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“Yes, there’s violence, but there’s also so much love” — Lessons About Dedication and Commitment from Teachers Who Grew Up, Live, and Teach in their Urban Neighborhoods

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“Yes, there’s violence, but there’s also so much love” –

Lessons About Dedication and Commitment from Teachers Who Grew Up, Live, and Teach in their Urban Neighborhoods

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Ana María Tenorio

2024

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"Yes, there's violence, but there's also so much love" –

Lessons About Dedication and Commitment from Teachers Who

Grew Up, Live, and Teach in their Urban Neighborhoods

by

Ana María Tenorio

Doctor of Education

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Professor Inmaculada García Sánchez, Chair

Amid high teacher turnover in disenfranchised neighborhoods, teachers who were raised in, live in, and teach in these neighborhoods demonstrate unwavering commitment to their students. Eight teachers from a major metropolitan city in the United States participated in 45–60-minute pláticas to discuss the joys, challenges, and needs of teaching in the neighborhood they grew up in, live(d) in, and teach/taught in. The data was analyzed using narrative inquiry approaches, from which portraitures of the participants were developed. The study found that teachers with a robust understanding of the sociopolitical context of the neighborhood and positive human relationships with people in their neighborhood intentionally chose to teach in the neighborhood they grew up in to provide dignity-affirming and liberatory education opportunities for their

students. The teachers in this study do so by developing their students' social consciousness, addressing socioemotional needs with compassion, and fostering academic aptitude. While the study identified the forces that drive teacher commitment and longevity in the workplace, it also identified the need for educational leaders to adopt servant leadership strategies to implement effective strategies to support these teachers.

The dissertation of Ana María Tenorio is approved.

Nicole Anne Mancevice

Mark P. Hansen

Inmaculada García Sánchez, Committee Chair

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2024

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the caring, loving, and compassionate teachers in my life (Mrs. Hagenmayer, Ms. Chacón, Mr. Hamilton, Ms. Breckenridge, Mr. Turner, Ms. Hartt, Mr. Morales), every teacher who teaches with compassion and empathy, and above all, my first teacher, mi mamá. You all build an oasis of love and learning when so much uncertainty and chaos permeates our world. Thank you.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I also want to thank my dissertation committee - Dr. Inma, Dr. Hansen, and Dr. Mancevice - for generously sharing their insight, expertise, and time. This has been the most challenging academic endeavor I have ever engaged in. I have been fortunate to have had your guidance.

Finally, I want to thank the teachers who participated in this study. I am inspired by your courage, compassion, love, and commitment to our students. It has been my honor to have met you, learned from you, and shared your work of love and hope in this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

A 2017 study revealed that 55% of the teachers who left the teaching profession cited job dissatisfaction as the reason behind their exit from the profession (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). Insurmountable accountability measures, expectations to teach to the test, low administrative support, and few opportunities to make leadership input are some of the factors that prompted early teacher exit from U.S. classrooms. It is no surprise that Title 1 schools where over 45% of students live in poverty struggle with high numbers of teacher vacancies (2017).

A 2005 study revealed that teachers who worked in challenging schools were twice as likely to exit the teaching profession or leave their school site when they cited having an unsupportive principal (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Teachers were also likely to leave the profession when they were not granted autonomy or school influence (Carver- Thomas, 2018). The implications of teacher turnover become more alarming when we consider that three out of four teachers of color teach in hard to staff schools (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Research conducted by a teacher's union representing the teachers in this study shows turnover is 70% higher than at schools where the population of students of color is only 10% or lower.[1] While studies indicate that an experienced teacher can impact the trajectory of a student, the adverse social conditions within the school environment contribute to high teacher turnover.

Amid relentless teacher turnover, teachers who demonstrate an irrevocable commitment to the urban disenfranchised communities exist. Teachers born, raised, living, and teaching in urban disenfranchised communities have shown dedication to their schools. Despite the unfavorable work conditions that drive teacher exodus, their loyalty and allegiance to their

[1] I am refraining from using the source of this citation to preserve the anonymity of study participants.

communities drives their work. A 2022 study found that teachers who graduated from the urban district they currently teach at are more representative of the district's student body, slightly more effective at improving test scores, and more likely to remain in the district (Redding, 2022). By the end of their first year of teaching, only 16% of district graduate teachers had left, compared to 20% of non-district teachers (2022).

Since teachers of color often tend to see themselves in their students and have an unwavering desire to give back to their communities, they are more likely to stay in hard-to-staff schools than their white counterparts (Achinstein et al., 2010). The experiences of teachers of color who grew up in the neighborhoods they teach in reveals the mechanisms necessary to support teachers in disenfranchised urban schools. The conversations with teachers who grew up in and/or live in and teach in the neighborhood uncover the source of their satisfaction and dissatisfaction, inform administrative and district practices on how to support these rare teachers, and can potentially result in long-term academic and personal gains for students of color and their communities.

The teachers of the Historic Anza Corridor have devoted years of service to the students in their beloved neighborhoods and seem intent on continuing their service. Although the circumstances and conditions are not ideal, their love for the human beings they teach inspires them to serve with compassion, generosity, and kindness. The pláticas with the teachers in this study reveal the source of their unwavering commitment to the students from the neighborhoods they grew up in, lived in, and taught in. This study uncovers how the profound love teachers from the Historic Anza Corridor feel for the people of their neighborhood fuels and propels their tenacious dedication to the students who are currently living, growing, and learning in the neighborhood. This study shows how administrators, school districts, and other education

leaders can better support and cultivate more of those teachers, so they continue to support the students that need them the most.

Explanation of the Vocabulary Used in this Dissertation

There are words that will be used throughout this dissertation to describe students, teachers, and the residents of their neighborhood. First, I will use the word disenfranchised. In this dissertation, the word disenfranchised refers to people from a low-income neighborhood who have been systematically denied access to resources by American institutions in education, law and government, and the economy.

Secondly, I will use the word community to refer to a group of individuals who share a geographical location and acknowledge and validate one another's existence. While these people may not be close friends or family, they see one another as part of the same place , and therefore, might see themselves as part of the same unit. There's a recognition of one another in the shared geographical landscape sustained by a tacit acknowledgement or a verbal or non-verbal interaction in the geographical landscape.

Finally, the word neighborhood refers to the geographical landscape the teachers, students, and residents share. The geographical landscape includes, but is not limited to, the places where quotidian life takes place: schools, churches, parks, recreation centers, businesses, restaurants, sidewalks, and roads where ice cream trucks and taco trucks can be found.

Statement of Purpose

This study recognized that teachers who grew up in, live in, and work in the Historic Anza Corridor are an invaluable community asset. Their devotion to student learning stemmed from a profound love and devotion to the people, places, and things that comprised the Anza Corridor. Their "love praxis" stems from "cultural memory" - teachers' recollections of positive experiences with the people of their neighborhood fuel their loving commitment to their work as

educators (2012). By shedding light on the commitment and longevity of teachers from this neighborhood, this study aimed to impact the way school administrators and districts support teachers of color who live, work, and teach in the disenfranchised communities they grew up in. Since the teachers in this study consistently demonstrated wholehearted commitment to their work, then education leaders must mobilize with precision and purpose to ensure their longevity in the teaching profession. To better understand how to support these teachers, the study sought to understand what teachers from disenfranchised communities perceive to be the benefits of working in their neighborhood, what they perceive as the challenges of working in a disenfranchised urban school, and what resources they think they might need to remain in their teaching positions. I argue that building a teacher force of dedicated and committed teachers takes ample time, resources, and often happens serendipitously rather than strategically. Instead of losing these remarkable teachers, or relying on chance to find them, education leaders must acknowledge their worth and make a strategic commitment to support their efforts in our disenfranchised urban schools. This study centered the teachers who grew up in and/or live in the neighborhoods where they teach as the experts of their schools and surrounding communities. This study also aimed to leverage their expertise to train, educate, and support all teachers who commit to serve students in urban disenfranchised schools.

In building systems of support, I hope education leaders can transform the existing teacher force into one that intentionally, proactively, and authentically serves the historically disenfranchised urban schools and surrounding communities for the long haul. In other words, I would like my research to replicate the commitment of those who grew up in, lived in, and teach in urban disenfranchised communities. In doing so, we can provide teachers who will equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in and out of the school setting - in all disenfranchised urban schools.

Research Questions

The literature raised many questions on how teachers from the neighborhoods they grew up in, live in, and teach in developed a profound sense of commitment to their neighborhoods. The research questions include: Why did teachers who grew up and/or lived in the Historic Anza Corridor also decided to teach in the Historic Anza Corridor when they joined the teaching profession? What do teachers view as the benefits of having teachers who come from and live in the neighborhood? What structures and resources might they need to support their work? Teacher turnover disrupts the academic learning that is paramount for the lifelong success of students of color from disenfranchised urban communities. I argue that teachers from the Historic Anza Corridor demonstrate resilience and tenacity that should be acknowledged, praised and supported. I also argue that their efforts should be studied and replicated in our work to support committed teachers. Teacher satisfaction and fulfillment can result in the longevity of teachers that would enable students to triumph in school and beyond. I argue that comprehensive insight on this topic might offer solutions, approaches, and strategies to better serve - not just teachers who grew up, live(d), and teach/taught in the Historic Anza Corridor, but - all teachers in hard-to-staff schools.

Conceptual Framework

Culturally relevant pedagogy recognizes that the social, political, and cultural background of teachers of color from marginalized communities influences how they teach (Ladson-Billings, 1995). For the teachers in this study facets of their identity such as race, socioeconomic status, and an upbringing in the Historic Anza Corridor, shape why and how they teach. Their awareness of the intersection of these elements guides their thoughtful reflection on the implications of belonging to marginalized communities and how, what, where, and why they teach. In culturally relevant pedagogy, one of the ideas that comes up is the role and

importance of teachers from disenfranchised urban communities and how they can make a difference in their students' personal and academic lives through strong student teacher relationships. I am looking at the teachers of the Historic Anza Corridor to study how they build commitment to teaching under challenging social, emotional, and mental conditions.

It is important to note that coming from the same community or the same racial or ethnic background does not automatically determine whether the teacher will connect students' sociocultural backgrounds with the work they do in the classrooms. In many cases, teachers of color might have some investment in the community but may need support developing culturally relevant pedagogy in their practice. Not to mention that placing the expectation on teachers of color to practice culturally relevant pedagogy might put added personal and professional pressure on teachers of color. Nonetheless, teachers of color do possess knowledge and expertise from their lived experiences that might be useful in supporting teachers in disenfranchised urban schools.

It is also important to note that teachers from geographical locations outside of the Historic Anza Corridor, and from racial and ethnic groups outside of the African American and Latinx community, are also capable of reflecting elements of culturally relevant pedagogy in their work. However, for my research study I am looking at the existing community assets within the Historic Anza Corridor. I am exploring the assets that grow and expand within the geographical boundaries of an urban community. The way teachers from Historic Anza Corridor approach their work can help leaders determine how to recruit and retain teachers of other geographical locations and racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Research shows that teachers of color who grew up in the community have a pivotal role to play in implementing a culturally relevant approach to schooling. A teacher of color's visceral connection to these marginalized communities, and their reflections on the implications of their marginalized status might inspire the teacher of color with an intent to eradicate systems of

oppression through culturally relevant teaching and learning (Yatzie-Mintz, 2007). As members of the disenfranchised communities they serve, many teachers choose to deliberately and intentionally bring their whole self into the classroom space and school community (Yatzie-Mintz, 2007). And as these teachers bring their entire self into the work they do, they recognize the many pieces that comprise the human beings they work with in the school community. Rather than simply speak the language and embody the culture of their students they are precise, thoughtful, and strategic about how they bring those features into the classroom space to serve the academic attainment of the student (Ladson-Billing, 1995). Yatzie-Mintz builds on this argument in her work with the "Navajo-ness," or familiarity with a Navajo person, where the familiarity with the Navajo person helps to build a bridge between the home context and the school context (2007). Since the research shows that teachers of color implement culturally relevant pedagogy in both conscious and unconscious ways, culturally relevant pedagogy is an apt lens through which to understand and analyze the experiences of teachers who grew up in the neighborhood where they now teach. This will show education leaders how to better serve the needs of all teachers in urban disenfranchised schools.

Research also shows that teachers of color repeatedly negotiate between the characteristics of two worlds - the world of the dominant group and the world of the oppressed, they continuously choose to carry out their teacher duties from an asset-based perspective (Gay, 2002). Rather than lament at low English language skills - limited vocabulary or fragmented sentence structure - they leverage existing language qualities from the student's culture to teach new language skills. And as they incorporate the student's cultural background in the classroom, they honor and celebrate it (Gay, 2002). Ladson-Billings found that using similar language patterns as Native American students and rap songs facilitated learning for Native and Black students who historically scored low in English language assessments (1995).

While this research study highlights the work of the teachers of color who leverage culturally relevant pedagogy to support and empower their students academically and personally, these pedagogical practices can be learned by all teachers for effective teaching. Teachers must understand the lived experiences of their students and incorporate those in the curriculum and in the process of relationship building (Gay, 2002). Through culturally relevant teaching, all teachers of color can serve as stewards of social justice for students of color who have been historically marginalized. This study uses culturally relevant pedagogy as a lens to analyze how these teachers make sense of their lived experiences in relation to their work as teachers and vice versa. The study reveals the mechanisms that inspire teacher commitment to their work, while also highlighting some necessary systems of support to promote the longevity of all teachers who work in schools in neighborhoods like the Historic Anza Corridor.

Organization of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I review the existing literature related to understanding teacher turnover in disenfranchised urban communities of color. To begin, I explore the historical context of the social and political turmoil responsible for the conditions that make disenfranchised urban schools so hard to staff. Then, I describe several peer-reviewed research articles that explore the connection between teacher shortages. Next, I discuss literature that shows the challenges teachers face in their professions. Finally, I look at the Grow Your Own Teachers programs as a viable initiative to address some of the escalating teacher turnover in disenfranchised urban communities.

In Chapter 3, I provide my methodology for conducting this qualitative study. I justify my use of pláticas to collect data from study participants. I also explain my use of portraitures to analyze the data on the study participants. I argue that my approach is the most fitting to

understand teachers of color who grew up, live(d), and teach/taught in urban disenfranchised neighborhoods for its intimate engagement and understanding of the population.

In Chapter 4, I describe the findings of this study. I explain how the data shows that unbending commitment from teachers stems from the profound love and unbending bonds they have cultivated with their families, friends, and neighbors over the years. Finally, I explain how their developed socio-political awareness inspired them to teach with compassion and empathy.

In Chapter 5, I look for emerging patterns and trends to make suggestions for changes in policy, practice, and future research. Specifically, I note the need for compassionate and empathetic systems of support for teachers who generously share their minds, souls, and hearts with the young students of their neighborhoods.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The United States education system faces a growing teacher shortage. This teacher shortage is most palpable and consequential in urban disenfranchised communities of color. Racist policies - redlining, racial profiling, police brutality - have built a precarious environment. And since the challenges of schools often mirror the turmoil of the neighborhood and vice versa, the work conditions in these communities may be more arduous for its teachers. Historically, the challenges unique to urban communities have both deterred teachers from working in disenfranchised urban communities or prompted an early exit from the teaching profession. The existing exodus of teachers from the profession will aggravate a longstanding problem for the most vulnerable student populations. Teachers who grew up in, live(d), and teach in urban disenfranchised communities have demonstrated a wholehearted commitment to their communities that should be studied, analyzed, and replicated for the wellbeing of the students living and going to schools in disenfranchised urban communities across the nation. The insights from such teachers might help education leaders build systems of support for their professional success and wellbeing. It can also highlight some of the mechanisms school administrators and districts can make to ensure teacher retention. The following chapter will include a historical context of the Historic Anza Corridor, an overview of the teacher shortage, retention efforts, and overview of the promise of the Grow Your Own Teachers Program.

Historical Context of the Historic Anza Corridor

The Historic Anza Corridor is home to 52,509 people (2023)[2]. This district is in an urban area of Southern California. In the 1970's the Historic Anza Corridor became the epicenter of Black culture in Bella Brite City. Hundreds of Black families left the Jim Crow South for Bella Brite City and forged communities rich in culture, entrepreneurship, and unity. Since housing

[2] I am refraining from using the source of this demographic citation to preserve the anonymity of study participants.

covenants limited African American expansion beyond the Historic Anza Corridor, Canby Boulevard became the epicenter of Black life. The geographical area boasted a Black-owned bank, theater, and jazz club, life insurance company, funeral home, and office building.[3]

While the Historic Anza Corridor was a vibrant community, racist policing and city planning disrupted the growing success of the Historic Anza Corridor.[4] In the 1960's, Chief Jillian Gardens of the Bella Brite Police Department built and facilitated hostile tactics against the thriving Black community. Under his leadership, the Neptune Police Department engaged in unhinged racial profiling, antagonistic policing, and frequent harassment of both store owners and patrons. Residents of the Historic Anza Corridor faced additional violent policing when they protested the construction of the local freeways - a project that ultimately displaced residents. The racism systemically embedded in the city's social infrastructure developed a place of unrest, discord, and strife where a Black community stood triumphantly. In the 1980's, Ronald Reagan's neo-liberal policies created an economic depression for the Historic Anza Corridor as plants of unskilled and semi-skilled labor shut down. Increased poverty rates and unemployment left fertile grounds for a crack cocaine market.[5]

The racial demographics of the Historic Anza Corridor shifted between 1980-1990 as civil unrest and economic deprivation in Latin America ushered an influx of immigration from Mexico and Central America (Hondagneu- Sotelo & Pastor, 2021). Just as the Reagan administration's neoliberal agenda triggered economic deprivation in the Historic Anza Corridor in the 1980's, its international policies destabilized the political and economic infrastructure of Latin American countries (Borgen, 2018). In Mexico, the US neo-liberal agenda weakened the already precarious Mexican economy as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

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destroyed Mexico's agrarian economy and devalued the peso. In Central America, US meddling in its politics created economic deprivation and civil unrest (Borgen, 2018). In 1950's Guatemala, the United States government contributed to and benefitted from tacit control of Guatemalan land for agricultural financial profit. Under the guise of eradicating subversive communism, the United States removed democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz. From 1960 to 1996 the government sanctioned ex-military and gang affiliated men dispossessing indigenous farmers of their land and killed an estimated 200,000 people. Today, appropriation of Guatemalan land persists for sugar and biofuel production (Borgen, 2018).

In El Salvador, the US government sponsored "right wing death squads" to eradicate communist ideology that led to the civil unrest and social instability of the country (2018). The deportation of MS-13 members imported gang violence from the most distressed streets of Bella Brite City to a country brim with civil chaos. In Honduras, reformist President Manuel Zelaya was removed for his attempts to resolve strife between "campesinos" and big agricultural industry. State sanctioned violence and neoliberal politics brewed the civil tumult and economic deprivation that contributed to the influx of immigration from Mexico and Central America.

While most Mexican immigrants settled in East Bella Brite City and Central American immigrants settled in West Bella Brite City, the influx of immigration from 1980-1990 could not accommodate the large numbers of Latin-Americans (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Pastor, 2021). Dreams of homeownership and a search for decent living spaces beyond a single-room apartment brought these new arrivals to the Historic Anza Corridor. Today, the Historic Anza Corridor is 90% Latino.[6]

While both Black and Latino families settled in the Historic Anza Corridor with aspirations to a better life, both groups have been historically afflicted with systemic racism (Hondagneu-

[6] I am refraining from citing the source to protect the anonymity of study participants.

Sotelo & Pastor, 2021). The repercussions of these longstanding and continuous structural inequalities remain palpable today. According to Census Data from 2020, 52.6% of people living in Historic Anza Corridor make less than $50,000 per year (Census, 2020). A non-profit organization that operates from Carranza Avenue in the Historic Anza Corridor since 1987, noted that unemployment is double the national average. [7]Although year after year, findings by the Bureau of Labor Statistics find a correlation between education levels, weekly median earnings, and unemployment rates that promises higher incomes and lower unemployment rates for every additional level of education, 92.9% of Historic Anza Corridor residents do not hold a college degree (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). More specifically, only 4.8% of residents have a bachelor's degree and only 2.1% have a postgraduate degree (Census, 2020). In the Historic Anza Corridor, 74.2% of residents over the age of 25 did not complete high school[8]. Meanwhile, the neighborhood has a crime rate that is 60% higher than the national average.[9] Although the number of Historic Anza Corridor residents with college degrees is scarce, they are overrepresented in California prisons. In 2020, out of 48,959 Historic Anza Corridor residents, 282 were in state prison, compared to only 88 people in the more affluent Butlure neighborhood of 56,971 (Prison Policy Initiative, 2020). Institutional racism designed the conditions for scarcity, violence, and generational trauma the residents of the Historic Anza Corridor still experience today. Thus, the Historic Anza Corridor is a prime example of what critical race theory calls the systemic racism embedded in American society (Ladson-Billings, 2010)

[7] I am refraining from citing the source to protect the anonymity of study participants.
[8] I am refraining from citing the source to protect the anonymity of study participants.
[9] I am refraining from citing the source to protect the anonymity of study participants.

Scarcity of Experienced Teachers in the Historic Anza Corridor

The following section will discuss the challenges with teacher recruitment and retention that schools in the Historic Anza Corridor have historically encountered. While this study is not exclusively about teacher retention, the literature on retention serves to illustrate the point that if teachers from the Anza Corridor remain in the profession while teachers across the nation exit at alarming rates, then we must mobilize our resources to ensure teachers from the Anza Corridor and others like them, are supported. First, I will discuss the factors that lead to a disproportionate number of teachers with less experience. Then I will discuss the attempted strategies to rectify the inequities produced by the surge of teachers with less experience. Finally, I will discuss why supporting teachers who are already committed to student success is a more fruitful and effective strategy to keep our teachers.

