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A Walking Meditation with Queer English teachers of color: Diffracting stuckness, empowerment, resistance, and vulnerability in Nepantla

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, "A WALKING MEDITATION WITH QUEER ENGLISH TEACHERS OF COLOR: DIFFRACTING STUCKNESS, EMPOWERMENT, RESISTANCE, AND VULNERABILITY IN NEPANTLA" by ETHAN TINH TRINH, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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A WALKING MEDITATION WITH QUEER ENGLISH TEACHERS OF COLOR:

DIFFRACTING STUCKNESS, EMPOWERMENT, RESISTANCE, AND VULNERABILITY

IN NEPANTLA

by

ETHAN TINH TRINH

Under the Direction of Gertrude Tinker Sachs, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

There are two purposes of this study. The first purpose is to explore what possibilities could emerge when emotions and queerness are co-constituted in teaching and research, especially in interdisciplinary fields (i.e., Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, critical queer studies, affect studies, and research methodologies). The second purpose is to trace queerness and emotions methodologically-theoretically. Two research questions in this study are: *What were the possibilities in terms of theory, teaching, and research that queerness and emotions produced through the intra-active conversational process between four queer English teachers of color and Ethan-researcher? and How were queerness and emotions traced methodologically? By whom or what?*

By drawing from Chicana feminism (Anzaldúa, 2015), new materialism (Barad, 2007), and Vietnamese Buddhism (Thich, 1999), and using diffractive methodology (Barad, 2007), the concepts of an atomic emotion and the spiritual third eye were born to address the research questions. An atomic emotion consists of elements of emotions that emerged from the conversations. The movement and differential becoming and reconfiguring of these elements are always held together, co-existing relationally, intra-acting, and transforming constantly in every second. There is nothing permanent in an atomic emotion. There is nothing permanent in its form. Elements of emotions in an atomic emotion motion, transform, and intra-act impermanently. The concept of atomic emotions is important in this study to deconstruct predetermination, challenge fixity, question colonial knowledge, rethink assumptions and biases toward Others, and redirect readers to look into the inseparable relationship of human, non-human, and more-than-human through discursive practices. This study concludes by offering the pedagogy of response-ability and future directions to construct a queer utopia of emotions with students, teachers, families, and policy makers in interdisciplinary fields across the world.

INDEX WORDS: Vietnamese meditation, diffraction, nepantla, queer, emotions, TESOL

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the queer, transgender, and non-conforming English language teachers

around the world.

You are not alone.

We are here. We are queer. Together.

We are fabulous.

<3 <3 <3

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Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: LAY OF THE LAND

Soy la que escribe y se escribe/ I am the one who writes and who is being written.
Últimamente es el escribir que me escribe/ It is the writing that "writes" me.
I "read" and "speak' myself into being. Writing is the site where I critique reality,
identity, language, and dominant culture's representation and ideological control.

-Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 3

Prelude

In this prelude, I focus on *how* my dissertation will present and organize itself in the
entire text. This dissertation is an ongoing process of writing and rewriting, thinking and
rethinking, doing and redoing until I, the writer, researcher, thinker, and believer of this text,
could learn how to "reinvent reality" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 44). Reinventing reality, according to
Gloria Anzaldúa (2015), requires one to suspend the conscious "I", insert the idea with images of
the new reality, "cultivate a pretend reality and act as though you're already in that pretend
reality. Eventually that reality becomes the real one, at least until you change it again" (p. 44).
This pretend reality would include the following entities, but not limited to, research participants,
research context, research questions, research methodology, theoretical framework, and myself
as a researcher, among other elements. The pretend reality includes me in it to write, think,
breathe, and live with it. I have this pretend reality to hold on to, stick with, come back, rest,
meditate, and recover to continue the journey of writing this dissertation. This pretend reality is a
spiritual, safe, and resting home for me to write, speak, and do with inner peace with the hope of
seeing the self-transformation during and after I leave the space.

I am writing in a pretend reality called *nepantla.* Nepantla is defined as a psychological,
liminal, or an in-between space, which is "the point of contact y el lugar between worlds–

between imagination and physical existence, between ordinary and non-ordinary (spirit) realities" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 2). As I am writing in nepantla, nepantla "infuses my writing," providing a space for me to see the multiple reality clashes, the conflicts, the tensions, where "transformation and healing may be possible, where wholeness is just out of reach but seem attainable" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 2). As a result, writing with/in nepantla allows me to give birth to a new identity of mine: *Nepantlera*. The concept of *Nepantleras* describes "threshold people, those who move within and among multiple worlds and use their movement in the service of transformation" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. xxxv). In the movement, Nepantleras experience the anguish of changing perspectives as we are working through and questioning our (and other) belief systems and previously accepted worldviews. Besides, the movement to become a nepantlera is not easy; instead, "it's risky, lonely, exhausting work. Never entirely inside, always somewhere outside, every group or belief systems, nepantleras do not fully belong to any single locations" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. xxxv). As I was warned about the loneliness and risk of becoming a nepantlera, I accept the challenge to enter the nepantla world to write, think, and do (research) in this dissertation study.

As this dissertation project is written in nepantla, I use Karen Barad's (2007) concept of diffraction as a methodological practice of reading (and writing) "insights through one another" (p. 25). Drawing from their quantum physics work and developing the notion of diffraction as a metaphor from Donna Haraway's (1988) work, Barad (2007) views diffraction as an alternative to reflection, a metaphor which describes sameness or mirroring; instead, diffraction "is marked by patterns of difference" (p. 72). Barad (2007) uses an example of ocean waves as well as water and sound waves (p. 74) to demonstrate that when waves interfere or overlap, they change in

themselves and are spread differently, creating an interference pattern or "superposition" (p. 76).

Using diffraction as a methodological practice of reading insights through one another allows

readers and writers to "escape from the established academic habit" where meanings and values

are waiting for "discovery, interpretation, judgment and ultimate representation" (Vannini, 2015,

p. 318). Rather, diffractive reading moves from habitual normative reading toward a reading

"that spreads thought and meaning in unpredictable and productive emergencies" (Mazzei, 2014,

p. 742). By using the diffractive practice of reading and writing, the readers are no longer

standing outside to reflect *on* the text; instead, they are co-constituting and entangling *with* the

text in producing knowledge and (re)configuring the world (Barad, 2007; Mazzei, 2014; Murris

& Bozalek, 2019).

Even though there are research studies discussing diffraction as a methodological

practice (Jackson & Mazzei, 2022; Lenz Taguchi, 2009; Mazzei, 2014; Murris & Bozalek, 2019;

Springgay, 2015; St. Pierre, 2017), little guidance is provided for the writers and researchers

(Murris & Bozalek, 2019). Besides, the key idea of diffraction is reading theory (or multiple

theories) *with* practice to "produce an emergent and unpredictable series of readings as data and

theory make themselves intelligible to one another" (Mazzei, 2014, p. 743). Therefore, in this

dissertation project, I invite the readers to engage with the "thought experiment" (Barad, 2007)

by entangling with text diffractively other than reading and reflecting from the outside, or as

Barad (2007) puts it, "knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to

another part of the world" (p. 185). In other words, this dissertation is a diffractive text itself that

will be diffracted thoroughly from the beginning to the end and after the reading ends.

In order to have the readers entangled and co-constituted with the text while navigating with me in the nepantla space, I propose two "sets" of weaves where the first set will be my personal voice/story (*in a cursive style*) and the other will be generated by the diffractive reading and writing woven with multiple theories and analyses. These two sets will liberate myself from the constrained and structural format of writing an academic text; instead, I can stay true to who I am as a writer; so that I can breathe freely, calm myself down whenever I feel panicked, write, theorize, think multi-dimensionally, and un-paralyze myself from the crippled academic writing and research. Further, as my personal and professional lives (i.e., personal stories and academic research) come together diffractively, I want to pay tribute to the past and future (Barad, 2012a) while staying creative in research and writing (Murris & Bozalek, 2019). Most importantly, these two sets will follow the readers until the last page of this dissertation because "writing is not a unidirectional practice of creation that flows from author to page, but rather the practice of writing is an iterative and mutually constitutive working out, and reworking of 'book' and 'author'" (Barad, 2007, p. x), which could lead to other diffractive patterns within the readers as a result of this entanglement after leaving the nepantla space.

While writing in nepantla space, I want to briefly share what my dissertation is about. In this dissertation, I want to center affects, emotions, and feelings of queer English language teachers (QETs) in academic discourse, hoping to understand how "small and subtle shifts in perception or understanding [emotions and feelings] cumulatively might lead to social reform" (Benesch, 2012, p. 134). I theorize QETs as nepantleras due to our unfixed identities belonging to neither/nor of space and time (Kumashiro, 2002; Luhmann, 1998; Talburt, 2000; Trinh, 2022). As Anzaldúa (2015) acknowledges, "Like queer and bisexual people living in cities–stuck

between the cracks of home and other cultures–[Nepanleras] experience dislocation, disorientation. We are forced [or we choose] to live in spaces/categories that defy gender, race, class, sexual, geographic locations" (pp. 81-82). Therefore, QETs in this project are theorized as nepantleras to respond to an inquiry about "missing peoples" that Braidotti (2018) describes as "real-life subjects whose knowledge never made it into any official cartographies" (p.21).

In the next section, I will describe the *what* of this dissertation in detail. Specifically, I will start with two sets of weaves to describe a summary of the issues in relation to queerness, affects, and QETs in research, followed by the significance of the study, the purpose of the study, theoretical eyes used in this project, research questions, and researcher positionality before moving to the literature review chapter.

Statement of Problem

You would see I was wearing a skirt, and my hair was curly, right? It was me when I was

a kid. I was wearing a skirt to school, and my friends could not recognize if I was a boy

or a girl. My mom always wanted me to be a girl. But that wasn't the worst part. I was

being bullied because of my appearance. You know, in Vietnam, you have to show your

masculinity, your manhood, and if you were different, you would be alienated and

isolated and people would start questioning you, and it would be a sin if you were

someone different. I was that different. But my mom loved me for who I was, and I love

me for who I was and for who I am. (Trinh, 2019, pp. 29-30)

Queer, an inclusive term for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, among other sexual identities (LGBTQ+), is a relational term that "introduces effects, misrecognitions, tentative acknowledgments, and disruptions into any educational endeavor" (Mayo, 2014, p. 91).

Queer, if used homophobically, is meant to position and shame people who are deemed "unintelligible" from the heteronormative lens; however, it also means to inquire critically about/against the practices of normalization in the study of sexuality (Luhmann, 1998). In theory and research, queer is asking radically a question of identity and binaries (Barad, 2012a) and of the limits within its conventions and rules that could lead to "subversive performances" (Britzman, 1995, p. 153). Therefore, queerness never comes to an end but always in moving, in contestation, in becoming that questions the binaries, dualism, and the practice of normalizations in teaching and research (Trinh, 2022).

We, queer educators, researchers, and writers, have never reached an ending point of queerness, because it is always an identities-under-construction project (Harris & Gray, 2014), a site of resistance against the imposed subjectivity (Rodriguez, 2007), a site of thinking queer (Talburt, 2000), a site of challenging the limits of thoughts (Britzman, 1995), and therefore a site of permanent becoming (Jagose, 1996). In addition, queerness is used as an analytic tool to explore the discourse of differences (Britzman, 1995; Nelson, 2006; Trinh, 2022), unfixity and unruliness of identities (Luhmann, 1998; Trinh, 2022), power (Pawelczyk et al., 2014), relationality (Barad, 2007), spatiotemporality (Talburt, 2000), and criticality (Mayo, 2014), among others. As such, queerness is a project to (re)imagine a future, a utopia, or borrowing Munoz's (2009) words, "The future is queerness's domain" (p. 1).

Both "queer" and "pedagogy", despite their differences in social positions, are marked by repudiation (Luhmann, 1998). While queerness is rejected and policed in a public school discourse, pedagogy serves as a site for reproducing unequal power relations in education (Britzman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998; Talburt, 2000). Therefore, queer pedagogy does more than a

good strategy by simply bringing images of queer populations into the curriculum; rather, it should explore the "messy process of learning and teaching, reading and writing" (Luhmann, 1998, p. 128) to escape the normative frame of thinking (Kumashiro, 2002) in the process of teaching and learning for teachers and students.

I am thinking with the so-called "queer pedagogy" in the excerpt above. The excerpt depicts a moment when I was teaching Latinx middle school students in an after-school program in 2019. I was a research assistant in a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) project where I co-led a class discussion about an incident that happened a day before. A student was bullied by her classmates; they said she was dating a girl. The conversation happened because I wanted students to think about differences in terms of gender and sexuality in classrooms. I had students draw a picture of themselves when they were a child, and so did I. I shared with students about my background and how I was also bullied by my friends because I was different: I learned that I was gay at a very early age, but my mom still loved me for who I was. Did I queer students' thinking about differences? We sat in a circle and shared our stories together. We enacted queer pedagogy in STEM. By coming back to the past (i.e, childhood), we returned to our true selves. The queerness did not lie in the image; instead, it lies in problematizing the conversation, adding the discourse of difference into the classroom, even if it was an after-school program.

Who are "queer teachers" anyway? The term "queer teachers" itself is problematic (Gray & Harris, 2014). Gray and Harris (2014) pose thought-provoking questions about this term as below:

Do we mean educators as self-conscious subjects who understand ourselves as 'queer'? Do we mean educators who do queer work, who 'flirt with the possible' within our professional lives? Or do we mean that we, as researchers, read the experiences of our research participants as queer subjects? What do we mean when we talk about 'queer teachers' and 'in whose gaze and for whose desire do we perform queer' (Pinar, 2007, p. 6). (p. 2)

These questions closely reflect Deborah Britzman's (1995) inquiry in her provocative essay, *Is there a queer pedagogy?, or Stop reading straight*. In this essay, Britzman alerts the educators that queer in Queer Theory "signify *actions,* not actors" where queerness should be viewed as a verb, or "a citational relation that signifies more than the signifier" (p. 153, emphasis in original). Britzman emphasizes that it does not depend on the identities of the signifier (i.e., theorist, pedagogue, researcher) to identify as "queer," but how queerness can get into problematizing "the limits within its conventions and rules, and in the ways in which these various conventions and rules incite subversive performances, citations, and inconveniences" (p. 153). Likewise, as I have also argued elsewhere (Trinh, 2021a), it is not because research subjects and/or the researcher who identify as queer and/or belongs to the LGBTQ+ community make research queer. Instead, the actions in the form of relationality, unfixity, unruliness, and disruptiveness of heteronormativity critically name queer research queer. However, for the purpose of this project, queer teachers in this study touch on the professional lives and experiences of research participants who self-identify within and beyond the coded LGBTQ+ umbrella, regardless of how they want to introduce themselves and their identities to the public.

Despite an increasing number of research studies on queer teachers' lived experiences, pedagogies, and identities (Hayes, 2014; Kumashiro, 2002; Mayo, 2007), there are urgent calls to ask future researchers to center on onto-epistemologies of queer and trans teachers of color in interdisciplinary fields (Brockenbrough, 2015; Ford, 2017; Hayes, 2014; Lange et al., 2019; McCready, 2013). However, researching the topic of queer teachers is a complex project due to the pressure of a heteronormative and sexist curriculum, school policies, cultures, religions, and other factors (Gray & Harris, 2014; Nelson, 2006; Lange et al., 2019; Mayo, 2007; Paiz, 2019). Our voices and stories are continuously silenced in academic discourse and research, which benefits the perpetuation of Eurocentric heteronormative research agenda and predominantly cis-gender, heterosexual, and white academia.

> *Seeing and being seen in front of the public is painful to us, metaphorically and literally. We do not belong to a society constructed by the hierarchical, patriarchal, heteronormative system. We are outsiders. As outsiders, we do not belong to a circle of "normality". The normality is paralyzing our moves, our bodies, and our lines of thoughts. Gradually, our emotions are becoming numb, frozen, and dead. The regime, wherein the ignorance of a self, the unacceptance of others, and heterosexism hold utmost power, is distancing us instead of allowing us to come closer to our circle; we are unable to sit down and share our thoughts with others. We are alone here. (Trinh, 2019, p. 31)*

The complexity of visibility to fit in the practice of normalcy is a hurdle to overcome, describe, and address completely (Gross, 1991; Rubin, 1984; Steinbugler, 2005; Trinh, 2021b).

Queer teachers are always outsiders; we never come to settle. We are moving, thinking, reflecting, and questioning the so-called "normalcy" which continues to restrict our identities and emotions in public. Specifically, in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) field, research demonstrates an urgent need to infuse critical reflection, critical consciousness, and critical questions of the teachers and students (Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2004; Motha, 2014; Paiz & Zhu, 2018). Despite a growing scholarship in English language teaching that looks into queer inquiry used in the classroom (Peirce, 1989; Nelson, 2006; Paiz, 2019; Tran-Thanh, 2021; Trinh, 2020a, 2021a), the conversations related to sexual identities and queerness remain silent and invisible (Cahnmann-Taylor et al., 2022; Nelson, 2006, 2009; Pawelczyk et al., 2014; Paiz, 2019, 2020). For example, Paiz (2019) has posited that the TESOL field has not adequately addressed the issues of LGBTQ+ in the classroom, which continues reifying dominant, heteronormative discourses that could lead to more harmful consequences (i.e., suicide among queer students).

> *Our tongues are cut, frozen, and replaced to fit in the crowd. We are sweating; we are doubting; we are afraid of judging eyes; we are hating ourselves; we are hating others for hating us; we are rolling back to our regime; we are continuing to hide; we are seizing ourselves in a closet again. We are handcuffing the whole body—to harm ourselves, to cut ourselves, to disappear. Because we are ashamed. (Trinh, 2019, p. 31)*

In studying affects, emotions, and feelings in TESOL, one of the commonplace assumptions was that emotions are "subjective, irrational, exclusively female, and hard to capture, in ELT [...], as exclusively cognitive" (Benesch, 2012, p. 133). Because the cognitive

aspect indicates that emotions are "'difficult to research" and "soft" in comparison to the 'hard, quantifiable and rational facts'" (Richards, 2022, p. 226). However, emotions in language teaching and learning do not only tap into cognitive but also social and physical (Benesch, 2012). From these scholarly discussions in TESOL, emotions are already in a binary perspective: subjective/objective, irrational/rational, female/male, and observable/non-observable. What if, emotions are thought of and done differently? For example, what would happen if emotions connect mind, body, and sexuality, acknowledging teaching and learning as not only cognitive, and social, but also physical, agential, cultural, political, and spiritual? What would happen if emotions and feelings are viewed from a non-binary perspective in order to break the habit of thinking, which St. Pierre (2017) asked us to think about? These are the questions that are worth investigating, thinking with, and asking differently to re-direct our attention to think about "bodies as assemblages" (Benesch, 2012, p. 136), aimed toward creating a space of possibilities for the teachers to co-explore with students to embody in language learning and teaching.

Further, the affective turn in the English language teaching field has shown a shift from what emotions are (or are not) (Barrett, 2016) to what they do and how they affect second language learning and teaching through classroom interactions (Benesch, 2012, 2018; de Costa et al., 2018; Gkonou & Miller, 2021; Her & de Costa, 2018; Pavlenko, 2013; Pentón Herrera et al., 2023; Song, 2016; Zembylas, 2003). This turn is an important topic for me to inquire in this dissertation project: *what possibilities could emerge when affects and queerness come together?* As Richards (2022) posits, "Emotions are understood as a sociocultural experience primarily determined not only by individual characteristics but also by relationships and social contexts. They are not merely something that we 'have' but something that we 'do'" (p. 226).

Interestingly, queerness is also in agreement with less than being, but more about doing, acting, and troubling the heteronormativity and practice of normalization, aimed toward social critique to imagine a utopia for queer population (Britzman, 1995; Jagose, 1997; Luhmann, 1998; Munoz, 2009; Talburt, 2000). Therefore, this project offers an actionable and thinkable path to research affective turn and queerness in TESOL by proposing to trace the possibilities of these two elements create when they meet in between.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Are you still listening to us? Are you still there in your own circle? I am glad you are going this far to listen to our stories. Can I ask you a favor instead? We would like you not to be a stranger, a heartless passerby. If you ever see us, could you please give us a moment to talk, to share, to laugh with us, or at least to give us a hug? (Trinh, 2019, p. 31)

The rationale for this dissertation project emanated from my desire and wish to make queer emotions and feeling visible in the public and academic discourse to feel differently. Bringing queer emotion and looking at emotions and feelings as a non-human agent, I aim to educate and provide future research with a nuanced understanding of the relationship between queerness and affects in TESOL. This dissertation pushes educational (language) educators to expand our viewpoints of emotions as a cognitive/psychological discourse (i.e., what emotions are) to what they do. Rather, it invites a larger conversion where political, cultural, linguistic, sense-making and reworlding, and reconfiguring of possibilities when affects and queerness come together (i.e., QETs and their emotions and feelings).

Doing this project expands the call to theorize and explores how emotions stick (Ahmed, 2004; Benesch, 2012) and how matters come to matter (Barad, 2007). In other words, this project, despite situated itself in the context of English language teaching and learning, responds to the call for interdisciplinary and plurality of understanding queerness and emotions in education (Allen, 2018; de Costa et al., 2018; Lange et al., 2019). First, emotions and feelings still remain "under-theorized and entirely absent" in TESOL (Benesch, 2012, p. 32); however, it is important to note that they are decision-makers for driving any pedagogical moves and strategies in teaching and learning (Benesch, 2012). The importance of doing this study could lead to creating spaces for QETs to critically reflect on their identities and power in classrooms (Freire, 2000; Nelson, 2009; Paiz, 2020) and push us the readers and researchers toward a deeper and more nuanced understanding of what emotions do in each specific context with each population (i.e., QETs who come from different backgrounds on this project).

> *By giving a hug to others, especially to those who lived a life of marginality, you will be able to see a deeper layer of a person's life and teach you how to share empathy with people around you. (Trinh, 2019, p. 31)*

Doing the work of intersectionality of queerness and emotions could pave a way for liberation, a form of activism in the classroom. In fact, teachers are expected to carry out "complex emotion work" and "manage their emotions to get to the 'appropriate' ones" (Benesch, 2012, p. 134); therefore, the teachers' emotions and feelings are (sub-)consciously policed, restricted, and shaped by the classrooms, schools, societies, and cultures where they are situated.

Expanding on previous research work by critical queer and affects scholars (Benesch, 2012, 2018, 2022; de Costa et al., 2018; Gkonou & Miller, 2021; Her & de Costa, 2018; Nelson,

1999, 2009; Paiz, 2019; Pavlenko, 2013; Pentón Herrera et al., 2023; Song, 2018; Vandrick, 1997; Zembylas, 2013), this project aims to think with QETs and their affects in the context of English language teaching. Specifically, for QETs, their emotions and feelings are double and triple restricted, monitored, policed, made invisible, and shaped by heteronormative societies and norms, or borrowing Ahmed's (2004) language, "compulsory heterosexuality." Compulsory heterosexuality is defined "as the cumulative effects of the repetition of the narrative of heterosexuality as an ideal coupling, shapes what it is possible for bodies to do" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 145). This definition provides a different way to think about how queer emotions and feelings *should* do in an ideal way to meet the heteronormative standards, where their authenticity of queer self is blurred, buried, ignored, and invisible. The "should-ness" is closely related to the performativity of how one's gender and sexuality should look to continue their passing in a heteronormative life. Therefore, this project hopes to highlight and center the emotions and feelings of QETs in academic discourse, troubling and furthering the readers to see how "small and subtle shifts in perception or understanding [emotions and feelings] cumulatively might lead to social reform" (Benesch, 2012, p. 134), where "social reform" is the liberation of queer identities and affects acknowledged and appreciated in public space.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose is to explore what possibilities could emerge when affects, emotions, and feelings and the unfixity of queerness in teaching and research. This project explores the meaning-making process between human (i.e., QETs), non-human (affects, emotions, and feelings), and discursive (i.e., interview, photograph, written reflection) agents. This project is an extended example of how the ontological turn (Ahmed, 2008; Barad, 2007) and affective turn

(Pavlenko, 2013; de Costa et al., 2018) do in TESOL, pushing the interdisciplinary field to think, do, and feel differently as I am trying to re-direct our attention to human and non-human entanglements. Specifically, this project does not go beyond what the fields are doing, but it returns (Barad, 2014) to individual concepts, brings them together, and explores its multiplicities of how these concepts are theorized, (will or will not) entangle with one another and give each other (new) meanings during and after the dissertation process.

From a diffractive thinking-writing-reading process, I hope to see what kinds of agential cuts (Barad, 2007) will be made for those in this project (i.e., researcher, research participants, dissertation committee, future readers). Barad (2011) describes agential cuts that "do not mark some absolute separation but a cutting together-apart—holding together of the disparate itself (p. 46). Cutting together-apart "entails the enactment of an agential cut together with the entanglement of what's on "either side of the cut since these are produced in one moved" (Barad, 2012b, p. 20). This cut is different from a usual cut which completely set the two objects/sides in an absolute separation; however, for cutting together-apart, the cut does not stop, but it is iteratively reworking and reconfiguring. In other words, cutting together-apart is in quest of "indebtedness, inheritance, memory, and responsibility" (Barad, 2012b, p. 20). Put differently, how are we produced differently after this diffractive, affective, and queer dissertation project?

Theoretical Eyes

From the beginning, I have invited the readers to follow me on this journey of reading the text diffractively in the pretend reality called nepantla. I hope you are still with me. This text, borrowing Anzaldúa's (2015) words, "is about the imagination, about 'active imagining, ensuenos (dreaming while awake), and interacting consciously with them" (p.

5). From the beginning, this text is situated in the theoretical and imaginative world (i.e., nepantla), I theorized myself and QETs as nepantleras in this dissertation project. The concepts "Nepantla and nepantleras" have become part of my personal and professional lives (Trinh, 2019, 2020b, 2021b) and will continue their existences and impacts in both the pretend and the current realities until I could find another dimension/space to think, live, and theorize. I am now re-turning to a conversation with Karen Barad and their theory to help me see differently, in addition to Anzaldúa's nepantla, or in-between, eyes.

Barad (2014) posits *returning* "not by re-turning as in reflecting on or going back to a past that was, but re-turning as in turning it over and over again – iteratively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew, in the making of new temporalities (spacetimematterings), new diffraction patterns" (p. 168). There is no past to come back, but the past and present are co-existing and come back over and over so that we (can) make up a new temporality, or a temporality could be made. There is no separation in space and time, but all are integral and intra-acted. *Interaction* suggests that there are two separate agents that exist prior to the interaction whereas *intra-action* recognizes that the distinct agencies do not precede but come into being through the mutual material entanglement with one another (Barad, 2007). Intra-action emphasizes the *relationality* of thinking, connecting, entangling, and theorizing with multiplicities, negating the idea that entities, elements, subjects, and objects exist individually in an absolute separation. Therefore, as times, spaces, and bodies are intra-acted, it is critical to explore how the multiplicity, complexity, nuances, thickness, and depth of a moment can be thought of with other bodies and materials.

By sharing our (deepest) secrets, we were able to understand the concept of returning,

because there is no here-now or there-then; nothing goes beyond or underneath, but all

are moving within. Our memories now do not exist independently, but they exist within

relations. (Trinh et al., 2022, p. 834)

Inspired by a recent study where re-turning brought collective healing for those who are

involved in the memory rewriting process (Trinh et al., 2022), I will continue using the concept

of *re-turning,* weaving with the nepantla concept, to revisit critical moments of QETs on this

project. By doing so, I aim to theorize un-ending, yet reworking and reconfiguring, possibilities

that affects and queerness will create and see what would happen when Baradian and Anzaldúan

perspectives come together. I am extremely intrigued with the indeterminacy and possibilities

that this project will (re)create, (re)fine, (re)think, (re)configure, and (r)e/merge.

Research Questions

This dissertation explores affects, emotions, and feelings as non-human agents via intra-

action (Barad, 2007) and Chicana feminism (Anzaldúa, 2015) to theorize and offer some queer

analysis and thinking with QETs. Therefore, the guiding research questions are:

- How are queerness and affects traced methodologically?

- What are the possibilities that queerness and affects

  (from/by/with/through/on/within) QETs are produced in TESOL?

There will be no research question #1 or #2 in this dissertation project because the

questions are mutually entangled with one another. These questions will expand a nuanced

understanding of emotions and feelings to respond to an inquiry that Barad (2007) ponders,

which "calls into question the nature of agency and its presumed localization within individuals

(whether human or nonhuman)" (p. x). The nature of agency through human, non-human, and discourse, helps enrich discussions of the call to explore how emotions should be understood across disciplines (Benesch, 2012, 2017; Martinez Agudo, 2018), especially when the factor of gender and sexuality (i.e. queerness) comes into play. Besides, as Barad (2007) posits, "Practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world" (p. 91). The possible knowing (Barad, 2007) produced from specific material engagement with emotions and feelings of QETs will add richness, depth, nuances, and complexity to respond to the call for understanding the English language teachers' identities and the fluidity of the constructs (e.g., in/equity, privilege/marginalization), and multiplicity of meanings and sense-making process in TESOL (Yazan & Rudolph, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

My researcher positionality is scattered throughout five chapters of this dissertation project, in the nepantla space, in the text, and in the conversations with research participants (i.e., QETs). My positionality no longer fits in one concrete, physical place/space; rather, it is now embodied in all matters that I will be connecting and intra-acting with within this dissertation project. Therefore, I will borrow Anzaldúa's (2015) wisdom to re-present my positionality.

> My feminism is grounded not on incorporeal abstraction but on corporeal realities. The material body is center and central. The body is the ground of thought. The body is a text. Writing is not about being in your head; it's about being in your body. The body responds physically, emotionally, and intellectually to external and internal stimuli, and writing records, orders, and theorizes about these responses. (p. 5)

Further, as Barad (2007) reminds me that I do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world, but I am always "part of the world in its differential becoming" (p. 185). My becomingness has been always entangled with emotions and feelings through my writing, teaching, and research agenda. My becomingness is part of the world to see how my identities are part of positionalities, positionalities are part of identities. I will not be able to separate who I am as a Vietnamese, queer, immigrant, and English language teacher educator who writes and teaches with emotions in different spaces and times. I have never acknowledged and written about/with emotions and feelings in my work even though these non-human agents have been in/hyper/visible in every space and time that I write. Therefore, this project has become essentially significant for me in connecting human (i.e., QETs), non-human agents (affects), and discursive (i.e. interview, photo, written reflections) agents together to explore where, how, and what these entanglements will lead to and open different forms of queerness and affects emerged from intra-active interview processes. My positionality does not stand alone in this world; rather, it has been and will be part of the world in its differential becoming even after this project ends.

Chapter 1 Summary and Next Steps

In this chapter, I have set up, a lay of the land, for my dissertation to propose this project. In chapter two, I will discuss the literature to review emotions and feelings in research and teaching contexts and make a case for the importance of inquiry into the relationship between humans (QETs), non-human agents (affects, emotions, and feelings), and discursive (i.e., interview, photo, written reflections) agents. I will use autohistoria-teoria, a personal essay that theorizes (Anzaldúa, 2002), to think and feel with the texts. In chapter three, I discuss each component of my methodology, data collection, procedures, and analysis in this project.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Prelude 1: How the Text is Presented

In Chapter 2 where I am going to review previous research studies, I will continue a journey of reinventing reality in the pretend reality called nepantla (Anzaldúa, 2015) by using multidisciplinary approaches woven in a storytelling format. At the same time, I follow a diffractive reading and writing "insights through one another" (Barad, 2007, p. 25) where I will have two sets of weaves where the first set will be my personal voice/story (in a cursive style) and the other will be generated by the diffractive text/literature woven with theories and analyses. There are two reasons why I chose to follow this format.

First, I could constantly shift my positions in the literature review, which means "taking into account ideological remolinos (whirlwinds), cultural dissonance, and the convergence of competing worlds, [...], when crossing to other mundos, shift into and out of perspectives corresponding to each; it means living in liminal spaces, in nepantlas" (p. 3). Reviewing this literature will enable to shift my position as a nepantlera, who is "never entirely inside, always somewhere outside [of] every group or belief systems" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. xxxv). Not only does this shifting helps me think through/with/about different ideas, experiences, emotions, and feelings of the authors, their research participants, their contexts, but also create a space for me to think *as* an insider with these literatures by weaving my own story to co-constitute the meaning and understanding of the authors' works.

Second, by thinking with the diffractive reading and writing, I am no longer an outsider who reflects *on* the text; rather, I will entangle *with* the text in producing knowledge and (re)configuring the world. By writing the literature diffractively, I want to disrupt the

conventional style of doing research which is representational (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017; Murris & Bozalek, 2019) where the writer of the review creates an overview with comparison, contrast, juxtaposition to look for themes and similarities. Rather, I read texts through one another to come to new insights (Murris & Bozalek, 2019). I want to escape the "bird's eye point of view" to read the literature where I am an outsider of the text (Murris & Bozalek, 2019, p. 1505). Rather, I propose to use the nepantla, or in-between, eyes to read, write, and think in this diffractive literature review for my dissertation project. I, therefore, invite you the readers to join me in this thought experiment (Barad, 2007).

Prelude 2: Purpose of the Review

The cursor blinks. I am not sure how many scratches I have made in writing this literature review. I have been sitting at my desk for quite a long time, binge-reading after reading to figure out how to start putting words together. I am thinking about the purpose of this literature review. The more I think about the purpose, the more questions I come up with: How to explain affects? How to explain emotions? How to explain feelings? "How to put into words something not quite finished, something congealing, taking from pressing, present, but still in motion? What can affects help us think, feel, do, and be(come) in education?" (Dernikos et al., 2020, p. 20). Importantly, how can I treat, or not treat, this review as a dry, emotionless, and dead text when its affects and emotions are already woven with my body displayed through the notes on the margin of pages of books and articles?

This text, or the so-called "academic literature review," has been treated unfairly. The unfairness here is that the text was taken for granted by the reader and the writer with

the knowledge it provides, but we the readers forgot to ask, How does the text feel? How

does the text make us feel differently? After closing the page, we forget that our affects

and emotions stick (Ahmed, 2010). We view the text as an emotionless non-human

subject, consuming the content and knowledge and leaving the text behind. The question

is whether or not the text is really left behind without sticking anything with or into us. In

fact, the text may disrupt, interrupt, and open up "unforeseen ways of being, thinking,

feeling, and knowing" (Bridges-Rhoads et al., 2018, p. 817). It rocks our worlds and

electrifies us to think about unthinkability. As such, in this literature review, I want to

read, write and do justice to the text and the questions that remain undefined,

unanswered, lingering, inviting for explorations, and..and...and... Specifically, I aim to

place the reading, the text, and the literature review in the human-non-human

relationship to explore how the text makes me and the reader feel differently (or, more

ambitiously, do differently) after we leave this space.

What makes a "good" literature review if it does not have affects, emotions, and feelings

on the writer and the reader? How deep will be "deep" enough to show the depth of my

understanding of the topic I am researching (i.e., queerness and affects)? "Understanding,"

according to Shulman (2002), "connotes a form of ownership" (p. 40), which implies three

expectations from the writer-doctoral candidates in the dissertation phase: the ability to develop,

make intellectual choices, and defend epistemic warrants about the literature; the ability to find,

evaluate, analyze, synthesize the literature; and the ability to re-evaluate the literature

continually. Also, in response to Joseph Maxwell, who contends that dissertations should include

research articles and a conceptual framework that only discuss "relevant literature" (p. 32),

David Boote and Penny Beile (2006) inquire, "Who would argue to include 'irrelevant literature'?" (p. 34). They argue that relevance is "subjective and contextual" (p. 34) and is an ongoing decision to produce what the writer claims to demonstrate their understanding of a specific topic. I concur with Boote and Beile (2006) in their statement about what counts toward "relevant/irrelevant" literature, especially as we situate, transcend, historicize, problematize, and politicize our experience (Haraway, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1994; Scott, 1992) into each word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, and page(s). Which literature could count as "relevance" in helping us reflect and connect the relationality of us (human), experience (non-human), and text (discursive), and if possible, go beyond the scope of academic writing?

Another question has been raised in writing a literature review, *How many references and citations would be enough to count toward the writer's understanding of the field?* The writer cannot merely add citations to show evidence of how (well) they have read; instead, adding citations of one's work is an engagement with the text through "the creative act of philosophical interpretations" (Bridges-Rhoads et al., 2018, p. 821). James Salvo has described philosophical texts as follows:

> Philosophical texts have value only inasmuch as they give rise to thinking. They contain truth, but not the kind we can heat and eat. Rather, they contain the seeds for our own truths, truths that are only revealed if we discover them through slow reading. In other words, we have to plant, cultivate, harvest, mill, knead, and only then get cooking. (Bridges-Rhoads et al., 2018, p. 821)
>
> *The concept of slow reading through the creative act of philosophical interpretation and texts has inspired and encouraged me to write this literature review affectionately. I am*

no longer interested in showing/adding mere citations just by synthesizing, evaluating, and putting the readings into themes in order to produce a text where it continues producing "educated workers" restricted and controlled by the knowledge-based economy (Denzin, 2019, p. 721). Rather, I purposefully inscribe this text by writing it in my body, in which my body is a beautiful, yet critical, agency to guide me and the reader to think affectively, emotionally, spiritually, and politically as we are conversing with different texts in this literature review.

I have come to understand the purpose of this review more clearly. Not only do I want to showcase to the readers of this literature (i.e., the dissertation committee and myself as a writer) that I know knowledge (i.e., queerness and affects) in the interdisciplinary fields (i.e., TESOL, critical queer studies, affect studies), but I want to do justice to the text that I am producing. I want to take responsibility for this literature review. As Barad (2007) puts it, "Knowing entails differential responsiveness and accountability as part of a network of performances. Knowing is not a bounded or closed practice but an ongoing performance of the world" (p. 149). I, therefore, consider this text as a non-human agent whose affects, emotions, and feelings should be cultivated, personified, and listened critically, which could be a form of differential responsiveness and accountability that Barad refers to, while I as the writer could insert my emotion and feeling and criticality to think with/in the text. In order to do so, I propose to use the autohistoria-teoria approach (Anzaldúa, 2002) to write this literature review.

Prelude 3: Autohistoria-teoria: Writing in my Body

Autohistoria-teoria is a personal essay that theorizes (Anzaldúa, 2002). It is a form of fusing personal narrative with theoretical discourses, of "inventing and making new knowledge, meaning, and identity through self-inscription … to blur the private/public borders" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 6). Autohistoria-teoria aims to help the writer to rewrite stories aimed toward "healing, self-growth, cultural critique, and individual and collective transformation" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 242). I am not sure what transformation will look like for me after writing this piece (i.e., literature review), but this text is "acts of imaginative flight in reality and identity construction and reconstruction" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 7). The reality will be re-written with a sea of theories— queer theories, affect theory, and sometimes Buddhist meditation, to help me swim and breathe in the ocean of conocimiento, or new knowledge.

Autohistoria-teoria is a whisper of a soul, providing me with a space, a platform to re-construct identities and weave the pretend reality into the current reality. Chimine Arfuso (2022) has described the six major components of autohistoria- teoría, including the risk of personal, an extensive self-reflexivity, the Cartesian split being challenged by "becoming a gesture of the body and finding ease in ambiguity" (p. 603), writing within an oppressive structure, a form of decolonizing epistemological and ontological assumptions, and a suture of colonial trauma used by scholars as social justice praxis. In addition, Gloria Anzaldúa (2015) reminds me of the *writing-within* approach through autohistoria-teoria, which is an intense self-reflection and incorporation of complex theory and practices in a creative process to invite the readers to share and enact themselves. This writing-within approach closely connects with the diffractive reading and writing in this dissertation project, as well. Therefore, in the next section, I will treat every

small story as life data with "antagonism, dialogue, crisis, climax, resolution, and poetics" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 6), followed by the theory and research articles related to affects and queerness. These stories are situated in my personal and professional lives to help me connect and make sense of the literature in this chapter.

> *I promise the committee that I will not write a mediocre dissertation; I cannot write a dissertation that is un-me. Not only do I write to make sense of who I am as a writer, a reader, a teacher, a queer Vietnamese doctoral student, the eldest child of a working-class immigrant family, and a thinker who weaves theories and spirituality to communicate with the text. I write to invite the readers to co-construct/-imagine a space of understanding (new) knowledge with me. This literature review is a personal, philosophical, theoretical, affective, and thinkable agential text that invites us to think, feel, and act together.*

In this diffractive, autohistoria-teoria literature review, I attempt to write, think, and feel differently. Specifically, I aim to blur the boundary of public versus private in autohistoria-teoria (Bhattacharya & Keating, 2018; Trinh, 2020a, 2020b; 2021a) and explore the relationality of epistemology and ontology (Anzaldúa, 2015), or, in Karen Barad's (2007) term, ethic-onto-epistemology, where there is no separability of ethics, ontology and epistemology when engaging in (scientific) knowledge production. In this process, I use the following questions to guide my thinking: *How can I trace affects, emotions, and feelings, and queerness in autohistoria-teoria? What does the tracing process look like? How does the tracing make me feel and think differently?* Diffractive reading and writing of different texts from queer studies, affect studies, and English language teaching will be woven to help me make sense of these fields,

what these scholars are doing, as well as how the scholarships and theories relate, reflect, and help me think with the research questions. Writing this diffractive, autohistoria-teoria literature review by incorporating affects, emotions, and feelings in it is exhausting, risk-taking, yet rewarding, to help me gain new insights, understandings, and interpretations of the research topics of this dissertation project. Therefore, I am genuinely committed to doing this work.

Affective Atmosphere

I like to think as I am walking in nature. My advisor told me to turn off the phone, put on "do not disturb" mode, and clean up the space before starting writing. Another committee whom I co-write and co-think with shared a picture with me in which she was reading an article next to her cat and flowers blossoming in the garden. I like to walk and think in nature because this space allows me to think freely; I can feel the winds come to my face; its movement breaks the silence of rustling leaves, giving birth to another thought of thinking. I use the phrase "the thought of thinking" to remind myself that thinking is a complicated, ongoing, and incomplete flow that will never come to a final, ending or unified form. Thinking is also an agency that brings about, represents, and allows other forms of thinking to (e)merge and create possibilities in writing, living, seeing, and research.

I am walking and slowly monitoring my breath. I need to recover after anxiety and depression to write this literature review. I have been stuck with writing for three months. I have been searching for what affects, emotions, and feelings are, but these concepts are synonyms and used interchangeably (Rice, 2008).

There is no definition of affects (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Thrift, 2007); instead, affects

can be seen as a form of thinking (Massumi, 1995; Thrift, 2007) and as the beginning of a

scholarly inquiry (Cvetkovitch, 2012). Affects, from poststructuralist and feminist perspectives,

do not follow a psychological form of a specific definition but are used for scholarly discussions,

opening a space of possibilities for thinking to (un)fold, (e)merge, and (re)present. I am not

interested in understanding what these terms mean psychologically, but I am more intrigued by

how or what these concepts *do* to help me think and feel differently in different spaces and times.

Affects as atmospheres "are a class of experience that occur before and alongside the

formation of subjectivity, across human and non-human materialities, and in-between

subject/object distinctions" (Anderson, 2009, p. 78). Nature creates a bonding between human

and non-human (i.e., my body and the body of nature comprising of different elements such as

wind, leaves, animal, etc.), allowing me to connect and think with a multiplicity of atmospheres

which is impersonal and transpersonal (McCormack, 2008), the transmission of energies,

feelings, and environment (Brennan, 2004), and a sense of place (Rodaway, 1994). The

multiplicity of atmospheres interrupts a stricture and structure of a place and time and creates "a

space of intensity that overflows a represented world organized into subjects and objects or

subjects and other subjects" (Anderson, 2009, p. 79). Engaging to think with affective

atmospheres does not simply mean looking at an engagement between human and non-human

materialities, subjects and objects; rather, it should be exploring how the incorporation of

inseparable relationships of human and non-human, subjects and objects comes together to

narrate and tell a story and makes the atmosphere affective. The story is not only intensely

personal but also related collectively to bring about collective consciousness and provoke criticality with/in the readers.

> *In 2018, I wrote a piece titled, How hugging mom teaches me the meaning of love and beyond, where I used walking meditation in a forest to share a story of how my mother and I were victims of domestic violence in Vietnam. Through walking meditation in the woods, thinking and listening to each stepping foot, which took me to different past events in Vietnam, I would be able to make sense of and complicate the meaning of the word "hugging." The meaning of hugging no longer stays fixed to one meaning, which is holding someone tightly and affectionately in one's arms, but it expands its meaning in multiple aspects and levels: hugging is sensational, hugging is endurance, hugging is resistance, and hugging is forgiveness. The walking meditation in the forest did something different to my body, allowing me to engage with and return to the past, see brutal memories that happened to me and my mother, and guide me to think about forgiveness for my father and his actions.*

Affective atmospheres go beyond one person's feelings and emotions; its space of intensity provided a platform to make sense of what is "between presence and absence, between subject and object/subject and between the definite and indefinite – that enable one to reflect on affective experience as occurring beyond, around, and alongside the formation of subjectivity" (Anderson, 2009, p. 77). In affective atmospheres, there is no distinction between the subjective and personal (for emotions) and the impersonal and objective (for affects), but they are indeterminate, mixing, (re)storying, and creating a new meaning and understanding of a certain

word, phrase, or an event. As Ngai (2005) puts it, affective atmospheres emerge and spread in tone in literature, inviting the readers to feel with the writers of the text. In this diffractive, autohistoria literature review, the affective tone has spread throughout the paper, bringing about a different atmosphere, a "sense experience" (Anderson, 2009), into each word, *inviting* the readers to think with all matters in this chapter. Since affects are becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), events in affective atmospheres are also becoming, redefining, restorying, and perhaps retoning itself to think about where affects will *turn.*

The affective turn (Clough, 2017) shows that "critical theory is facing the analytic challenges of ongoing war, trauma, torture, massacre, and counter/terrorism" (p. 1). The hugging mom piece (Trinh, 2018) could be something that Clough talks about in her perspective of the affective turn. The piece moves beyond one's feelings; it is a collective feeling (mom and the author, their mom and dad, dad and the author, their family and the readers, which later a Vietnamese researcher chose to translate the author's work into Vietnamese so that students and teachers could see and feel this feeling). Therefore, that piece is not only a form of advocating for the silent voices of domestic violence that children and their parent(s) have to go through, but also moves beyond the scope of Western academic writing (i.e., one place) to travel back to Vietnam (i.e., another place) to "interrupt, perturb, and haunt fix persons, places or things" (Anderson, 2009, p. 78). The trauma, torture, and other emotional sufferings have guided the author to think beyond a specific location and time, write and feel deeply and expansively about patriarchy and social norms in Vietnam, and finally come back inside of themselves to intensively reflect on forgiveness for their dad and themselves.

The indeterminacy of affects and affective atmospheres is not apprehended through feelings and emotions; instead, its openness in exposing its affects is the beauty and platform for resistance, advocacy, recreation, reimagination, remaking, and ultimately healing for those who are part of the process. Affective atmospheres are not static; they are unfinished, incomplete, and always moving and traveling across time and space. As Anderson (2009) beautifully puts it:

The singular affective quality of an aesthetic object is 'open' to being 'apprehended' through feelings or emotions. What is interesting about this account, for my purposes, is that atmospheres are unfinished because of their constitutive openness to being taken up in experience. Atmospheres are indeterminate. (p. 79)

In the summer of 2019, this piece was used in the study abroad in Vietnam, where a diverse group of American college students of different ethnicity and backgrounds (two of them were of Vietnamese descent) discussed the trauma and affects of this piece right in the context of Vietnam 30 years later. Especially for the two Vietnamese descents, the stories in the paper guided them to discuss their inter-generational trauma in their families, exposing their vulnerabilities to make sense and connect with their people, who they could finally visit and talk to through difficult experiences.

As Dutro and Bien (2014) remind us of rethinking trauma and affects, placing them in the classroom to discuss *difficult experiences,* which are defined as "those challenging life experiences that inevitably are carried into and lived within classrooms" (p. 5). Therefore, the traumatic event of the hugging piece turned affects and the classroom atmosphere into a space where students argued, reflected, connected, and thought about/forward about social issues and

injustice in and beyond the Vietnamese context. The affects of the act of hugging mom

transcended from the paper to the readers, pushing the teachers and all students in the study

abroad program to understand the Vietnamese context and social issues on individual and

collective levels (demonstrated in the in-class discussion and written weekly reflections), making

difficult experiences and affects "productive relationally and pedagogically within research and

teaching" (Dutro & Bien, 2014, p. 5).

As such, the discussions about affects in affective turn (Clough, 2017) have moved from

psychoanalytically and psychologically informed theories of identity and representation to

thinking with the complexity of intersections and interrelations of discursive practices with a

human body, desire, power, social, cultural, political forces, subjectivity, materiality, and trauma,

woven with individual experiences. The affective turn, as Clough (2017) argues, invites a

transdisciplinary approach of theory and method as well as experimentation in "*capturing* the

changing cofunctioning of the political, the economic, and the cultural, rending it affectively as

change in the deployment of affective capacity" (p. 3, emphases are mine). In other words, the

affective turn signals a co-constitution of all socio-cultural-political factors that affect how a

person feels, moving beyond personal, psychological, and cognitive feelings.

> *Capturing affective change is something that has excited me to think about and do this*
>
> *work. I always think and believe that affects always happen around us, getting involved*
>
> *with everything in our lives, impacting and affecting our actions, ideas, and events that*
>
> *get us to affect and to be affected, to feel, act, and open up to other possibilities for new*
>
> *relationalities, social movements, and world(s) that are not yet to come. Therefore, the*

not-yet-to-come is something I am intrigued to (try to)capture, explore, and trace to see where affects travel, how they circulate through different bodies, subjectivities, spaces, and times, and possibilities that they might give birth to.

