was when Washington and Lincoln were presidents, as that was truly my conception of a meaningful "history" before me at the time. In some ways, I was the ideal, desired white American settler subject in my youth, unknowingly growing and cultivating life in stolen spaces of white flight, my presence on the land never questioned, challenged, instead almost always validated. I wasn't taught to think deeply about what is happening in the world and how to critically examine my place, my role in it. This story has everything and nothing to do with me.

These timelines bring me to when I was 18, I moved to Anishinaabewaki, on the shores of Gichigami, to begin my studies at Northland College. Even going into college I personally and historically understood very little about my identities as a middle-class white American settler, how that forms my understanding of my mind/body/spirit, my place in this world - and those lessons are ongoing. But I found my way into a "Sociology of Gender" course "for fun", a class that fundamentally changed me and served as an

entryway into understanding myself and what I thought was “mine.” That led me to be 19, longhaired and a newly declared double major in Sociology and Social Justice, and Gender and Women’s Studies, where my love for education rooted in care tended to me where I was wounded, where I thought I was broken, where I was actually growing. My introduction to feminist education was planted, rooted, and flourished amongst brick buildings, balsam firs, and the chilled waters of Lake Superior. I really began to embrace this re-examining my life, this country, this world in this body through more critical lenses which allowed me to understand that some of the so called “personal” things I went through were actually much bigger than me, offering the chance to find different meaning in my experiences and in my life. I’m thinking specifically of a class period where we talked about the self-harm that a lot of girls inflict on their bodies and I thought of the fading scars on my legs and arms and I remember crying in that class, moved to tears by wanting to know how to comfort a hypothetical someone else who still harbors those thoughts, but also by knowing I didn’t know what I needed to hear when that was still me. This re-examining wasn’t always poetic and sweet. Even so, it felt so transformative.

These timelines remind me that it was in those years I initially began to unlearn the false history of the United States, the reckoning I had to do to come to terms with knowing I was at least subtly lied to my whole life, if not outright, if not intentional and deliberate. More than that, the whole time I was alive, people were fighting against systems that were propelling me forward, or at least where I lived fairly comfortably and protected. Even as I unlearn I’m benefitting and it’s more than just me but plays out on

me, within me, around me. And at the same time, learning resistance, the ongoing struggles that existed before me and continue on today. I remember walking around campus one winter evening, trying to have fun and goof around with my classmates but lost still in the article I had just read, line by line learning history that was strategically hidden from me up until then. This country whose past I was finally beginning to know, the flaws at the core, whose violent origins still live, this country and those violent histories seemingly swept away by Obama's progress. I began to experience a deepening discrepancy between what we are told about this country, and the actual atrocities that took place for this land to bear this name, the cruelty and bloodshed required to call this land American. I was seeing people celebrate the progressiveness of Obama's second administration while learning about the deeply rooted structural violences of this nation, the truths strategically omitted from my knowledge and memory.

These timelines remind me that summer going into senior year, when Trump announced his run for presidency, I started seeing how he embodied what was inherent to this nation's past, present, and future. From what I had been learning it was almost not a surprise, his rise in popularity, which of course led to him being elected. And in that aftermath people came together in such caring, critical ways in spite of, or perhaps in response to, the direct view into the violence inherent to this nation I was taught to pledge my allegiance. I didn't just come to know this from nowhere; my readings, my courses, my faculty laid the foundation for my continued and changing understandings of who I am, what this world is, and navigating my existence within it. At its most vague, just learning about what it means to be alive. More specifically, it sparked within me a deep

challenge of my understanding of this country I was told to uncritically call home. My studies gave me the tools to do that as we entered more outwardly turbulent times. I felt a sense of urgency and obligation to return that to future students seeking insight on themselves and their lives, this complex world.

Almost 8 months after graduating college, a close friend of mine, Parker, whom I knew for almost a decade, unexpectedly passed away on an internship with the Smithsonian when he collapsed in the jungles of Panama. Two weeks later I was in his parents living room, surrounded by them, his siblings, and my own parents, when their fax machine printed his *autorizacion de incineracion*. I translated the document for his parents, showing them where to sign, and what each line meant. They faxed it back to *Jardin de Paz*, who then began the cremation of his body, and I couldn't cry for four months, despite experiencing grief more intimately than I ever had before. Grief for my communities' loss split me open, along with the emerging feeling that the pain of his death was tethered to more deaths, more loss, more violence and suffering to come. Given the undeniable way my life, my sense of self, and my relation to the world was fundamentally altered by this intimate encounter with death, grief, and loss, I wondered what my grief was trying to offer me. Embracing that wonder was also transformative, as it forced me to face the grief not so hidden all around me and allowed me to begin to further understand how the history and present of this nation has always been violent, how our social, racial, colonial, gendered contexts undeniably shape our exposure to loss, the violent deaths that have happened and are happening and will happen, how due to these systems I was born into, how some are seen as deserving of death and others deaths

are tragedies and our relations to privilege and power determine whether our lives are worth living, and our loss of life worth lamenting over.

These timelines flash forward to me trying to write about grief, as a deeply personal feeling and a public, collective phenomena, for the first time in my grad school application essays. I felt like I was learning to write all over again; my words felt sloppy, too big, I was tripping over letters and lines and my vocabulary seemed inadequate for the task. I wondered why writing grief in that way felt as unfamiliar yet as invigorating as taking my first unsteady steps; I knew then that however abstract the concept still was to me then, grief would continue to be a central tenet for how I move through and connect with the world.

You can imagine my surprise, then, after I accepted my place in then-Humboldt State University's Public Sociology graduate program and was told our first task was to read *Grave Matters: Excavating California's Buried Past* by Tony Platt. This book gave me an honest introduction to not only the recent history of white settlers in what's now called Humboldt County, where I would soon settle too, but the ways educational institutions— more specifically UC Berkeley and the creation of their Anthropology departments— built their “knowledge” and collections off of stolen remains of Yurok peoples and other indigenous populations in recently-named California. While this was supposedly done to “preserve” history and protect indigenous cultures, it was another form of colonization, of western institutions exploiting the people they claimed to be benefiting, to create knowledge that served their ideologies. I felt this was further evidence that loss and grief inevitably exist in political, racial, colonial, gendered

contexts that impact different people and communities in vastly different ways, and I still had so much to learn, ideally without extraction and violence.

These timelines show me, with my life and my 4 year old cat packed into a U-haul rental, driving ten and a half hours on mostly unknown roads from tiłhini on northern Chumash homelands to Goudi'ni on Wiyot homelands, passed recently charred landscapes next to the highway, smoke rising as the flames grow still on the other side of the hill. These timelines bring me to my first semester, Fall 2018, crying hot angry tears on the third floor balcony of the BSS after hearing a mere two minutes of Brett Kavanaugh's feeble attempts at feigning innocence a month before joining the Supreme Court. At that point I hadn't thought I had much personal experience with sexualized violence but the story he told was one I had heard for so much of my life, and I wept for everyone who had to witness this or worse, live through it.

These timelines urgently take me then to a night in late October 2018, when someone I barely knew but offered my help to ran her hands over my still body, taking any semblance of a sense of safety that I clung to, desperately, quickly away from me, mere minutes after I starred wholly and blissfully at the emerging winter night sky, my naive bliss enveloped in seemingly eternally blazing bodies so far and so close to me, and now Orion and the Plieades were watching my motionless body. These timelines remind me of the tears I cried for months trying to find what she had taken from me and trying to make sense of this fear that moved in where care was. These timelines take me to sifting through papers from my first year here; mixed within notes from classes and scattered poetry were letters to my professors my first semester from the Title IX office, asking for

academic accommodations as I was experiencing “extenuating circumstances” that impeded my ability to do what was tasked of me. A week later, late August 2019, I was shedding more tears while taking a mandatory mandated reporter training where my own behaviors, my own body, my own experiences were reflected back to me in the training material. These timelines take me to that next month, in the Act to End Sexualized Violence course, where I was given the chance to engage with what happened to me and how my pain exists in this inextricably connected way to the violences so many others also face in different ways.

This is a story of me getting lost along the way, flung out of orbit, undone in ways that made doing the work required of me difficult. I questioned my ability to be an adequate educator as I struggled with writing, meeting deadlines. How could I possibly support my future students in their own grappling with grief and trauma as I truly stumbled with my own? I felt again a sense of urgency and obligation to return that to future students seeking insight on themselves and their lives, this complex world. Would future educator Casey be up to the tasks? What were the questions in the meantime I needed to ask? Amidst my uncertainty, I had a few critical conversations with professors, almost but not quite by accident, that slowly but certainly resulted in this project.

I sought to fill the gaps in my own knowledge and teaching practice so I could be better prepared as an educator for my future students. Some questions I asked myself when imagining my teaching were; how will I as an educator guide students through the course content and class material that confirmed their existing knowledge and/or challenged what they were told is true? What does supporting students look like when

their lived experiences of trauma, violence, and grief come up in class discussions, their writing, or our conversations? How will I guide them as I was guided as they go through the transformative process of learning and unlearning the harrowing truths about this country, our present, our history, our futures, and where their lives fit into it all? Who better to ask than those already engaged in these questions and in this work?

Between November 2019 and January 2020, I interviewed 14 professors in humanities and social sciences on their experiences navigating trauma in the classroom, supporting students when their students lived experiences are reflected through coursework, being there students in the aftermath of violence or as students begin to understand their trauma in context larger than just them. I wanted to know what challenges they had faced, what wisdom they have to offer me as I embark on this inquiry.

Of course these timelines turned even more tumultuous and uncertain with this ongoing widespread virus turned pandemic. But given the pre-covid contexts of these interviews, these timelines require me to remember back before those fundamental global shifts, which are still shifting. I will briefly reflect on this research and the challenges presented by COVID-19 and pandemic, but I will spend more time remembering back to before, seeing what knowledge my participants had to offer us then, and what they can offer us now.

Inseparable yet distinct from this project is my own story, my experiences, my words, my poetry, some of which I weave into this research and my own (un)learning of what I've been conditioned to uphold, of how I make sense of myself in this world. This

knowledge comes from me and exists far beyond me, it is a fractured, incomplete genealogy of work, a humble contribution to conversations that span beyond this lifetime.

Two months past his departure

Spring winds bring  
summer stars in-  
soon Lyra will return  
like ashes in an urn.

Casseopia holds tight-  
ly onto the horizon,  
almost out of sight,  
behind lights from the prison

called “California Men’s Colony”  
And Ursa Major is upside down  
right above me.  
The news spreads all over town,  
he’s no longer around, while  
the big dipper is completely empty

And still taking up space.  
Cosmis choirs begin to sing,  
“The stars are already dead  
and eternal and gone and  
will rise tomorrow again.”

Before they leave, I beg my seven sisters  
to please return next winter;  
*Spring 2017*

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emergent pedagogies are rooted in the following core understandings: imperialist capitalist white supremacist cis-hetero patriarchy guides nearly all aspects of our society and lives (hooks 2010); those values and practices exist and are reproduced by the corporate educational institutions we are in, driving to varying degrees what we teach and are taught, by who, where, when, and why (Alexander 2012); for those and other reasons, disciplines and scholars emerged to challenge patriarchal, colonial, and imperialist practices in and standards of the university (Mohanty 2006); Existing disciplines, institutions, educators, and departments are invited to interrogate themselves, where they uphold and are held down by abusive systems of power, as well as how to challenge and eradicate those systems (Halpert 2007; Love 2019). A crucial component of that interrogation lies within deepening our understanding of how these systems create and reproduce trauma, affecting us as individuals and collectively, to varying degrees (Casper and Wertheimer 2016; ). This topic also asks how trauma-informed pedagogy is critical alongside knowing that education aimed toward justice may evoke nonlinear processes of facing and coping with trauma and violence, inquiring how professors navigate and support one another through that while not conflating the pain from experiencing trauma firsthand and the pain of witnessing it (Hodges Hamilton 2016).