Years of racist policies have generated distressing living conditions for the residents of the Historic Anza Corridor. Urban high-need schools struggle to attract and retain high quality teachers[10] in this turbulent climate (The Partnership Schools, 2021). In California, 13.5 percent of less experienced teachers who have taught for less than 2 years teach at schools where minorities make 99.5% of the student population (California State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, 2016). Skilled and experienced teachers gravitate towards schools that offer a supportive and less stressful school environment. These low-need schools serve a predominantly affluent and white population, typically unafflicted by perennial systemic racism (The Partnership Schools, 2021). 1% of less experienced teachers were at schools where only 9.1% of the population were socioeconomically disadvantaged. Between the 2001-

[10] It is important to note that when I use the term "teachers with less preparation" I am referring to teachers who have emergency credentials, less than 2 years in the profession, or little professional support in their tenure. It is also important to recognize that teachers are often vilified in federal, state, and local politics - often fueled by charged media coverage that fails to explore the complexity of low academic achievement amongst students from disenfranchised urban communities.

2002 school year and the 2012-2013 school year, emergency credentials tripled to 13,000 and 40% of these teachers left the profession within 3 years (Carver-Thomas, 2021). Indeed, without a robustly comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the social and political elements that characterize urban high-need schools, the distressing circumstances may deter teachers from teaching in the urban high-need school settings. Teachers who grew up in, live(d), and teach/taught in the neighborhoods where teacher turnover is high teach with a solid understanding of these socio-political conditions. Many of them specifically teach to show students different alternatives to life that do not include the violence that permeates their neighborhoods (Marshall, 2020). Many of these teachers also teach with varying levels of class consciousness (Lambirth, 2010).

The literature on teacher retention suggests that we curtail teacher turnover by providing holistic services that support the "whole child" and their families. Educators want "wrap-around" services that support students and their families with access to safe and secure housing, food services, counseling, academic intervention, and health services. Teachers understand that while they can make an impact within the four walls of their classrooms, they cannot control the socioeconomic disadvantages that negatively impact minority students (California State Plan to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators, 2016). Thus, they ask that leadership meet the basic needs of students to ensure their success at school and beyond. However, the teachers in this study have been teaching with ample knowledge of these conditions. Much of this knowledge was gained through personal experience. "Inherited conceptions" about their shared neighborhood fostered a commitment to teach in these neighborhoods (Kazembe, 2012). Teachers were familiar with the violence, but they also knew of the love, care, and kindness. Teachers recognized the material scarcity, but also rejoiced in their cultural wealth.

The teachers who grew up, live, and teach in the neighborhood, developed a “social connectedness” that was nurtured over years of bonding with other people in the neighborhood (Raymond et al., 2010). They have developed “place belongingness” and “place rootedness” that takes years to cultivate (2010). It is no surprise then that “must place” teachers - displaced teachers whose previously held positions were dissolved - struggle to build a sense of belonging in schools they never subscribed to and opt-out of. “Must-place” teachers are 5 times more likely to be placed in high need schools (The Partnership Schools, 2021). To illustrate, when lowest need schools get 37 must-place teachers, highest need schools get 183 must-place teachers. For instance, in a survey administered by a school district in Southern California, 75% of the principals noted that the “must-place” teacher pool never yielded a teacher candidate who was a viable fit for their school (The Partnership Schools, 2021). Of the teacher candidates hired from the “must-place” pool, only 40% remained at their school site for one year (The Partnership Schools, 2021). The absence of mutual excitement between the teachers with “must-place” status and school administrators, coupled with the philosophical differences between both parties, contributed to the high attrition rates in an already unstable school environment. At Title 1 schools, the turnover rate was 50% greater than at non-Title 1 schools.[11] At schools that predominantly serve students of color, turnover is 70% higher than at schools that serve only 10% of students of color.[12] Meanwhile, teachers who grew up, live(d), and teach/taught in the neighborhood demonstrate “neighborhood attachment” - an emotional connection to their social and physical surroundings (Comstock et al., 2010). Research demonstrates that psycho-social connection to their neighborhood benefits the neighborhood itself as the members of the neighborhood become invested in the work necessary to secure its

[11] I am refraining from citing the source to protect the anonymity of study participants.
[12] I am refraining from citing the source to protect the anonymity of study participants.

prosperity. What makes the teachers in this study unique is that they teach with an unwavering fidelity to their students because they see them as representations of their beloved neighborhood. Unlike “must place” teachers or teachers from other neighborhoods, the teachers in this study have forged deep connections with the neighborhood - mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

The importance of supporting the committed teachers who grew up, live(d), teach/taught in the Historic Anza Corridor is clear when data shows a growing disinterest in the teaching profession amongst high school and college aged students. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs decreased by more than 75% between the 2001-2002 school year and the 2013 to 2014 school year (Carver-Thomas, 2021). It is estimated that a return to pre-2001 enrollment levels will take 17 years (Carver-Thomas, 2021). Even high school students - a potential teacher pool - show disinterest in the teaching profession. Of the 1.5 million high school students who took the ACT, only 4% cited they would be interested in pursuing teaching as a profession (Gist et al, 2019).

Teachers who grew up, live, and work in the Historic Anza Corridor are intimately familiar with these challenges and choose to teach in the neighborhood because of these challenges. They are aware of the difficulties of the job, and teach anyway because the lives of their families, friends, and neighbors depend on it. They teach with compassion and empathy because they see how socio-political circumstances continuously threaten the humanity and dignity of the people they know and love. They choose to teach in the neighborhood precisely because they are needed.

Supporting Teachers Who Grew Up, Live(d), and Teach/Taught in the Neighborhood

In the following section I will discuss the promise and challenges of teachers of color as it relates to teachers who grew up, live, and work in the neighborhood. While the population of

teachers of color has increased, many feel underserved and unsupported and quit. This phenomenon threatens the career longevity for the rare teacher subgroup in this study. First, I will provide a brief overview of the demographic shifts of the population of teachers of color. Next I will discuss the differences between “triangle teachers” and teachers fully integrated in the neighborhoods where they teach. Finally, I will discuss the existing and developing Grow Your Own (GYO) teachers program and their initiatives to support the teachers who grew up, live, and teach in their own neighborhoods.

While the population of teachers of color continues to grow, retention challenges are most acute amongst this teacher group. Teachers of color leave the profession at an annual rate of 10%, compared to the 8% annual rate for their white counterparts. A recent research review found teachers of color leave the profession because they are frustrated with low pay, a lack of decision-making power, leadership’s anemic attempts to lead with racial consciousness, and colleagues who demonize and underestimate students of color (Achinstein, 2010). And since 3 out of 4 teachers of color are placed in historically underfunded and under-resourced schools, they exit the schools more frequently creating a “revolving door" phenomenon where they are perpetually replaced by less experienced teachers (Ingersoll et al., 2001). Teachers of color also cite a lack of administrative support as the culprit for their departure from the teaching profession. Teachers who highlighted low administrative support were twice as likely to leave their work site or the teaching profession altogether (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). New research indicates that principals need to be better equipped to support new teachers to ensure their endurance in the teaching profession.

Although white teachers can educate students of color successfully, more training is necessary to fully equip them to teach and stay in high-need, hard-to-staff schools. One research study of three students in the Historic Anza Corridor in the Bella Brite City area found that white teachers were more likely to be “emotionally distant” in their depictions of the

community they worked in (Alicea, 2019). In cognitive mapping exercises they indicated corporate landmarks - Bank of California Stadium, the local Starbucks Coffee, and the University of Southern California - as pivotal representations of the community (Alicea, 2019). Their lack of integration into the neighborhood creates an emotionally distant view of the space that often honors superficial landmarks of the neighborhood as opposed to the rich historical context of the neighborhood - known features of “triangle teachers” who rarely venture beyond their homes, schools, and stores (Wyman and Kashatok, 2008).

Unlike “triangle teachers”, the teachers in this study are deeply tethered to the neighborhood, and because they are deeply tethered to the neighborhood they show an unwavering devotion to it through their long tenure as teachers in the neighborhoods they grew up in. The teachers in this study develop their professional prowess from a personal understanding of the lived experiences of their students of color (Kokka, 2016). Their unique insight into the lives of their students and the community equips them to respond to students with astute emotional intelligence. Their first-hand knowledge of the distress disenfranchised urban communities experience, guides their response to classroom challenges (Herrera et al, 2019). Where an outsider to the community might respond with frustration, anger, and punishment, a teacher from the community might show empathy, kindness, and generosity. A teacher’s primary knowledge of the hardships disenfranchised communities experience enables them to help students develop the emotional toolkit that will sustain their academic development (Kokka, 2019). Teachers of color also leverage their knowledge of the language and culture of their students (Griffin, 2018). Their own commitment to family - a phenomenon known as *familism* - enables them to make their students feel at home within the school environment. Moreover, as the political atmosphere degenerates, the radical empathy of teachers of color becomes an invaluable asset. Teachers of color have been able to offer reassurance and

comfort to students of color persecuted by anti-immigrant rhetoric and anti-black sentiments (Griffin, 2018).

Their lived experiences with disenfranchised communities make teachers from the neighborhood ideal candidates to work with students of color confronting similar issues (Kokka, 2019). Research demonstrates teachers of color are cognizant of this feature. Their deliberate choice to teach in disenfranchised urban schools is a mindful approach to mitigate the issues that encumber students of color. Three out of four teachers of color choose to work in schools where students of color are the predominant group (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Their desire to make an impact in their students' lives and give back to their community, drives this humanistic purpose (Achinstein, 2010). Their love and care for their students keeps them in the profession despite the imperfect environments. Since teachers of color demonstrate commitment to the academic and emotional success of students of color, their needs and demands must be met to ensure their endurance and success in disenfranchised urban schools.

Considering that teachers of color from the neighborhoods they teach in often demonstrate an unwavering dedication to the students and families they serve, we must consider how to address their challenges at work. Across the United States, job dissatisfaction drives the exodus of teachers from both the teaching profession and school sites. 55% of teachers leave the profession and 66% leave their work site due to rigid accountability measures, missing administrative support, unfavorable work conditions, and dissatisfaction with the teaching profession (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017). In disenfranchised urban communities, teachers of color are more likely to exhibit longevity in the profession when the school administration allows them to build their own curriculum: lessons and assessments. Teachers value their autonomy to design a learning experience that directly responds to the students' needs (Kokka, 2016). Teachers were also privier to remaining at a disenfranchised urban school when administrators demonstrated apt involvement in student discipline. In one

study, teachers expressed that student behaviors within school grounds were likely to resemble the problems of the surrounding community (Kokka, 2016). While research shows that students from low-income backgrounds have lower temperaments and are more likely to have negative interactions with their teachers, teachers of color who persist in disenfranchised urban schools never begrudged students for their behavior, expressed love for students, and commitment to help students evolve emotionally and academically (Rudasill, 2010). Instead, teachers were frustrated and angry with the school administration that repeatedly failed to provide clear guidelines and follow-up for student discipline. Indeed, a 2005 research study found that programs for school administrators are amongst the worst training programs in the nation for their inconsistency in quality and efficacy (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Some principals-in-training were required to spend 45 hours in schools, while others were required to spend an extraordinary 300 hours (Carver-Thomas, 2018). Insufficiently prepared administrators can contribute to increased attrition amongst teachers in urban disenfranchised communities. Teacher retention depends on their school leadership prowess. Their leadership aptitude can create supportive environments for teachers that ultimately build teacher capacity, morale, and resilience. Conversely, leadership inaptitude might dishearten and distress valuable teachers of color. Students in urban disenfranchised communities would benefit from a sustainable teacher workforce that can equip them with the academic, social, and emotional skills to thrive in school and beyond. Knowing what we know about the challenges and dissatisfaction teachers of color face in the teaching profession, this study aims to understand the unique needs of teachers who grew up, live, and teach in the neighborhood. We must understand what they might need to remain in a challenging profession they have already demonstrated insurmountable commitment to.

Grow Your Own Teachers Program to Foster Teacher Longevity

A teacher recruitment program that sees the value of teachers who grew up, live, and teach in their neighborhoods is known as the Grow Your Own Teachers Programs (GYO). GYO Programs emerged in the mid-1980's in an effort to groom resilient and tenacious teachers of color from the disenfranchised urban communities they would serve. These programs offer teacher residencies and apprenticeships to support aspiring teachers. There are several iterations of the GYO teachers program around the country to meet the varying needs of schools across the country. The following section explores the Grow Your Own programs more thoroughly. First, I will discuss the foundational principles of the GYO program. Next, I will discuss the characteristics of the GYO program candidate that makes them an asset for schools in disenfranchised urban communities. Finally, I will suggest GYO programs will take years to mitigate the inexperienced teacher issues in disenfranchised urban communities.

A nascent initiative dubbed the "grow your own teachers program" aims to funnel teachers from the community into high-need schools (Valenzuela, 2017). These teachers who grew up, live, and teach in the neighborhood reflect the racial demographic of high-need schools, understand the cultural implications of their student's lives, apply culturally relevant pedagogy, and help students maneuver the differences between their home and school lives (Irvine, 1988, Villegas and Lucas, 2004). These teachers from the neighborhood are more influential than their white counterparts in retaining students, encouraging them to go to college, enroll in advanced placement courses, attend school, stay in school, offer a rigorous academic experience, and do well on standardized tests (Achinstein et al, 2019). In one study, a homegrown Afro-Latina teacher from Historic Anza Corridor leveraged both her racial and spatial identity as she lead students through readings of Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* and Sherman Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* - two texts where

race is the cornerstone of the discourse. Her direct experience with the topics of race and space as a homegrown teacher enabled her to empower her community via education (Alicea, 2022).

A shared cultural experience between teacher and students serves as the foundation that propels the teacher's work. This intimate conceptualization of their students, enables teachers of color to recognize the students' strengths and potential. Rather than see their students as culturally disadvantaged - unequipped with the social and cultural skills necessary to attain upward mobility, the homegrown teacher recognizes, celebrates, and upholds the community cultural wealth that can propel students of color towards academic success and social mobility (Yosso, 2006). The recognition of the student's community cultural wealth - aspirational capital, familial capital, linguistic capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital - equips teachers to support their students from an asset-based perspective (Yosso, 2006).

Compared to their white counterparts, teachers of color who grew up in the geographical areas where the high-need schools are located, demonstrate a fervent awareness and implementation of their own cultural capital in the classroom. In one study, an Afro-Latina teacher from Historic Anza Corridor recognized her familiarity with the neighborhood as an asset as she asserted, "I feel powerful. I feel like I can do what no White or Asian person can do in my community. Or even someone from a different country…I know this, I know the owner here and I'm putting money in here. So, it's like for me as a Black woman, I just feel powerful in this space. I do. I do" (Alicea, 2022). Her recognition and celebration of her community cultural capital as an insider of the community transferred onto her pedagogy. As she engaged her English Language Arts students in academic discourse on race and space she used "context as a pedagogical tool" to support her practice (Emdin, 2016).

Efforts exist to support the acclimation of white teachers to schools that serve predominantly students of color. A recent initiative provided a group of white student-teachers with mentorship from parents and families that included panel discussion and training on how to collaborate with parents. The effort encouraged student-teachers to lean into and leverage the parent's expertise for the child's academic success (Zeichner et al., 2016). This is one novel example of intentional initiatives to connect the neighborhood to the school. However, more initiatives like this are necessary to ensure all teachers feel supported and connected when working in challenging schools. An investigation of the Historic Anza Community might shed some light on how to support the success of those teachers and how to emulate that success for teachers of all racial and cultural backgrounds.

It is important to note that even without these initiatives, teachers of color are more likely than their white counterparts to stay in the classroom- particularly when they work in high-need schools that face numerous social, emotional, and academic challenges. For teachers who grew up and live in the neighborhood, the desire to stay despite all the challenges intensifies. Many teachers of color cite their desire to give back to their community as the main reason for their endurance in challenging high-need schools. Repeatedly, their humanistic commitment keeps teachers working in spaces with dire work conditions (Achinstein, 2010). Their navigational capital enables them to leverage their resources to thrive in a challenging setting (Gist et al, 2019). A research study of 12 Mexican American student teachers who lived, taught, and went to school in a Texas neighborhood found that teachers who live and teach in the community demonstrate long-term commitment to the community via their teaching. Since the culmination of their teacher preparation program in 2012, all except one of the teachers continues to live and teach in their neighborhood (Esparza et al, 2019). Teachers who teach in the district where they themselves attended school also have higher longevity rates in the classroom. By the end

of their first year teaching, only 16% of district teachers had left the profession, compared to 20% of non-district teachers (Redding, 2022). By their third year of teaching, 60% of district teachers returned compared to 56.5% of non-district teachers (Redding, 2022). Teachers of color have an internalized sense of duty and commitment to the communities they come from. Their love and hope for the success of their community drives their service to students. Their experience with the community drives their resolution to return to the classroom as their white counterparts – who grew up in different neighborhoods and educated in different districts- depart.

GYO Programs also show promise because they comprise members from the community who have a higher chance of interacting with students outside of the academic setting in positive ways. GYO programs focus on recruiting teachers from the communities they will serve. Prospective teachers include local parents, high school students, cafeteria workers, teacher aids, custodians, church leaders, and other members of the community. Research finds that 67% of tumultuous student-teacher interactions occur inside of the classroom and 53% of friendly interactions occurred in hallways, courtyards, and places in the community outside of school (Classens et al, 2010). These encounters in what researchers call “in-between spaces" allow students and teachers to discuss issues that arise in the classroom and prevent issues from arising by creating bonds with students (Frelin & Grannäs, 2017). Paraprofessionals who become teachers demonstrate tenacious longevity in the field. In one study, 60% of paraprofessionals remained in their teaching positions six years later (Gist et al., 2019). They also show immense talent, quantifiable through the rewards, recognition, and leadership positions they are likely to hold within their first such and such number of years teaching (Esparza, 2019).

The many iterations of the GYO teachers programs around the country, allow school leaders to find the most pertinent program for the needs of the school community. A popular GYO program from South Carolina builds pathways to teaching for high school students known as the Teacher Cadets (Garcia, 2024). Major school districts in Los Angeles, CA and Tucson, Arizona also offer career ladder programs for their employees that provide mentorship, training, and scholarships (Garcia, 2024).

Why My Research Matters

I wanted to understand the mindsets, experiences, and origin stories of these teachers who teach in the neighborhoods they grew up in and/or lived in. I wanted to understand why they went into the profession to understand how they can remain resilient and tenacious when they face obstacles. I also wanted to understand how, if at all, this dedication can be maintained and emulated amongst teachers of different racial and cultural backgrounds.

The teachers in this study grew up in underserved communities, observed and reflected on the academic and social conditions, and deliberately chose to teach in the neighborhoods that saw them grow. With a spirit of care for their community, these teachers have dedicated years to the profession.

However, the social distress within our urban schools will continue to mirror the distress of our urban communities. Teaching in a challenging school environment also threatens the teacher's physical, mental, and socioemotional wellbeing and career longevity in the profession. Hence, we need to preserve the few urban teachers who have demonstrated commitment to schools in disenfranchised urban areas. We need to analyze the victories, struggles, and needs and wants of teachers who teach in urban settings to determine how to create the conditions that will make these teachers - our most valuable asset - stay in disenfranchised urban schools.

We need to figure out some tangible and practical ways to keep the teachers of color at high-need-hard-to-staff schools. Being that teachers are fleeing the profession, recruitment of experienced teachers is difficult, onboarding of new teachers is scarce and limited, and teachers of color often feel committed to stay in high needs schools, we need to figure out what supports this demographic needs in order to stay in the profession and work effectively. Understanding what teachers need might allow us to replicate those techniques in disenfranchised urban schools with similar problems and needs across the country.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my research study was to understand the successes, challenges, and needs of teachers in the Historic Anza Corridor- a disenfranchised urban community in Southern California that has been marginalized for decades. The insights gathered from this research study could help to build sustainable work conditions for teachers who have been getting by on personal endurance and persistence. To gather the necessary data for this research study, I interviewed teachers who grew up, live, and teach in the Historic Anza Corridor to uncover the benefits, challenges, and supports they might need to stay in a profession with rampant turnover. I recruited teacher participants by using snowball sampling via my own professional networks. To collect data, I conducted interviews using the organic conversational method known as pláticas (Valle and Mendoza, 1978). I analyzed and reported my findings in narrative format using the method known as portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). In the following section I will explain how I will use the methodologies.

Research Questions

This research study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Why do teachers who grew up in and live(d) in the Historic Anza Corridor also decide to teach in the Historic Anza Corridor when they join the teaching profession?
2. What do teachers view as the benefits of having teachers who come from and live in the community?
3. What resources or structures do these teachers need to support their work?

Research Design and Rationale

This was a qualitative research study that aimed to validate and honor the experiences and expertise of the teachers who grew up in, live(d), and teach/taught in the Historic Anza Corridor. Since the members of the Historic Anza Corridor community are at the center of this

work, I used data collection methods that empowered the participants to co-construct knowledge on the topic along with the researcher. In honoring their expert voices, this research study enabled them to take on a direct role as changemakers in their own community. While more traditional methodology extracts information from participants, the research methodologies in this research study aimed to mitigate the recreation of marginalization that has historically afflicted the Historic Anza Corridor. This methodology is designed to give teachers an opportunity to reflect on their experiences as well as centering their agency to discuss the topics that they consider more crucial.

Population and Sample

During this research study I learned from a group of eight K-12 teachers who grew up in, live(d), and teach/taught in the Historic Anza Corridor. I identified all members of the population through snowball sampling. One of the teachers taught at Prospero Charter Schools, a charter school system with K-12 schools in 6 regions of the city. 96% of students at Prospero Charter Schools are accepted to college. Seven of the eight participants taught at one of the schools in the Bella Brite City Unified School District. The schools in the Bella Crite City Unified School District the seven teachers in this study taught at were considered California priority schools. Priority schools receive extra resources to bolster scores in categories such as state assessment, pupil attendance, and completion of college courses known as A-G requirements.[13]

Eligible participants taught in a public school in the Historic Anza Corridor Community for at least five years. Teachers who had left the teaching profession or their site in the Historic Anza Corridor Community in the last two years were also welcomed to participate as their reasons for leaving revealed some of the challenges and needs for teachers in the Historic Anza

[13] I am refraining from using the source of this definition to preserve the anonymity of the study participants.