Inseparability of Affects, Emotions, and Feelings

It seems to be quite late to start talking about the inseparability of affects, emotions, and feeling until now. However, I was wondering, if I had tried to push myself to look for the definitions of affects, emotions, and feelings (i.e., imposing myself on subjects and objects) versus letting the affects, emotions, and feelings lead the way from the beginning and let the affective atmospheres spread and set a tone for this paper, I could have forever got stuck in the circle of binge-reading the literature without writing with it.

I recalled a conversation with Gloria Anzaldúa where she asked me why I procrastinated on my writing (Trinh, 2021a). I remember that I looked away to escape her questions. I probably would not be excited and curious to write if I already knew the destinations of my writing. For me, writing is an interesting, provoking, exploring, yet excruciatingly painful, frustrating journey involving all those feelings simultaneously. Writing is a reflection of my body to connect with the text. I need to let creativity lead the way, and see how the writing-within helps me feel differently. As Anzaldúa (2015) beautifully says, "Writing is a gesture of the body, a gesture of creativity, a working from the inside out" (p. 5). Who am I to define, or impose, what affects, emotions, and feelings should look like for each individual and myself, leaving alone what affects, emotions, and feelings do differently to me and others?

Affects should be viewed in an inseparable relationship with emotions and feelings to loosen its hegemonic psychoanalysis approach. In her book, *Depression: A public feeling*, Cvetkovich (2012) defines and distinguishes between affects and emotions, "where the former signals precognitive sensory experience and relations to surroundings, and the latter cultural constructs and conscious processes that emerge from them, such as anger, fear, or joy." (p. 4). Cvetkovich applauds Deleuzian's concepts and scholarship that elaborates and expands the body of scholarship related to affects, which opens up a fuller vocabulary for "accounts of sensory experience that have emerged from cultural studies of embodiment and the turn away from Cartesian splits between body and mind" (p. 4). However, she prefers to use affects as a generic sense encompassing emotions and feelings and including impulses, desires, and feelings that get "historically constructed" (p. 4). Likewise, Sarah Ahmed (2010) argues that affects and emotions should not be viewed separately; instead, they stick together. She explains:

> While you can separate an affective response from an emotion that is attributed as such (the bodily sensations from the feeling of being afraid), this does not mean that in practice, or in everyday life, they are separate. In fact, they are contiguous; they slide into each other; they stick, and cohere, even when they are separated. (p. 231)

From this perspective, the stickiness of affects, emotions, and feelings interweaves, touches, comes together contiguously and becomes one. Its stickiness erases and loosens the hegemony of psychoanalysis of viewing the terminology; instead, it brings about "a modal difference of intensity" (Ngai, 2005, p. 27) that invites an open-ended discussion, inquiry, and multiple directions of thinking and writing with affects, emotions, and feelings.

In addition, as emotions and feelings are encompassed within affects, these concepts should not be viewed in a dualist way. As Boler (1999) discusses the emotional epistemologies, emotions are usually placed in the category of biological science from Western thoughts as "naturalized entities" (p. 141); therefore, emotions are restricted to reimagining otherwise due to the power of dualism, binaries, and essentialism. To understand emotions, we need to localize and situate them in a specific context to determine "what can and cannot be felt and/or expressed" (Boler, 1999, p. 141). Besides, I concur with Cvetkovich (2012) with using the word "feeling" as a generic term as described below:

> [T]he term "feeling" does some of the same work: naming the undifferentiated "stuff" of feeling; spanning the distinctions between emotion and affect central to some theories; acknowledging the somatic or sensory nature of feelings as experiences that aren't just cognitive concepts or constructions. I favor feeling in part because it is intentionally imprecise, retaining the ambiguity between feelings as embodied sensations and feelings as psychic or cognitive experiences. It also has a vernacular quality that lends itself to exploring feelings as something we come to know through experience and popular usage and that indicates, perhaps only intuitively but nonetheless significantly, a conception of mind and body as integrated. (p. 4)
>
> *I kept a long quote from Cvetkovich about using the term "feeling" because I have found it useful and related to the concept of queerness and its non-linearity in thinking, doing, and writing (see discussion of queerness in Chapter 1). I like how her perspective about "feeling" does not rush us to find a definition of feelings, emotions, and affects. Instead, she highlights the ambiguity of feelings as embodies sensations and psychic experiences.*

Instead of looking for a rigidity to understand the terms, thinking with Cvetkovich has given me another way of looking through and within feelings by paying attention to the integration of mind, body, and experience and gradually learning how to diminish the impact of cognitive aspects into analysis. As Anzaldúa (2002) advises me, "Your bodymindsoul is the hermetic vessel where transformation takes place. The shift must be more than intellectual" (p. 554). The separation of body, mind, soul is no longer unattached; it comes into one. The shift in thinking about affects, emotions, and feelings now goes beyond the so-called "intellectualism" in demonstrating my intellectual arguments on an academic paper. Rather, this shift comes from within self to explore the inseparability of bodymindsoul and its relationality with other material factors (i.e., social, cultural, sexual, political, etc.). In other words, the bodymindsoul intra-acts with other materials to make this shift queerer, expanding and troubling the fixity, or "straightness", in understanding affects, emotions, and feelings.

Further, as feelings come in a non-linear form to explore bodymindsoul, there emerges a connection between queerness and affects, emotions, and feeling. While queerness invites openness, unruliness, and unfixity in thinking and doing (Britzman, 1995; Luhmann, 1998; Talburt, 2000), the impreciseness and ambiguity of feelings create a third space to blur the boundaries of cognitive versus social, personal versus public, professional and unprofessional, male versus female, among other binary and hierarchical concepts that stand in between. Therefore, as affects, emotions, and feelings are viewed, theorized, and considered from a queer lens will create intra-active entanglements to support one another to make sense of the non-

linear, transdisciplinary flow of experience, identities, and sexuality, among others. In other words, the terms *affects, emotions, feelings,* and theirs theories and usages in this dissertation project will be employed interchangeably to explore its non-dualistic, non-Cartesian, non-binary relationship and relationality with other factors

Locations of Affects, Emotions, and Feelings

I found a picture posted on social media the other day. The picture shows the multiplicity of understanding feeling on the right-hand side while stating that it is easier to understand the feeling if we can categorize what each feeling is. For me, it would be more interesting to trace where different feelings meet, how they intra-act, what possibilities they create, and what those possibilities look like. In other words, it is not necessary to "understand" feelings in a totalized and universalized way. Instead, we could ask, where is the feeling situated and what possibilities could these feelings bring?

Since affects, emotions, and feelings are unformed and unstructured (Massumi, 1995), their affects could constantly move and vibrate in the world, initiating and bringing about different intensities across bodies and subjects. In addition to affective atmospheres, affects could be in the form of energies (Brennan, 2004), moods (Flatley, 2008, 2019), flows (Manning, 2016), intensities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), virtual and autonomous (Massumi, 1995), among others. Among these, I was thinking about virtual autonomous affects, where the body escapes the reality and materiality of this world and travels back to a specific space and time. Specifically, Massumi (1995) asks us to think about the body as virtual and actual as follows:

Something that happens too quickly to have happened, actually, is virtual. The body is as immediately virtual as it is actual. The virtual, the pressing crowd of incipiencies and tendencies, is a realm of potential. In potential is where futurity combines, unmediated, with pastness, where outsides are infolded, and sadness is happy (happy because the press to action and expression is life). The virtual is a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt-albeit reduced and contained. For out of the pressing crowd an individual action or expression will emerge consciously. One "wills" it to emerge, to be qualified to take on socio-linguistic meaning, to enter linear action-reaction circuits, to become a content of one's life–by dint of inhibition. (p. 91)

Reading Massumi's (1995) body as virtual and autonomous has triggered a scene in Vietnam where my mom and I were in the middle of a home party.

"Get out of my sight or I will throw this glass at your head!" As those words hung in the air, a glass of wine was immediately thrown at me, whizzing by my hair, and shattering to bits on the floor. Never did I forget the moment when I finally stood up to my father, to his violent abuse of my mother. I yelled, "Dad, stay away from my mom! You are a man in this family. You don't have the rights to do this to my mom!. I angrily and fearlessly spoke directly to my dad. "Stop scaring my mom. You cannot threaten my mom by telling her that you are going to commit suicide. I do not believe you. You might scare her, but you do not scare me! Go ahead, put your finger into the high-power outlet if you want to die!"(Trinh, 2018, pp. 7-8)

The extract above describes how my 17-year-old body stood up for my mom in a public space. My body reacted with what it was supposed to do—without hesitation: using my body as a shield to protect her from another violent blow from my dad. I recall a famous question from Spinoza (1959): "What a body can do?" where he later acknowledges, "No one has yet determined what the body can do" (p. 87). Therefore, I want to take a moment to unpack, relate, reflect, and analyze from the perspectives of virtual affects.

First of all, the body at the moment did not think but acted. The body was associated with affects and emotions, moving swiftly in a paradoxical real world where a Vietnamese child in a family did not have a voice and right to stand up against their father or the patriarchy in Vietnamese cultural norms versus self-advocacy and standing up for what was right. In that scene, my emotions and feelings emerged and took control to do something against the norms: I stood up against my father (patriarchy) and family domestic violence to push back and fight against him and the culture that he was enjoying privileges and protecting him. Affects, emotions, and feelings interwoven and created a space where contrary forces (patriarchy versus filial piety; power versus oppression; violence versus wound) coexist, coalesce, and connect, pushing my body to lean toward my mom to protect her. Thinking about individual bodies (mom, dad, myself, and guests in that party) and how the bodies' reactions and movements created in that space spoke loudly about injustices in a Vietnamese family, depicting an unaccepted behavior of a husband and an "abnormal" act of a child against their father, representing a socio-political meaning that it was not okay to continue the domestic violence abuse in the family. My body was no longer possessed by my own subjective "I;" or, the

subjective "I" no longer existed in that space. Instead, affects and the subjective I (e)merged and exceeded personal feelings, augmenting the body's capacity to act.

Second, I concur that affects connect with futurity. Affects orient us to think about the future. Even though there are positive futures (Harris, 2004; McCall, 2020) that affects can bring about, there are moments of anxiety, depression, and shame that affects could lead to. From the snippet about hugging mom shared above, I could relate to Massumi's (1995) statement: "In potential is where futurity combines, unmediated, with pastness, where outsides are infolded, and sadness is happy" (p. 91). To begin with, the futurity and the pastness come together, mixing and uncategorized, leaving the dualism aside and behind. Futurity, for me, is not only a combination of future and possibility that invites unpredictable and unforeseen events to happen but also a recall and revisit of past memories to plan to do things differently. Specifically, I did not know what would happen to my body before I shielded and protected my mom (i.e., I could have been beaten to death; I could have been judged by my actions against my dad; I could have been viewed as a disobedient child, so on and so forth), but the affects led the way and created something that I humbly called "affective futurity". Affective futurity, for me, is the continuous affects that travel through space and time and bring spacetime, pastpresentfuture together, and create a space for the traveler to reflect, think, and live again with a moment. For example, I would never expect that I could reflect, think about, and analyze the events that happened 20 years ago, and analyze them now at the time being. The past event never stops; it never ends but continues moving and affecting me years forward.

Further, affective futurity may connect closely with the politics of emotions in terms of culture and gender in different contexts. The politics of emotions in relation to women's

movement and discourses, according to Boler (1999), reflect the three themes: the pathology, rooted in medicine and science perspective (i.e., a woman has to be caring and nurturing); the rational, rooted in the Enlightenment philosophy where Man is *the* person of reason versus woman is emotional, and woman has kept her roles in the domestic sphere; and the religious, rooted in perceptions of channeling desires and feelings in an "appropriate" way. Therefore, the inescapable relationship of these ideologies strengthens the string of social control, hegemony, and emotions on women, maintaining them in a subordinate status, preventing them from expressing anger, injustice, transgression, nor taking actions for themselves.

In addition, Boler (1999) also emphasizes how different cultures have different emotional rules for men and women, especially as they are placed in different social classes.

My father was a son of the Republic of Vietnam Commander while mom belonged to a very poor 11-member family. Restricted by Confucianism, a woman has to follow paternal authority; a wife has to follow her husband, and a widow has to follow her eldest son. Therefore, my mom did not fight back against my dad despite brutal beating.

If it were not because of you, I would commit suicide to escape from this living hell, my mom shared with me.

I must have done something terrible to your father in my previous life; therefore, I had to pay the debt in this life, my mom tried to comfort herself and me.

You had to grow up as a strong man to protect me, my mom held me in her arms, crying.

While writing these lines, the feeling of those hugs in the tent surrounds me as if it is in this present moment. The memory of those hugs draws out an image of a woman who sat

alone in a dark room, suffering, scared to death, and enduring her profound pain in

silence, a pain which was unspeakable and unprotectable. The hugs traveled through

time, through space, and went beyond words, pushing me to speak up for my mom.

(Trinh, 2018, p. 7)

Since affects travel through space and time, at this moment, I am able to make sense of what caused my body to act, what happened between my mom and dad, and how the Vietnamese cultural hegemony could cause such endurance (for mom), violence (for dad), and resistance (for mom and myself) in the event above.

I need to rest.

My fingers are not able to type words on the keyboard anymore.

I need to leave this space in order to recover from this intense reflection and analysis.

I need to give myself a break while doing this work.

I need to breathe.

Breathe in. Take a deep breath in.

Breathe out. Take a deep breath out.

Breathing in, I am aware of myself, my well-being, my body, my surroundings, space, and
time that I am inhabiting.

Breathing out, I am aware of myself, my well-being, my body, my surroundings, space,
and time that I am inhabiting.

Breathing in, I am aware of this writing, this walking, this thinking.

I am aware of my feelings, emotions, and affects running through my veins and mind.

Breathing out, I am aware of this writing, this walking, this thinking.

I am aware of my feelings, emotions, and affects running through my veins and mind.

From this intense analysis from the pathological, the rational, and the religious perspectives, I now see the reasons why my mom endured her marriage. Also, I can see the connection between culture, gender, and emotions interconnected and influenced by power in society, which Boler (1994) discussed in feeling power. Who has the power is able to control and oppress the public (acts), and in my story, the controlled and obstructed object is the smallest unit of the society: the family, where a woman and her children are the victims of domestic abuse, patriarchy, cultural hegemony, and the power of emotions.

I hate this writing; I hate this feeling so much. I don't know how I should feel now.

Massumi (2015) discusses *thinking-feeling* as "a kind of perception of the event of perception in the perception" (p. 6, emphases in original). Massumi further explains:

> We experience a vitality affect of vision itself. This is like the doubleness of perception I was talking about becoming aware of itself. A direct and immediate self-referentiality of perception. I don't mean self-reflexivity, which would be thinking about a perception, as from a distance or as mediated by language. This is a thinking of perception in perception, in the immediacy of its occurrence, as it is felt – a thinking-feeling, in visual form. (p. 6)

I cannot fully understand what Massumi means in that statement, but I am lacking the vocabulary to describe my own feelings as of now, especially when theory, analysis, and stories come together. I just hold on to the thinking-feeling; I hold on to the concept of the doubleness of perception. In my stories, the perception of the event at the party reminds me of the meaning of love, motherhood, husband-wife relationship, child-and-parent relationship, and these perceptions are placed in the perception of affects, emotions, and feelings in relation to society, culture, gender, religion, and language.

This thinking-feeling (Massumi, 2015) does more than provoke a personal feeling, but it demonstrates the multiple layers of perceptions (theories of affects, stories, affects are affected by stories, analysis of stories, analysis of affects, analysis of human and stories, among others). These layers are intersecting, weaving, forging a path to understand the complexity of affect theories and literature where the writers could live with the past memories again: the past has never been dead; it never did.

As I would be able to fly back to the time when I was sitting in mung with mom, listening to her stories and sharing, I know I did not imagine the stories, but I relived them; I felt the moments again. I took out the labels on me (i.e., teacher, researcher, doctoral student), an adult who is trying to strip off their metaphorical social clothes, clinging to the childhood memory as a life jacket, then jumping into the river of memories to swim toward my mom, wanting to become a child again, and seeing through why I was a ray of hope for mom to survive and continue to live through violence where she did not have any other choices.

In the block quote I used earlier about thinking-feeling, Massumi (1995) also discusses the virtual affects as potential. He states, "In potential is where futurity combines, unmediated, with pastness, where outsides are infolded, and sadness is happy (happy because the press to action and expression is life)" (p. 91). I could partially understand about the outsides being infolded, but I am stuck with the thought of sadness. I realize that sadness has the power to change. Sadness could lead to actions. Sadness could orient us toward futurity. But the futurity is disoriented, or a different orientation where the everyday moments of disorder could help us "find joy and excitement in the horror of such disorientation" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 544).

In the disorientation of futurity affects, thinking about the picture where it asks to organize the feeling that I shared earlier, I am convinced that locations of affects, emotions, and feelings appear and present themselves in everywhere and everything. Affects are disoriented, virtual, autonomous, and create futurity. Not only do they locate in personal feelings, but they move in cultures, societies, and politics. There is no certain place that they will settle permanently in terms of space and time. Instead, they move from the past to the present and travel to the future. They bring pastpresentfuture together in one. The possible affective futurity creates a paradoxical understanding and reimagination of what affects could look like in different bodies, in different forms and actions; thus becomes an affective non-human agent to think with. As Berlant (2008) puts it, affects are "an effect in a process" (p. 229). However, I would like to think that affects are an effect in a timeless and spatial-less process that may allow possibilities to (e)merge, (re)present, and (re)form to narrate and (re)negotiate events, stories, meaning, phrases, words differently and affectively.

As affects, emotions, and feelings stick and come to one and are used interchangeably, it is critical to ask: *Where do they stay?* Affects arise in in-between-ness (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). Affects are moving and passing from body to body (human, non-human, part-body, and otherwise), "in the very passages of variations between these intensities and resonances themselves" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 1). Its movement helps us think about how the body's capacity affects and is to be affected by who, which, what, where, and when. Also, its movement and relationship with other factors help us examine the relationship between human and non-human agency in the world (Barad, 2007). To read affects, Sarah Ahmed (2010) suggests an "in place" reading, which involves psychic and social dimensions, and states that "the in place is not always in the same place" (p. 231).

If reading affects is not in the same place, affects *could* be everywhere, horizontal and vertical, diagonal, upside down, intertwining, nonlinear, messy, multidimensional, and/or in-between. These perspectives give birth to another thought: *Where do affects, emotions, and feelings live? How can they be traced? What are the possibilities of affects, emotions, and feelings creating (instead of created, because possibilities play a role of agency in creating a future)?* The purpose of tracing affects, emotions, and feelings is to delve deeper into the in-between-ness space and time, and may have psychic, social, cultural, political, personal, and sexual aspects to think with the complexity of its relationship with humans and how affects push the researchers to rethink, remake and rewrite our (and others') experiences, identities, and stories in the era of affective turn and the crisis of representation.

Nepantla is a place for affects, emotions, and feelings to be born, move, and transit from place to place, from time to time, from body to body. As Anzaldúa (2015) describes, "Unruly emotions and conflicts break out. In nepantla, we hang out between shifts, trying to make rational sense of this crisis, seeking solace, support, appeasement, or some kind of intimate connection" (p. 17). As nepantla could give birth to emotions, she may do that to queerness, too.

Queerness within nepantla

I am sitting and meditating with Gloria Anzaldúa, a spiritual friend of mine who used to be a Chicana feminist, lesbian, theorist, philosophist, and writer before she left her physical body. We have conversed with each other in different spaces and times (physical reality) in nepantla (pretend reality): in the field trip with adult English language learners (Trinh, 2021c), in the conversation between me and another adult Nepanlera student at his house (Trinh & Merino Mendez, 2020), at a cemetery where I talked with my ancestors about the immigration journey of our family to the United States (Trinh, 2020c), at a tribe where I called for an inclusive global community to connect different identities and ethnicities (Trinh, 2020d), at my own apartment where I tried to escape from the rigidity of academic writing (Trinh, 2021a), and especially at a life-death situation where I thought about committing suicide (Trinh, 2020b). I have listed out these spaces and times to demonstrate how impactful and meaningful the conversations with Gloria Anzaldúa in nepantla have been helping me survive in the current reality. Nepantla is a safe space, a refuge for my emotions and feelings to be vulnerably exposed, seen through, and critically analyzed.

Every time that I talked with Gloria, she kept reminding me of "re-member[ing] my

experiences in a new arrangement" to adjust to life challenges (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 556).

She posits, "As you continually interpret the past, you reshape your present. Instead of

walking your habitual routes you forge new ones" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 556). Following

her advice, I continue the journey of writing this literature review by inviting the readers

to think about queerness with me in this liminal space.

The concepts of "queer" and "queer teachers" were discussed earlier in this dissertation
(see Chapter 1). Therefore, in the next section, I will think with the queer research studies in the
field of education and then narrow the scope down to the field of TESOL while sharing my
personal and professional stories as well to diffract the text. In order to do so, I invite the readers
to take a queer walking meditation with me.

Queerness in education

While walking meditatively, I notice the nature around me. The whiteness of snow across

the street is covering them. Like the snow, the white heteronormative cultures are

functioning similarly, preventing me and other queer writers and teachers of color from

writing our stories. We, queer writers, teachers, researchers, educators of color, are

marginalized and silenced in the queer mainstreams' discussions; the beauty of our

interconnectedness in terms of race, gender, sexualities, and class are neglected. (Trinh,

2020a, p. 2)

In the introduction of the special issue of *Curriculum Inquiry,* titled *Queers of color and*
anti-oppressive knowledge production, Brockenbrough (2013) centralizes two main questions:

"How can queer of color epistemologies interrupt hegemonic processes of knowledge production, and, How can these interruptions inform transformative pedagogical work that benefits queers of color specifically and anti-oppressive educational scholarship more broadly?" (p. 427). These two questions have remained open for future researchers who want to delve deeper into queer teachers of color's perspectives in the academic literature where there is an absence of representation, stories, vignettes of ours in a heteronormative school and workplace. Heteronormativity, which normalizes heterosexuality and considers gender and sexuality roles as norms (Cameron & Kulick, 2003), fosters an inequitable school environment for queer students and teachers. Specifically, Brockenbrough (2013) asks future studies to explore the lived experiences of queer teachers of color in the intersections of race, gender, and education.

Following the work of Brockenbrough (2013), Hayes (2014) centers on the lived experiences and teaching practices of gay teachers of color (African-American and Latinos in particular) and examines how race and sexuality impact the principles of their pedagogy and life struggles. Hayes (2014) also emphasizes the largely absence of this population in educational research that needs attention to examine iu the future.

Three years later, Ford (2017) conducts a study with eight Black lesbian classroom teachers in the United States. She discusses the (not) "coming out" experiences (Mayo, 2007) of the teachers with their students in the classrooms. The lesbian teachers are reported to emphasize honesty in communications and build dialogues to connect with students and colleagues at their workplace. From the stories shared by the participants, Ford calls for future studies to discuss explicitly about gender identification and gender representation of the lesbian/queer teachers in the classroom and bring the teachers' womanism to ending oppression in a classroom.

Recently, Bracho and Hayes (2020) have made a powerful statement: "Gay voices without intersectionality is White supremacy" in their special issue in the I*nternational Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. In this issue, they explore gay and lesbian teachers' multiple, complex, and fluid identities of queer individuals who are marginalized in research. Therefore, they highlight the importance of counter-storytelling that could challenge normative discourses about queer teachers of color in education in the United States. They make an urgent call to continue creating a space for queer teachers of color to honor their voices, for others to listen to their stories, and especially to "view the world through a lens that is grounded in an anti-racist struggle, including the anti-racist struggle in the gay community, and does not affirm assumptions of Black, Latinx and Asian inferiority and White superiority" (p. 589)

> *I applaud, admire, and appreciate critical researchers of color (Bracho & Hayes, 2020; Brockenbough, 2013; Hayes, 2014; Ford, 2017), among others, who have continuously asked for furthering research studies on lived experiences of queer teachers of color. Their work has demonstrated the stories (i.e., struggles in the negotiation of queer identities, coming out experience) in the school context in order to enrichen the literature. However, I want to give the term "experience" a critical thought instead of leaving it to stand alone.*

As Joan Scott (1992) argues, the terms "identity" and "experience" are tied to each other and are usually taken for granted. Scott reminds us of how to think about these concepts not in the sense of capturing the reality of the object seen, but of trying to understand the operations of the complex and changing discursive process by which "identities are ascribed,

resisted, or embraced, which processes themselves are unremarked, indeed achieve their effect because they aren't noticed" (p. 33)

In other words, the terms "experience" and "identities" should be taken into consideration seriously for those who want to do critical queer research. Specifically, the changing discursive process of identities need to be observed carefully to unfold the unnoticed remarks of these queer teachers of color's identities, where the deficit framing of "queer teachers' identities" could be shifted to a critical interrogation "in which these shifting subjectivities are enriching both individuals and collectivities engaged in education writ large" (Gray & Harris, 2014, p. 4)

Harris and Gray (2014), in their edited book that focuses on queer teachers' identities and performances in schools, acknowledge that discussions about queer teachers are problematic. In order to explore and learn about the complexities in queer teachers' identities, the researcher needs to take time and efforts to explore and (re)imagine teaching pedagogy to queer the normative research. The authors try to understand "what it means to be sexually or gender diverse and to work as a school teacher" (p. 2) in four different countries, including Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Their book goes beyond what research has shared about the lived experiences of queer teachers; it responds to the call of what Rodriguez calls 'a lack of critical engagement with (hegemonic) heterosexuality' (2007, p. 6) and reminds future researchers: "Education is–more than anything else–about interrelationality, so important in academic discussions about education and identity, subjectivity and criticality" (p. 9).

> *While walking meditatively, I asked myself: 'What does it mean for me as a queer,*
> *immigrant, teacher of color, to be in love? In love with whom? Being in love is a luxury*
> *that I would probably never have. Or worse, do I deserve a pure love in a western*

gay/queer world where I do not see myself fitting in? Or worst, will I be another victim

who is being fetishized by another white gay male for my Asian feminine fat look? Or

more painfully, will I be isolated, unwelcomed within an Asian queer community due to

racialized hierarchy? However, if I do not love and appreciate this Asian queer fat body,

who is going to love and appreciate it? (Trinh, 2020a, p. 1)

In 1999, Sillin wrote an article to discuss a story of a gay teacher using his identities as

"the politics of representation" (p. 99) to teach students in the U.S. The article has brought up the

issues of risk-taking where the teacher uses his identities and coming-out experience in a

sexually repressive classroom. He states, "There are always risks; our words and our lives are

often misunderstood and misrepresented. Naming confines and controls. Articulation belies the

power of the unrepresentable. But silence is a denial of pedagogical responsibility" (p. 104).

Writing this piece is an excruciatingly painful process for me. However, if I do not find

courage to expose my queer self and vulnerabilities, how can I inspire other queer

educators and students of color to write their identities and stories in the future? (Trinh,

2020a, p. 2)

Silin's (1999) essay connects with the potential risk of "a role model" to teach students in

a heteronormative classroom and how the pedagogy could be changed when the wall between

private and professional experiences are dismantled. The struggles situated in political, historical

and pedagogical contexts provide the readers with an understanding of the risks that a gay

teacher was taking. "Confessions of desire have a paradoxical effect" (p. 96) However, Silin's

story reminds the readers the importance of "the quality of classroom life" in discussing social issues "that fosters communication and coalition building" (p. 98). Silin powerfully states,

> No matter how moving our stories or provocative our reading lists may be, resistance to social injustice cannot be mandated. And what of our stories? Are they merely exercises in self-display, testimonies to the privilege of class, or do they lead students to new forms of action? (p. 98)

> *Silin and I are crossing our paths in this space. We are talking about risk-taking in teaching. We are in dilemma and paradox of using our queer identities and the story in teaching. Similar to "identity", "experience", the term "story" cannot be taken for granted. Instead, the story needs to serve as a non-human agent itself to guide students to think critically about social issues (i.e., homophobia, sexism, etc.) and take actions.*

Recently, Martin and Kitchen (2020) offer a comprehensive literature review about the self-study of teacher educators concerning creating a queer-related curriculum in teacher education programs. Three main themes from the literature are: teacher educators queering themselves to understand their practices, teacher educators mutually investigating the queer self with teacher candidates, and teacher educators collaboratively investing their queer selves. Although there are positive impacts that show queer pedagogical practices in the classroom, resistance to incorporate the queer-positive materials and curriculum still exists due to religious beliefs and tension in the field. The researchers emphasize the importance of collective efforts of diverse stakeholders drawing from the queer lens should be enacted to disrupt and identify the normativity of gender and sexuality in teacher education programs, aimed at the "productiveness

of inquiry" (p. 606) of/by queer and ally to inform engagement and practices with teacher candidates in the future.

Talburt and Rasmussen (2010) took up complex, yet provoking questions in queer education research. Specifically, they do not particularly aim to answer and continue to fall into dominant linear narratives of queer research because queer research is "neither uncontested nor complete" (p.5). Instead, they are interested in "identifying researchers' desires and imaginings related to the proper subjects of queer educational research, its approaches, goals, and possibilities" (p. 4).The authors raise questions where queer research could be taken into consideration for "after-queer" research in the context of neoliberalism. The paper ends with asking future research to imagine different trajectories that could not just end in a particular way of doing "conventional" queer research which focus on representation and the coded term LGBTQ. The authors state, "After-queer research might question normative spatiotemporal constructions as they construct subjects in certain ways (Talburt & Rasmussen, 2000, p. 11)

> *What should I do in order not to fall into repeating dominant linear narratives that could perpetuate the invisibility of queer research subject? "What makes 'after-queer' research queer" is a provocative, inspiring, yet complicated, question that need to be taken up. These questions arise as I am thinking with Talburt and Rasmussen: "How am I going to move beyond pointing out a particular gendered and sexual subject in research, or the so-called "case study", to problematize the messiness, contestation, and unruliness of queer research participants? Should queer research ask itself, How can a normative habit of thought be queered in creating possible, un-ending outcome of queer research?*

As Talburt and Rasmussen ask future researchers to question spatiotemporal

constructions, how could the concepts of nepantla (Anzaldúa, 2015) and re-turning

(Barad, 2014) build an interdisciplinary bridge to help me/us (i.e., (critical) queer

researchers) reconfigure and co-constitute an understanding of the intersection of

queerness and affects as we are discussing the experiences, identities, and stories of

queer teachers (of color) in the classroom?

Further, Mayo (2014) reminds queer researchers to maintain the criticality and queerness:

"Queer scholars are nothing if not eloquent in excessive gestures, wrapping experience in theory,

turning theory onto experience, finding inconsistencies in desires and destabilizing desire in

inquiry" (p. 96). This connection makes queerness spectacle and equity, in which:

spectacle for those are recognized/misrecognized;

> *for those who are included/excluded;*

> *for those who are ignored/viled;*

> *for those who are visible/invisible;*

> *for certainties/uncertainties;*

> *for normalization/challenges;*

> *for equity/inequity;*

> *for individual/collective*

> > *queer liberation!*

Mayo (2014) reminds me, "How do we even begin to understand the different subjectivities that are being articulated in these new conditions? (p. 93).

Mayo (2014) also posits, "As we think about how to make schools more equitable and more queer, we as educators need to be thinking about the seemingly new possibilities for queer normalcy and the continued work to be done" (p. 96). As he raises questions of new possibilities for queer normalcy in different spaces. I thus transition to think with queer studies in TESOL to think with queer researchers in this field.

Queerness in TESOL

I share my perspective of a Vietnamese queer, immigrant, TESOL teacher of color, and first-generation doctoral student to connect with other students and teachers who might share similar intersectional identities. I write this piece for other queer people of color, queer immigrants, queer Vietnamese teachers who are living and teaching in the U.S., in any countries, and/or in in-between spaces and worlds. (Trinh, 2020a, p. 2)

Snelbecker (1994) uses survey to conduct a study for her Masters' thesis in Brattleboro, Vermont. This study explores different issues such as level of homophobia in the workplace, in the classroom, strategies to come out to colleagues and students as well as to include queer content in pedagogy. Even though the study tries to bring visibility of queer teachers in TESOL via surveys, she states that she needs to conduct a year-long study with queer teachers in the classroom. This study depicts responses from white/Caucasian teachers; therefore, she asks to pay more attention to queer teachers of color by bringing their stories and experiences to research. Recommendations for pedagogical reform expands from classroom change to

institutional support such as the inclusion of queer themes/issues discussed in the classroom, workshop with students, parents, administrators about issues, challenges that both queer teachers and queer students are facing, and support from ally.

In addition, Vanderick (1997) provides a different perspective in terms of the hidden identities in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. The central idea that Vanderick asks us to think about is the pressure of multiple factors in ESL classroom spaces that push the students and teachers to hide their identities. For example, Vanderick discusses gay students and teachers are in the dilemma of exposing their queer identities, which leads them to "psychological problems of guilt or ambivalence" where they "are torn and expend much energy on wondering what they should do, what they should do it, and what the consequences will be" (p. 154). The inner conflicts have caused the queer teachers and students to be hidden in front of the public, asking them to be strategic in their own actions and taking up "a tremendous amount of emotional energy and affect[ing] their persons' studies or teaching" (p. 154). Emotional energy is often overlooked in teaching (Benesch, 2017), especially teachers are facing emotion labor in the public. Therefore, their emotions are triple oppressed and made invisible.

> *As queerness is hidden, so is emotion. I am thinking about queerness and emotions are hiding their own identities at the same time due to the pressure of emotion labor, heteronormative curriculum, especially in TESOL classrooms (Hoschild, 1979, 1983; Benesch, 2017; de Costa et al., 2020; Lander, 2018; Nelson, 2009; Paiz, 2019, 2020). These identities are completely hidden, invisible, and ignored in ESOL classrooms.*

Hoschild (1983) differentiates between emotion labor versus feeling rules. According to Hochschild, feeling rules are inner feelings that serve as appropriate emotions where an individual has to display in social contexts such as workplaces, classrooms, whereas emotion labor is the result of the clash between individual feelings and mandatory feelings rules in public. However, Benesch (2012), whose works focuses on the relationship of affects and standardized testing of English language teachers and students, refuses the differences and does not agree with Hoschild's perspective. Benesch argues that emotion labor is neither a negative and individualized feeling nor a sign of emotional illiteracy of teachers; instead, she considers emotion labor is socially, culturally, and discursively constructed under the pressure of power, in which the institution needs to pay attention for their education reform (Benesch, 2012, 2017, 2018; de Costa et al., 2020). Therefore, emotion labor is "complex, nonlinear, multidimensional and constantly reproduced through interactions and the power dynamics surrounding teachers" (Her & de Costa, 2018, p. 3).

> *I was planning to review queer research in TESOL. I did not expect that the aspect of emotion labor in English language teaching came out and intra-acted with the literature of queer studies. That is an example of how diffractive reading and writing produce which "spreads thought and meaning in unpredictable and productive emergencies" (Mazzei, 2014, p. 742). Should I come back and rename the sub-heading of this section? Perhaps, not. I found an important connection between queerness and emotion labor after two studies: these elements are hidden and completely overlooked and invisible in ESOL classrooms. Both elements (i.e., queerness and emotion labor) are complex, non-*

linear, unruly, constantly moving and contesting (internally and externally) against the

power of heteronormativity and normalization of feeling rules in the classroom. I will

borrow Michalinos Zembylas' (2006) words, whose works situates emotion rules in the

context of English language teaching, to describe the same situation that queer teachers

and students are facing in relation to their emotions and feeling in classrooms: "Emotion

rules police teachers' and students' emotional expressions in their everyday life at

school: forms of language and embodiment of emotion that teachers and students are

taught to value and others that must be dismissed" (p. 255).

Queer Pedagogy in TESOL

As a result of understanding an important work of creating critical praxis in ESOL

classrooms, I took courage to think about creating a critical and inclusive curriculum to

challenge social issues with my transnational immigrant ESOL adult students. (Trinh,

2020a, p. 7)

Cynthia Nelson (1999) uses queer theoretical framework in posing critical questions for

ESL students. Nelson poses a challenge of how to find ways of working and teaching with gay

and lesbian self-identified students in the classroom without further marginalizing them. At the

end, she suggests including sexual identities discussions that facilitate inquiry to support both the

teacher and ESL students to "analyse cultural and discursive practices" (pp. 388-389). Besides,

Cumming (2009), who identifies as a lesbian ESL teacher, uses a novel titled *Someday this pain*

will be useful to you to provoke students to discuss a gay character. Even though there are not

many discursive arguments to focus on the teacher's thoughts, this work has brought some of

possible ways of queering heteronormative thinking in ESOL classrooms. At first, Cumming argues if the coming-out experience is useful to include in the teaching because, the key point is that it does not depend on the teacher's identities (as queer), but "to which their own insights and quandaries about sexual-identity negotiations are informing their teaching practices by shedding light on questions of identity and representation generally" (Cummings, 2009, p. 86)

> *In the ESOL textbook, there was no evidence or examples that show the inclusion of gender, races, immigration, or power structure. I thus recognized that the content presented in the ESOL textbook perpetuates the colonization and heteronormativity in the classroom. I could not stand with its colonized, systematic mainstream English standard ideologies. As such, I came up with a different way to teach. I inquired of myself, 'What would I do differently to teach to disrupt this a heteronormative and sexist system? What would I do differently to teach my students to think critically to challenge the norms? What would I do differently to teach my students to take actions after the lesson?' I attempted to explore possible teaching practices to challenge this approach to instruction and create an anti-racist, anti-homophobic pedagogy in my classroom, even though I had to re-teach the structure and language of the colonizers in my lesson plan. (Trinh, 2020a, p. 8)*

Thinking about queering the textbook and materials used in TESOL, Joshua Paiz (2015) examines the degree of heteronormativity in 45 ESL textbooks from 1995 to 2012. Heteronormativity is a concept in which heterosexual identity is the only acceptable and normal sexual identity in society. The textbooks were assessed based on the three scale levels from 1-3,

in which 1 describes non-heteronormative, 2 describes low-heteronormative, and 3 describes heteronormative. Paiz explains they chose to employ heteronormativity ratings because they wanted to track the average heteronormativity in each text and how heteronormativity is reflected over time. The results show that the texts and textbooks have been extremely heteronormative. Critically, Paiz shows that some publishers such as Longman, Pearson-Longman, or the Penguin Imprint of Longman Publishing are producing heteronormative textbooks to avoid the discussions that challenge the heterosexual norms. Besides, the texts to serve the targeted proficiency levels (i.e., beginner, intermediate, and advanced) reflect a high degree of heteronormativity. Apart from finding that reading textbooks shows a slightly less heteronormative material than reading texts, the study reveals that there have been relatively minor changes in the average of heteronormativity in the materials over time (question 5). Paiz thus suggests queering teaching and materials in TESOL by having students and teachers engage in the pedagogy of inquiry, in which students interrogate sexual identities and stereotypes in classroom discussion. Further, they suggest the openness and willingness of the publishers to create spaces for resistance and inquiry toward all sexual identities in the textbooks to de-institutionalize the heteronormative discourses in English language classrooms.

Goldstein (2015) also conducts a study titled *LGBT Visibility in language learning materials*. This case study examines the creation of English language textbooks where gay content in the EFL textbooks is diminished and erased due to globalizing/universalizing textbooks to serve heteronormative and economic purposes. The content and the images speak for themselves about inequality that continues to make queer meanings and populations invisible. Visual images, like written texts, are embedded in the ideology of in/visibility that could "speak

to and against social injustices" (Albers et al., 2019, p. 377). In reading this article, the images presented are in favor of heteronormativity in the EFL textbooks, erasing queerness in EFL classrooms and public discourses. Evidence presented in this paper has reaffirmed that the publishers are the power holders in controlling the knowledge, making knowledge universally claimed, determined, and fixed, which automatically assigns and assumes heterosexuality wrong in everyday public pedagogy. For example, Goldstein (2015) describes, "Firstly, the gay couple was replaced with a straight one with the backdrop of Tower Bridge, while other taboo images such as those depicting nudity and alcohol were also removed" (p. 37). While the visibility of heterosexuality is assumed good and morally acceptable homosexuality is assigned as bad as alcoholism and nudity. Further, the author claims that he was asked to remove the LGBT content due to sales pressure, which benefits the neoliberal markets that maintains heterosexism in the EFL textbooks and make the queer community silenced and invisible.

> *After an intense conversation [about a video of a gay bilingual discriminated against in public], I quickly had students share with their peers about a reflection they wrote about the video a while ago. Then, we came to the whole-class discussion to question why these topics such as racism and homophobia had not been discussed in our ESOL textbook. (Trinh, 2020a, p. 9)*

Cynthia Nelson (2015) offers multiple perspectives, especially fears, of the teachers and learners towards incorporating queer-related content into the EFL classrooms in three different studies conducted in the U.K., Canada, and Japan. The narratives coming from various perspectives have shown the oppositions in the teachers' and the learners' ideas. Specifically,

teachers state that they do not have enough resources, are afraid of the students' demographics and cultural backgrounds, are sensitive to the topic due to its privacy of the subject, consider the topics irrelevant to the students, and are concerned about the students' disapproval and/or homophobic comments toward the queer community. In contrast, the students found it useful to learn and hear from one another's knowledge, connect to daily lives open to beyond-the-classroom discussion with peers and themselves, and have a public space to "speak with knowledge and authority" (p. 11) to know queer community and defend them with the rights they deserve to have. One of the suggestions is to use the learners' attunement to sexual identity as a situated practice for various performative and negotiable discussions in the classroom.

> *Love, I emphasized, would help us heal from our own oppression. For example,love to me manifested in a way I could see my family every day. Love to me is the moment when my family are sitting at a table and having dinners together. Love is the moment when my mom and I are laying down next to my work corner to look at the pictures of an old me which I dressed beautifully as a princess. Love is the moment when I randomly open the door and talk to my dad when he is finishing off his cigarette in a yard. Those are the moments I take as an inspiration to continue this life and be a happy queer child. (Trinh, 2020a, pp. 8-9)*

Joshua Paiz and a student Junhan Zhu (2018) critically reflect on the importance of creating a safe space for discussing queer topics in TESOL. According to Paiz (2018), queering teaching "is the act of designing a course so that students engage with and interrogate identities, not just sexual ones, in a critical manner and come to understand how social discourses structure

and police those identity options" (p. 566). Their co-reflection has shifted the power in the classroom, creating a space for identities to speak and liberate themselves.

Roderick Lander (2018), drawing from the poststructuralist perspective, seeks to understand the connection between the queer teachers' identities and their sexuality in the Colombian school context. The researcher seeks to answer a question, *What influence does the Colombian context have on these identities?*. In his method, Lander (2018) uses a narrative research approach in order to highlight "an individual's personal experience, […] , lived and imagined experience" (p. 93) of three gay male teachers. The findings reveal how the gay teachers exposed their identities in their own classrooms, how their gay identities were influenced by their workplaces and vice versa, and how they perceived homophobia at public schools. Lander concluded by emphasizing that the openness about identities of queer teachers would provide queer students with role models in the classroom.

Further, Paiz (2019) discusses multiple ways to approach queering English language classrooms. For Paiz, queering embraces all (sexual and gender) identities of students and teachers and place them into inquiry. Besides, Paiz has strongly argued for the importance of thinking about queering the classroom spaces through textbook analysis to material inclusion to queer inquiry for other teachers and students within queer community to go beyond the European contexts to think about different queer approach.

> *Standing in front of class, I shared, 'A denial of a self is a sin. Being a queer is not sinful, but a self's rejection is sinful to myself and my family'. I enthusiastically shared with my students about my positionality as a queer immigrant TESOL teacher of color and my*

struggles with my own sexualities as I first came to the U.S. I stated, 'If we do not love

ourselves; if we hurt ourselves; if we reject ourselves; we are hurting the ones we love. In

fact, love will challenge and change hatred'. (Trinh, 2020a, p. 8)

Examples of queer pedagogy in TESOL (Goldstein, 2015; Nelson, 1999; Cumming,

2009; Paiz, 2015; Paiz & Zhu, 2018; Lander, 2018; Trinh, 2020a) are powerful stories to show

queer approach to work with students: from posing critical questions, using queer characters,

including queer-related textbook and materials, negotiating coming-out experience, writing a co-

reflection between a queer student and a queer teacher, honoring honest conversations and

thinking about role model, sharing queer experiences, more and more approaches that are not

listed here. However, these approaches have not advanced the equity and spectacle of queerness

(Mayo, 2014) that Snelbecker (1994) surveyed the teachers two decades ago. What are the

issues? Does queer research in TESOL continue to fall into "simplistic celebration", but we

forgot to ask "how many times can one read that queer offers a way of deconstructing the binary

categories by which heterosexuality sustains and reproduces itself, and still feel excited?"

(McKee, 1999, p. 166).

I am getting stuck with that excitement.

In this moment, I am wondering, where do queerness and emotions hide?

Talburt and Rasmussen (2010) reminds us of after-queer research tendencies where we

"grapple with [queer research] history in order to reimagine a different future" (p. 5). I thus come

back to queer research history to think about what has happened and see what the history can

provide me with new insights. As Karen Barad (2012a) reminds me of the meaning of "critique" where it may provide some important insights at first glance, but it "isn't an acceptable stopping point of analysis. It isn't sufficient, and often times it isn't at all helpful politically. The presumed exterior and oftentimes superior positionality of critique doesn't have the kind of political traction that is so needed" (p. 14). I am no longer interested in being an outsider of research to offer critique, it does not do the justice to the work that I want to do. Instead, I follow what Barad (2012a) suggests in doing the deconstructive (not destructive) work. Even though Barad's work situates in the quantum physics, I concur with their statement about deconstructive work, in which

> Deconstruction is not about taking things apart in order to take them down, but on the contrary, about examining foundations of certain concepts and ideas, seeing how contingency operates to secure the 'foundation' of concepts we cannot live without, and using that contingency to open up other possible meanings/matterings. (p. 14)
>
> *Therefore, I come back to the history, the foundation of queer research and affects in this space from interdisciplinary fields (i.e., from queer research and affect theory in education in education to narrow down to the field of TESOL). As a nepantlera who writes and does this research, I will never belong to a certain group/field/category, I am somewhat an outsider. But I chose to do this work because I am given an opportunity to understand the problem of the fields to offer conocimieno, new knowledge, to advance queerness (i.e., spectacle and equity) and affects (i.e., non-linearity) moving forward.*

Bronwyn Norton Peirce (1989) discusses the pedagogy of possibilities where she discusses the power of teaching language in an international context. She makes important points in teaching English. First, English is a political act that not only challenges social inequities but requires English teachers to take accountability for their actions in the classroom. Second, teaching English does not only focus on the linguistic part only, but also asks students to engage in the discourse to disrupt the illusion of English that particularly favors in one small, elite group (i.e., middle class, native English speakers, white males). By continuously privileging this group, the teachers are "running the risk of limiting our students' perceptions of how English can be used in society" (p. 407), leading to the perpetuation of inequities in the society. Therefore, the language learners and teachers are encouraged to take up different positions to engage in the discourse in teaching English.

A pedagogical political vision (Peirce, 1989, p. 2) is critically needed to engage the discourse of language with students in a specific socio-cultural-political context. The queerness and affects are not only individual accounts that provoke personal and individual thinking and actions, but also a powerful account to allow political act and vision that could happen in the classroom. Teaching English should go beyond the neutrality (Kachru, 1986); rather, it asks students and teachers to reimagine and enact the pedagogy of possibility together.

> *Following this perspective, what are "alternative possibilities" within pedagogical policy vision that would look like when queer teachers re-examine their own teaching and pedagogy, their emotion labor, their identities in the classrooms under the pressure of heteronormative and sexist content?*

Song (2018) studies nonnative English language teachers and how their emotions are affected in their classroom. Her study has revealed an important finding that positions these non-native English teachers have experienced "a deep sense of insecurity" (p. 462) due to their linguistic backgrounds compared to native English counterparts.

Similarly, Swearingen (2019) has reviewed 17 studies exploring nonnative-English-speaking teacher candidates' (NNES-TC) language teacher identity (LTI) development in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. The review has revealed four main points. One, the NNES-TC have been found to struggle to claim ownership over English as compared to Native Speakers (NSs), due to their own accents and legitimacy. The research suggested adding counter-discourses, critical pedagogy, personal reflections, lived experiences, and future imagined identities in order to transform the candidates to be agents of change in their classrooms. Two, Swearingen (2019) has claimed that issues of race and racism and gender identities have not been connected to LTI development in TESOL research, which "may further marginalize NNES-TC" (p.8). Three, NNES-TC are reported to have "academic identity clashes" (p. 8) that disconnect them to connect with the past and present experiences as the language learners and the teachers cause them to struggle with their language proficiency due to "not yet [being] fully polished academic English" (Her, 2005, cited in Swearingen, 2019, p. 9), and find it difficult to get involved in critical reflection as they come to negotiate with their new identities in a newly academic environment. And positive emotion, through reflections during discourses and identities explorations along with supportive network, is a key in LTI development.

Melisa Cahmann-Taylor et al. (2022) discuss how to use Teaching Proficiency Through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) to initiate conversation in L2 classrooms in a Mandarin

language context. Using queer perspectives in their analysis, the researchers have observed that the unknown and non-normative content was the initial way to provoke dialogue with students. The researchers observed the learning process through students' responses through simple gestures, sounds, laughter, and words. The researchers suggest that queering L2 requires "the acts of courageous teachers" to be "comfortable loosening and expanding control of what is taught in the L2, how, why, by whom, with and for whom, and to what ends" (p.149).