### *Capitalism in the University*

“It is this link between the university and other scapes of global capitalism that recycle and exacerbate gender, race, class, and sexual hierarchies that concerns me” -Chandra Talpade Mohanty 2006:173

People attend colleges and universities, and seek degrees for myriad reasons, Prospective students and aspiring faculty and staff are generally interested in what the institution can offer academically, in terms of courses and degrees; financially, related to tuition, scholarships, loans, and/or wages; and futuristically, meaning how will these studies, this degree fit into some semblance of a plan ahead. Strong underlying currents within the university, which shape our considerations for attending or instructing there, and shape what is taught and learned is the commodification and corporatization of knowledge and education which prioritizes profit over the people who make up those institutions. Especially where that is unacknowledged and unchallenged, it is the driving force of much of how universities operate. bell hooks makes clear that “more often than not, we work in institutions where knowledge has been structured to reinforce dominator culture” (hooks 91), capitalist culture. Institutions do this by valuing Board of Trustees satisfaction over the wellbeing and lived experience of students, by increasing administrators’ salaries while increasing tuition, which deepens student debt and financial stress. How and when knowledge is commodified as resources for the state to maintain systems of inequity and injustice also reinforce a culture of domination. Chandra Talpade Mohanty offers “a serious anticapitalist critique of the corporate academy- an academy that determines the everyday material and ideological constitutions of our work as teachers and scholars in the United States of America” (2006:170) , an academy where teachers and scholars grew too, where students come with hopes to be at times faced with the experiences that the practices of these universities don’t always align with how they are advertised. By recognizing that even the institutions we are a part of perpetuate this

undervaluing of human life and prioritizing profit, we see “In the context of the university/corporate complex, universities can no longer be heralded as sanctuaries of nonrepression- nor can they be sites for ‘free scholarly inquiry,’ that is, free from the pressures of state or industrial and corporate profit making” (175). It is thus necessary to see educational institutions for what they are, as we imagine how we wish they would be, and envision how we could make them be.

Not only are we welcomed to seriously critique the institutions we are a part of, but also the disciplines themselves, what we learn. For example, Sociology as a discipline has concerned itself with identifying the relationships between social systems and the people that make up society, centralizing the way power operates between and within institutions and individuals within society. One might think that sociology would also then concern itself with addressing such injustices and eradicating the conditions that created and perpetuated them. Contemporarily, however, the fact that the discipline as a whole isn’t always what it strives to be, is actually intrinsic to sociology’s history. In “Early American Sociology and the Holocaust: The Failure of a Discipline,” Burton Halpert discloses sociology’s harrowing history on the 1940s;

The United States was seen as becoming a world power, and American business leaders dreamt of a world economic empire headed by American corporations. Influential leaders within American sociology wanted to contribute to this growth in America's power. In searching for how they might accomplish this and thereby gain national recognition for their discipline, these leaders settled on the goal of using their scientific skills to strengthen the internal functioning of the United States (2007:12).

These leaders of American sociology chose to align the discipline with “America’s power” that was primarily concerned with global control by a strong empire. Not only

that, but American sociology also failed to critically examine the United States' own history of genocide against indigenous peoples, as well as the ongoing violence necessitated by global capitalism, therefore further cementing this country's abusive influence worldwide. If "American sociology's neglect presents an urgent challenge to sociology to identify and explain antecedent patterns of genocide in the interest of preventing such future occurrences" (Halpert 2007:7), then we are living with those consequences today, in our classrooms, in our coursework, in our research, in our minds. This is in part why Avery Gordon's notion of haunting is so crucial; she urges us to recognize that "sociology needs a way of grappling with what it represses" (2008:60) alongside a way of reckoning with the violence that it has been used to uphold. Our academic institutions, disciplines, and practices exist within, and have been used to justify and strengthen, "abusive systems of power" on the basis of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, nationality, etc (Gordon 2008). This happens on all levels; administrative, within faculty student dynamics, between peers, amongst staff, even relations we don't often consider. The normalization of such abusive systems of power ought to be challenged and eradicated in all spaces, otherwise under this corporate education model, even "feminism becomes a way to advance academic careers rather than a call for fundamental and collective social and economic transformation" (Mohanty 2006:6). The remainder of this section is concerned with identifying what revolutionary scholars and activists have done to transform their classrooms, courses, and institutions from corporate universities to sites of liberation and care for those marginalized and dehumanized by these abusive systems of power.

*Disciplines of resistance*

“What knowledge do we need for education to be the practice of liberation?... And what kinds of intellectual, scholarly, and political work would it take to actively work against the privatization of the academy, and for social and economic justice? Finally, how do we hold educational institutions, our daily pedagogical practices, and ourselves accountable to the truth?” -Chandra Talpade Mohanty 2006:189

In the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, scholars and academics, who had been historically marginalized and minoritized within academia, began to emphasize, highlight, and center disciplines of resistance. By that I’m referring to ways of knowing, teaching, and learning that are rooted in explicitly challenging the hierarchical structure of educational institutions, and their complacency in upholding inequity (Mohanty 2006) . This need was understood by those who recognized that despite supposedly equitable legislation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, this country’s imperialist capitalist white supremacist hetero-patriarchal core remained strong and in place. The creation of Womens’ and Gender studies, Ethnic studies, Native American studies, African American studies, and Chicano & Latino studies, was in response to what was largely missing from academia: ongoing interdisciplinary movements, scholarship, and knowledge sharing that challenged how oppression was practiced and taught in and outside of academia (Mohanty 2006).

Paulo Friere posed that question, “Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society?...Who can better understand the necessity of liberation?” (2000:45). This revolution of imagining and creating disciplines of resistance made apparent how “Schools are mirrors of our society;

educational justice cannot and will not happen in a vacuum...” (Love 40). While Bettina Love, a queer Black abolitionist educator, is speaking largely to K-12 education, her sentiment remains true; these disciplines came from a critical need for pedagogies rooted in and guided by social movements that recognize and join in scholar-activism on our campuses, in our homes, in our local and global communities. bell hooks reminds us that:

Academics, especially college teachers and professors, who have dared to examine the way in which white supremacy shapes our thinking, in both what we teach and how we teach, have created a small, revolutionary subculture within the educational system in our nation. Many of these academics teach and do scholarship in the area of Ethnic Studies, Women’s Studies, and Cultural Studies (2010:7).

Education aimed at building community and strengthening resistance against imperialist capitalist white supremacist cishetero-patriarchal systems of domination and oppression proves exceptionally transformational when those who are being educated see themselves, their lives, their experiences in the materials in a way that empowers them instead diminishes their light (hooks 2010).

Paulo Friere’s transformative work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* asks, “How can the oppressed...participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?” (2000:48). His questions seem to me to be at the core of the creation of disciplines of resistance, where those marginalized by academia and society at large created critical, caring spaces to make sense of these worlds and move against them in community with others. Indeed, “Antiracist education also works to undo these systems while working to create new ones built upon the collective vision and knowledge of dark folk” (Love 2019:55). That can mean developing and designing relevant curriculum for students, or having students

select which literature and authors they want to work with. That means not shying away from having difficult conversations as they come up in class and in writing.

However, Bettina Love warns, “we must never merely discourse on the present situations, must never provide the people with programs which have little or nothing to do with their own preoccupations, doubts, hopes, fears- programs which at times in fact increase the fears of the oppressed consciousness” (2019:96). The last part- programs which at times increase the fears of oppressed consciousness- is a crucial reminder. Even as these disciplines of resistance name oppression within and outside of the university, even in that process of fighting against those systems, those systems resist their own undoing. Not only that, but in order for this struggle to be effective, educators and students with race, class, gender, and other forms of privilege ought to be challenging their own power and positionality. That must happen in tandem with challenging these abusive systems of power that dominate education and all aspects of life. Whether that self-reflective inquiry is happening or not, we must not make the mistake of believing that these disciplines focused on resistance are at all absolved of perpetuating the same oppression they claim to challenge.

This interrogation requires the continual unlearning of the values of imperialist white supremacist capitalist cisheteropatriarchy that we have internalized and, against our best interest and theirs, wielded over others, recognizing the trauma those values reproduce, and will continually until they are eradicated and replaced by beliefs of care, reciprocity, collective liberation. This is a crucial step in the “struggle together not only to reimagine schools but to build new schools that we are taught to believe are

impossible: schools based on intersectional justice, antiracism, love, healing, and joy” (Love 2019:11). Paolo Friere says the fight by the oppressed to end oppression through an education that liberates instead of dominates “will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors’ violence” (45). Those acts of love cannot move through racist teaching, not through oppression in the classroom, not when the pedagogies are rooted in seeing some as less than human, not when institutions cut critical funding for departments and faculty, not when courses are cut, not when campus police get more funding than health services, not when administrators sit in comfort watching the rest of campus struggle to survive. So it is with critical awareness, that likely lends to some hesitation, but that also requires ample amounts of love and caring attention, that anticapitalist educators and students continue to forge deeper, stronger paths toward collective liberation.

### *Trauma studies*

Trauma studies is a discipline concerned with understanding and responding to trauma as a spectrum of individualized and collective experiences, as the result of natural, political, and social disasters, including but not limited to interpersonal harm, accidents, catastrophes, and the underlying culture of domination inherent to maintaining abusive systems of power. A critical component of trauma studies is “recognizing and naming ‘trauma’ not only as a condition of broken bodies and shattered minds, but also and primarily as a cultural object...a product of history and politics” (Wertheimer and Casper 2016:5) Trauma studies recognizes that trauma may be universal, felt by many, but it is certainly not monolithic, felt the same way; attempting to essentialize or homogenize

how trauma impacts people on individual, collective, and cultural levels, is an act of erasure in favor of the systems and beliefs that produce such injustice in the first place. On the note of individuality and collectivity, “trauma study reveals a previously uncharted world to the observer and thus in a tragic way creates an opportunity to see what would otherwise remain deeply hidden. In this sense, trauma at the individual level resembles crisis at the societal level” (Eyerman 2013:42). The way trauma is kept hidden is also a tool for its perpetuation, and if we can hardly face individualized trauma, we would then be unsurprisingly ill equipped to recognize and address collective trauma and large-scale, ongoing violence.

Additionally, trauma remains deeply hidden in part because to reveal those means to make apparent how this world is wrought with violence, historically, contemporarily, and futuristically. Trauma doesn't fully recognize the distinction in time we typically assume to be true: the past, the present, and the future, distinct from one another and in that order. Some suggest that “Trauma... binds you not to the repetition of a memory of a terrible, horrible, shocking event or experience but binds you to the repression of it” (Gordon 2011:4), repressing the past for whatever reason; to make the present more survivable, to justify current conditions, or due to our lack of shared language and skills to make sense of trauma. Others maintain that “trauma is the trauma of a future which is unknowable but imaginable, and imaginable as traumatic. The ‘wound’ of trauma is less the wound of the past and much more, to paraphrase Derrida, a wound which remains open in our terror of the danger that we imagine lies ahead” (Neocleous 2012:195). If both of those sentiments can be true, trauma's relationship to time exists in a nonlinear

way that challenges dominant understandings of time and history, the past as fixed, the future as far off from the present. By providing a space to uncover and understand trauma with care and consideration, which trauma studies and trauma-informed practices strive toward, and with this deeper understanding of the timelines of trauma, trauma studies offer opportunities for examining trauma and other affects as a serious source of knowledge.

Here I am paying particular attention to the dynamic relationship between pedagogy and trauma. Examining this relationship is crucial, as “...some scholars argue that we are all teaching in a time of trauma” (Hodges Hamilton 2016:183), by which they mean:

School shootings...cops shooting unarmed dark bodies with impunity. Teachers murdering the spirits of students. Families being targeted and torn apart by hateful immigration policies...CEOs making billions while their employees fight for a living wage. Hospitals dumping their patients onto the streets...these momentous events are just blips in one twenty-four-hour news cycle of our humanity screaming for help. While it is almost too much for any one person to take, educators must digest these realities and more (Love 2019:125).

Sitting with this knowledge, we recognize and see that trauma is all around us, hidden yet glaringly apparent: we live with past atrocities we made to believe could no longer be, while imagining and living towards a future free of such violence. In the social sciences and humanities, when we are studying and living current events, we are undoubtedly not only studying the effects and affective realities of trauma, but likely experiencing it to varying degrees and severities. Many students come to education with histories of trauma; many experience trauma throughout their education; and more still experience

vicarious traumatization and/or re-traumatization through the materials taught (Carello and Butler 2016:157). “As educators we undoubtedly need to teach about trauma; at the same time, we must also be mindful of how we teach it as well as how we teach trauma survivors” (163), which illustrates the authors’ distinction between teaching trauma and trauma-informed teaching (155). The authors acknowledge that “certainly there are risks in not engaging the topic of trauma in and out of the classroom, such as perpetuating shame, secrecy, or stigma” (155); however, there are also risks in engaging in these topics, as “students with trauma histories may be susceptible to experiencing retraumatization, and all students may be at risk for secondary traumatization through exposure to trauma narratives shared in the classroom” (158). This is what trauma-informed teaching offers us, with the necessary caveat that learning about violence is not the same as living closely to violence which is not the same as witnessing violence from a distance; proximity, longevity, and identity in relation to trauma must also be understood.