Corridor. Teachers who grew up and taught in the Historic Anza Corridor, no longer live in the area, but make weekly personal visits due to their connections to friends and family also qualified for this study as they had a vested interest and commitment to the community that differentiated them from the teacher practitioners who drove to and from their classrooms without engaging with the community they work with. The tables below offer a brief snapshot of the teachers of this study. One table contains the personal demographics of the teachers in this study. The second table contains the professional demographics of the teachers in this study.

Table 1: Personal Demographics of the Teacher

Pseudonym	# of Years Teaching	# of Years Teaching in Historic Anza Corridor	Grade Level	Academic Subject	Type of School	School Classification	Current Professional Status
Angelique	11	8	Secondary - high school	Sciences	Public School	Priority school	teacher
Sebastian	7	7	Secondary - high school	Social Sciences	Public School	Priority school	teacher
Emiliano	5	5	Secondary - high school	English Language Arts	Public School	Priority school	teacher
Ernesto	9	9	Secondary - high school	Special Education (English and Math)	Public School	Priority school	out of classroom teacher (2 years)
Tia Shannon	24	12	Secondary - middle school	English Language Arts	Charter School	No designation	teacher
Teresa	8	8	Primary - elementary school	Special Day Class	Public School	Priority school	teacher
Marisol	20	20	Secondary - high school	Social Sciences	Public School	Priority school	teacher
Patricia	20	20	Secondary - high school	English Language Development	Public School	Priority school	teacher

Table 2: Professional Demographics of the Teachers

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Age	Time period in their K-12 years they lived in Historic Anza Corridor	Professional Status
Angelique	female	Latinx	38	Childhood to pre-adolescence	teacher
Sebastian	male	Latinx	37	Childhood to young adulthood	teacher
Emiliano	non-binary	Latinx	33	childhood	teacher
Ernesto	male	Latinx	35	Childhood to young adulthood	out of classroom teacher (2 years)
Tia Shannon	female	Black	57	pre-adolescence to young adulthood	teacher
Teresa	female	Latinx	34	Childhood to young adulthood	teacher
Marisol	female	Latinx	42	Childhood to end of adolescence	teacher
Patricia	female	Latinx	45	Childhood to end of adolescence	teacher

Eligibility Criteria

There were two minimum requirements all participants had to meet in order to participate in this study. All participants had to have lived in the Historic Anza Corridor for a minimum of five years. Five years offers ample time for people to build formative relationships and experiences in the neighborhood. Participants also had to have taught in the Historic Anza Corridor for a minimum of five years. Teachers who exit the profession leave their teaching positions within the first five years (Zhang and Zeller, 2016). Staying past year five of teaching, indicates some commitment to the profession. Not having these two eligibility requirements made a person ineligible to participate.

Besides the two eligibility requirements for participation, participants had to meet at least one of three eligibility criteria. The first eligibility criteria invited the participation of teachers who lived in the Historic Anza Corridor or teachers who grew up there and maintained a connection to the community. The second eligibility criteria asked for the participation of teachers who currently taught in the Historic Anza Corridor or taught there for a significant period until recently. The third eligibility criteria asks for the participation of teachers who left the profession, changed positions, or left the school site in the last 2 years. This criteria fostered the inclusion of various teacher voices to capture a nuanced portrait of the Historic Anza Corridor teacher experience.

Eligibility Criterion # 1: Teachers Who Grew Up and/or Lived in the Anza Corridor Who Moved Out to Live Somewhere Else, but Returned to Teach in the Anza Corridor

This study aims to capture the voices of teachers in the Historic Anza Corridor who have a personal or physical connection to this geographical space. For the purpose of this study, a personal connection consists of individuals who have maintained significant interpersonal relationships with other residents of the Historic Anza Corridor. These might be relationships with close family members (i.e. a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or cousin) or a lifelong friend. These personal connections tether these Historic Anza Corridor teachers to the neighborhood in

both concrete and abstract ways. These Historic Anza Corridor teachers interact and engage with the neighborhood and its residents outside of work hours and with a purpose that is not necessarily related to their work as teachers. During the time they engage with the neighborhood, these teachers might be visiting a relative or friend, attending a family gathering, community event, religious service, a medical appointment, a favorite restaurant or food truck, or a preferred neighborhood business. These same personal connections are important because they feed and fortify an emotional connection to the geographical space which may include fondness, appreciation, or pride in the geographical space. Their interactions with the residents of the Historic Anza Corridor are connected to their own being.

However, the personal connection to people alone is not sufficient to solidify a person's fidelity to a geographical space. In order for a place to shape identity, Historic Anza Corridor teachers must also have resided in the Historic Anza Corridor for a significant and meaningful time period. A significant and meaningful period of residence allows for the formation of experiences etched into memory. These recollections might prompt the reflections of Historic Anza Corridor teachers in relation to their motives and challenges for teaching in Historic Anza Corridor. For the purpose of this research, individuals must have lived in the geographical space for at least 5 years of their school-aged lives. These years might include their years in elementary school (5-10), middle school (11-13 years old) or high school (14-18 years old). This period of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood are formative enough to yield insightful reflection.

Table 3: Teachers Who Grew Up and/or Lived in the Anza Corridor Who Moved Out to Live Somewhere Else but Returned to Teach in the Anza Corridor

Participants	**Age**	**Time Period Participant Lived in the Anza Corridor**	**Reasons why the Participant Continues to Visit the Anza Corridor**	**Reasons why the Participant Left the Anza Corridor**
Emiliano	33	The participant lived in the Anza Corridor from birth to the age of five.	Visits grandparents and extended family. Visits once to twice a week.	Violence in the neighborhood. Family needed a fresh start.
Angelique	38	The participant lived in the Anza Corridor from birth to the age of eleven.	Visits grandparents and extended family.	Parents bought property about 12 miles outside of the Historic Anza Corridor
Ernesto	35	The participant lived in the Anza Corridor from the age of nine to the age of twenty four.	Visits grandparents and extended family.	Moved in with his partner at a place outside of the Historic Anza Corridor.

Eligibility Criterion # 2: Teachers Who Grew Up and/or Lived in the Historic Anza Corridor Who Currently Teach and Live in the Anza Corridor

To obtain a nuanced and whole depiction of the experiences of teachers in the Historic Anza Corridor with ties to their neighborhood and how it impacts them as teachers, it was important that I included the teachers who lived in the geographical space. These teachers were key participants since their consistent interaction with the neighborhood made them privier to the challenges and joys students and their families face in the community. These teachers were able to speak fluently on the cultural experiences of the neighborhood, from the mundane to the exceptional. Mundane refers to the daily moments that make our lives: brief interactions with the morning crosswalk person, the sight of the weekly practice of the local soccer league, or the sound of police sirens late at night. The extraordinary refers to interactions with local government officials, notable community members, and hallmark community events. The voices of teachers who continue to live in the neighborhood mattered because they helped to depict whole and complete portrayals of the geographical space that might have gone unnoticed by a visitor. Their depictions of the gustatory, olfactory, tactile, visual, and auditory elements that

comprise the neighborhood inspired a rich portrayal of the neighborhood that demonstrated how the geographical space itself impacted, shaped, and influenced teachers and their work.

The five teachers who currently live in the Historic Anza Corridor share several characteristics in their living arrangements that fostered loyalty to the neighborhood. The Historic Anza Corridor has been the backdrop to their lives for the entirety, or majority of their lives. Brief periods of distance from the neighborhood have only occurred when they attended college and, in the period, soon after their graduations from college. Their loyalty to the neighborhood has endured the passage of time as all five of the participants own property in the neighborhood. Their purchase of real estate indicates they have a long-term, if not life-long commitment to the neighborhood. Their experiences in the Anza Corridor have left an indelible impression on them as they have a profound understanding of its mores, values, traditions, and their transformation over time. The table below captures a snapshot of the characteristics of this group.

Table 4: Teachers Who Grew Up and/or Lived in the Historic Anza Corridor Who Currently Teach and Live in the Anza Corridor

Participant	Age	Time Period During K-12 They Lived in the Anza Corridor	Current Housing Situation
Sebastian	37	Childhood to early adulthood	Currently lives in the Anza Corridor. Owns his home.
Patricia	45	Childhood to early adulthood	Currently lives in the Anza Corridor. Owns her home.
Teresa	34	Childhood to early adulthood	Currently lives in the Anza Corridor. Owns her home.
Tia Shannon	57	Pre-adolescence to early adulthood	Currently lives in the Anza Corridor. Owns her home.
Marisol	42	Childhood to early adulthood	Currently lives in the Anza Corridor. Owns her home.

Eligibility Criterion # 3: Teachers Who Grew Up and/or Lived in the Anza Corridor, but Left their Teaching Positions to Teach Outside of the Anza Corridor

This study also included the voices of teachers from Historic Anza Corridor who left their teaching position in the last two school years. These teachers left teaching to pursue a different position in the school system or transferred to a different site. Reasons for their transition into a new role included noble aspirations to make a broader impact in the education sector and emotional fatigue from a lack of systematic support on the job.

Although these teachers no longer taught in the Historic Anza Corridor, their recent exit offered insight into the school conditions that pushed them out of the Historic Anza Corridor. Their experiences and perspectives highlighted the decisions education leaders can take to support teachers in disenfranchised urban schools and make their work sustainable.

Table 5: Teachers Who Grew Up and/or Lived in the Anza Corridor, but Left their Teaching Positions to Teach Outside of the Anza Corridor

Participants	Age	Began teaching in the Historic Anza Corridor	Stopped teaching in the Historic Anza Corridor	Reasons for their Exit
Angelique	38	August 2014	June 2022	Social-emotional stress from a myriad of out-of-classroom tasks and a lack of administrative support.

To fully understand how this subgroup of teachers impacts their approach to their work, it is important to breakdown the demographics of the Historic Anza Corridor teachers. The teachers of the Anza Corridor all teach in the public-school sector. Their classrooms range from kindergarten to high school. The majority teach in the arts and humanities and social studies. Seven are schools in the Bella Brite City Unified School District. One is in a network of charter schools known as Prospero Charter Schools. All seven of the Bella Brite City Unified School

District schools are priority schools, this means they receive extra resources to improve achievement scores in state assessments, pupil attendance, and student completion of college courses known as A-G requirements. Prospero Charter Schools boast a 96% college acceptance rate.

Data Collection

To collect data for this research study, I recruited teachers from the Historic Anza Corridor who were willing to share their insights, stories, and experiences working in schools. To recruit participants, I used the Bella Brite City Unified School District Directory - an online database that includes the school's name, address, phone number, school type, region, community of school, and school website. Using the Bella Brite City Unified School District Directory, I narrowed my search to schools located in the desired area code - the Historic Anza Corridor. These 56 schools spread across two board districts and included: 19 elementary schools, 7 high schools, 6 middle schools, 3 primary care centers, 6 early education centers, 3 state preschools, 1 magnet center middle school, 1 continuation high school, and 10 dual language elementary schools.

I also sent an email that briefly explained my dissertation topic, positionality, the problem in education, and my request to be connected to teachers who were raised, lived, and taught in the Historic Anza Corridor. While two Historic Anza Corridor principals connected me to two teachers who met my research criteria, those initial conversations did not lead to pláticas. I recruited five of the participants in this study through frequent social media platforms where I am connected to several educators. When they saw the post, they contacted their friends and colleagues who fit my criterion and with their consent forwarded their contact information. In addition, three of the participants were my colleagues at the high school I taught at in the Historic Anza Corridor

I had one-on-one conversations on my research project with these participants in person and on Zoom. Since a teacher's personal and professional obligations are both taxing and demanding, I plan to schedule interviews at times and places most convenient to the teachers. Each interview conducted should last at least 60 minutes to gather sufficient data on the relevant topics.

Pláticas

To gather data, I used the data collection method known as *pláticas* (Valle and Mendoza, 1978). *Pláticas* are informal conversations rooted in a developed mutual trust - or *confianza* - between the researcher and the participant (Bernal, 2020). *Pláticas* were born from a realization that traditional methods of data collection, such as the formal interview and surveys, were not the most culturally responsive methods of data collection (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013). The *pláticas* I conducted, honored the knowledge and expertise of the participants in a fluid dialogue, rather than simply "extracting" information from the participants (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013). As I honored my personal connection to the community and the participants' authority on the subject matter, we co-constructed knowledge through a series of informal conversations (Bernal, 2020). The *pláticas* also required an adequate and pertinent amount of vulnerability from the researcher to elicit the same vulnerability from the participants (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013). In this way, the *pláticas* recognized my shared knowledge and experience with the participants and the community as an asset. The *pláticas* leveraged that shared experiences to gain the *confianza* - or trust - of the participants for the most authentic and genuine revelations on the topic (Bernal, 2020). The *pláticas* yielded stories, testimonies, memories, and insights (Bernal, 2020). Since the *plática* is a co-construction of knowledge rather than an extraction of knowledge, it empowered marginalized communities as leaders at the forefront of change and innovation to help resolve the social issues they were experiencing

(Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013). Since the organic nature of *pláticas* put the participants' lives within context, the data collected is a fair and honest portrayal of the community.

The pláticas acknowledged and valued my own experiences as a member of the community in question. The *pláticas* recognized my insider status as a strength to collect the most genuine and pertinent data from the community. The connection between me and the participants allowed for a relationship to build quickly (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2015). The trusting relationship set the conditions for candid, honest, and authentic dialogue between me and the participants. This relationality fostered a study that respected, honored, and celebrated the participants. The *pláticas* also validated the power of the community to speak on their experiences. *The pláticas* centered the research around the expertise of the community in question. Thus, the *pláticas* prevented further disenfranchisement amongst historically marginalized urban communities and instead honored the community's lived experience.

Before each of the eight *pláticas*, I asked participants to bring an artifact that responded to one of the three warm-up questions:

1. What is your fondest memory of growing up in the Historic Anza Corridor?
2. What is your fondest memory of being a student in the Historic Anza Corridor?
3. What is your fondest memory of teaching in the Historic Anza Corridor?

The artifact served as a mechanism to uncover and activate all the "surface and deep" cultural aspects I shared with the participants. Some superficial cultural aspects included music, food, and colloquial and academic language. Some deep cultural aspects included beliefs about family, friendship, and life and death. The conversations sparked by the artifacts helped to establish and fortify our relationship at the start of the *platíca*. Participant responses to the artifact questions determined and led the course of the conversation since many of the answers to my preliminary questions I had prepared prior to conducting the *pláticas* naturally stemmed from the warm-up questions. Most importantly, the artifact questions honored the

epistemological principles of *pláticas* as a data collection method as it allowed me to connect with participants and develop a trusting relationship with participants. The artifacts fostered the honest and genuine conversation typical of this form of data collection.

Seven of the eight participants shared their artifacts with pride and enthusiasm. One of the eight participants, Ernesto, shared their artifact as an abstract idea - their memories of all the friends and family they had lost to community violence. Since only one of the seven participants did not bring an artifact, I was not sure if this was a calculated choice, or if the participant did not have sufficient time to find an artifact that answered one of the three warm-up questions. Ernesto, an out-of-classroom teacher, was acclimating to his second year as dean and restorative justice teacher at a "priority school". Ernesto's priority school is one of one hundred schools struggling to meet benchmark requirements on student absenteeism, graduation requirements, performance on state assessments, and A-G Requirements (college admission requirements) and thus receives extra resources from the Bella Brite City Unified School District to bolster numbers[14]. Ernesto was in a high stress environment - navigating a new position that involved the social-emotional needs of adolescents at a priority school.

Apart from Ernesto, participants brought one or more artifacts that responded to these prompts. Our platíca began with a discussion about the artifacts the participants chose to bring to our meeting. The discussion on the artifacts served to gather insights, narratives, anecdotes, and stories that jump started the conversation and moved it forward. The discussion on the artifacts also positioned them as experts in their community and placed them at the center of the research. The prompts for the artifacts were also asset-based to ensure that any negative biases on the Historic Anza Corridor were kept at bay and a more nuanced portrait of the

[14] I am refraining from using the source of this definition to preserve the anonymity of the study participants.

neighborhood emerged. The prompt asked them to share their favorite memory living, going to school, or teaching in the Historic Anza Corridor.

During the *plática*, I took copious notes using my iPhone's audio recording feature. Interviews via Zoom were also an option for teachers unable to meet in person. These were recorded using the audio recording feature on Zoom. At the end of the plática, I asked participants how they wanted to see the findings of this research study disseminated amongst the Historic Anza Corridor educator community. As experts in the neighborhood and local schools, I wanted them to help shape the distribution of knowledge from these findings. They proposed viable strategies to reach the audience that will most benefit from learning about the findings of this research study. All participants were asked if they were willing to contribute to the creation of materials on study findings. All said they would like to help as much as their time allowed them to.

Overview of the Shadowing Process

As a form of experiencing the everyday lives of the participants, shadowing allowed me to document and observe the naturally occurring situations that participants navigate daily. This study allowed me to see how teachers in Historic Anza Corridor make meaning of their lived experience in real time as they responded to a variety of encounters and situations in their lives as educators. This ensured a greater validity of the study, since I intended to calibrate the data obtained via these observations with the data obtained via pláticas. Since shadowing showcased and validated some of the patterns and findings from the *pláticas* it allowed for triangulation of the data. Shadowing of the participants will be used as an auxiliary method to sustain, support, and verify the findings from the *pláticas*. The victories, challenges, and needs teachers might describe during the *pláticas* emerged during the live shadowing. Shadowing was also conducted from an asset-based perspective that was attuned to the good work happening in our disenfranchised urban schools.

Three of the eight teacher participants were shadowed before, during, and after work hours. Teachers participated based on their availability, comfortability, and principal's consent. Since these factors limited the number of teachers I could shadow, the teachers I shadowed were selected purposefully. These participants must have thoroughly reflected on their reasons for teaching in Historic Anza Corridor, the frustrations they experience with their work, and their professional needs to continue the work they were passionate about. Teachers observed on nondescript days since the purpose was to observe how their connection to the Historic Anza Corridor neighborhood impacted their choice to teach.

Teachers were observed for a total of 4 hours. Since I wanted to observe the influence of the Historic Anza Corridor neighborhood on their decision to teach, one of the four hours of shadowing fell either before or after school.

I arrived each day of shadowing in the classroom with a small, lined paper notebook. At the top of the first page, I included my research questions. To ensure I paid attention to moments that were relevant to my research questions I ensured I knew my research questions well. This helped me ascertain that I was attuned to the moments that would answer my research questions. I took free-style notes because I wanted freedom to note and express all relevant data, rather than limited by my own preconceived ideas. To avoid any biases, I also journaled intently about my own notions of the neighborhood, teachers, and neighborhood schools. My journaling was guided by my research questions to identify my own thoughts, understand my own thoughts, and prevent myself from inadvertently ascribing my own notions to the participants during data collection or data analysis. After shadowing teachers, I had a brief 15 to 20-minute debrief. The purpose of this debrief was to note how teachers are interpreting the incidents of the period of observation. Some of the incidents that happened during the day needed to be placed in context to help answer some of those research questions. The elaboration from teacher participants clarified, demystified, and elaborate some

of the things that I see. Above all, it allowed me to understand what was happening through each teacher's knowledgeable perspective.

Teachers Were Shadowed at Work

The Historic Anza Corridor teachers were randomly shadowed during 4 work hours at their school site. Their motivations to teach in Historic Anza Corridor became conspicuous during the shadowing. I saw teachers deliver lessons that provided social emotional support for students, abolitionist literature, the use of funds of knowledge to garner student interest and promote engagement, and the analysis and discussion of some of the social struggles and conflicts in the neighborhood. These observations show that teachers consider their background and origin central to their teaching. They indicated that a personal understanding of the struggles and challenges the Historic Anza Corridor neighborhood and its residents face. Since this research study did not focus on how teachers teach (pedagogical skills, choices, and moves), but on why teachers from Historic Anza Corridor teach, I used these observations as indicators of their motivations to teach in the neighborhood. For instance, some teachers taught specific curriculum not only to ensure student mastery of their respective academic discipline but to build the next generation of disruptors of the status quo - revolutionary thinkers, grassroot leaders, political leaders, and civically engaged citizens.

During the shadowing protocol, the Historic Anza Corridor teachers also showed the challenges of their work in a Historic Anza Corridor school. The shadowing process revealed frustration with the administration throughout the day based on how their choices impacted their work with students. There were moments of frustration when the administration failed to be attuned to student needs. There were also moments where the teacher lauded systems that upheld and promoted the wellbeing of the whole-child (their social, emotional, academic, and physical wellbeing). Teachers also pointed out the systems that disrupted the holistic wellbeing

of students. Issues revolved around student discipline, after school programs, academic instruction, teacher leadership, and teacher professional development. The teachers expressed their thoughts on these matters through non-verbal cues that included a frowning and stoic countenance. All teachers directly, honestly, and vulnerably expressed their sentiments.

Historic Anza Corridor teachers also expressed satisfaction or frustration with how the administration's decisions impacted their daily lives. Issues included: the utility of professional development, the absence of shared leadership, and growing District changes and expectations. These issues highlighted what teachers need to feel prepared and equipped to engage Historic Anza Corridor students in learning for the long-haul.

Journaling for Control and Elimination of Bias

Before I collected data, I engaged in extensive journaling to ensure all my personal feelings and motivations were overt and apparent to me. My journaling reflections were guided by my research questions. I considered them to identify any preconceived notions and avoid prescribing my own biases against what the teachers said. This conscious effort to understand my own psyche about the research topic allowed me to recognize any potential biases that might have jeopardized the authenticity of my research study. I was able to distinguish any inequitable, unfair, or biased portrayals of the community before they even happen. To further ensure I did not perpetuate any biases as I interpreted the data, I continued to journal during the data collection process. This will allow me to work with clarity and purity of thought, rather than preconceived unconscious notions of teachers of the Historic Anza Corridor community. Through habitual journaling I crystalized subconscious biases and collected and interpreted data with impartial motivation.

The *pláticas* recordings were transcribed using Rev AI Transcription service. Each individual *plática* was scrutinized for major themes and patterns that told the story of Historic

Anza Corridor teachers. I was attuned to the emerging stories as I reviewed the data (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). As a researcher using “portraitures” I maintained a reflective lens, leveraged my own insight into the community, and interpreted the context (Cope, Jones, and Hendricks, 2015). Most importantly, I looked for “positive” elements in their stories that highlighted the assets of the community being studied.