These three studies (Cahmann-Taylor et al., 2022; Song, 2018; Swearingen, 2019) have shown a largely absent literature of queerness and emotions in TESOL where these two identities continue positioning the queer teachers, especially non-native English teachers, under the emotional rules that have to feel in a certain way to meet the normalization of emotions and normativity in public spaces (i.e., English language classrooms)

> *I closed out the discussion by having students give a group hug to the actor and actress who volunteered to do a role play, but surprisingly, the students gave me a hug as well. A student told me, "Thank you teacher for sharing us your story." I then thanked each of them for a beautiful act and re-directed their attention to the question that I raised at the beginning, What made you happy?. I proudly shared with students that seeing them expressing love and empathy to each other, myself included, and our discussion of homophobia and racism in an ESOL classroom made my night because that discourse cultivated hope in me to develop an inclusive curriculum in the future. I found tears on my face when I was sharing with them. The bell suddenly rang, breaking the moments of silence and discussion of our class. (Trinh, 2020a, p. 9)*

The ESOL students and I in the excerpt above have come together to acknowledge our "ugly feelings" (Ngai, 2005) in our learning and teaching process in an English language classroom. Ugly feelings (Ngai, 2005) focus on "minor and generally unprestigious feelings" (p. 6), such as irritation and paranoia, which happen with people of color who are experiencing intense feelings and trauma due to death threats and other eventful atrocities. Situated in what Ngai's "obstructed agency," or what prevents people from acting with others in the best interests, especially in the arts work, Ngai looks at how emotions can be used for critical praxis, discovering possible areas of resistance, uplifting people of color to achieve equity and "pessimistic understanding of its own relationship to political action" (p. 3) through the lens of minor feelings. Extending the work of Ngai's (2005), Benesch (2017) asks the teachers' and students in English language classrooms to explore "a pedagogy of complex feeling" (p. 127). Benesch (2017) also urges the teachers to figure out how to acknowledge both students' and teachers' ugly feelings and use them as an entree to discuss the challenges of navigating the complexity of living in a globalized world in a time of neoliberal uncertainty.

In a neoliberal era where it is "characterized by corporatism, rugged individualism, and privatization to ensure national safety and preserve culture" (Strom & Martin, 2017, pp. 4-5), Black and Brown bodies are the victims to be assaulted of xenophobia, heterosexism, and white supremacy in the classroom space and academic hegemony. Therefore, ugly feelings expressed by me and students became a point of discussion, inquiry, and resistance to the social issues which silenced students' voices and bodies in English language classrooms, allowing a space of intensity and affective atmospheres to liberate our own self to cry, celebrate, hug, and appreciate one another despite challenges. The challenge that I want to emphasize here is the oppressive

school system where queer teachers and students are not allowed to be authentic with their feelings but have to continue to do the work of emotional labor in public (Boler, 1994; Benesch, 2012; Hoschild, 1983).

It is not a Conclusion; it is a Beginning

I am bringing awareness to the nepantla space where we come to an end for this queer walking meditation (Trinh, 2020a). As Denzin (2019) argues, "As critical scholars, we need to find new ways of better-connecting persons and their personal troubles with social justice methodologies" (p. 1). Therefore, diffractive reading and writing (Barad, 2007) woven in the autohistoria-teoria allow me to gain new insights, stay away from the bird's point of view to be part of the world reconfiguring of the foundational concepts in the fields (i.e., critical queer studies, affect studies, and TESOL). At the end of this walking, I see the light in the dark of this writing (Anzaldúa, 2015; Barad, 2007). As Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) put it, "there is light in darkness and dark in lightness are similarly fluid and provide an understanding of how binaries can be queered, and how differences exist both within and beyond boundaries" (p. 5). I hope this text has partially diffracted and queered your perspectives about the topics in this dissertation.

Besides, Sedgwick (2003) invites us to think about a reparative turn where she asks a different range of affects to think about the truth, and reality, and welcome surprises and mistakes. What would happen if we invite affective pedagogy (Berlant, 2011) that does not always evoke optimism but could be associated with depression (Cvetkovich, 2012), shame (Probyn, 2005), ugly feelings (Ngai, 2005), resistance (Airton & Martin, 2022), trauma (Zembylas, 2020), failure (Halberstam, 2011), among others, to think about the complexity of feelings and how bodies are to affect and to be affected in the human and non-human

entanglements. Further, what would happen if we let the openness, interconnectedness, and vulnerability of bodies (e)merge, speak, and make sense of their meanings in the classroom? Would teachers and students achieve immanence in learning progress where it "creates new connections, new styles for thinking, new images and ways of seeing" (Colebrook, 2005, p. 4)? As Colebrook (2005) puts it, teaching and thinking pedagogy with affects and emotions allow those involved in the process to confront chaos, "encounter with relations, potentials, powers not our own" (p. 3), to "create new connections, new styles for thinking and new images and ways of seeing" (p. 4). These are the questions, hope, and new possibilities that I am intrigued to explore in conducting this study where queerness and affect come and meet in between.

I gradually bring awareness to the current reality, my meditation, writing and analyzing. I am stepping out of the nepantla space and coming back to my current reality. I have followed queerness and affect theories, traveling back and forth to think with queerness and affects from different studies in interdisciplinary fields. However, I am not sure if I escape from the nepantla space. The reality, the dream, meditation and the nepantla space weave together. There is no reality; there is no dream. Dream and reality co-exist and emerge from the nepantla space. As Keating (2006) acknowledges, those who come out of the nepantla space will become "an agent of awakening" (p. 9) to continue carrying on deep awareness and responsibilities with their own lives afterward. I am not sure if I have become an agent of awakening; however, I am convinced this text has done justice to the readers, myself, queer teachers and students who do not have a chance to speak in the literature. Even after I woke up and sat down and rewrote these lines, Anzaldúa (2015) is still with me spiritually. She re-affirms me with this type of writing by acknowledging that,

This text questions its own formalizing and ordering attempts, its own strategies, the machinations of thought itself, of theory formulated on an experiential level of discourse. It explores the various structures of experience that organize subjective worlds and illuminates meaning in personal experience and conduct. It enters into the dialogue between the new story and the old and attempts to revise the master story. (p. 7)

I am sitting with these contrary forces in this literature review: the new story versus the old story, the subjectivity versus the objectivity, the reality versus the nepantla, the discourse versus the theory, the experience versus the imagination, affects versus rationale. Are they becoming one now? Are they crossing the boundaries and binary from the dualist and binary perspectives? I am writing this text by weaving theory, analysis, research, and personal and professional lives together. Breaking a conventional style way of writing up research which looks for representation (Murris & Bozalek, 2019; Vannini, 2015) is exhausting, risky, and lonely, but as I said from the beginning, I want to do justice work for queerness and affects from the interdisciplinary fields/perspectives.

In this chapter, I have followed these questions: *How can I trace affects, emotions, and feelings, and queerness in autohistoria-teoria? What does the tracing process look like? How does the tracing make me feel differently?* These are the foundational questions that guide me to think about what I want to do with the research participants—critically and emotionally. I want to feel with them. I want to learn with them. This diffractive, affective, autohistoria-teoria literature review has come to an end on this paper, in this conclusion paragraph; however, is just a beginning of an exciting new journey.

In the next chapter, I will describe the methodology of this dissertation project.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Research Design

Organizing the Chapter; Organizing my Thoughts

We have been walking through times and spaces to feel and think queer together in chapter 2. In this space, I would like to invite you to join me in this thinking/walking/writing process of this chapter. I am walking on a trail right now. It is the Fall in Atlanta, Georgia. You do not have to prepare anything for this walk, except a bottle of water to sip whenever you need to take a break. I like to think in nature where I can fully engage in a conversation with matter. I hope you like a walking conversation in nature as much as I do. The matter could be leaves, trees, squirrels, or any thing. The matter could be words, phrases, ideas that come out naturally with me and us in this process. In this process, I am writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) to think through ideas that help me come up with the research design for my dissertation. For social scientific writing does not stay fixed but also moves to reflect the historical events and various schools of thoughts; hence, writing is "a sociohistorical construction, and therefore, is mutable" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960).

As Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) posit, "Producing 'things' always involves value– what to produce, what to name the productions, and what the relationship between the producers and the named things will be. Writing things is no exception" (p. 906). At the end of the day, what are the values of our work, scholarship, writing, teaching, among others, in guiding us to live, do, learn, and think differently, positively, and peacefully?

The values of this writing are not only residing in helping me see through what/how I want to do in order to partially answer "research questions", but also giving me ideas to critically examine the reality and self so I can prepare myself to enter the conversation with research participants.

Jennifer Wolgemuth and their "partners in crime" (2018) wrote in work/think/play/birth/death/terror/qualitive/research in a special issue of *Qualitative Inquiry,* where the play leads researchers to suggest that "research playing can be a form of academic self-maintenance, of keeping fit as a (critical) qualitative researcher" (p. 719). In their paper, Wolgemuth and their partners ask important questions about the play and how researching play moves beyond normative rules of qualitative research. The idea of the play is to open up unexpectability, possibilities, anything, everything, and/or nothing that could happen.

I like how to think with something unpredictable and imaginative, something that could provoke and intrigue me to think, do, and feel differently to become different. I like to think about the process and how to trace the process, like what I am walking each step in this trail. Yes, tracing the process of thinking is something I want to say. Tracing the process of thinking helps me entangle with different (historical, cultural, pedagogical, political) ideas and events. In other words, tracing the process of thinking helps me be part of the matter, reality, and the world. As Barad (2007) emphasizes that we do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world, but we are always "part of the world in its differential becoming" (p. 185). My becoming has been always entangled with emotions and feelings through writing, thinking, walking in this chapter. My becoming is

part of the world to see how my identities are part of positionalities, positionalities are

part of identities, to help me trace the process of thinking in this chapter.

Research Purposes

Let's slow down a little bit on this walk. As the word "trace" comes out during this walk, the

verb "trace" has different meanings as follow, according to Oxford Dictionary (n.d.):

- *Trace somebody/something (to something) to find or discover somebody/something by looking carefully for them/it.*
- *Trace something (back) (to something) to find the origin or cause of something*
- *Trace something (from something) (to something) to describe a process or the development of something.*
- *Trace something (out) to draw a line or lines on a surface.*
- *Trace something to follow the shape or outline of something.*
- *Trace something to copy a map, drawing, etc. by drawing on tracing paper (= paper that you can see through) placed over it.*

I like how the verb "trace" shares with me a different idea of how to "discover by

looking carefully", "find the origin", "describe the process", "draw a line", and/or

"draw on tracing papers". Tracing gives me a feeling that I do not have to follow a

certain format of thinking and doing research from a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-

method approach; for methodology is a journey traveling with multiple paths without a

clear beginning or ending (Koro-Ljungberg, 2019). Instead, I situated this study as a

phenomenon. This study was an inquiry process within a phenomenon. The word

"within" is used to highlight the inseparability, undividedness, and reconfiguring of

individuals in the phenomenon, where the term "phenomenon" will be unpacked shortly.

A phenomenon is the smallest unit of analysis where a phenomenon is "a specific intra-action of 'an object' and the 'measuring agencies'; the object and the measuring agencies emerge from, rather than precede, the intra-action that produces them" (Barad, 2007, p. 128). The intra-active process, which is in contrast to interaction, lies on those who are involved in a phenomenon (i.e., humans, non-humans, such as objects, text, research tools, and more than humans) where they are mutually constituted, entangled with one another. Intra-action is asking "the questions of differences," negating the pre-existence of individuals, and acknowledging that "'individual' only exists within phenomena (particular materialized/ materializing relations) in their ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring" (Barad, 2012a, 77). Therefore, in this study, **the first purpose** was to explore a phenomenon where the researcher could trace and understand what possibilities could emerge when affects, emotions, and feelings and the unfixity of queerness in teaching and research. In order to do so, this project needed to move away from the interaction understanding to think within intra-action in the research process.

Intra-action, according to Barad (2007), emphasizes the *relationality* of thinking, connecting, entangling, and theorizing with multiplicities, negating the idea that entities, elements, subjects, and objects exist individually in an absolute separation. The concepts such as affects, emotions, feelings, and queerness play an intra-active role in co-constituting this study. As they are entangled in the intra-active thinking/writing/doing process, the individuals enact

"agential separability" (Barad, 2007, p. 140). The separability is the cut together-apart, the cut

that separates the phenomenon and binds it as a unit. Agential cuts "do not mark some absolute

separation but a cutting together-apart—holding together the disparate itself (Barad, 2011, p. 46).

Cutting together-apart "entails the enactment of an agential cut together with the entanglement of

what's on 'either side' of the cut since these are produced in one move" (Barad, 2012a, p. 20).

This cut is different from a usual cut which completely sets the two objects/sides in an absolute

separation. For cutting together-apart, the cut does not stop, but it is iteratively reworking and

reconfiguring. In other words, cutting together-apart is in quest of "indebtedness, inheritance,

memory, and responsibility" (Barad, 2012a, p. 20).

> *The more I am writing, the clearer I come to get a clearer sense of what I want to do. I*
>
> *am coming back to the definition of tracing above. The verb "trace" guides me to think*
>
> *about how to "discover by looking carefully", "find the origin", "describe the process",*
>
> *"draw a line", and/or "draw on tracing papers". I want to think about tracing as a*
>
> *methodology that includes multiple ways to collect "data" that have affects and*
>
> *queerness lead the way. As this study is entangled with theorizing, storytelling, (data)*
>
> *analyzing in this process, the cut enacted and to be enacted will continue moving in the*
>
> *form of making and remaking, constructing and reconfiguring, inviting unpredictability*
>
> *in re-searching purposes, even after the study is defended. Perhaps, data is no longer*
>
> *data. Data now is in the form of conversations.*

As this study is/was/will be always already entangled in inquiry, **the second purpose** was

to re-search how to conduct a theoretical-methodological study. In other words, this study

is/was/will be in existence of iteratively searching and researching its own purpose during its

indeterminate becoming. There is no finish line of this study; rather, this study will be always entangling, reworking, and reconfiguring during and after this process.

Researcher's Positionality and Responsibility

Differential Becoming

As Barad (2007) emphasizes that we do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world, but we are always "part of the world in its differential becoming" (p. 185). My becomingness has been always entangled with emotions and feelings through my writing, teaching, and research agenda. My becomingness is part of the world to see how my identities are part of positionalities, positionalities are part of identities. I will not be able to separate who I am as a Vietnamese, queer, immigrant, and English language teacher educator who writes and teaches with emotions in different spaces and times. I have never acknowledged and written about/with emotions and feelings in my work even though non-human agents such as emotions and feelings have been in/hyper/visible in every space and time that I write. Therefore, this study has become essentially significant for me in connecting human (myself and other queer teachers), non-human agents (emotions and feelings), and discursive agents together to explore where, how, and what entanglements will lead to and open different forms of queerness emerged from our intra-active interview processes. Concurring with previous scholars (Barad, 2007; Marn & Wolgemuth, 2021; Mazzei, 2014; Wolgemuth et al., 2018), my positionality does not stand alone in this world; rather, it has been and will be part of the world in its differential becoming.

A re-turning occurred today after I finished the conversations with the research participants. This was another agential cut that I intentionally wanted to make in this process related to my positionality. As I re-turned to research questions and conversations, I have to acknowledge that English language context is just one thread, among multiple ones, in this interdisciplinary study. What this dissertation has produced me differently is that I have become an interdisciplinary theorist, methodologist, realities creator with the third eye. TESOL is a small part of this cut, an essential matter of this phenomenon, but it cannot and will not be the center of this work. Therefore, I will need to revise the research questions.

An interesting part of intra-active entanglement that agential cuts created: a new Ethan-researcher with diffractive perspectives, knowing, and being. The conversations with the research participants queered my perspective, contributing to an ongoing becoming process and viewpoints, pushing Ethan to take response-ability of a researcher to re-turn to what they proposed at the beginning of the prospectus stage and revise the research questions.

Research Questions after the Agential Cut

The set of questions proposed on December 5th, 2022: *How are queerness and affects be traced methodologically?* and *What are the possibilities that queerness and affects (from/by/with/through/on/within QETs) produce in English language classrooms?*

The set of questions proposed on May 11th, 2023: *How were queerness and emotions traced methodologically?* and *What were the possibilities that queerness and emotions produced by a gay Chilean teacher and Ethan-researcher in the intra-active interview process?*

The set of questions selected on August 3rd, 2023: *What were the possibilities in terms of theory, teaching, and research that queerness and emotions produced through the intra-active conversational process between four queer English teachers of color and Ethan-researcher?* and *How were queerness and emotions traced methodologically? By whom or what?* I am using this research questions to guide this study.

Ethic-onto-epistemological Matter

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia State University. All of the participants' privacy were strictly protected using pseudonyms and signed consent forms (see Appendix A). In working on the research study, I always kept in mind the ethico-onto-epistemological matter and the responsibility of the researcher as we are *part* of the world. As Barad posits, "Responsibility is instead … a relation always already integral to the world's ongoing intra-active be-coming and not-becoming. That is, responsibility is an iterative (re)opening up to, an enabling of responsiveness' (Barad, 2012a, p. 82), especially with the ability to respond to current socio-cultural-political contexts that oppress queer teachers.

Policy on LGBTQ+ teachers

Harris and Gray (2014) send us an important message in working with queer teachers, that researchers can have literature reviewed as much as we want in our ivory towers, but we have to remember that in many countries, queer communities are still the victim of murder and catastrophic exclusion, and "the freedom to bring any queerness into our classrooms is fleeting, contingent, and just as rapidly revoked as our desperate global desire to believe that it has, surely and finally, "gotten better" (p. 9). The desperate desire to get better for queer teachers will remain blurry and abstract as the public views gender and sexuality as "shame".

In his ground-breaking work, Warner (1993) discusses that the public views sex as associated with losing control and "merging one's consciousness with the lower orders of animal desire and sensation, for raw confrontations of power and demands"; thus, it causes people aversion and shame (p. 2). Warners points out that sexual shame is not only a personal, private matter, but is also political where queer people are placed at greater risk than others, who might be "beaten, murdered, jailed, or merely humiliated, stigmatized as deviants or criminals, or impeached" (p. 3). The ethical responses to sexual shame, in Warner's argument, are to put it to someone else to blame and push people toward sexual moralism, which are some standardized sexual practices mandated for everyone.

Thinking with Warner (1993) and Harris and Gray (2014) has reminded me that conducting queer-related research studies is not a solo, individual project that focuses only on queer subjects. Rather, it brings inter-relationality into thinking with research, including the connection of "education and identity, subjectivity and criticality" (Harris & Gray, 2014, p. 9), and how to "promote queer sexual culture" (Warner, 1993, p. 218) that is banned by public policy for queer individuals and communities.

Bringing personal queer self into public and education research and policy is political. In her review of research and policy from 1993 to 2015, Meyer (2015) emphasizes the feminist message, "The personal is political", and points out that research did not show a greater impact on policy and practice for three particular reasons: religious resistance to valued diversity and multiculturalism into public schools, unfounded fears about an explicit discussion of sexual behavior in K-12 classrooms that cause "threat" to parents and communities, and a lack of courage to take actions by school leaders, politicians, and professional organizations. These three

reasons continuously represent in the current educational context, especially in a case of Katie

Rinderle reading "My shadow is purple" authored by Scott Stuart in her classroom in the state of

Georgia. Katie was later terminated for her contract with the school district because the content

of the book was deemed "inappropriate" with the "they/them" pronouns and other divisive

concepts (Hauser, 2023). From this example, the public fear for sexual shame rooted by sexual

moralism (Warner, 1993) has reiterated the three reasons that Meyer (2015) shares remain valid

and are proved with the real-life situation. Thinking about this example leads me to ask a

question, How could teachers resist politics of fear in discussing gender and sexuality in the

context of political dividedness?

   Fear is an affective politics (Ahmed, 2014). Ahmed discusses the connection of fear,

bodies, space, and power where fear affects and restricts the bodies' mobilities in relation to the

expansion of other bodies. In addition, the way that fears work in a public space is that it

intensifies threats, which "creates a distinction between those who are "under threats" and those

who threaten" (p. 72). Drawing from this perspective and thinking with the case of Katie and

"My Shadow is Purple", which body is under threat and which body is threatening? Which body

is restricted, and which body is liberated? Which body is repressed to feel, and which body is

privileged? Later, Ahmed also makes a connection of fear and terrorism under the name of love

and patriotism. It gives me a thought of Katie's case and its connection with the national fear that

the children are being indoctrinated by divisive concepts in teaching and learning. Therefore,

another question is, are we willing to let fear overwhelm us in our teaching and learning process

and push us back? Or, are we willing to find another way to think about alternative ways to

conquer our fear, in specific, and emotions, in general, to teach to the intense (Trinh & Tinker

Sachs, 2023) with students? If we go with the latter, in which way can we learn more about the

role of emotions occurred in the classroom so that we can enact the response-ability (Barad,

2007) in the context of political restrictions? I now move on to the next section to discuss the

Significance of this study to continue exploring this line of thought.

Significance

> *I pause this walk for a bit to think about the significance of this research study. From my*
>
> *perspective, there is nothing new in this paper; there is nothing called moving beyond.*
>
> *Beyond-ness sounds like we already stepped ahead from an event and left the past*
>
> *behind. It sounds like we humans do not own anything from the past or the future;*
>
> *however, the past and the future are never closed. Because we humans "are always*
>
> *already haunted by the past and the future" (Barad, 2012a, p. 13). Past and present are*
>
> *blended into "the now of questioning" (Kleiman, 2012, p. 81).*

This study did not move beyond any *thing* in terms of the research topic; instead, it was

situated and contextualized in a phenomenon, where materials and discourse, things and

language, came together in an inseparable relationship as *material-discursive practices* to

explore different, possible (re)configurations of who/what involved in the process, to see how the

agency and its enactments are made differently, and what agency would do differently from "the

specific practices of materializations of time but also space, or rather of the entanglements of

spacetimematterings" (Barad, 2012a, p. 80). In essence, the significance of this study tried to

rethink a phenomenon that has been taken for granted in research. Specifically, this project did

not go beyond what the fields are doing, but it re-turned (Barad, 2014) to individual concepts,

brings them together, and explores its multiplicities of how they entangle, are theorized, and

(will or will not) give each other (new) meanings. Further, this study guided us to re-think the damage of binary thinking and research that has been done on our doing/feeling/thinking situated in a particular spacetimemattering. This study returned to the smallest unit of analysis, which is a phenomenon, to think about it and explore what lessons will be learned from this study. As Barad (2012a) urges the researchers, "if you really attend to the data in terms of phenomena, you see that the diffraction pattern only shows up again if you do the work of tracing the entanglements" (p. 20). Therefore, it is interesting to keep in mind the following questions during the research process, *How does the entanglement of materials and other materials/kinds lead to different patterns of thinking and doing? If so, how does the entanglement look? What benefits can the entanglement give? To whom/what/which? In which spacetimemattering*? As such, this study offered a re-thinking and a re-doing within a phenomenon in which the foci of the study lie in the field of TESOL, research methods, and critical queer studies.

Research Design

Queer Walking Meditation

Even though I as the researcher used the technical material (i.e., Zoom), we were theoretically and spiritually involved in a queer walking meditation. Queer walking meditation (Trinh, 2020) is a walk that "moves between stories, initiates dialogues with self, recognizes self's confusion and complexity" (p. 10) and is meditative for queer individuals to "think through, to write, to reason, to accept, to embrace, to reject, and to love ourselves and others compassionately so that we can come back to home" (p. 10). Research participants were involved in queer walking meditations in four stages, namely *walking, sitting, resting, and*

returning. Specifically, walking allowed the participants and Ethan-researcher come to know each other; sitting invited the participants and Ethan-researchers to sit on the playground to connect with the childhood; resting created a space of breathing and stopping while returning provided us a space of coming back to look deeply into each moment of the conversations. Each conversation in each stage lasted from one-to-one hour and thirty minutes.

Research Participants

The human participants of this study were queer English teachers recruited from all over the world, regardless of their teaching experiences. I recruited six participants. The criteria to be in the study was that participants were not necessarily "out" because of the complexity of coming out and visibility of queerness (see discussion in chapter 1). I recruited the participants through my connections in TESOL International and professional listserv such as American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) and American Educational Research Association (AERA). I obtained the appropriate permissions from the Internal Review Board (IRB) to recruit teachers. Before the conversation, I also sent them the flier of the study and explained to them the process of the study. The participants also signed the consent forms. There were four-time interviews with the participants.

I chose to report three participants: Ignacio (from Chile), Olivia (from Brazil), and Usman (from Pakistan) due to the uniqueness of their representations of their social-cultural-political contexts. The participants also chose their pseudonyms in this study and I honored their requests in writing up the study. However, as Barad (2007) reminds me of the co-becoming and part of the world, and as Anzaldúa (2015) reminds me of the split in nepantla, I split myself into

two in this study: Ethan-participant and Ethan-researcher. Therefore, there were four participants of this study, including Ignacio, a gay man from Chile, Olivia, a transgender woman from Brazil, Usman, a non-binary using he/she from Pakistan, and Ethan, a non-binary using they/them from Vietnam. This study was uniquely queer in that way.

~~Data~~ Generation

I am walking and thinking about when data is dead (Denzin, 2019). Denzin (2019) asks the researchers to find new ways of researching that "read and interrupt traces of presence, whether from film, recordings, or transcriptions. They do not privilege presence, voice, meaning, or intentionality" (p. 3). I am thinking about his question, "Where do data live?" (p. 2). As Pigott and colleagues (2021) ask in critiquing research: Whose aims are served by the research? How open are the researchers about their methods and values? How does history bear on the subject being investigated and the context being studied? Whose perspectives and biases are measured in the research? These are critical questions for me to look for, think with, and honor data without falling into binary research.

In this study, I chose to use the word "conversation" instead of "data" in order to engaged deeply with what the participants shared with me. In addition, due to the uniqueness of diffractive methodology, which will be discussed in detail later, I proposed to use interview and photo elicitation to invite the participants to engage in the conversations with me. In the next section, I will walk the readers to understand why I chose these approaches and describe the procedures of doing so.

Photo Elicitation

As I choose to use photo elicitation through semi-structured interviews in this process, I will first discuss the rationale for using photo elicitation and interview and then describe the process of incorporating these two approaches.

Rationale

Photo elicitation is based on an idea of "inserting a photograph into a research interview" (Harper 2002, p. 13). Collier and Collier (1986) acknowledge the use of photographs in research to have inquiry lead the way and "interviews can become stilted when probing for explicit information, but the photographs invited open expression while maintaining concrete and explicit reference point" (p. 105). Further, Harper (2002) states, photo elicitation "evokes information, feelings, and memories that are due to the photograph's particular form of representation" (p. 13). In other words, photo elicitation is a method that can invite open conversations that arouse the participant's emotions and feelings. Further, using affects, emotions and feeling in queer research has "not only made emotion, feeling, and affect (and their differences) the object of scholarly inquiry but has also inspired new ways of doing criticism" (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 3).

Using photo elicitation in this project supported me in finding a communicative and dialogic space with QETs, who traced untold stories, memories, experiences about critical events in their lives (i.e., upbringing, coming-out experiences, pedagogies). As Harper (2002) acknowledges, "Photographs appear to capture the impossible: a person gone; an event past" (p. 23). For me, photographs are not only used to initiate historical conversations in historic contexts, but they *are* socio-cultural/political contexts. In this study, photographs were also a narrator to co-lead the conversation with the participants (i.e., QETs).

Second, the semi-structured interview "explores people's views of reality, and allows the researchers to generate theory" (Reinhaharz, 1994, p. 18). Interviewing offers the researcher "to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than the words of researchers" (Reinhaharz, 1994, p. 19). In addition, by interviewing the participants, the researcher can come to understand their stories during the meaning-making process (Seidman, 2006). As the root of the word *story* has the Greek word *histor*, which means one who is "wise" and "learned" (Watkins, 1985, p. 74), having the participants share their stories as a way to learn from their wisdom in the learning/knowledge-sharing process.

This study did not simply use interviewing as a way to gain knowledge and understand the meaning making process; but it explored how to use interviews for intervening and transforming (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2016). Specifically, this type of interview was used for the participants to engage in a critical conversation that explored desubjectification (Hoy, 2005), a less structured and fixed way to understand the reality, to think about moments of subjective ambiguity and alternative identity performances (Wolgemuth & Donohue, 2006).

As photo elicitation and interviews were co-constituting in this study, data became conversations and the conversation is no longer dead (responding to Denzin's inquiry of where data lives and if data is dead); rather, conversation became alive and served an agent mobilizing, co-constituting, and materializing in the phenomenon where "data, researchers, participants, and the world become the same equivalent and indifferent" (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2018, p. 473). In this study, data was conversations. I chose to use the word "conversations" to show the entanglement of our thoughts throughout the interviews. Findings of the study did not exist separately from the research process; rather, they *were* the process. The inseparability of objects

and subjects in the mutually implicated material-discursive relationship make conversations become more complex and nuanced in generating a new understanding of knowledge and identities during and after the study.

Implementation

The participants were requested to bring photos during the interview process. The interview lasted 45 mins to an hour each time (see Appendix B for the list of Interview Questions). The photos served as a narration to lead to the conversation. There were four-time interview phases. The first time (i.e., the walking) focused on the research participants' backgrounds where the participants shared their upbringing, cultural, pedagogical, spiritual, and perhaps political beliefs, and experiences. The second interview (i.e., sitting) was the continuity of expanding their backgrounds and the connection between the participants' queerness and critical incidents that happen in their lives (i.e., in family, school, workplace, society). In the second time, the participants were asked to bring the photo with them for the first time. The researcher used the participants' photos to initiate the conversation to understand about queerness and affects embedded in their queer lives. The third time of the interview (i.e., resting) elaborated queerness, pedagogy, and affects in their teaching. In this interview, the researcher asked the participants to take photos of the classroom artifacts such as classroom spaces, teaching materials, and/or any *thing* that represented their teaching philosophy and pedagogy. The researcher and the participants co-constituted the space to discuss the photos and make a connection between queerness, pedagogy, and emotions. The fourth time was a re-turning where the participants and the researcher came back to a moment of the previous interviews and wrapped up the study.

Diffractive Methodology

This dissertation used diffractive writing to think with the conversation. Diffractive thinking/writing/reading is not rejecting things but is to "renew ideas by turning them over and inside out, reading them deconstructively for aporias, and re-reading them through other ideas, queering their received meanings" (Barad, 2012a). As I continue to explore this diffractive thinking/writing/reading process from the beginning of this dissertation project, I want to acknowledge a couple of things.

First, as a scholar who has recently read around new materialism and affects and is on the way to learn, think, and "play" (Wolgemuth et al., 2018) with these theories, what I am offering in this study is nuanced thoughts and connections built upon inquiry, curiosity, excitement, partial knowledge, and teaching/writing/research experience. As Richardson and St. Pierre (2000) remind me, I cannot write "a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone" (p. 962); therefore, I have to understand my audience and the text itself. The first audience is me learning wisdom from those who have done this work before/during/with me. Therefore, the language itself has to be written to make sense to me as a reader.

Second, since the meaning is carried in the entire text (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2000), the conversation in the next chapters will take some time to unload and unfold in the meaning-making and theorizing process. Sometimes, the readers will not find a full definition of some concepts because the language is falling apart, the ideas are falling

*apart, but these concepts will come together later. Sometimes this paper requires the practice of re-turning (Barad, 2007) to diffract the text, our knowledge and understanding; therefore, the result of this writing could need the entire rewriting to make sense of **matters** in this study.*

Next, I choose to use diffractive analysis to allow myself to *try* to do justice to the conversations in this study. Specifically, I let diffractive reading/writing/thinking take me to "entail close respectful and response-able (enabling response) attention to the details of a text [...] *to do justice* to [it]" (Barad, 2012b, pp. 13, emphasis in original). The conversations and excerpts in this paper were taken from multiple sources and written up during the research process; for "writing is thinking, writing is analysis" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 967). As Mazzei (2014) explains that "to engage in the diffractive analysis is not to layer a set of codes onto the data, or even 'a' theoretical concept for that matter, but is to thread through or 'plug in' data into theory into data resulting in multiplicity, ambiguity, and incoherent subjectivity" (p. 743). By using diffractive methodology interwoven with theories in the in-between space or sometimes in the undefined spacetime continuum (Anzaldúa, 2012; Barad, 2007), I on purpose avoided the dualist Cartesian ontology in which I have been trained in Western-based institutions; instead, weaving theories into analyzing/writing/ thinking with theories created a space for conversation plugged in and co-constituted in the study.

After every conversation was finished, I followed the traditional research step to transcribe the conversation and continuously re-turned to think with, theorize, caress, and give an excerpt a caring thought and attention. In the transcription, I paid attention to "the detail of

patterns of thinking" (Barad, 2012b, p. 13) to see how each small detail such as a word, a sentimental expression, a nod, or a smile is a precious moment contributing to the meaning- and sense-making process. I concur that, "What something means to individuals is dependent on the discourses available to them" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961). Therefore, I took responsibility to re-turn to the conversations again and again to address the research questions.

Besides, I thought with a nonlinear process in returning. I agreed with Marn and Wolgemuth (2021) in which they looked at the *logics* of analysis: "Rather than provide a set of procedures, we discuss the *logics* of our analysis–logics that are asynchronous, always becoming, resisting finality, and inextricably tied to our versions of Barad. These logics are found in data that glows" (p. 2097, emphasis in original). The idea that data glows and researchers glow back allowed me to think about how the conversation glowed where the intra-activity was entangled in a performative and materializing/materialized process. This process allowed me to think with liberation and non-linearity with the conversations. The transcripts were no longer a dead text, but they became an agent to think with and move in "somewhere in between—as in intra-action with researcher, participant, students, room, memories, documents, methods, technology" (Cannon, 2019, p. 104). What Marn, Wolgemuth, and Cannon discussed excited, inspired, electrified, and re-affirmed me to follow the diffractive writing in this study. Not only did the study allow me to think about/with the relationality of analyzing *matters*, but also provided me a space to trace the "ontological turn" (Lather, 2016) via material-discursive practices where matter and meanings were co-constituted and entangled in a phenomenon (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017).

Additionally, the details *to* the patterns of thinking through the transcripts, conversations, photos remind those involved in this research process that diffractive methodology is an ethic-onto-epistemological matter. As Barad (2007) reminds us, "Diffraction marks the limits of the determinacy and permanency of boundaries" (p. 381). Therefore, as diffraction is an ethico-onto-epistemological matter where each of us is part of differential mattering, each action is relational and inseparable in doing, or "relational ontology" (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017). As the result of the reconfiguring, the cut together-apart continued emerging from the intra-active activity and never comes to an end. As Barad (2007) puts it, "Different agential cuts produce different phenomena" (p. 175). Because of that, different phenomena would lead to other agential cuts; therefore, the possibilities will be indeterminately and inherently emerged and continue their entanglement. As such, the becoming of individuals (i.e., emotions, queerness, methods, researchers, research participants, readers) will become indeterminately and inherently reconfiguring, remaking, moving, and thinking.

CHAPTER 4: FEELING WITH AND RETURNING TO CONVERSATIONS

Ignacio and Ethan

Figure 1

Meditative feeling-home pedagogy: This picture was created after returning (to) our

conversations. I no longer see myself separate from Ignacio. Both of us were sitting meditatively,

using the third-eye perspective, or the in-between eye, to see the world.
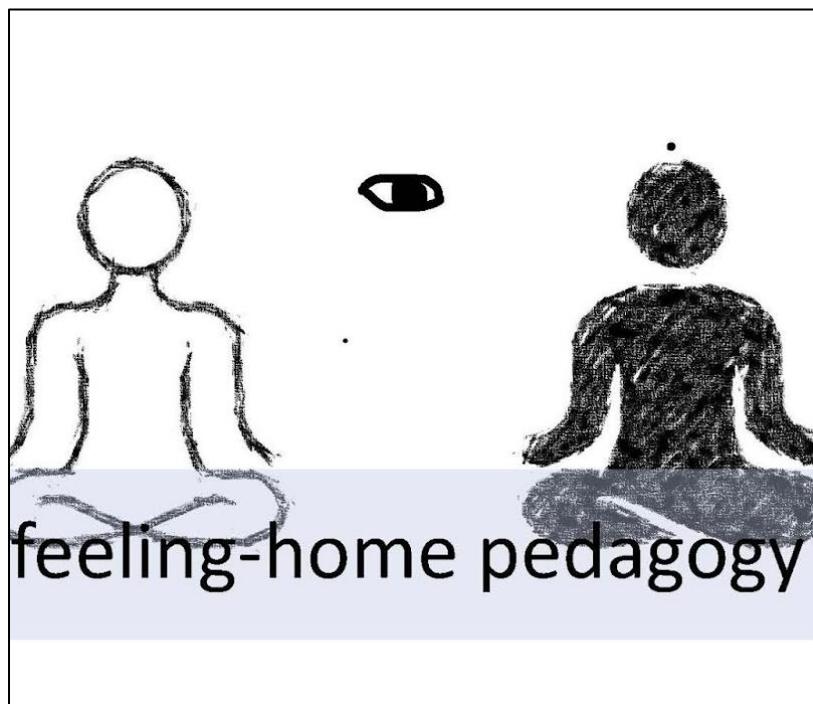
"My transformation aligns with the Buddhist philosophy"

     I was walking with Ignacio in a park. We had been walking meditatively together to share

our stories, feelings, emotions, teaching, and pedagogies. We trusted each other in this space of

queer walking meditation to expose our vulnerability and "the deepest, deepest secret and

feeling" (Returning, 02/01/2023).

We were sitting in a frozen lake. I turned to Ignacio, asking him if he knew why I chose

to sit in front of the lake. Ignacio responded that he liked the idea of the reflection, the sky

reflection on the lake. "What else?", I asked. He continued, "Shiba is looking at something and

maybe a bird. I don't know if she's considered focused. And we don't know because the frozen

lake is beautiful" (Returning, 02/01/2023). We were both amazed by Shiba, my doggy, who had

been with us on this journey. Shiba was sitting still, appearing calm as if she enjoyed the moment

and the environment around her (Figure 2). Shiba taught us an important lesson: we need to be

patient with ourselves and "do not have to rush to do anything in our lives, things will come"

(Returning, 02/01/2023).

Figure 2

Shiba and the lake: Re-turning with Ignacio
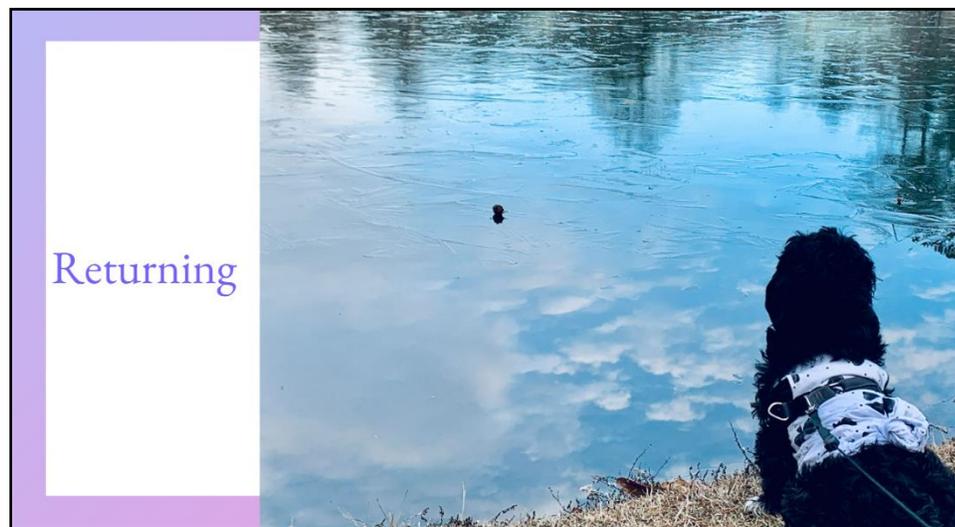
I then thanked Ignacio for his continued support of the study and shared with him the

concept of "returning" (Barad, 2014) where we are going to "come back over and over and over,

in order to get deeper into the patterns or the conversation" (Returning, 02/01/2023).

Specifically, in this final talk, we were going to return to the moments of the previous

conversations, getting deeper into each moment, and seeing where the moment would lead us.

We were taking a deep breath. I asked Ignacio how the conversations between me and

him, between him and himself, and between him and his photos affected his doing, thinking, and

feeling about queerness, teaching, life, and research after this study. He shared,

> I think it's been very enriching. And it's been, Yeah, and some parts have been really
> thought-provoking, the ones that I hadn't thought before and I feel that it hasn't been a
> one-way conversation. Like you said, you shared at the beginning. It's not like a colonizer
> who comes and, like, gets all this stuff and then runs away, it's more of a, of a two-way
> conversation, like a two-way process. (Returning, 02/01/2023)

Ignacio has a special place in this journey as a co-thinker in this walking meditation. He had

been helpful in sharing his ideas and perspectives and being involved in the discursive practices

to help me understand and unpack the complex concepts in my own research project. I had never

understood fully what these concepts meant until I talked with Ignacio and listened to his

perspectives. In other words, discursive practices occurred. I kept my promise as a researcher

that I did not come to take away his stories. I stayed present with him with each moment to think,

feel, share, expose our vulnerability, and "find the commonalities that are always the highlight"

for us (Returning, 02/01/2023) (see Figure 3). Ignacio acknowledged that the connection "is very

important and that makes it … makes it meaningful" for him. He posited,

I have also participated in other studies and I'm always happy to participate and help people in.. in any way that I can or sometimes say feels more transactional. It's like a little survey or something and it's nice, but at the end of the day, I don't remember it or it doesn't have any impact on me. It's more about giving. So I've had really good conversations with Roger [Ignacio's husband] about things that we have talked about and some of those are conversations that we've had but now I am now more aware or so like that's just a little example of how I notice that it's been relevant and meaningful. So I appreciate that. Thank you very much. (Returning, 02/01/2023)

Figure 3

Our bodymindsoul came together in this conversation. Ethan (in pink lines) and Ignacio (in black lines) had intra-active conversations where green lines represent our meeting in in-betweenness.
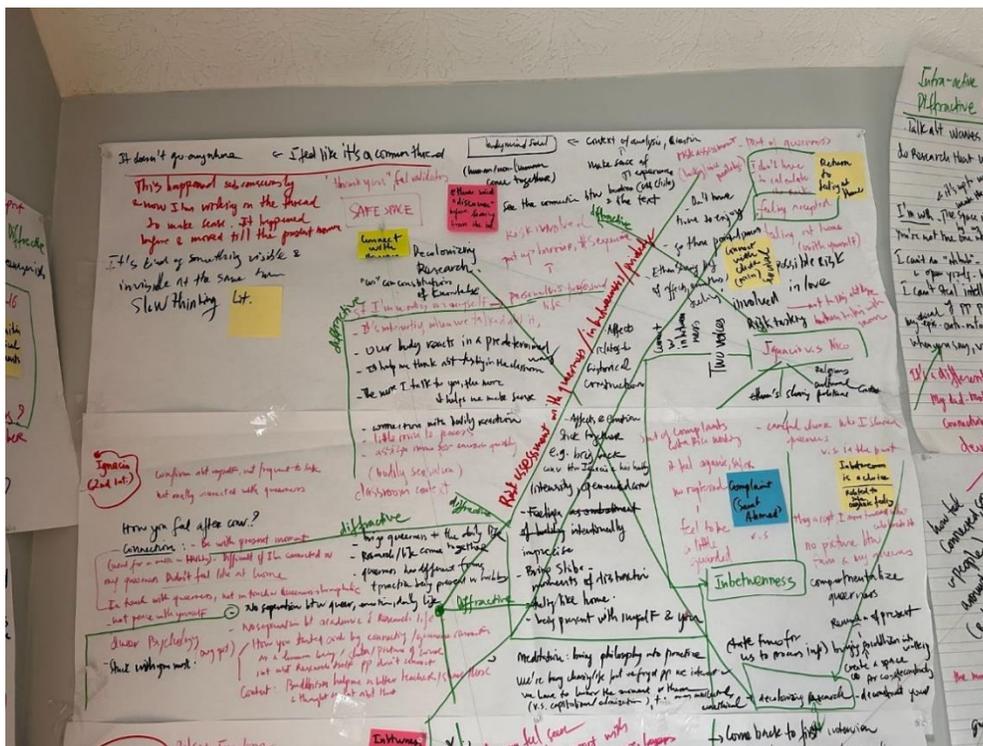
Our conversation was more than just transactional. It was a "mutual trust" for us (Returning, 02/01/2023). The conversations between myself and Ignacio had always been a spiritual connection. I admitted that the connection with Ignacio was rare. Rarely could I find a person from Chile who incorporated Buddhist philosophy in pedagogy in English language classrooms. The spiritual connection put us, a queer Vietnamese ESOL teacher teaching in the United States and a gay Chilean ESOL teacher teaching in Costa Rica, to take a queer walking meditation and share a spacetime together. Ignacio acknowledged these values:

> My transformation aligns with the Buddhist philosophy at the school in Costa Rica with me and thinking about my queerness [that] makes me think about what's important to me, my values and the role of emotions and things like the concepts that you have highlighted. And that I have repeated a lot like feeling home and being guarded … that escaped me. I think it's been a chance to sort of, like, stop and reflect and make connections between these topics, and who I am, and in what role they pack in my life. (Returning, 02/01/2023)

Ignacio iteratively referred to the moment of stopping to reflect and make a connection to unpack his life in our conversations. As we wrapped up the final conversation, he returned to the important concept and values throughout his thinking process: feeling home. Therefore, in the next section, we will trace back this concept flowing in different spacetimes of this study.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

As I returned to this section, the values that connected both Ignacio and Ethan were mutual trust, Buddhism, and queerness. These values made two queer different bodies who lived in different

spacetimes feel like home. "Home" no longer stayed in a fixed concept for queer people of color; rather, home is a fluid thinking and connecting through spacetime, philosophies, trust, and understanding. Home is a fluid safe space for us to shift between stories, to hold on to each other to delve into feelings, anger, joy, aimed to break the guard that Ignacio had when he shared his queerness in public. In other words, these values embedded in this queer home were mutual trust, Buddhism (i.e., compassion, non-violence, and love), and spirituality. This shift is "more than intellectual" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 554). This shift is the co-creation of knowledge, intellectuality, and emotionality situated in this safe space.

Feeling home

Feeling home is the main concept repeatedly discussed, unpacked, and returned in our conversations. For Ignacio, feeling home is that:

I feel that I can be myself and not be judged. I don't feel that I have to filter so much. I feel that I can be myself and I'm not going to be punished or reprimanded by that. It doesn't feel dangerous. (Returning, 02/01/2023)

Why was feeling home embodying the feeling of judgment, punishment, reprimand, and danger? Could feeling home be something related to comfort and safety? Feeling home brought Ignacio's memory back to the first house he grew up in. He also emphasized that feeling home "could change for everyone depending on their experiences" (Returning, 02/01/2023). I shared with Ignacio that I did not even have the answer for the concepts between "feeling like home" versus "feeling at home" when I asked him the question. The question emerged naturally out of curiosity as we had been discussing this quite a long time in previous conversations. I turned to him and shared mine.

For me, feeling like home is more like a "lived experience" and bringing these kinds of experiences anywhere in the world, either with biological or chosen families. Feeling at home, or feeling home is related to a place where people can sit down and do what they want to do to feel connected. I shared, "You can curse, you can express your emotion, you can laugh, you know that you can cry and know that everybody there in that space will embrace you" (Returning, 02/01/2023). At that moment, I came to realize that "feeling at home is more internal and feeling like home is more external" (Returning, 02/01/2023).

Quickly, Ignacio shared a moment when he visited his friend's house and the chaotic situation reminded him of his parents in Chile even though he felt home with his husband. He stated, "I guess that it was influenced probably by that memory of this, feels like being back at home or back home" (Returning, 02/01/2023). It is noticeable that the "feeling home" was repeatedly discussed, e/merged, and returned in Ignacio's responses and led conversations in this study. Feeling home was built upon Ignacio's upbringing, which later affected his interaction and pedagogical approaches with students, colleagues, and staff in his school. In order to understand the feeling home, I trace the events that happened in his life in the next section to see how this notion developed over spacetime.

Critical Family History

In the process of tracing the concept of feeling home, we are going to trace what happened in Ignacio's life and think with him at each moment to see how his life events contributed to his life values, philosophy, and teaching.

Self-love

Ignacio recognized he was gay when he was 12. However, he did not have to go through the "Oh gosh, God make me different" kind of phase. However, he developed his self-love as "the foundation to be accepting with other people" (Walking, 01/18/2023). Ignacio described what he meant about critical to love as follows:

> So I guess it's like it's like two voices inside of my head. One is like always questioning if I'm doing things up to my standards, I guess. And the other, the other voice of saying like, How do you feel about this right now? Do you have the energy to do it? And I feel like the other voice, the one that was very demanding with myself used to win the conversation before but now it's like, "Okay, but also how do you feel?", and it's like a self-checking. So that's…that's what I meant by being critical and also finding some self love. (Walking, 01/18/2023).

I acknowledged what Ignacio shared about two voices in one's head. I shared with him that we have more than one voice and it is important for us to listen to the other half or whatever voices come out because that is "the journey of exploring; it is full of anonymous, but also full of fascination" (Walking, 01/18/2023). As we started to explore something anonymously, we would be able to discover something about ourselves. Ignacio excitedly said, "Absolutely".

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

> *Critical love, for Ignacio, is the combination of rationale and emotions. The*
> *"demanding" voice and the "self-checking" voice came together to balance thinking*

about self-love. Love is not an indivisible concept, but is carefully examined, analyzed,

and situated, weaving with emotions and feelings to care for and with self.

Coming out

As Ignacio became older, being gay was "one layer of the identity". For him, it was about connection and alignment with the core values. He shared, "Acceptance is one of those values that I really need around me to feel like home. So I think if somebody understands some of my queer experience, and can acknowledge it and can celebrate it, that's super important" (Walking, 01/18/2023). He did not have any pictures and his biological family that showed the connection between his queerness and personal life. Rather, he shared that he had to escape from "a very negative environment, from people being harsh with each other or even in family dynamics" in 2011 (Walking, 01/18/2023). Because of the harsh lived experience, a space of acceptance, in which his sexual identity or gender identity were not being judged, made him feel "very complete" (Walking, 01/18/2023).