Trauma-informed teaching is rooted in care for students who have experienced past or ongoing traumas, whether they have been disclosed or not. “To be trauma informed, in any context, is to understand how violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have figured in the lives of the individuals involved” (Carello and Butler 2016:156) and to adopt methods for supporting individuals and communities in the wake of their trauma. Carello and Butler go on to write, “we propose that a trauma-informed approach to pedagogy—one that recognizes these risks and prioritizes student emotional safety in learning—is essential, particularly in classes in which trauma theories or traumatic experiences are taught or disclosed” (2016:153). And trauma need not be

disclosed in order to be seen as legitimate, and disclosure is not a prerequisite for how trauma arrives; the traumas that students carry both silently and aloud deserve our attention.

However, a common challenge that educators face, whether they are teaching about trauma and practicing trauma-informed pedagogies or not, is navigating the distinctions between their role as professors, their status as mandated reporters, and the occasionally challenging moments they feel they are being asked to perform the tasks of a therapist or counselor. This is often brought on when “course content can cue students’ trauma experiences and lead them to disclose, invited or not, and instructors are often ill prepared for these disclosures” (Carello and Butler 2016:159). Despite educators’ own grappling with trauma or their own experience in therapy, it would be considered dangerous to equate the role of an educator with that of a therapist. They come with different training, expectations, and responsibilities, though the grey-area between educator and therapist ought to be seriously and critically examined.

This is even more apparent as one considers the healing that can, and often does, come when we deepen our understanding of ourselves, our experiences, and our place in something much much bigger than us. While healing may not necessarily be a goal for our coursework, wounds may begin to mend in a fundamentally deeper way when one recognizes themselves as not alone in their struggle; “it is also powerful for students to see their experiences as socially constituted; therefore, as responders, we should invite students to engage in the social and political constructs surrounding their experiences” (Hodges Hamilton 2016:199). What happens in classrooms may be mentally,

emotionally, spiritually therapeutic - as in healing of dis-ease, discomfort, harm - because that can happen once someone is given the tools and language and context to understand their lives, their pains, and their joys. Throughout it all, we must “check any assumptions that trauma is good (or even romantic), even though some good may be found by those who successfully adapt to the fallout of such experiences” (Carello and Butler 2016:164). There ought to be ways of engaging in trauma and trauma studies that don’t glamorize traumatization to the point of falsification, normalize violence, nor essentialize trauma as a homogenous experience.

However, there are those who argue “that the feminist classroom and the space it creates can lead to powerful healing for all students- racially, politically, sexually” (Hodges Hamilton 2014:196). Hodges Hamilton writes extensively on the practice of writing as healing, how students often disclose trauma or other types of pain through their writing even when it’s not required, and about how professors, as the “first responders” in those moments, address students emotionally and intellectually is tricky, powerful, tricky, and often contested. While academic and creative writing in classrooms isn’t primarily concerned with healing, those who have been students or teachers know that education opens up the possibilities of tending to long-buried wounds. For example, “In one student’s process narrative, she explained the decision to write about being raped by her stepfather as a way to continue living: ‘I chose to write about this because I want to survive’” (181). This student willingly and out of a concern for survival takes the assignment as a way to work through and survive the violence enacted against her. That is incredibly powerful and not a task everyone will be up for. Perhaps this was the first

time she felt invited to do that work, or else the first space she felt she had to claim her survivor narrative.

### *Trigger Warnings*

Trigger warnings have emerged as a tool to reduce retraumatization and discomfort that those who have experienced or are sensitive to what is being “warned” of might experience, if they are being forced to relive traumatic experiences when those precautions aren’t taken. Part of the purpose of trigger warnings is to give people a choice in whether or not they engage in material that mentions, highlights, or centers violence and harm; “trigger warnings could provide necessary consideration for students living with everyday trauma, including survivors of endemic racialized, classed, and gendered violence” (Lothian 2016:744). However, there are concerns that such a focus on mitigating discomfort could inadvertently shield those with privilege from grappling with and facing their privilege, their comforts, at the expense of others discomfort; “we do not want students to evade uncomfortable confrontations with power and privilege... and we may have good reasons for not announcing potentially controversial aspects of our courses in descriptions or catalogues” (748). Knowing that dominant society and our institutions serve to protect the status quo that maintains inequity and perpetuates trauma, means that all educators ought to pay attention to how whiteness, anti-Blackness, anti-indigeneity, settler colonialism, and ablist capitalist cisheteropatriarchy operate intellectually and interpersonally in coursework and classrooms, especially as those systems align with our identities. Male professors must be prepared to address patriarchy, white professors need to name and combat white supremacist ideologies, cis-heterosexual

professors speak against homophobia and transphobia when brought up in class, while not separating themselves from the systems they are critiquing. That is a necessary step toward undoing systems of violence and domination.

Crucial moments where educators are called to navigate difficult dynamics often come without their own warning, but can be opportunities for educators to interject and address trauma as it is enacted around them, often coming from privileged students who feel their deeply-held values are being challenged. For example, “there are numerous reports in the published literature about the negative, sometimes hostile, reactions of White students as they learn the concept of White privilege,” who may insist that racism is a thing of the past, or that the professor is uneducated on the topic in order to discredit them and avoid potential discomfort they feel when faced with their white privilege (Boatright-Horowitz et al 2012:285). Indeed, any sort of centering of the comfort of the privileged is “To assume that comfort is always unproblematically ‘good’ (in either the classroom or society at large)” and “ignores the power differentials which assure comfort for some only at the expense of others’ discomfort” (Alexander 2012:65). Even these moments can be ones where violence happens, especially when the professor coddles ignorance, protects whiteness, and fails to unpack privilege, maybe even their own. (Guilford 2018).

Often these white students are experiencing deep discomfort as their ideas about themselves and their lives in this country are challenged, and outbursts are often attempts to avoid those uncomfortable feelings. However, “if discomfort became a topic for discussion instead of a reason to avoid it” (Alexander 2012: 64), then “this shift from

avoiding to embracing ‘discomfort’ can inspire readings and attachments that are surprising, pushing students to foster worldviews that are complicatedly considered, as ambivalent as they are insightful, and as critical as they are compassionate” (60). Especially in classes where privilege like whiteness or cisness or heterosexism is the topic, professors ought to be prepared for hostile emotional reactions from privileged students and work actively to mitigate, reduce, or ideally alleviate potential violence against students of color, trans, and queer students.. To fail to do so risks reproducing more racial violence, more harm, and more trauma in a course where an alternative outcome is desired.

To complicate trauma and institutions further, “a 2009 study provided empirical evidence that teaching White Privilege results in lower student evaluations compared to teaching an innocuous topic, such as social learning theory.” (Boatright-Horowitz et al 2012:896). In this instance, discussing white privilege resulted in worse course evaluations on the instructor, whose work at a corporatized university on some level “hinges on the imperative to ‘keep the customer satisfied.’” (Alexander 2012:57). This places educators- particularly those whose evaluations carry much weight- in the position of needing to risk receiving poor evaluations by teaching from a place that stays committed to addressing white privilege, white violence, and white supremacist ideologies. By no means does this imply that it is within educators best interest to cater to ableist, classist, cis-hetero-sexist, imperialist, and white supremacist ideologies, but it may mean that they are rewarded when they do, or might face reprimand and hostility when they don’t. However, As Bettina Love reminds us, “pedagogy, regardless of name,

is useless without teachers dedicated to challenging systemic oppression with intersectional social justice” (2019:19). A lack of connection between pedagogy and justice reproduces those same injustices that are being interrogated.

“What I see you doing is creating narratives that assign meaning and purpose to the struggle that sometimes seems hopeless, endless, debilitating, and shameful. I know that what you’re doing is creating purposeful narrative. You’re going for redemption. You’re going for meaning, you’re going for a cure.

But you in this world have read enough to know there is no cure. There are techniques for making it possible for survival. There are strategies that we can explore that remake how our culture deals with the very events that are embodied under the label trauma.” - Dorothy Allison, “A Cure for Bitterness” 2016:253

Monica J Casper and Eric Wertheimer, editors of the anthology *Critical Trauma Studies: Understanding Violence, Conflict, and Memory in Everyday Life* “ seek to foster a new humanities, one that respects fact and heart...our work is thus keen to meld the scientific with the affective, the voices of narrated pain with the determined habits of repair and psychic healing, the archives and realms of theory within the visceral, lived experiences of practice” (2016:2). This new humanities is an attempt "to heal the collective wound" (Eyerman 2013:44). This new humanities embraces nuance and rejects traditional notions that divorce fact from feeling. Pulling from adrienne maree brown’s work *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds,*” where “emergent strategy” is a “ strategy for building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions...the potential scale of transformation that could come from movements intentionally practicing this adaptive, relational way of being, on our own and with others” (2017:2), this new humanities aligns deeply with what I’m calling emergent

pedagogies. These are methods of teaching and learning that center the knowledge that in our education we are working through complex abusive systems of power in our seemingly small but actually quite significant interactions. Emergent pedagogies work to undo the hold those systems have on ourselves and our society. In our disciplines, our classrooms, and our campuses, we can begin to cultivate relations grounded in education built on collective liberation instead of violence and indifference. This research and I do not seek to be a cure let alone the cure for these deeply rooted issues, but rather we seek to unearth deep justice-driven inquiry made possible through collaborative research.

### CHAPTER 3: THEORY

The theoretical frameworks that help me make sense of these emergent pedagogies are rooted in the following fixed yet fluid knowledge: imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy guides nearly all aspects of our society and lives, both unless and even when those systems beliefs and practices, and the people who rely on them, are challenged; these values and practices not only exist within and are reproduced by the educational institutions we are in (hooks 2010). Knowledge as fixed and yet fluid recognizes that there are some universalities, but the concrete ways in which individuals and communities are shaped, upheld, and/or oppressed by imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy vary to infinite degrees. A crucial part of undoing these “abusive systems of power” means reckoning with the ways we are individually and collectively haunted by them, embracing the ghosts of what was or is or could have been, the ghosts who show themselves to us, and the ones they lied about and said never existed; those encounters themselves, encounters with our trauma, our grief, are sites of knowledge that can deepen our relation to liberation and justice (Gordon 2008). When education is envisioned and enacted outside the confines of the corporatized university, understanding what those institutions represent, repress, and reward, when we work to eliminate domination as core to abusive systems of power in education, we open up space for connection and humanization in those spaces where learning and growth can be deep and deliberate, grounded in collective liberation (hooks 2010).

*Haunting, Trauma, & Pedagogy*

“haunting ... is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely... Haunting... alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. These specters or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view” (Gordon 2008:xvi).

In *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, first published in 1997 and again in 2008, Avery Gordon embarks on a critical project to explain in part the ways that we are fundamentally altered and impacted by these abusive systems of power, in immediate and gradual ways. Hauntings are how we feel and experience the effects of these systems, how we are affected by them, in ways we can name and those we have yet to identify. Hauntings happen in our hallways, our classrooms, conversations, embedded in the syllabus. Haunted in the news. New ghosts being made everyday. From my experiences, learning, unlearning, and relearning produce that feeling, that sense of Gordon’s haunting, particularly in “those singular and yet repetitive instances when home becomes unfamiliar, when your bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what’s been in your blind field comes into view” (Gordon 2011: 2). Hauntings arise during each lesson, raising questions like, why haven’t I learned this before? and how can the person who wrote this not know me at all yet through their words know me so well? Those moments of recognition proved to be critical to my understanding of myself, my life, my world within racialized, gendered, classed contexts, as I moved through and beyond my undergraduate years.

Understanding the ways we are overwhelmed by what we know, what we don't know, and what still exists despite both our attempts at liberation and our naivety, requires that we come to speaking terms with the ghosts buried under our shame, buried deeper than our trauma itself, in recognizing that often these systems are the cause of turmoil and trauma to begin with. Sometimes we find our ghosts, our trauma, humming quietly yet persistently beneath the surface. Others are exposed by outbursts, decisions, notices that make apparent historical and contemporary oppression that, to varying degrees, affect us differently, across the spectrum between the individual(s) and the collective(s). The evidence of living injustices exposes again the persistence of these systems, their existence long before we were made aware of it and before we were even born, but given the ways our lives not only intersect with but also are histories, ways in which time is experienced in a nonlinear way; if the ghost is still disturbed, the conditions that created it have not been resolved, and require a new way of approaching them with the understanding that just because a moment has passed doesn't mean the consequences have; some have yet to be recognized.