Data Analysis via Portraitures

My primary method of data analysis consisted of *portraitures* of three of eight teachers who grew up in and/or lived in, and taught in the Historic Anza Corridor: Sebastian, Emiliano, and Angelique. I wrote portraitures of only these three teachers because I either got to know them better during the shadowing protocol or had a professional relationship with them prior to this study.

I shadowed Sebastian in his classroom, school hallway, and the teacher workroom before we had our platíca. I shadowed Emiliano in their classroom, school hallway, and school parking lot. Emiliano and I were also colleagues for three semesters and our classrooms were in the same hallway. While I did not shadow Angelique, we were colleagues for a semester. I witnessed elements of her teaching philosophy both on school grounds and in the surrounding neighborhood. During our interactions, her dedication and commitment to student, teacher, and family advocacy were palpable. Since portraitures require an in-depth analysis of the participants, it seemed only reasonable to focus on the individuals I had the most frequent and nuanced understanding of as teachers from the Historic Anza Corridor.

Much like the process of capturing the essence of a subject in a portrait through multiple sittings, the portraitures captured the ethos of a subject through the process of narrative writing (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997). Since each individual narrative was written as told, the meaning is preserved as the participant intended. The narrative approach recognized

the “context” in which each of the stories took place and thus eliminated misinterpretation of the data during analysis (Rodriguez-Dorans and Jacobs, 2020).

In addition, the narrative writing demonstrated the experiences of people were not mere stories, but happenings connected to broader “organizational, social, cultural, and historical” situations (Rodriguez-Dorans and Jacobs, 2020). While researchers may drive data analysis when they use traditional methods, participants drive data collection when they use portraitures. This allowed for the elimination of bias from the researcher and made way for a co-construction of the stories of the participants. This helped the research findings to be authentic- a true portrait of the community told through the community.

There are basic elements of portraitures that help to build the conditions that facilitate authentic data analysis. Portraitures uphold participants as experts of their own community, whereas traditional methods of data analysis might continue to perpetuate the marginalization of the community. Portraitures challenge the notion that purposeful research must be defined from the outside in. Oftentimes, Indigenous scholars trained in the western tradition might perpetrate some of those same harms that silence the voices and experiences of the indigenous communities (Yatzzie-Mintz, 2009). In a study that aimed to understand how 3 Navajo teachers conceptualized culturally relevant pedagogy, the Navajo researcher was able to approach the topic with an understanding that there were cultural and political implications to how the 3 Navajo teachers approached their work at Navajo schools. The same predisposition of the researcher allowed her to garner the trust of her subjects and authentic portraits of each Navajo teacher to emerge (Yatzzie-Mintz, 2007). Moreover, since the researcher was not expected to divorce their own experiences from the research methods, a “nuanced” story that holds space for “multiple truths” is captured (Brooks, 2017).

Besides recognizing participants as experts of their own experiences, the portraitures focused on the “good” in the community that was being analyzed (Lawrence-Lightfoot and

Hoffman-Davis, 1997). During the data analysis, I focused on the positive elements that emerge during the narrative writing process. So often research methods approach marginalized communities from a deficit mindset - what is still needed, what is not being done, what is being done adequately. That approach clouds and obscures the good work the community might be engaging in to improve human experiences. By analyzing the data through asset-based narrative writing, I actively avoided perpetuating existing stereotypes that harm rather than uplift the community in question.

Since the research questions aimed to capture the shared experiences of teachers in Historic Anza Corridor, *portraiture* is the most pertinent method of data analysis. Since individuals in the Historic Anza Corridor community have been historically marginalized, *portraitures* situated the study participants as central experts on the research topic and enabled them to share their own personal stories growing up, living, and teaching in Historic Anza Corridor. *Portraiture* also worked well for the purpose of this study since I (the researcher) have a personal connection to the community I in this study. As a teacher who grew up in Historic Anza Corridor, lived in Historic Anza Corridor, and taught in Historic Anza Corridor, I was able to rely on my own background knowledge to build a trusting relationship with the participants, garner authentic stories through thoughtful interview questions, and ultimately co-create a "painting" of the shared experiences of Historic Anza Corridor teachers.

This research study was meant to gather insight on the reasons why Historic Anza Corridor native residents teach in Historic Anza Corridor, the benefits of their condition, and the challenges of their condition. All data collected will come from the perspective of those teachers. My research captured teachers' beliefs, interpretations, and ideas about students, the community, and schools, based on their own experiences growing up, living, and teaching in their own native community. The subjects were treated as the experts on the subject as I allowed my own experiences in the community to guide the research process.

Positionality

Along the mirrored perimeter of the stuffy Zumba dance studio, bold five-year-olds mimic their mothers' swaying hips as the eldest children sit on folding chairs and gently rock the strollers with sleeping toddlers. "Maghalena" by Sergio Mendes reverberates throughout the dance studio as my neighbor dances and my mom exclaims, "Que bonito baila. Esta gordita, pero se sabe mover." On the walk home, I hear Chalino Sanchez play from Panchita's house, Los Bukis play from Chavela's house, and Juan Gabriel play from our house. When we come across familiar faces, some elderly neighbors ask, "How are you doing, baby girl?" while others ask, "Como estas, mi'ja?" During our brief check-in we want to know: How's your health? How's your mom's health? How's school? What are you cooking today, and will you share a plate? Did you see the latest gossip on such and such Mexican telenovela stars? The neighborhood vibrates with love and joy. Despite the robberies near the liquor store, drive-by shootings, break-ins, unfriendly encounters, and constant helicopters circulating the area, I see the beauty outsiders struggle to discern.

I became a teacher because I believed in the beauty and promise of students who resembled my family, friends, and neighbors. I wanted to nurture their talent, creativity, and character through the reading of literature and poetry. I wanted them to consider the sociopolitical forces responsible for our material scarcity and recognize the cultural wealth in every corner of our streets. I wanted our students to see that they themselves were the most invaluable gem in our community. So, we read Langston Hughes' *Thank You Ma'am,* Rudolfo Anayas' *Dead End,* Luis Rodriguez's *Love Poem to Los Angeles*, and Yessika Salgados' love poem to Los Angeles, *Casamiento*.

But my work conditions were tough. I was overwhelmed with four prep periods - Pre-AP, English 10, English 9, and a College and Career course. Every IEP meeting revealed the

devastating conditions our students lived in and our school's lack of systems to support them. Professional development meetings revealed 60 different versions of a school vision as opposed to one unified hope and dream for our students. Faculty meetings were weekly, monotonous, and redundant. In-school issues were not properly resolved by school officials and spilled into the students' lives outside of school. One day during my walk home from work, I stood in front of a migrant student from Guatemala who was about to be attacked by a group of five male students over some stolen earphones and snitching. A Pepsi truck driver told them to get out of here, as I asked, "Please don't do this." When I began to write despondent poetry that compared the purple sky at sunset I had always admired, to bruises, I knew I had to leave my position.

Throughout this period in my career, I learned that there were other teachers like me. These teachers had grown up in the neighborhood, lived in the neighborhood, and taught in the neighborhood. They began their teaching careers with similar sentiments of love, empathy, and compassion for students. They were driven by a commitment to social justice. However, they were mentally, physically, and emotionally overwhelmed and overexerted in their teaching positions, and left to salvage their light and will to teach our students.

I wanted to determine how to keep teachers in the schools they clearly loved with an aching devotion. I knew their commitment to their schools stemmed from a love for the people. I suspected that their altruism was being exploited (consciously or subconsciously) by a system that values and prioritizes productivity and results. This research study grew from an attempt to keep the teachers who love their schools, students, and communities. The findings from this research study offers some ideas to better invest in these dedicated teachers. The findings also offer some ideas on how education leaders can build systems to help teachers from outside neighborhoods build high levels of heartfelt commitment for their students and the neighborhoods they serve.

Ethical Issues & How Study Addresses Them

One ethical issue in this study stemmed from teachers' perceived fear of administrator retaliation, principal retaliation, and district retaliation. Teachers feared that if their experiences painted an unfavorable portrayal of these school leaders, they might experience retaliation. Teachers cited a fear of being "blacklisted", losing their jobs, or being barred from access to professional opportunities. To assuage the fears of the teachers of the Historic Anza Corridor pseudonyms were used for every teacher, school, street, city, school district, and unique landmark. I did not want fear to drive the pláticas we engaged in for data collection. I did not want teachers to hold back or soften valid and critical observations, experiences, and perspectives. I wanted the participants to share candid portrayals of their teaching experiences under current leadership. Although the group of teachers who I worked with were all boldly opinionated, their wellbeing had to be protected through anonymity.

Some teachers were also concerned with maintaining cordial and civil relationships with their colleagues in a work environment that demands collaboration. I wanted to ensure that their careers, professional relationships, and their mental and emotional health was not disrupted. These ethical concerns were also addressed with pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants, the schools, the neighborhood, and entities like the school district. These measures will prevent any possible retaliation from those who hold more power within our social systems and structures. These ethical issues were also addressed by meeting study participants in the spaces where they felt the most safe and secure from recognition by leaders and other "in-group" members in their work site. These spaces included: Zoom, their favorite community restaurants, and outdoor spaces near their homes.

Another ethical issue that I wanted to address was the process of taking information without providing any compensation in return. It was important that I did not perpetrate existing systems of exploitation of participants. I could not simply take the knowledge from the

community for my professional and academic purposes, without allowing for the research to promote the social, cultural, or political prosperity of the community. To mitigate this issue, I asked the participants to share how they wanted to see the findings of this study used and disseminated. At the end of the interview, I asked participants, “How do you hope the research findings in the research study you have just participated in are used in our education community?” This question was meant to co-create any material products that resulted from the research. The participants decided how their community would most benefit from their participation in the research study. This final question to participants put the power back in the hands of the people who knew their community best. Participants chose to disseminate this information through banners with positive messages about the Historic Anza Corridor, typically lined up along the sidewalk to be seen by motorists and pedestrians. They also chose to make the results of this research available via social media like Tik Tok and Instagram. Another participant thought that an art collaboration in a local restaurant or community space would give more visibility to this information. Someone suggested the creation of Zines and their distribution in campuses with teacher education programs. Another participant suggested the findings of the dissertation become mandatory reading in teacher education programs that typically supply teachers to schools in disenfranchised neighborhoods. One participant suggested that we develop a workbook for teachers who will work in these disenfranchised communities. Only one teacher suggested that we host professional development meetings for teachers working in the disenfranchised urban schools.

Often researchers decide how they disseminate the findings, but a truly honest and egalitarian process includes the disenfranchised community in that decision. The material products that can emerge from this research study should be created with the voices of the study participants to ensure the people it is meant to support truly benefit from it. All participants

said they would like to participate in the creation of the materials as much as their schedules allow.

Finally, teachers were compensated for their time to meet with me. Our society undervalues the work of our teachers. To mitigate some of that socioeconomic injustice, I gave each teacher a $50 gift card to Amazon one to three days after our plática. Some gift cards were sent via text, others were sent via email.

Study Limitations

A limitation that I initially feared would emerge during this study included the possible tendency of participants to speak to me through the master narrative of Historic Anza Corridor as a distressed neighborhood and as a historically underserved network of community schools. I worried that this double consciousness - an identity rooted in the dominant culture simultaneously existing with an identity rooted in the marginalized culture - would result in conversations where teachers critiqued both the neighborhood and the school from a deficit mindset. I was most concerned with teachers who were still in the process of developing a critical lens of the status quo. Yatzzie-Mintz argues that simply knowing the marginalized language and culture is not enough to practice culturally relevant pedagogy (2007). Instead, a culturally relevant pedagogue must reflect on and act on the implications of their marginalized status through their work as teachers.

To mitigate this issue, I set the tone of the *plática* from an asset-based perspective. I asked participants to bring artifacts that were emblematic of a joyful memory at home, in the neighborhood, or in their classrooms. By speaking to participants in questions designed to bring out the assets of the community, deficit thinking was curtailed. The line of questioning prompted participants to think in asset-based perspectives and put those experiences in an asset-based language. While distressing issues in the Historic Anza Corridor - real, palpable, and enduring- came up, they did not become the focal point of the study. The aim of these asset-based

questions was to build a space that celebrate the good of the community to replicate the good in the community. The *pláticas* per se - a research collection method rooted in the cultural practices of many communities of color - also highlighted the extent of that double consciousness. The *plática* itself will showcase the forces that make teachers adopt multiple identities.

To further facilitate authentic stories and accurate findings, I put relationship building at the heart of data collection. As a researcher from the community, I leveraged my insight on both the challenges and successes of the neighborhood, schools, and the people that comprise them. I earned the trust of the participants based on our shared experience and identity as teachers of color from Historic Anza Corridor. When I introduced myself as a member of the community and a teacher, I explained that my research study aimed to capture a fair and balanced portrayal of the strengths and challenges of teaching in Historic Anza Corridor as someone who has historically experienced, observed, and reflected on the systems of inequity that continue to stifle the progress of our friends, family, and neighbors. More specifically, I explained that the aim of this research study was to highlight the systemic issues specific to Historic Anza Corridor, mitigate the challenges that prevent or cause teachers to leave, and build a solid infrastructure for Historic Anza Corridor schools through the retention of Anza Corridor teachers who want to stay in their schools. The relational trust might yield the most accurate, true, and powerful findings to truly support the urban disenfranchised community.

Conclusion

This research study aimed to uncover and highlight the reasons why teachers who grew up in the Historic Anza Corridor area currently live and teach in the Historic Anza Corridor area. These teachers demonstrated an unyielding dedication to the schools they serve. They teach with passion, compassion, and relentless commitment. However, they have not necessarily been cared for with that same intensity by education leaders. I wanted to learn what teachers

perceive as challenges to their work and what systems of support they needed to stay in their teaching positions for the long haul. For decades, schools in the Historic Anza Corridor have been misunderstood and dismissed as dangerous places. Administrators have struggled to recruit and retain experienced teachers, and achievement has remained minimal or stagnant. During so much turnover and uncertainty, teacher residents of the Historic Anza Corridor often stay in the profession. These native teachers offer insight that enables education leaders to develop systems of support for teachers who are both native and outsiders to the Historic Anza Corridor area. Although the Historic Anza Corridor community of schools has experienced constant transitioning of teachers for decades, the problem has never been investigated. The findings from this research can give rise to systems that will ensure teachers stay in their Historic Anza Corridor sites for the long-haul. These systems of support can allow for long-term academic gains and economic improvement in generations.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

For the people of Historic Anza Corridor, the recognition of the self in the other stems from their personal interactions and exchanges with the people in the neighborhood. Where media accounts might prime a non-resident to perceive the members of the neighborhood as stereotypes, the lived daily experiences of the members of the community enable them to see the full humanity of their friends, family, and neighbors. As they recall “inherited conceptions” about their shared neighborhood, teachers of color leverage their “cultural memory” to activate a “love praxis” that humanizes the students they serve (Kazembe, 2012). When teachers from Historic Anza Corridor recall and reflect on the “practices, values, thoughts, rituals, roles, customs, and manners of interacting” of the people in their neighborhood, they can serve their students with compassion and humanity (Kazembe, 2012). During data collection, the teachers in this study articulated their experiences in the neighborhood with an irrevocable affection. When asked to describe Historic Anza Corridor in one word, or phrase Teresa said, “Historic Anza Corridor is home.” Teresa explained:

> Historic Anza Corridor is where my dogs are. It's where my mom is at. It's where my mandarin tree in the backyard is at. It's where I feel safe. I feel comfortable. Oh, another thing, people are like, ‘Oh, it's dangerous.’ I've never felt unsafe in my home, ever. I like my little block of street, it's very diverse. I talk to most of my neighbors. I talk to my neighbors across the street, my neighbor's next to me. I've never felt unsafe there. So, I think, home is home. I think my home is beautiful.

These daily human experiences helped these teachers build the love, compassion, and commitment that drive the Historic Anza Corridor teacher. Their early human experiences and human relationships are the fertile ground that later blossoms into the committed educators they become. They saw their fellow Historic Anza Corridor residents with love and respect. They were guided by a humanistic and empathetic code of ethics that was cultivated by specific life experiences.

The teaching philosophies of the teachers in this study is also shaped by their experiences outside of Historic Anza Corridor. The teachers in this study went to school outside of the boundaries of their neighborhood at some point between their K-12 experience (seven teachers) or their early college years (one teacher) for at least five years. The critical juxtaposition of their lived experiences in Historic Anza Corridor and the lived experiences of those who lived outside of Historic Anza Corridor enabled them to reflect on the sociopolitical climate of their neighborhood. As they considered their own values, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences, the teachers in this study gained insight into themselves. Their early experiences marked the genesis of their race and class consciousness. This awakening galvanized their drive to enact liberatory and healing practices with their students. Other researchers have found that the experience of struggle can inspire a commitment to teaching for social mobility within a democratic liberal ideology or a revolutionary critical approach (Lambirth, 2010).

It is important to note that while the Historic Anza Corridor teachers who participated in this research study are driven by their immediate recognition of their shared humanity with those around them, colleagues and administrators who do not share the life experiences of these Historic Anza Corridor teachers might struggle to make that human recognition with the same immediacy as a teacher from Historic Anza Corridor. This does not mean that educators from neighborhoods outside of Historic Anza Corridor are incapable of serving Historic Anza Corridor students adequately. It simply means they might need support in developing the skill of critical reflection in their practice (Shandomo, 2010). This also does not suggest all teachers of color are innately capable of practicing critical reflection as many have internalized Eurocentric views they must work to dismantle (Khorshid, 2022). Teachers of all racial demographics might unwittingly misunderstand and misappropriate culturally relevant pedagogy as trivialized superficial and generic interpretations of a student's and communities' cultures (Allen, 2020). Teachers of all racial backgrounds might need support in developing the historical and political

context Historic Anza Corridor teachers developed through their lived experiences. To put it simply: the Historic Anza Corridor educators who teach in Historic Anza Corridor have built a robust historical and political context based on their own personal experiences living and growing up in Historic Anza Corridor. This personal experience successively facilitates and expedites the human recognition required to fully commit to their students. The following section details how the personal experiences of the teachers in the Anza Corridor fostered their commitment to their students via: positive experiences in the neighborhood, opportunities to juxtapose their under-resourced neighborhoods with affluent ones, their desire to liberate their students through the classroom space, the need for more time to meet the demands of the job, and the need for more time from administrators for genuine professional support and collaboration.

Early Positive Lifelong Experiences Living in the Neighborhood

It is important to note that their critical reflection was grounded in love for the people of the neighborhood and the neighborhood itself. Everyday interactions with fellow Historic Anza Corridor residents tacitly affirmed their own humanity and the humanity of those around them. The personal connections they forged with other members of the shared neighborhood resulted in loyalty to the place (Raymond et al., 2010). When exposed to well-resourced neighborhoods, the participants practiced varying levels of critical reflection and viewed their imperfect neighborhoods with compassion. Contrary to popular conceptions of Historic Anza Corridor as a hodgepodge of distressing conditions, they viewed it as a home in need of more material resources. Angelique illustrates the joy of growing up in the Historic Anza Corridor through a vivid description of childhood memories:

> We just had so much fun. It was just so much fun growing up and I feel like those are the memories that I remember growing up in the Historic Anza Corridor and the community that I grew up in. All the pictures that I have, it's just [my cousins and I] smiling, having a good time together, and bonding with my family. We had

> a treehouse. We liked singing. We were outside. We would play tag. We were very active. We would fill up a swimming pool and then my cousins would come over. Usually at my grandma's [house], we grew up living with my grandma and [the whole family] got together every weekend.

Anchored in love for the people that comprised their neighborhood, they learned to observe Historic Anza Corridor through a critical lens that led to a fair assessment of the social forces that shaped the challenging experiences of the people of Historic Anza Corridor. From our small dark corner of Mercado La Bonilla, a local community space and food hall, one teacher explains the importance of questioning students' negative interpretations of the neighborhood, challenging those negative perceptions to broaden their perspectives, and guiding them through action for community change. As she tells me about the issues unique to the Historic Anza Corridor school community, she demonstrates how she leverages her historical and political context to cultivate a class consciousness amongst her students. Patricia states:

> I think I always want to stand up for the Historic Anza Corridor and remind folks that people live there. People work there. People go to school there. People shop there. People are there. I think it's easier to say Historic Anza Corridor - this generic place - is blank. It's a lot harder to say, this family is blank. This young person is "ghetto". Let's use the word "ghetto". 'The Historic Anza Corridor is a ghetto.' You can say that, but can you say that to a person? Can you say that to a family? How does that change? I think I am always challenging that. Like, where does your perception come from? Ever from within, right! Students and families will be like, 'This school is ghetto. Man this is… tarararara..' And it's like okay, 'What makes you say that?' And again, they might be coming from some real things. They've seen things. They're hearing things. So, my thing is, how do we address that? How do we change things? How does it make you feel? Because you live here. And some kids say, 'I live here now but I am trying to get out of here.' Which is real too. Social media and general ideology of often making it out as opposed to making it and being there and coming back, wherever your life trajectory takes you.

In early adulthood, they acquired formal education which helped them understand and articulate the forces that lead to the inequitable material conditions they grew aware of. The participants of this research study engaged with the world outside of Historic Anza Corridor for

four to five years either before moving into Historic Anza Corridor, as they lived in Historic Anza Corridor, or in college, after their high school graduation. This engagement with neighborhoods outside of Historic Anza Corridor included living in more resourced neighborhoods in their county, attending K-12 schools in more resourced neighborhoods in their county, or attending college in more resourced neighborhoods in their county.

Every participant referenced their enrollment in K-12 or post-secondary schools outside of Historic Anza Corridor as a formative element to the class and race consciousness that inspired them to return to Historic Anza Corridor to teach. As the teachers vacillated between their homes in Historic Anza Corridor and their schools outside of it, they were able to juxtapose the living conditions of two distinct neighborhoods. The teachers who participated in this study had to be exposed to life outside of the Historic Anza Corridor to identify and make sense of the features of race and class injustice in their own neighborhood. Existing research suggested that experiences with economic struggle inspired aspiring teachers with working class backgrounds to teach to promote social mobility (Lambirth, 2010). Their engagement with two distinct material worlds activated critical reflection of their lived experiences. According to Piaget's constructivist theory of learning, participants in this study constructed knowledge through their engagement with ideas and experiences (Piaget, 1973). Since the teachers in this study faced and wrestled with issues of social inequity as they navigated two economically distinct areas of their city, their perspective of their neighborhood, other neighborhoods, and the world broadened.