The coming-out experience was not easy. As he came out, he had some issues with some of his family members. He had a big extended family and he "felt pretty alone" and he always felt like "a little bit of an outsider minority" even though he loved them, but there are things that he just could not "really share with them, that they wouldn't understand fully" (Resting, 01/26/2023). As he grew older, his biological family, including his mom, two brothers and sisters, and some cousins, accepted his queerness, but he recognized that he "gravitated towards people who not just tolerated but also celebrated" his queerness (Sitting, 01/19/2023). Despite the family's acceptance of his queerness and his husband Roger, Ignacio always had the need "to

be a little guarded just in case and to not bring queerness to every situation" (Sitting, 01/19/2023). He explained about being guarded about his queer visibility as follows:

> I don't think that it means that I'm not myself. I think it just means that I myself minus that part or that part is I save it for other moments with other people in other situations. So I don't.. I don't feel repressed. I don't feel that I'm hiding something but I do feel that there is a [real name] or Ignacio that it's like, comes up in certain moments. And then Ignacio that comes up in other moments because it feels more natural. It feels more … more organic. It feels safer. So I guess that bid comes from there and then in my professional life. (Sitting, 01/19/2023)

Although Ignacio affirmed that there were not two different personalities between a real person and a pseudonym, he was selective to choose who he came out with. The selectiveness in sharing queerness comes from the "feel[ing] way more at home, feel[ing] way more themselves, feel[ing] to celebrate queerness and not feel[ing] at risk", he added, "I don't know, it's like, not really killed or be looked at weirdly" (Sitting, 01/19/2023).

I shared with Ignacio that I realized that I was queer at a very early age. I showed him the picture when I was 5 or 6 years old. In the picture, I was sitting next to a table in a denim dress with a lotus pose and had lipstick on. I gave a smile to the camera lens as if I was so comfortable with my own skin, clothes, and everything that reflected my identity. "Everything is very feminine", Ignacio commented (Walking, 01/18/2023). Later, I shared my queer space with him because I wanted to make queerness as much visible as possible.

Queer visibility is also associated with taking risks. As Ignacio shared the feeling at risk to be queer, I reaffirmed what I was listening with him, "I am listening deeply with you, in your in-between world and space and it involved the risk, and some sort of, like, deeply, profoundly, carefully thoughtful actions" (Sitting, 01/19/2023). Not only did the word "risk" trigger me to think and relate to what Ignacio's sharing, but I was also pushed to think about the risk that would involve people whom we love. I stated, "There is a possible risk that exists, but sometimes we don't, we do not have time to recognize and manage it" (Sitting, 01/19/2023)

In response, Ignacio asked where feeling acceptance and feeling at home were located. He then offered his thinking about what feeling at home meant:

Feeling at home starts with yourself. Like feeling at home, it's not necessarily at place, but feeling at home is what you feel, in my opinion. To me, it's like it's what it feels like to be able to be yourself and not worry about that risk. (Sitting, 01/19/2023)

The concept of feeling at home e/merged in the conversation again, but it connected to the involvement of risk. He shared that he felt at home with his husband because he could be himself and he did not have to "calculate so much of the risk". He shared that if someone who was queer did not have to do the risk assessment, it would be "very lucky and a nice privilege", but it would not be the case for most queer people; there is always "risk assessment in everyday life" as queer people interact outside of their comfort zone, especially the risk that harms our queer bodies, our mental health, and people who are around us (Sitting, 01/19/2023) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

In-between-ness in risk assessment in our everyday life. This figure has shown the risks exposed and crossing across spaces and times in Ethan and Ignacio's stories.

Listening to him carefully, I shared that I did not think that queer people enjoyed the full privilege. In contrast, queer people went through a painful process in order to "recognize ourselves, love ourselves, embody ourselves" because we had been through a lot. Because of that, we were getting "a lot of wounds and the wounds actually that still imprint on us, and then leaving scars, whatever it is in our life" (Sitting, 01/19/2023).

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning:

> *The visibility of queerness was complicated in terms of dual voices, dual lines of thinking,*
> *and dual personalities that appear and perform in public. Queerness is never completed;*
> *it will never finish; it always exists in between. The conversation on the playground was*
> *tremendously impactful for both Iganacio and Ethan to share what they thought about*
> *our queerness, coming-out experiences, and risk involvement in our queer lives. The*
> *conversation between them occurred in the in-between-ness space, where it gave Ethan*
> *"space, time, and the fluidity of thinking" to connect stories together. Ethan shared,*
> *"Queerness is situated in the in-between-ness; in-between-ness is situated in queerness".*
> *In other words, in-between-ness is no longer abstract, it came out to them naturally,*
> *unexpectedly, and queerly, for both of them.*

Minority within minority

Being queer has always "felt like being a minority within a minority within a minority" (Resting, 01/26/2023). For Ignacio, he never imagined that one day he would be able to be in a relationship with anyone. Although "sexuality is a huge part of queer identity" (Resting, 01/26/2023), it was not the case for Ignacio.

He always felt alienated as a teenager. From a very young age, he knew that he wanted to find somebody who made him "feel seen, feel at home, feel connected, feel different" (Resting, 01/26/2023). In his family, he could not talk to his cousins. Even though one of the cousins was gay, Ignacio could not connect with him because the cousin was religious and did not want to tap into "that part of himself". Despite Ignacio's male cousins being accepting and nice to him, they

would not be able to understand his lived experience and feelings. Further, as Igancio went to an all-boys school, he "felt like a minority most of the time" (Resting, 01/26/2023). Although he had some gay friends they were very different from him because other gay friends "who were like other boys were trying to explore their own sexuality". Thus, he always felt that he could not "fully relate" to anyone and was "trying to survive high school" (Resting, 01/26/2023).

I listened to Ignacio attentively. I shared with him that he was struck in between the triangulation of family, schools, and friends. He did not feel belonging to any kind of group: he did not belong to the gay community because they did not share the same perspectives about what sexuality meant. He did not feel belonged to the school because he was trying to survive. Besides, he did not see the connection and belonging in the family, specifically with the gay cousin who was religious as an example. Even though they shared the same gay identity, there were still differences in gay communities that varied for every person.

After reaffirming what I heard from Ignacio, I shared with him about my intersectional identity as a Vietnamese, queer, immigrant navigating the white gay world in the United States. I shared with him how my queer identity in the predominantly White gay world was oppressed and devalued when I was asked to be penetrated by a White gay man in the first conversation on a dating app. I also felt excluded and did not feel that I belonged to the queer Asian community in the United States because of language differences and perspectives on cultural backgrounds and upbringings. Also, I was viewed as "a competitor" in a race with other queer Asian men because having a White gay boyfriend would be "a success, an accomplishment". I concluded, "I

don't want to play that game" (Resting, 01/26/2023). I then shared with Ignacio my personal

experience because I saw connections between us:

> I feel like it is just not easy to talk about those kinds of feelings or those kinds of
>
> moments. Like, you know, people always talk about, like, how happy they are, or you
>
> know, how fun they are? How much freedom that I can get, you know, as a free queer
>
> person, but it's not, right? It is not! It is just pretty much like, every single day, that is the
>
> negotiation of identity in real life. (Resting, 01/26/2023)

Ignacio paused, thanked me, and responded that talking with me and Roger, his husband,

who come from different countries, contexts, and lived experiences and struggles, helped him

"complement" his own experience and that I could understand what he went through. I also took

him back to the first conversation where I asked him how he identified himself. Ignacio shared in

the first conversation that he was looking for "acceptance". Throughout the conversation, he

continuously demonstrated his efforts to look for what acceptance meant and did. I was "stuck"

with this phrase from the beginning because accepting ourselves and others was "the whole

painful, crazy, complex process" (Resting, 01/26/2023). The complexity of this process is that

we had to continuously and constantly "reflect on ourselves and then have a conversation with

other people to make sense of the experience" Throughout the conversations, we were blurring

the personal and professional spaces. I acknowledged,

> So the conversation came to me that, at the very first conversation that we had together
>
> until now, I did not feel like it is kind of a.. a professional research study. But I feel like,
>
> it is more like the process of a healing process for both of us, you know, but also kind of

like the process of the journey where you and I come to learn together to co-construct the queerness identity, even though we live in two different spaces. (Resting, 01/26/2023)

I then came to learn that emotions went beyond bodily reactions; they embraced cultural, political, racial, and other social factors. Emotion "is kind of, kind of like a door, to open all of the different gates on different aspects of our lives" (Resting, 01/26/2023).

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

The conversation about a minority within a minority within a minority gave us different understandings of the phrase. We put our experiences out there in the conversation and brought them together to make sense of what we had been through and came to understand how the stories pushed us to think about emotions differently. Emotions are viewed as a door, metaphorically, to help us get an insightful understanding of other people despite different spacetimes. Emotionality co-constructs queer identities and opens the healing process for both of us in this shared spacetime.

Teaching

Ignacio went to a training school in the middle of nowhere in the jungles of Costa Rica after his escape from a very negative environment. In this school, he acknowledged that he felt surrounded by so much love. For his regular routine, he studied pedagogy in the morning and taught at night, so he would have a chance to put the theory into practice immediately. The training in teaching English pedagogy "absorbed him in a positive way," making him feel like home because he "never felt judged". The pedagogical approach was based on the tenets of Buddhism built on compassion and a non-violent approach and present moments. He explained:

It's like to be a good teacher. You need to be present for what's happening in front of you,

right? So you cannot be thinking about your lesson plan the whole time. Because if not,

you're not looking at your students. You're not looking at the person that's in front of you.

(Walking, 01/18/2023)

For Ignacio, focusing on the wholeness of students is the core of his lesson plans. Because these

values of the pedagogy helped him create "resources to process what happened in classrooms

every day" (Walking, 01/18/2023) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Queer Pedagogy from Buddhist Perspective. This pedagogy embraces safe space, compassion,

and feeling-home approach.

I was listening to Ignacio and was excited to hear that. I shared with him that those

elements from the Buddhist's perspectives are naturally incorporated in this teaching, but these

elements did not only apply to the learners but also to himself, as well. He affirmed, "Right,

exactly". I continued to draw the connection between his core values in life and the Buddhist philosophy, including connection, respect, and mental health. I shared:

> If we don't love ourselves. If we ruin, if we damage this body, this mental health, how could we sustain, how could we continue this very un-healthy job, you know, with a lot of like emotions, with a lot of you know, emotional labor, right, especially in front of the public. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

I posited that his teaching went beyond religion, but it was more about "the personal spiritual connection" (Walking, 01/18/2023). Not only was I excited about connecting with him by stitching the ideas he shared about the values of the pedagogy that included compassion, a non-violence approach, presence, and feeling-like-home, but I also made him feel excited. I asked, "Why are you laughing?" (Walking, 01/18/2023). He responded:

> I don't know because it's just, I'm…I'm excited. You're excited because this is something that is really hard to talk about with other people because nobody had the experience. Nobody from my friends or my family, nobody had the experience that I had. So I don't think that they really understand why my time in Costa Rica. I lived there for 10 years. Like, why it's so special and so unique and how it changed me, so…(Walking, 01/18/2023)

The excitement came from both of us. This was the first time we met and talked with each other in the "interview", but we felt like home. We felt connected. The way that Ignacio offered his thinking that nobody from his friends or family would be able to understand his experience and the reason why he stayed in Costa Rica for 10 years excited him. He showed excitement, a feeling of being seen and recognized and understood for what he had been through

in the last 10 years. In other words, in that spacetime, two different bodies were emotionally connected. We both agreed that the conversation was" like magic and how it just like goes beyond the space and time that we are living right now" (Walking, 01/18/2023).

As the conversation about feeling home is connected to the elements of Buddhism for both of us, we are going to explore the relationship between Buddhism and Queerness in our teaching, life, and research in the next section.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

Feeling home returned over and over again and connected us to think about something beyond gender and sexuality. The feeling home showed us the meaning and demonstration of acceptance and genuine listening to one another. The level of acceptance, as Ignacio mentioned from the beginning, was his foundation to connect with people. Ignacio was very careful with whom he chose to share his queerness because of what happened in the past; therefore, his queerness was "so compartmentalized" and could only open up when he felt truly connected to someone (Sitting, 01/19/2023).

In a queering, in-between-ness space, Ignacio and Ethan were connected. Their queerness was un-compartmentalized. In other words, Ignacio no longer calculated risk. He put his guard down. He felt safe with Ethan. Ethan felt comfortable with him. They both were both comfortable exposing their queerness on a personal level, allowing them to see double and triple in this space. They both "dis-identif[ied] with the fear and the isolation (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 552), they sat quietly and meditated, "trance[d] into an altered state of consciousness, temporarily suspending our usual frames of reference and

beliefs while creative self seeks a solution to the problem by being receptive to new patterns of associations" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 552). Ignacio and Ethan both suspended their guards and exposed their queerness meditatively. Their ideas, thoughts, queerness, teaching philosophies, among others, are now intertwined and intra-acted in this shared space.

In Nepantla, both Ignacio and Ethan transformed themselves to think about queerness, coming-out experience, the situatedness and differences of minority within minority, and teaching. In this space, two queer bodies came together, minds shifted emotionally and peacefully as they shared feelings and thinking without being judged, resulting in continuous re-visit to past memories in the most genuine and vulnerable ways.

Buddhism and Queerness

Buddhism and Queerness in Teaching

Viewing Students as Human Beings

Ignacio acknowledged that he had been influenced a lot by the Buddhist and humanistic approaches. For him, "seeing the learner as a human being trying to connect with people at an essential level with my students, that's been really, really important" (Walking, 01/18/2023). He gave an example that when he taught a group of students in Costa Rica, he had to teach a group of teenagers and he did not like them because they did not respect him. Then, his mentor asked him, "Do you love them?". He was questioning what love had to do with the teaching. Later, he came to answer his own question:

It's not loving them, maybe a family but it's like, do you see them as human beings? Do

you take time to connect with them? Do you let them know that you were there? And that

you're going to be there for them, like supporting them? So I guess the basis of my

teaching philosophy, this is just like an example of when this started, but my teaching

philosophy has a lot to do with connection. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

Ignacio came back to the very first value that he always looked for as he grew up: a genuine

connection with human beings. Surprisingly, both Ignacio and I met in between when we shared

a lot in common in terms of teaching philosophy. I was excited to share with him:

I love all of the things that you just said. The words "love, connection, respect mental

space". And I think, you know, those are kind of like, the things that I also like, stick with

whenever I come to any space, right? Not only like working with, you know, the research

participant but also with my students. As you said, you know, you have to see them as the

whole human being rather than treat them as a subject or as an object, right? (Walking,

01/18/2023)

Viewing students as human beings and respecting those who share the same space with us were

the values from our conversations. Our ideas are bouncing with each other, which created our

shared spacetime comfortable and trustful to discuss our teaching and research philosophy.

Queer-inclusive and welcoming environment

Even though Costa Rica is a very religious country, the staff and the environment at the

training school made Ignacio feel comfortable. "They saw me as a human being first. I really

wanted to connect with everyone at a human level first, and I felt that they all embraced me"

(Walking, 01/18/2023). The other participants of the training were gay, as well, so it was like a

"little community" for him that he did not feel like "the elephant in the room to talk about the taboo thing". According to Ignacio, the staff from the cooks to the lady that cleaned the school had "a vibe of respect and a vibe of 'we-see-you'"; therefore, he felt resonated and deeply connected as a human being and ended up moving to Costa Rica for teaching English there.

The environment at the school made him feel liberation and acceptance. Because of the school environment, he wanted to bring that concept to teach his students. He shared,

> It's okay to have that difference. If they have differences in how they learn, or how they identify, as like, like, that's not, that's not relevant, and it's not a reason to make them feel like they don't belong. Like, this is not a space where they belong, like my classroom. So I guess that that's one way that my queerness connects there to the triangle, and there's probably many more, but that's the one that I can think of right now. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

Ignacio felt at home at this school. His queerness is embraced by the Buddhist teaching approach, including focusing on compassion, non-violence, and present moments. The space embraced and liberated him, allowing him to create a similar space for his students to feel belonged and accepted, which was exactly matching with his life values. His queerness was thus situated in the Buddhist, feeling-home pedagogy where compassion, non-violence, and present moments were anchoring and co-existing.

Feedback with validation

Feedback given to him at the training school "was done very tactfully and very positively". His trainers always offered feedback with validation, "You did this, this and this, and

all of that was very effective. Next time, you could try the synthesis out and it can be even more effective" (Walking, 01/18/2023). Because of that experience, he offered another perspective about feeling at home. He stated,

> So I think that feeling at home started with the language that we used to talk about each other, about each other's performance when we were teaching. It really started with not being judged. In this context, it was our performance as teachers but you can really take that and apply it to your personal life and it's… it's what I did and I feel that acceptance to really try things out as a teacher and sometimes messed up and be okay with it because you tried it and just learn from it, reflect, and learn from it. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

The pedagogy approach based on the Buddhist perspectives validated Ignacio's philosophy and lived experiences. There was no judgment for his mistake. What he received from the training was acceptance and he was given another chance to learn from the mistake even though he messed up. Ignacio later shared that he "felt trusted" and "had freedom" to be himself. Because of that experience, students would "feel at home" because they "would feel that they could be themselves a little bit more or that if they made a mistake and it's fine. It's part of the process" (Walking, 01/18/2023). These are the "key" to make him feel like home with the training and teaching approach. He concluded, "I feel that this school really absorbed me in a positive way. It was like and I just felt like, I felt like home" (Walking, 01/18/2023).

Queerness and Meditation in Teaching

The relationship between queerness and meditation occurred in our conversation. I shared with Ignacio that I read the works of Thay Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Zen Master. In my research and writing, I tried to build a bridge among queerness, meditation, and spirituality back

in 2020 because I felt it was so important in terms of healing and I had a space and time to

"decompress, to see myself on a different, deeper level". I genuinely shared,

> I could see myself falling in love with this person. I could ask myself, why I just hate my
>
> body so much. I just felt that the aspects of queerness and meditation in teaching were
>
> never explored, but it is always there, right? So, like you said, we are always like rushing,
>
> in a hurry, but we forgot to sit down, to breathe, to deeply reflect and connect with the
>
> present. That's what I meant. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

The space that I created for queerness and meditation to grow and shine was for my healing, for

me to see myself on a deeper level, to breathe, to reflect, and to connect with the present.

However, I acknowledge that incorporating those elements in teaching and writing was "just

very difficult" because we have to follow certain principles and if we went in a different

direction, it would not be accepted. I shared with Ignacio that I wanted to do something

"differently to disrupt heteronormativity and traditional binary ways of doing" and that the

connection with Buddhism, queerness, and spirituality helped me see myself deeply.

Ignacio paused for a second and acknowledged that he did not see the connections of the

"dots" of the elements yet before my sharing. However, after listening to my sharing, he posited,

"that was the moment that resonated the most with me" (Walking, 01/18/2023). He explained:

> Because I feel that um, I feel that as a queer person. You are very self aware from a very
>
> young age, and you're sort of forced to, to grow up really quickly and many times before,
>
> before your classmates or before anybody else. Like you're sort of pushed to, to grow and
>
> be more mature than other people because you need to be self aware. You need to sort of
>
> like survive and the environment if it doesn't accept you, which is normally what happens

and I feel that I'm very self aware because of that. And maybe that's why I'm so critical

with myself. And I'm also critical with myself when I look at the mirror as you were

saying, and I think that… that's what I can … I can see a connection there. It's like okay,

this is my… this is my body. Why I'm not, why am I not happy with it? Or like. What is

it? What is it? Yeah, like, what is it that it's not, it's non-conforming to a standard of what

people find normal or desirable or acceptable. And I think that's definitely one…one way

to enter that conversation. It is like, yeah, do I fully accept myself?. Yeah, so

that's…that's the part that resonated with me. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

Ignacio offered a thoughtful discussion about queerness that related to critical self-

awareness about the body, acceptance, standards, acceptance, and survival. In addition,

he also made a deep connection with Ethan and himself by asking different questions in

the conversation. The question, "Do I fully accept myself?", reiterated the message that

he carried from the beginning: self-acceptance. The value of self-acceptance has made

him connect with me and pushed him to inquire about other social factors that are

placing misconceptions about queer bodies. He also referred to the mirror which Ethan

shared with him about self-reflection to stand in front of the body and pay attention to it.

The metaphorical object "mirror" also connected and resonated with him to think about

body, desire, and acceptance in society.

Buddhism and Queerness in Research

 Both Ignacio and I did not push each other to respond to the question. We were both "slow thinkers" (Walking, 01/18/2023). The moment of pause, waiting, silence, and reaffirmations, allowed us to think and connect with each other deeply and emotionally.

For example, at the beginning of the first interview, I invited Ignacio to take a queer walking meditation with me and Shiba in the park. I created a safe, warm, and welcoming space where we both felt that we were chatting between two friends rather than the relationship between a research participant and a researcher. Ignacio shared:

> I feel comfortable that you invite me to come here with a queer walking meditation and you share a little bit about you with me, like, those are the little details that for me, helped me feel that I can be open and I can share and what I'm going to say matters or it's not wrong or it's not going to be discarded. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

Because of the welcoming space, Ignacio could open himself and feel validated for what he was about to share in the rest of the conversations. What I did to start the conversation was also what he intended to do with his students:

> As a teacher, as a facilitator, it's the same. I want to create an environment where I can, even if it's a little thing, just find a little thing in common to connect with the students and validate what they say. And to me that goes beyond being a teacher or being somebody who teaches something because I think that's very related to the content and not as much related to the connection between two human beings. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

Ignacio always looked for connections with his students on a personal level, especially as he viewed his students as human beings. I shared with him that I loved everything about his sharing

because I could find a lot of commonalities in our teaching philosophy, especially his approach "rehumanized" the teaching and learning process with the students (Walking, 01/18/2023).

In another time, I shared with Ignacio that I was "trying to break the standards in the research process" (Walking, 01/18/2023). I explained that the researcher had to "stick with the script or the interview questions", but we forgot that we were talking with another human. I then brought us back to the concept of feeling home because it reminded me of my positionality and philosophy. I shared,

> If you rush yourself, right, you will not be able to come home, right? Being home means that you need to have peace in you. And it comes back to me where we talked about, like love and self-love, and aspects of compassion, like, you have to get compassion for yourself and for people around you in order to be home with home. That is the reason why I do not want to rush through the question, and I want to pause here. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

I decided to pause the first interview because I felt it was needed for both of us to rest our minds and bodies. We had been talking excitedly for over an hour. The concepts of love, self-love, compassion, feeling home, turn into practice in research that we both felt caring for the self and others were so important in and beyond academic research (see Figure 6).

Ignacio also acknowledged and agreed with the pause of our conversation:

> That sounds amazing and it's very coherent. We were talking about like, it's just like when you're teaching, like don't follow the lesson plan necessarily, like be present and see what's going on and how you respond to it. So, I appreciate that you decided to linger a little bit longer in this area that came up. And it's super meaningful to me. Because as I

was telling you, I don't think I get to share this with a lot of people because I don't think a

lot of people would understand it at a deep level. (Walking, 01/18/2023)

Figure 6

Pause in research creates diffraction in thinking between Ignacio and myself. The yellow post-it

has shown the bridge to connect our bodymindsouls together.
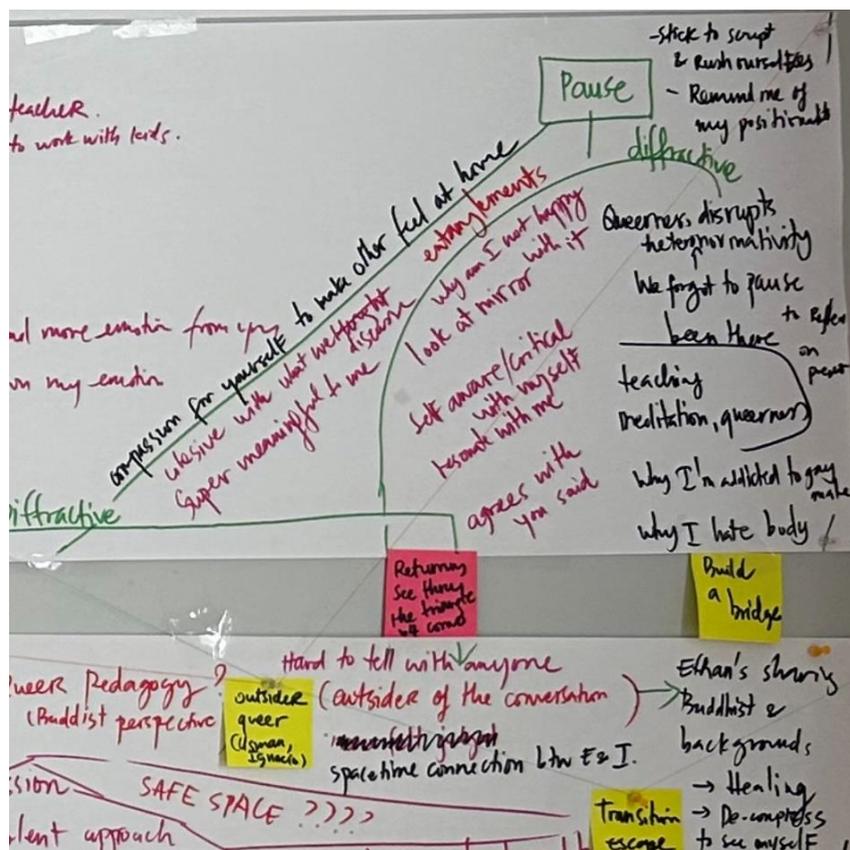
The present moment, the connection, the resting are important values to bring the

connection with two human beings who did not know each other before, but we felt so connected

and understanding and meaningful after the first conversation. Specifically, Ignacio shared how

he felt about the first meeting in the second interview:

I live in a big city and people don't tend to connect a lot. They just want to get things done quickly and stuff like that. So that was very nice. And about the interview itself, the contents of the interview. I really love how we were able to connect over things that maybe were surprising, like were unexpected, but how those bits of Buddhism that I have received in my life, have helped me become a better teacher and a better human being in general. Or that I think it's a better teacher and a better human being. Like how we shared those, that was really sweet. And I thought about it a lot afterwards, because it was kind of unexpected, because I didn't really feel that we're gonna connect there in the "research", but now I could understand more about queerness. So that was really cool. (Sitting, 01/19/2023)

The point of slowing down, connecting, taking some time to rest and flow and reflect was core values in Buddhism and was carried out and applied right in our research conversations. In addition, the impact on Ignacio was described as "nice, sweet, cool, and unexpected". These were the combination of mixed feelings that he would be able to transform himself about "research" and would connect with his queer identities on a deeper level.

I concluded that for queer teachers to feel safe to talk about the identity, "another reality must be created" so everyone could feel like a refuge, a shelter, a space that we can come back to. It is such a feeling-home experience that people could share vulnerability. I emphasized:

Like emotions, like a happy moment. But sometimes, you know, we forget that, in order to be happy, you need to understand the vulnerability, based on the philosophy from Buddhism. Anyway, so, I guess, you know, that is kind of the reality that I want to create

in this research, actually, so that everyone feels like they are living in a safe space.

(Resting, 01/26/2023)

The conversations with Ignacio have opened up our vulnerabilities, creating a needed reality that we both could feel safe and feel like home to be ourselves to share our genuine feelings and emotions. In this safe, in-between space inherited from Buddhism, we successfully co-created a reality that we both wanted to see, especially getting deeper into human values and humanizing the research study in the most homey, queering/query way.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

It is fascinating to see how Buddhism connected both of us in teaching and research. A strong foundation of the Buddhist perspectives and philosophy led us to see every single person who we interacted with in both teaching and research as human beings. Both Ignacio and Ethan rehumanized the teaching and research process by focusing on acknowledging identities, feelings, thinking, and taking a pause for us to be reflexive.

Being reflexive and meditative was critical and humane in building a world of acceptance, a value that Ignacio has been looking for based on his lived experiences. While meditating on each other's story, feeling, and thinking, they continually "reinterpreted the past to reshape the present" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 556). In the Buddha's teachings, meditation was "not only an individual's practice of mindfulness but a strategy to build collective peace" (Dong et al., 2022, p. 10). In other words, they created meditative strategies to take them to peace for themselves and the people around them, especially for queer bodies of color who suffered from a minority within a minority.

Queerness and meditation came hand in hand to allow a space of collective healing and provide a point of interdependence of beings in the world. In other words, queerness and meditation come together to create another reality, or an in-between-ness space in this study, that queer bodies came to live and think and feel at peace.

Through self-actualization (hooks, 2010), Ignacio and Ethan demonstrated the practice of Buddhism that "live deeply and explore their own ways of blurring the line between being, living, and practicing" (Dong et al., 2022, p. 11) in their reality and in the nepantla state. Both of them transformed each other, forging new pathways for each other, and entering into the path of becoming with one another after the study.

Figure 7

In this Figure 7, Ethan-research re-turned after the dissertation defense finished. The committee agreed that there was no revision needed, but the dissertation chair and I agreed that we wanted to elaborate a bit about semiotics of each artefact created by the research-creation (Manning, 2016) by Ethan and the participants. For example, the flower is a symbol of purity, pause, self-love, meditation, acceptance, and queerness demonstrated through the white lotus. The white lotus in this artefact has two meanings. One, in the Vietnamese culture, the lotus represents the bravery and resistance in the challenging time. Two, the artefact came from a family that I know of and they are a beautiful example of acceptance to the queer community. While working on the artefact, Ethan-researcher, Ethan-participant, and Ignacio intra-acted beautifully to come together to shine. We are shining in the sunlight after leaving this meditative nepantla space.
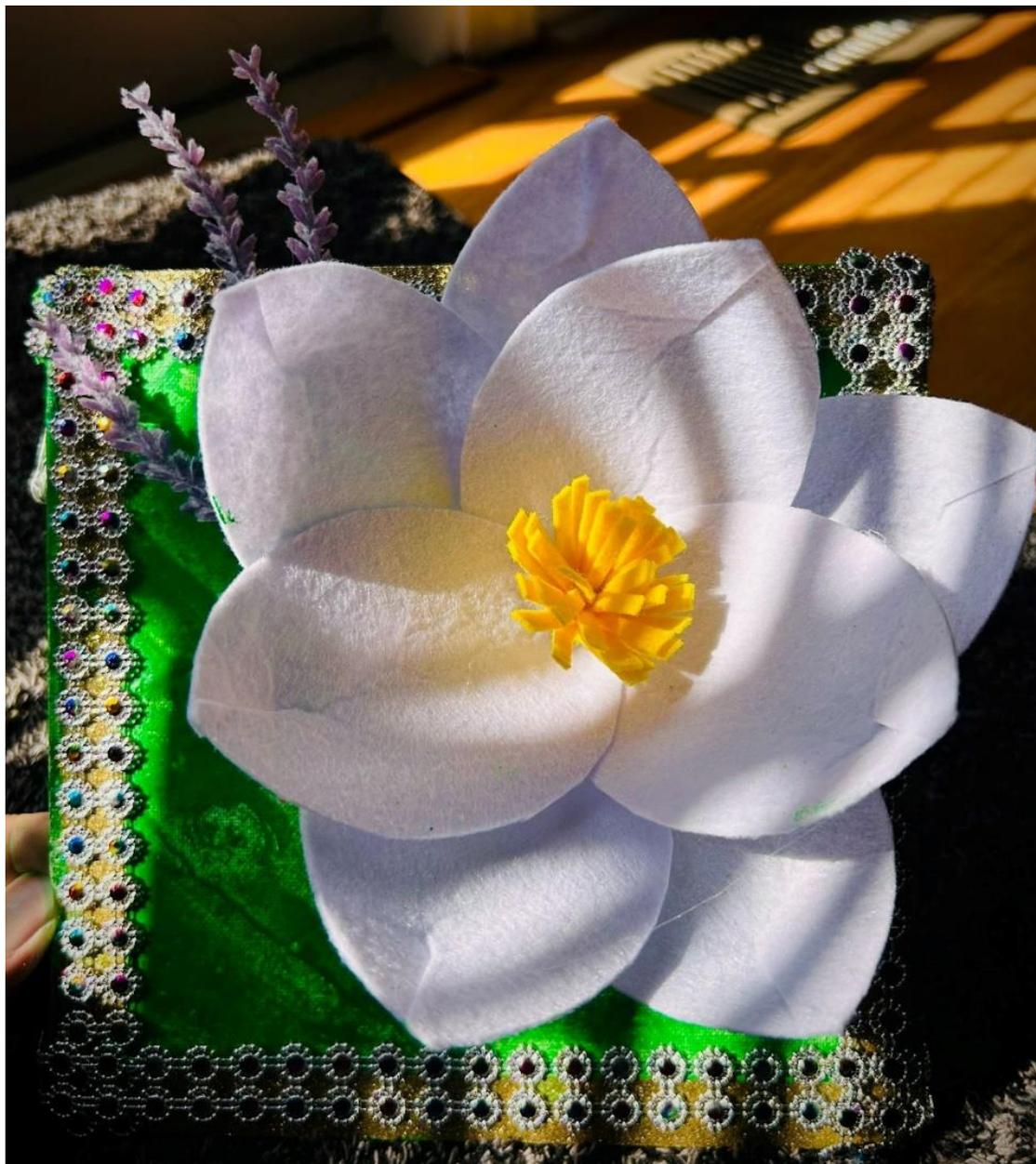
[This page is intentionally left blank. It aims for the purpose of re-turning of Ethan as a researcher, Ethan as a participant, or the readers of this section]

Usman and Ethan

Figure 8

Undoing the norms: This picture was created after I finished sharing the conversations between Usman and Ethan. The picture was created by combining our eyes together while sharing emotions in the public space. The eye in between us represents the third perspective that connected both of our identities, perspectives, and ideologies shared in our safe spacetime.

"I'm always in a process of becoming something"

Usman and I were sitting next to the frozen lake. Usman was having a cup of hot tea as Usman always did every time we had a conversation. Usman identified as a non-binary person, "but not in a strictly Western sense" (Walking, 01/17/2023). Usman explained that he/she did not associate with pronouns because English was not Usman's language. Usman stated, "I don't live here. So, that does not translate it to me and I do not want to follow it blindly. It does not translate into my language" (Walking, 01/1/2023). He/she often switched the pronouns between male and female while talking to queer friends. "I feel so comfortable with you right now. I feel like this is what I am like, I don't want to put myself so" (Walking, 01/17/2023). In addition, in the four conversations, Usman did not mention using the pronouns "they/them". Therefore, I want to to honor Usman's home language, culture, and identity, I used the pronouns "he/him/she/her/himself/herself" in referring to Usman to represent non-binaries and "Usman" interchangeably rather than "they/them". We hope that the readers would be patient with us in this space in terms of disrupting the "normal" flow of reading (i.e., one particular pronoun to refer to someone). In other words, the stories of Usman and Ethan in this section offer a different way of queering academic reading and writing in the English language.

When asked about the picture that Shiba was waiting patiently at the lake (see Figure 2), Usman guessed that picture was "some kind of metaphor for the in-between stage" (Returning, 01/31/2023). I was interested in hearing the term "in-between stage" because the notion of in-between-ness has been consistently weaving into Usman's story. I then applauded him/her for the answer and shared that the space and time in the frozen lake came together in a sense that "past and present and future is one" (Returning, 01/31/2023). In four conversations with Usman,

his/her emotions for teaching spread throughout spacetime and remained the same as we re-turned over and over again in each moment. For example, in "returning", I checked in with Usman as we were discussing a story in his/her teaching: "How do you feel right now when you return to this moment? Is that still feeling the same? Or is that kind of like, oh, it just happened yesterday? Or, how do you feel right now?" (Returning, 01/31/2023). Usman responded,

> I feel emotionally humane right now thinking about it. And how students have dealt with or expressed their emotion so much, so I feel overwhelmed even right now. I'm feeling all those emotions, like, concentrated right now. But I also feel good about it. That I was able to provide those students with that kind of environment. (Returning, 01/31/2023)

The reason for the mixed emotions and feeling was because "that kind of environment" was a continuous attempt to build a safe space by students and Usman. The safe space liberated themselves from being obstructed in the hetero-patriarchal-colonial English language classroom. The overwhelmingness, the excitement, the concentration on the self's feeling from Usman showed how much he/she constantly put in teaching to challenge an academic system which was not designed for marginalized populations.

I then shared with Usman that I was glad that he/she was there for them as both a queer and feminist teacher. Not only was Usman him/her in his/her teaching, but he/she "balanced and incorporated the rationality and emotions to the teaching space", especially when the class tapped on "very sensitive topics such as sexual harassment, human rights, women's rights" (Returning, 01/31/2023). I reiterated a message that people would never be able to completely understand what safe spaces meant. Instead, safe spaces needed to be situated and

contextualized. In Usman's context and story, "safe spaces were created because of part of [his/her] identity" (Returning, 01/31/2023).

After listening to me, Usman checked in with me, "How do you feel right now?". I shared, "I feel emotional, as well. I miss teaching, actually" (Returning, 01/31/2023). I continued my thought by sharing what I was thinking about "affective futurity" where affects traveled through space and time and brought space and time, past, present, and future together, and created a space for the travelers to reflect, play, and live again with *a* moment. For me, "the past will never come to die, but all just come together" (Returning, 01/31/2023). In a conversation with Usman, I felt that pastpresentfuture is one. He/she acknowledged, "I also feel like everything is being conflated here" (Returning, 01/31/2023).

I shared with Usman that my work was arguing that emotions and queerness were located in the in-between-ness; that spacetime and pastpresentfure were also found in the in-between-ness. Similar to what Usman shared about the conflating, freezing moment in our conversation, pastpresentfuture came into one and never separated. Usman then posited, "Then, the emotion comes to you. You do not come to the emotion. Yes, emotion emerges from the conversation" (Returning, 01/31/2023). Both of us were living with our emotions, witnessing emotions going through our queer bodies despite the different physical space and time (i.e. different states, different time zones, different shelters, etc.). However, emotions connected us as one. Emotions e/merged and guided us from and throughout the conversations.

As I was asking Usman about how the conversations between myself and himself/herself, between him/her and himself/herself, between photos and himself/herself affected his/her doing, thinking, feeling in teaching and research, Usman paused and shared:

I enjoyed having this conversation. And I liked that. You didn't write it as an interview; it was like a conversation. Because I feel like we also created a safe space here where I also felt safe and open to talk about it. Let's say, for example, a white queer person, maybe, I might not have been that open with them, because I've always been then; I would have been conscious of how they would have taken my critique of whiteness. I would have thought of, like, not offending them or maybe toning it down a bit for them to be able to process and digest it. So I felt like you created that kind of environment where I was more comfortable and hence more open and honest about things between you and yourself. Yeah, I'm always up for your flexibility in being reflective. (Returning, 01/31/2023)

I came to the "research study" as an immigrant, a queer person of color, a teacher educator, and a researcher. These identities of mine intertwined in the conversations, allowing both of us to feel safe to share our vulnerability. Also, because of the interview-like-a-conversation, Usman felt that he/she did not have to "tone down" in critiquing White queerness. Our identities intertwined in co-creating this safe space, which made our conversations more comfortable, more open, and honest in reflecting about what happened to us.

Usman then came back to the concept of in-between-ness and posited,

I never feel like, I am like, I have arrived. I am something like this. I feel like I'm always in the process of becoming something. So I never feel like, even right now, I never feel like, "Okay, I have achieved queer pedagogy and this is it and I'm going to be like this forever". So, I always self-critique, self-reflect. I go back in the past, in the present and think about the future, the timelessness. I'm always doing it with me, as well. So you

provided me again with an opportunity and I had like a third person's perspective here as well. So that was also helpful to evaluate where I am. And I never think that I am complete or whatever I'm doing is perfect and I just need to regurgitate and reproduce that. That thing I'm always also ever changing and ever evolving because we are dealing with humans, real people and you can't be just the same whether everyone likes you or not. There is no fixed method dealing with that. But when you enter the conversation, that was a bit interesting, like bringing my own personal life, connecting it with teaching, my past life, my childhood. And interestingly, I was able to make sense and make connections and you also helped me make connections like channels, how from he and she I have come to embrace that he/she achieved so alike. (Returning, 01/31/2023)

Usman shared that he/she had the "third perspective" from our conversation, which might refer to another idea that, in addition to the perspectives of Usman and Ethan, there might be another perspective that existed in the in-between-ness in our conversations. Because of the third perspective, Usman would be able to channel through, reflect on, connect, and make sense of the different events of childhood, personal life, and teaching. These channels, under the form of research-like-a-conversation-and-vice-versa, provided Usman with a platform to "embrace" intersectional and complex identities. Therefore, in the next section, we are going to trace back Usman's developing his/her (queer and emotional) identities through childhood, personal life, as well as the teaching approach documented in different interviews.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

Never did our conversation come to an end, but it opened endless possibilities for co-becomingness in us–Usman and Ethan. Usman felt that he/she had never arrived. The

destination was not defined in the response, either. For Ethan, it was not necessary to

define the destination. The destination could be Usman's and Ethan's endlessly-

becoming queer identities; it could be Usman's and Ethan's ever-changing queer

pedagogy; it could be another chance in another spacetime for them to reflect and

become differently again and again. There is not a fixed destination for them. There is

not a fixed form of the final or the arrival. The destination is always evolving, changing,

and becoming, and so are queer identities. As Anzaldúa (2002) state:

Nothing is fixed. The pulse of existence, the heart of the universe is fluid. Identity, like a

river, is always changing, always in transition, always in nepantla. Like the river

downstream, you're not the same person you were upstream. You begin to define yourself

in terms of who you are becoming, not who you have been. (p. 556)

Usman and Ethan could be reiteratively refining their becomingness in such a queer way.

Critical Family History

In the process of tracing Usman's identities, we are going to trace what happened in
Usman's life and think with him/her in each moment to explore how life events contributed to
his/her life values, philosophy, and teaching.

Love is confusion

Usman was the only son in a big, five-sister, religious family in Pakistan. Usman's father
was a businessman, but not very extremist religious. Usman grew up in a family that he/she
would "cross-dress, have female characters play, and everyone knew about it" because his/her
family would think that he/she would grow up "like a man and be masculine" (Walking,

01/17/2023). Usman was surrounded by girls and women and Usman's father would "let him do whatever" (Walking, 01/17/2023). He/she would have freedom to pick up a girl's song and dance with it. However, when Usman grew up, he/she received a lot of criticism, especially from his/her female literature teachers whom he/she considered as role models. People would critique him/her why he/she was not standing or shaking hands in a certain way, why he/she was not playing sports, leading him/her to get puzzled and disillusioned to "try to fit in and try to be masculinity in a phase" (Walking, 01/17/2023) to please everyone.

I then shared with Usman that my mother dressed me up like a girl until three or four and nobody would recognize that I was a male. My mom wanted everyone to believe that I was her daughter. Usman responded to my story by sharing that he/she was blaming his/her father later in a therapy session because he was able to reflect that the father was "so dismissive, always working and earning money and would not get involved" in educating Usman. Usman's father would make assumptions that Usman would grow up as a man and obviously "knew" how to play sports, which later he complained that "my boy is not manly enough" (Walking, 01/17/2023). Even Usman's sisters dressed him up and did makeup for him/her at the beginning and did not have any problems with Usman being effeminate. Because of that, Usman found love and acceptance confusing. Usman later frustratingly raised a question, "Why did they let me be so for many years?" (Walking, 01/17/2023). We paused for a moment before moving on because I did not know how to respond to that question.

Queer Exhaustion

Usman offered another perspective about queerness. Usman shared that, in addition to not being normal, queerness experienced internal discrimination. For example, straight acting and

transphobia, sissy femme phobia were "very common in gay circles" and Usman did not identify with this discrimination. Queerness, for Usman, did not have to follow the homo-normativity and hetero-normativity. Usman felt he/she was "an anomaly in everyday life and it was quite exhausting". Usman shared,

> I feel like when you have to be non-normative against the grain all the same, and it makes you tired, like, you know, you're like, "Oh my God, Why do I always have to be like, different" and like, opposite of everyone and like, I would just rather be. (Walking, 01/17/2023)

Not only did queerness face external homophobia from the heteronormative side, it was also challenged by internal homophobia within the queer community. The discrimination by both parties exhausted queer individuals. I also shared with Usman that queer identities were being policed and monitored, controlled, as well as had to act in a certain way to be "queer". Simultaneously, Usman responded that we had to be conscious of who we were and of our identities all the time in order to be accepted. He/she emphasized, "Queerness is never a given. It is never unmarked. However, it's always marked. You have to think about yourself so much" (Walking, 01/17/2023). Therefore, Usman tried to "do less and less now and did not give a damn about things. Queerness has always been there" (Walking, 01/17/2023).

Later, Usman shared that he/she completely embraced his/her queerness despite the fact that people would make fun of him/her for "not being masculine or being effeminate enough" (Walking, 01/17/2023). He/she no longer found these remarks offensive; instead, Usman "literally own[ed] it" and the fluid, back-and-forth movement between male and female

happened "so much in [his/her] language and sometimes switch[ed] into the non-binary thing"

(Walking, 01/17/2023). He stated,

> I feel like I just don't want to be policed and told by anyone what to do or what not to do,
> even if even in the queer community. I am not gonna say that queer communities are all
> embracing welcoming, there are so many do's and don'ts, even in the queer community.
> So I just, I just don't want to be policed in any way. I just want to be, like, relaxed, like,
> no one telling me how to be what to do. (Walking, 01/17/2023)

Usman reached a point of his/her own understanding and created an agency for him/her. His/her queer identities no longer waited for others to accept; rather, Usman accepted his/her queer identities, so that he/she could feel relaxed and liberated in his/her life.

Queer Ladder

Usman continuously emphasized the message that queer community is hierarchical, racist, and divided. In the Southwest of the United States where Usman was living during his/her study, Usman witnessed racism in the gay community. He/she shared:

> White gays here are so racist and because of the generational wealth that they have
> inherited. They are very high up in that ladder where queer people of color do not even
> come near it and there's a lot of discrimination and racism there. So and I don't even, I'm
> queer in that way, too. I don't even, I don't even identify with them and not just don't not
> only identify with them, I don't want to live there. Like I don't even look up to
> them. Like you know there would be many gays who would want to copy white gays that
> all have to be like this. If they are wearing this, I have to wear this. I have to act like this.
> (Walking, 01/17/2023)

From Usman's description, there was a dividedness in queer community due to ethnicity, racism, classism, and capitalism. These factors caused separation, dividedness, and hierarchy within the queer community, which later caused Usman to feel like an outsider in the gay community. Usman's friends made fun of him/her because he/she did not "do drugs, go to orgies and stuff like that" (Walking, 01/17/2023). In other words, Usman did not conform to "the norms of the queer community", which made him/her as an outsider of the community (Walking, 01/17/2023).

Further, Usman negated the fact that queerness is "one single identity" and is utopia. He/she said that queer world was not perfect and reminded queer individuals of "doing an internal kind of auditing ourselves" (Walking, 01/17/2023). He posited,

> Because we are a minority doesn't mean we can't do anything wrong. So we need to kind of do some introspection being clear. Just because we are a minority doesn't mean we are immune and we can do anything and get away with it. (Walking, 01/17/2023)

Usman particularly stated that not many people were talking about what was happening inside the queer community and he/she wanted me to "bring it up in the dissertation" to share that being queer was "not just black and white, like queer versus straight". Then, Usman shared an example of his/her dating in the United States where non-White people did not receive "a lot of likes" in the dating apps because "people just had their own biases" and those who did not have biases, "they would just want to have sex with you and that they have exotic size interpretation of this brown person" (Walking, 01/17/2023). Usman lived in a very dominantly White area in a big city in the Southwest of the United States; therefore, he/she could witness that there were "two extremes and either completely ignored or fetishized as a brown person" (Walking, 01/17/2023).

Usman's life has found love and acceptance in his/her family and personal life confusing, unjust, and exhausting. Moving from the confusion of love from the family, especially the lack of support from his/her dad to the hierarchy in the gay/queer community that caused emotional exhaustion, Usman used those experiences into the classroom with a hope of doing something differently to challenge the norms, i.e., queering the classrooms.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning:

> *Throughout the conversation, Ethan spoke less and allowed a space for Usman to express his/her emotions, feelings, and thinking. Although Ethan added their lived experience to connect with Usman, the conversation appears that Usman used the space to share his/her perspectives about how queer identities are controlled and discriminated, which caused confusion, outrage, and exhaustion to him/her.*

> *In the in-between-ness, Usman ran into a clash of realities (i.e., his/her childhood reality, his/her queerness in the reality of queer world, his/her anger in the conversation with him/herself and Ethan). In this clash, Usman would be able to see through the "feelings of disgust, bitterness, disillusionment, and betrayal class, spatter, and scatter in all direction. The emotions flare through the body" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 563). In this clash, Usman felt seen for what he/she had been through. In this clash, Usman did not feel alone by him/herself. Usman was able to confront him/herself in the process of thinking-feeling (Massumi, 2015), a doubleness of perception to think and feel in "the immediacy of its occurrence" (p. 6). In this thinking-feeling process, Usman recognized what love meant in his/her families and societies (i.e., Pakistan and the U.S).*

In this clash of thinking-feeling and analyzing, Usman's becomingness became different. The intertwining of emotions, rationality, and queerness came out, allowing him/her to feel again and make sense of his/her experience.

Queering Power and Safe Space in the Classroom

Usman acknowledged that "teaching is an emotional profession" (Walking, 01/17/2023). Usman had been a teacher all of his/her life since he/she was a kid pretending to be a teacher. He/she stated, "Teaching is in my blood or in my sexuality" (Walking, 01/17/2023). Specifically, Usman taught literature at high school and first-year writing undergraduate-level courses. He/she liked this profession because he/she could have "power and got to control being a teacher and become the boss to decide everything" (Walking, 01/17/2023). Usman explained:

> Being powerless all of my life and I think I got addicted to that and how I can use and exploit (may have some negative connotation) this power dynamic to just be me and give my students that they would not get otherwise in other courses. Like my career agenda, but not like, out and about, but being queer here. I am using it like being different, like being queer. I am using it in a feminist way, like being nice, not being that masculine, punitive approach to teaching. (Walking, 01/17/2023)

It could be understood from Usman's explanation that the power he/she mentioned did not try to overwhelm and punish students but in a sense that uplifted and gave students the power of being cared for and treated nicely. Usman gave an example about a late submission from his/her student. Usman gave another chance for a male student to submit a midterm assignment late after Usman knew about the family situation that the student was facing. For the student,

"that was so shocking for him" (Walking, 01/17/2023). He was shocked by the kindness, love, and compassion in the feminist teaching. Once the late assignment was marked, Usman could get "that kind of warmth and happiness" from the student when he/she ran into the student. That had been his/her "queer agenda which had nothing to do with sexuality" (Walking, 01/17/2023), but he/she could transform his/her powerlessness in the patriarchal world to his/her own classroom, and that was "kind of being queer there" (Walking, 01/17/2023).