Gordon believes "Sociology needs a way of grappling with what it represses...so we are left to insist on our need to reckon with haunting as a prerequisite for sensuous knowledge and to ponder the paradox of providing a hospitable memory for ghosts *out of a concern for justice*" (2008:60). Her understanding of haunting offers a tool for that reckoning, as haunting also "is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done..." (xvi). This something-to-be-done— to tend to these ghosts, to undo these systems, to

commit to this unlearning for life— may be something we feel and embody before we can name. We are encouraged by her to heed that call.

Gordon does talk, albeit briefly, about the relationship between haunting and trauma, that “certainly a scene of haunting can emerge from trauma or end in one; they are kin for sure. And certain too is our need to sympathetically understand the traumatization process and its consequences” (2011:4). But, she says that “haunting is not the same as being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed, although it usually involves these experiences or is produced by them” (2008:xvi). Given the scope of my research and what Gordon offers us here, I will weave together my understandings of haunting and trauma in an attempt to uncover that kinship and how it plays out in my findings. Because trauma can become a serious source of knowledge and the way we are interrupted by our past, by ghosts, by violence and hauntings, those interruptions require tending to and that is a necessary use of our time.

“How is *this still* happening?  
 Asks they who are not yet  
 Under the constant glare of the undead past,  
 No, of our complex realities, no, of the futures  
 That can be  
 If we ask the ghosts of these harrowing realities where they  
 Needed us to be yesterday, where we can stay, as they  
 Guide us through *this*, yes, this ongoing yet denied violence that’s  
*Still* happening.  
 2020

I hear it in people's voices when they attempt to declare “it’s (whatever year), how is *this* still happening?” That statement, though, when exclaimed in frustration by people largely removed from the actual material consequences of whatever *this* is, removes them

from their responsibility about honestly digging deeper beneath that question and taking stock of how exactly this violence began, how it's been sustained, and how it will be eradicated. We are not only experiencing the effects of that violence but face the consequences systematically buried and denied the ongoing injustice. Beyond asking that question or making that exclamation, Gordon wants us to “[keep] urgent the systematic dismantling of the conditions that produce the crises and the misery in the first place while at the same time... anticipating, inhabiting, making the world you want to live in now, urgently, as if you couldn't live otherwise, peacefully, as if you have all the time in the world” (2011:8). Grounded in our attempts to address these haunts; the world doesn't need more unfounded urgency particularly from folks who are just learning about these oppressive conditions; that's reactionary and doesn't prioritize space to learning from those who are and have been directly impacted, following their lead, finding how we can support their efforts— or as long as injustice has existed, resistance will exist too. Haunting creates this sense that we must act, we must move, we must do something toward at least acknowledging these ghosts and their presence, their calls for our attention. Maybe we can follow them, maybe they can lead us to unfinished business between ourselves and within our psyches created by our society's violence that began long before our first breaths. There we can learn to cultivate our relationships with our ghosts, learn the lessons of our hauntings, and understand ourselves as intimately tied to others, and their ghosts as well.

*Connection, Humanization, and Pedagogy*

“Teaching about trauma is essential to comprehending and confronting the human experience, but to honor the humanity and dignity of both trauma’s victims and those who are learning about them, education must proceed with compassion and responsibility toward both” (hooks 2010:163)

Black lesbian feminist theorist, educator, and late writer bell hooks, author of many books including *Teaching to Transgress (1994)* and *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope (2010)*, recognizes the ways in which “white-supremacist thinking informs every aspect of our culture including the way we learn, the content of what we learn, and the manner in which we are taught” (2010:25). Core to the understanding that “in our nation most colleges and universities are organized around the principles of dominant culture” means realizing we’re not being told the whole story about the purpose of education and going to college, pursuing advanced degrees (30). Just like in pre-k-12 education, there are hidden agendas in higher education that subtly, implicitly serve to maintain dominant society, which is and has been rooted in inequity and injustice. These agendas are able to maintain their subtlety through denying both their existence and their consequences. Another reason why “even though colleges and universities have a corporate infrastructure, that power is usually masked” (22) could be attributed to dominant narratives about higher education; that you go to college to learn how to make a difference in the world; that certain universities and areas of study are legitimized more than others; and that promoting diversity and learning are the institutions’ primary goals. These are, of course, generalizations, but we can recognize the trends, maybe we’ve already heard these messages. Yet when we learn and understand that we are “working

within the conventional corporate academic world where the primary goals of institutions is to sell education and produce a professional managerial class schooled in the art of obedience to authority and accepting of dominator-based hierarchy” (20), we become attuned to recognize how that domination exists so purposefully, yet to some invisibly. How much was your university’s administration paid last year? How much have student fees increased with the president’s salary? Where does this inequity exist at various sites of learning- discussions, readings, written narratives- and how do we react when we encounter it? Understanding these underlying forces at play help inform how we move through them.

However, simply knowing something oppressive exists doesn’t just take away its power, or the conditions that gave it power in the first place, nor does it guarantee that how we move forward won’t be reproducing that oppression. “As discourses about race and racism have been accepted in academic settings,” and now as discourse around diversity and inclusion seem to be at the forefront of many classrooms and campuses, “individual black people/ people of color have been to some extent psychologically terrorized by the bizarre gaps between theory and practice” (hooks 2010:29). The learning that’s required of students as they are unlearning internalized messages of entitlement can come at the expense of marginalized and minoritized students’ in those spaces; their very existence and experiences are being contested and disregarded by those who are benefiting from such a system; so how does one confront these moments, when these systems make themselves known? hooks tells us that

As long as educators are unwilling to acknowledge the overt and covert forms of psychological terrorism that are always in place when unenlightened white people...encounter people of color, especially people of color who do not conform to negative stereotypes, there can be no useful understanding of the role shame and shaming play as a force preventing marginalized students from performing with excellence (98).

This is in part where, when, and how imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy manifests in our classrooms, our institutions; it's in our minds, our syllabi, the history of our disciplines, how the university upholds oppression, teaches and rewards subjugation. The scope of these ongoing injustices is large, expansive; yet we cannot ignore the resistance against these abusive systems that have been present since they took power.

As seen and experienced within feminist and ethnic studies as faculty, departments, and more nuanced ways of knowing have challenged oppressive scholarship and administrations, reclaiming power in the name of liberation of self and society, no longer relying on domination as the primary way of relation, responding when it's enacted around us, teaching around, through, sometimes with, it. "When education as the practice of freedom is affirmed in schools and colleges we can move beyond shame to a place of recognition that is humanizing" (hooks 2010:119). Instead of reinforcing shame, which is used by dominant systems to dehumanize, in our interactions with one another, "there can be no better place than the classroom, that setting where we invite students to open their minds and think beyond all boundaries to challenge, confront, and change the hidden trauma of shame" (2010:119). bell hooks believed that "When contemporary progressive educators all around the nation challenged the way institutionalized systems of

domination (race, sex, nationalist imperialism) have, since the origin of public education, used schooling to reinforce dominator values, a pedagogical revolution began in college classrooms” (hooks 2010:1). I am humbled by the opportunity to learn and grow from bell hooks’ writing specially now, months after her death. Her words carry truth far beyond her untimely grave; when community, humanization, and a commitment to collective liberation is centered in our learning, “education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life. It is about finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world” (43).

## CHAPTER 4: METHODS

A core guiding principle of this project was my own continued interest in being an educator on the college level, as well as my experiences as a teaching associate in the Sociology department. I sought to fill the gaps in my own knowledge and teaching practice so I could be better prepared as an educator for my future students. Some questions I asked myself when imagining my teaching presently and in the future were; how will I as an educator guide students through the course content and class material that confirmed their existing knowledge or challenged what they were told is true? What does supporting students look like when their lived experiences of trauma, violence, and grief come up in class discussions, their writing, or our conversations? How will I guide them as I was guided as they go through the transformative process of learning and unlearning the harrowing truths about this country, our present, our history, our futures, and where their lives fit into it all? Through asking myself and other educators these questions, I was guided by somewhat spontaneous conversations with two professors outside of my department right before the start of Fall 2019 semester toward this research project.

Approaching this project, then, it was necessary to determine what my overarching guiding question(s) would be, as well as how I'd approach attempting to answer them. Some of those core questions are: How are professors who are already in these fields engaged in this? How do they navigate trauma in their classrooms, course materials, and institutions? How are these institutions themselves sites of violence? Where does trauma and grief come up in the classroom? What does supporting students

during these moments look like in their role as educators? How are our universities reproducing and creating the violence systems we are learning about and being critical of? How do the practices of the university go against what the university says or believes about itself?

In order to address these questions and to garner some insight and knowledge, I began a semi-targeted outreach to faculty at two West coast public institutions in social sciences and humanities departments (IRB 19-032). I also encouraged people who received my outreach email to send the request to colleagues of theirs who might be interested in this research and also taught at those institutions, thus some participants were selected via snowball recruitment. Semi structured in-depth interviews seemed to be the most effective way to discuss this topic in whatever depth and breadth the participants wanted. We were guided by my interview questions but not bound by them. I wanted to ensure there was space to honor the potential vulnerability participants would experience in sharing with me, allowing us the space to sit with that and get to however deep a level participants felt like reaching. Interviews ranged from 35 minutes to 90 minutes. For the most part we were able to touch on all interview questions I prepared, though we adjusted based on their availability and the time they could commit to being interviewed. The interview guide (appendix whatever) serves as just that- a guide to help the interview as it flows however it does, knowing each interview would be different from the others.

As I progressed with this project, I realized that a second terrain of inquiry kept arising, specifically, the experience that “teaching trauma” had on the faculty. While my focus was initially related to students’ experiences, I was also collecting data on the

faculty themselves, their educational histories, and their experiences as students in the classroom. To investigate this, I opted to include questions that would probe this experience. What is their educational history? How did they come to their fields of study? What led them toward being an educator? What keeps them there?

Through my outreach efforts, I was able to interview 14 professors from those two institutions from various disciplines: education, Ethnic Studies, Native American Studies, Race, Gender, and Sexuality studies, Women and Gender Studies, Sociology, Environmental Studies, Education, and English. Admittedly, a large gap in my research comes from not having reached out to or interviewed faculty from Psychology and Social Work programs. However, the disciplines represented in this research do cover a large array of knowledge and experiences that I hope makes up for where my outreach lacked.

I didn't collect a lot of demographic data about my participants out of a concern for their anonymity; I worried collecting and reporting their ages, number of years teaching, and attaching their discipline to their pseudonym may compromise their anonymity. The only demographics I am reporting are race and gender (appendix 1).

This research has only been made possible through the conversations and questions asked by me and of me by various faculty guiding me toward this project. Additionally, this knowledge produced here is primarily possible thanks to the educators who allowed me the space and time to inquire about their experiences. That inquiry has been and continues to be rooted in hopes that I - and we - can gain further insight on navigating the waters between connectivity and community in our classrooms and on our campuses.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Trauma (Individual ↔ Collective) in class/coursework/campus*

Participants spoke of the myriad ways trauma and violence impact their students, generally speaking on systems of violence and the trauma they create, impacting students on the spectrum between individually and collectively. Summer pointed out the ways (1) inherited and intergenerational trauma impact societally marginalized / minoritized students, and (2) how that compounds within students lived experiences prior to coming to campus and (3) at times what they are facing in their education: “these three layers are kind of concurrent and simultaneous and I think it's important to be mindful of them continually...it seems to me that those three layers are always there in the classroom.” This to me is key to the relationship between haunting and trauma- acknowledging the historical and ongoing violence of these abusive systems of power, paying attention to how that violence shows up in all classrooms, and understanding how that affects students in endlessly variable ways, some of which we may know and some we will remain unaware of. Dolores noted

“students, undergrads experience so many challenges these days. certainly students speak about sexual assault and harassment. They speak about the challenges they face if they don't fall in the gender binary. They talk about being undocumented, or having parents that are undocumented, so that the lack of documentation overshadows many students experiences...”

Kamille similarly said, “higher ed is seeing an increase in the number of students with explicit and more complex mental health and social issues than then the institution was conscious of before. So it feels like an incredible influx, it feels like there's an awful lot of students that need services of a variety.”

Robin and Dolores talked about teaching during the 2008 recession, the number of students whose families lost their housing ,and the way that devastation impacted the students deeply. Although happening outside of the classroom and these students' formal education, the consequences of that housing crisis directly and deeply impacted students' families and therefore students, their education, and their classroom performance. Trauma in and outside of the classroom requires educators to be aware of how it will unexpectedly show up in students' lives and/or while learning, and to offer students support and alternatives instead of penalization for missing classes or assignments.