Juxtaposing Neighborhoods: Moving into the Historic Anza Corridor

For some Historic Anza Corridor teachers, their class consciousness began when they moved into an historically disinvested area from a more resourced area. The Bella Brite City neighborhoods they initially lived in enjoyed economic prosperity evident in material conditions and the harmony amongst its residents. Their exposure to the living conditions of two neighborhoods - one unhampered by generations of institutional racism and the other

historically disenfranchised - gave these teachers some suspicion there was more to be explored for a complete understanding of the driving forces behind these contrasting conditions. When Tia Shannon moved to Historic Anza Corridor from a “hippie-dippy, peace and love” Bella Brite City neighborhood, the hardships of the neighborhood were salient both in their neighborhood and at school.

Tia Shannon vividly remembers riding her bicycle with her older brother on Christmas Day in the Historic Anza Corridor. Before moving into their new neighborhood, they had always ridden their bikes until the streetlights appeared. On this day, two people came up to them, pushed them off their bicycles, and rode away in their bikes. Paralyzed by bewilderment, they watched the two strangers vanish with their bicycles. Besides their experiences with petty theft, they learned about other phenomena that had previously been foreign to them. During their first year living in Historic Anza Corridor, they developed a conception of gangs. The distress of the neighborhood extended into the school environment. At her middle school, she witnessed violence between peers and student-teacher violence. For the first time in her life, she saw her teachers curse at students, she saw a fight between two preteen girls, someone used racist derogatory language against her, and someone spit on her. For the first time in her life, she was afraid. Her fear was disconcerting because it was other people of color who brought about her fear. She realized she was afraid of people who looked like her, a phenomenon she never experienced while living in a westside neighborhood two miles away from the beach.

Although Tia Shannon was not guided by preconceived notions of Historic Anza Corridor, even as a preteen, her experiences suggested there were stark differences between Historic Anza Corridor and her former place of residence. The dichotomy of these experiences created fertile ground for a more thorough exploration of social inequality in later years (Lambirth, 2010). These early experiences form the embryonic stages of her class consciousness. The class lenses with which she learns to explore the world only evolved,

developed, and refined over time. With every added experience in high school, college, and as a film producer working around the world, she learns to reflect on the circumstances in Historic Anza Corridor through a critical lens (Shandomo, 2010). Together, these collections of experiences guide a holistic examination and conceptualization of Historic Anza Corridor.

Juxtaposing Neighborhoods: Living in the Anza Corridor but Attending School Outside

Some teachers developed class consciousness when they lived in the Historic Anza Corridor while attending middle school and high school in the better resourced neighborhoods of the Historic Anza Corridor. As these teachers oscillated between two distinct worlds, they were tacitly introduced to the intersection of race and class to explain social injustices. Before these teachers started school in neighborhoods outside of Historic Anza Corridor, they viewed Historic Anza Corridor as the unequivocal backdrop of all the joy and laughter family, friends, and neighbors can bring (Raymond et. al, 2010). Their exposure to the outside neighborhood awakened an understanding that not all places were created equally. The teachers - then tweens and adolescents - began to discern notable differences between the material realities of the Historic Anza Corridor neighborhood where they lived, and the well-resourced environment surrounding the neighborhoods outside of the Historic Anza Corridor where they attended school (Lambirth, 2010).

While attending schools outside of the Historic Anza Corridor, their vague awareness of political and economic disinvestment in their neighborhoods crystallized. One participant, Teresa, recalled growing up near a commercial building she saw go up in flames during a period of sociopolitical tumult for Bella Brite City. The dilapidated building remained for over two decades and thus highlighted a history of political apathy and disinvestment in Historic Anza Corridor. As a teacher, she recognizes that her school experiences in the neighborhoods outside of Historic Anza Corridor made her vaguely aware that Historic Anza Corridor was neglected.

While Teresa lived in Historic Anza Corridor while attending school outside of Historic Anza Corridor, she experienced a glimpse of life in a better resourced community. Overcrowded local schools, prompted a participant's parents to enroll her in a middle school in a suburb about 25 miles away from their Historic Anza Corridor home. As a pre-teenager, the participant recalls noting the overt differences between the neighborhood surrounding her school and the neighborhood surrounding her home in Historic Anza Corridor.

> I never thought I was poor, but when I went to middle school, I was like, 'Oh, I think I'm poor.' Because you see these massive homes, these communities [that] looked very different from mine. And not to say that I never went to these communities, it was just driving through [on] the school bus and through these literally white picket fenced homes. I was like, 'This is different. This is like the movies.'

Teresa notes the tangible change and transition that unfolded before her eyes as she left one neighborhood and entered the other. One neighborhood was missing the material indicators of prosperity like pristine picket fences, while the other had an abundance of indicators of material wealth. These material indicators resembled the middle-class wealth American television shows consistently displayed as the norm, ideal, and default. As a pre-teen she was able to discern visible signs of economic disparity between both neighborhoods. Her home was surrounded by battered buildings dating from days of civil unrest[15], while the neighborhood surrounding her school enjoyed manicured lawns and attractive fences. This sprouting notion - when nurtured by growing experiences, maturity, retrospection, and synthesis - later becomes the class consciousness that drives the Historic Anza Corridor teacher's commitment for students. As a teacher, Teresa conjures her "cultural memory" into action, even when those memories of social injustice are unnerving (Kazembe, 2012).

[15] Bella Brite City witnessed days of civil unrest due to continuous violations and indignities against the human rights of black men at the hands of biased Bella Brite City law enforcement officers.

Patricia also demonstrated the early signs of a developing class consciousness when she attended middle school outside of her Historic Anza Corridor neighborhood. Much like Teresa, the visual transformation of all the material objects - homes, businesses, parks, and yards - unfolded as she rode public transit. Besides her own observations and determinations, her peers unknowingly contributed to her developing race and class consciousness.

Students in her middle school kept a bleak perception of the Historic Anza Corridor. After the city's period of sociopolitical upheaval, the neighborhood entered the public psyche as a space of mayhem and violence. This widespread sentiment was apparent even amongst her peers. During conversations with classmates or friends someone inevitably made comments that the Historic Anza Corridor was unsafe. While they spoke of their own neighborhoods with a general sense of pride, their general perception of Historic Anza Corridor was that it was a place of danger and violence. While the public perception of the neighborhood was not at the forefront of Patricia's mind at the time, those thoughts were elemental in activating her awareness that there were stark differences between neighborhoods in the city. She recounts:

> I think [their comments] always helped me see how folks perceive Historic Anza Corridor. Because they were always talking. Even folks who lived in small apartments or owned houses, they still had a sense of pride when they talked about other places. Whereas I heard other people talk about Historic Anza Corridor and they were like, 'You live there?!'

As Historic Anza Corridor residents attended schools in other Bella Brite City neighborhoods, they began to understand the perception people outside of Historic Anza Corridor have of their home. The limited views of the non-Historic Anza Corridor residents, juxtaposed against the Historic Anza Corridor residents' more complex lived experience, begins to germinate ideas of class consciousness. While their understanding is not yet nuanced, its inception forms the foundation for a more substantial understanding of class and race later in life.

Juxtaposing Neighborhoods: Living in the Anza Corridor but Attending College Outside

Many participants cultivated race and class consciousness while pursuing undergraduate degrees at universities outside of Historic Anza Corridor. Courses in Chicano-Latino and African American studies that explored the history of oppression of people of color, filled the information gaps participants had as tweens and adolescents observing stark differences between different neighborhoods for the first time. One of the participants describes the initial stages of his class and race consciousness in high school.

Growing up in Historic Anza Corridor he and his friends experienced a lot of traumatic events that included encounters with police. As he got older, he noticed that residents of other neighborhoods were not experiencing the same harassment by police officers. While he survived those encounters, many of his friends passed away due to gang violence or lost years of their lives in the prison system. The juxtaposition of life in Historic Anza Corridor and outside of it prompted him to become a committed Historic Anza Corridor educator. His courage to tap into daunting “cultural memories” of police violence and leverage those in his practice are key features of the commitment to service of the teachers in this study (Kazembe, 2012). Ernesto demonstrates his will to remember painful experiences to inform how he approaches his work:

> I remember that as I was in high school and getting older, I realized that we are exposed to things that other folks in other communities are not exposed to - whether it is gang [affiliation] or encounters with police. I think a lot of us are forced to grow up fast and make decisions based on those encounters. I had a lot of encounters myself that I know that I was fortunate to come out of good. And for me, those experiences led me to where I am now. I understand what a lot of our students face and the different decisions that they're going to have to make. And that's what I share with them. I say to them that some of us are very lucky and fortunate to come out of it okay, but we can't say that for everybody else. I have friends that are no longer here or incarcerated because of those decisions they made or the exposures [to violence] they’ve had. I grew up with a lot of friends that were smart, brilliant, but based on their environment and based on the decisions they made, they're no longer [living] or incarcerated. And that led me to my profession.

Ernesto's lived experiences and reflections generate the initial stages of his race and class consciousness. While he lacked the theoretical frameworks to conduct a thorough dissection and critical analysis of the distressing conditions of the people of the Historic Anza Corridor, he observed striking differences between life in Historic Anza Corridor and life in neighborhoods outside it. When he attends college, this glimmering idea evolves into a more sophisticated understanding of the oppressing forces that oftentimes dictate the lives of the people in Historic Anza Corridor.

Ernesto describes his pursuit of a college education at twenty-three years old. His college courses expanded his understanding of the interaction of race and class in generating the social experiences of people in the Historic Anza Corridor. In college he learned about the Black Panther Party and the Brown Berets. Rather than blame individual people for their social struggle, he was able to see social systems and structures that worked to stifle the prosperity of people of color. He states:

> Right after high school I went to college and I felt out of place, so I ended up dropping out. Then I went back when I was 23 and when I was 23, I had a different mentality. [I thought] I'm just going to get it done. I had professors that taught us about the history of LA and what different cultures went through - the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets. And so, from that, it made me realize that there is something more to the struggle that we were going through.

In college the participant begins to decipher the interplay of forces beyond his control that shaped the lives of the peers and friends he had lost. The knowledge he acquired through his college courses began to provide context for the hardships of the people of Historic Anza Corridor. His college readings on liberation movements organized and led by people of color show him the systematic oppression of people like his friends, neighbors, and himself. Through his newly acquired knowledge he contextualizes the loss and grief that constantly surrounds him. This historical and political context cultivates his teaching philosophy grounded in a moral and political obligation to work for his students' success.

Teaching for the Liberation of the People of the Historic Anza Corridor

The personal experiences of growing up in Historic Anza Corridor while attending schools outside of Historic Anza Corridor led teachers to develop a personal philosophy meant to work towards the liberation of friends, family, and residents of Historic Anza Corridor. This philosophy of liberation also shaped their pedagogical practices. The philosophy of liberation manifested itself in their practice in three dimensions. First, these teachers cultivated their students' race and class consciousness through their creation and implementation of an abolitionist curriculum. Second, teachers endeavored to equip students with robust acquisition of academic skills for empowerment and self-actualization. Third, teachers helped students build strong social-emotional toolkits for sensible decision making outside of the classroom walls. These teachers use the school grounds as the training grounds for student acquisition of the political, social, and emotional skills indispensable for their success in a society systematically designed for their failure. Their steadfast and unwavering commitment to the liberation of their students demonstrates the urgency and immediacy of their approach to their work.

Ensuring the Sociopolitical Liberation of Students

To varying degrees of knowledge, all the participants in this study aimed to build class and race consciousness for the residents of Historic Anza Corridor through their course curriculum. These participants combined their formal and experiential knowledge of the challenges of their neighborhood to develop teaching frameworks centered around the healing and liberation of Historic Anza Corridor residents. These Critical Educators of Color (CEoC) teach to "resist and dismantle oppressive systems of education while still working in them" (Pour-Khorshid et. al, 2022). One participant, Emiliano, developed an abolitionist curriculum that empowered students through knowledge of the oppressive systems in our Western society. Of their American literature curriculum, he says:

> For my [American literature] courses, we do a deep dive into colonialism, and we look at it and how it affects kinship structures, gender, sexuality, history, narratives. And so, the students really evaluate who narrates history and then whose ways of being and thinking are prioritized. So I think of it as students get the opportunity to question, not just the problems of our society, which are located really in the state sanctioned and state produced violence, but to also question the state approved methods of changing things like liberalism, the status quo, our existing political parties, even things that may appear to be helpful, hate crime legislation and so on. These are all solutions that are approved by the state, but when you look more deeply, they maintain property relationships. They've maintained policing and maintained all these structures of violence for racializing violent peoples. That's the first semester of my American literature courses. And then we're transitioning now to still trying to do some other questions but get them to make some personal connections. So, then we'll move into a unit that's based in basically what do you need to have hope in your community, identify injustices, but also what could be the solution for that? And hopefully by the end of the year, the students have really questioned the solutions that seem to be the official solutions that you can find. But we know the ones that maintain this as well.

It is from a heightened awareness of social injustices that Emiliano proactively developed an abolitionist curriculum designed to "hold up a mirror" to systems of oppression. Students do not view the struggles of the neighborhood as indicators of inherent flaws of the place and its people, but as symptoms of a disease of systemic oppression. Rather than perceive their friends and relatives with guilt and shame, or hostility and disdain, they can reject merciless perceptions of them and attribute the social challenges of the neighborhood to systematic marginalization by American institutions. They were able to reject prescribed notions of their neighborhood or its people. Through course texts, activities, and materials, students were empowered to raise their own moral and ethical questions for American society. Emiliano welds the full force of "instructional power" where the teacher leverages their autonomy and authority to bring the perspectives of marginalized groups to the forefront and challenge Eurocentric values (Marshall, 2020). Emiliano remembers an incident where his use of instructional power was questioned by district administrators:

> I've had an administrator come by and say [my curriculum] was depressing. Not to me directly, but I heard about it later. And we were doing an abolitionist unit.

> But for our students to read this and to see how people are thinking about this one, recognizing it as a problem, but also doing work to combat it, to frame it, to understand it, and to propose solutions. It's not depressing. It's holding up a mirror to these systems and saying, I've uncovered what you really are, and I'm articulating that. And so, while that may seem depressing, it did something to me as a youth to rethink my father's imprisonment, and my family's experience, and his deportation, and all these other things when I didn't believe the proposed moral, ethical questions about who is my father? What has he done? As if he had to be deserving of the sentence that he got when it's an inhumane response to something and a disproportionate response to something. So when I think about the things I teach my students, it's like, no, how do you actually reject the values of these things that yes, they're fucked up and it may seem depressing, but there's also somewhat of a kind of form of relief to be able to say, no, this is that thing that I don't have to internalize and just see as natural or just think that it's particular to me and my family and my experience or my neighborhood as if there's something fucked up wrong with me, or us.

For Emiliano the decolonized readings they engaged in throughout their life elucidated the complex forces behind the present-day realities of the people of Historic Anza Corridor. As Emiliano observed the lived reality of their father and their fellow residents, they understood the interplay of social forces designed to hinder the progress of Historic Anza Corridor residents. The people of Historic Anza Corridor were no longer bearers of biased labels, but people affected by powerful conditions beyond their control. Emiliano's "contextualization" of their experiences enabled them to build a decolonized curriculum that restored their father's dignity and the dignity of so many other Historic Anza Corridor residents (Marshall, 2020). Emiliano's curriculum ignites the "conscientization" of students affected by these conditions as they learn to recognize structures of oppression (Jimenez, 2019).

Emiliano believes that race and class consciousness in Historic Anza Corridor can be activated immediately because students live "in the belly of the beast". Since students observe evidence of injustice in their material reality, the course readings and course dialogue demystify conditions that were already palpable for them. Students learn to read and write the word and the world (Freire, 1970). Students analyze the problems in our society, the state-sanctioned resolutions, propose their own hopes for their neighborhood, and design their own resolutions.

Emiliano's course aims to generate leaders whose radical empathy prompts them to build a better world for themselves and their neighbors.

The Teaching Experiences of Emiliano

Emiliano's work as a teacher in the Historic Anza Corridor activates sociopolitical consciousness that empowers students to skillfully identify, explain, question and reject skewed explanations for the insufficient resources and social need in the Historic Anza Corridor. The following portraiture of Emiliano captures his revolutionary drive to replace myopic explanations of sociopolitical problems with insight to empower their students.

A weekly professional development post-covid school shutdown turned sour quickly. A white middle-aged teacher proclaimed that mastery-based learning and grading - a grading system that dismissed assignment completion and upheld the mastery of skills through unlimited assignment attempts and teacher feedback - was not the equitable system it claimed to be but an easy pass for lazy students and a slap in the face for the more disciplined ones. A handful of younger educators tenaciously pushed back and advocated in favor of the more equitable system of academic evaluation. It was only my third week teaching at this school site in Historic Anza Corridor and already I felt exasperated, angry, and irked at (what I perceived as an) anemic social justice spirit amongst veteran colleagues at a school in my own historically underserved neighborhood.

Shortly after the meeting ended, Emiliano, one of the young professionals who had been advocating for equitable grading practices, opened the door that connected my classroom to the next one, poked their head into the room, and gently asked if they could come in. They wore a black hat with a white outline of a revolutionary fist, relaxed stone-washed denim jeans, and a basic black t-shirt. Later, as my interactions with Emiliano increased, I learned that every aspect of their life inside and outside of the classroom was led by a revolutionary spirit that recognized and prioritized the holistic wellbeing of their fellow humans.

As my interactions with Emiliano unfolded, I saw they didn't have the reckless and insatiable consumption urges many westerners express through their purchasing power. Rather than lead by frivolous consumption prompted by social media, marketing, and advertising, Emiliano experienced the world conscientiously. They cycled through the same wardrobe essentials, wore their black hat with the revolutionary motif daily, and kept a vegan diet. Emiliano didn't subscribe to American cultural pressures most of us blindly followed. Instead, their commitment was to nurture their mind, body, and spirit. And later, as I got to know them as a colleague, I learned they modeled those principles for their students daily.

During our initial meeting, Emiliano proceeded to explain the work dynamic at my new workplace. According to them, many of my new colleagues perhaps had not yet questioned the neoliberal approach to education that upheld meritocracy in academic grading. Unaware of decolonial forms of teaching, our colleagues were committed to the traditional point systems that had prevailed at the start of their teaching careers. They had not developed the critical consciousness pivotal to dismantling systems of oppression within their own minds and therefore the minds of those they loved and served. This first encounter with Emiliano was both a recognition and a homecoming. At a new school where I had begun to feel alone in thought and ideology, Emiliano offered community. Emiliano provided the emotional, intellectual, and professional support I needed to teach my students with love, compassion, and academic rigor. This community extended beyond our work relationship. As their colleague I saw them support colleagues in their own teaching journeys. When the principal announced our school was the only one in the district with a permanent police presence, Emiliano courageously spoke directly with the principal on behalf of like-minded colleagues and students. When I was disappointed in the format of the Individual Education Plan meetings at the school, Emiliano reviewed my email. Throughout my tenure at the site, Emiliano stood at the forefront of the mastery based learning and grading practices as they helped teachers set up their gradebooks, develop assignments,

and create rubrics. Before I left the site, Emiliano was the lead English teacher - building a vision for the professional development of a young teaching staff rooted in love, compassion, and great expectations of Historic Anza Corridor students.

One year after I had left my teaching position in Historic Anza Corridor, I shadowed Emiliano for this study. On the day I walked into his classroom, Emiliano instructed students to complete an independent reading and annotation of Vietnamese revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh's letter to the French colonizers, titled "An Open Letter to M. Albert Sanrut, Minister of Colonies". Students moved through the motions of the task with familiar agility and grace. When struggles arose, they turned to each other for support. When they cannot resolve the issue on their own, they feel comfortable asking their teacher for help. Often Emiliano notices their struggle and approaches them before students can ask for support. Independently, in small groups, or with their teacher, they debate the meaning of the text. The many posters of revolutionary leaders look at the work approvingly and reassuringly. On one corner stands the somber face of Assata Shakur in shades of magenta and soft pink and the phrase, "a wall is a wall and nothing more at all" in one corner. Next to it stands a black poster with large gray text with the words, "I charge the world for its acquiescence in my destruction," and boxed in red the white text, "Free Palestine". The largest poster stands above Emiliano's desk. In a sea of sky blue stands a fiery red image of Kwame Ture - an indignant look on his face as he points an austere finger into the horizon - and the words, "In order for nonviolence to work your opponent must have a conscience. The United States has none" in one corner. These posters quietly scream the revolutionary and liberatory essence of Emiliano as a human being and as an educator.

The posters reflect all the revolutionary ideals that the teacher demonstrates in their practice: lesson plans, classroom norms, routines, and classroom aesthetic. The teacher does

not simply claim to be for the liberation of people, the teacher demonstrates they are for the liberation of people through their actions.

A love for humanity is what drives Emiliano's work. Emiliano uses their love for humanity to fuel their fighting spirit against the oppression inflicted on the most vulnerable peoples. Emiliano is no stranger to the years of institutional racism that have built challenging living conditions for their fellow residents. Their father spent most of their childhood in the carceral system, a punishment that was both an "inhumane and disproportionate" response to the crime.

Emiliano sees themselves, their family, and their neighbors in every student and family that walks through the doors of their classroom. They see all the beauty, love, and potential of the human beings that make up the neighborhood they grew up in. In the families they serve they recall Sunday afternoons of baseball with parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. They also recall their frequent afternoons shooting hoops alone or with contenders at the local park. They recall the backyard ska and punk shows they attended with friends. They remember the musical pieces with lyrics they wrote on their guitar and performed at local shows.