I would be able to connect Usman's family stories and upbringing to understand the reason why he/she approached the teaching that way. I stated, "You brought the family's way of thinking to work with your students, and kindness and compassion are so important, and that was part of the emotion, as well. You gave students the feeling of being accepted" (Walking, 01/17/2023). Usman stated, "My teaching is very reactionary. I would be, like, anti-patriarchal and anti-masculine and whatever the authoritative non-sense" (Walking, 01/17/2023).

From Usman's queer teaching agenda, his/her teaching challenged the norms in the Pakistan teaching context embedded in the patriarchal ideology. Therefore, the idea of having power to control patriarchal-heteronormative-authoritative-masculine acts in Usman's classroom came to make sense to me: the power to queer the classroom and create another chance to learn.

After talking for a while in the first interview, Usman looked straight to my face and said, "Ethan, you made me angry!". I responded, "Why? Are you angry at myself or yourself?". Usman said, "You brought up anger in me!" (Walking, 01/17/2023). For me, that was a compliment because Usman could feel safe enough to share his/her observations, critique, and honest feedback with me. As I said at the beginning with Usman, the queer walking meditation was a safe space for us to talk and express ourselves freely and to queer the research study

process that blurred the researcher, the researched, and the academic study. As such, because of the safe space created from the beginning and throughout the conversations, Usman acknowledged his/her anger naturally. For me, the shared space was built upon the foundation of non-judgement, acceptance, and genuine listening to one another. As Usman shared from the beginning, he/she felt so comfortable moving from "he" to "she" and vice versa in our conversations. In other words, his/her queer identities are not being judged; rather, Usman's queerness was reaffirmed and acknowledged throughout the conversations.

As the safe space is being discussed, Usman has shown attempts to build a safe space in the classroom. Therefore, we will trace where safe spaces looked like in his/her queer pedagogy.

Nurturing Student-Teacher Relationships in Safe Space

For Usman, his/her classroom is a safe space for him/her and his/her students. Usman explained that the academic discussions paid attention to students such as creating accommodations for students to share vulnerability and weaknesses, but Usman felt like he/she also benefited from and gained support from the students. Usman posited:

It's not just the teacher only dealing with students emotionally. I feel like students also deal with teachers' emotions. And I also put myself out there so, unlike most teacher identities, you know, where the teacher is the strong character, the anchor in the classroom, like I am not like that. I am also emotional. So, yeah, so I developed this kind of relationship with students. (Returning, 01/31/2023)

Usman pointed out an important reminder that both teachers and students were dealing with each other's emotions. The teachers were not always the strong characters and anchors, but they were

emotional, as well. The way that Usman built the relationship with students was to stress the human's emotions and not to neglect his/her emotions.

For Usman, it would be "very sacred even if we are not connected" (Returning, 01/31/2023). He/she explained that the relationship ended when the courses ended; however, when teachers created an everlasting relationship with students, the relationship never came to an end. Usman gave an example of how a female student sent him/her a Happy Birthday wish on Instagram after they had not met each other for a long time, especially because of COVID. The student said that Usman was her favorite person in the world and she was not expressive like that before, which made Usman surprised to hear from her. This example provided how emotions stick and lasted until the end of the course because of the mutual relationship.

In another example in the second interview, Usman shared a story of Rafi. Rafi was a very kind of straight, heteronormative dude and presented everything that was normal and straight. Usman shared that Rafi and Usman would have "very long arguments" in a safe space classroom. Usman stated,

> I feel like we do not cross that bridge, queer versus non-queer, and therefore, we remain in those categories and boxes. So, in my classes, I was bringing students towards that in between so we would have a lot of arguments with him. Arguments were on the same level; it would not be any kind of power imbalance in those discussions. Although I hated Rafi most because I would have had the most arguments with him, I feel like deep down, both of us loved each other most because it was like a love-hate relationship. (Sitting, 01/18/2023)

What Usman shared was to queer the binary of thinking in teaching between queer and non-queer students. In other words, Usman did not avoid the intense conversation, but Usman taught to the tension and was ready for the arguments with Rafi to come to an understanding, created in a safe space for all of them. The love-hate relationship signified a paradoxical situation where the mixture of emotions was demonstrated to cross "the bridge" of mutual understanding of queer/straight, male/female, and teacher/student. Also, a noticeable point in Usman's response was the concept of power was reiterated, which signified how power could be used differently in the classrooms. In other words, the hierarchy and power between students and teacher was disrupted; students were given power to speak up and express their ideas about what they did not know and thereby creating knowledge after the discussion.

I then applauded what Usman did because the arguments ignited excitement and spread affect to the whole classroom. When I was about to move on to the next idea, Usman interrupted me right away and shared an interesting outcome of Rafi's story. Specifically, Usman shared that Rafi was westernized and changed his name into a script rather than in an Arabic way previously. But then, when he was studying at a college in the United State where he served in the Student Council, he was wearing the traditional Sherlock clothes in a profile picture displayed in the school website. Usman excitedly shared,

> That was no coincidence. That's me. That's because of me. I could never have imagined
> him wearing Sherlock back in Pakistan, but he was very similar to me in the US and
> during that very picture for the Students Union Instagram, [University] Instagram page,
> and I feel like that is I have transferred my queerness and queerness I do not mean like

the sexuality queerness but not being normal, or like you're not challenging the status

quo. (Sitting, 01/18/2023)

Usman right away apologized for cutting me off, but I found this explanation amazing and

interesting. I was glad that he cut me off because then I could learn from his/her perspectives

about queerness. It went beyond gender and sexuality, but was more about challenging the status

quo, not being normal, as what Usman defined from the beginning.

Later, Usman continued sharing with me about the queering outcome of the teaching with

Rafi. Usman shared that Rafi's mother came to ask Usman: "What have you done to him? Like,

he talked about you all the time? Like, he never used to do that. Have you changed your teaching

methodology?" (Sitting, 01/18/2023). Usman was so surprised for the comment, but Usman

anticipated that Rafi was kind of "steal [Usman]'s idea and maybe secretly being influenced by it

and then kind of using them at another place" (Sitting, 01/18/2023). I was excited to share with

Usman that Usman had successfully queered Rafi's perspectives and actions and how the aspect

of queerness and emotions came together that still stayed with both of them after the class in

Pakistan and moved to the colleges in the United States.

Undoing Power in Safe Space

The concept of undoing power returned in the third interview. In this conversation, we

delved deeper into how the concept of power was undone in pre-mindset colonized English

language classrooms. Usman stated,

I do use my power to subvert power, like I do assert power in a way to undo it, like you

know, even to undo power, you need some power, like a totally powerless person cannot

undo power. I don't know, does it sound very paradoxical? (Resting, 01/24/2023)

Usman continued to explain that to undo power needs "some kinds of access, some kind of

privilege" (Resting, 01/24/2023). Usman was perceived with power in class as a physical

appearance as a male teacher in a patriarchal society where teaching is respected; therefore,

Usman would be able to use that power to undo the power of hierarchy in the classroom.

While listening to Usman, I was reminded of Paulo Freire and bell hooks. I shared how

Paulo Freire aimed to create a democracy classroom and bell hooks tried to build a feminist

classroom where students and teachers were engaged in uncomfortable conversations to see

in/justice in the classroom. I related to what Usman shared and saw the connection among

Usman's undoing-power, Freire's pedagogy of oppressed, and hooks' feminist classrooms. In the

triangulation, I asked Usman, "Where does queerness come out?" (Resting, 01/24/2023).

Usman responded by connecting the position of English teachers in Pakistan as the power

and privilege holders because that profession was associated with the colonial legacy. Usman

furthered the discussion by sharing that his/her physical appearance was not viewed as "non-

binary" for students. For students, Usman was a cisgender straight male person, so Usman could

access a lot of power. Because of that, Usman used that kind of power and privilege to "undo

power in the sense to criticize the very nature of the soul and in the classroom by asking the

questions like, Why are we forced to learn English? Why are we doing English literature, not

literature of our indigenous languages? Why so much obsession over that?" (Resting,

01/24/2023). The safe space created by Usman and their students allowed them to open up what they would think about these questions, to process what questions meant to them, and thereby students would be able to "protect" Usman (Resting, 01/24/2023).

In Usman's classrooms, both Usman and students felt safe and free to not only challenge the English language and the status quo, but Usman wanted to teach students to become critical thinkers by asking students to criticize him/her as a queer teacher, themselves as students, power dynamics in the classrooms, and to explore how to undo power in the classroom. Usman added,

> Because being queer, I live outside, I'm ostracized. I am outside of the hetero-patriarchal power matrix. because I know that I do not have or I can have. By the way, I can share that power by passing off as straight by marrying a woman because many people keep queer people do that in Pakistan. I can very well-share that power, but I know that I'm not going to do that. By being queer, so if I come out as queer that power is going to ostracize me and exclude me, terrorize me. So, because I know that, and that is why I feel like because I know that I don't, I don't belong in that matrix. I am more willing to and readily criticize it and do it. And on the opposite end, the straight cisgender people, because they are enjoying the very privileges of those powers, they are not motivated to go against that power because that power benefits them. So, I think that the queerness and the power element kind of conflicts here. (Resting, 01/24/2023)

This juxtaposition of queerness, straight acting, and use of power was complicated in Usman's response. The queering approach now moved beyond gender and sexuality; rather, it embraced, inquired, and challenged Usman's positionality, hetero-patriarchal ideology, nuclear family,

privileges of heteronormativity, and courageousness to act and undo powers on Usman. Usman chose to stay and live with his/her identity regardless of exclusion and ostracization of society. Usman, in other words, empowered his/her identity and was ready to criticize not only the Pakistani society but also the ideology that caused consequences to those who shared the same queer identities as him/her.

In addition, when Usman shared about living outside of the hetero-patriarchal matrix, that statement was so powerful that it reminded me of another acknowledgement later in the fourth interview. I stated,

So queer teachers are always an outsider. We never come to zero. We're moving, thinking, reflecting and questioning the so-called normalcy, which continues to restrict our identity and emotion. So for me, as a queer teacher myself and as a queer person of color, I don't think that we ever belong to any group, right? I must say, I don't think that I belong to any group of community, and somehow that was my stand: not inside nor outside, but only less than in between. And because the more that I'm thinking about queerness, every time that I think about fitness, I think about my positionality, and I think about my positionality and emotion together. And every time that I'm thinking about emotion, queerness and positionality I'm thinking about, you know, normalcy. Because those kinds of like concepts, kind of like, restrict the identity and emotion of us and me in public. I, I kind of have to encounter emotional labor, the feeling wounds, to kind of act in a certain way, you know? (Returning, 01/31/2023)

Both Usman and I are excluded in the circle of normalcy. We do not belong to any groups of community, even within our queer community. We are neither insiders nor outsiders. We are in-between-ers. Our positionality, sexuality, emotionality are always intertwined and revolving in order to keep moving, thinking, reflecting, resisting, contesting to be able to live, survive, exist in public, in a reality that we do not belong to. The emotions that were used for laboring and serving the public acceptance, the wounds that were hurt and cut by the hetero-patriarchal ideologies, the identities that were restricted, policed, monitored, and prohibited to share come together in this exclusion, creating an in-between-ness that we would be able to feel safe and free to be ourselves In this in-between world, we were brave warriors that use emotion and queerness as a shield to protect us from lawful damages on our queer bodies.

Coming back to the conversation about the exclusion of the hetero-patriarchal society, I shared with Usman that he/she was "really brave". I explained that Usman created a safe space for students and himself/herself. I acknowledge the safe space occurred in the in-between-ness:

> The in-between-ness is the answer and is another form of safe and courageous space, you know, for us, queer people, queer teachers. We see the in-betweenness as kind of like a shelter, a refuge, for us, so that we can come back and move from there, don't you think? (Resting, 01/24/2023)

We then wrapped up the conversation, but the in-between-ness served as the shelter for us to come back, talk, hug, and share vulnerability and acknowledge each other's identities developed throughout multiple stages and phases in our lives. We came out this space to become warriors to continue this fight for us and people like us. We are queer nepantleras.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

The safe space was in the in-between-ness; the in-between-ness created a safe space. I as the researcher now understand why the idea of in-between-ness kept occurring in our conversations, especially when we were re-turning. The idea of in-between-ness occurred, reiterated, and moved around and within our conversations, guiding and situating our conversations in different spacetimes. In other words, not only did Usman and Ethan live within the in-between-ness, we in-between-ers developed our third perspectives to think through, share, learn, and feel with each other.

In the world of nepantla, our emotions were not hidden thanks to its non-judgementality. Rather, emotions are genuinely unfolded, exposed, critiqued, and unlearned. Borrowing Usman's words, we undid the power of public emotions to come back to our own selves. Both Ethan and Usman' emotions no longer needed to wear the mask metaphorically. They were now bare, naked, and vulnerable to each other. They were both successful crossing the bridge of academic research that they would be able to live, feel, and think through with each other. A "sense experience" (Anderson, 2009) connected them so queerly that their emotions came together–inseparably (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

For Ethan, the conversation with Usman completely changed their perspective. Ethan was inspired by Usman's queer and emotional pedagogy to confront the power. Usman approached teaching in the most feminist and queerest way that he/she could by turning a hostile and traditional context in Pakistan to a safe space where students were taken care of, challenged, and would be able to think differently about sexism, heteronormativity, and transphobia. The effects of emotions did not stop after the courses ended; rather, it

stayed with Usman's students and changed the way that students presented themselves in

the world (e.g., Rafi).

In addition, the perspective of power was refined. Power was given (back) to the teacher

to transform, or queer, students' thinking and perspectives and doing in and beyond the

classroom. Using Usman's word "a powerless person in the society" (i.e., queer, person

of color in a challenging, oppressive context), I learned that Usman used power to

educate students. The concept of undoing power in Usman's queer agenda was to include

his/her identity into the classroom to challenge the predetermination and fixity of

cultural, educational, and social power in their own space. In other words, Usman

empowered him/herself in this becomingness-as-process to reconstruct and refined what

power meant for queer teachers of color in his/her own teaching and social context.

Queering Time

As we were about to close the conversations, we returned to the final interview. I shared

with Usman that we both moved from walking meditation, sitting meditation, resting, and

returning. I excitedly shared that it was "very interesting to start pulling things together and

found that time is out of joint" and acknowledged that "each moment is an infinite multiplicity"

(Returning, 01/31/2023). Usman also agreed with me that we both experienced things

temporarily and temporarily is something "different and is not linear as we think because we

keep experiencing things from our past, sometimes our future, too" (Returning, 01/31/2023).

I then came back to make a connection about each moment where Usman built the

relationship with his/her students. In the moments of rethinking about the past events, Usman

would be able to see the multiplicity of reasons why Usman chose a particular way of approaching the teaching as well as representing him/herself. I shared with Usman that we often think that time should be about one minute and each minute has 60 seconds, but if we redirected our thinking from cultural, social, and queering perspectives, we would be able to see the connections of emotions and actions in each second. In other words, time contained a lot of things inside that we did not know, but for sure it contained our emotions, which were demonstrated through the walking and sitting meditation that we both went through together.

Usman agreed with me that time has a straight version and linear and he/she liked the idea of queering the time. Usman came back to the idea of power that was a "non-material that cannot be verified" (Returning, 01/31/2023). Usman explained:

> Yes. I think, like the very idea of what power is very hetero, patriarchal, and especially when people say things like, "more power to you". If someone says that like you know, I don't really like that thing, like when people say more power to you, many people do that because I feel like, again, they are propagating the idea of like power in a very hetero patriarchal way. And in that way, they want everyone to be powerful, like a heterosexual person, like you know, the concept of power there. So, this power that I'm talking about is like very powerless from that heterosexual fame but they wouldn't even consider it power and wishes so yeah. (Returning, 01/31/2023)

The concept of power came back to our conversations again. Here, the concept of power was defined in a hetero-patriarchal way. This perspective was a reminder to ask questions: Who defined power? Whose power does it belong to? and How is power used by those who are the

power holders? It was such a powerful statement that Usman tapped on, which was something overlooked: the powerless person situated in and existed in the heterosexual, heteronormative, and patriarchal perspectives. Therefore, it would be interesting to think about how power would work, how it could be refined, and how it could affect people involved in the context of the hetero-patriarchal and in-between world.

Later, I argued with Usman that power is materialized as well because of how teachers used our queer identities to work with students, which are different bodies in the classrooms. Usman explained that in the sense of the heterosexual perspectives, it would be like non-material because "they would not be able to measure it, verify it in a way for them to see it would be" (Returning, 01/31/2023). For Usman, power was associated with emotions, which was concrete materials in queering the classrooms. For Usman, power and emotions could be used to undo and disrupt the hetero-patriarchy and to unstabilize the definiteness of such ideology. When asked how to unstabilize what was set definitively, Usman used an example of spooning the pyramid:

> I use a metaphor like, for example, there's a big monument like a pyramid, Egyptian pyramids, and you're trying to break those pyramids with a spoon to try challenging hetero patriarchy. I always felt like we are trying to do that, like, trying to break a very majestic monument. You can think of any big monument like a pyramid or that's what I can think of right now. And you're trying to break it down. And how you're doing it with a spoon, you just have to spoon. And it's gonna be very slow. It's gonna take a lot of time. But maybe if there are a lot of other spoons with you, it may increase the process of undoing that. But at least this is how I always feel like it's, it's very small, very insignificant, but it is something there. So even in my classes I don't want to come across

as like a very radical revolutionary teacher that I'm doing this with. I feel like it's still yet

like just a drop in the ocean. But it's a drop, nonetheless. (Returning, 01/31/2023)

The metaphor of spooning an Egyptian pyramid was powerful. This action came back to the

notion of queering the classroom, the society, and the time. This act of queering was built on the

attempt of doing something differently, although it would take a lot of time and contribute a very

small, insignificant part to undo the power, the ideology that we had been discussing.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

Despite challenges in Usman's life, Usman proved the point that he/she invested in

his/her teaching by undoing and challenging the (hetero-patriarchal) norms with a

(teaching) spoon. In other words, Usman's power was charged and ignited by moving

from seeing injustice from his/her childhood, personal life, and teaching to making a

lifetime commitment to doing something differently in his/her own safe space. Who

knows, Usman had been living a life of an in-between-er, teaching in the in-between-ness,

and developing his/her third perspectives in a non-linear spacetime. Who knows, Usman

had been spooning the pyramids from a very early age without recognizing it. Who

knows, Usman had been undoing power in his/her entire life that the power had spread in

his/her family members and students in multiple spacetimes. However, I as a researcher

know that my own queer pyramid was moved and cracked after the conversation.

Figure 9

Ethan re-turned this time to create an artwork to represent the fluidity of Usman's queerness and

his/her ideology of undoing power in every single step of his/her life. The pink and grey balls

represent non-binary universes where both were staying, living, feeling, and thinking with each

other. The circle of non-binarism reiteratively re-turned and intra-acted to make Usman's queer

identities queerer. The fragility of writing-with (Manning, 2016), thinking-with, and feeling-with

allowed me to go beyond the comfort zone to create the artefact, even though I had no arts-based

background. However, Usman had been with me the whole time while I created this work.

Usman's thoughts, identities, and queerness taught me to play with im/possibilities, with queer

joy, with creativity so that I could come and see Usman and unfold his/her pyramid deeply.

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Olivia and Ethan

Figure 10

Three in one: Ethan, Olivia, and rebirth: This picture is created by the combination of Ethan's past self after the first interview with Olivia on January 14th, 2023. The first conversation with Olivia completely changed Ethan's perspective. Ethan felt and related to the pain that Olivia shared, but Ethan would never be able to fully understand the pain that Olivia was going through. Ethan needed to take a walk in the park with Shiba. The water and the sun next to the lake calmed Ethan down. They were in tears. They were in pain. They were lost. They would not know how to process their thinking and emotions. They took a picture of the sun that hoped to ease the pain inside. In Figure 10, there are two Olivias representing the brave journey of who Olivia is. The upside-down and two-sided beautiful eyes and hair partially represent her in the most respectful way when I, Ethan as a current researcher, created her picture in this section.
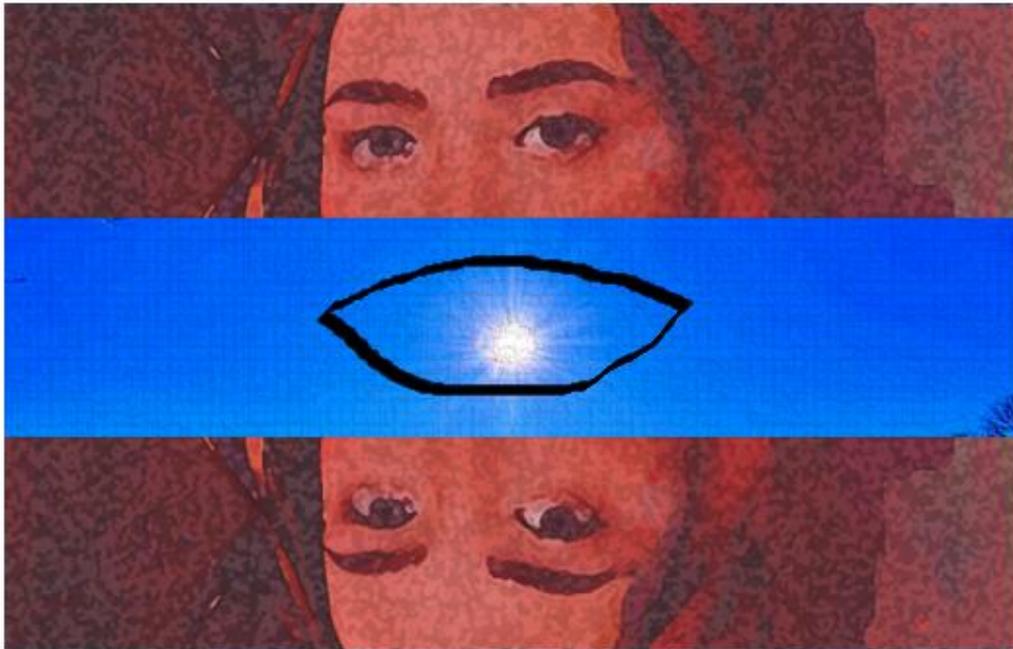
"It is really like a Privilege to be Alive"

I always started the conversation with Olivia by sharing with her how much I appreciated and learned from and with her. Every time I talked with her, my heart always felt "painful and lost" (Walking, 01/14/2023), "frustrated but also felt inspired and motivated at the same time" (Sitting, 01/29/2023), "complicated and heartbroken at the same time" (Resting, 02/04/2023), and "happy because Olivia was still alive" (Returning, 02/06/2023). In return, Olivia always responded with a nod, a smile, and a thank-you note to let me know that she was also appreciative that her stories contributed something to this study.

In the final interview, as I was sharing that I was happy to see her alive and that talking with her helped me "appreciate more about seeing my loved one every day, appreciate their being, and appreciate each moment with people we love, because the line between life and death [was] so thin" (Returning, 02/06/2023). Olivia agreed with me that the line between life and death was so thin, but hearing my sharing made her happy. She used to be a big fan of birthdays, but now she always wanted to celebrate something like just a cake or Happy Birthday singing, because "it is really a privilege to be alive. It is a gift" (Returning, 02/06/2023). I was in agreement with her and reiterated the message that we had to enjoy each moment in this life because we never knew what was going to happen in the next minute, especially in the context of "political risk, harm, and threat for the marginalized queer community" (Returning, 02/06/2023).

As being asked about the connection of emotion and teaching, Olivia responded that she agreed that emotions connected with culture, politics, and agency. She further explained that in her pronunciation class:

This language [English] does not belong to anyone. We're dealing with the lingua franca. And this language is theirs, as well. So I've tried to deconstruct these notions of nativeness and non-nativeness that belong to a certain group and that some groups are inherently better than others. And I think we have a new sense of agency. (Returning, 02/06/2023).

The sense of agency, for her, disrupted the notion of native-speakerism in English language teaching. The sense of agency was reflected through the notion of belonging. She explained: "Students have their own agency, too. First, they understand their own English and their own accent and then learn how to do with that" (Returning, 02/06/2023). She then gave an example that as students were interning in an international setting, they had an agency to choose the word choice and speech that help them communicate with people from various parts of the world. Moving from understanding themselves (their own English and accent) to the practical use in an international setting, Olivia showed that the learner's identity needed to be embraced in real life.

As I was listening to Olivia, I was wondering if there was any connection between her teaching and personal life. She was laughing and told me that was a very good question and was not sure if she could articulate a satisfactory answer. She shared that she had been very interested in teaching pronunciation because she "was a loner" (Returning, 02/06/2023). She stated:

Because, to me, it was about tapping into people's identities and who they were and how they wanted to be perceived in the world. Because sometimes, you know, you naturally speak a certain way but in a certain context, you may want to change or to make adaptations or modifications to your accent and sound in a different way because you feel

you need to be more respected, you'd need to be more valued. So I've always been

interested in that. And that is a direct reflection of society. So I'm not sure, so. I've always

been interested in how society and language are intertwined. Well, there isn't a language

if there is some society, right? I can't develop my own system. But to make this

connection, language and societies are very interesting and now I am looking at it,

studying and trying to unveil as much as I can. (Returning, 02/06/2023)

In Olivia's response, I was stuck with the statement of herself being lonely in life. The loneliness

somehow guided her in appreciating the learners' identities. Their identity was an important part

in the intertwining connection of language and society. Olivia truly focused on the three

important aspects of this connection in English language teaching: respect, values, and

flexibility. These three factors iteratively returned in the conversations, which pushed me to

think about her writing reflections.

In the reflections, the words "activism", "treated equally, respectfully with dignity" were

associated with her writing. Throughout the conversations, I felt that Olivia was constantly

looking for equity, respect, and dignity in her spacetimes. Gradually, she became an activist for

herself and students. She responded that there were different kinds of activism. Her viewpoint of

activism in teaching was not only peaceful protests but also "make a difference to have a better

society and having a better society start[ed] with people" (Returning, 02/06/2023).

As the topic about activism was touched on, I connected violence and emotions that

impacted queer bodies and queer teachers of color in the classroom. Olivia acknowledged, "It's

sometimes difficult to express emotion because we were queer creatures. We were held to

standards that perhaps other people [were] not. We have to be, like, super professional and we never have any flaws" (Returning, 02/06/2023). For Olivia, emotions were associated with the standards that queer teachers of color had to always reach because of societal pressure. I was wondering what those standards were and why these standards had power on deciding what queer bodies of color needed to do. I was also wondering why professional settings would not allow emotions to occur. Olivia responded that emotions were seen "as something less than important" (Returning, 02/06/2023), especially working with children whose emotions should be acknowledged and respected.

Later, Olivia pointed out that being a role model as a queer teacher of color in the classroom is exhausting. Both of us shared the same feeling because queer teachers of color had to do the free labor work for capitalism. Our emotions were exhausted. Olivia shared an experience in which she was invited to a school to discuss issues trans people were facing. She then asked for compensation for the talk and the school did not move forward with the talk. We were both angrily questioning at the same time about the price our queer bodies had paid "throughout the years of oppression, violence, hardship, difficulties, barriers, everything" (Returning, 02/06/2023). We were always running, working, trying to meet heteronormative standards, and ignoring our bodies and emotions. As a survivor herself, Olivia emphasizes on the ideas of resting and building a sense of peacefulness in herself. The idea of resting, according to Olivia, connected with the past events in order to make sense of them, while becoming a person of understanding, acknowledging, and rationalizing the events to help Olivia find a sense of peacefulness. This peacefulness brought back to the idea of being a survivor herself. Olivia made

a powerful statement that these traumatic events did not "break" her; instead, she became a better person with a sense of peacefulness. I then took her back to this moment when she wrote these lines and asked her: "Olivia, activist, what do you think now about this moment?" (Returning, 02/06/2023). She said:

> I feel this [moment]. I really do. I'm nowhere near where I want to me in life right now. I am going to 37 very soon. I'm nowhere near where I want to be. But, despite the fact that I realize that I still have a long way to go ahead of me. I feel like a winner. (Returning, 02/06/2023)

Olivia was in the process of becoming and she would be able to find confidence in herself and her identity. The idea of continuing growth and self-celebration created a platform for her to refuse anyone who would take away her agency. "Nobody can tell me that I am not a winner, that I haven't won in this fight" (Returning, 02/06/2023). I immediately connected to what she shared about winning her own peacefulness. I stated, "You are the winner of this story because you're the survivor, but also you found the peacefulness, as well" (Returning, 02/06/2023).

The connections about peacefulness mixed with traumatic experiences allowed both of us to see what a sense of agency meant. For Olivia, she talked directly about traumatic events: " I am not going to romanticize those experiences. They were bad and no one should go through these things. But then, kind of forced us to develop a sense of agency that I don't think other people had developed" (Returning, 02/06/2023). For me, agency was tiring because queer people of color had to turn on the survival mode every day. I drew on the experience of trans women of color and discussed the safety for them and acknowledged that trans women of color could not

be "the only one inspiration the whole time" (Returning, 02/06/2023). I was questioning if

anyone ever looked into "what is inside of the tiredness," if anyone was interested in looking into

"the whole process of unpacking the experience, the events, the stories, the emotions of queer

people, especially queer people of color". I shared that queer community always "experienced

double, triple, quadruple oppression" (Returning, 02/06/2023). Because of the agency that we

created for our own, we would be able to survive every day despite hardships facing us.

As we were about to close the final interview, I was asking how the conversation between

my and herself, between her and herself, and between her and photos affected her thinking and

feeling in terms of teaching and research, Olivia responded:

> I think it's an ongoing journey of revisiting a journey of self discovery and a journey of
>
> teaching and learning. So yeah, very, very powerful. Very powerful. I know that you're
>
> about to wrap up the interview stage of your segment. I just wish we had more time so we
>
> could refer some friends to you and have them have this experience, so thank you thank
>
> you. Because it is so good to think about these things and yes, we get to revisit and think
>
> about a lot of difficult moments. And our lives are very high in my mind. But we get to
>
> see that we are here. We survived like we're here. We're queer. We survived and we
>
> survived. There's something very powerful, very powerful in that. (Returning,
>
> 02/06/2023)

Olivia's words empowered me to do research. She stated that this experience was "very

powerful" (repeated multiple times) and wanted to refer to her friend to share the experience.

That was such a compliment for me because I could feel that this experience was meaningful to

her and made her feel seen, heard, and included. The idea of referring to some friends reaffirmed

this experience made her feel safe enough to ask those who shared similar experiences to share theirs: the stories of queer trans survivors who always want to be alive.

In addition to feeling respected for what we had been discussing with each other, Olivia gave me reaffirmation in the approach of doing research differently. I stated:

> You know, I'm thankful for that, you know, because you acknowledge this work, and you acknowledge the experience that we had together. Like I said, I don't know if I'd been reiterating this message, but I don't want to do this kind of research where I just come into space and then take the data away. I just really want to have a deep, deep, deep conversation about us, to see through how we feel, how our emotion shapes our thinking and you know I just don't want to do those kinds of work of the colonizer. I want to do the work of decolonizing the research. (Returning, 02/06/2023)

The mutual feeling occurred throughout the conversations. We had "a deep, deep, deep conversation about us" to see through how we felt and how our emotions shaped our thinking and doing. We both came to the conversations to share our brave queer and trans stories: the story of survivors in extremely hetero, sexist, trans and homophobic societies and English language classrooms. For Olivia, the study was such "a very sensitive approach" (Returning, 02/06/2023) that allowed us to share vulnerability with one another. The powerfulness in Olivia's stories and statements did not only create an agency for me and herself to share ideas back and forth, but the aspects of respectfulness and dignity genuinely connected us emotionally. I also kept the promise that I did not come to the study as a colonizer to take the conversation/stories away. I wanted to honor her feelings, her story, our stories so that we could find our senses of peacefulness.

Writing this "returning section" extensively allowed me to understand which aspect I need to focus on in this section. I will thus trace back to Olivia's story where the evidence of survival was demonstrated. Specifically, I will trace the evidence in her personal life and teaching in the next section. I am now turning to her childhood as the first start.

Critical Family History

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning:

I am stuck. I do not know what to write.

Every time I came back to revisit Olivia's story, I had tears in my eyes.

> *My voice is shaking. My hand is shaking.*

> *I have so many things to talk about Olivia and her brave story, survival, and in-between-ness.*

> *But it was just so painful for me to relive her moment.*

>> *Yes, her moment.*

>> *Each moment is like needle-sharp bolts shot through my skin,*

>>> *Lacerating spacetime to squeeze my heart.*

>> *I am walking through her pain to witness*

>>> *"Conversion therapy" (Walking, 01/14/2023)*

>>> *"Give birth to myself" (Sitting, 01/29/2023)*

>>> *"Life and death" (Resting, 02/04/2023)*

>> *What am I going to do with these traumatic events*

>> *When I have been stuck with them?*

I am sitting in a public space, calling for help.

I am not knowing who I am:

> *Ethan-participant;*

> *Ethan-researcher,*

> *Ethan-human being,*

> *Who am I?*

How could I tackle these emotions?

I am sitting in a public space.

> *-Stuck-*

There's not much about teaching pedagogy from Olivia's story.

> *-Stuck-*

What is the lesson that the readers can learn from?

What is the lesson that I learned?

Definitely not a teaching strategy.

> *-Stuck-*

Rather, it is more like a story of survival that Olivia shared with me, with us.

Her trans body, her willingness to live, to survive, to breathe, to smile.

> *Ahh-Unstuck*

That's a story of her life. That's a lesson of her life.

> *Ahh-Unstuck*

That's a story of embodied lived experience.

> *Ahh-Unstuck*

I am now leaving this mourn, this grief, this sadness.

I will come back to sit with it, to feel with it, to re-live with it.

> *Over and over again.*

> *-Unstuck-*

> *-Stuck-*

> *-Unstuck-*

> *-Stuck-*

After distancing myself from this writing for two days to let my heart recover. I came back to this writing. I acknowledge that I am an emotional person and researcher. I will not be able to detach my emotions with Olivia's story even though the conversations ended a long time ago. From my lived experience and emotions, I could attest how emotions stick and connect pastpresentfuture together. While writing in the in-between-ness space, I found that the three phrases from the poem above (i.e., "Conversion therapy" (Walking, 01/14/2023), "Giving birth to myself" (Sitting, 01/29/2023), "Life and death" (Resting, 02/04/2023)) touched my feelings. In other words, I would not be able to stop thinking about these phrases after a two-day rest. Perhaps, these terms have never left me. They have been there waiting for me to return and talk with them. They are always there in our conversations. Therefore, I will let my emotions lead the way and think with these phrases and see where they will take me to.

"Conversion therapy"

Olivia had a crush on her philosophy teacher in middle school (before the transition) because the teacher was really cute, and Olivia loved the lesson. She wrote in a journal and her sister read it and showed it to her mom, which her mom later took her to the conversion therapy.

Olivia's mother was "not really a Catholic or she wasn't really like an evangelical at the time; she was more like a spiritualistic person" (Walking, 01/14/2023). What people at the temple at that time told her mom was that Olivia did not want to be a trans person, but she was attracted to men only. Olivia explained:

> So, what people would say is that they believed in reincarnation, so your spirit never dies and it comes over many times. And sometimes the person has lived many lives as a woman and is now a man and is struggling to adapt. And that is a spiritual problem. Sometimes this may also be the case of spirits from past lives for enemies and they want you to do that. (Walking, 01/14/2023)

Unfortunately, the notion of reincarnation and the religious beliefs were tremendously affecting Olivia, causing her queer identities as a bad spirit that needed treatment. However, for Olivia, she knew who she was from the beginning: "I was just a kid. And at that time, I knew there wasn't any problem being connected to men. I already had this awareness" (Walking, 01/14/2023).

For Olivia, the conversation therapy was not really traumatic in terms of physical; rather, it was "kind of absurd" (Walking, 01/14/2023). She gave an example that a minister gave a lecture discussing the reincarnations of Indigenous people who "were less advanced in terms of how many reincarnations they have had, so they kind of lived like animals. In evolutionary terms, they were a little behind" (Walking, 01/14/2023). Of course, Olivia found it so offensive and offered an argument that Indigenous people "were actually very much advanced and they had a lot of technology, and in many regards rights in terms of architecture and living and hunting and surviving" (Walking, 01/14/2023). Although she could not win the argument in the

"treatment session", she found the lectures "very much absurd", along with the other ideology that every person had "bad spirits and wanting them to fail and do bad things" (Walking, 01/14/2023).

For Olivia, the issue did not lay on the issue of her (as a boy back then) attracted to men or of her having multiple times of visiting the conversion therapy (i.e., once a week and 8 to 10 times visits); however, the experience was traumatic "because it's like your mother's taking you to a place to essentially try to change who you are, and a part of your identity" (Walking, 01/14/2023). For Olivia, "That was something that I had to process over the years" (Walking, 01/14/2023). For an adult Olivia looking back to a teenager Olivia, she did not do anything wrong (i.e., having a crush on teacher), but she would be able to direct her understanding to her mom where she came from "a place of love and she wants to save her child, but at the same time, love leads to a lot of violence experiences. So that is a good representation of this in-between-ness that we talked about" (Walking, 01/14/2023).

Both Olivia and I were talking and situating in the in-between-ness space. I shared with Olivia that I was glad that she would be able to come to recognize this in-betweenness by sharing her traumatic experience with her mom when she was a teenager. She summed up her feeling that she had constantly processed that experience over the years, and it was a long-lasting, traumatic, unforgettable moment to a young Olivia. I shared with Olivia that I was the person who lived and believed the in-betweenness and the whole research was situated in that space. I acknowledged that as a queer, gender non-conforming person of color, I would not be able to fit in one side, and everything that happened gave me an ability to see double and triple. I shared with her about Gloria Anzaldúa, the nepantla, and her philosophy which I drew from. I shared

with Olivia that "love and violence come hand in hand. Love is also violence. Love appears in the form of violence. There is violence in love" (Walking, 01/14/2023). She responded, "Right, definitely" (Walking, 01/14/2023).

I then shared with Olivia that this study was embedded in the spirituality because I saw emotions and spiritually connected really well with each other when I started writing this study. I thus asked Olivia if she would be able to share her perspectives about the connection of love, violence, and religious beliefs back then and in the current time being.

Olivia emphasized that she did not think anything was inherently wrong with her despite having been struggling with this experience in the early 20s. She discussed reincarnation, believing that "there is something more, but feeling comfortable not knowing what it is". She did believe in higher power and that was why we met. She continued, "I don't think that I was supposed to be alive anymore" (Walking, 01/14/2023). What kept her alive "was also something that is not super healthy, but it was something that was good to me because I disassociated myself from those situations" (Walking, 01/14/2023). She explained:

> It's a lot of times it felt like like I was watching a movie and not really living in my own life. And I think that's that's really what got me here today because here in Brazil, life expectancy for trans people is 35 years old, which is half of the cis-population. When you look at trans people of color, the number drops to 28. So when I was growing up, I always thought I was going to die very young. Like in my early 20s, I always, it wasn't something it didn't come from a morbid place like I want to die and don't want to live. No, it was like, I had this certainty that I was going to die early. But here I am. (Walking, 01/14/2023)

Oliva looked at her life as a movie and described her desire to be alive despite the reality (i.e., life expectancy for trans people). The dilemma and struggle of dying and being alive were fragile, which was not in her control. We then celebrated her life with my coffee and her tea on Zoom. We were both laughing. I said, "let's cheer for your courageousness and bravery to survive" (Walking, 01/14/2023). Then, Olivia responded:

I don't mean to be rude or anything. I take care of your compliment and I really appreciate it, but it's certainly one who will talk about being brave and being courageous. Because how many more were there? There were points that I didn't, I didn't feel brave. I didn't feel courageous. I didn't feel like I had a choice. Like taking certain steps for instance. I don't think it was a choice. I don't think I've ever had the choice. So for instance, it took me many years to transition, many, many years from the moment that I find out that, okay, I'm trans so this is what I am. Until the moment that I actually transitioned over like many, many years. 20 years to be to be exact. I transitioned when I was, sorry, transitioning when I was 33. Now I'm 36. So, because during these years like doing this gap, I thought that I could, even though I, even though I knew I was a woman, I thought that I could live as a male. (Walking, 01/14/2023)

Olivia refused to think that she was brave and courageous. Olivia also believed she did not have a choice. A choice here could be everything in her life: a choice to stay alive, a choice to be courageous, a choice to be brave, or a choice to be her choice. However, from what Olivia shared, she knew she was a trans woman. She made a choice for herself to transition at the age of 33. That choice, for me, was brave and courageous to live a life of what she wanted. She stated:

And that would be kind of my secret. But then, when I was, when I decided okay, no, I'm

going to I'm going to do this. I'm going to give this a shot. I didn't feel like I had a choice

anymore. I felt that the years and all the time like denying myself and denying my

existence. I just lost so much doing that. That I didn't feel like I really had anything to lose.

And of course, it did because things can always get worse. But that was my feeling at that

time. I didn't feel like I had anything to lose anymore because I had already lost so much.

(Walking, 01/14/2023)

A choice to find her lost-self created an agency to make a decision for her life. She did not want

to deny her identity and existence. She did not have anything to lose because she lost so much.

That was Olivia finding her own self. I then shared with her my perspective. I stated:

And you know with a person making that statement, it is showing that person has been

going through a lot. You know? It is, I think, using the word bravery and courageousness is

kind of like give me another thought about yourself. But I think, you know, when people

come into a stage where they don't have a choice, they were not given a choice to make a

decision about what it is, they just have to like to move forward, right? They just have to

move forward with what it was, and if it comes to you, you have to tackle it in order in

order to change your life, or in order to make a milestone of your life. I don't know. I'm

just, I'm listening to you with humble and with honor. (Walking, 01/14/2023)

Olivia responded, "Thank you. That's really sweet of you" (Walking, 01/14/2023).

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

While I was revisiting this moment, I had tears in my eyes. I recalled that I was emotional

when I was listening to her story during the conversation. Right now, when I got into the

conversation with Olivia, my emotions got heavier. It was getting heavier because I would be able to sit in a moment and listen to her voice, her story, and would be able to carefully listen to a young Olivia and an adult Olivia. Both Olivias were not much different despite their different bodies before and after the transition. They were both brave, and courageous, and knew who they were and who they would become. They knew from the beginning that they would tackle their lives in a way that they would never give up even though they were not given a choice (i.e., from their mom, from the religious beliefs, from the heteronormative and anti-trans society). However, after the whole time of challenges, they are alive. They survive. They continue their path. Nothing could defeat their willingness to live, to survive, to breathe.

In this phase, I have learned a different aspect of in-between-ness: love. Love might exist in violence. Violence might exist in love. They might come hand in hand. I was wondering, What is love? What is violence? Who has the authority to decide what kind of love is best for someone? Who has the authority to decide someone's identity? From Olivia's story, I have learned that the detrimental effects on queer bodies never come to an end. The trauma stays remained, unsolved, and even if it is solved, it will never be completely healed. Olivia taught me a lesson about her strength to live, to make a decision for yourself, to confront challenges despite hardships, to create a choice for myself, to look back and think about my younger self and how a younger self could teach me a different lesson. I came to understand why she stated later that "it is really like a privilege to be alive. It is a gift" (Returning, 02/06/2023). Because being alive for her was simply a gift.

"Give birth to myself"

Being asked if hair represented queerness, Olivia responded excitedly: "For sure. Like, Absolutely, absolutely" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). Olivia went on and shared with me that when she was like 11 or 12 years old, she "messed up so much with hair" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). She tried different hairstyles with kind of female style, such as a punk rock kind of vibe. "It was really good, so I really expressed myself through my hair and with different colors" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). Her mom would not let her dye hair because the chemicals were not good for a young Olivia, but Olivia did it anyway. She would dye her hair "like mascara or put on the top like a pompadour red mixed with [her] blonde" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). She enjoyed having her hair with different colors because she thought it was so beautiful. Then, Olivia chose another photo that showed her prettier hair. She described her hair with excitement:

> [Hair] went from like brown like lime brown to more of a blonde like it is now it was like something switched. And I like got all my power almost like a superpower I had never thought about it, but it's kind of like bringing this this kid back to life. (Sitting, 01/29/2023)

For Olivia, expressing her queer identity via her hair was like a superpower. She described it with details because she was so engaging and enjoying with making her identity seen. She acknowledged later, "I express myself a lot through my hair" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). Describing her hair brought her joy. Also, she mentioned that sharing about her hair in her childhood brought "this kid back to life". I found this statement interesting because she would be able to recognize her back-then identity, she never denied its existence, but she embraced it proudly. The then-kid did never die. The kid was there and was part of Olivia's life.

I then shared with Olivia that hair was always part of queerness. Hair showed our queer identities, our creativity, but not many people paid attention to it. Olivia responded by sharing that her grandfather was black while her mother is more "on the white side, so it's very mixed" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). Therefore, her hair was "always like a topic of discussion and everything because this was not my natural hair. This was not an extra texture. My hair was kinky" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). Right away, she shared with me her family story where hair was perceived:

> So when I was a kid, my hair was supposed to be like my grandfather's like shaved head because that's what we would do. They would do like Woyzeck kinky hair. But then I always tried to grow my hair as much as I could. And it's funny because I didn't select any of those photos. They would be a little bit more difficult to find. But I was always really censored because of my hair. Like, there was always too long like, "Oh, why don't you cut your hair?" Like every single person in my family like yeah, every single person expressed that they were somehow uncomfortable with my hair, even though it was like considered like short hair. So yeah, there are many layers when we talk about hair. (Sitting, 01/29/2023)

For Olivia's family, long hair was not accepted. Long hair represented feminism and would not considered to reflect the family's tradition. Hair, which was presented in a queer way, made her family member feel uncomfortable. Hair was then censored and controlled due to its unconformity with social, cultural, and familial values. Olivia also shared with me that her case was "the whole factor of femininity and queerness and racial factor because that is considered beautiful hair, that is considered okay for you to grow" (Sitting, 01/29/2023)

I was listening to Olivia and was curious about the connection of family's background, hair, femininity, queerness, and race. Olivia acknowledged that the factors were "so intertwined and

would not know how to separate them" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). She then brought the cultural and historical aspect in Brazil where the country, in recent years, "reclaimed natural hair, natural texture, and everything" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). Then, she confessed that she did not know her hair anymore and would love to see a full head of hair with natural texture because now she came to understand that "the hair was not ugly anymore. There's nothing wrong with the hair" (Sitting, 01/29/2023). What she was terrified of was "the process". She shared that she was not ready to cut her long, straightened, and relaxed hair because it would take five years to grow.

I then responded to Olivia about our straightened hair in Vietnam and in the United States. As an Asian, you were not supposed to grow long hair or dye your hair because hair would signify the society that you were kind of a bad person and if you had green or blue or different hair color, you would not be hired in a professional context. I then shared with Olivia that I noticed she was pointing out to a then-Olivia who was a young boy in the picture. I said, "It's not ugly. There's nothing wrong with it and you know now as an adult Olivia, it's just you. You were talking with the kid Olivia. That's how I am feeling now" (Sitting, 01/29/2023).

Olivia smiled and responded:

I wish this kid hadn't grown up thinking that was anything inherently wrong with the way she looks. Yeah. Because, um, of course, there was the gender layer which is huge thing. But I, I feel that I, through all the years and everything, I've I've kind of, I've kind of give birth to myself. So I'm kind of like my own mother in a way of course. I have my mother and I love my mother. I don't want to minimize her importance or anything. But I am a product of my own creation. Because, because of the modifications that I had, but also because of, you know, the wake-up calls that I had to, to, to have by myself because I couldn't always have

my mother the way that I wanted or the way that I needed. So I had to be my own mother in many respects.

Ethan: And nothing, there's nothing wrong with it. You remember in the very first of the nation, you identified yourself as survivor and I think you know, that kind of message just continues going with, you know, the conversation that you have so far. You are a survivor. You're giving birth to yourself. You are a mother of yourself. You are the person who creates your own identity, another layer, right. So, I think that is kind of the point of people who don't really think about it. Like, I will say the trauma that, you know, we as a people must suffer and sometimes you know, we have to choose the life that we are unable to have at the first time. You know what I mean? So, when we were born whatever, you know biologically given to us, you know, we have to leave with that kind of aside identity. Right? However, you know, when we grow up, and we kind of understand who we are, then that is kind of like the time that we started to develop our identity. We know we started to explore it and we create it and recreate it in a way that I think that allows the agency for us to be who we are.

Olivia: Yes.

Ethan: You know when you talk about giving birth to yourself. It stuck with me in a way that, you know that I will probably not say the word "unfair". But I will say that sometimes, you know, let give us the moment, give us the challenge so we can refine and re-explore who we are. I think that there is nothing wrong with recreating our own identity, because probably that identity has been hidden somewhere, right? That identity has been in the closet somewhere. And the process, and again, here's what I'm thinking about the coming out process, right? I think when you use the term, giving birth to yourself, it goes beyond that.

Like going out of the closet. But it's more about like, I'm going to come out of the womb to find a different Olivia, that I am giving birth to myself, and I see her, and I appreciate her, and I want to hold her in the way that I want. That is kind of something that still stuck with me when I listen to you.

Olivia: Yes, it's beautiful. When you put it that way, I think it sounds really beautiful.