Catalina spoke to this challenge as well but in a different way;

“people can be traumatized or triggered, or put through hell in a classroom because they're reading something that they've never heard of considered...it can traumatize them or freak them out, or throw them off or put them into grief, because they didn't know that, for example, women of color have been forcibly sterilized...And if you had no idea that anything like that happens. You could also be triggered traumatized, thrown off... because the stuff that you're studying resonates with your experience. And, and so those are two kinds of opposite circumstances, ‘this is brand new, I've never heard of this oh my god I can't believe my country did this.’ And, ‘yeah, this happened to my mother or this happened to my people or it happened to me or finally someone's talking about this thing that happens in my community. ‘you're doing things for people in opposite categories, people for whom their, their world has just like broken apart...then people for whom this is old news, and this is a deep grief that was already there. This is a pain that's already there.”

Catalina speaks to the juxtaposition of the position many faculty are put in: how to navigate this space made for inquiry and learning when people come to the room with vastly different experiences, histories, and knowledge bases. Research tells us that “teaching about trauma is essential to comprehending and confronting the human

experience, but to honor the humanity and dignity of both trauma’s victims [sic] and those who are learning about them, education must proceed with compassion and responsibility toward both” (Carello and Butler 2014:164). However, educators must use caution to ensure they uphold their responsibilities to survivors of trauma particularly when those unaware of that trauma are reactive, or hostile, or in disbelief.. And it is fair to assume that survivors of all types of trauma are in all spaces; that’s why Catalina told me “a lot of us say some version of, there's always people in the room for whom this is not merely theory or history...you're going to have both of those people in your classroom, the people for whom this is brand new, for the people for whom this is not remotely new.” Learning to teach in a way that confronts violence is essential to trauma-informed education and navigating these abusive systems of power. Bettina Love knows that

To even begin to attack our destructive and punitive educational system, pedagogies that promote social justice must have teeth. They must move beyond feel-good language and gimmicks to help educators understand and recognize America and its schools as spaces of Whiteness, White rage, and White supremacy, all of which function to terrorize students of color (Love 2019:13).

Kamille also noted the importance of getting students of color to begin to see and understand the challenges they experience at a predominantly white institution, not things to blame themselves for. Instead students can learn to connect their experiences to broader issues, and “starting with the naming and identifying and articulating it, I think it's terribly important” in Kamille’s experience. As Hodges Hamilton wrote, “it is also powerful for students to see their experiences as socially constituted” (2016:19) For marginalized people, being able to name the systems working against them deepens their

understanding for how it shapes their lives may offer them not a story of personal failure, but one of strength and learning how to navigate and eradicate those systems that keep them marginalized.

Candace noted how “We talk about, you know, sexualized violence, prison industrial complex, police brutality, all you know the inequalities, economic inequality and disparities, hate crimes on trans people...All of these things that we talk about [in class] are already inherently traumatic.” Additionally, she reflected on students facing many challenges in addition to or perhaps a result of being “so busy in the grind, you know in America, you know you gotta do this, gotta do this.” More than that, many if not a majority of students are unable to just be students during their times at university; they’re working one or multiple jobs, they have caregiving responsibilities, they may have to provide financial support to family, they may be having to navigate other systems in addition to the education system. Knowing the toll that takes, Candace made clear “I want to give students the benefit of the doubt. And I want to see them succeed.”

Being able to name the ghosts that haunt us, and to face the traumas we carry, is necessary as both often fundamentally change our sense of self and on some levels influence how we move through the world that produced them.

### *Heeding Interruptions*

When prompted on how she pays attention to moments of disruption or interruption in the classroom, Catalina recalled a moment in class where students discussed a recent anti-trans murdered that happened and some students in response “said these really horrific victim blaming transphobic things in a classroom where we had been

studying, you know, racism and sexism and transphobia and victim blaming. So then people got traumatized by the, not by the story but by the comments that people made.”

Luz had a similar experience, although in this class “ it's not like anyone in classes saying anything necessarily openly racist or, you know, openly hurtful. Because that would be my job to step in, and correct that. Or you know, address that.” But sometimes the conversations that Luz or some students wanted to have about the readings they couldn't really have because despite centering indigenous ways of knowing and indigenous theorizing in the course, “it was still a predominantly white space...and it became really difficult for [those students] to have the conversations they wanted to have about those readings.”

Kamille remembered one class where, once she prompted the class to consider what it would be like for all students on all levels of education to receive the quality of education, resources, and care primarily focused on gifted education programs, one student exclaimed “but who would mow our lawns” and another said “and who would make our hamburgers?” The dehumanization necessitated by capitalism,

Kamille remembered:

other students started talking about the social chaos they thought would break out. And I was so shaken, personally. Because for me, they were talking about me. And it wasn't the first time that kind of thing had happened. It happened a number of times where my students' responses to the content of the course shake me, my life, and my family. I can picture the faces, the people for whom they were relegating to second class citizenship and more specifically, relegating to their servants, you know, not just inferiors but their servants. And so it took me a minute to not start crying to try to figure out how to respond.

Then Kamille saw the discomfort and pain caused by that conversation written on the face of another student in the room, and “it's their faces that snap me back into what I need to do, because then I go into the mode of needing to protect...[I] feel that sense of responsibility, that part of what I'm here to do is teach people who do not know but part of what I'm also here to do is to elevate, embolden, and give agency for those who have been marginalized in educational contexts. I have often felt, that seeing that [students face] helped bring me back to the moment, enabled me to say something, which enabled her to say something,” Kamille’s honest reflection of her own emotional response to a student's comment coupled with her sense of responsibility to empowering marginalized students to speak shows her commitment to her role and the ways educators can hold all of this space during these interruptions.

Diane mentioned how sometimes students ask or say derogatory or violent things, and “what I do is I call people out on that. And maybe it's empowering to see that moment where somebody asks a question that is like highly judgmental. And then you kind of stop and go ‘I want to talk about why you ask a question like that.’ And I answer the question because I want to talk about why you think that's a question you should ever ask.” Addressing interruptions like this head on a way for Diane to stand against harmful things students say that may leave their peers feeling uncomfortable or uneasy, and is a direct way to confront violence in the classroom, which necessarily addressed the underlying and ongoing conditions that lead to that conversation and confrontation.

April had a different experience than Kamille, Diane, and Luz; when watching a video on El Salvador in class, there were some students in April’s class who were

disputing the history of U.S. involvement in civil unrest in El Salvador while there were other students in that classroom whose families fled El Salvador and who were directly and deeply impacted by this history that their peers were attempting to dispute. One of those students spoke up, and April hoped that helped the initially disputing students gain some empathy and understanding where they previously lacked knowledge.

In another instance, April said one student was perpetuating racism, Islamophobia, and misogyny through discussing one specific study “and my goal was to shut it down as quickly as possible” and she did so “without naming it, but then I was not deconstructing it and I was letting it linger. And that I had as an instructor, I had a responsibility to name it more clearly than I had.” This passage stuck out to me because April seems to be acknowledging that she didn’t step up where she should have not only as the instructor, but as a white instructor who has even more of a responsibility to deconstruct racism as it’s happening in her class. I am encouraged by April’s honesty both to herself and to me, and think this touches on the necessary and specific work of white educators; how are we confronting our own role(s) in perpetuating white supremacist violence both in and outside of our teaching? Bettina Love reminds us that “white folx cannot be co-conspirators until they deal with the emotionality of being white...white emotionality goes a step further than White fragility by arguing that when race and racism raise up emotions of guilt, shame, anger, denial, sadness, dissonance, and disconcert, those feelings need to be deeply investigated to understand how racialized emotions perpetuate racism” (2019:144). Whiteness is centered and protected by abusive systems of power, therefore I and other white people are centered and protected. That

means not only is naming white supremacist ideologies in our institutions necessary, but so is naming the role I and other white educators have in disrupting whiteness. If I do not want to reproduce or protect white violence, I must be prepared to disrupt it when and where it occurs. And hopefully, as we move through these efforts, we're undoing the hold that imperialist white supremacist capitalist cis-hetero patriarchy has on us, which includes holding ourselves painfully accountable when we chose silence/comfort over action. bell hooks reminds us that education can be a powerful tool to affirm confidence and self-esteem in Black students and other students of color "when educators are anti-racist in word and deed" (2010:99). It is crucial that white scholars and educators interrogate ourselves and be honest about where we have reproduced violence through centering privileged experiences and identities, or perhaps centering our own comfort. Much of this interrogation ought to happen outside of our work as educators, with the explicit knowledge that it will hopefully positively impact not only our teaching in the future, but our students in the classrooms as well.

When considering interruptions or moments of collective trauma that happen either on the campus, in the community, or across the country, Xoaquin mentioned that several times during the academic year there would be "something", locally and/or nationally, some violence or denial of human rights or natural disasters like wildfires. When that something happens, he said he recalibrates how he will handle class that day on the way to campus. He often approaches that conversation from two places: "I'll enter the class and I'll say, 'Hey, this is going on. I know it's impacting A lot of us. I, it's deeply impacting me. I don't want to avoid it. But you know, we'll spend

more time in the next class, if anybody wants to say anything right now we can open it up. But I wanted to do an activity with this topic in the next class,' you know, something like that." Depending on the situation, Xoaquin provides immediate space for students to address the interruption, the violence, the haunts, or gives himself and the class some time to reflect before discussing. Either way he provides space to connect this interruption to larger contexts students' may interact with or not.

Five participants explicitly spoke about the day following the 2016 Presidential election. Kamille remembered, "after the election of Donald Trump, the very visceral emotional response that folks had," the following day she found ways to make space for other faculty, staff, and students, and "the very next quarter made it part even more formally into the content, sought out pieces that addressed both whiteness and the Trump election. Before some of those pieces were written, I used my own informal research and then new Research, newspapers, pop culture discussions to make that part of the class content, and developed assignments around that." She ensured she was making that critical analysis of current events as well as the shared space to just be in rage or grief or sorrow together, she offered that opportunity to students. Cinthia remembers something similar, that that time " was obviously very difficult for many people in our communities...I had to teach the day after the election... to go into the classroom and not address it seems silly. And it was, in some ways academic, right. It was related to the content of the course," which covered topics like immigration, labor, and other forms of discrimination. In some ways, Trump's campaign trail and eventual election brought light to the violent origins of this nation and displayed how that violence is perpetuated. It was

almost as if the supposed “over-and-done-with” of institutional racism, settler colonialism, and cis hetero patriarchal violence “came alive” again through his presidency, though it never really went away, though that violence is still denied. A lot of us probably felt haunted at that time. It seemed as though Trump’s successful election made those of us who were not used to such displays of violence painfully aware of what we could no longer deny, what was central to public life.

Cynthia saw it as her responsibility to provide a space for students to feel and express their opinions during this politically charged time, and noted that students also felt that space was necessary and desired:

I think in one class, we finished early, but some students wanted to stay on and just continue the conversation. Other students, I think later just talked about how weird it felt in their other classes that that just carried on with the lesson for the day and didn't even acknowledge this huge national thing.``

Candace recalled similarly, “after Trump took office. There was this collective trauma, we experienced even in the classroom after he was elected. It was like a dark day. My students, I mean classes I couldn't even teach what I had on the syllabus because students were devastated, they were hurt.” Candace also remembered, though, that for many of her younger students, most of their young teen and teenage life Obama was in office, “so there was this illusion of a post racial society,” and how that idea fueled even more so these students’ views and their gloom at the news. Candace also recalled having to tell one of her students not to police others' emotions, as he was saying to his peer “I don’t even know why you’re crying right now.” Dolores also remembered “we came to class and people just wanted to cry right. They wanted to spend a lot of time, especially that

next day, talking about what it meant. And how does one respond.” This touches so closely to how haunting encourages us to act and to connect; haunting evokes within us an urgency to address, if not eliminate, the conditions that create the violences we and others face.