At the university, their readings of revolutionary leaders gave Emiliano a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the political, social, and economic elements that chronically disrupted the lives of his father and his fellow residents. In college, Emiliano read thinkers like Ghassan Kanafani, Kwame Ture, and Audre Lorde. The words of these revolutionaries gave them the understanding and language to engage in critical reflection on their own life, the world, and their relationship with it (Freire, 1970). They learned that powerful forces beyond their father's control, and others who had been incarcerated like him, were significantly responsible for their incarceration.

At his university, two professors built a safe space for him to ask challenging questions in both undergraduate and graduate level courses like Race, Gender, and Policing, Ethnic Studies, and Racial/Colonial Genocide. With the guidance of those professors they admired,

Emiliano learned that “the most important questions are those that we ask ourselves”. The readings offered a humane and just explanation of the ignorance of human imprisonment and many of the social injustices disproportionately inflicted on people of color. Emiliano’s professors displayed “rigorous study” in their scholarly pursuits, they themselves emulated as students, and later in their career, as a teacher.

When Emiliano garnered that revolutionary knowledge they chose to enlighten the people of the neighborhood whose experiences mirrored those they experienced, their friends, and their family. They endeavored to become a teacher with an ardent sense of duty and purpose to inspire students living “quote on quote, in the belly of the beast” to question the origins of societal injustices. Emiliano understands that students can sense and recognize the injustices of years of systematic oppression because they’ve seen it, heard it, and felt it throughout their lifetimes. Emiliano’s course aims to fill the gaps created by a “Eurocentric school system” intent on maintaining the status quo. They understand that students have excessive exposure to texts that often obliterate or ignore the histories of marginalized communities. By including course readings of Malcolm X, Toni Morrison, Angela Davis, and Assata Shakur, Emiliano rectifies some of the failures of our education system. Emiliano aims to give students the critical mind and critical reflection that had allowed them to fully see and feel the humanity of their father in youth.

Emiliano’s impact on their students is noticeable. Half of Emiliano’s classroom is covered in wallpaper that resembles chalkboard where students express their own messages and ascertain their equal ownership of the classroom. Students have drawn books in the shape of guns and the Black Panther Party logo. They understand that knowledge can be a most effective weapon in the fight for justice. Most of all, his students demonstrate a willingness to wrestle with challenging texts and the ability to think critically about them. Emiliano is most proud of “students discovering the sense of humor in Ho Chi Minh; their appreciation for Trask’s

boldness, both in her personality and in her writing; and the struggle they experience, later followed by relief, when reading Dylan Rodriguez." Emiliano's every pedagogical choice has prompted students to embark on a journey towards social consciousness. Later in life - with a spirit of love, compassion, and community they learned in Emiliano's classroom - those same students will liberate others.

Emiliano Cultivates the Next Generation of Abolitionists

As a Historic Anza Corridor teacher, Emiliano implements their liberatory teaching philosophies through their pedagogical practices, they also consider the long-term impact those choices might have on the community at large. Emiliano aims to develop students who have what Giddens articulates as the "discursive consciousness" to reflect on the social injustices of their neighborhood, offer nuanced explanations of the social problems, and design concrete resolutions for transformative outcomes (Giddens, 1987). Through their curriculum Emiliano aimed to generate teams of liberators equipped to engage in transformative leadership. Hence, their reach extends beyond their students and their classroom experiences and into the surrounding neighborhood. As students begin to think of themselves as agents of change, a renewed community can flourish. In a few generations, the cumulative results of their pedagogical effort can yield liberated communities that collectively address the neighborhood's challenges and thus build a more prosperous neighborhood for its residents.

The Liberation of Historic Anza Corridor Residents Through a Robust Academic Toolkit

For Historic Anza Corridor teachers, knowledge is an invaluable characteristic, critical to survival in an American society not necessarily designed for people of color to succeed. The teachers in this study believe that if they equip students with the foundational academic skills, they will be prepared to navigate unfamiliar spaces beyond their classroom walls. Since American society is not designed for our students to succeed and will not change any time soon, the teachers in this study have a sense of urgency to help students acquire the skills to be

successful in American society as it is at this very moment. Much like bell hooks saw her black teachers at a segregated school, she sees herself as, “committed to nurturing intellect so that we could become scholars, thinkers, and cultural workers - black folks who used our minds,” (1994). The teachers in this study hope to help their students adapt to the expectations of a dominant American society for success. For one of the teachers in this study, Tia Shannon, it is imperative to “equip [the students] with the tools they need to be successful in this world” because their life depends on it.

Their commitment to the academic development of their students is evident in their unrelenting unit planning. They are willing to craft thoughtful lessons and curriculum based on their student’s academic and cultural needs, even when those planning sessions extend beyond contractual work hours. They believe in the careful consideration of every core text and supplemental text because they understand the present circumstances of their students - their material conditions and how those impact their social-emotional health - demand immediate attention. These teachers aim to build the foundational thinking skills that will give students the opportunity to choose their responsibilities. They hope their students’ have a myriad of life choices rather than lives predetermined and designated by social injustice.

On the day of my shadowing visit, the teacher’s urge to elevate her student’s academic skills is palpable. During a mandated practice test in preparation for annual state testing, I see her eyes inundate. Perplexed and preoccupied she shows me the students’ scores on her computer monitor. A sea of red marks covers the entire screen. The class had reviewed the main idea and supporting evidence, but the real-time scores do not reveal the weeks of direct instruction, group work, and individual practice they engaged in. She looks down from the monitor, shuffles some papers, and says, “I want to cry.” She holds back tears as she reminds her students they have 10 minutes remaining.

During our plática over Zoom the next day, she shares that her class went over the practice test earlier that day. She asked her students a series of deductive scaffolding questions that elucidated their misconceptions. She imitates a chorus of students exclaiming, "Ohhhhhhhhhh," as they realize the connection between what was asked of them on the practice state assessment and the skills they have worked on in Tia Shannon's class all year. Tia Shannon uses this opportunity to cultivate her students' metacognition. She asks them to consider why they were not able to apply those same skills during the practice test. A girl about four feet tall raises her hand and says, "It's because no one asks us to do that, only you." The bright smile that had adorned Tia Shannon's face as she retold this learning moment faded away and tears streamed down her face. Her teaching philosophy is rooted in the idea that students must learn to think for themselves, value what they think, and always nurture intellectual curiosity. Instead, many colleagues have built cultures of completion and compliance that diminish creative and original thought amongst students. Her voice, warm and amicable, deepens. With stern and solid eyes, she states, "What you think is great, but if you don't have the words and if you don't have the practice, you will be yet another silent generation. And they deserve better than that. They deserve their voice. It is a crime that they have only been asked to copy. And that someone led them to believe that that's all they needed to believe." Tia Shannon's words are an indictment of teachers who build and maintain cultures of completion and compliance. She believes students must be encouraged to think and practice their thinking constantly. The constant exercises of thought will yield the mental acuity required to not merely succeed academically but become an engaged participant in the world. During my shadowing visit a male student lingers behind. His backpack, too heavy for his small frame, seems to slow him down. He pushes against its weight and points at the whiteboard. Tia Shannon wrote the year was 2025 instead of 2024. She thanks him and sighs.

Tia Shannon wants students to read the word and the world and determine their place in it (Freire, 1970). She is willing to spend countless hours creating and refining lessons to support her students' academic development. She welcomes feedback, engages in self-reflection, and modifies when necessary. Driven by her unwavering commitment to knowledge, she works tirelessly. When her students do not match her energy, she does not resent them. She understands they might be too young to discern the crucial need for them to develop robust academic skills. She knows that to serve them, she must compel them to engage. She also knows that to equip students with the necessary academic tools she needs an entire team of educators - primary and secondary - to share her educational philosophy and matching work ethic. Tia Shannon knows her job is too important to simply log into Teachers Pay Teachers on Sunday night, browse for a random handout that loosely fits the academic skills in practice, and hope students build the skills they need to succeed beyond an academic setting. Tia Shannon yearns for teams of teachers who share her professional mission of student liberation through academic aptitude and critical thinking. When I comment that it sounds like she is pushing and fighting against a tide, she thanks me for saying that.

The Liberation of Historic Anza Corridor Residents Through a Robust Social Emotional Toolkit

For some teachers, their desire to liberate their neighborhood of the generational trauma accrued over years of social injustice, drives their teaching philosophy. Some of the teachers of Historic Anza Corridor witnessed their beloved family and friends endure the personal turmoil that shaped the limited emotional toolkit that often led them astray. These teachers see the potential of their students to live wholesome lives and wholeheartedly endeavor to teach for emotional intelligence in addition to academic skills. Emotional intelligence then becomes a course objective as powerful and significant as the skills of literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking. The academic setting thus becomes a training ground for emotional development in

addition to the academic development. Just as teachers would help students build an academic toolkit, they help students develop the emotional toolkit that might help them discover their immeasurable worth, make sensible choices, and secure a healthy life: mentally, socially, and emotionally. When Angelique endeavored to pursue a teaching career, her cousin and young people like him - were on her mind. She reminisced on her cousin and the circumstances that lead to his early passing:

> So, he did end up passing away because he was in a gang. That was when I was in college. At that time, I knew I loved science, I knew whatever I was going to do, it was going to do with science. And initially I thought maybe research in science. And then when he passed away it changed where I wanted to go with science. I tried a couple things and one of them was an internship at a high school and I was like, you know what? I think I can do this. I can help kids find a different path, a different alternative. Because he was going through some really rough times, and I feel like he just didn't have the support at that time. And at that time, I knew there was something off, but I was still too young to really process and understand and really be there for him. Because he was asking for help. He was asking for help in so many ways that I think people, even our family, weren't aware of and didn't see. So, he diverted my path into teaching. I was still going to do science, but I was like, I want to help students [by showing] them other paths. Education can be one of them, and just give them support that maybe they don't get at home. [My cousin] was not getting the support, now that I reflect, that he needed as a child growing up. So, he kind of diverted that path and I became a teacher.

Angelique's commitment to teaching stems from a commitment to promote and ensure the social emotional health of adolescents. She gives students the caring support her cousin needed. While she is not a mental health practitioner, her adherence to the tenets of social emotional health is palpable in her patient approach to working with adolescents who are privy to mood swings. She understands student behavior often indicates the possibility of underlying personal problems that have little to do with the teacher. While she does not provide therapy, she provides a warm classroom and a caring demeanor. A strong student teacher relationship then flourishes. The following portraiture for Angelique illustrates her care for the emotional wellbeing of students.

Angelique's Teaching Experiences

Through the squared window of the familiar white ice cream truck that stood outside of Unity High School, a petite woman in a sleek ponytail, skinny jeans and a heather gray hoodie handed the truck operator money in exchange for a single scoop vanilla ice cream cone. Standing amongst high school students waiting to purchase their own afternoon snacks, Angelique looked like a high school student herself. As the petite woman made her way to the school entrance, her bouncing hoop earrings complimented her gleeful gait. As she leaned her head for a taste of her ice cream cone, she recognized me, smiled, and said hello.

Even in my first encounter with Angelique, her personal connection to the neighborhood was obvious. She was not a triangle teacher who moved between home, work, and the store, and never ventured from the course (Alicea, 2024). Instead, she was a fully embedded resident of Historic Anza Corridor who recognized and enjoyed the amenities it had to offer. Every day at 3:45 PM, the familiar face of the ice cream truck operator waited on the high school students, adults, and children eager for Neapolitan ice cream sandwiches, paletas shaped into famous cartoon characters, and Hot Cheetos with nacho cheese. The purchasing of treats from the ice cream truck was a communal ritual the entire neighborhood participated in. The ice cream truck was both a meeting point for the neighborhood and a symbol of belonging. As I observed, I heard a familiar, "Me da esta por favor," from a teenager in a baggy hoodie and oversized pants as she pointed at a decal image of a banana split on the side of the truck. With unassuming confidence and natural demeanor, Angelique stepped up to order like her fellow ice cream lovers. Her participation in this daily neighborhood ritual indicated she was integrated into the neighborhood. The familiar greeting, the exchange of petty cash for a treat, the uttering of a goodbye or see you later, all suggested she was one with her neighborhood.

During our *plática*, her face lit up like sunshine as she retold childhood recollections. Her memories revealed the origins of the love and ease with which I saw her navigate her own

neighborhood during our encounter near the ice cream truck. Even on an impersonal digital platform like Zoom, her love for the neighborhood was apparent in her wide smile and cheerful intonation as she recounted her childhood in Historic Anza Corridor. When I asked to share an artifact that embodied a joyful memory of Historic Anza Corridor, she smiled and pulled an old photograph close enough to the computer camera for me to see. The photo displayed a half-dozen children with beaming faces standing in their grandmother's yard in her home in Historic Anza Corridor. These were just a handful of the twenty cousins she grew up with. As children, there was always someone to play and laugh with. Later in life, when life's challenges needed to be processed, there was always someone to count on.

This sense of community extended beyond their grandmother's house. As the children played in her yard, the neighbors who walked by waved hello or stopped to chat. During their walks to the local stores, their grandmother greeted multiple people. Later, when Angelique became a teacher in her own neighborhood, her grandmother "always supported [their] school events" where she would undoubtedly encounter a friend or neighbor whose eyes lit up when they saw her familiar face. As she explained, "My nieta es maestra aquí," the school and neighborhood blended into one space built through human connection. Their grandmother's vivid love for her neighborhood and the people that comprised it, showed Angelique and her cousins there was plenty to cherish and celebrate about the neighborhood. They were unequivocally and irrevocably a community - within grandma's loving home and outside of it too.

From our conversation, I gathered Angelique's grandmother's house was the heart that sustained the family's interconnected lives. At grandmother's house, the children co-created fantasy worlds often involving glamorous artists. The girls pretended to be celebrated singers while the boys pretended to be adoring fans. On hot days they filled up a kiddy pool with cold water and took dips. They often played traditional playground games like tag or hide and go seek. Every birthday was filled with the warmth and joy only loving friends and family can bring.

These early interactions within the community would enable Angelique to recognize the humanity of all Historic Anza Corridor residents. Her empathy for her neighbors stemmed from her precious and wholesome interactions with them. Those same interactions would later fortify her love for her students.

Her recognition of all the beauty around her - family, neighbors, and unity, nurtured her love for Historic Anza Corridor residents. Her grandmother propelled so much of that love. “My grandma is so popular,” she said proudly to describe the ease with which she navigated her neighborhood. “We would walk, everyone would know her,” she said. Even at school events, “one of the parents knew my grandma.” Although Angelique recognized there was “violence and stuff,” she also recognized there was “so much community and so much love”. Her will to preserve the beauty around her - often threatened by social injustices - inspired her to become a teacher. During our plática, Angelique also showed me a folded paper with her name written across it in pristine Old English font. The edges of each letter were meticulously shaded to create the semblance of protruding 3-D letters. She smiled and read the opening, “To the ugliest girl I know, how are you?” She chuckled. She added, “Even the first sentence, ‘to the ugliest girl I know. Hey, how are you?’ It just reminds me of us growing up together. Although the letter was sent from prison, the line reminded her of the playful and loving banter that started in their grandmother’s yard during child’s play. He was the oldest by only three years and the close age range allowed a friendship to flourish. He trusted and confided in her and she quickly noticed that the “problems he had with his dad,” pushed him to find comfort in the members of his street gang. Although their paths diverged soon after he joined a gang in high school, she recalled their frequent check-ins on weekends, and later when she was in college, on the phone during her walks through campus. It was during her college years that he passed away due to gang violence. For years, the high school in Historic Anza Corridor where Angelique taught for almost

ten years used to be an empty lot used for a weekend swap meet. In that barren lot, surrounded by stucco single-family stucco homes, her cousin was shot by a rival gang member.

As she spoke about the loss of her cousin, her fair complexion gained a rosy hue, and tears streamed down her face. When I asked her if she wanted to move onto another topic, with valiant certainty she stated, “No. I want to talk about this.” Her cousin needed socio-emotional support. “He needed help,” she said with tears streaming down her face, “He didn’t have the best home life”. Angelique recognized her cousin’s need for professional support to help him develop a robust emotional toolkit. He needed loving patience and compassionate guidance to rise and thrive through the challenges of life.

Angelique’s understanding that young people need mentorship propelled her towards a career in teaching. “He gave me my purpose,” she explained. He was the reason why she became a teacher. While at the time of her cousin’s adolescence and young adulthood she was only a child, as an adult she channeled her compassion to guide and support the students of Historic Anza Corridor who might be experiencing the socio-emotional challenges her cousin faced. As she decided to become a secondary science teacher, she would teach them to love science, but also teach them to love themselves. On the date he sent the letter from prison - August 7- she began her teaching career. This coincidence, she felt, was the “sign” that teaching was her calling and destiny.

With the same dynamic, nuanced, and compassionate perception she held of her cousin, she holds her students. “I see my cousin in some of these kids. Especially the boys,” she shared. She sees them as full humans with potential to design wholesome lives for themselves and others. And so, when students were “rude”, she understood these reactions were indicators of social-emotional troubles that required compassionate attention and care. When they “gave attitude” or “talked back” to her, she knew to forgive. She, “Never [took] anything personal” because their remarks were not a personal attack against her but

symptomatic of issues experienced adults needed to help address and assuage. Thus, she believed in the imperative role of the teacher to help a child in their own healing journey. As their teacher, she made sure to make the lessons “fun and engaging” to ensure students felt “excited to show up”. She welcomed everyone with warmth and kindness. She talked to students with respect but held them “accountable” for their errors by showing them the “expectations”. She built a safe environment where students felt seen, loved and realized there were other ways of navigating the world that could foster growth and joy.

Angelique Leaves Her Teaching Position at the School in the Anza Corridor

Angelique embodies bell hooks’ definition of love (2000). Love means help. True love supports the healing journey of the beloved. Love requires a commitment to the emotional and spiritual evolution of the person who is loved. However, Angelique did not receive the help she needed from education leaders superseding school functions and operations. After 8 years of teaching high school science in the Historic Anza Corridor, she made the heartbreaking decision of leaving her teaching position in the neighborhood she loved. Through tears she explained:

> I was so tired of fighting. I was so tired of advocating and not seeing enough change. It was so defeating. It's like you try so hard every single day because these kids deserve it. Why aren't the people above you trying just as hard? I just feel like I kept bringing up the same issues year after year after year, and not just bringing up the issues, but also trying to find solutions. ‘We could do this; we could do that. We can do this; we can do that.’ And just being stagnant or actually getting worse, getting worse than when I started there. These kids couldn't have one inch of systemic consistency or every year, especially with the seniors, every year it was the same thing. We don't know what the dates are.

Today, Angelique teaches high school science in a school outside of the Historic Anda Corridor. She says, “the kids are great and [her] colleagues are great, but it’s not the same.” Angelique hopes to return to the Anza Corridor “with more energy, or maybe when things have changed.”

Recognition of the Self in the Other

The teachers of Historic Anza Corridor thought that the benefit of having teachers that come from or live in the community was a profound recognition of the self in the other that activated and strengthened their commitment to teach for the neighborhood. The teachers saw themselves mirrored in their students and their families; and because they saw themselves reflected in the people of Historic Anza Corridor, they were able to build positive human relationships with students and families, both in and out of the classroom. They were also able to use their experiential knowledge of the neighborhood to inform their teaching. Oftentimes, they taught a curriculum that helped students recognize the beauty of their neighborhood and their power to shape it into their own image. Teachers were able to relate to students in two three distinct ways they experienced during their own young lives. During their K-12 years, teachers either had feelings of love or disdain about their neighborhood. Informed by these different experiences, the teachers were able to identify themselves in their students and teach for love and ownership of their neighborhood.

Students Represent Teachers' Early Positive Sentiments Towards Their Neighborhood

Teachers who prioritized their positive experiences growing up in Historic Anza Corridor, described their youth with idyllic nostalgia. They described the quintessential wholesome activities of a community rooted in love and care. Their memories involved significant people and landmarks. As young people, they were fully integrated members of the community who used every public resource available to them: they shopped at the local stores, rode public transit, and used local parks and libraries. They recognized all the public goods of the neighborhood and their constant use of them underscored these goods as the cultural wealth and assets of their neighborhood.

When I asked her to share the most joyful memories of growing up in Historic Anza

Corridor, Marisol took a sip from her cucumber agua fresca beverage and then revealed an even brighter smile. Her monarch butterfly earrings danced gently as her voice got higher. Invigorated by the power of lovely memories, she revealed the Historic Anza Corridor was her playground. If she was not delighting in a new Mexican food dish at a friend's house, she was riding her bicycle through the local university campus. A self-proclaimed "rebel scholar", she and her friends would skip school during the dormant period between the end of advanced placement testing and the end of the school year to simply exist. At the shopping center for local university students, her friends would buy treats from the mini mart her aunt and uncle worked at as she hid from their sight outside the shop. She hungered for the world and satiated that hunger with daily wonder, curiosity, and exploration of every corner of her neighborhood.

This is not to say that Marisol and the other Historic Anza Corridor teachers were naive to the fact that their neighborhood faced serious social problems. On the contrary, they saw and experienced the neighborhood's needs, and still felt love for it. The neighborhood consisted of human beings who were dear to them - people with whom they co-created their shared lived experience (Raymond et al., 2010).

The teachers designed their lives with love and joy, even though social problems were pervasive in the community. Marisol and her family had moved five times by the time she was in 3rd grade in search of more affordable housing. Other teachers had lost parents, friends, or relatives to the carceral system and deportation. Some had lost material property to theft and robberies. However, their early interactions with the people and places of the neighborhood had shattered the myopic lens promulgated by American media of a cesspool of distress. Where non-residents might have only seen violence and degradation, teachers of Historic Anza Corridor saw all the wonders of life itself. They saw friends, neighbors, aunts and uncles, cousins, grandparents, and parents with complex personalities collectively shaping an even more complex world. They remembered themselves at ska and punk shows in backyards, family

baseball days at the local field, and summers by the kitty pool. Where outsiders saw the world in black and white, they saw it in technicolor. They did not see flaws, but instead saw needs. They saw material disparity because they saw the residents as human beings first. When asked to use one word or phrase to describe Historic Anza Corridor, Patricia used the word, “people”. She elaborated and explained:

> [Historic Anza Corridor] is not a geographical cutout. It’s a community. When I think of Historic Anza Corridor, I don’t think of specific time periods, or landmarks, I think of people. People are there. People have lived there. People have come through. That’s what makes a place. It is who is there.