(Sitting, 01/29/2023)

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

That excerpt was kept as it was because I felt that the readers would be able to appreciate, feel, hear, and witness our loving conversation. The conversation between Olivia and Ethan was no longer a researcher and a researched. It was a conversation that signals love, empathy, understanding, and reaffirmation of our identities. Moving from hair identity to queerness to racial, social, and familial values to giving birth to oneself was deeply powerful and empowering for both of us. The stuckness did not serve as a barrier; it served as a door to open the possibilities of emotions to spread its wings, to fly up freely in the sky of heteronormativity, transphobia, and homophobia.

The conversation was an emotional catalyst for both Olivia and Ethan to co-re-define motherhood, feminism, queerness, and collective feelings and emotions that existed in the shared spacetime of in-between-ness. Ethan constantly reaffirmed a message, "You are a mother of yourself. You are the person who creates and recreate your own identity" to Olivia, rooted from the idea of identity was not fixed, was not pre-determined by anyone. Rather, identities, especially queer trans identities, are the agencies, the mothers, and the creators themselves to liberate themselves from the restriction of the "normalcy". In

other words, the process of giving birth to queerness is a solo, independent, empowering

act of us to recreate and re-live our lives in a way to set us free from the toxic chains of

heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia. The reaffirmation of "Yes" or "It's

beautiful" from Olivia signified that both of us met each other somewhere in this in-

between world. We moved on to the next topic, but emotions stayed. Perhaps, another

queer-trans-Ethan was just born. This was, indeed, a queer moment for Ethan after this

conversation.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning (n times)

This conversation turns out that Ethan and Olivia contributed to hair, queerness,

feminism, race situated in the context of family and society. Ethan did not feel saddened

in this phase. What Ethan was feeling was hope. Perhaps, hope was something that a

future Olivia would do something differently with her hair, with her identity. Perhaps,

somewhere out there, another Olivia would be able to embrace her hair with love and

pride. Perhaps, somewhere out there, another Olivia would be able to feel joyful that hair

was no longer a topic of discussion and censorship, but it would be a place of

celebration.

I am coming back to this space with joy. I could feel the conversation between Olivia and

Ethan was emotional with reaffirmation, understanding, and love. Somewhere, Ethan

acknowledged their emotions with Olivia:

Every time that I engage in a conversation, I feel like it is not one way conversation,

right? It is not one-person sharing or as a researcher coming in to get the conversation

and leave. I just feel like there's so many things that we related, and we connected

somehow, even we live in a different space and time. (Sitting, 01/29/2023)

Despite the conversation about hair, which was not usually brought to academic

discussion, Ethan and Olivia would be able to make this conversation about the

recreation of queer trans identities. The recreation came from the perspective of giving a

new identity to oneself. For Olivia, that was her trans identity displayed through hair to

do something differently. For Ethan, that was their queer, non-binary identity described

at the end of this except: "Another queer-trans-Ethan's ideology was born". That was a

new identity that was given birth to, and it was a beautiful identity where Ethan started to

learn about queer and trans ideologies, where they do not focus on genital aspects but

more about how ideas would be done differently.

"Life and Death"

As the conversation moved forward in the third time, I was sharing with Olivia that if she

felt comfortable to discuss the topic of life and death and suicide and survival and if she did not,

we could skip it. I shared, "There are some triggers in mind that we need to talk about it. The line

between life and death, survival and suicide are very thin and we can cross that any time,

especially for trans women" (Resting, 02/04/2023).

Olivia agreed to continue and responded that she agreed with me that things could get

really hard, and it was "a fundamental part of the transition" (Resting, 02/04/2023). Her

transition took so long because, according to Olivia, "Having understood what it was from an

early age was exactly the possibility of having to prostitute myself to live and again, I have

nothing against prostitution" (Resting, 02/04/2023). Olivia hoped that her then-employers would be understanding her "transness and [her] trans' experience".

For Olivia, life was not always easy, and she had to do what she had to do to survive as a trans woman. The way she shared with me about doing prostitution to survive signaled to me that she trusted our shared spacetime and was not ashamed of what she did. For Oliva, she needed "to have a plan to survive" (Resting, 02/04/2023). She discussed that she worked on translation in English language teaching (ELT) where it did not require face to face interaction, and she could work remotely. Fortunately, she established her career in ELT where people "were wonderful, accepting, welcoming, loving" (Resting, 02/04/2023). She also found it fortunate that the transition was successful so she would look like a cis female, so she could appear "passing and pretty" (Resting, 02/04/2023). But, then she asked the question, "If I did not look like this women, would have people's opinions of me been so accepting and so kind and so loving? I am really not sure" (Resting, 02/04/2023). Her uncertainty told me that the physical appearance for a trans woman was an essentially significant factor to receive the public's acceptance and thus affecting the way trans women will be treated and perceived.

Olivia then connected with the trans women in ELT and how the field was treating them. She stated, "I know other trans women in ELT happen to be also reappraising" (Resting, 02/04/2023). She gave an example of a trans woman who did not "really pass and she's brilliant". She emphasized that the company the trans woman was working at was really "inclusive and belive[d] in the idea of diversity by walking the walk and just not talking by" (Resting, 02/04/2023). However, another trans woman had to move from state to state because she felt "threatened and her life was at risk so she moved to the big city like San Paulo to get

more acceptance" (Resting, 02/04/2023). Olivia acknowledged that the acceptance was very complicated because it was "not just about the transgender experience, but it was about how you look" (Resting, 02/04/2023). She shared that if she had been a black trans women, her life would not have been the same: "If people looked at me and instead of [seeing] light, they saw a very dark skin, my life would not be the same" (Resting, 02/04/2023). She expressed her anger when trans women were perceived by the look and the color of their skin:

That was clear to me that it makes me so angry to think about it. Even though my surgeries and the way that I decided to present myself wasn't 100% motivated by others, and how others are going to perceive me. I know what helps and it shouldn't help. I shouldn't have to be really for people to.. tolerate me, to tolerate my presence, and in our industry. (Resting, 02/04/2023)

I was listening to Olivia and trying to process the conversation. I did not know that the discrimination occurred for trans women due to the different skin color. I did not know that the ELT industry made trans women feel at stake. I also did not know that Olivia went through that kind of thinking process to choose how she wanted to present herself and her choice was influenced by the public's opinion and viewpoints. In other words, the public's acceptance still played a role in affecting how trans women presented themselves.

Olivia stated that there was a lot of prejudice in the trans community. She gave an example that in the black community people dealt with issues of colorism whereas in the trans community a trans female required "expectations which are not feasible for everybody" (Resting, 02/04/2023). Then, Olivia provided an incident that happened in the bathroom in Brazil.

A trans woman was using the bathroom and another female student told her to leave because the trans woman had not changed her appearance. She was wearing a dress but she still had a quite long beard. Therefore, she did not really "conform to what people expect a female looked like" (Resting, 02/04/2023). The situation became national news because the trans woman got really triggered and angry and she said that she was legally a woman and she had the right to be in the bathroom. Then, the national conversation went too far that made women feel "threatened" and even people in the trans community would also argue against the trans woman saying "that was just a crazy guy in a dress and this person was not trans" (Resting, 02/04/2023). Later, Olivia watched the video again and acknowledged that if she had been alone in the bathroom with that person, she was going to feel threatened as well. Then, she paused to think before continuing.

Olivia acknowledged,

> I started to think about my reaction and why I would feel this way and I realized that I also wasn't really walking the walk because we talked so much about they don't need hormones to be trans, [they] don't need surgeries to be trans, or just clothes. They don't really imply someone's gender. We shouldn't assume people's gender and at the same time in that situation, when a woman didn't really conform to societal views of what a woman should live should look like. My initial reaction would also be to feel intimidated. And I still don't have the answer to that specific situation is so don't know how we should go about that specific case. But you see, I felt sad and disappointed in myself. Because I was thinking about those things because I know that not everybody is going to have access to hormones, that a provider is going to have access to surgery, is too close to, I

don't know, its beauty products and procedures. I know these things are not reality. (Resting, 02/04/2023)

In Olivia's response, she recognized that she also had own biases about what "trans woman" should look like. The trans should be the outsider to serve the purpose of seeing (or public view) rather than asking someone's gender. Even though she shared that she felt intimidated and disappointed, she also reminded me of the privilege in the trans community who would have access to surgery, products, procedures. Unfortunately, not a lot of people would be able to have that accessibility and privilege to be a trans woman.

Then, Olivia shared her perspective about a society with binary views and perspectives: But our society it's really binary. And we kind of get contaminated by the views to a certain extent. So, we have to do the work on our regular basis of trying to, as trans people, try to understand other realities and have other people in our circles and get in touch with other people. Because the realities are very different. The expectations are very different, and people want different things. Not everybody wants to have life threatening surgeries and that's okay, but our societies still, and when I say society, I don't say just cis people but our society in general is still not ready for people who are not conforming to ideas, typical ideas of gender. When I think about that student instance, a whole identifies as female, and has a female name and female documents, but doesn't look what we understand as female. I wonder what her life is like and the opportunities she has. So, I can't imagine what it's like to be in her skin. And yet we are part of the same demographic, and our experiences are totally distinct. This is just one example. There are many layers. (Resting, 02/04/2023)

The layer of coming to understanding the differences in Olivia's response pointed out that society was still living under the binary perspective, especially as we were coming to discuss the issues of gender and sexuality. In addition to the life-threatening issues facing the trans community, other exotic social events such as employment and opportunities are overlooked issues. According to Olivia, even in the same trans community with the same demography, experience are distinguishably differently. While listening to Oliva, I reminded her of the conversation we had related to "the process of readiness, including life and death and privilege and capitalism" (Resting, 02/04/2023). I explained that not only the financial situation that provided procedures and accessibility for the trans community, but it was more about self-negotiation and self-checking, because the denial of self could be the biggest barrier for queer trans communities. Olivia agreed with me and stated that "the most difficult thing [was] to start. It wouldn't necessarily say to come out to community, it's very difficult, but just start your process whatever that meant to each person individually" (Resting, 02/04/2023).

Then, I was trying to connect with the bathroom incident that Olivia shared above and thinking about how problematic the word "acceptance" was. I also related to the conversation about Oliva's mom and her acceptance to the trans identity of her daughter later in the second interview. I stitched the ideas together and shared with Olivia that acceptance should be in the four different levels: self-acceptance, family's acceptance, social acceptance, and legal acceptance. I stated, "the process of readiness takes a lot of recognition and validation and acceptance from self, family, social and legal, to aim for change. That's what I connect the dots from the story that you shared" (Resting, 02/04/2023).

Olivia shared that my connection made sense to her because there "may be different layers to the transgender experience" (Resting, 02/04/2023). She said that she liked the expression like "woman of trans experience", "men of trans experience" because it was showing "difference experience that is going to shape your life and unimaginable ways" (Resting, 02/04/2023). She added, "Not everything is bad, but it is going to shape your life and shape who you are as a person in many different ways" (Resting, 02/04/2023). I agreed with Olivia, and I also reiterated the message of acceptance was complicated and should be situated personally, culturally, and socially, as well, before moving on to the next conversation.

Ethan-as-a-researcher's returning

First, the conversations between life and death were not really scary as I thought. It was more about bravery to confront our own selves and biases. When Olivia acknowledged her self-disappointment in the bathroom incident, she taught me that even in the trans community people still have the ideas of trans should look like. The ideas of conforming to an ideal ideology to be a trans man or a trans woman continue to come back to the circle of binarism and normalcy which follows a certain idea. The question here is who defines and decides the transness, who defines and decides the presentation of transness, who defines and decides the actions of transness. The binarism in thinking about trans, all of a sudden, comes back to the biases of self, situated and influenced by the social norms. Therefore, I was wondering what we could do differently to see transness in a multiple way rather than a uniform understanding and ideology.

Second, the conversation between life and death taught me about privilege and accessibility. In Olivia's story, the privilege and accessibility related to employment and

money for transitioning. What happened to those who do not have the privilege to find a job that gives them love, respect, welcome, and especially money to support their "plan" (Olivia's word). In order to make their plan happen, some have to relocate to find acceptance, some have to find a job remotely, some have to work as a prostitute to survive. Due to the lack of privilege, money is also affected and thus affecting their plan (i.e., not enough money to have the appearance as they wish after transition, not enough money to sustain and inject the hormones after the surgery). Therefore, privilege and accessibility are closely related to money. These factors are important for the trans people to recreate their own realities (i.e., post-transition).

Last but not least, the conversation also taught me to see the problems of the word "acceptance". During the conversation, after listening to Olivia's sharing, I would be able to see the complexity of "acceptance". It requires four different levels: self, family, society, and legal. However, this thinking also reminds me of Ignacio's acceptance, but in Ignacio's perspective, self-acceptance is the most valuable. It also reminds me of Usman that discusses the queer ladder, which touches on the queer community. Olivia has expanded the story to four different levels of acceptance. The question here is how acceptance is the most important link to all of the three participants in this study and what acceptance does in order to make queer individuals feel seen and heard.

All in all, the conversation from life and death went beyond my expectation. I let the conversation go in a way that both Olivia and I were honest with each other and with ourselves to see what we could do better. I think another aspect of acceptance is peer acceptance to discuss what we really think to help each other see different perspectives.

Stuckness as a research method

I return to re-think about the poem and the process of writing and thinking with Olivia and myself as a researcher. Last night, I had a dream about the word "loner" from Olivia. For some reason, Olivia came to my dream. Probably, I have been so deeply engaged with her story that I would not be able to stop thinking about her life events and the lessons she has taught me.

In this stuckness, I did not give up on writing the conversations. It sounds cheesy, but only if someone were in the situation where the traumatic events kept returning repeatedly, even in the dreams, they would be able to relate to what I meant. The pain was helpful, indeed, so that I could cry out loud to calm myself down.

From understanding my position as a researcher to a role of a participant talking with Olivia and analyzing myself to a genuine feeling of a human being, I could understand the hidden messages in the "conversion therapy", "give birth to myself", and "life and death". Living, writing, thinking, and feeling in this stuckness, or I could see as an in-between-ness, I would be able to see multiplicity, complexity, depth, and feel the silence. The multiplicity of trans identities in multiple spaces (i.e., family, temple, bathroom, ELT), the complexity of the phrase "acceptance", the depth of Olivia's thinking and my own relation and connection, and the silence of the conversations so powerful, loud and clear. In this stuckness, I saw the light that conversations held. I saw the light of knowledge awakened from Olivia's story and my own thinking and feeling. In this stuckness, I overcame fear, sadness, mourn, and grief to find hope, love, reaffirmation,

differences, and self. This stuckness in this in-between-ness was not as scary as I thought.

In contrast, it was full of warmth, love, complexity, multiplicity, depth, and spoken silence

that I overlooked. In this stuckness, I grew and were given different eyes to see the

world. In this stuckness, I became differently as a researcher and a human being.

Figure 11

Ethan re-turned to this artefact iteratively multiple times. This artwork was created to

demonstrate the rebirth of Olivia, demonstrating how the text could become and "what thinking

could do" (Manning, 2016, p. x). This artefact was an example of the thought experiment

(Barad, 2007) where thinking-feeling process (Massumi, 2015) came together, intra-acted, and

spoke out. While creating this artefact, Ethan-researcher had no ideas where emotions, colors,

painting, and thinking would lead them; however, each movement created "new modes of

expression" (Manning, 2016, p. 2). When Ethan-researcher created this work, Olivia was still in

the closet; however, Olivia's identities came out beautifully later. Ethan-researcher tried to do

justice to this artefact as an important part to honor Olivia and HERstories. In another universe,

another Olivia is looking at the current Olivia, smiling because of their own bravery and

courageousness to live. Olivia was reborn. Her beauty, smile, and love come out with her again

and again.
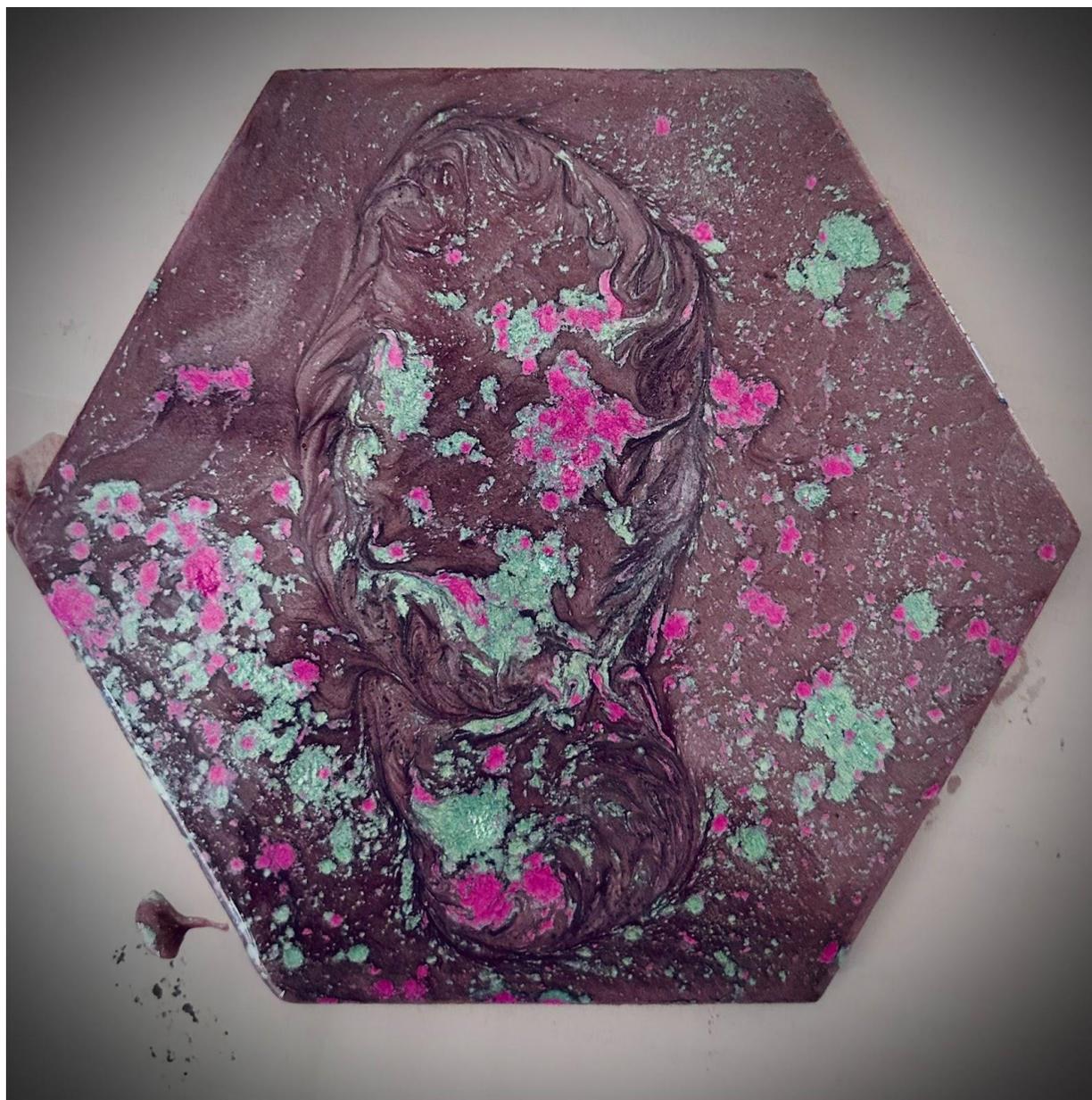
[This page is intentionally left blank. It aims for the purpose of re-turning of Ethan as a researcher, Ethan as a participant, or the readers of this section]

CHAPTER 5: RETURNING TO BEGINNING

Returning

When you take one in-breath, make two steps, and say to yourself: "I have arrived. I have arrived." Take one out-breath and make three steps, and say to yourself: "I am home. I am home. I am home." This is not a statement; this is a practice. Arrive in the here and the now, and make a strong determination to stop and not to run anymore. (Thich, 2015, p. 8)

I am walking slowly in nepantla. I am breathing in and out.

I am walking barefoot, making a connection with the Earth.

In every single step, I breathe in and out.

In every single step, I take refuge in Mother Earth.

Her hair, in the form of emerald grass, is moving steadily, synchronizing the hue wand in the summer breeze, letting my pain, stuckness, and anxiety flow with the wind, allowing me to stay calm and reconnect with my inner self. I am gently bringing my palms together, taking the shape of a lotus, placing them in front of my chest, focusing on my breath, and continuing a slow walk.

In every single step, I have arrived.

In every single step, I am home.

*In this walk, I am returning to the beginning of this journey as a queer nepantlera, a theorist, and a researcher to write in nepantla. I do not think this nepantla is pretentious. Nepantla is **in** every step that I am walking. I am not sure what is real and not real; I do not know what the difference between actual reality and pretend reality is. What I can attest is that emotions stick, stay, evaporate, condense, precipitate, and transform. Emotions never die; they are transformed—into me—Ethan-researcher. I am the transformation of my participants. My participants live in me. And I live in them.*

Thay Thich Nhat Hanh (2002) uses an example of a cloud transformation to discuss the continuation of life. Thay states:

Before being born, the cloud was the water on the ocean's surface. Or it was in the river and then it became vapor. It was also the sun because the sun makes the vapor. The wind is there too, helping the water to become a cloud. The cloud does not come from nothing; there has been only a change in form. It is not a birth of something out nothing. Sooner or later the cloud will change into rain or snow or ice. If you look deeply into the rain, you can see the cloud. The cloud is not lost; it is transformed into rain, and the rain is transformed into grass and the grass into cows and then to milk and then into the ice cream you eat. Today if you eat an ice cream, give yourself time to look at the ice cream and say: "Hello, cloud! I recognize you". (pp. 25-26)

The perspective of the cloud's transformation in different forms could be applied to understand the emotions of queer teachers in this study. Emotions are not lost or evaporated; they are transformed into Ignacio, Usman, Olivia, and Ethan (as the participant and the researcher)

evidenced in the final remarks in the *returning*. Emotions transformed each participant to feel, do, and think differently after each conversation (i.e., feeling seen, heard, connected, loved, uplifted, healed, among others). Emotions empowered, connected, and stayed with the four of us. Their emotions have arrived in Ethan-researcher and found a home there. And Ethan has also found a home in every single one of them.

Emotions are now the symbol of liberation. Emotions are moving freely without being restricted by the normalcy of heterosexism and Western academic research; rather, they have regained agency after this study. Emotions transformed Ethan-researcher in writing up this study. Emotions are thus this dissertation. Emotions also move the readers. Emotions are thus (in) the readers. Emotions are also a disrupter. They disrupt "the binary perspectives: subjective/ objective, irrational/rational, female/male" (p. 11, This dissertation). Emotions are now a trans-form-ation that transcends its "form" into everyone involved with it. In every form, emotions are one step coming closer to addressing the initial thoughts of this study:

> What if, emotions are thought of and done differently? For example, what would happen if emotions connect mind, body, and sexuality, acknowledging teaching and learning as not only cognitive, and social, but also physical, agential, cultural, political, and spiritual? What would happen if emotions and feelings are viewed from a non-binary perspective to break the habit of thinking, which St. Pierre (2017) asked us to think about? These are the questions that are worth investigating, thinking with, and asking differently to re-direct our attention to think about "bodies as assemblages" (Benesch, 2012, p. 136), aimed

toward creating a space of possibilities for the teachers to co-explore with students to

embody in language learning and teaching. (pp. 11-12, This dissertation)

From the findings of Chapter 4, emotions, minds, bodies, genders and sexualities, languages, cultures, politics, spirituality, and teaching intra-acted and collectively formed *an* agency where all of these elements were/are moving and weaving with one another. In other words, the emotions of this study not only show what they do and affect (to be affected), but they speak, inquire, create possibilities, and transform every single element involved in it, including humans (i.e., research participants, researcher, committee members), non-human (i.e., dissertation), and more than human (i.e., cultures, politics, spirituality) in discursive practices (i.e., interviews). In other words, emotions never exist separately; instead, they are an example of "the entanglement—the ontological inseparability—of intra-acting agency" (Barad, 2012a, p. 77).

> *This is a special moment for me when I came to understand what Barad (2014a) states*
> *about agency, which "is an enactment, not something someone has, or something*
> *instantiated in the form of an individual agent" (p. 77). I came to understand how intra-*
> *actions enacted "agential separability"—the condition of exteriority-within-phenomena.*
> *So it is not that there are no separation or differentiations, but that they only exist within*
> *relation" (Barad, 2012a, p. 77). In this study, the exteriority is the participants'*
> *differences in terms of family backgrounds, schooling, coming-out experiences,*
> *pedagogies, cultures, societies, and politics, among others. As we discussed emotions and*
> *let emotions lead the conversation, we were all intra-actively situated in a phenomenon*
> *called "the dissertation study" wherein all elements of this entanglement will not*

separate anymore. They are intertwining and are continuously developing in numerous forms and directions.

Due to agential separability, emotions exist *within an* agency; an agency contains emotions and other elements that are moving within and constantly transforming. Like clouds and their multiple forms of (re)presentations, emotions are (re)presenting themselves in different forms—human, non-human, and more-than-human. As such, applying Buddhism (i.e., cloud transformation) to understanding quantum physics (i.e., intra-action) is a crucial step to understanding the complexity, plurality, and nuances of emotions. In other words, it is critical to ask: How do emotions feel? Where do emotions go? What forms do emotions represent next? In answering these questions, it is important to emphasize that there is no final form of emotions nor a predetermined direction of emotions to transform and go. Emotions are always in the process, in the making, in the in-betweenness.

> *In this process of self and collective learning, I am awakened because I am part of becoming with the world (Barad, 2007; Thich, 2002). I am no longer an Ethan-doctoral student. I am now a scholar who has become different after this dissertation. I am now part of a transformation of emotions. E-motions move and create things that are not predictable. Things emerged from emotions cause other things to be emotional, too.*

Emotions, like clouds, have transformed themselves into an intra-active form that enacts the response-ability of *all* elements involved in this study. As such, emotions do not fall into a subject or object that awaits to be quantified or qualified. It is thus not waiting to be judged for how "difficult to research" (Richards, 2022, p. 226). Rather, emotions take up a role of a

facilitator themselves, in addition to the companionship of Ethan-researcher, to co-create

spacetimes for queer bodies to speak, inquire, challenge, and express themselves. This study

situated queer bodies as assemblages in safe spacetimes to co-explore an anchoring question

posed from the beginning: "What possibilities could emerge when affects and queerness come

together?" (p. 12, This dissertation), where *possibilities* are always in inquiry, in thinking, in

progress and process of becoming. Therefore, I am returning to revising the research questions.

> *From the beginning of this study, I asked multiple questions to guide my writing,*
>
> *thinking, and reading and thus leading to having a different understanding of reading,*
>
> *thinking, and writing of different forms of texts (i.e., peer-reviewed articles, book*
>
> *chapters, books, poems, artwork, self-reflection, walking, among others). As having been*
>
> *practicing the diffractive methodology of reading and writing by "experimenting with*
>
> *different patterns of relationality, opening things up, turning them over and over again,*
>
> *to see how the patterns shift" (Barad, 2012a, p. 77), I put myself "at risk", troubled*
>
> *myself, and "sensed the differences and entanglements from within" (Barad, 2012a, p.*
>
> *77). As a queer nepantlera who suffers "alienation and pain" (Keating, 2022) in the*
>
> *process of doing this research and going through multiple states and phases of stuckness,*
>
> *I turned "alienation into insights and powerful tools for community-building and*
>
> *transformation" (Keating, 2022, p. 165). As such, coming out of the entanglements from*
>
> *nepantla, I learned how to enact my response-ability to return to revise the research*
>
> *question –three times (for the purpose of this study and will be revised again and again*
>
> *after this study completes).*

The set of questions selected on August 3ʳᵈ, 2023 was: *What were the possibilities in terms of theory, teaching, and research that queerness and emotions produced through the intra-active conversational process between four queer English teachers of color and Ethan-researcher?* And *How were queerness and emotions traced methodologically? By whom or what*? I am using the last set of research questions in this study to guide this chapter. However, I do not rush into answering these questions; instead, I will slowly walk the readers so that you will be able to see, feel, and think with me about how different elements of emotions come together. As we have traveled through spacetimes and felt with each other since the beginning (chapters 1, 2, and 3) and walked with me, Shiba, and queer teachers of color (chapter 4), I am asking for your patience to walk with me again until the end of this path. I am grateful for your openness to see, think, and feel, or seethinkfeel, with me despite the limits of my understanding in theorizing and analyzing. I am grateful for your empathy and understanding. I am grateful for your presence with me. In this walk, I thus want to focus on the act of being present, in the here and the now.

> *Breathe in. Lift up one foot, move the foot a bit forward, place the foot on the ground to connect with Mother Earth, and shift the weight of your body into the heel. Breathe out.*
> *We have arrived at the first step.*

Elements of emotions

In the first step, I briefly share different elements of emotions that I observed in the conversations with the participants. These elements are *empowerment, resistance, vulnerability, meditation, and stuckness*. Every single element no longer belongs to any particular participant.

Rather, each element represents four of us. In this step, I will go through each element, starting

with *stuckness,* because this element represents how I am feeling right now in nepantla. Then, I

will let other elements lead the way. Wherever and whenever emotions go, the queerness of

thinking and writing will tag along.

Stuckness

I do not view stuckness as something that "move[s] us forward ←→ keep[s] us stuck"

(Dernikos et al., 2020, p. 6), or as "instances of incoherence or instability that manifest a surge of

affects" (Colmenares, 2021, p. 377), or as "a specific form of waiting that highlights the power-

geometry" (Straughan et al., 2020, p. 636). Rather, I view *stuckness as stillness* that allows

connectivity, imaginativity, and explorability to find the way itself. Stuckness sees bodily and

emotionally sensational constraints as an asset to look deeply into an inner self to sort out, put

different pieces together, re-envision the relationship of self and the world, re-narrate the stories,

and create a new reality. In other words, stillness does not go beyond, but it stands still in the

present. As what Thrift (2000) calls "present-orientation stillness", which promotes "a politics

based in intensified attention to the present and unqualified affectivity" (p. 42) and argues that

"[stillness]'s history is born out of a number of developments which, taken together, constitute a

genealogy of the present" (p. 42). As such, stillness and stuckness are two elements that co-exist,

intra-act, and go hand in hand in the present moment, orient bodies and feelings in the now, view

separation, immobility, and instability as a process and a phenomenon. As a process and a

phenomenon, it will constantly change. What might remain after a phenomenon change would be

a space of indeterminate possibilities of transformation. To examine this thought, I am returning

to what I (as a researcher) wrote at the end of chapter 4 after leaving the space of thinking with Olivia to explore Ethan-researcher's moment of stuckness.

At the end of chapter 4, I wrote:

In this stuckness, I saw the light that conversation held. I saw the light of knowledge awakened from Olivia's story and my own thinking and feeling. In this stuckness, I overcame fear, sadness, mourning, and grief to find hope, love, reaffirmation, differences, and self. This stuckness in this in-between-ness was not as scary as I thought. In contrast, it was full of warmth, love, complexity, multiplicity, depth, and loud silence that I overlooked. In this stuckness, I grow and have been given different eyes to see the world. In this stuckness, I become different as a researcher and a human being after all. (p. 189, This dissertation)

For Ethan, the stuckness was not scary, but it was a space of transformation, of seeing things differently. This stuckness in nepantla allowed Ethan to connect with their self (i.e., inner world) and Olivia's story–their research participant (i.e., outer world) to create "a zone of possibility" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 544). The zone of possibility as a fluid reality was nepantla.

In this nepantla, Ethan experienced reality "as a fluid, expanding and contracting, …, open to other perspectives, more readily able to access knowledge derived from inner feelings, imaginal states, and outer events, and to see through them with a mindful, holistic awareness" (p. 544). In nepantla, Ethan stayed still and calm and learned how to have a peaceful conversation with fear. By confronting their inner self, Ethan enacted a peaceful state of mind. Instead of seeing stuckness as a negative state, Ethan found stuckness useful and transformative for their

self. Instead of romanticizing stuckness, Ethan lived with(in) it, seeing it as a connection, as a catalyst of fear and non-fear. In other words, Ethan was awakened with a mindful, holistic awareness (Anzaldúa, 2002; Thich, 1999) to live in both realities where Ethan was doing research, and in nepantla where this study is situated. Stuckness and stillness are co-situated in the in-betweenness, bringing peacefulness and calmness into this space.

In nepantla, Ethan challenged the *capacities* of what a queer body could do and feel. As Lim (2007) argues, the capacities of queer bodies to affect and to be affected are "in determinate, in part, because these capacities are constantly changing" due to the interaction and encounters with other bodies (p. 55). Therefore, in the moment of returning to the conversation with Olivia, Ethan got stuck with writing up the story and had a couple of moments when they did not know what to do (i.e., the poem in chapter 4 demonstrates their stuckness). In that moment of stuckness where it is difficult to find "equilibrium between the outer expression of change and inner relationship to it" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 549), as a nepantlera, Ethan put themselves into a conversation with self in nepantla to "sort out, put different pieces together, reenvision the relationship of self and the world, re-narrate the stories and create a new reality" (p. xxx, This dissertation). In other words, nepantla creates a zone of possibilities for Ethan's queer body to act and think beyond the liminal space of reality where a body of a researcher was located. Rather, Ethan becomes a shaman (Anzaldúa, 2002) in nepantla to think and confront stuckness. In other words, Ethan could attest that stuckness is the stillness that allows connectivity (with self and others), imaginativity (with self's splitting), and explorability (with writing in fear), reconstructs knowledge in the study (by asking how to (re)present the conversations to do justice

to each participant), and disrupts the two-dimensional space of reality (in fact this study has been written in so many different realities interwoven at the same time), so Ethan (and their participants) could live in both (and multiple) worlds simultaneously.

> *As I found stuckness as stillness in the nepantla, I also dealt with chaotic thoughts in understanding conversations from research participants. In the process of exploring where to go next, Anzaldúa (2002) came and talked with me: "The last thing you want is to meditate on your condition, bring awareness to the fore, but you've set it up so you must face reality. Still, you resist." (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 551). Therefore, I am transitioning to meditation to face and explore what the next stage of reality will be.*

> *Breathe in. Lift up one foot, move the foot a bit forward, place the foot on the ground to connect with Mother Earth, and shift the weight of your body into the heel. Breathe out. We have arrived at the second step.*

Meditation

Buddhist meditation has two important aspects: shamatha and vipashyana. While vipashyana asks us to *look deeply* to liberate us from suffering, the practice of shamatha asks us to *stop.* Stopping is "fundamental" (Thich, 1999, p. 54). "If we cannot stop, we cannot have insight" (p. 54), said Thầy Thich Nhat Hanh (1999).

Following the practice of shamatha, I applied it to the conversations with my participants. We stopped together, we practiced meditation together by mindful walking, breathing, thinking, and smiling. We all touched deeply the present moment to harvest the fruits of "understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy" (Thich, 1999, p. 55).

The reason why I enacted the stopping was that I deeply cared about the participants, queer teachers, whose emotions are feelings are "double and triple restricted, monitored, policed, made invisible, and shaped by heteronormative societies and norms" (p. 14, This dissertation), especially with the compulsory heterosexuality where the narrative of heterosexuality as ideal shapes what bodies could do (Ahmed, 2004). Queer teachers of color's emotions are completely overlooked in English language teaching (Trinh et al., 2023); hence, how could we do research in a way to honor, respect, and uplift their feeling, emotions, and stories while creating a space of genuine care with them? I see the moment of stopping in this study as a crucially and irreplaceably important aspect for the participants to pause and meditate on their stuckness (in terms of thinking and feeling while sharing and analyzing their stories), and find peace from within themselves and with Ethan-researcher. To demonstrate the moment of stopping, I turn to Ignacio and explore again what other "insight(s)" could emerge from this returning.

In Chapter 4, I wrote about the connection of rushing and peacefulness with Ignacio (p. 121, This dissertation). From this short conversation, both Ethan and Ignacio enacted the act of stopping to rest. They did not rush themselves to respond to the questions. Rather, they appreciated each other's presence. For Ethan, the act of stopping was critical to helping Ignacio feel like home and decolonizing the Western concept of distance which individualizes and separates the community (Smith, 1999). For Ignacio, the act of stopping was meaningful and allowed him to unfold his feelings and connect with Ethan at a deeper level. Later, as a researcher, I acknowledged that queerness and meditation come hand in hand in creating another

reality, or an in-between-ness space in this study, so both queer bodies co-create "a space of collective healing" and "an interdependence of beings in the world" (p. 125, This dissertation).

In addition, I like to think about meditation from queer and Buddhist perspectives, which contains contrasting sub-elements: running (to hide) and stopping (to heal). First, queerness is always fleeing, escaping, and running (Trinh, 2022). Drawing from my work with queer Students with Limited and Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), a ghost and invisible population in research and teaching, I traced the history that queer identities are always on the run due to violence in the family, school, society, and even in the refugee camps (e.g., rape, sexual harassment, sex trafficking, the list goes on and on). Therefore, as I was thinking with Ignacio, I was reaffirmed that queerness is always on the run to survive in his reality.

Ignacio's reality is situated in Chile, the place where he was from. Chile is a highly patriarchal country dominated by the *machista* culture of male dominance and power (Nierman et al., 2007). Despite the recent approval of same-sex marriage in Chile (Romo, 2021), previous studies in Chile have shown that there were high levels of stigmatization and prejudices toward the queer community (Barrientos & Bozon, 2014; Gómez et al., 2021; Nierman et al., 2007). The discriminatory acts toward Chile's queer community, as in the rest of Latin America, have been associated with the disapproval and rejection of homosexuality by the Catholic Church since the early 20th century (Cornejo, 2011), political and racism (Barrientos et al., 2010; Gómez et al., 2021), and class structures (Lizama, 2015). For example, Cornejo (2011) traces back to the history of Chilean society and finds that the Catholic Churches, along with political groups, pronounce homosexuality as an abnormality, illness, and deviation of "human nature" for the

sake of procreation. Further, in association with the HIV/AIDS era, the association of

psychologists in Chile considered homosexuality as a disease that could be treated and reversed

(Figueroa & Tasker, 2013). As such, the heterosexual, patriarchal, and heterosexist model of the

"natural family" were highly influenced accordingly by the churches and politics. Specifically,

the government implemented the policy to reproduce the sexual division of labor for men (i.e.,

going out to work to produce) and for women (i.e., staying at home to reproduce) through the

industrialization process (Oyarzun, 2005, cited in Figueroa & Tasker, 2013). Therefore, the

perspectives of parents and families toward queer communities are controlled and manipulated,

leading to rejection (from families) and self-rejection (from queer individuals) due to political

and religious controls, leading queer individuals to leave the country for their own safety and to

look for liberation.

As Anzaldúa (2015) acknowledges, "Like queer and bisexual people living in cities–

stuck between the cracks of home and other cultures–[Nepanleras] experience dislocation,

disorientation. We are forced [or we choose] to live in spaces/categories that defy gender, race,

class, sexual, geographic locations" (pp. 81-82). As I have theorized queer teachers as

nepantlerxs in this study, Ignacio's queer identity is an example of being stuck between the

cracks and experiencing dislocation and disorientation to live in different spaces. Due to the

political and religious context in Chile, Ignacio had to run, escape, and find another place where

he could settle to feel like home. Because of his context, Ignacio had to calculate the risk (p. xxx,

This dissertation), because his queerness was **always** at risk in public. Thus, the moment of

stopping was a significant step to practicing mindful breathing, coming back to the present moment, and staying still to listen deeply to and heal wounds in our queer bodies.

Stopping is "to stop our running, our forgetfulness, our being caught in the present or the future. We come home to the present moment, where life is available. The present moment contains every moment" (Thich, 1999, p. 352). By concentrating on the present moment for his/our queer bod(ies) and emotions to stay calm, healed, and seen, both Ethan and Ignacio were living in the nepantla. They saw an act of stopping as mediation to "sense more keenly the overlap between the material and spiritual worlds" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 549) so that they could enact their co-existence in both places simultaneously. As Anzaldúa (2002) explains, "Nepantla is the point of contact where the 'mundane' and the 'numinous' converge, where you're in full awareness of the present moment" (p. 549). The present moment here is an act of meditation in nepantla. Doing meditation in nepantla is a humanizing way to heal two queer bodies while carrying on queer bodies in this academic study.

After returning to seeing the connection between meditation, nepantla, and queerness, I came to realize two other insights. One, neither of these concepts is abstract. Rather, the combination of meditation and nepantla empowers queer bodies to feel calm, rested, and healed. Two, bringing these concepts together is a manifestation of reducing methodology in qualitative research where the researcher is "provoked to think about care for self and for others in an interdependent relationship and to value knowledge not as a product but a collective practice, with the power to resist pressures of capitalist institutions" (Koro et al., 2023, p. 5). We have demonstrated interdependent relationships/friendships, valued and co-constructed knowledge in a

way that listened to our bodies and feelings, and created collective empowerment for us to resist research under the pressure of capitalist institutions. This resistance is political in terms of demonstrating how queer bodies became "invested" by genuine care (Ahmed, 2004, p. 12). Due to collective care, we transformed ourselves to see double, first from our own culture and second from the perspective of another (Anzaldúa, 2002). In this nepantla, we "felt our way" (Ahmed, 2004) to view our queer emotions as "a form of cultural politics or world-making" (p. 12) while confronting the emotional intensities of our stories. Through the act of stopping, we restructured forms of being (Ahmed, 2004), doubled consciousness and reality (Anzaldúa, 2002), and healed (Thich, 1999) in a uniquely queer and humanizing way. Most importantly, we found homes–in each other–after this study.

> *Breathe in. Lift up one foot, move the foot a bit forward, place the foot on the ground to connect with Mother Earth, and shift the weight of your body into the heel. Breathe out.*
>
> *We have arrived at the second step.*

Em*Power*ment

> *Empowerment [uncountable noun]: The act of giving somebody more control over their own life or the situation they are in.* (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.)

How does empowerment enter the politics of emotions? How does empowerment feel? What does empowerment do to disrupt binarism and hierarchy? These are the important questions to ask in thinking about what empowerment does rather than what it is. The definition of "empowerment" from the Oxford Dictionary troubles me to inquire: Who or what gave someone a privilege to control? Will control be asked to be returned after giving? Who or what is being compared to possessing more power to control? In other words, the Oxford definition is

showing the passiveness of the word "empowerment" rather than allowing the agency to be enacted. Therefore, while analyzing in nepantla, I like to think about empowerment a*s a dismemberment* of an emotional self to undo social power in order to feel power again. To explore this idea, I will return to the conversation between Usman and Ethan to theorize with Anzaldúa (Anzaldúa, 2015) and Boler (1999) while weaving the religious context of the Middle East to help the readers and myself make sense of what empowerment as dismemberment looks like. First, let's start with Boler (1999) and *feeling power.*

For Boler (1999), feeling power means two things: Feeling *power* asks "the question of social control" while *feeling* power "directs us to explore how people resist our oppression and subjugation" (p. 4). She argues that education is an environment controlled by power and authority; therefore, the project of feeling power needs to have a collective "self-reflective, historically-traced understandings of our emotions as part of a public process" that involves educators and students to be in the "risky process of change" (p. 4). Theorizing from Boler's perspective, the conversation between Usman and I demonstrated the back-and-forth discourse of power situated in families (e.g., in Pakistan and in Vietnam), in the gay worlds (e.g., in Pakistan, in the US, and in Vietnam), in teaching pedagogies (e.g., colonized, patriarchal, heteronormative versus decolonized, feminist, and queer pedagogies). Both Usman and I unfolded the perspectives of *feeling* power and feeling *power* as we are both queer and people of color in the U.S. white gay world while teaching to challenge hetero-patriarchal-cisgender educational systems. We were both engaging in self-reflection to understand what power looked like in different contexts. We overcame the risk of exposing our queer selves to come to trust each other in this process of change. For example, Usman acknowledged that he/she felt angry because

he/she would be able to say what Usman was thinking in his/her mind. At another time, Usman affirmed that our shared queer-of-color identities helped him/her feel safe in the conversation. From these moments, we were engaging in the feeling-power process that challenges Western, hetero-patriarchal-colonized academic research to regain and refine power within us.

> *"Why aren't you writing?", asked Anzaldúa (2002). "I do not know where to start", I responded. "I feel this section is a whole new world for me. I am overwhelmed. I am an outsider researching the topic of Islam and queerness. However, if I do not do this, I will never be able to come closer to understanding Usman's and other queers' experiences in Pakistan and in the Middle East." "This knowledge prompts you to shift into a new perception of yourself and the world", said Anzaldúa (2002, p. 556). She continues:*
>
> *To transform yourself, you need the help (the written or spoken words) of those who have crossed before you. You want them to describe las puertas, to hold your hand while crossing them. You want them to mentor your work with the Chicana, queer, artistic, feminist, spiritual, and other communities. To learn what to transform into, you ask, "How can I contribute?" You open yourself and listen to la naguala and the images, sensations, and dreams she presents. (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 557)*
>
> *Listening to Anzaldúa's advice, I am now drawing on the literature on Islam and queerness (i.e., those who have crossed before me) to learn about Usman's context. Also, I am using artistic works from Usman's country to explore the connection between power and queerness so I can return to the excerpt to see double the meaning of the message.*

The article "Is gayness a test from Allah? Typologies in Muslim stances on homosexuality" by Eidhamar (2014) offers a comprehensive understanding of research on Islam

and homosexuality. Eidhamar focuses on these two questions in this article: "What stances exist within the Islamic discourse regarding homosexual predilection and practice?" and "Which stances exist among non-hetero Muslims themselves and how do they combine these stances with their actual practices?" (p. 245). The article is divided into two sections. The first section answers the first question by showing different ranges in historical and contemporary research, ranging from strongly to moderately traditional, and from moderately to radical progressive ones. The second section shares insightful narratives and quotes from different readings to answer the second question. In the second section, Eidhamar (2014) groups narratives into six types of the correlation/tension between "right" (divinely related) and "good" (human sense), including:

> (i) rejecting all kinds of non-hetero identities, feelings and practices; (ii) accepting feelings and identity, but rejecting practice; (iii) unsuccessful efforts to reject practice; (iv) accepting one's identity and practice due to interpretations of the Qur'an and theological reflection; (v) accepting non-hetero practices without regard to religious rules pertaining to this issue; (vi) accepting non-hetero identity and practices combined with (secretly) rejecting Islam due to the question of homosexuality. (p. 245)

> *I approached this reading with an open-minded, ready-to-learn mindset even though I felt uncomfortable with quotes and languages selected from different articles by the author. I know that the discomfort could not be avoided, but I am still feeling hurt. I would never understand how queer Muslims would go through life-death challenges. Anzaldúa (Anzaldúa, 2014) came and reminded me of the dismemberment: "To be healed we must be dismembered, pulled apart. The healing occurs in disintegration, in the demotion of the ego as the self's only authority. By connecting with our wounding, the*

imaginal journey makes worthwhile" (p. 29). Following Anzaldúa's suggestion, I decided

to lead the readers to another route of re-reading (Kumashiro, 2002) where I will pull the

quotes related to feelings, power, and/or actions that provoked feelings and power from

Eidhamar's (2014) article. Specifically, I will present a poem by stitching separate

quotes from the reading together while weaving with what Usman shared with me. I want

the readers to be with me in this text to "give rise to thinking…through slow reading"

(Bridges-Rhoads et al., 2018, p. 821) so we can seefeelthink with each other.

For the *strongly traditional type*, (male) homosexuality is not following with "the natural

order"; instead, it is considered as "a crime against the rights of females"[1]

> Homosexual emotions result in homosexual practices.
>
> To maintain the purity of the Muslim society, the punishments need to be enacted:
>
> "One in this life and one in eternity"[2], with:
>
> Whiplashes and stoning to death
>
> They said: homosexuality is a *learned* behavior[3]
>
> Boler (1999) argues that emotions "are a site of social control" and education "is a

social institution that serves the interests of the nation-states and functions to maintain the

status quo and social order" (p. xiv). Connecting with what Usman shared in Chapter 4

was his/her confusion of growing up when he/she was stuck in between of male and

---

[1] Al-Qaradawi, 2001, cited in Eidhamar, 2014, p. 246
[2] Eidhamar, 2014, p. 247
[3] Kotb, 2004, cited in Eidhamar, 2014, p. 247

female, of fitting in a masculinity and femininity, of walking like a girl and let-him-do-whatever-he-wants-and-he-will-be-different-growing-up from Usman's father. He/she also mentioned having received a lot of criticism from teachers because Usman did not stand or shake hands in a certain way. Not only were Usman's emotions and queer bodies controlled to act in a certain way, being and growing up as a queer person in Muslim society and educational settings could lead him/her to being stoned (to death) by the social and religious beliefs—metaphorically and literally. As Eidhamar (2014) reviews and acknowledges that homosexual emotions lead to homosexual practices as a way of a strongly traditional type in Muslim practices, I was wondering even Usman's parents were also stuck in the in-betweenness as they knew the uniqueness of their child but also did not know how to tackle the situation when they stood in between the line of religion (i.e., nation-state boundaries) and family (i.e., status quo and social order). If homosexuality was the learned behavior, what kind of behavior could help unlearn the misunderstanding of queerness in school, family, and religion?

For the *moderate traditional type,*

> "Having sexual feelings for the same gender is not a sin in itself, as long as one tries to control such feelings and does not make them public"[4].
> If you transform your desires into a struggle and a challenge to overcome it and not physically commit it, then insha'Allah,

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[4] Eidhamar, 2014, p. 248

you will receive an award for it.

Don't lose hope!…

Stay away from those people.

They are an extra trial.