Several participants discussed instances where students attending the university died or were killed, and how they moved through that. There was a Black student enrolled in Robin’s course many years ago who was killed. She came to that class the very next day after his death, prepared to talk about what happened and process this with the rest of the class. Some of his classmates heard about the murder but didn’t realize it was their peer who had died. It was “really heavy and really hard.” but she came prepared to hold that space, as if it was the least that she could do. In general, Diane noted how when students die during their time at the university, an email gets sent out to the entire campus body and includes some resources for emotional support but that’s sort of it. She recalled supporting a colleague through one of their students committing suicide, and how little direction was given by the university for how they should navigate that. Diane began to wonder “why we don’t show up with a team of people whose job is to make sure students are okay, and why there isn’t like a standard ‘you can come here and share memories, or you can leave flowers here’”. One of Diane’s colleagues suggested maybe the departments those students belonged to could host some sort of memorial gathering. Soon after that suggestion, another student death occurred, and

immediately, there was food, and a memorial space, a space for people to share, a lot of students showed up, they spent the whole time just talking ...to me it was like a community moment...I see students kind of having to navigate that usually

by themselves...And it was sort of like, oh, there's a community that could come out of this. But again, like, that's not an institutional practice and then you wonder why, like, what would it take for it to be an institutional practice.

When left without institutional guidance for handling student death and other difficult topics, both Robin and Diane engaged students from the approach that held both the pain students were facing, as well as the possibility that the best they can do is to witness and hold that pain in community with one another.

Similarly, Kamille helped guide a student who was arrested at a demonstration to write and process her experience being jailed for one of her classes, and how that assignment “then literally part of her healing process to do that, to take it head on to find then her voice and saying, here's, here's what I saw. Here's what I learned. Here's what it did to me. But here's what it also revealed in terms of problems in the system.”

Elizabeth reflected on a school shooting that had happened somewhat recently before our interview; one of her students was from that community, and came to class experiencing the emotions of that. When asked if classroom discussions happen a lot after these interruptions, Elizabeth said “it just depends on the group and how they feel. sometimes they talk at length about it, sometimes they don't really want to talk more about it because they're just exhausted by it.” She also noted that “those conversations [are] harder when you don't create a type of community” Cinthia admits that navigating those challenging moments impacts her not just in the moment but after: “I always obsess over the class that I just taught, after I've taught it. And especially when, you know, like with these different issues and incidents that come up, I always reflect afterwards. Did I say that right? Should I have said more, should I've done it in a different way? So I'm

always constantly processing after difficult conversations.” This reflexiveness was reflected by all participants in their retelling and is necessary for this type of pedagogy, as it requires us to understand our strengths and our weaknesses, gives us the tools to understand why we responded in certain ways, and encourages us to pay close attention to the lessons in each interaction, the way these interactions impact our lessons.

Robin sees importance in responding to the room when people start to whisper or someone is audibly angry about something or the energy in the room for some reason shifts and “you know something's gone down. Yeah, you gotta figure out what it is. And then you've got to navigate it. And you've got to help the people in the room navigate it.” This is especially imperative if this thing that’s “gone down” is directly related to something that was said about a student, or a group of people. Heeding that interruption

“call[s] attention to the need for critical vigilance when marginalized students of color (or marginalized individuals of any group, that is, a Jew at a Christian School, a gay person in a predominantly heterosexual and heterosexist environment) enter environments that continue to be shaped by politics of domination. Without critical vigilance, shaming as a weapon of psychological terrorism can damage fragile self-esteem in ways that are irreparable” (hooks 2010:99)

I interpret hooks’ understanding of fragile self-esteem being the result of constant physical, psychological, spiritual, and other attacks marginalized people encounter in these spaces knowing that.

When asked about how she attempts to navigate those anticipated dynamics going into courses and classrooms, Abigail said “preparation around anticipating difficult dialogue goes a long way...the very first day or two class we set up, we talked about we're going to talk about difficult things that are going to raise a lot of discomfort for

people. And so we need to know how we're going to do that.....if everybody is anticipating the possibility of difficulty, then there's more trust that that can happen in a way that's beneficial and positive.” Listening to professors discuss their interactions with students, interruptions, outbursts, disruptions, I can’t help but to feel like there is haunting that’s happening in those spaces, that Avery Gordon’s work can help us to understand not only how or why this is happening, but how we can tend to the ghosts and specters and hauntings that make themselves known. Being able to recognize and name that may help us move through them the next time they reappear.

### *Institutional Barriers*

When considering the institutional barriers that exist in addressing and working through trauma in and around the classroom, Summer noted that the language she is required to add to her syllabus about being a mandated reporter might not be clear to students, both in terms of what being a mandated reporter means and in terms of what disclosing certain information will mean. “But how we should show up first to students in that moment of disclosure I think matters really greatly and I wish there was more conversation around that. I think we do our best to try to figure it out....but I wish there were more of a discourse around it on our campus,” Summer said. It seems as though there might be a disconnect between how instructors are told they are legally obligated to respond to a student disclosing to them about experiencing sexualized violence, for example, and that legally obligated response may not be the support and care that a traumatized student is seeking.

When considering institutional barriers, Dolores discussed how

“We're working with a population of students who have unprecedented challenges in terms of the cost of higher education, family responsibilities, the heavy loan burden that students take on and the need for services that I think the university is now addressing. But there were many years when these issues went on, the food insecurity, housing insecurity, the need for mental health services, all of these things were not part of what universities historically have expected to provide for students, and now it's imperative that you provide these things.”

Given the current expectations, though, Dolores noted the lack of mental health services and general health services available to students, as well as the added challenge of navigating insurance from a new place which could impact their treatment. Dolores was not alone in her concern, almost all of my respondents directly spoke to the challenges students face in being able to access basic resources for survival. Elizabeth considered there might not be adequate resources for students of color and other marginalized students. Kamille specifically spoke to how students of color, low income students, and other marginalized students often have complicated social identities and context surrounding their existence and education, and that even trying or needing to seek therapy and counseling support “are taboo in and of themselves, [and] where that stuff is crossing lines with being At PWIs, predominately white institutions, where those resources exist in ways and are distributed in ways that are in and of themselves inequitable or irrelevant...”

Catalina also considered how “grief and trauma, we know, take time, and are not predictable. It often happens on its own terms, not that you can force but meanwhile you're in an institution that has a schedule, right, this is when your papers due, this is how many units you can have, I mean, you know, one institutional barriers just the bureaucracy” and students feeling discouraged at the thought of not meeting those

requirements, not knowing if or they can ask for extensions, or any level of understanding from their professor. Relatedly, Dawn noted how when students' emotional space is taken up by whatever they are going through outside of class, "they may not have the bandwidth to process the learning that needs to take place in an academic setting." Dawn thinks that giving students more flexibility and time on assignments without penalization when they are struggling may help. But "there's not necessarily a broad policy, so it is a case by case so I may be more generous than another professor. then that becomes the institution passing the buck, right?" Additionally, Cinthia plainly said "one of the problems and I don't know how to get around this, but institutionally, there's always the move to protect the institution and its brand" over providing adequate resources and support for students especially after a traumatic incident at the institution. Systems that concern themselves with profit and image over the lived experiences and material conditions of the people within those systems are actively causing harm to those they claim to serve.

Robin reflected that "academia still has some framework of the head being separated from the heart, or the mental from the emotional, it's less than it used to be, but it's still there," and there is this dismissal to consider the material conditions and challenges that students face (anxiety, trauma, loss, depression, living in their cars, hunger) and

the idea that I can just somehow neutrally teach them information is just doesn't make any sense to me and so I think, talking about trauma and loss is part of that right like how do we hold space for that how do we how do we hold space for that and also not get completely overwhelmed... I'm always wanting people to talk more about how our heart self, and our somatic self enters the room, and not just

sort of this disconnected brain that has some somebody whose idea of a disconnect..

Between concern for legality over emotional support in moments of disclosure, to to inadequate resources like mental health services, to reinforcing this false separation between head/heart, these are all examples of how institutional practices are often times inadequate to addressing the issues at hand and confusing for educators to navigate in ways that also can harm students.

### *Navigating Role conflict*

In addition to the difficulties of navigating those conversations and spaces across the semester, participants also noted in various ways the ways they had to navigate the sometimes conflicting demands of being an educator, and a moderator, and a mentor, and the many roles that many professors balance in addition to teaching. bell hooks wrote:

Colleagues have shared with me that they do not want to be placed in the role of “therapist”; they do not want to respond to emotional feeling in the classroom... Teachers are not therapists. However, there are times when conscious teaching—teaching with love—brings us the insight that we will not be able to have a meaningful experience in the classroom without reading the emotional climate of our students and attending to it (2010:133).

Elizabeth admitted quite planely “I find myself at a loss for words a lot of times because I’m not trained as a counselor, I don’t have any background in it. I’ve gone to therapy myself, and I find myself using things that I’ve learned there, but I don’t even know if those are the right tools for this person.”

Kamille agreed, noting:

“Their levels of grief and trauma are well beyond what I have the capacity to do. And I say to faculty all the time, it is not your job...because we are not trained to do the work that our students need. And we are not trained to be counselors, we’re

not trained to be therapists. So there are limits to the ways in which we can intervene.”

Kamille also noted, however, that accessing resources like counselors or therapy could be difficult for some students, like students who carry stigma against using those services, and students whose social identities might prevent them from receiving adequate care.

Dawn shared some of Kamille’s concerns about the capacity for campus resources to support all students. Dawn agreed that

institutions especially higher ed spaces are built with sort of certain normative populations in mind. And it takes a lot of effort to change that, in terms of policies and practices and cultural changes, so how do we speed this process up a little bit? Because it's marginalizing populations that don't fit in what we consider to be that average college student. How are we thinking about income and race and parental status or caretaking responsibilities?

Earlier on in the interview, Dawn also noted that “whether it's counseling services, mental health, physical health, just really, like, you know, I'm not a professional in this, so I don't feel like I'm expected to know everything, but I should be knowledgeable enough to direct students to the services that they would need.” Dawn acknowledges that the institution in practice might not fit the needs of all students or even have their concerns on its radar. She also knows she’s expected to at least point students in hopefully the right direction of the service and support they need.

#### *What Education has to Offer*

Despite the many challenges they previously shared with me, when considering the benefits of education as a practice and their jobs within the institutions, Summer said,

“I feel like the students that we work with here that I see in my classroom are eager to show up and to hold space for each other...It makes me feel that there's possibility in this world and that and just kind of in awe of our human capacity to

to change and morph and try new things and take risks and be vulnerable with other people.

Cinthia shared how “obviously my job is to teach them and to mentor students, but I feel like what also keeps me going is that they keep me on my toes. And so I’m constantly learning from them, or having to do my homework so that I am adequate.” Dolores spoke of using personal testimony as examples in the classroom because “Students really respond to seeing somebody else model personal testimony... that is empowering.... and I really believe that the whole act of writing also helps them to psychologically and intellectually process the experience. Just the act of writing and going through multiple drafts also helps them achieve insight into the thing that they're writing about.” Dolores’ use of personal testimony in her pedagogy helps students to make those direct ties from their lives and experiences to larger contexts, thus potentially (re)shaping their understandings of themselves and this world. This re-telling, constant learning, and sharing vulnerable spaces with one another is part of the transformative possibilities that education can offer.

Dawn, Xoaquin, and Kamille all discussed their strong network of colleagues and peers in their department or around campus, and how those relationships made their work more possible. Dawn praised her department as “pretty strong” and notes she’s frequently checking in with her colleagues; she said “having a supportive network helps to be reminded that we're not doing this by ourselves.” Xoaquin talked about the ongoing racial battle fatigue he and his colleagues of color carry around and how crucial moments of coming together “with folks collectively, like that's kind of what really helps me...”

The community that is built in these spaces is so crucial to sustaining the transformative work that comes from these classrooms, departments, and disciplines. Xoaquin also excitedly shared “when I see a student like, hella critical and going about something in a very thoughtful way, it's so energizing, I love that, and I love the fact that I can see that and I can see growth and I can see all that occurring. That kind of really keeps me like really engaged.” Central to hooks message is making “the classroom a place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student work together in partnership” (2010:xv). The same can be said about the partnership between teachers, between, students, beyond classrooms, on campus, in the intangible spaces we exist in while we are learning.

When asked about what keeps her engaged as an educator, Elizabeth said “ I really like connecting with people and having conversations about what's going on in their lives...we need to recognize their own humanity...we all need to be human with one another.” Seeing one another not just as anonymous others in classrooms or on campus but as people existing within and navigating these systems may shift the way we engage. Similarly, Summer mentioned her gratitude for spaces where “we're not trying to commodify every last bit of our labor, we are learning for and embracing knowledge and creativity and cultural production for its own sake” and holding space for possibilities. Diane was insistent that she “appreciate[s] the sheer amount of vision that comes from college students...they can see, like such a beautiful, amazing possibility in future,” there's still more curiosity than apathy, there's more possibility, less bureaucracy, that's part of what they see. “And the vision there pushes me.” In response to her

aforementioned class where a student said some really hateful, transphobic violent things, Catalina's educator friend reminded her of the powerful impacts discussing such statements and violence in a space that is designed to deconstruct and reimagine them, that the disruption could be tended to and become a learning moment... "students in class who had to go through, it wasn't good, but given that it happened. we were able to turn it into a transformative moment." A lot of what this reminds me of is Gordon's understanding that "Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward" (2008:4). A humanities that holds spaces for complex personhood and refuses to use that to excuse violent interruptions is necessary in these conversations and spaces.