Human beings with complex lives reside in the neighborhood many outsiders begrudge as deficient or lacking. The residents cannot be defined in oversimplified terms. They are whole people. Teachers from Historic Anza Corridor see their complete humanity and advocate for it in their classrooms and outside of it.

Students Represent Teachers’ Early Negative Sentiments Towards Their Neighborhood

Many people of the Historic Anza Corridor have developed and internalized negative conceptions of the neighborhood they live in. The teachers in this study pointed at condemnatory comments such as “this place is ghetto”. As a teacher and resident of the Historic Anza Corridor, I too have heard those comments from students, friends, and neighbors. The teachers in this story attributed an Anza Corridor resident’s disdain for the neighborhood to the lack of sociopolitical consciousness. One of the teachers in this study illustrated this phenomenon as he recounted his own limited perceptions of his neighborhood and his struggle to cherish it throughout his K-12 school years. While most teachers deliberately asserted they developed love for their neighborhood at an early age, Sebastian explained he disliked his neighborhood growing up. He lowered his head and pushed up his tilting glasses as he exclaimed:

> I mean, I definitely did see that there was this whole part where I just didn't care, didn't

> like my community- typical person from Anza Corridor. I think that we just wanted to get out and stuff because of all that we see.

Sebastian highlights the negative perceptions residents of the Historic Anza Corridor have of their own community as they see the inadequate material conditions. Sebastian speaks to the misplaced resentment of many residents. Rather than understand the source of the observable indicators of material scarcity, they turn their anger and frustration towards the neighborhood itself.

> And I think that me leaving my community really made me have this experience that this is how communities could look and how they have looked, but mine doesn't look like this. A lot of times this does give you that hatred of my community, of myself and not liking myself because I know I belong to this community.

Sebastian realized that not all young Historic Anza Corridor residents are able to conceptualize its flaws as “needs” and thus see its goodness. They realized it takes a thoughtful teacher -who has identified, explored, and rationalized those human emotions- to shift their animosity into productive engagement in their community. Research has found that many educators of color also need to engage in vulnerability collectively and identify and reject any internalized self-loathing and subscriptions to Eurocentric views (Khorshid et. al, 2022). Sebastian recounts his own repudiation of the neighborhood as an adolescent. I also recall my own students in Historic Anza Corridor making hostile remarks about the area, disassociating from other members of the community, avoidance of any local public goods and services, transportation by private vehicle only, and expressed and not expressed desire to leave the neighborhood. Sebastian is a caring teacher that aims to show students to love themselves and their origins. He sees his students with love and compassion. When asked why he loved his neighborhood he said:

> Every time that I see my classes, I see all the students that are so beautiful, that have so much knowledge. Just thinking about community cultural wealth, there's so many things that we don't know about our own community and take for granted, but we have so much

within each one of our students. They know how to do this or that.

For Sebastian, the students of the Anza Corridor are the invaluable wealth of the neighborhood. While generations of economic and political disinvestment are visible on every corner of the neighborhood, the people of the Anza Corridor are the talented and gifted who make the beauty of the place. The following portraiture reflects Sebastian's journey towards self-love, love for his community, love for his students, and the sociopolitical consciousness that propelled it.

Sebastian's Journey Towards Love for the Neighborhood

The high ceilings and broad walkways of Pleasant Hill High School create the illusion visitors are walking through a grand cathedral. Its magnitude is as confusing as it is grand. Feeling unsure about my route to Sebastian's class, I ask the first student I encounter if room 333 is the direction I am heading. With their reassuring directions, I continue my path. I knock on the door as lightly and firmly as I can to avoid disrupting the class in session, and a twelve-year-old boy in a black hoodie opens the door. As I step in I see Sebastian sitting at a desk that directly faces about twenty students sitting in a double horseshoe seat arrangement. He glances from the notes he is projecting onto the white board and says, "Welcome, you can sit at this desk up here."

The desk he points at sits adjacent to the desk he's sitting at. From this vantage point I have a full view of every corner of the classroom. On this desk sit several miscellaneous items: a PC computer, a book titled, "Historic Anza Corridor" with images of the neighborhood throughout the years, and Costco brand Granola bars. Behind this desk stands a rack of used clothing: plaid shirts, tee shirts, jeans, and dresses. While at this point of our meeting, he has not outwardly confirmed it, Sebastian is a generous teacher who uses his personal funds to purchase snacks for his students and resourcefully asks his friends to provide him with used

clothing to pass down to the students who need them.

His entire classroom is filled with artifacts that indicate his love for the neighborhood and his belief that students can transform it. On one side of the classroom sit three recreated historical photos of former students with today's students. On the left corner, a paper clip secures a 4 by 6 black and white photo of white students on the bleachers, others on the quad, and others on the PE field. The poster-sized photo is of today's students: a balanced group of Black and Latinx students standing on the same spots the white students were photographed years ago. The juxtaposition of the two student populations highlights the demographic changes of the neighborhood. It also highlights the shared humanity of the students. All students, despite their racial group, show promise and potential. Their pearly eyes and gentle smiles suggest they look at the future with hope and faith. As the photo project shows the similarities of the students, it makes me wonder why, despite our shared humanity, people of color disproportionately experience injustice in the neighborhoods of American society.

On the other side of the classroom several 3-panel display boards lean against the wall. As I sort through them, I see Youth Participatory Action Research[16] projects that advocate for more quality produce in urban food deserts, more extracurricular courses for intellectual stimulation, and less policing on campus. These artifacts signal that students have been introduced to sociopolitical issues and have begun to develop the race and class consciousness that most of the Historic Anza Corridor teachers in this study did not develop until they were in college. They are equipped with awareness of social injustices and knowledge of its origins. They are trusted to pose and implement ideas to resolve social problems. They are entrusted with leading community efforts for transformative change.

bell hooks claims love represents an unwavering commitment to helping yourself and

[16] Youth Participatory Action Research allows students to engage in the research process to propose and execute solutions to the social issues that impact their communities.

helping your beloved heal. Under this philosophy, Sebastian is committed to helping his students heal through knowledge and learning. Surrounded by artifacts that aim to teach students how to love their neighborhood, Sebastian reviews *The Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program*. He asks students to build connections between the Party's tenets and the environmental hazards induced by the freeways surrounding their neighborhood. He projects a Google maps image of the neighborhood surrounded by intersecting freeways. A student explains that the poor air quality causes illnesses and that every human being deserves to live a quality life. Already students begin to show a spirit of love and respect for their neighborhood. Sebastian recounts the more nuanced perspective his students have developed. More than halfway towards the course, murals, restaurants, and parks begin to stand out as cultural assets to them. They feel pride and satisfaction when they learn that Sebastian uses the local auto mechanic shop or buys food from his student's parents. His students recognize him as someone who loves Historic Anza Corridor, and because they respect him, they also begin to recognize themselves as people who love Historic Anza Corridor.

On the day of our platíca, we start the conversation with an artifact that reminds him of a joyful memory of Historic Anza Corridor. He pulls out a small nine by ten painting of a turtle wearing a white t-shirt with the words, "I love Historic Anza Corridor," airbrushed on it. He explains one of his students made several paintings to sell and reserved that one for him because she already knew that was the painting he would want because, "You love Historic Anza Corridor". It is clear his students are aptly aware of his profound love for the neighborhood. When I asked him why he chose to bring that painting he explained that he was like the turtle depicted in the painting. He had a tough exterior of perseverance, but also made slow but steady progress towards his chosen career. With the same moderate but certain pace of the turtle, he gradually determined his love for the neighborhood. Students today will benefit from his recognition of his younger, more vulnerable self.

Sebastian revealed he saw the discontent of his younger self revealed in many of his students. As an adolescent he “didn’t like [his] neighborhood”. He didn’t like it for all the things “we see”. He was referring to the material indicators of disinvestment - the dilapidated buildings, barren lots, and excessive litter and graffiti. He explained that these physical representations of material need, “A lot of times give us that hatred of our community, of myself as well, not liking myself because I know I belong to this community.” Today, Sebastian’s entire social studies curriculum aims to help students uncover a history of the neighborhood’s activism, resilience and tenacity, its spirit of community, and our shared responsibility to transform it as we see necessary.

Over Zoom, he explains he wants students to recognize the cultural wealth of their neighborhood. He turns his gaze downward, lifts his tilting dark frames, and proceeds to tell me he begrudged his neighborhood in his middle and high school years. “I just didn’t care. I didn’t like my community,” he shared. He thought that attending a school in a different neighborhood would placate some of those frustrations, but instead his new school magnified feelings of inadequacy when he did not feel encouraged to go to college like his other peers. While he begrudged his neighborhood, his sister led a wholesome life on those same streets. His sister chose to attend the neighborhood high school where she made friends, was an active member of her school community, and always welcomed her family to school events with pride and enthusiasm. He always wondered why she had a positive experience, and he didn’t. His sister’s love for Historic Anza Corridor, his college courses on Chicano-Latino studies, and the privilege of retrospection, later helped him develop an appreciation for his neighborhood. His perspectives of the neighborhood have shifted so radically that he purchased a home in Historic Anza Corridor, shops in Historic Anza Corridor, and teaches students to appreciate and uplift their Historic Anza Corridor neighborhood. During my visit he asks students to name the cultural assets of the neighborhood and five hands wave in the air. He smiles proud and excited. His

work in the classroom has already begun to shift mindsets amongst his students. They resemble his youthful angst less and less each day and instead begin to build the love for the neighborhood his sister always had. It is a love that stems from self-knowledge, background knowledge, and a will to change the neighborhood for the prosperity of everyone who lives in it.

Sociopolitical Consciousness Cultivates Love for the Neighborhood

Sebastian's story demonstrates that a love and appreciation for the neighborhood can be cultivated and nurtured. While for some residents, love for the neighborhood might grow organically, for many critical reflections through a social, racial, and economic lens is pivotal to develop a robust understanding of the forces behind the state of the neighborhood. Sebastian understands the challenges of his community after learning about social justice movements and its organizers and determining how these fits into his neighborhood's circumstances. Sebastian teaches from a heightened awareness of the social conditions that limit the choices of his fellow residents. He has a tenacious desire to cultivate a love for the neighborhood amongst his students and empower them to build the knowledge to make the changes the neighborhood needs. In some ways, Sebastian is raising the next generation of informed neighborhood leaders - who like Sebastian - will be the future teachers, activists, community organizers, and civically engaged residents who will shape their neighborhood with love, empathy, and compassion.

Historic Anza Corridor Teachers Need Time to Help Students Thrive

Historic Anza Corridor teachers need time to grow into effective practitioners without sacrificing their own mental, emotional, or physical health. For any practitioner, the myriads of professional demands is enough to lead to job exhaustion and burnout. For practitioners from Historic Anza Corridor, guided by an unwavering moral and political commitment to their students, these same professional demands feel consequential and momentous. An effective lesson plan is carefully crafted to address the academic needs of the students within the

teacher's ample and nuanced understanding of the social and political constructs that govern Historic Anza Corridor. Their historical knowledge of the people, place, and time in which they teach is at the genesis of each lesson plan.

While their heightened awareness of the social and political context of teaching for Historic Anza Corridor generates a devoted teacher pool, the data compiled during my *pláticas* with the teachers of Historic Anza Corridor suggested the personal and emotional cost for these teachers is heavy. Historic Anza Corridor teachers are providing emotional labor that many other key figures on the school site are not providing to this degree or extent. Like most people across the globe in positions of care and service where entire societies benefit from their labor, the need for systems of support is practically non-existent. Teachers should not be expected to go above and beyond for the success of their students. The extremities of their professional and emotional labor must be recognized, and systems of support must be established for their longevity in a strenuous and demanding work field. Teachers are not superheroes; they are human.

Traditional teacher training programs and student teaching offer limited opportunities for growth. Since most teacher growth happens in the real-time of the classroom, robust systems of support are pivotal for teacher and student success. While some teachers have developed pragmatic systems to achieve the tasks of the job - lesson planning, unit development, grading, and reflection - most have had to sacrifice personal time to survive in their demanding positions. The assortment of professional, personal, and emotional demands stifle any teacher's professional progress, trigger their early exit from the profession, and contribute to an increasing loss of invaluable experienced teacher professionals for the students who could benefit the most from them, and the novice teachers who could benefit from seasoned teacher mentors and coaches.

The teachers of today and tomorrow need ample time to grow as practitioners. They

need independent work time to process and implement new learnings and the administrators' time through authentic engagement and involvement in classrooms and extracurricular spaces.

Teachers Need Ample Time to Process and Implement New Learnings

The amount of time education leaders offered to process and implement new learnings from an assortment of mandated academic, social, and political training sessions was minimal or nonexistent. While the importance of many of these mandated training sessions is unquestionable - weekly professional development, Title IX, Mandated Reporting, Racial Bias, Mastery Based Learning and Grading, Levels of Questioning, Higher Order Thinking - Teachers need time to review the content and determine how to apply it in their practice. Teachers explained there was either an expectation from superiors to implement new learning immediately, or the number of new teaching strategies or materials was too overwhelming to sort through. Emiliano described the information shared during professional development meetings as overwhelming. Emiliano stated they, "have never had the time to look through everything…they give you a bunch to look at. You're never processing that."

The participants in this study deemed all the training sessions untimely - they came too early, too late, and hardly at the right time. An English Language Development teacher for emerging multilingual students, Patricia describes her apprehension at the sudden changes to the ELD curriculum as mandated by education leaders.

> The district changed its English language learner program. So instead of having ELD1 ELD2 and so forth, [we now have a class for] international newcomer [students]. The [other students] are going to be [assigned ELD courses] by grade level. The curriculum has not been looked at. They're saying we are switching from the EDGE [curriculum], which I thought was okay, to Perspectives ELD. I looked at it, took notes, and was very diligent about [looking at] what they were providing already. And they said, we are going to provide some training over the summer and through the year. To a new teacher [the administration was] like 'Hey teach ELD, and she was like okay, I really love the kids, and it's like, okay, next year it's going to be totally different, from this year your first year. I am specifically thinking about one new teacher who was specifically teaching ELD, who tried her best, but next year, guess what, totally different [curriculum], and they won't maybe train you until, summer, and if the dates align and the universe

> is with you maybe you'll get some stuff there where you can start already getting familiar with it. If the universe is not, then sometime in the fall, when you have already technically started teaching, those courses. So, that's just one example of how difficult it is for someone to want to stay in teaching in general but then you know the specific high needs program. But I've also seen more [online mandatory training] that [teachers] must get through, every year. Even those little things take time. And some of them are very important and valuable, but then the time. I always think, for a field trip, ughh, do I have the energy? And it's not even going to the field trip, it's getting it approved, is there the money, did I clear everybody through the nurse. And then I am like, but I am teaching every day. In my conference period I also must plan, grade, support, you know, somebody had something happen, or you have to cover a class. Everything is just stacking up.

The teacher describes the overwhelming workload of the average teacher in Historic Anza Corridor. It includes a myriad of expectations that range from the elemental (general practice) to the supplemental (coordinating a field trip). The sudden and frequent changes and adjustments mandated by top District officials hinder teachers from developing and honing their curriculum and practice. Just when they begin to build mastery of their practice or curriculum, they are disrupted with significant changes in their work. The sudden interruptions to their pedagogical momentum can be stifling, frustrating, and discouraging. As these sudden changes disrupt the continuity of the teacher's learning. The changes put them in a state of shock and chronic survival mode. Changes are not gradually made, but in short notice.

When education leaders make changes without substantially consulting or engaging with the school community who will be affected by said changes, the health and success of that entire community is threatened. Each individual member of the school community invested physical, intellectual, and emotional energy towards the success of the school community. Sudden shifts create disarray and chaos, school communities are forced to sort through and organize. Sudden changes can stifle or curtail the success of the community, but they also stifle and curtail the morale and endurance of newer and older teachers alike. When Teresa mentioned her need for more time to complete her professional tasks, she captured a teacher's increasing frustration at the lack of time to complete their work tasks successfully. At her

elementary school, education leaders required teachers to partake in professional development sessions that included extensive presentations where they could have been completing their immediate job duties and obligations. When asked what she thought teachers needed to stay in the profession she said:

> I think just giving us time, because often when we have a planning period, it's like, okay, we have an hour and a half of planning period, but half the time someone is talking about how we should be planning. Okay, this is not a planning period. This is your talking period. And I understand that we need to get through X, Y, and Z, but every planning period seems like half the period is taken by you. And then if you didn't finish it, by the way, it's due on Friday. Okay, cool. So now I have more work. Every meeting is more work. It's taking away from the time where you could be doing something else. Or it's just more testing. This week it's more testing, more progress, monitoring, more new strategies, new strategies. Try this but try this. But also, we're going to check in on you, see how you're doing it. Do you have that in your lesson plan? What are the standards like? Oh my God. And again, I see why [it is important], but also, oh my God, didn't we just have a meeting last week? Were you asking for more work? There are not enough hours in the day.

As she listed an exhausting number of relentless expectations, I felt her exhaustion, fatigue, and exasperation. It became clear that teachers need the independent time to determine how to best service their students. Teachers need time to process the material presented in professional development meetings, independent work time, and time to collaborate with colleagues. Just like our students, they need think-time, opportunities for practice, and reflection cycles. The time to process new learnings makes the work digestible and feasible. A more carefully phased scope and sequence for teacher development can allow for growth. A popular saying amongst educators says, "depth before breath". Perhaps this needs to be a phrase we apply to our teachers as well as our students.

Teacher's Need the Education Leaders' Time Through Authentic Engagement with Teachers and Students

While teachers want more time to work autonomously, this does not mean they do not value collaboration between education leaders and teachers. On the contrary, teachers want the

collaboration to be meaningful and pertinent, rather than the ritualistic and monotonous sessions formal evaluations and accountability measures often yield.

All teachers expressed a desire for education leaders to spend meaningful time in and out of their classrooms learning from considerable observations, shadowing, and conversation. The teachers want the interactions to be meaningful and valuable. They hope that genuine interaction in and out of classrooms will inform leadership decisions that adhere to the genuine - rather than inferred - needs of teachers and students. They hope genuine engagement in and out of classrooms will help education leaders diagnose and address school issues in real time and work towards better systems of operation the entire school community may benefit from. The teachers hope for education leaders that are attuned to the needs of the students and teachers and know when to step up and step down in their roles as education leaders.

Angelique explained she left her school site in Historic Anza Corridor because she was "tired of fighting" when the presence of education leaders was not interwoven into the several components of a school. Throughout her career, no one recognized the needs of teachers and students, and she had to repeatedly prompt administrators to listen or experience directives that did not meet the school community's needs. For instance, during her tenure she led a leadership class with extra work hours and no compensation. When she gave up the role, she advocated for the position to come with a stipend for future colleagues. When her students worked tirelessly as translators, marketing agents, and ushers she advocated that they be recognized for their leadership in some small but thoughtful way. While students were honored with a pizza party, such an event only took place after persistent advocacy. Angelique felt like [her and her students] had to "fight to be heard". She had to ask several times for this small gesture of appreciation to happen.

On another occasion, when an uninvolved administration mandated sudden changes to the leadership team's plans for the graduation ceremony and activities, guided by their teacher,

the students stood outside the administrative offices past lunchtime to voice their concerns. Angelique said:

> [The students] had their list of concerns. And so, the principal came out and talked to them. And things did change for that portion, but every time we had to fight to be heard. That gets exhausting for the students and for the teachers and for the staff and for everyone involved. So, it got really tiring because after a certain point, it just felt like we always had to fight to be heard instead of feeling like we were heard and then changes were made. It felt like [our needs and demands were] just falling on deaf ears.

Had administrators engaged with teachers and students more significantly, the need for sudden changes might not have become an issue. Perhaps constant and open communication would have mitigated those last-minute changes. However, the administration's presence was hardly palpable. This last-minute, barely-there, administrative approach ushered friction between students, teachers, and the administration that created distress for all the parties involved. When asked why she thought administrators did not take the feedback and engage with the school community in meaningful and consistent ways, Angelique said:

> I feel like I don't have an answer. I really did not understand. And I think that's part of the reason I exited [the school site in Historic Anza Corridor]. I didn't understand how, they didn't see that this was breaking the kid's spirit or adding unnecessary stress to the teacher's load. And part of my main reason is I was like, maybe they just forgot what it's like to be a teacher. So, they have all these other loads of issues that maybe they're dealing with that we don't know about, as admin or leaders, and that takes up their time. But I always felt like if you don't address your teachers, your students, then I feel like everything's just going to crumble down. But yeah, my main thing, maybe I just feel like they forgot what it is to be a teacher, or they don't think these issues are important because they're in a different position now.

Despite their own needs, Angelique and her colleagues do empathize with administrators and the demands they face from "higher ups". All the teachers in this study understood that administrators were inundated by compliance demands and requests from their own superiors. They understood that - like teachers- administrators were stretched thin and at capacity. However, the data shows that the current accountability systems - school safety,

teacher and staff evaluation, test scores to name a few - hinder school leaders from spending meaningful and significant time engaging with the school community. School leaders do not have the time they need to immerse themselves in the school community. Historic Anza Corridor teachers yearn for more authentic, meaningful, and significant involvement from their administrators. Administrator presence would build awareness of the existing strengths and needs within the school, troubleshoot solutions, and ultimately build synergy amongst all members of the school community: teachers, students, families, and the district.

The need for meaningful involvement from school leaders was most palpable on the day I shadowed Sebastian's classroom. While Sebastian asked his students to make comparisons between one of the Black Panther Party's 10 Point Program and issues in the neighborhood, a petite woman in a lavender shirt and black pants, opened the door, poked her head into the classroom, shut it, and proceeded with her day. At that moment I wondered how that interaction might have been different had she sat with a group of students, guided them to complete the assignment with prompting questions, and listened and learned from their perspectives. During our *plática*, I learned from Sebastian that the woman was a special official appointed by the district with a permanent office at the school site. Sebastian explained she spent most of her work time in "the dungeon as we call it" rather than supporting teachers.