If you can pass this test, you will receive an extra reward[5]

Use therapy

to prevent the feelings of guilt with these kinds of homosexual feelings

to continue religious practices and lead a moral life

without sexual indulgences[6]

Religious power as *symbolic* power interpreted

the male gender, the rich or the educated, or

by the hetero majority and its ubiquitous heteronormativity[7]

This rereading of Eidhamar's (2014) text helps me, as a researcher, come closer to understanding the historical context of the relationship between queerness and Islam. This text not only gives rise to my thinking but also provokes my feelings in order to seefeelthink with different queer Muslims in different texts through their quotes from different research articles. Their voices are weaving with one another in the poem. I cited each quote with the APA

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[5] Missionislam, n.d., cited in Eidhamar, 2014, p. 248
[6] Ahmed, 2006, cited in Eidhamar, 2014, p. 248
[7] Eidhamar, 2014, p. 248

standards to align with academic writing, but also at the same time disrupted the standards of citing the text to queer and connect readers emotionally with queer Muslims.

Texts, in the form of a poem, are moving and generating effects on our bodies (Ahmed, 2004). From these effects, we would be able to name (Ahmed, 2004) different emotions that emerged from the poem: fear, confusion, self-hatred, disgust, and so on and so forth. Using Ahmed's (2004) words, these words "belong" together and "mark one's own presence" (p. 14). From the poem, despite the dismemberment of separate quotes from the reading, I would be able to imagine how queer Muslim feel with a complexity of emotions pre-guided, restricted, and governed by symbolic and religious power. "Power" in the context of Islam is the mighty power represented by the male, the rich, the educated, and the heteronormativity. "Power" here is predetermined, preselected, and preserved for a (queer) body before, during, and after it is born for having it mandatorily acted in a certain way to meet the religiously moral values.

In chapter 4, in the *returning*, I wrote about refining power and my understanding of Usman's word "a powerless person in the society" (p. 140, This dissertation). Drawing from Boler's (1999) works, I am in agreement with the discourses of emotions: the pathological, rooted in medicine, the rational, or Man is *the* person of rationality, and the religious, or desires and feelings are channeled in an "appropriate" way. Boler (1999) expands the notion of pastoral power, an approach where emotions are (dis)placed in "self-policing" students and teachers "through a combination of religious, scientific, and rational discourses" (p. 32). Although Boler does not discuss much the tension between queerness and emotions, she asks important questions to think about what counts as *moral* and explains how moral control uses emotions as a site of social control. Put in the context of education, pastoral power is used to teach individuals to

police themselves and "internalize ideologies as commonsense truth" (p. 33). Boler gives an example of how children are taught not to show their anger or not to question authority or not to resist those who hold power. From this notion of pastoral power, I would be able to connect with the mighty power that Usman discussed in our conversation.

Usman turned his/her teacher's power into disrupting the heteronormative public space and questioned the students about the power in connection with heteronormativity, patriarchy, and queerness in Pakistan. Specifically, Usman nurtured a student-teacher relationship in a feminist way, undid power in a safe space, and crossed the bridge of queer and non-queer discussion to challenge the hetero-patriarchal ideologies in the classroom. Usman disrupted the pastoral power where he/she disrupted the internalization process of thinking about what counts as moral, commonsense truth, and belief while weaving critical thinking into a discourse of difference (Britzman, 1995; hooks, 2010; Trinh, 2022). From my viewpoint, not only did Usman undo the power, but he/she also uncuffed the policed mindset pre-served for students. As Boler (1999) posits, "Transcripts of interactions between students, and between teachers and students, provide another source of the 'unofficial' education of emotions" (p. 18). The transcriptions provided in Chapter 4 have demonstrated the **act of empowermen**t in Usman's classroom, which allows the **dismemberment**, or unpacking and inquiring knowledge critically, to **undo power** (of religion, gender and sexuality, and language), **to feel power** (of self-liberation) again.

> *I am looking at Usman right now. I can still feel his/her anger after our conversation.*
> *After this analysis, I could relate to his/her on another deeper level. Both Usman and I*
> *are queer nepantlerx in this journey of empowerment. As Anzaldúa advises us: "We are*
> *all on a path of empowerment. We must empower the imagination to blur and transcend*

customary frameworks and conceptual categories reinforced by language and consensual reality" (Anzaldúa, 2014, p. 45). Both of us brought our own ways to blur the realities, transcend the concept of emotions, queerness, and power by using languages (i.e., in this queering text, in our conversations, in analyses, in theorization, etc.) to empower ourselves and others (i.e., readers, students, among others). We are now "bare, naked, and vulnerable with each other" (p. xxx, This dissertation). This sense of empowerment has allowed us to listen to each other deeply so we can seefeelthink with each other queerly. In fact, the conversation has queered my perspectives about what empowerment means in the paradoxical religious situation. I am indebted and grateful for this opportunity to learn with Usman in this shared spacetime.

I am pouring myself the homoerotic and debaucherous poetry of Abu Nuwas (The repentance of Abu Nuwas, 2015), using it as a metaphorical glass of wine to celebrate us in this space.

يارب إن عظمت ذنوبي كثرة / فلقد علمت بأن عفوك أعظم

إن كان لا يرجوك إلا محسن / فبمن يلوذ ويستجير المجرم

أدعوك ربي كما أمرت تضرعا / فإذا رددت يدي فمن ذا يرحم

مالى إليك وسيلة إلا الرجاء / وجميل عفوك ثم أني مسلم

O Allah, if my sins become abundant

Then indeed I know Your Forgiveness is greater than my sins

And I supplicated in humility

And if You turn my hands away

Then who will be merciful to me?

If the only people that can have hope in You are the good doers

Then who would the criminal, the sinner, and the evil turn to?

The only way I have to come to You is my hope in You

And Your beautiful forgiveness is that I am a Muslim.

Breathe in. Lift up one foot, move the foot a bit forward, place the foot on the ground to

connect with Mother Earth, and shift the weight of your body into the heel. Breathe out.

We have arrived at the next step.

Resistance

Resistance [uncountable, singular]: The act of using force to oppose
somebody/something; The power not to be affected by something; A force that stops something
moving or makes it move more slowly (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.)

How can resistance enter the politics of emotions without not involving with suffering,

pain, suicide, homicide, killing, death, and other violent acts? What is the *cost* of resistance?

What *provokes* resistance? What *resists* resistance? What *remains* after resistance? The Oxford

Dictionary offers definitions that this word is an uncountable, singular noun that describes the

use of force to oppose or stop something moving and the use of power not to be affected by

something. Reading these definitions, I offer a push-back of the definition in the context of queer

and trans* being killed every day in the world (Keena et al., 2021). What kinds of force have we

queer and trans* used to protect us from violent acts, but our bodies? What kinds of power do we

have and have we used to oppose and/or slow the act of killing or put a stop to violence? I do not

like how *resistance* makes things move slowly because the slowness shows that the progress is

moving; thus, more deaths of queer and trans* bodies will be collected. I also disagree that resistance is an uncountable noun. This word should be considered count-ability due to the ability to count how many queer and trans* death bodies are collected every day in the world. As such, resistance should be a countable noun to describe an act of a queer and trans* body who fight for their lives and stop the killing. The cost of resistance often equals *a* person's life (Mendes & de Silva, 2020; Winton, 2023), where we queer and trans* do not deserve to die.

As such, I like to think about *resistance as a response-ability* to act. This ability is only enact(ivat)ed from within where one has to take an immediate affective decision in responding to adversity, abjection, subversion, dehumanization, and other oppressive acts. As Barad (2014) posits, "Responsibility is not a calculation to be performed. It is a relation always already integral to the world's ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming" (p. 183). Drawing from that perspective, I acknowledge that resistance is not a calculated performance; rather, it is a process of enacting immediate responses "that precedes the intentionality of consciousness" (Barad, 2014, p. 183) to confront the world, to move forward, in order to live. There are many goals for queer and trans* bodies to resist, but I want to focus on one goal in this space: *survival.* I argue that resistance for queer and trans* bodies is an ability to immediately respond to oppressive acts in order to survive. Therefore, I will return to the conversation between Olivia and Ethan to explore this thinking while seethinkfeeling with different scholars next.

In chapter 4, I shared with Olivia about the connection of the daily survivor mode and peacefulness mixed with traumatic experiences. This type of connection develop a sense of agency for queer and transgender community to "unpack the experience, the events, the stories,

the emotions of queer people, especially queer people of color" who are always "experienced

double, triple, quadruple oppression" (Returning, 02/06/2023).

Survival among queer and trans* has been documented through the homicide from spatial

analysis (Mendes & de Silva, 2020), arts during the cancer treatment (Lin, 2016; Lorde, 1980),

mothering (Gumbs, 2010), in a precedent moment with fear and loss (Segwick, 1993).

Sometimes, the survival is messy and mobile (Winton, 2023) and is a failure (Halberstam, 2011),

leading to mental health challenges such as chronic social isolation, suicide ideation and attempts

(Gomes de Jesus et al., 2020). Despite the challenges that trans* and queer communities are

facing, resistance always goes hand in hand with survival in all circumstances, that failure is not

considered negative, but it allows us to "escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and

manage human development with the goal ofdelivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and

predictable adulthoods" (Halberstam, 2011, p.3). Failure, according to Halberstam (2011), is

something queers "do and have always done exceptionally well" (p. 3). Therefore, resistance, for

me, is an exceptionally well-done, unruly, unpredictable product of survival, especially for queer

and trans* bodies being punched, beaten up, suffocated, raped, killed, and other endlessly

homicidal acts on a daily basis. In other words, survival is a form of self-acceptance where an

emotional responsibility is enacted to resist oppression and predetermined social expectations.

Survival co-exists with resistance to create an agency to mark their belonging in the world where

cisgenderism, patriarchy, sexism, trans/homophobia are governing, controlling, and dominating.

Coming back to what Olivia shared with me, I need to enact my responsibility. As an

outsider to her world, I cannot relate to the adversity that Olivia and other queer and

trans* bodies in Brazil have been facing. I need to overcome the fear of being an outsider as a researcher to get inside the social context in Brazil. Anzaldúa (2002) advises me,

You use your imagination in mediating between inner and outer experience. By writing about the always-in-progress, transformational processes and the constant, ongoing reconstruction of the way you view the world, you name and ritualize the moments/processes of transition, inserting them into the collective fabric, bringing into play personal history and fashioning a story greater than yourself. (p. 559)

I sit with this piece of advice and think about what kind of imagination that I could mediate between inner and outer experience. I am always writing in progress, and thinking in progress, in nepantla. What kind of transition do I need to make to bring collective fabric to build a greater-than-myself story? All of a sudden, I was pulled back to the poem (pp. 165-167, This dissertation) when I was stuck with Olivia's story. I suspect that Anzaldúa, Olivia, or a spirit is calling me to return to that space to reimagine otherwise.

It was just so painful for me to relive her moment.

Yes, her moment.

Each moment is like needle-sharp bolts shot through my skin,

Lacerating spacetime to squeeze my heart.

I am walking through her pain to witness

………………………………………………………………………………

Her heart was torn out![8]

She had her body broken.

The murderer defaced her body.

He must have enjoyed it.

They never saw each other.

They didn't know each other.

A monster.

Brutality and degradation

hand in hand with the sacred.

In His name.

He put a saint in the place of her heart.

In His name.

He opened her chest with shards of glass.

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[8] The poem's title is "The Travesti's Heart - Bruna Benevides" from the report by Benevides & Nogueira (2020). I incorporated my poem and their poem to demonstrate the similarity of Olivias and the stories of transgender populations in Brazil.

But who was she?

Who was this demon that he wanted to exorcise with his zeal fuelled by religious

speech

that demonizes us.

He appears in the media

While about her we know nothing.

She is dead.

She was born dead And died dead.

Invisible.

Her story was erased.

Didn't she have a name?

Family?

Nobody knew her?

Erasing her is unacceptable and this is not a good sign.

Who will be next?

We need to humanize the victim,

Give her a face, because they demonize her.

The world needs to know who she is.

I want to know!

We need to cleanse her.

No more normalizing the violence against us.

The demon is he!

And he is free, alive.

She is not.

We too are not!

…………………………………………………………………………………………

What am I going to do with these traumatic events[9]

When I have been stuck with them?

I am sitting in a public space, calling for help.

I am not knowing who I am:

Ethan-participant;

---

[9] Ethan's poem on page 166-167 in this dissertation

Ethan-researcher,

Ethan-human being,

Who am I?

How could I tackle these emotions?

I am sitting in a public space.

-Stuck-

The poem above was a combination of my own and Benevides & Nogueira (2020). It is iteratively remade with the becomingness of stuckness and stillness and meditation to sit with the moment. Both Benevides and I wrote our hearts out to seethinkfeel what happened to trans* women's tragedy. Even though these poems were written in different spacetimes, they are weaving with each other as **one** *so the stories of transfemicide can be shared in public. Despite writing about two different bodies, Benevides and I were thinking about trans* women in Brazil and their life-death experiences. Olivia was correct when she said that she did not want to romanticize the experience because the tragedy is happening to her/them every day. In other words, trans* bodies are being erased, killed, and disappeared without notice.*

How dare you, killers!

How dare you erase us?

How dare you cause us fear?

How dare you to make us feel miserable?

We will continue this fight.

We will continue resisting.

We will continue surviving.

Because we are not meant to die.

I am not sure what is happening to me now. I need to rest. My body is shutting down. I will need to come back to this later. Anger is overwhelming me. I cannot breathe.

For the 14th consecutive year, Brazil is the most dangerous place where there is a highest number of transgender people killed (Cristaldo, 2023). A report titled "Murders and violence against Brazilian travestis and trans people in Brasil 2019" (Benevides & Nogueira, 2020) indicates the "direct violence" in trans* people on a daily basis. Drawing a source from Gênero e Número magazine, Benevides and Nogueira (2020) share that "an 800% increase in reported attacks against trans people, reaching the tragic number of 11 people assaulted daily in Brazil. In a recent case, a travesti had to pretend to be dead in order to survive" (p. 9). The report also shows that the average age of murder victims in 2019 was 29.7 years old and 64% of these murders happened on the streets (Benevides & Nogueira, 2020, pp. 29-31). They acknowledge that no action plan has been taken by the Brazilian government to protect queer and trans* community in Brazil. In another study that discusses homicides of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, travestis, transexuals, and transgender people in Brazil from spatial analysis, Mendes & Silva (2020) revealed the finding that:

Over half of transgender homicides occurred in small towns and cities (52.8% compared to 47.2% in state capitals), 76.8% were committed in public thoroughfares, 49.8% used firearms, and 57.1% involved 2 to 5 blows or shots. Almost half of the victims (49.5%) were aged between 20 and 29 years, 54.6% were white, and 79.5% were sex professionals. Half of the identified perpetrators were aged between 20 and 29 years (50.6%) and around two-thirds (69.6%) were military members (pp. 1711-3).

The numbers from Benevides and Nogueira (2020) and Mendes & Silva (2020) do show the deadly reality that queer and trans* communities are facing. These numbers are not dead; rather, they are reporting the death of queer and trans* people every day with different violent acts. I concur with Mendes & Silva (2020) that this homicide is "a public health problem and gross and systematic violation of human rights" (p. 1719). The systematic violation is embedded and manifested in employment discrimination and denial to find a place to live (Gomes de Jesus et al., 2020). For example, Gomes de Jesus and colleagues conducted interviews with transgender women in Brazil and India about mental health and other challenges. The stories from the participants show that they have experienced a high level of discrimination, intimate partner violence, suicidality, and low social support. A participant from Brazil shares,

> Baby, we are isolated. Society don't wanna see a bunch of travestis in the Shopping Mall, or seating nearby them at the movies. We are not welcomed. Not at all. They look at us and it feels like we have some sort of disease… So, I usually stay home during the day. (Gomes de Jesus et al., 2020, p. 423)

In order to survive, they have to literally protect each other while walking on the streets. A Brazilian trans* woman shares:

> If we walk alone in the daylight, people laugh at us, call us names, and it's always in the news, we are dying. They kick us, they beat us, they laugh while they are killing us. Nobody cares… We are the country that kills more trans in the world! And baby, if we wanna stay alive, we gotta protect one another… I mean, we fight A LOT. It's always 'Bafao' [messy] around here [in Brazil]. (Gomes de Jesus et al., 2020, p. 424)

What this woman shared has demonstrated their resistance toward the transfemicide in Brazil on a daily basis. Their resistance is collectively enacted and this fight is always "messy" in Brazil. Winton (2023) has coined a term called "messy survival" in her work with queer and trans* community in the migration/asylum field. Winton (2023) defines the messy survival as:

> an alternative to linear, sanitized queer migration narratives by engaging with the nuts and bolts of (queer, marginal) mobility as a kind of survival, and one which is inherently contradictory, disorderly and uncertain. Messy survival takes places where the affective, material, spatial and political intertwine and collide in the dynamic yet harmful margins. (p. 1813)

The definition of messy survival (Winton, 2023) has depicted clearly the messiness of survival for queer and transgender community. This survival is affected by emotions, materials, space, and politics that never settle down in our community. We are always running in order not to be caught, killed, punched, torn apart. We just want to live as human beings. However, our survival

is not guaranteed, is always on the margins of life and death, and is always uncertain and disorderly. Survival for us is a freaking mess!

We want to speak up. We want to fight. We want to resist.

When we speak up, heteronormativity says we are too queer.

When we speak up, patriarchy says we are too feminine.

When we speak up, cisgenderism says we are too trans.

> *How about, if we are silent, what are they going to say?*

> *How about, if we move from place to place, what are they going to say?*

> *How about, if we die, what are they going to say?*

What we want is to live, survive, and be treated as human beings.

Is that too much to ask for?

I am borrowing Benevides and Nogueira's (2020) final remarks:

We have been shaped by this struggle and we will not leave it until our rights are guaranteed. We want full rights, not half. We need federal legislation that punishes the criminals who murder our population on a daily basis and we will not hesitate to fight omission and impunity. We do not prioritize individualism, nor do we encourage it. Our action is plural and, for us, only pluralism makes sense. (p. 67)

Pulling the quotes, findings, and stories from the participants of different articles and reports in Brazil aims to find multiple Olivias in different spacetimes. Talking with, listening to, and witnessing the tragedy and lived experiences of other Olivias helped me come closer to Olivia in this study. I can now feel her resistance and survival more vividly. As one of the participants in Gomes de Jesus et al. (2020) states, "All 'travesti' [transgender women] that you will interview have the same story. We are all kicked out of our family, or we just ran away after years of violence" (p. 423). How can I not incorporate their voices here in this analysis and theorization? As Sedgwick (1993) says, "Everyone who survived has stories about how it was done" (p. 1). I believe each of Olivia in different spacetimes has their own survival stories to share and we should respect and honor and visiblize them.

Returning to Olivia in this study, she has demonstrated her independent and powerful agency to empower herself while going through the traumatic events that happened to her trans* body. Britzman (1995) significantly reminds us that resistance should not be viewed in the separation of the subject of knowledge or the knowledge of subjects, "but rather as a constitutive of knowledge and its subjects" (p. 154). Likewise, in the context of trans* and queer bodies, Olivias and their knowledges should come together to honor their resistances. Specifically, Olivia and the trans* communities demonstrate resistance as the constitutive of knowledge shared by their lived experience evidenced in their traumatic tragedy, moving, running, escaping, dying, and themselves as a lived embodied subject. The constitution of their knowledge and their own bodies are an example of how resistance and messy survival are always already intra-active, co-becoming in the process of enacting responsibility to survive. Because of that intra-action of

becomingness, they open up and enable multiple responsiveness of emotional reactions of themselves and those who are with them in their becoming process until they feel safe enough to move on to confront the next challenges in their lives.

Benevides and Nogueira (2020) acknowledge that our actions are plural. Thus, resistance should be a count-ability in order to count our collective act of togetherness to protect, to survive, to fight with and against, to live a life that we deserve to have and to stop the dead bodies that are being collected every day. Queer and trans* survival is "an irreducible multilayeredness and multiphasedness" (Segwick, 1993, p. 3). Survivors do not merely survive, "but take on, handle, negotiate, and manage their survivorship because it is a category of experience that has been instrumentalized and politicized " (Lin, 2016, p. 342). Queer survival will always go hand in hand and co-exist with resistance because this resistance-survival relationship is a political act for queer and trans* to feel, act, and live together.

I am coming back with Gloria Anzaldúa (2002), listening to her whisper:

Returning from the land of the dead, you wake up in the hospital bed minus your overies and uterus. Scattered around you en pedazos is the old story's corpse with its perceptions of who you used to be. Como luciernaga a light crosses your dark inner landscape awakening un saber (a knowing). You've passed a turning point–decided not to drag the dead self into the present and future just to preserve your history. Instead you've chose to compose a new history and self–to rewrite your auto-historia. (pp. 558-9)

There's not much about teaching pedagogy from Olivia's story.

-Stuck-

What is the lesson that the readers can learn from?

What is the lesson that I learned?

Definitely not a teaching strategy.

-Stuck-

Rather, it is more like a story of survival that Olivia shared with me, with us.

Her trans body, her willingness to live, to survive, to breathe, to smile.

Ahh-Unstuck

That's a story of her life. That's a lesson of her life.

Ahh-Unstuck

That's a story of embodied lived experience.

Ahh-Unstuck

I am now leaving this mourning, this grief, this sadness.

I will come back to sit with it, to feel with it, to re-live with it.

Over and over again.

-Unstuck-

This time, Olivia and Olivias are writing their own autohistoria-teorias

Theirs would be embodied lived pedagogy that we want to learn from.

A pedagogy of resistance and survival to fight for their immortal lives–with pride.

Breathe in. Lift up one foot, move the foot a bit forward, place the foot on the ground to connect with Mother Earth, and shift the weight of your body into the heel. Breathe out. We have arrived at the next step.

Vulnerability

When I used the search function to look for the word "vulnerability" in articles, I was given a suggestion, an alternative word: "risk". I was wondering if vulnerability and risk are closely related; if they are supporting each other in terms of pragmatics and semantics; if they are betraying each other in paradoxical situations, and how they feel and act in public. These are the questions that provoke my thinking to start this section.

Previous studies (Behar, 1996; Blackburn & Schey, 2018; emerald & Carpenter, 2015; Hubbard et al., 2001; Lasky, 2005; Song, 2016) have shown an inextricably intertwined relationship between vulnerability and risk in education and research. As vulnerability "is a multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience" (Lasky, 2005, p. 901) that opens up openness, trust, love, compassion, and collaboration, among others, the question is if risk will be able to enact the same "doors of possibilities" for the risk-takers to cross the border of trust and untrust in a professional and personal space. How can we know where/when risk is ready to cross over? I am thus intrigued to ask, How can we delve into an understanding of *vulnerability* and *risk* in the politics of emotions? Does vulnerability emerge from risk, or vice versa, or do they co-exist? What kind of risk is vulnerability exposed to? What kind of possibilities will/can

(re)create from vulnerability? Does vulnerability make risk vulnerable? If so, how? What makes

vulnerability vulnerable? What makes vulnerable tangibly strong? These questions intrigued me

to enter the politics of emotions to think about this relationship.

As I returned to the conversation in Chapter 4, I realized that vulnerability is a crucial, yet

invisible, element. I acknowledge that emotions *have to* emerge to respond and react to both the

researcher and the participants to inform our mutual understanding of the research topic

(Hubbard et al., 2001; emerald & Carpenter, 2015). Working with vulnerability in research, it

needs more specific attention to the emotions of both the researcher and the participants due to

its ethical concerns in terms of protecting the research project, integrity of the data, and

subjectivity-objectivity in the so-called "data collection" (Hubbard et al., 2001). However, I

argue that exposing emotional vulnerability is not a risk to the participant; it is a disruption of

academic research that divides and erases humanity in research. We will never be able to escape

our own emotions as a researcher and as human beings because "to be human is to be emotions"

(Denzin, 1984/2007). Bringing emotional vulnerability is a humanizing approach that creates a

safe space for different bodies and emotions involved in the process to feel respected, cared for,

listened to, and deeply connected with our own stories through the conversations during and after

the research process. Let's come back to the conversations to explore this line of argument.

To begin with, vulnerability is a way to disrupt ethics concerns in academic research.

Particularly, the vulnerability of this study would not have existed if I had not had a conversation

with the committee at my prospectus defense. Back then, I was discussing a section of "ethical

concerns" where I proposed to "**stop the study** if I have noticed any immediate triggers from the

participants when we discussed experiences, identities, and/or past events" (Personal Communication, December 15th, 2022). One of my committee members asked, "Why do you have to stop the study while emotions are the core of this research design?" (Personal Communication, December 15th, 2022). Noticeably, as it comes to research protocols, University's Internal Review Board (IRB) asks questions to protect the risk of participants; however, the emotions of researchers are dismissed, left out, and largely unreported and ignored (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008; Lee & Lee, 2012). Therefore, researchers are put in a vulnerable situation to deal with their own emotions and the effects on the participants during and after the research process.

For example, before I started sharing the story of Olivia and Ethan, I described how I created an image about Olivia (p. 157, This dissertation). As I return to this excerpt, I can still see an image of Ethan-researcher wandering at the park, walking with Shiba to rest their mind. Still, they did not know how to process the information after the conversation with Olivia. I echo what emerald & Carpenter (2015) ask, "Who cares for the researcher?" (p. 2). Research also shows that the researchers need to attend the therapy sessions during and after the interview process (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008; emerald1 & Carpenter, 2015; Hubbard et al., 2001). Dealing with their own vulnerability, researchers might be caught in vicarious traumatization (McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Pennebaker, 1990; Sexton, 1999). Vicarious traumatization, in essence, describes a process where the researchers begin to experience the emotional trauma themselves after talking to, working with, and listening deeply to the participants during the research interviews. In other words, the risks go hand in hand with the vulnerability where the researcher

put themselves at risk with their emotions and mentality. As Blackburn and Schey (2018) share

that risk is the uncertainty that people experience that could lead to unpredictable ways to

respond; therefore, in order for risk to emerge requires "trust between people" (p. 338).

However, both Blackburn and Schey emphasizes that degrees of vulnerability cannot be

equivalent to the quality of risk, especially in the context of diversity and oppression and

violence in the queer and transgender community. In this study, after the first conversation with

Olivia, the excerpt documents that Ethan-researcher also had their own vicarious traumatization

and did not know what to do with it because Ethan "would never be able to fully understand the

pain that Olivia was going through" (p. 157, This dissertation).

Even though there were no tears described, Ethan in the excerpt felt hurtful. This pain

was indescribable, but it was so surreal that Ethan had to find a way to escape reality (e.g., this

study) in order to enact a care for themselves (i.e., walking in nature to find peace within before

coming back to reality). Even though different strategies are offered for teachers and researchers

to take care of their well-being such as debriefing sessions and finding time for self to avoid

emotional burnout (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008; Pentón Herrera et al., 2023), taking care of

emotional vulnerability remains unknown and abstract, with an exception of using

auto/duo/collaborative ethnography as an emotional outlet to see the relationship of self and

other social factors (Adams et al., 2022; Pentón Herrera et al., 2024; Yazan et al., 2023). To

bring our emotions and vulnerability to work with participants, Ethan split themselves into two:

one was an Ethan-researcher and the other was an Ethan-participant. In other words, Ethan was

the four research participants of this study. This blurriness of participant/researcher is critical and

powerful in this study, aimed to disrupt the boundaries and requirements of research protocols and ethics, pushing the researcher to come back to their self, split it, observe it, and be it. Also, at the same time, Ethan is facing the risk of failing this dissertation because this study is falling into nowhere of a traditional dissertation, which either focus on researching on/with other people or on themselves. This dissertation is a both/and study that brings self into the study, allowing a spiritual self to lead the way, having a self-researcher return and offer theorization into the conversation. In other words, I concur with emerald and Carpenter's (2015) acknowledgment, "the researcher is one of the participants" (p. 4). I am thus one of the participants. I am thus facing the risk and vulnerability at the same time.

> *Pulled back to nepantla, I was reminded that I was creating "a split in awareness" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 549). I possessed double knowing in my "body's ears and soul's eye" (p. 549). I turned my vulnerability into a powerful asset to work with my participants. As Anzaldúa (2002) states, "staying despierta becomes a survival tool" (p. 549). If Anzaldúa could image "an image of a double-headed, double-faced woman, una cara in the profile and the other looking ahead" (p. 549), I would be able to see the split of Ethan and their eyes, their hearts, their souls. I could see that this work did not break my heart (Behar, 1996); instead, it allows me to see double, and triple, with multiphasedness, multilayers, and multidimensionality. Vulnerability and risk did not weaken me; instead, the combination of both elements empower, strengthen, complexify my understanding of emotions, and most importantly, encourage me to cross the bridge of academic risk and being in deep touch with my participant and spiritual self. At this moment, there is not*

only one individual small self. Rather, the small self becomes a big Self with the weaving

of Ethan-researcher, Ethan-participant, Ethan-spirit, Ethan-shaman, Ethan-emotions, the

list goes on and on. This relationship of vulnerability and risk is truly spectacularly

powerful for me as I am returning to this moment again in this space.

The second argument I want to make is that the relationship of vulnerability and risk is no

longer abstract, but it exhibits interconnectedness. I now view *vulnerability as a web of care*

of/for/with risk in the context of working on sensitive topics with vulnerable populations in

research. Sensitive topics are defined as "research which potentially poses a substantial threat to

those who are or have been involved in it" (Lee, 1993, p. 4). Those who are in sensitive research

groups are "stigmatised, disadvantaged or socially disregarded in some way" (Lee & Lee, 2015,

p. 47). Because of the sensitivity of the research, the researchers are trained to suppress their own

"inappropriate" emotions to maintain their objectivity and rigor in research (Hubbard et al.,

2001). However, from the findings of Chapter 4, vulnerability guided our conversations and

created a bridge for us to take the leap of risk with each other, uplift emotions when we were

upset, stuck, or angry, and carry each other and the study to the finish line. We finally crossed

the bridge and found our own homes. As I argued from the beginning of this chapter, emotions

are not lost or evaporated; they transformed into Ignacio, Usman, Olivia, and Ethan (as the

participant and the researcher) demonstrated in the final remarks. What connected us is the

shared vulnerability and enabled the risk-sharing in our conversations that allowed us to fully

accept ourselves and others and provide us strength to critique social queer issues. Therefore, I

come to understand the question I posed above, Does vulnerability make risk vulnerable?

Vulnerability does not make individual, separate risk vulnerable. Vulnerability is also not

intricate anymore; it is the form of self and collective care with one another in a shared, trusting

spacetime. Vulnerability sees through us, embodies us, holds us, lifts us up, and builds us a queer

home after this study. I am recalling a few excerpts that connected all of us together, even though

Usman, Olivia, and Ignacio have not met each other.

> *I think it's an ongoing journey of revisiting a journey of self-discovery and a journey of*
> *teaching and learning. So yeah, very, very powerful. Very powerful. We get to revisit and*
> *think about a lot of difficult moments. And our lives are very high in my mind. But we get*
> *to see that we are here. We survived like we're here. We're queer. We survived and we*
> *survived. There's something very powerful, very powerful in that. (Olivia, Returning,*
> *02/06/2023)*

> *You didn't write it as an interview; it was like a conversation. Because I feel like we also*
> *created a safe space here where I also felt safe and open to talk about it. So I felt like you*
> *created that kind of environment where I was more comfortable and hence more open*
> *and honest about things between you and yourself. Yeah, I'm always up for your*
> *flexibility in being reflective. (Usman, Returning, 01/31/2023)*

> *I think the conversation has been very enriching. And it's been, Yeah, and some parts*
> *have been really thought-provoking, the ones that I hadn't thought before and I feel that it*
> *hasn't been a one-way conversation. As you said, you shared at the beginning. It's not*
> *like a colonizer who comes and, like, gets all this stuff and then runs away, it's more of a,*
> *of a two-way conversation, like a two-way process. (Returning, 02/01/2023)*

Home is that bridge, the in-between place of nepantla and constant transition, the most unsafe of all spaces. You remove the old bridge from your back, and though afraid, allow diverse groups to collectively build it, to buttress it with new steel plates, girders, cable bracing, and trusses. You don't build bridges to safe and familiar territories, you have to risk making mundo nuevo, have to risk the uncertainty of change. And nepantla is the only space where change happens. (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 574)

Breathe in. I know I am breathing in. Breath out. I know I am breathing out.

Breathe in. Lift up another foot, move the foot a bit forward, place the foot on the ground to connect with Mother Earth, and shift the weight of your body into the heel.

Breathe out. We are here. We are home.

I am coming home with Ignacio, Usman, Olivia, Ethan, and Anzaldúa in nepantla. Anzaldúa came in and built that (in)visible, spiritual bridge with us. We have taken a queer walking meditation with one another for a while. It is time to arrive at hom, our queer nepantla home. Each of us is a queer nepanlera. On one hand, we use **vulnerability** as a core foundation to protect us from hetero-patriarchy, sexism, homo/transphobia, racism, and other discriminatory acts. On the other hand, we successfully walked through **stuckness** by taking risk with each other, **meditating** to **empower** ourselves to continue this fight. Still, we **resist.** Vulnerability does not make us vulnerable, it provides us "the source of our greatest strength. (Lorde, 1980, p. 22). Stuckness, meditation, empowerment, resistance, and vulnerability come together as one. They are powerful elements of emotions that carry this study to the finish line.

Every time I returned to the conversations with Ignacio, Usman, Olivia, and Ethan, the returning diffracted me as a researcher differently. Vulnerability is the core of the emotions that connect us. Vulnerability is emotional, felt-sense conversations. We overcame personal and professional risks and brought vulnerability and risk together to open up indeterminacy, uncertainty, and unknownness to move towards what was/is/will be to (be)come. There is always vulnerability in risk and vice versa. In other words, vulnerability and risk are foundational and are existing from the beginning of the study. "Our queer bodies-voices-scholarship-teaching-research-activism are all intra-acting" (Trinh & Behizadeh, 2023, p. 7). The co-existence and co-feeling among us unconsciously guided us to surrender the wall of doubt, deconstructing individual small "I" -s to transform into a collective, total Self in this study. Borrowing Anzaldúa's (2012) words, we all become a shaman, "a nahual", a shapeshifter where we "transform into a tree, a coyote, into another person" (pp. 104-105). In this study, nahual becomes the emotions that become us. Us-emotions, emotions-us are one. In this study, our vulnerability is no longer an emotional disguise (Denzin, 1984/2007). Rather, each element of emotions represents each participant when it feels the way (e.g., **stuckness-Ethan, meditation-Ignacio, empowerment-Usman, resistance-Olivia, vulnerability-us**) and it can appear and witness other emotions here and there, in in-between-ness, elsewhere within here, "all at once" (Trinh, 2014, 38:36). In the next section, I will introduce a theoretical concept called "atomic emotion" that brings different elements of emotions together in in-between-ness all at once.

Atomic Emotion

I have turned off my cell phone for two days. Last night, I stayed up late until 4 a.m. to try to finish writing. My body is shutting down. I cannot do anything right now. My body is resisting. My body is telling me to rest. I cannot rest. I have to finish this dissertation. I am almost there. Just a final stretching. But I can't.

"Sitting is an art. The art of resting first. It's very important that we learn how to rest. Many of us have lost our capacity to rest. We know that our body has the power of healing itself. But we just don't give it a chance to heal. We work our bodies too hard. We don't know how to allow our bodies to rest. By eating, by drinking, by working, we make our body suffer. We do not allow our body to rest. If only we knew how to allow our body to rest, our body would know how to heal itself" (Plum Village, 2021).

Another day, I came back to this writing. I am sitting meditatively. I am lighting a candle to connect with my inner self. I remind myself of stuckness as stillness and meditation as stopping. I allowed myself to rest yesterday. I needed that rest to continue this journey. I am now listening to my queer body and its inner feeling. I am now returning to the conversations of Ignacio, Usman, Olivia, and Ethan to remind me of empowerment as dismemberment. In this returning, resistance is an ability to respond. The vulnerability here is not weak; it is a strength. This strength is not personal, it is communal, it is interconnected, it is political, it is spiritual. I am now bringing elements of emotions together again in this space while I am sitting meditatively. I trust this space, I trust myself, I trust the embodiment of emotions and queer bodies of myself and participants. I am now sitting with them and we are ready for the next step of this journey.

In the next step, I come back to the research questions to answer them. The questions are:

- What were the possibilities in terms of theory, teaching, and research that queerness and emotions produced through the intra-active conversational process between four queer English teachers of color and Ethan-researcher?

- How were queerness and emotions traced methodologically? By whom or what?

To respond to the research questions, I am proposing a concept called *atomic emotion* developed from each element presented above. In this dissertation, I have constantly refused to "go beyond" what the fields are doing, because beyondness sounds like we leave the past behind, "but neither the past nor the future is closed" (Barad, 2012, p. 13). The pastpresentfuture is one (Barad, 2007). I am always indebted to the past because it allows me to see the stories differently and how the past opens future retellings (Barad, 2012). Thus, I decided to return to within, push the limits of thought, theorize, analyze, and stay in nepantla. The elements of emotions are *one* of the possibilities that emerged and produced in the intra-active conversational process to respond to the research questions, but there are more possibilities that are not yet to come. Next, I am going to get into a smaller unit, the *atom*, to bring the elements of emotions together.

An atom, the basic unit of matter, consists of a central nucleus that is surrounded by subatomic particles: protons, electrons, and neutrons. Drawing from Bohr's work, Barad (2007) acknowledges that atoms "are not simple objects but complex, open-ended configurations of intra-acting practices. That is, an atom includes that apparatus that helps constitute it" (p. 472). Later, Barad points out that atoms participate "in the world's differential becoming as part of many different complexes of practices" and do not exist in isolation (p. 472) and directs the

reader's attention to the question of material conditions in order to explore the question of "what a phenomenon is, what marks on bodies, that is the traces of the enfolded processes of materialization and an accounting of how this differential response matters" (p. 472).

Building from Barad's interpretation of the atom, I have theorized the elements of emotions (i.e., empowerment, resistance, vulnerability, meditation, stuckness) that emerged from the study as subatomic particles, where they are moving around a nucleus, which I called *an atomic emotion* (see Figure 12). An atomic emotion consists of these elements, the movement and differential becoming and reconfiguring of these elements are always held together, co-existing relationally, intra-acting with one another, and transforming constantly in every second. There is nothing permanent in an atomic emotion. There is nothing permanent in its form. Elements of emotion in an atomic emotion motion, trans-form, and intra-act impermanently.

Figure 12

Atomic Emotion
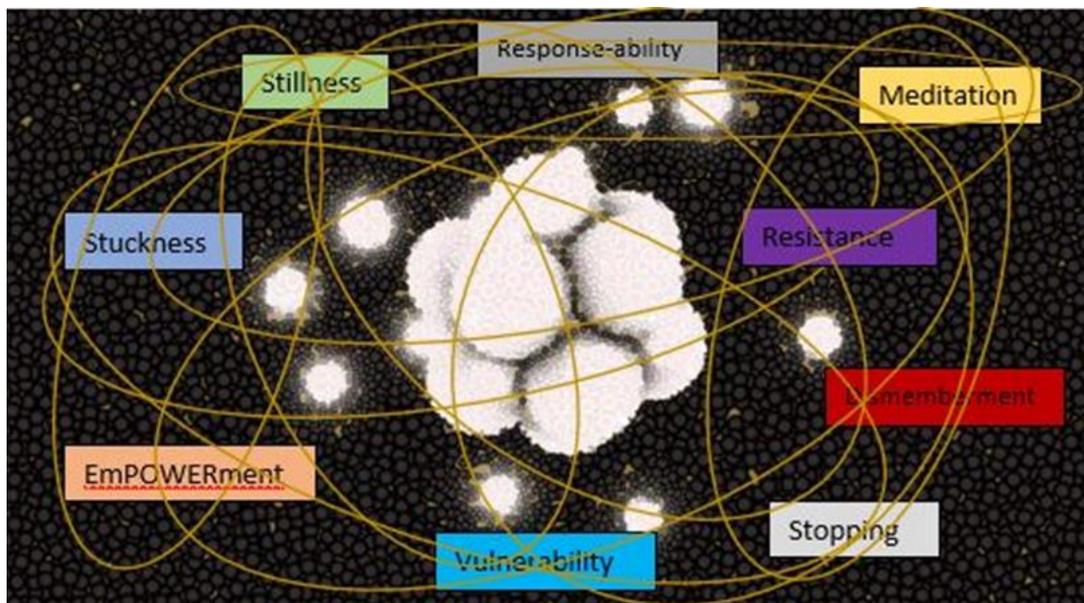
In discussing impermanence, I want to draw on the Buddhist perspective on thinking with quantum physics, particularly with intra-action, to help me build my thinking and argument of an atomic emotion. In his book, "No Death, No Fear: Comforting Wisdom for Life", Thay Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) acknowledges that impermanence should be understood as "everything changes and that nothing remains the same in any consecutive moments. And although things change every moment, they still cannot be accurately described as the same or as different from what they were a moment ago" (p. 40). In other words, impermanence reminds us of the constant changing in every moment; there is nothing permanent. "Out body is impermanent, our emotions are impermanent, and our perceptions are impermanent" (Thich, 1999, p. 47). Since impermanence means being transformed in every moment, then there is no permanent, separate self. "Nothing can exist by itself alone. It has to depend on every other thing. That is called inter-being. To be means to inter-be" (Thich, 1999, p. 47).

Both concepts from the West (i.e., intra-action) and the East (i.e., inter-being) reaffirm that a phenomenon is constantly changing and what is inside of a phenomenon co-existing interdependently. In this study, each element of emotion is a coexistence of the other element (i.e., stuckness-stillness, meditation-stopping, empowerment-dismemberment, resistance-response-ability, vulnerability-risk, or all at once) and is traced by the process of materializing emotions and other material factors that directly affect bodies (i.e., politics, cultures, religions, family, etc.). The co-existence and interdependence of elements of emotions have shown that emotions are not a simple inanimate subject/object, but they are the result of what is left (on/out), marked, and iteratively (re)constituted through the intra-action of each individual queer body.

The conversations of Chapter 4 and the discussion of this chapter have shown that emotions are constantly developing, changing, and transforming. Through careful, attention-to-detail tracing, one element emerges from one another in a relational relationship. As these subatomic particles (i.e., elements of emotions) move around a nucleus, they create a power to change. The transformation of an atomic emotion is thus relational, indeterminate, and impermanent.

As Thay Thich Nhat Hanh (1999) posits, "our body is full of everything else–limitless non-body elements–except one thing: a separate existence" (p. 49). Following this perspective, a queer body is full of atomic emotions and other non-emotional elements that are always co-existing and intra-acting. This perspective closely relates to "mutual entanglement" in an agency, where an agency does not exist separately, but "exists in a relational, not an absolute, sense (Barad, 2007, p. 33). Therefore, the co-existence and interdependence of elements of emotions in an atomic emotion are the manifestations of what emotions and queer bodies do in a relational, impermanent entanglements. In other words, each element exists in an intra-active entanglement where they iteratively and impermanently reconfigure their own forms, actions, and movement, which contributes to disrupting the fixity and predetermined understanding of what emotions and queerness are and redirects the thinking of what emotions could potentially *do* to (re)present themselves. In other words, atomic emotions *queer* our understanding of the relational relationship of queerness and emotions and the becoming of the worlds.

An atomic emotion is a constantly moving, changing, relational, and nonrepresentational form. The concept of atomic emotion challenges the notion of representation where we do not stand outside of the world to understand the world; instead, it is asking us to walk, sit, rest, and

return together to co-constitute a direct materially-emotional engagement with each other and

with the worlds, evidenced throughout the excerpts in Chapter 4 and in the collective returning

(p. 238, This dissertation). In other words, this concept is another form of understanding

posthumanism where it "doesn't presume the separateness of any-"thing", let alone the alleged

spatial, ontological, and epistemological distinction that sets human apart" (Barad, 2007, p. 136).

This concept is in favor of agential realism (Barad, 2007, p. 207) that disrupts

representationalism[10], which takes the notion of separation as the core, and explores the

connectedness and relationality of emotions and the worlds and its ethics-onto-epistemology. An

atomic emotion has its empowerment to enact response-ability and possibilities when it

intervenes, touches, and transforms other "things" involved in the process. Thus, every single

emotion and non-emotional element do not exist alone; rather, they are part of co-becoming and

togetherness with/of the world, "because the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter"

(Barad, 2007, p. 185).

By drawing from multiple theories, mainly nepantla from Chicana feminism, intra-action

from new materialism, and meditation from Buddhism, the concept of atomic emotion was born

from the mutually-emotional entanglement (i.e., intra-active conversation) where the study was

situated in walking meditation (in the research process), but multiple realities (i.e., cultural,

---

[10] I am indebted to what Barad (2007) defines realism, which "is not about representations of an independent reality but about the real consequence, interventions, creative possibilities, and responsibilities of intra-acting within and as part of the world" (p. 37). This perspective helps me think deeply with the concept of atomic emotions and its movement in the world.

political, and schooling contexts) are constantly challenged, inquired, and theorized in nepantla

(i.e., in-between-ness) before, during, and after the interview process. Therefore, this concept is

useful to answer the research question of this study: What were the possibilities in terms of a

theory that queerness and emotions produced through the intra-active conversational process

between four queer English teachers of color from different backgrounds and Ethan-researcher?

In terms of theory, the findings of this study have answered the possibilities of what

queerness and emotions are produced in the intra-active interview process. Not only do emotions

and queerness arise in-between-ness (Anzaldúa, 2015; Deleuze & Guattari, 1994; Gregg &

Seigworth, 2010; Trinh, 2020a, b, 2021a; Trinh & Merino, 2021) and move and pass from

human to non-human (i.e., stuckness-Ethan, meditation-Ignacio, empowerment-Usman,

resistance-Olivia, vulnerability-us) "in the very passages of variations between these intensities

and resonances themselves" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 1), but they now create possibilities of

transformation for those **who** *and* **what** are involved in its becoming process. For example,

transformations could be seen in what queer participants shared in their final remarks (i.e.,

Ignacio found the study as a two-way conversation and enriching, Usman felt safe and

comfortable to be honest about his/her feeling, Olivia felt the journey of self-discovery very

powerful and wanted to recommend more of her friends to join the future projects, Ethan felt

inspired by the stories and continued their journey of returning again and again to talk with

Ignacio, Usman, and Olivia even after the interviews were completed). The transformations

occurred *only* through our intra-active conversations (i.e., discursive practices) with each other

(in this case, Ethan and their participant, Ethan-researcher and Ethan-participant). If Ethan-

researcher came to the study with their role as an outsider to observe a phenomenon, an atomic emotion may never have happened and vice versa with the participants of this study. If Ethan-researcher did not pay attention to the details that enact the matter of care in ethic-onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007), an atomic emotion could have been invisible; thus emotions of queer participants may not have been uncovered. The concept of atomic emotion thus reiterates the complexity of hyper/in/sibility of queerness, which is "an intertwined sociopolitical process that can perpetuate and oppose, exclude and include, perpetuate and disrupt cisheteronormative ideologies and assumptions simultaneously" (Trinh, 2021c, p. 757). Atomic emotions thus challenge the hyper/in/visible of queer emotions. Queerness and emotions crucially require careful analysis and theorization in order to see and feel and think with them, which will be further described in the next section. As such, after this study, atomic emotions are part of Ethan in their becoming process and vice versa. They are no longer separate. They are *an* intra-action.

Further, the conversations and discussions have highlighted and affirmed the concept of atomic emotion, which is a constantly moving, changing, relational, and nonrepresentational form. The forms such as stuckness-Ethan, meditation-Ignacio, empowerment-Usman, resistance-Olivia, vulnerability-us are now transforming *into* Ethan-researcher where they are writing up this report; however, stuckness, meditation, empowerment, resistance, and vulnerability could stick and live within all queer participants of this study. This "couldness" shows the indeterminacy and potentiality of queerness, the unfixity of forms and undividedness of human and non-human, to be able to understand, see, and move with the worlds simultaneously. We are thriving and transforming because of this co-becomingness with one another. In this process of

co-becoming, our emotions stick, mediate, and empower each other's vulnerability to continue resisting injustice in the worlds. As I enact the next *returning*, another atomic emotion will emerge (see Figure 13). At that time, Ignacio, Usman, Olivia, and Ethan will carry different elements of emotions to continue shape-shifting and emotion-changing to explore what is yet to (be)come. Next time, there will be no longer the same Ignacio, Usman, Olivia, and Ethan. They are all becoming different in the next return. That is what I meant about the transformation of an atomic emotion being relational, indeterminate, and impermanent in its differential becoming.

Figure 13

Blurring an atomic emotion to show its indeterminacy in the next transformation.
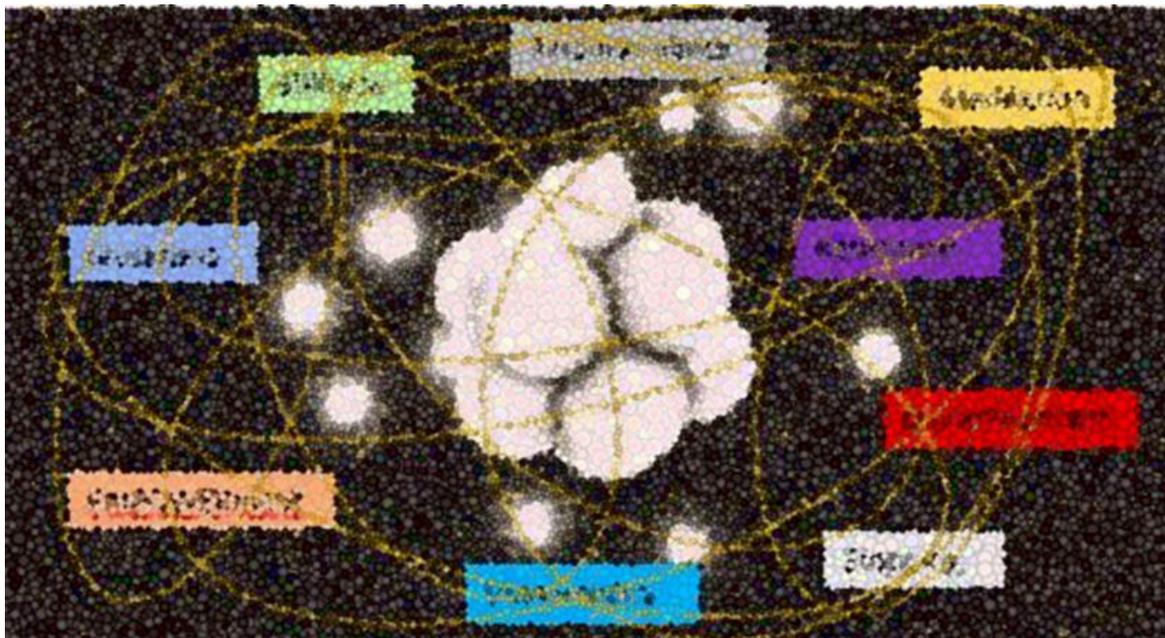
Spiritual Third Eye

I want a feminist writing of the body that *metaphorically emphasizes vision* again because we need to *reclaim that sense* to find our way through all the visualizing *tricks and powers* of modern sciences and technologies that have transformed the objectivity debates. We need to learn in our *bodies*, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our *theoretical and political* scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of *mental and physical* space we *hardly know how to name*. (Haraway, 1988, p. 582, italics are mine).