Summer, Dolores, and April all spoke to the joy they get in witnessing students' growth and transformation over the course of the class and their education; "I like seeing people learn. I like teaching people things that are meaningful to them, intellectually, emotionally just in terms of their development as people" Dolores said. April spoke specifically to students indicating on evaluations how certain courses of hers were "life transforming...providing them with a greater sense of empathy and awareness so they can move toward a more hopeful, optimistic future." Summer echoed similar sentiment, saying that "It makes me feel that there's possibility in this world and that and just kind of in awe of our human capacity to to change and morph and try new things and take risks

and be vulnerable with other people.” This leads me to understand how we are not only haunted by the past but by glimmers of hope for that futures may look like and be:

This emergent rather than fatalistic conception of haunting often...lends the something-to-be-done a certain retrospective urgency: the something-to-be-done feels as if it has already been needed or wanted before, perhaps forever, certainly for a long time, and we cannot wait for it any longer (Gordon 2011: 5).

In emergence we are coming into being, whereas fatalism sees violence as inevitable.

Hauntings thus give us the possibility and opportunity to reimagine our current realities in classrooms, in relations, within institutions, beyond the dominant cultural narrative of fear, depravity, scarcity, and unrelenting violence. The transformative possibilities of education that exist sometimes within these institutions, that are sometimes made difficult by the institutions, bring people together to wonder how we can better learn from and with one another about ourselves, this world, and our futures.

## CHAPTER 6: COVID-19 AND A BRIEF GLIMPSE AT GRIEF

staring at this rainbow outside my window thinking maybe somehow  
 i was meant to live in this state to live in this town to live in this house right now .  
 somehow meant to keep having these breaths amidst lifetimes of mess,  
 the promise of deaths .  
 each moment i love more moments i'll lose, amused at the way love stings and it bruises .  
 more than skin, we're losing kin when left to live amongst the ruin .  
 we begin where others end , dead friends they still stay around ,  
 clapping overhead in a lingering thundercloud .  
 so we're fighting now, we're hiding out, writing our feelings down .  
 reeling on some crooked lines, each moment divine ,  
 spiraling time, no final goodbye ,  
 stumbling on endless light .  
*March 2020*

“Like individual trauma, a societal crisis is both a shock to established routines and taken-for-granted identities and an opportunity, because to the trained eye it reveals what otherwise remains deeply hidden” (Eyerman 2013:43)

There is so much to say about the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and how it has fundamentally reshaped nearly all aspects of our lives, including of course k-12 and higher education. Each of our lives has been altered by our experiences these past almost 2.5 years in ways we likely are not fully aware of yet. Instead of walking us through a linear timeline of how each month, each week since the pandemic began has been wrought with hardships and harrowing headlines, I'm going to take a moment to examine our current context and attempt to apply some of what I learned through the above analysis. I've come to learn how buried violence comes back to haunt the systems and the people who continue to deny. And despite all the ways our society and country have changed since March 2020, still some of us cling desperately onto the idea that life could possibly return to what it was like before. But there is no going back to a time before

covid, beyond just the existence of the virus. That in and of itself can evoke many different types of grief, all which deserve our personal and collective attention.

During these last couple of years, I struggled to write this whole time, pushing back my graduation date, working up this project in my mind, making it seem impossible to finish. I got even more lost in my research and the meaning of it- how can I write about classrooms, campus life, when we're all on zoom, when our entire education context has shifted? Suddenly my research felt irrelevant- my questions to professors about navigating their classrooms were nowhere near what we're suddenly facing. How can I make sense when nothing does anymore? Each time people began to praise the end of the pandemic or the return to normal, parts of me inside knew that even if everything suddenly returned to the way things were, we would still need to process the experience and face the consequences of the pandemic, and still need to pay explicit attention to the unknown effects of what we went through, individually and collectively. But things have never just gone back to how they were, and we continue to be in more precarious times than before.

On some levels for a while, I let those unknowns, those uncertainties, those fears guide me. And not only was I trying (and seemingly failing) to write this, I was also just trying to survive, to afford rent, food, gas, to navigate a more physically isolated life than I ever had before, to tend to deep psychological wounds that showed themselves to me, as urgent as earthquakes, demanding diligence, and my attention. I was coming to embrace my gender nonconformity and my queerness in new ways, learning how to love on my small-fat body. I was expanding my understanding of what it means to be a white settler

on stolen land, of what I'm tasked to do with this life. I was beginning to understand how some of my struggles are rooted in trying to fit into neurotypical standards that never worked for me, I just didn't have the language for it until then. I am walking away from this degree with knowledge I never anticipated.

This section is about honoring the unique grief and trauma that emerged during this global pandemic, which is inseparable from that are also part of the continual violence of imperialist capitalist white supremacist cisheteropatriarchy, which is ongoing, and will continue to haunt us in innumerable and incomparable and at times incomprehensible ways. Regardless of why, all of this is now inextricably tied into our lifetimes. I'm trying to seek adaptability instead of apathy, curiosity instead of doubt. I don't have any real, solid, easily digestible one size fits most "answer" about what to do. I do think we are part of a conversation that is older than ourselves, and maybe it's about "Contemplate haunting and ghosts at the level of the making and unmaking of world historical events. (Gordon 2008:27). I find Gordon particularly useful here as we continue to live through world historical events on the daily; the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and its effects, including but not limited to at least 6.4 million people dead from the virus across the globe and countless folks disabled by long covid, now monkeypox, mass shootings, people in so-called power continuing to fight against bodily autonomy, increasing funds for military abroad and police domestically, anti-trans legislation, increasingly severe climate crises, the consequences of industries incompatible with sustaining life on this planet. I wonder what we have learned about life on this earth, I wonder if it's bad now, how will it get worse? We see "history" "repeat itself" because it

never really goes away, it is embedded into society then emerges in new ways. Eyerman's note on societal crisis-- how it "reveals what otherwise remains hidden" (2013:43)-- can be useful here. I'm thinking about summer 2020, when doctors, nurses, hospital staff, and other frontline medical workers fighting for their sick patients struggled to get access to adequate resources to protect themselves and one another from the pandemic. At the same time, large amounts of money were directed towards police in riot gear deployed to combat the uprising for racial justice that began taking place after George Floyd's murder. Systems actually built on care and liberation, freedom and liberty, would not see such glaring examples of systemic violence. Even within this past year, Biden has urged states to divert funds, originally meant as covid relief money, to police departments and other policing efforts. This is to say, we have the chance to learn from and fight against the mistakes people in so-called power make when they value profit over people, both on our campuses and across the country.

Educators have been heeding that call this entire time: in May 2020, the Disability Visibility Project shared syllabi based on the life and work of the late Stacey Milburn ([disabilityvisibilityproject.com](http://disabilityvisibilityproject.com)); the "Reclaiming Wholeness: Healing Grief" Education & Wellness dialogue in March 2021 spoke very clearly to my thesis topic. Sitting in my room on that zoom call, I felt a rush, flushed with possibilities, knowing that despite all of the challenges and obstacles and pain, there were incredible people engaged in infinitely powerful work for the betterment of each other and this world. I have let that knowledge hold me softly as I find my place(s) in this unfolding mess of survival and existence.

*A Glimpse at Grief*

“It’s so humbling to feel something in spite of logic, time, circumstance, and thinking the feeling is finished. grief is a sharp visitor, her long nails a surprise in my chest. heartbreak is heavy and fireworky, like full body tears, swollen eyes. joy melts my jaw.” (brown 2017:108).

Breathing life into grief, into our experiences of loss on the spectrum between the individual and the collective, can allow us a critical space to mourn more wholly, more openly, amidst the struggles and the joys of living, of survival beyond loss. Whether or not educators or students explicitly invite grief in, grief is likely to be present, in their lived experiences, in the histories, disciplines, and materials that make up the coursework, the critical reflection required of students, even in the events that transpire throughout the term together. What do educators and students have to gain from embracing grief, in course materials, classrooms, and pedagogical practices, as an intimate and powerful way of knowing? What do we lose when we don’t have the tools to move through grief, individually and collectively? How can we be transformed by grief and the openness and vulnerability it requires in a way that honors the weight of such a transformation, one that is both overwhelmingly personal and distinctly political? Research already done on this topic of grief asks us to consider “grief in the service of social justice” (Granek 2014:2). To do so, however, one must examine the complex conditions of grief coupled with “evidence of hearts taking hold of their own brokenness” (Milstein 2017: 5).

Often mistaken as a solely psychological experience, grief can be evoked from any type of encounter with loss, including but not limited to death. To understand the

political aspects of grief, as it relates to or is a result of abusive systems of power, one must “consider a dimension of political life that has to do with our exposure to violence and our complicity in it, with our vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows, and with finding the basis for community in these conditions” (Butler 2003:19). This examination of grief, and indeed “The expression of grief, is always mediated by one’s social context and is always political” (Granek 2014:1), again meaning that it is undeniably tied to the abusive systems of power that our lived experiences derive from, but those contexts and conditions are not experienced universally. Losing a home to an accidental house fire or to an eviction both might result in similar outcomes, but the causes of each must be acknowledged when examining their effects, to provide contexts to the conditions of each loss and the larger forces that shape those conditions.

Understanding the complexities inherent to grief means holding these contradictions carefully; that means embracing the distinctions between the deaths of the elderly, the deaths caused by accidents, the deaths caused by years if not decades of neglect, the deaths caused by state-sanctioned violence. Most deaths elicit some types of grief, yet they are not the same. This understanding further reveals the falseness of individuality, the Western and American belief that we exist outside of any relations to others, that we are not accountable to anyone but ourselves, and that we have nothing to do with others' experiences, particularly ones rooted in oppression where we are, acknowledged or not, privileged. Undoing that harmful, harrowing beliefs of rugged individuality means embracing the ways “in which our relations with others hold us, in ways that we cannot always recount or explain” (Butler 2003:23). Butler goes on to say,

“let’s face it. We’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something. This seems so clearly the case with grief, but it can be so only because it was already the case with desire” (23). Given our society’s aversion to grief, however, clarity might be needed in order to understand and lean into how “one does not always stay intact. One may want to, or manage to for a while, but despite one’s best efforts, one is undone, in the face of the other, by the touch, by the scent, by the feel, by the prospect of the touch, by the memory of the feel...I am speaking to those of us who are living in certain ways *beside ourselves*, whether in sexual passion, or emotional grief, or political rage” (24). These understandings of relations are quite unlike relations designed by and in support of racial capitalism, which refuses to recognize the need for vulnerability, interdependency, and certainly collective grief. Seeing grief and loss in this collective way that is more than just our own feelings helps to understand how

the psychologization/medicalization of grief and the ways in which individualizing this experience serves to reinforce and encourage the neoliberal 21st century ideal of the productive, consuming citizen. I argue that framing grief within a psychological/medical frame dampens the rage that often accompanies widespread losses of all kinds. This includes “natural and expected” deaths, but also deaths caused by murder, and other losses that are a product of social injustice such as poverty, imprisonment, violence, lack of education, and other opportunity gaps that are rampant in Western industrialized societies (Granek 2014:2)

This is to view this really deep visceral feeling through the individualized, Americanized lens when really grief, we are more interconnected than we are made to believe, Our grief may actually inform how we see and move through the world, wrought as it is with violence and resistance. Barron asks, “How can owning one’s grief be a transformative pedagogical practice? (2009:28). In my experience, befriending grief has given me a

deeper respect for and understanding of what it means to be alive, to make what we can from this life, and to believe in what we're doing. It's transformed everything for me. If it was critical for us to get to know our grief before, it is of the utmost importance now.

Below is a shortened version of a literature review on grief and pedagogy, which I wrote initially to include in my main thesis but found a better home for here. I will end with a brief narrative "Writing Joy and Grief: Nonlinear lessons from the dying coral reef" I wrote Fall 2019 for a class.

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adrienne maree brown in *Emergent Strategy: shaping change, changing worlds* urges us to "deepen and soften that intelligence such that we can align our behavior, our structures and our movements with our vision of justice and liberation" (2015: 6). These systems and the terror they create and cover up haunt our headlines and heartstrings, leave us feeling a lot of ways, sometimes apathetic, sometimes grief stricken, leave me feeling like we're not feeling our grief, feeling like we have more shared grief than we even let ourselves believe.

Felt that in the days leading up to Umi's death, with three nationally covered shootings in one week. Last November after the synagogue shooting in Pittsburg, Cindy Milstein wrote about how "Our Grief is the Starting Point for our Fight against Facism." In this short piece, Cindy reminds us that we are at a unique point in history, "that history is being written on bodies — bodies that are piling up; sometimes our bodies, or those of people we love. It is etched onto place-names as our morbid shorthand — Charleston,

Charlottesville, Pittsburgh...” (Milstein 2018). Feeling like Umi was feeling this too, when one of his last posts on Facebook was about confronting racists and their online posts on the app nextdoor and the importance of doing that especially there, near Gilroy where a white man with an ak 47 killed Stephen Romero, Keyla Salazar, and Trevor Irby (LA Times July 29th 2019). Less than 7 days later, Javier Amir Rodriguez, Jordan and Andre Anchondo, Dave Johnson, Arturo Benavides, Leo Campos, Maribel Hernandez, Angie Englisbee, Margie Reckard, Jorge Calvillo García, Juan de Dios Velazquez, Sara Esther Regalado, Adolfo Cerros Hernández, Elsa Mendoza de la Mora, Gloria Irma Márquez, María Eugenia Legarreta, Ivan Filiberto Manzano, Maria and Raul Flores, Alexander Gerhard Hoffman, Luis Alfonzo Juarez, Teresa Sanchez were killed in El Paso, Texas by a white man with an WASR-7 rifle. My heart stayed heavy that day, as these deaths happened sometime in the morning and headlines were on high alert by the time I had gotten up, but I was mostly feeling numb about it. Until that night while I slept when Jordan Cofer, Monica Brickhouse, Nicholas Cumer, Derrick Fudge, Thomas McNichols, Lois Oglesby, Saeed Saleh, Logan Turner, and Beatrice Warren-Curtis lay lifeless at a bar in so-called Dayton, Ohio after a white man with a military style rifle shot them (New York Times 2019). I awoke to shudders, ghostly chills down my spine. I’m remembering and wanting to center the fact that the shooter went to that bar specifically because his trans brother was there, one of the first to be killed. And in writing this I find that I can’t honestly find a news article that listed all the deads’ names and didn’t include his dead name.

I suppose interpersonally and intellectually it should come as no surprise that now I'm dreaming and scheming and breathing around grieving, how integral mourning and grief are in liberation. This space here holds me mostly safely for that. Hard to see beyond despair on the front page and forefront of my mind, but Gordon gently reminds us that within our despair about these problems, those moments when our despair emerges, "at that meeting point—in the gracious but careful reckoning with the ghost—we could locate some elements of a practice for moving towards eliminating the conditions that produce the haunting in the first place" (2011: 5). We can see those sites, those moments, those violences as opportunities for alternatives to emerge, as they have been, again, for generations. As an act of healing, that writing, that describing, that articulation of what is so deeply disvalued in dominant society, feeling, especially those related to mourning, "that your grief is a worthwhile use of your time" (brown 2015: 110). Writing and mourning and grieving through and on our bodies, this is part of what I'm trying to do now, how I'm trying to make sense of these last 16 months behind the redwood curtain, gently, tenderly, urgently.

I was in bed the morning of August 8th, 2019, when I get a message from Nicci to Emily and I saying that Umi died in a diving accident the previous day. All I can say is "Oh Nicci, Fuck, Nicci..." when I call right away. She calls me again, it's nearing 11, tells me that before he left they at least got to say goodbye, since he was on a trip to Alaska when he died, when they found his body on the ocean's surface, on the phone we both start to cry. I tell her comedic stories about my life to hear her laugh, feel her smile despite the miles, despite the inherent denial of the absolute fact of Umi's death, the

waves catching his last underwater breath. Looking back on those first few moments when I read her message and immediately called her, I realized I was struck with having to acknowledge Umi's ghost and this feeling that I needed to do something about this thing I'm not even fully processing. This is what Avery Gordon must have meant, the haunting, Umi's death raising specters of other unsettled griefs. What had I needed in those initial moments, days, months after Parker's death, that winter Nicci, Em, and I lived together?

Over those next couple of days I visited his twitter page, facebook, even his website with his CV and other accomplishments. He wrote that he was "broadly interested in the extent to which organisms are adapted to their environment, and how that could confer resilience to global change. [His] work has generally focused in temperate reef systems, as well as polar environments" (umi.science). Throughout his life, many were witness to him doing his critical work: diving in Antarctica a few times, putting his pronouns in his twitter bio (which, in my experience at least, is rare for a cisgendered heterosexual man to include), even the seemingly simple joy of playing accordion covers and putting those recording on youtube, or else playing his instruments on a bench on UCSC's campus, which they now dedicated in his name. Less than a month after he died underwater, I'm lying on the bed in the spare room in the apartment him and Nicci shared. "He was a really great guy. And I'm really sorry," I choke out, tears sliding like rain on the window pane while we lay in puddles of our grief on those sheets. We spend 3 days with one another, surrounded by the last 8 months of their life together, little abalone strewn about from some project and an intense coffee rig he set up

in their kitchen that looks like a chemistry lab. In the shower I find black hair that had to be his in the brush, we drink his rum in some delicious blackberry iced tea, we walk around the garden he helped plant, had this soil been touched by his feet? Are his fingerprints still lingering on these cherry tomatoes? Do these bees and those butterflies know?"

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I've come to embrace the transformativeness of all of this, of being alive in this mess and seeking truths hidden in the lessons always swirling around me.

About Leaving (revisited)

Before you go, let them you're  
 Case and you're brave and you're here for a short, queer time. not an omen about  
 Dying but geologically speaking this  
 Earth is ancient and you're still an infant, the way you  
 Fuss like it's your first time around,  
 Glimmering grief pouring down your cheeks.  
 Here, in this galaxy, you are a  
 Infinitesimal and irreplaceable.  
 Jump between star clusters in ways billionaires will never  
 Know. Teleport to the closest black hole, take your time  
 Laying out the event horizon, tell your  
 Mother what you can see on the other side, and how  
 Neither of you make it through alive. And it's okay, it's alright,  
 Open wide, feel the way space and time  
 Peer through themselves, you can leave behind  
 Relations defined by  
 Straight lines and  
 Taste the  
 Underside of the di-  
 Vine possibilities in each sunrise.  
 "What do you think happens when you die?"  
 mX, we are here to learn 4.5 billion years of lessons  
 Yet again, and whenever this ends, we'll be flung to the  
 Zenith outside the busted window, where the  
 7 siblings will hold us and never let us go.  
*July 2022*

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

Abigail	white
April	white
Candace	Black
Catalina	Multi-racial
Cinthia	Asian
Dawn	Asian
Diane	Native
Dolores	Chicanx
Elizabeth	white
Kamille	Black
Luz	Latinx
Robin	white
Summer	White
Xoaquin	Chicano

## Appendix B

### Outreach E-mail

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Casey McCullough and I'm currently a 2nd year Master's student in Public Sociology with a teaching emphasis at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. I will be graduating this upcoming spring and am currently seeking participants for my thesis research. As a current and future teacher/scholar, I am interested in the ways that trauma, grief, and loss affect processes of teaching and learning. My thesis research inquires how professors attempt to address the complex contexts students lives and their education exist within, as the latter can both critique and cause various types of trauma and loss. As such, my inquiries lie within exploring how empathy, resilience, and hope are encouraged within and outside of their education.

I'm hoping you're interested and available in the next three months for a 45-120 minute interview on your experiences supporting students' learning as it relates to, or exists alongside, experiences of trauma and grief, resiliency and hope.

If you cannot participate in an interview, I would appreciate it if you could either spread the word about my project, or suggest to me some colleagues at \_\_\_\_\_ who might be interested in participating as well. If you do choose to participate, you will be contributing to emerging knowledge related to teaching and learning in a rapidly changing world, as well as helping inform current and future teachers on pedagogies and practices that foster empathy, hope, and resilience in the face of these challenges.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request! I appreciate your consideration, and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, Casey McCullough

## Appendix C

### Research Participation Informed Consent

#### Humboldt State University- Emergent Pedagogies

Thank you for your interest in this study. You are invited to participate in a 45-120 minute in-depth interview related to your experiences supporting students' learning as it relates to, or exists alongside, experiences of trauma and grief, resiliency and hope. Your participation will contribute to emerging knowledge related to the complex contexts students' lives and their education exist within, as the latter can both critique and cause various types of trauma and loss. Your participation will also help inform current and future educators with methods and mechanisms for fostering empathy, hope, and resilience in and outside of the classroom. This study is being conducted by Casey McCullough, a Sociology Master's student at Humboldt State University.

Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to not participate at all, to decline answering particular questions, or to discontinue the interview at any time with no negative consequences. Participating in this study poses minimal risk: risks are no greater than discomfort you may experience when teaching, or in everyday conversations about your teaching experience, academic curriculum, or classroom discussions related to trauma, grief, and healing. The potential benefits for your participation include identifying positive practices you've encountered with learning through trauma and grief in the classroom, gaining insight or knowledge from others in this study, and benefits of simply talking about, reflecting on, and sharing your experiences.

For confidentiality purposes, you may choose a pseudonym to protect your identity, or I will choose for you. If you consent to me using direct quotes from the interview in my research and writing, aspects of your identity (areas of study, ethnicity, research experience, where you've taught, etc) will be protected if that information may reveal your identity. This research is being conducted for my Master's thesis, and may be presented at various conferences or used in different publications.

Digital audio recordings of interviews will be captured electronically on a password protected computer, and within 3 days of the interview, the recording will be filed in a password-protected location on that device. Within 21 days, the audio file will be transcribed and deleted. The interview transcription will be stored for up to 7 years then destroyed. Within 7 days, this written consent form will be scanned and stored in a secure electronic location separate from the transcript and for the same amount of time.

Dr. Michihiro Clark Sugata, Professor in the Humboldt State University Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice Studies, is supervising me as I conduct this research project. If you have any questions about this research, you may e-mail me at [cm445@humboldt.edu](mailto:cm445@humboldt.edu) or you may contact Dr. Sugata at [michihiro.sugata@humboldt.edu](mailto:michihiro.sugata@humboldt.edu).

If you have questions about this study or your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (707) 826-5165 or [irb@humboldt.edu](mailto:irb@humboldt.edu).

Signing below indicates that you are at least 18 years of age and willing to participate, and that you understand that your participation is voluntary and may stop at any time. I read and understand the information above:

Yes, you have my consent to use direct quotes from my interview associated with my pseudonym

No, you may not use direct quotes from my interview.

Print name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

#### Semi-structured Interview questions

##### General questions on educational history:

- Can you talk a little bit about, when you were an undergraduate/graduate student, what influenced your focus of study?
- Can you talk a little bit about what lead you to want to teach; What or who drew you to the profession at this level?
- can you talk a little bit about what interested you when you saw my research project, why you decided to participate?

##### Trauma and Loss in teaching and learning

- When you think about trauma that your students face, which can be in both the course material, their lived experiences, etc, what come to mind?
- Based on your observations, how do you think trauma or loss impacts their educational journey?
- If something traumatic or challenging happened in the communities you've taught in, or else the community experiences a significant loss, can you talk about how if at all that impacted the classroom/campus spaces?
- can you talk about your experiences teaching future teachers, how to prepare them for what they may face?
- can you talk about how you see students grappling with grief in their learning? where/how loss is located in materials or lives?
- I'm also interested in how you address students or moments when they are being inconsiderate to others' trauma, experiences, communities, etc
- How do you respond when students bring up anticipated tragedies or traumas (ie gun violence in schools, death in general, etc)
- What are some institutional barriers you've seen students face in their healing?

##### Hope // Empathy

- can you talk about students grappling with apathy, how you might respond to that?
- other ways you've seen students move from despair to hope?
- Think of a moment in your teaching career when you felt particularly burned out, or hopeless, what got you through it?
- Despite the challenges you've articulated, that your students continue to face, or your own grappling with those challenges, what keeps you engaged in teaching? what keeps you here.

What questions do you have related to this topic?

What did you wish I asked, or what did you want to talk about more?

Do you have any questions for me?