In this section, I am introducing the concept of the spiritual third eye and will describe why this concept is useful to answer these questions: What are the possibilities in terms of **research** that queerness and emotions produced in the intra-active conversational process? How were queerness and emotions traced methodologically? By whom or what?

To start this section, I come back to think with Haraway and her foundational text in 1988, titled *"Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective."* In Haraway's arguments, she resists the "god tricks" of totalization and relativism in understanding objectivity in research. Instead, she directs us to think about knowledge and objectivity to be "partial, locatable" in specific contexts where critical knowledge sustains "the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology" (Haraway, 1988, p. 584). According to Haraway, objectivity and relativism are created for the political purposes to support military, racism, White, male, heterosexual, colonialism, and the dividedness of ideologies such as "mind and body, distance and

responsibility" (p. 583) and thereby considering subjectivity as invalid in research. Therefore, to

disrupt the Cartesian dualism, Haraway proposes a metaphorical vision. For her, "vision is

always a question of the power to see–and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing

practices" (p. 585). Haraway asks a powerful question, "With whose blood were my eyes

crafted?" (p. 585) to remind us of the politics of positioning, which implies "responsibility for

our enabling practices" (p. 587). Critical positioning is a feminist version of objectivity.

For Haraway, eyes are not just passive organic ones, but they have specific "ways of

seeing", that is "ways of life", which is elaborated from "specificity and difference and the

loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another's point of view" (p.

583). Her metaphorical, feminist eyes, or vision, are closely related to subjectivity. She claims,

"Subjectivity is multidimensional, so therefore, is vision. The knowing self is partial in all its

guises, never finished, whole, simple there and original" (p. 586). Haraway also emphasizes the

splitting of self "is the privileged image for feminist epistemologies of scientific knowledge"

who "can interrogate positionings and be accountable, the one who can construct and join

rational conversations and fantastic imaginings that change history" (p. 586). Haraway asks:

> How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see
>
> with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinded? Who wears
>
> blinders? Who interprets the visual field? What other sensory powers do we wish to
>
> cultivate besides vision? (Haraway, 1988, p. 587)

By providing a snippet of the metaphorical vision from Haraway's perspective, I want to make a connection with nepantla, or in-between, eyes in this study. While re-reading Anzaldúa (2002), I have found a connection between Haraway's partial knowledge and Anzaldúa's seeing-doubles.

First, Anzaldúa acknowledges that our eyes, ears, and other physical senses are not the whole picture and are just a limited fraction of the reality prevailed upon societal assumptions. She argues that "What you or your cultures believe to be true is provisional and depends on a specific perspective" and "the experience of reality is partial, too" (p. 542). The "specific perspective" here could refer to white male supremacy, colonialism, linguistic, gender and sexuality oppression, among other discriminatory acts that impacted queer bodies. That repeatedly appear in her works (Anzaldúa, 2002, 2012, 2015). Second, as Anzaldúa (2002) describes living in between results in seeing doubles from one and the other's cultures, she argues that it is the "split in awareness that engenders the ability to control perception" (p. 549). In nepantla, the material and spiritual worlds are overlapping, the body is in both places simultaneously, it is thus "inspirited" (p. 549). Third, she argues against the Cartesian split and the dichotomy of "mind/body, matter/spirit" and claims that the intertwining of spirit and matter in the body "is the solution, requir[ing] knowledge be lived daily in embodied ways. Only then may the split be healed" (p. 555).

Therefore, nepantla is the space of giving birth to seeing through the cracks that "change or reinvent reality" by engaging the "facultad of imagination" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 44). For Anzaldúa, imagination is a "transformation of self, consciousness, community, culture, society" where it involves multiple different processes in terms of political, spiritual, and aesthetic

(Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 44). She emphasizes, "Without imagination, transformation would not be possible" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 44).

Bringing Anzaldúa's and Haraway's perspectives together, I have found similarities in their theoretical eyes. Both of their eyes view the world as partiality, seeing the split as feminist ethics, epistemology, and ontology, contesting Cartesian dualism in seeing the world. They argue that subjectivity is the embodiment of multidimensionality, spirituality, and livability of an individual rather than the totalization of knowledge from the dominant group in Western society. They ask for the imagination as a crucial point to reinvent the realities and change the worlds. Both of them situate the eyes/visions in relation to power, politics, and colonialism, which erase the knowledge of the Other and propose a feminist eye to see the cracks of realities with fresh critical eyes. Therefore, drawing from their perspectives, I propose *a third eye with atomic emotions* as a powerful matter to see the worlds in the cracks, in in-between-ness, and from below, to address Harway's (1988) questions (p. 587) and reinvent realities (Anzaldúa, 2015).

The third eye with atomic emotions (see Figure 14) comes back to the characteristics of atomic emotions where the subatomic particles move around the nucleus "third eye". Specifically, the elements of partiality, multidimensionality, spirituality, and emotionality exist relationally in in-betweenness where they are moving around the third eye to disrupt the totalization and wholeness of Western scientific objectivity. The third eye is a theory and a research method to trace what is invisible, subjective, abnormal, or any-*thing* that is denied in the creation of knowledge in political and cultural contexts (i.e., gender and sexuality, language, spirit, so on and forth).

I would like to think about the third eye with stereoscopic vision where three (or more) dimensional visualizations are awakened, which now goes beyond the visual ability of humans with two eyes. Instead, the third eye with atomic emotions could offer tiny, atomic, yet in-depth analysis with an observation of care. The third eye offers a shaman-like perspective that allows a space of stopping and resting and comes back to an inner self to connect with the worlds simultaneously through the splitting. The third eye also contributes to deconstructing predetermination, challenging the fixity, questioning colonial knowledge, rethinking about assumptions and biases toward Others, and looking into the inseparable relationship of human, non-human, more-than-human through discursive practices. The third eye also invites imagination for the purpose of transforming self, family, community, and society. The third eye allows the third space (i.e., nepantla) to think, theorize, and analyze the unthinkable, pushing the limit of thought to understand a phenomenon. The third eye raises questions: Where is the phenomenon located? Who holds the power to decide what a phenomenon should be? How does a phenomenon feel? Importantly, the third eye offers to view the world in unfixity, unruliness, partiality, and unfinishedness, embedded within atomic emotions where emotions are already always changing and opening indeterminacy and possibilities of thinking, acting, and feeling.

I am convinced that queer nepantlerx possesses the third eye. Not only do they live in the in-between world and see the cracks of cultural and social and political issues, but they also do not have a fixed "home". Because of their nature of queerness, queer identities are always on the move, running, changing, transforming, and creating "a web of connection" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 83) to connect with each other. Nepantlera is an agent of awakening (Anzaldúa, 2002; Trinh,

2020d) where each of them is linked with "everyone and everything in the universe and fight actively in both the material world and the spiritual realm. [They are] spiritual activists engaged in the struggle for social, economic, and political justice while working on the spiritual transformation of selfhoods" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 83). Due to the shared nature of unfixity of queerness and atomic emotions, both of these elements intra-act and weave into each other, enabling a response-ability to iteratively reconfigure their own becoming, diffract, and thereby allow themselves to open up indeterminacy and possibilities to seethinkfeel differently.

In the next section, I will return to the research question: *What were the possibilities in terms of **theory and research** that queerness and emotions produced through the intra-active conversational process between four queer English teachers of color and Ethan-researcher?* and *How were queerness and emotions traced methodologically? By whom or what?* I argue that queerness and emotions are traced with the third eye by queer nepantlerxs in this study.

Drawing from the theoretical third eye with atomic emotions, I claim that I as Ethan-researcher have used this eye as both **a theory and a research method** to trace the queerness and emotions in nepantla. Every time Ethan-researcher returned to the conversations, the third eye with atomic emotions was activated to diffract their own thinking, feeling, and analyses. Because of the power of the splitting of self, Ethan could see things multidimensionally which is underlying the participants' stories. Because of the splitting of self, Ethan would be able to trace back to the moment where they felt connected. Ethan-researcher and Ethan-participant are not the same person anymore. They both split themselves to see the cracks of the worlds, opening all of their senses through meditation, paying close attention to their (and other) queer bodies,

thinking with conversations with care, and enabling inner feeling, vision, and analyses to connect

with the participants to understand their critical positionings from the social, cultural, political,

religious contexts. In other words, the splitting of self is a response to blurring subjectivity and

objectivity, body and mind, fiction and non-fiction, real and unreal to come to the third space

(i.e., nepantla), which leads to inquiry, becoming, and transformation after that.

Figure 14

The spiritual third eye with atomic emotions
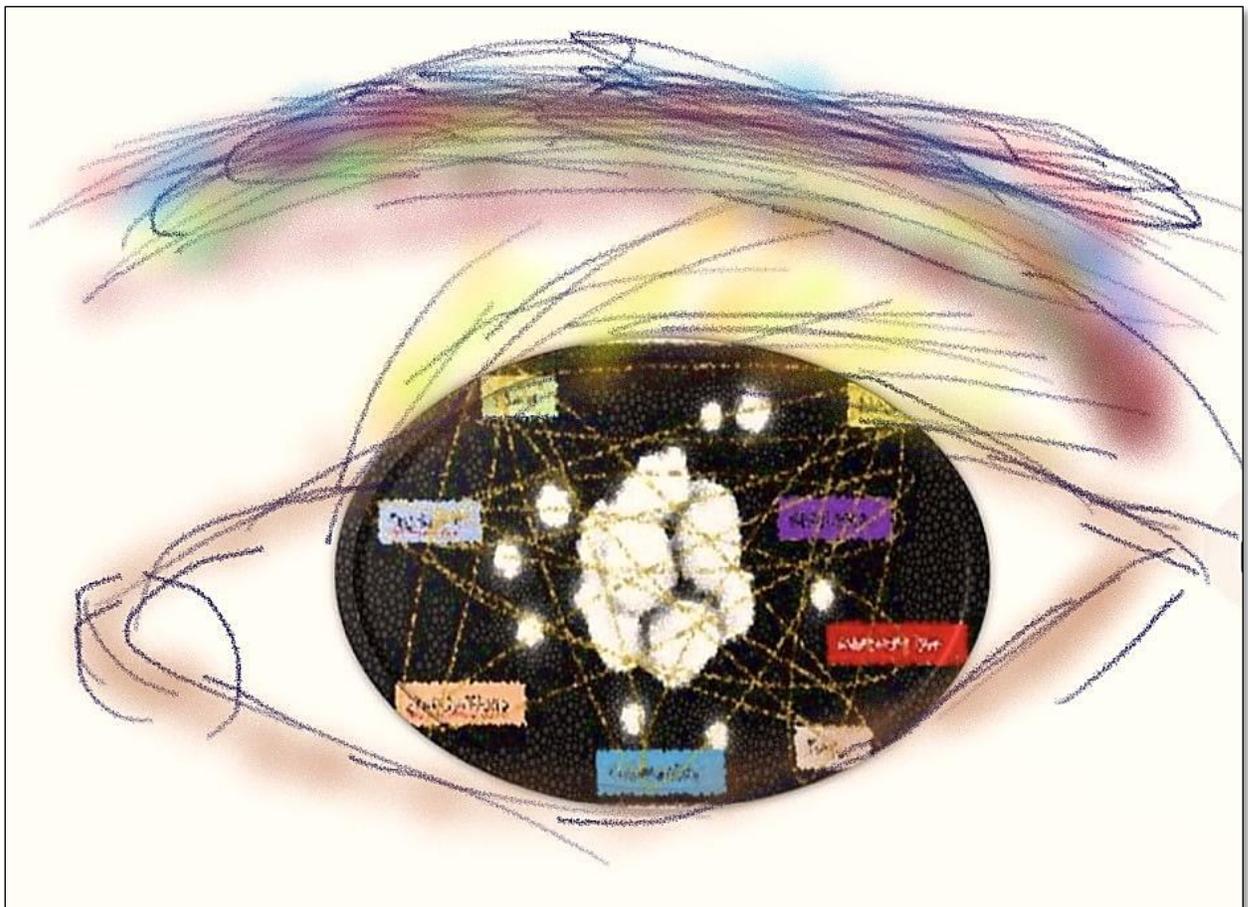
Let's take the italicized lines as an example of the splitting. Both the italicized and unitalicized paragraphs demonstrate both voices of Ethan-researcher and Ethan-participant and oftentimes their voices are overlapping. As Anzaldúa (2002) explains,

> In nepantla, you sense more keenly the overlap between the material and spiritual worlds; you're in both places simultaneously–you glimpse el espiritu–see the body as inspirited. Nepantla is the point of contact where the 'mundane' and the 'numinous' converge, where you're in full awareness of the present moment. (p. 549)

The readers might find this text familiar. This text has been used repeatedly in this study to demonstrate the point of meditation and the present moment. However, this text is revisited in order to affirm the point of the overlapping of identities that do not fix in one space or time. It is the spacetime that connects pastpresentfuture together. Therefore, as Ethan split themselves as a researcher and a participant, Ethan did not stay, feel, and write in one dimensional spacetime; they lived in multidimensional spaces with a spiritual third eye.

In nepantla, every time Ethan-researcher got stuck in thinking or felt overwhelmed with writing, they sought to speak with Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa never left Ethan. Both Ethan-researcher and Anzaldúa are both queer nepanlerxs; both of them met each other in an overlapping spacetime to support each other. Most of the time, Anzaldúa gave Ethan a small piece of advice here and there, so they could continue their thinking and writing. Anzaldúa is a spirit who is always with Ethan to whisper to their ears and lend her thoughts. After the study, Ethan and Anzaldúa are no longer two separate spirits. They *are* an intra-action.

For example, in chapter 4, every time Ethan returned as a researcher, Anzaldúa came and talked with them. For Ignacio, Anzaldúa reminded that the shift has to be more than intellectual, that queerness is situated in nepantla, nepantla is situated in queerness, that nepantla is a safe space for Ignacio to put his guard down and expose vulnerabilities with each other. For Usman, Anzaldúa reminded that nothing is fixed, that identity is fluid, changing and is always in nepantla, that the clash of/into realities is not lonely, but that is part of the becomingness. For Olivia, Anzaldúa reminds that love always exists in in-betweenness; violence might exist in love; love might exist in violence, that acceptance for queer and transgender community is not coming from self, but that should be from family, society, and politics. Above all, Anzaldúa lent each of us a third eye with atomic emotions (i.e., stuckness, meditation, empowerment, resistance, vulnerability) as we walked through with each other meditatively. As each eye is shown in Figures 1, 8, 10, our eyes are now reunited in chapter 5 (see Figure 15).

As Anzaldúa (2002) advises us, "The transition of life from birth to death, and all the daily births and deaths in-between. Bits of your self die and are reborn in each step" (p. 546). The "die-and-born-in-each-step" perspective represents the impermanence (Thich, 1999) and iterative reconfiguration (Barad, 2007) in observing a phenomenon. During the conversations, each participant, literally and metaphorically, went through the transitional lines between life and death. They were constantly reborn with different emotions and identities in multiple realities. However, after the study, they no longer exist separately. "They" became "we". We are reborn into a new form of emotions that remains in us: an intra-active form of emotions. In Barad's (2007) language, we are iteratively reconfiguring and reborn in our own co-becoming. Our third

eyes came together, becoming one, allowing us to seethinkfeel differently in the next returning in a different spacetime. The transformation does not stop and so is tracing and becoming.

Another re-turning occurred when Ethan revisited this text with their advisor three days before the final dissertation version was submitted to their current institution. In conversing with each other, Ethan's major advisor reminded Ethan of the absence of Thay Thich Nhat Hanh in the third eye. Ethan acknowledged that there was an absence about Thay Thich Nhat Hanh's words in enriching the spiritual theoretical eye philosophically. However, Thay Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching philosophy has been tremendously and intra-actively embedded in Ethan's teaching, writing, researching, thinking, philosophizing—in and outside of the academy. The concept of impermanence (Thich, 1999) was revisited, which reminded Ethan of an important message that "everything changes and that nothing remains the same in any consecutive moments. And although things change every moment, they still cannot be accurately described as the same or as different from what they were a moment ago" (p. 40). The spiritual third eye continues becoming, changing, and being different in every single second and thus impacting Ethan-researcher to seethinkfeel differently in the time being and in the future. The third eye concept will continue developing its doing, thinking, and feeling in the very near future in a different spacetime so that Ethan-researcher will re-turn and diffract the conversations of this dissertation with another fresh critical in-between third eye. The transformation of Ethan-researcher and the conversations do not stop and so is tracing and becoming of emotions.

Figure 15

Individual third eyes with atomic emotions guide this study

Pedagogy of Response-ability

When I took you in the walking meditation to go through the elements of emotions, I let

the emotions lead me to explore something I did not plan to do. I allowed myself not to be

framed into a structural way of writing a dissertation. I wanted to make a connection

with the social, cultural, and religious aspects of each element (i.e., macro level) to think

about how these elements are restricted or liberated, or situated in multiple contexts.

Besides, as I argued before, TESOL is **one** *of the elements of this study, it is part of this*

mutual entanglement of the phenomenon called "the dissertation study". Further, when I

have a chance to review and return to the conversations again and again and again (I

lost count of the returning), I notice that the participants did not describe explicitly the

strategies to queer the classroom, but their queer bodies **are** *pedagogy. This embodiment*

of lived experience is a queer pedagogy that emerged from the study. These queer

teachers have shown that they overcame the how-to teaching approach, which

"reproduces racial, gendered, and class-based power relations in its institutions,

ideologies, and practices" (Luhmann, 1998, p. 126). Rather, queer pedagogy centers on

"pedagogy's curiosity toward the social relations made possible in the process of

learning and on queer critiques of identity-based knowledges" (Luhmann, 1998, p.

120). Thus, their queer identities in public are queer pedagogies. Their emotions are

hyper/in/visible which was embedded in their queer pedagogy. As such, I did not want to

disrupt lines of thinking and the flow of feelings while exploring the elements of emotions.

Rather, I want to give it full attention in this section to think about the pedagogy of

response-ability situated in the context of TESOL.

The field of TESOL owes queer teachers a debt of emotional attention and appreciation. Due to the complexity of cultural and political contexts, queer identities are hyper/in/visible (Trinh, 2021b), and so are their emotions. The field of TESOL has conducted research that focuses on classroom spaces (Benesch, 2012, 2018), students' trauma (Zembylas, 2020), teacher's emotion labor (Benesch, 2017; Zembylas, 2003), teacher's feeling rules to respond to emotional capital and emotion labor (Gkonou & Miller, 2020), and oftentimes, there is neither too much nor too little emotion on either students or teacher's sides (Madalinska-Michalak, 2015). However, queer teachers' emotions are completely ignored and thus continue doing emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983) while suffering from multiple responsibilities and duties in the school system (at the macro level) and hiding their queer identities (at the micro level) due to political and cultural contexts.

In a recent edited book, Gkonou, Dewaele, and King (2020) showcase the emotional rollercoaster of language teaching across the world and acknowledge that language teachers are "relatively neglected" when they have to put the students at the center (p. 288), but there was no research study in 16 chapters that discuss emotions of queer teachers in English language classroom. They posit that emotions in teaching are difficult to observe due to the intra- and interpersonal aspects involved (i.e, the constraints of individual and social dynamics); therefore, researchers need to find innovative ways to collect and analyze conversations in order to suggest an effective pedagogical approach in teaching. However, I was wondering whether or not their suggestions continue the process of looking for information (i.e., representationalism) rather than thinking about the pedagogy's curiosity (i.e., agential realism). This approach reminds me of

Britzman (1995) where she emphasizes queerness does not depend on the identity of a person, but it aims to think about the unruliness of thinking and doing of a phenomenon when working with the topics of gender and sexuality. Therefore, even though research and pedagogy continue exploring emotions in teaching, they are missing and overlooking the queer aspect and queer teachers in English language classrooms. Even one of the pioneering works in the field (Benesch, 2012, 2017) does not touch on this missing of emotions of queer teachers. If so, are we still conducting research that perpetuates heterosexism and heteronormativity in understanding emotions? If so, where is *justice* for queer teachers?

Further, Martínez Agudo (2018) raises the question, "How second language teachers manage to handle emotion-evoking classroom experiences and situations is the crux of the matter" (p. 6). It can be seen that the arguments have been focusing on *how* teachers in TESOL need to *directly do with* their emotions by using the word "manage", "control", "handle" and "deal with" in responding to emotional challenges and situations in the classroom. The current challenge, from my perspective after reviewing the current research in our current society and in the classroom, is that emotions are still viewed as subjective. In order to "deal with" subjectivity, the rationale is considered as the solution, which comes back to the totalization of relativism and objectivity in research (Haraway, 1988). The point is that teachers are restricted by time and space in the schooling system (Martínez Agudo, 2018) and are asked to continuously look out for others (i.e., students, parents, administrators) instead of looking inside/for/with themselves. What I mean in terms of looking inside/for/with themselves do not try to put more pressure *on* teachers, but I want to emphasize that the act of *stopping to think* and *the collective sense-making*

process could help unstuck the stuckness and provide a sense of resistance to empower one another. In order to do so, queer teachers will not do that by themselves. They need allies (Trinh et al., forthcoming). The act of looking inside/for/with themselves is not a step-back; it is a moment of resting to share vulnerabilities with each other and learn how to see through each other's eyes. Again, we are always part of the world in differential co-becoming.

Oftentimes, we overlook a step-back to think about the co-existence and interdependence of emotions and bodies (bodies here could be of teachers, colleagues, students, and others in and beyond the classroom space). Therefore, it is crucial to find a moment to enact the stopping (Thich, 1999) in the progress of teaching to rest and heal ourselves, especially for queer teachers who are already in the escape, hiding, running mode. As the participants of this study acknowledge, the journey of self-exploration is powerful to them. The space of conversing with self and the researcher is cathartic to give them strength, clarity, and sense-making to come back to their own space. The act of stopping is the crucial point to go back to the inner self, sit in in-betweenness, rest, in order to see the relationality of emotions and bodies, explore how its interdependence makes queer bodies feel differently, and figure out the action for social change. It is important to emphasize that it is okay not to have a "now" response. It is okay to pause, rest, and come back later. The act of stopping is a starting point to enter the pedagogy of response-ability to resist the restriction of heteronormative spacetime and lawful acts that oppress queer bodies in and beyond schools.

In this space, I will not provide any framework and/or strategies or "pedagogical implications" to solve the problem of rationale and emotionality, or subjective and objectivity. I

resist falling into the trap of Cartesian dualism in thinking and contest the heteronormative way

of designing a lesson plan. Rather, I carefully think with the pedagogy of response-ability that

invites the thinking of queer pedagogy (Luhmann, 1998), pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999),

and feminist pedagogy (hooks, 2010).

Let's start with queer pedagogy. Queer pedagogy (Luhmann, 1998) asks the learner to

think about "being self-reflective of its own limitations" (p. 122). Queer pedagogy acknowledges

the unavoidable relationship of hetero/homosexuality and the limitation of transformation of

content by adding the portraits of queer individuals into the curriculum. However, what queer

pedagogy is trying to get at is to provoke the notion of curiosity about ideological appropriation

such as normalcy and abnormalcy and explore how the difference can be unpacked through the

discourse of students/teacher and the text. Luhmann (1998) concludes that

> What is at stake in a queer pedagogy is not the application of queer theory (as a new
>
> knowledge) onto pedagogy, nor the application of pedagogy (as a new method) for the
>
> dissemination of queer theory and knowledge. Instead, at stake are the implications of
>
> queer theory and pedagogy for the messy processes of learning and teaching, reading and
>
> writing. Instead of posing (the right) knowledge as answer or solution, queer theory and
>
> the pedagogy I have outlined here pose knowledge as an interminable question (p. 129).

Therefore, queer pedagogy looks at the messiness of teaching and learning where

interminable questions are constituting knowledges. The questions and answers are open to

endlessness and potentiality in and beyond the classroom space. Because of the interminability of

seeing the world from queer pedagogy, the pedagogy of discomfort (Boler, 1999) adds an aspect

of asking "how emotions define how and what one chooses to see, and conversely, not to see" (p. 176). Boler (1999) emphasizes that this inquiry is a collective process rather than being individualized. She then argues the risk of self-reflection, as compared to passive empathy, "runs the risk of reducing historical complexities to an overly tidy package that ignores our mutual responsibility to one another" (p. 177). Pedagogy of discomfort not only calls for inquiry but also asks for actions initiated by different bodies in the real world where we are living. In this pedagogy, teachers will invite students to share vulnerability and discuss pedagogies and emotional challenges together and enact "the politics of listening" (p. 198). She further explains:

> We risk creating pain within the pedagogical process, layered on top of what is already a difficult and vulnerable enterprise. The best antiracist and antisexist work I have studied and seen in action is not about confrontation but rather a mutual exploration" (Boler, 1999, p. 198).

Both Boler and Luhmann emphasize that knowledges are created by mutual creation and exploration of messiness in teaching and learning. As the pedagogy of discomforts add, risk and pain are a mutual connection. As pain is an unavoidable element in thinking about the fluidity of the pedagogical process, crying will occur. In feminist pedagogy, hooks (2010) acknowledges that students will break into tears when confronting difficult topics in the classroom, especially if the topic is about gender, sexuality, and race. In her essay, hooks (2010) is aware of sexist notions that tears coming from female professors will be considered as "not the intellectual equals of males" because "all females will be emotionally overwhelmed and that [they] will 'come undone'" (p. 79). However, hooks uses tears and emotional intensity, especially when

students respond to the texts, "to nurture awareness of subject matter" (p. 79). hooks argues that the moment of emotional intensity and tears in the classroom is "a threat" (p. 83) to the hierarchy where the mind should be dominant over the body and spirit. Tears and cries help teachers and students learn beyond the boundaries of language to learn from "our sense, feeling states" (hooks, 2010, p. 83) to build common understanding and our ways of knowing. She raises a question, 'If we allow for the possibility of tears, then an insurrection of subjugated knowledge may occur" (p. 83).

Bringing the crucial points of queer pedagogy, pedagogy of discomfort, and feminist pedagogy together helps me build up elements of what pedagogy of response-ability could be. Barad (2012a) views "responsibility" as not about the right or wrong response, but it is "a matter of inviting, welcoming, and enabling the response of the Other. What is at issue is response-ability—the ability to respond" (p. 81). Barad argues that possible responses and questions are not waiting for the right answers, but situate and enact the accountability "for the specific histories of practices of engagement" (p. 81). This perspective connects me with the mutual entanglement and how human and non-human are involved in a relational phenomenon in the discursive practices.

Therefore, I will not try to define what pedagogy of response-ability is, but I hope to propose what it can do. Specifically, I view *pedagogy of response-ability as an atom with different subatomic particles* moving around and transforming constantly. If pedagogy were an atom, then the subatomic particles would be *stuckness as stillness, meditation as stopping, empowerment as dismemberment, resistance as response-ability, and vulnerability as strength.*

The pedagogy of response-ability does not solely focus on students or teachers, but it centers on the co-existence of both bodies, while inviting other bodies and matter to be involved in the critical inquiry process. In this pedagogy, elements of emotions are embedded as foundation; teachers and students are nepantlerx who will work with each other to allow emotions exposed, discussed, critiqued, and shifted to challenge power, heteronormativity, sexism, homo/transphobia, racism, dualism, among others. As placing the pedagogy of response-ability in English language classrooms, the **vulnerability** needs to be prioritized and deserves careful attention. This pedagogy does not try to push anyone at risk, but it asks *what kinds of risk are being put on each body.* This pedagogy does not try to ask anyone to suffer emotional labor or feeling rules, but it asks *what kinds of emotions are letting us feel this way now and how understanding this feeling in that moment creates a space of inquiry, discussion to seefeelthink differently.* The questioning of now is crucially important (Anzaldúa, 2002; Barad, 2007; Thich, 1999). What this pedagogy asks is the dismemberment of stories and moments and memories that teachers and students carry with them in order to see through and **empower** their inner selves. What this pedagogy asks is to see **stuckness** as the moment of staying still, doing nothing, stopping to rest, **meditate**, listen to different forms of bodies, and take actions after that. What this pedagogy also asks is the interdependence of beings to aim for an indeterminate becomingness. This pedagogy asks us to respond to what we seethinkfeel to respond. Because response-ability is ethic-onto-epistemologically-related. Because response-ability is resistance. Because pedagogy is a matter of resistance to fight against injustice in the worlds.

Future Directions

Queer Utopia of Sensations

I am sitting in the room by myself and Shiba. I am feeling overwhelmed with everything. The tears keep coming down, coming down, coming down. I will not be able to hold to this feeling anymore. I will not be able to make it. I will not be able to make it.

Tears come out as part of cleansing the heavy bodymindsoul last night. I slept for three hours and then woke up to drop my mom off at her workplace. I am alone in the house, but I was stuck with the writing today. The writing took me back to my childhood when I was sleeping in an office where my mom was a housekeeper for my aunt (from my father's side) but she had to do all kinds of work until, or sometimes past, midnight to be able to come home with me. I did not recall the feeling of mom hugging me, but I do know that mom was working really hard to put food on the table, to have money to support me with schooling and learning English, and to buy me a new dress. The moment that I recognized that mom did everything for me and I would not be able to finish this work gave me a feeling of guilt, of bat hieu that I will not be able to support them financially in the US. My dad usually questions why I want to take this Ph.D. It does not give me money. I kept silent a couple of times. Until there was a TV show in Vietnam about the struggles of queer and transgenders, I pointed out and told him, They are my people. They are the reasons why I want to do this work, Dad. He kept silent. But silence gave me signals that he understood what I was/am trying to do.

Figure 16

You are special
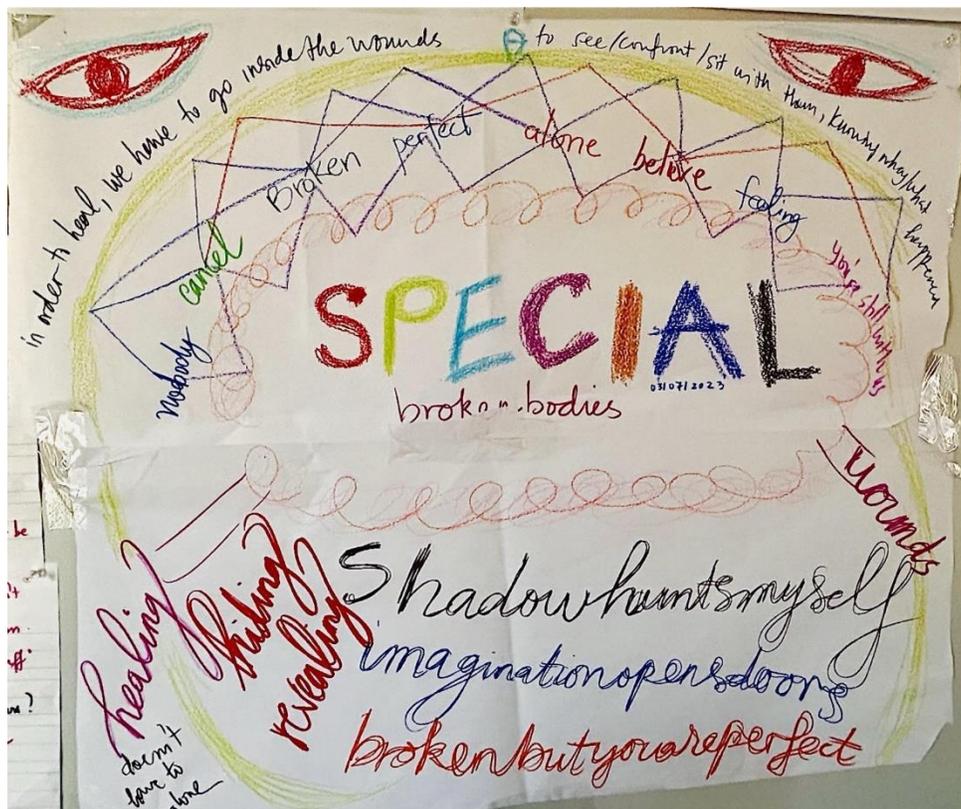
I am plugging my earphones in. I woke up from a long nap, 3 hours to be specific. Allergy in Georgia is killing me. I could not breathe. I could not work. I could not focus. I was angry. I was yelling at Shiba. I did not know what I was doing. I just wanted to give up on this. This dissertation is a painful process. Right now, I am so close to finish. A dear friend of mine said, "Stop beating up yourself, Ethan!" and she sent me the photos before the dissertation phase where I had a big smile. I texted her back: "That was before dissertation! I was happy". What is happening with me now? I took a shower and then came back to talk with Gloria.

Gloria Anzaldúa (2015) reminds me,

My job as an artist is to bear witness to what haunts us, to step back and attempt to see

the pattern in these events (personal and societal), and how we can repair el dano (the

damage) by using the imagination and its vision. I believe in the transformative power

and medicine of art. (p. 10)

I drew the picture (see Figure 16). The words "haunting", "imagination",

"transformative power", and "medicine of art" are actually haunting my mind. I wanted

to do something to get these words out of my mind. I took out crayons. I had posters

stitched from different pieces of paper taped incomplete on the wall. I put my earphones

on. I am playing Lizzo's Special. Where should I get started? Perhaps, the word

"Special" with a rainbow color could be useful. I then drew a round around the world

"special". Then, I took out words from the song: nobody, cancel, broken, perfect, alone,

believe, feeling, you are still with us. I then drew multiple sticks to weave the words

together because I saw their interconnectedness. Under the words were three different

phrases: Shadowhauntsmyself, imaginationopensdoors, and borkenbutyouareperfect.

Next to the three phrases were two words "hiding" and "revealing" that represent queer

identities that struggle with their identities in a public space. On the right-hand side, I

wrote the word "healing". Under the word "healing", I wrote, "healing does not have to

go alone". On the left-hand side, I wrote "wounds". I see the inseparability of these

words like the co-existence of left and right arms. I then wrote, "in order to heal, we have

to go inside the wounds to see/confront/sit with them, knowing what/why happened". In

between the phrases and the word "Special", I put down the word "broken bodies". I

colored the whole "body" green and put two scary, judging red eyes on the left and right

sides, and added an eye in the middle. The third, in-between eyes need to be open to see

through the matters, to think through, to overcome struggles, to beat up depression and

anxiety, to tell me that I am special, I am perfect, and I am not alone in this journey.

My in-between eye is now awakened to see the world, the reality, the individual and

collective queer self.

I am not alone.

I am feeling queer.

My perspectives are not only heard but felt.

I am feeling queer right now. Feeling queer is the moment of looking deeply into the

broken thicker moments to live, confront, and encounter them in a brave way to make queerness

and emotion publicly recognized. Feeling queer is the moment of theorizing, analyzing, and

thinking queer. Feeling queer is a critical self-love to take the courage to pause everything, pull

the puzzles together to help with meaning making, sense making and making sense and love

one's self for once. Feeling queer is a process of revealing queer and emotional self publicly so

the self-healing can get started.

> *This crying is helpful because it gives me a chance to realize the purpose of my work, to*
>
> *answer the question, for whom do I do this work for/with, and why. The research*
>
> *participants trusted me in the interview process, sharing with me their vulnerabilities and*
>
> *feelings, and emotions. The emotions transcended across times and spaces and stick with*
>
> *me so strongly that I am part of their stories. The work that I am doing is emotionally*
>
> *heavy but at the same time, I have to keep a consciousness of a researcher to do justice to*

their stories, to their emotions, and to respond to their trust. That's why I want to

continue this work.

Crying helps me see and connect with the vulnerable self. Crying keeps my dream alive in

the furnace of this pain. Like Ke Huy Quan, a Vietnamese Chinese actor receiving his

first award for the male supporting role at the Oscar 2023, said, Keep your dream alive,

I am following his inspiration to keep my dream alive, to carry my pain and dream and

emotion forward, to do the work that has never been created before, to live my life and to

continue writing the stories of unknown and invisible queer people. Perhaps, this crying

is an agential cut that was supposed to happen so that I can calm myself down (and of

course thanks to my partner who picked up the call when I was in need of him) and move

forward. I should be proud of these tears and thank them for helping me write down these

words. Because I only would be able to understand my own emotions when I confront

them directly; the tears put me in touch with a different Ethan who appears to be strong

and positive and optimistic. I am talking to another vulnerable Ethan who needs to listen

to hear these words. And perhaps, these lines would be useful for other vulnerable,

overwhelming, and anxious Ethans in the future who want to do this work, but don't

know where to start. My emotions are written down here and they can always come back,

sit with me, cry with me, and continue writing their own stories for the future.

The future is queerness's domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of

desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and

now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and not's the totalizing

rending of reality, to think and feel a then and there. (Munoz, 2009, p. 1)

Queer Emotion Movement

This study has prompted me to inquire about the queer emotion movement. Queer Emotion Movement is a social and spiritual reform that de-center "men" who are always the standard of the universe (Smith, 1999). Queer Emotion Movement re-directs us queer people to think about/with the emotion-and, queer-and, and the future-and where we are led to indeterminate future (perhaps an unknown, queer utopia where queerness does not have to escape and run for a new life, emotions are not perceived female-oriented). I am imagining that this movement will open a new historic-socio-cultural-linguistics-political-sexual transformation where relationality is emphasized and researched in multidimensional space. A queer utopia is a nepantla space where we have freedom to feel and be felt without judging, where we see stuckness as stillness, resistance as response-ability, vulnerability as strength. That will be a space where queer nepantlerxs do not have to relocate but would be able to rest, recover, and meditate, and let the body rest, loved, and healed. That will be a space where we do not have to think about controlling or managing emotions or how emotions control us? Rather, we create a space where queerness and emotions are co-existing in a peaceful state where we are able to stop what we are doing, give careful observation to our emotions, and plan for the next action to prepare for the next impermanent transformation.

Future House of Nepantla

During the process of stitching micro-stories together, Anzaldúa (2015) came and talked to me. She advised me, "Without imagination, the transformation would not be possible. Without creativity, "other" epistemologies–those of the body, dreams, intuitions, and senses other than the five physical senses–would not reach consciousness" (p. 44). How

could I invite all bodies into future experiments in the future? How could I do justice to

their stories? How could I enact creativity and imagination?

I am stuck.

I need to rest. I have been thinking with this dissertation every day, even in my dream.

I am resting on the couch.

I was struggling a lot with this writing.

  This is the end of one phase of writing and thinking with queer teachers of color

I need to take a break for the conversations to rest.

I need to take a break for my mental health.

The wind from the fan gives me chills to lure me to sleep.

This is what I am trying to do in my research: rehumanizing the research process where

my well-being and mental health are cared for. The work I am doing is dealing with

emotions, queerness, my and participant's identity negotiation, and our traumatic events.

The justice that I am doing here has two-fold purposes: one is to think carefully with

queer teachers and their stories and how I can do justice to their emotions; two is to care

for my own well-being and mental health in thinking with the conversations for the next

returning.

The conversations in my study are no longer a dead object, but they are alive, emotional,

becoming, iteratively reconfiguring, which move my soul, my heart, my energy, and my

mind to think and live with it until I finish the dissertation.

The conversations are now part of my personal life; my personal life is entangled and

intra-acted with them, blurring personal and professional spaces.

All of a sudden, the participants are coming with me into the in-between space. They are coming and walking out from the posters hung on the wall. I have been thinking with and talking with them for a long time. I have been surrounded by their voices and stories since I started this dissertation. Their voices through the posters on the wall have come out louder and clearer. I have been talking with them, but now they come to talk with me. They do not even know each other. This is not a "focus group" interview. This is a conversation among us, queer teachers. We are all sitting down and are ready to spill the tea in the House of Nepantla.

The next conversations will be kept for future research studies. In the House of Nepantla, we will gossip, dream, walk, dance, pose, feel, cry, and love with each other. The conversations still go on as our queer emotions do - always in the move, in the making, in running in nepantla within nepantla within nepantla—everywhere everything all at once.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Form

Georgia State University
Department of Middle & Secondary Education
Study Title: Tracing Queer Affects in TESOL: A Diffractive Analysis Study

Principal Investigator: Dr. Gertrude Tinker Sachs
Co-investigator: Ethan Trinh, Doctoral Student
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I.   **Purpose:** You are being asked to participate in a research study. This study has been approved by Georgia State University's Institutional Review Board. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. The information below will be explained and you can ask any questions before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate or stop participating at any time without penalty. Refusing to participate will not effect current or future relationships with Georgia State. To refuse or stop participation tell the researcher you wish to stop participation.

   The purpose of this study: To explore queer, affects, emotions, and feelings of queer teachers who teach in English language classrooms. The researcher is interested in interviewing queer English teachers to understand the connection of queer identities and affects in their lives.

II.   **Procedures**: If you agree to participate in this study, we will ask you to do the following things. Participate in 4 one-hour audio-recorded interview with researcher in one month, respond to 4 30-minute writing reflections after every interview, and spend two 30 minutes to look for photos for two interviews. Total estimated time to participate in study is **7** hours in four weeks' time. The interviews will be virtually via Zoom.

III.   **Risks:** There are no risks as such anticipated to participate this study any greater than everyday life. If you wish to discuss the information on risk, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the top of this form.

IV.   **Benefits:** This study is not designed to benefit you. However, participants may learn new information and may develop new academic or creative interests as a result of participating in this study but there are not known direct benefits from participating in this study. Participation in this study may help in the advancement of human knowledge

in the field of language education. Your participation may also help expand the visibility of queerness beyond the classroom spaces

V. **Compensation:** There will be no compensation or costs for the participants.

VI. **Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal**: Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you can drop out at any time. You may skip questions.

VII. **Confidentiality and Privacy Protections**: We will keep all research data confidential and protect your privacy to the extent allowed by law. The researchers will have access to the information you provide. The researchers might also share information with groups who make sure the study is done correctly. An example of a group that can see the information is the GSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Office for Human Research Protection. The researchers will use a coded name instead of your name when we write. We will store digital information on firewall-protected computers. The researchers will store physical information in a locked cabinet. We will keep a key that identifies participants by name separate from the data to protect privacy. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when the researchers present this study or publishes its results. The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

VIII. **Contacts and Questions**: If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study. Our names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page. You can talk about questions, concerns, offer input, and obtain information about this study. You can also call the numbers above if you think you have been harmed by the study.

IX. **Copy of Consent Form to Participant**: You will be given a copy of this consent form.

X. **Statement of consent**: When you sign this form, you indicate that you have read the previous information and agree to participate in this study. If you decide to retract your permission, please tell the researcher. You can retract your permission in any moment.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent   Date

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Date/ Time: Interviewer:

Place: Interviewee:

This interview is being conducted on _____. By conducting this interview, I

hope to understand your experiences in terms of queerness and affects on your lives and

teaching. You have volunteered for this interview. Your information is confidential and will not

be disclosed unless you permit me to do so. Do you have any questions for me before we start

(Pause)? The interview is being recorded.

First Interview - Questions and Probes

In this first interview, let's discuss your upbringing, cultural, pedagogical, spiritual, and

political beliefs, and experiences.

1. Probes:

- How do you identify yourself?

- Can you share your upbringing? By "upbringing", I am thinking about your backgrounds,

  schools, families, societies where you were born and grew up.

- Can you share your cultural values? By "culture", I am open to you how you define

  "culture" and what are important in your cultural values that co-constitute who you are

  and your perspectives.

- As you grew up, who played an important role in your thinking? Why?

- Please share critical moments in your life that have left an imprint on you.

- Why did you decide to teach?

- What do you think about the word "in-betweenness"

- What do you think about the word "queer"?

- What do you think about the words "affect", "emotion", or "feeling"

- Where is your political stance on teaching?

2. Follow-up

- You mentioned X in your response. Can you tell me more about this?

- You used the word "....". Can you please define it?

- Can you give an example of what "...." look like in your life in connection with
  academic, spiritual, teaching, and queer life?

3. Reminder: Thank you for sharing with me your background. In the second interview, we
   will discuss queerness in your lives. Please bring at least **5** photos to share the aspects of
   your queer lives in family, school, and workplace.

Second Interview - Questions and Probes

Date/ Time: Interviewer:

Place: Interviewee:

This interview is being conducted on _____. By conducting this interview, I

hope to understand your experiences in terms of queerness and affects on your lives and

teaching. You have volunteered for this interview. Your information is confidential and will not be disclosed unless you permit me to do so. The second time will be the continuity of expanding their backgrounds and the connection between the participants' queerness and critical incidents that happen in their lives (i.e., in family, school, workplace, and society). Do you have any questions for me before we start (Pause)? The interview is being recorded.

A.   Probes:

1. Was there anything that has come up since the first interview that you want to talk about?

2. Did the interview make you think about your identity after you left? If so, in what ways?

3. How did you feel after the interview ended? How do you feel now about the interview? In what ways do you think the interview impacted you? (ex. Was it beneficial, harmful, or anything else)

4. What was the one aspect of the interview that stuck with you most? What is that? Why?

5. As I asked you to bring photos to the second interview, let's start first with whatever you want to share about your queer life.

6. As a queer person, how were you perceived in public? It depends on how you want to define the word "public space".

7. As a queer teacher, can you share with me a critical incident where you mentioned queerness in your teaching? What were the outcomes of the classrooms?

8. In the photos you bring today, which one is the most closely related to the visibility and or invisibility of queerness in your life? What happened? Can you describe it in detail?

B. Follow-up

1. You mentioned X in your first critical self-reflection response. Can you tell me more about this?

2. You used the word "...." in your reflection. Can you please define it?

3. You mentioned Y in the interview today. Can you tell me more about this?

4. You used the word "...." in the interview today. Can you please define and/or elaborate on it?

5. Can you give an example of what "...." look like in your life in connection with academic, spiritual, teaching, and queer life?

3. Reminder: Thank you for sharing with me today. In the third interview, we will discuss queerness and affects on your lives. Please bring at least 5 photos to share the connection of queerness and affects, emotions, and feelings in your teaching.

Third Interview - Questions and Probes

Date/ Time: Interviewer:

Place: Interviewee:

This interview is being conducted on _____. By conducting this interview, I hope to understand your experiences in terms of queerness and affects on your lives and teaching. You have volunteered for this interview. Your information is confidential and will not be disclosed unless you permit me to do so. The third time will discuss photos of the classroom artifacts such as classroom spaces, teaching materials, and/or any thing that represents your

teaching philosophy and pedagogy. Do you have any questions for me before we start (Pause)? The interview is being recorded.

B. Probes:

1. Was there anything that has come up since the second interview that you want to talk about?

2. Did the interview make you think about your identity after you left? If so, in what ways?

3. How did you feel after the interview ended? How do you feel now about the interview? In what ways do you think the interview impacted you? (ex. Was it beneficial, harmful, or anything else)

4. What was the one aspect of the interview that stuck with you most? What is that? Why?

5. As I asked you to bring photos to the third interview, let's start first with whatever you want to share about the visibility of queerness in your teaching.

6. What is the connection between queerness and affects in this photo? Do you remember how you and/or students reacted in this moment?

7. How were emotions and queerness received in your classroom by students, colleagues, parents, and administrators?

C. Follow-up

1. You mentioned X in your second critical self-reflection response. Can you tell me more about this?

2. You used the word "...." in your reflection. Can you please define it?

3. You mentioned Y in the interview today. Can you tell me more about this?

4. You used the word "...." in the interview. Can you please define and/or elaborate it?

5. Can you give an example of what "...." look like in your life in connection with academic, spiritual, teaching, and queer life?

3. Reminder: Thank you for sharing with me today. In the final interview, we will discuss queerness in your lives. In the final interview, you do not have to bring anything to the interview. We will review the data together and wrap up the study.

Fourth Interview - Questions and Probes

Date/ Time: Interviewer:

Place: Interviewee:

This interview is being conducted on _____. By conducting this interview, I hope to understand your experiences in terms of queerness and affects on your lives and teaching. You have volunteered for this interview. Your information is confidential and will not be disclosed unless you permit me to do so. This is the final interview. In this final interview, we will re-turn to data together and delve deeper into the previous conversation. Do you have any questions for me before we start (Pause)? The interview is being recorded.

A.   Probes:

1. Was there anything that has come up since the third interview that you want to talk about?

2. Did the interview make you think about your identity after you left? If so, in what ways?

3. How did you feel after the interview ended? How do you feel now about the interview? In what ways do you think the interview impacted you? (ex. Was it beneficial, harmful, or anything else)

4. What was the one aspect of the interview that stuck with you most? What is that? Why?

5. What are the possibilities that could happen when queerness and emotions in English language classrooms?

6. How has this time with me meant anything to you in terms of everything we discussed?

7. From this experience, where can we go from here?

B. Follow-up

1. You mentioned X in your third critical self-reflection response. Can you tell me more about this?

2. You used the word "...." in your reflection. Can you please define it?

3. You mentioned Y in the interview today. Can you tell me more about this?

4. You used the word "...." in the interview. Can you please define and/or elaborate on it?

5. Can you give an example of what "...." look like in your life in connection with academic, spiritual, teaching, and queer life?

6. In the previous conversation, you mention …. I want us to re-turn to that moment. Can you please share more about it?