The need for school leaders - at an administrative and district level- to engage with the school community crystalized when Sebastian shared that out of the cohort of ten new teachers he started working with, only four remained. His colleagues, all "amazing teachers," cited feeling "unsupported" by their administration. More teachers contemplate leaving every year because the job is not manageable or sustainable. For instance, Sebastian teaches more than three different preps (or courses) and every year the three different preps change, which disrupts his own growth and development in teaching the subjects. At the start of this year, he contemplated no longer coaching soccer to replenish his energies but decided to keep the task when no one

else took on it. Sebastian's immeasurable love for their students is what infuses him with the mental, physical, and emotional energy to tenaciously remain in a challenging position as teacher at this moment and place in time.

When asked about the role of school leaders in building systems of support for teachers, Emiliano noted the importance of school leaders developing a thorough understanding of the needs of the teachers they serve. Emiliano stated the following:

> Show up to support and be strategic in doing that or move out of the way and let us do it. And that's another thing where they need to admit, where do I have my folks in my campus that have expertise in students' skill sets? I think I'm one of those people on my campus. Instead of bringing in the district person who comes in to plan with us, we have these sessions: we're split between 9th and 10th grade, and I have 11th and 12th. Instead of doing that, get me to go in there and help them plan and figure their stuff out because I haven't seen the goal that they could have had. If you would just trust your teachers to be in the same space together and to do things right. Why bring an expert that keeps it all superficial? So that's the thing. I think we have a bunch of experts that aren't experts, A bunch of people who just left the classroom really.

Teachers need school leaders to have a heightened understanding of their professional needs. These needs can be met when the school leaders have an intimate understanding of the strengths and areas of need of their teachers. They must know how to recognize the talent at their school site, which teacher leaders to appoint coaching or mentorship roles or duties, determine whether teachers need to participate in small professional learning communities or if an expert from the district offices is required. This level of attunement to the traits of the teacher staff is possible through meaningful engagement and interaction with teachers. There are no one-size fits all approaches to good leadership. Good leaders must see, hear, and feel the needs of their teachers and then do the best to funnel resources "strategically".

Teachers believe that if administrators spent more time in and out of classrooms, they would have an accurate pulse on the circumstances teachers and students face, and they would be able to practice a more authentic leadership. Their time, used with precision and purpose, would offer the perspective necessary to lead with more genuine intention. School leaders

would be able to “build trust” with teachers and create a “real open community” for teachers. This suggests education leaders in district offices, state offices, and federal offices might need to rethink how they administer accountability measures. While accountability measures can keep a school operating at its optimal capacity, the current format is not providing teachers with what they need: school leaders who are fully present and ready to act in ways that yield teachers’ success on the job.

The Lack of Time Leads to Many Perils

Teachers have determined that since no one takes care of them, they must learn to take care of themselves. Teresa stated she will work her contractual hours and then go home. While she demonstrates all the knowledge, compassion, and dedication of the Historic Anza Corridor teachers who participated in this study, she asserts that her job is not her life. She has beloved dogs to come home to, a mother and sister to spend time with, and friends to keep up with. And while her classroom community is always on her mind when she builds culturally relevant lessons and brings supplemental materials from her travels or excursions, she also has a community at home to nurture and cultivate. Teresa is a full human and her commitments outside of the classroom are just as important as her commitment to the students. Marisol has also learned how to set healthy boundaries. On the day of our plática she stated that as she got ready to leave for our meeting, a colleague asked her to make the flier to announce an open house. She confidently said, “No. I am not doing that. I am leaving.” Tired of fighting for her students’ needs, Angelique left her beloved school site in search for a place that did not agitate her so personally. All the teachers realized that no one was going to take care of them and so they learned to take care of themselves. The commitment of these teachers for their students is so deep and immense that their choices serve as a way to preserve their mental, physical, and emotional health for both themselves and their students.

Besides learning to set boundaries, when to say no, and when to leave an

uncomfortable situation, teachers have counted on their resourcefulness for their success in the classroom. All the teachers in this study showed they are resourceful professionals who make do with the little that they have. When mentors or coaches are ineffective or unavailable, they will conduct their own separate research to refine a lesson plan or unit of study, read extra books, or spend extra hours refining lessons independently. When the administration fails to build a sustainable workload for novice teachers and assigns them four different courses to teach to the most rambunctious grade level, they volunteer to take on those challenges to allow for their colleague's professional development. When the administration does not offer incentives for teachers to lead extracurricular activities, they volunteer to coach soccer, coach parents, or lead events for the school community. Some of the teachers overtly demand support as they add yet another task to their already heavy load. Others find making demands a futile exercise and make the necessary moves to accomplish the task. All rely on their strong characteristics of resourcefulness and tenacity. They always find a way because they believe their students deserve all the resources and experiences available to students in more affluent areas. Teachers leverage their cultural capital: they ask neighbors, acquaintances, family, and friends for help. They use donation sites for teachers like donorschoose.org. Teachers also build their own communities to air their frustrations and continue with their commitment to education. They build communities on campus and when those are not available, they participate in the support communities available on college campuses.

However, the emotional cost of their labor is tremendous. We ask teachers to be superheroes, and we watch them struggle and work tirelessly. We atone for our society's inertia to proactively change the status quo in education with incessant gratitude. We have resolved that teaching is a "calling" as if their professional commitment was induced by some celestial invisible entity, when it is a demanding job that tires the human being physically, emotionally, and sometimes spiritually.

True atonement for our society's inertia would come in the formation of systems of support. Teachers should not be expected to go above and beyond. Teachers need systems to process how to teach. Teachers need systems that allow them to process the emotions they feel. Teachers need systems that will allow them to complete all their miscellaneous teacher tasks within work hours. Teachers should be clearly expected to show improvement in a profession that requires perpetual learning.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Overview

I went into this study thinking I would meet teachers who naturally and logically wanted to give back to their community. I found, more deeply than I expected, that a profound love for humanity - years in the making - propelled their practice. The lifelong caring relationships they cultivated with friends, family, and neighbors urged them to read the world with love and compassion. As they matured cognitively and intellectually, they used these soft skills to steadfastly construct knowledge about themselves, the people in their neighborhood, and the world. As young people they encountered social injustice and faintly recognized it; as they got older, went to college, and learned the language of social justice they learned to call injustices by their names. They humanely juxtaposed their immediate world against the world around them, derived fair findings and conclusions, and proactively engaged in liberatory teaching. Their unyielding commitment to their students is born from a historical and political consciousness that is paired with irrevocable love for the people of their neighborhood. Love is the primordial force that fires and drives every action they take. Sociopolitical knowledge is what fuels that powerful love.

The Grow Your Own Teachers Program

Education initiatives that aim to leverage the cultural wealth in a neighborhood already exist. The Grown Your Own Teachers programs around the country aim to funnel members of the community - coaches, bus drivers, teacher assistants, paraprofessionals, and church pastors - into the schools of the neighborhood (Gist et al., 2019). The findings in this research demonstrate that it is not enough to merely have lived and/or grown up in the neighborhood. For teachers to remain in such a challenging professional role, it is essential that these members of

the community undergo a sociopolitical awakening that drives the critical reflection on their neighborhood, American society, and the world at large.

Having grown up and/or lived in a neighborhood does offer insight into the cultural aspects of the neighborhood itself. Students of color do have cultural capital in the form of "aspirational, familial, linguistic, social, navigational, and resistant" traits that sustain and nourish entire communities (Yosso, 2005). However, to truly dismantle and assess the present socio-political conditions low-income communities are beholden to, awareness of the forces that drive the socio-political conditions is pivotal. The teachers in this study were exposed to more financially prosperous neighborhoods at an early age that made them ponder, wonder, and question the inequities they witnessed daily. Their learning was furthered through college courses and college texts. Recruiting a teacher from the neighborhood is not enough to guarantee endurance, tenacity, and commitment to the teaching profession and the community teachers serve. A Grow Your Own Teachers Program must include learning experiences that challenge students to critically examine social injustices in their neighborhoods, in American society, and in the world. Teachers in a Grow Your Own Teachers Program already understand life in the neighborhood, but some might need to develop the critical reflection of the material need they witness every day. This critical reflection is the source of the love and compassion teachers in this study feel towards their students.

Opportunities for critical reflection are indispensable in other initiatives aimed to bolster interest in teaching. For instance, programming directed at high school aged students must build socio-political awareness that might strengthen their empathy and commitment for the community they will work with. Already, programs like the Community Teaching Strands (CTS) aim to bridge the separate worlds of white teachers and their students of color when they engage teachers in panel discussions of parents and caregivers (Zeichner et. al, 2016). These panel discussions offer insight into different social, emotional, and academic aspects of the

students. Perhaps it is also necessary to offer panel discussions on the different elements of the community at large as told by teachers from the community who also teach the community. These panel discussions can broaden the perspectives of aspiring teachers about the socio-political history of the neighborhood, the cultural capital of the neighborhood, and the current challenges teachers face. Panels can be the starting point to a more resilient and enduring teacher workforce.

What Teachers Want

With irrevocable love and a robust sociopolitical consciousness, the teachers in this study teach to liberate their students. Their practice embodies the philosophy of Toni Morrison, "If you are free then your job is to free somebody else. This is not a grab-bag candy game." The teachers in this study want their students to be free of the historical socio-political conditions that hinder them from self-actualization and personal fulfillment. The teachers in the study wish for their students to:

1. Be free from debilitating misplaced guilt or shame through class and race consciousness via (varying levels) of abolitionist curriculum.
2. Be free from the trauma of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that hinder their personal growth and success by modeling how to regulate emotions.
3. Be free from limited choices and opportunities through a robust academic skill set that fosters critical thinking in whatever work they do.

The teachers in this study can execute these laborious goals so diligently because they recognize something of themselves in their students. Since they see themselves in their students and their experiences, they can humanize them and serve them in nurturing, caring, and constructive ways.

Goals of this magnitude need support from education leaders. The teachers in this study expressed a need for more time during work to help their students thrive. The teachers in this study wanted education leaders to provide and/or advocate for:

1. More time to independently and collaboratively process and implement new learnings during work hours.
2. More time from administrators through their authentic engagement with the school community for valid observations and big-picture oriented leadership (i.e. in classrooms, in extracurricular activities, in out of classroom responsibilities).
3. More time from the district through authentic engagement with the school community beyond data driven goals (i.e. the social emotional needs of students, teachers, and the adults that support them on campus).

They believed that meaningful engagement between teachers and between teachers and school leaders could result in pertinent leadership actions that could benefit teachers and students. While teachers perceive numerous varying needs in their school community, they all believe that education leaders who are attuned with the characteristics of the school community can result in tactful thinkers, makers, and doers. They believe that deep insight on a school community - the strengths and needs of teachers, students, and staff - is born from dedicated time to observe and understand the unique spectrum of their schools. As education leaders are fully attentive to the elements of their schools, they are better able to support the unique needs of their school community. Rather than assigning new mandates they perceive as beneficial, teachers hope school leaders operate from a deep perception of the actual needs of their school community. The teachers in this study want education leaders who “accept” and “empathize” with the needs of the teachers (Greenleaf, 1970). They want steward leaders who lead to serve the needs of those they lead. They don’t “reject” their expressed concerns and instead aim to ensure the people they lead become “wiser”, “healthier”, “more autonomous”, and experience

less social injustice and social improvement (Greenleaf). The teachers in this study want to be cared for with dignity, humanity, and respect.

Lessons Learned

As I think about the love that fuels the work of the teachers in this study, James Baldwin comes to mind. In describing the fight for social justice, he states, “Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle; love is a war; love is growing up.” The radical love that James Baldwin describes conjures images of battle and struggle to evolve and embrace our full humanity and the humanity of others. Throughout this study, it seemed like the teachers in this study were fighting this “battle” and “war” to liberate their students alone. Their love for their students and their desire to help them grow made these teachers resourceful, proactive, driven, and tenacious, but instead of fighting in unity of thought and action, they seemed alone in their noble pursuit. They had pledged to champion their community - mentally, emotionally, and spiritually - but were alone in their endeavor. No one was celebrating their efforts, acknowledging their needs, or systematically mitigating their needs and addressing their concerns. The teachers in this study, and teachers like them, should feel supported.

They Need More Time

Teachers should have meaningful collaboration time to reflect on the full spectrum of their practice as teachers. They should be allotted time to think about its impact on their mind, body, spirit, and society at large, and they should be allotted time to reflect on its impact as a community of educators who share the purpose of uplifting students and thus the community. My recommendation is that teachers receive two preparation periods to engage in their work. Most teachers complete numerous tasks during one preparation period, while others do not have a preparation period at all. A truly revolutionary approach to support the tireless efforts of our teachers would be a school day where they are not required to teach, but instead can reflect on their practices, reconfigure where necessary, collaborate with colleagues, plan lessons, and

review student work. An even more revolutionary approach to support teacher efforts would include teachers teaching for half a day and using the other half of the day to plan lessons, reflect on lessons taught, and reconfigure their professional approach where needed.

During extra preparation periods teachers can lead initiatives that integrate the school to the community, instead of investing long hours after work in exchange for a small stipend. They might have the time to organize a family day where parents, families, students, and teachers build and strengthen relationships as they engage in field games, workshops, and team building exercises as collaborators. Or they may organize a school-wide or department-wide student showcase event where student work is displayed, discussed, and celebrated. Or perhaps, as I have in my current position, they will have the time and energy to develop a parent and caregiver book club where members explore important themes, who they are, and their place in the world. With ample work time and fair compensation, teachers can become integrated into the social fabric of the neighborhoods that they work in without experiencing physical, mental, and emotional fatigue. Education leaders can prevent the early exit of professionals who trained arduously and passionately for a career where they are desperately needed.

Servant Leadership

The transformation of teachers into one robust community, requires servant leadership. They need empathetic leaders that uplift everyone's voices, listen to concerns, and device systems that support their wellbeing. With the myriads of obligations teachers must adhere to, they should not be expected to build their own communities alone. There should be caring coaches, or teacher leads who spearhead the development of that supportive space. Teachers also need champions to care about them so much, they do for them what they do for their students. The radical love teachers demonstrate should be met with radical love from their education leaders. Administrators, districts, and policymakers at the state and national level should love teachers like teachers love their students and provide them with the resources they

need to succeed. The American education system has failed to recognize the humanity in our teachers. Instead, it views teachers as superheroes to meet and exceed colossal expectations. American society needs their love in our classrooms and so must respond with love and care.

Implications

When I started this study, I was concerned with the historically high teacher turnover rates in the Historic Anza Corridor area. I noticed that teachers from the neighborhood persisted despite numerous challenges in teaching. I wanted to learn from and replicate their good work at other similar schools. What I have come to learn is that these teachers are successful because they devote their mind, body, and spirit into their work. While we can all mimic the stamina, dedication, and commitment of these teachers, it does not mean we will or should. Like thousands of teachers across the nation, Angelique left her position at a Historic Anza Corridor school feeling overwhelmed, overburdened, and overexerted from work. Ernesto left his teaching position for an out of classroom role hoping he would have more opportunities to address issues that were impeding the wellbeing of both students and teachers. While their departures from their respective schools in the Anza Corridor were understandable, they presented a loss for the many students who would have benefited from their contextualized practice. From my study I have learned that thoughtful systems of support can nurture the growth, wellbeing, and sustainability of teachers. I have also learned that love means an irrevocable desire to support the healing of the beloved - as daunting as the word love might seem (hooks, 1999).

Support Groups

While all teachers will need systems of support that range from professional to personal, teachers from neighborhoods outside of Historic Anza Corridor will need help in building a robust sociopolitical context. To truly understand the implications of teaching in Historic Anza Corridor, these teachers will need to build the background information teachers from the

community built over time. These teachers will need to read, analyze, and discuss how the history of redlining, segregation, police brutality, racial profiling, neoliberalism, imperialism, colonialism, and unprocessed trauma can lead to challenges in the classrooms that reflect the neighborhood. These must be analyzed through critical reflection: independent journaling, dialogue, and discussions of the approach.

They might also need to invest meaningful time in the community. While student-led and colleague-led community walks are a popular approach education leaders adopt in underserved schools, these are superficial glimpses into the neighborhood (Safir, 2017). While these brief walks include brief introductions to local leaders, community organizers, and families, to truly gain a deep level of understanding of the community, educators must develop a deeper understanding of the culture of the people that comprise the neighborhood. This requires continuous engagement with the neighborhood to truly understand the "unconscious rules" of deep culture (Fatlu and Rodgers, 1984). This may include the group's rules around ideas such as patterns of decision making, preference for competition or cooperation, and even concept of the self (Fatlu and Rodgers). To serve with empathy and compassion, one must aim to understand the mind and soul of the people we lead.

This critical reflection is crucial for all teachers, including those of color or those from the neighborhood. Many of them might have internalized euro-centrist values and subconsciously inflict and enforce these values unquestionably on their students. They might also need to deconstruct their behaviors, reckon with any existing self-loathing, and thus build nurturing spaces for their students.

Ongoing Support

Teachers will need to not only understand these issues, but they will need support handling these issues throughout their tenure. To support the socioemotional health of teachers, education leaders must build systems of support that build community. This might look like

frequent and routine one-on-one check-ins and group check-ins that gauge at the socioemotional needs of the teacher (in relationship to their teacher responsibilities). Questions to ask can include:

1. What have been the successes you have had this week/month/semester/year?
2. What have been the challenges you have had this week/month/semester/year?
3. Who can support you?
4. How can they support you?
5. What can I do to help?
6. What can you do?
7. Is there anything else you would like to get off your chest?

These check-ins should be done often enough so that trust between the colleagues is gradually developed over time. As more trust develops between colleagues the check-ins will become more authentic. These check-ins should inform the choices of education leaders. During check-ins they might find that teachers need more time to peer-review their lessons or units, craft lessons, complete mandatory training sessions, and read literature on pedagogy. Much like the findings in a research study, the data should have some implications in their practice as leaders. Principals are indeed preoccupied with several responsibilities and tasks. Until they are granted the time to engage with their school community meaningfully, lead teachers, department chairs, instructional coaches, and other professionals in middle management positions should advocate for their teacher colleagues.

Education Leaders Advocating for Neighborhoods and Communities at the State and Federal Level

Every single teacher in this study described social problems that afflicted the community they work for. Education leaders must advocate for policy that ensures students and their families receive the elements of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). Teachers work

with students who are unhoused, work to help make ends meet, and have unhealed trauma. All teachers pointed to poverty as a major source of affliction for their students. Education leaders must work tirelessly to inflict meaningful societal change for students and their families. To this day, much of the transformational changes in education have come from the tireless advocacy of teachers and community organizers. For instance, in Los Angeles, California, the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) negotiated a teachers' contract that upheld the health and wellbeing of students and families that included support for unhoused students, black students, and immigrant students (UTLA, 2024). However, teachers engaging in cyclical struggles for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their students should not become the norm or expectation. Education leaders must adopt the mechanisms of servant leadership. When they do, teachers will no longer have to be superheroes fighting for their students. Instead, they will be free to teach with professional aptitude, empathy, and compassion.

Limitations and Future Research

Just as there are teachers of color from the neighborhood who possess a loving commitment to the neighborhoods they grew up in and teach in, there are teachers from various ethnicities and other neighborhoods who demonstrate a commitment to the communities they work for. It might be beneficial to determine how these teachers developed a dedication to the students and families they serve. An understanding of the conditions that build a devoted teacher might help school leaders support new teachers from communities outside of the neighborhood the schools are situated in. A deeper understanding of these teachers can help us build systems of support that meet the needs of all teachers. For instance, for the teacher who grew up outside of the neighborhood their social emotional needs might stem from vicarious trauma. Conversely, for the teacher who grew up in the neighborhood, their social emotional needs might stem from the remembrance of difficult life experiences. A deeper

understanding of groups of committed teachers with varying demographics can help foster differentiated recruitment and retention strategies.

While this study focuses on teachers from the neighborhood who developed the critical reflection and insight to steadfastly work for the people of their neighborhood as teachers, there are several teachers from the neighborhood who teach in the neighborhood who might not have developed that same critical reflection. These teachers might still harbor thought patterns that stem from neoliberal values - thoughts that value meritocracy, individualism, and a pull-yourself-up-by-your bootstraps mentality. It is worth investigating what fuels their more traditional mindset and what drives their work. Many of these teachers have committed the entirety of their working years to serving their students. Their commitment is undeniable while the approach might be outdated. It might be beneficial to understand them to best support their adaptation of more socially just forms of thinking about teaching and approaching teaching.

Finally, throughout my study I encountered three principals who grew up in Historic Anza Corridor, taught in Historic Anza Corridor, and are now principals in Historic Anza Corridor. It might be of great benefit to explore how they developed devotion to their neighborhood. Well into their 50's, these principals have been working in schools for over 25 years. Their insights into problems in education as students, teachers, and school leaders might offer some viable solutions, if not, refreshing perspectives on how the school community can better serve its students, families, and surrounding neighborhood. I study that captures their motivations for teaching and leading schools in their own neighborhoods might offer some insight to retain and recruit both teachers and principals.

Last Thoughts

Teachers who have a profound insight into the historical and sociopolitical context of the community where they teach also have a nuanced understanding of its beauty and its struggle

for justice. Their social consciousness allows them to teach with love, compassion, and empathy. Since their love is boundless, so is their strenuous efforts at work. Their efforts must be recognized and supported. Our teachers have been caring for our students for years, education leaders must begin to take care of them.

APPENDIX A: Email to Historic Anza Corridor School Principals

Dear INSERT PRINCIPAL'S NAME HERE,

My name is Ana María Tenorio. I am a lifelong resident of the Historic Anza Corridor, Almond Avenue Middle School alumna, teacher, and UCLA doctoral candidate researching teacher recruitment and retention in Historic Anza Corridor.

My research aims to understand why teachers who grew up in and live in the Historic Anza Corridor also choose to teach in the neighborhood. While I am interested in highlighting their stories of success, I am also interested in discussing their professional challenges and delineating feasible solutions.

To achieve this endeavor, I am looking to interview at least 8-10 teachers for 45-60 minutes on their experiences working in the Historic Anza Corridor.

I also plan to shadow 4 of those teachers at their school site for a half day (4 hours) to observe how the teacher's background as integrated members of the Historic Anza Corridor community impact their experiences in the school site.

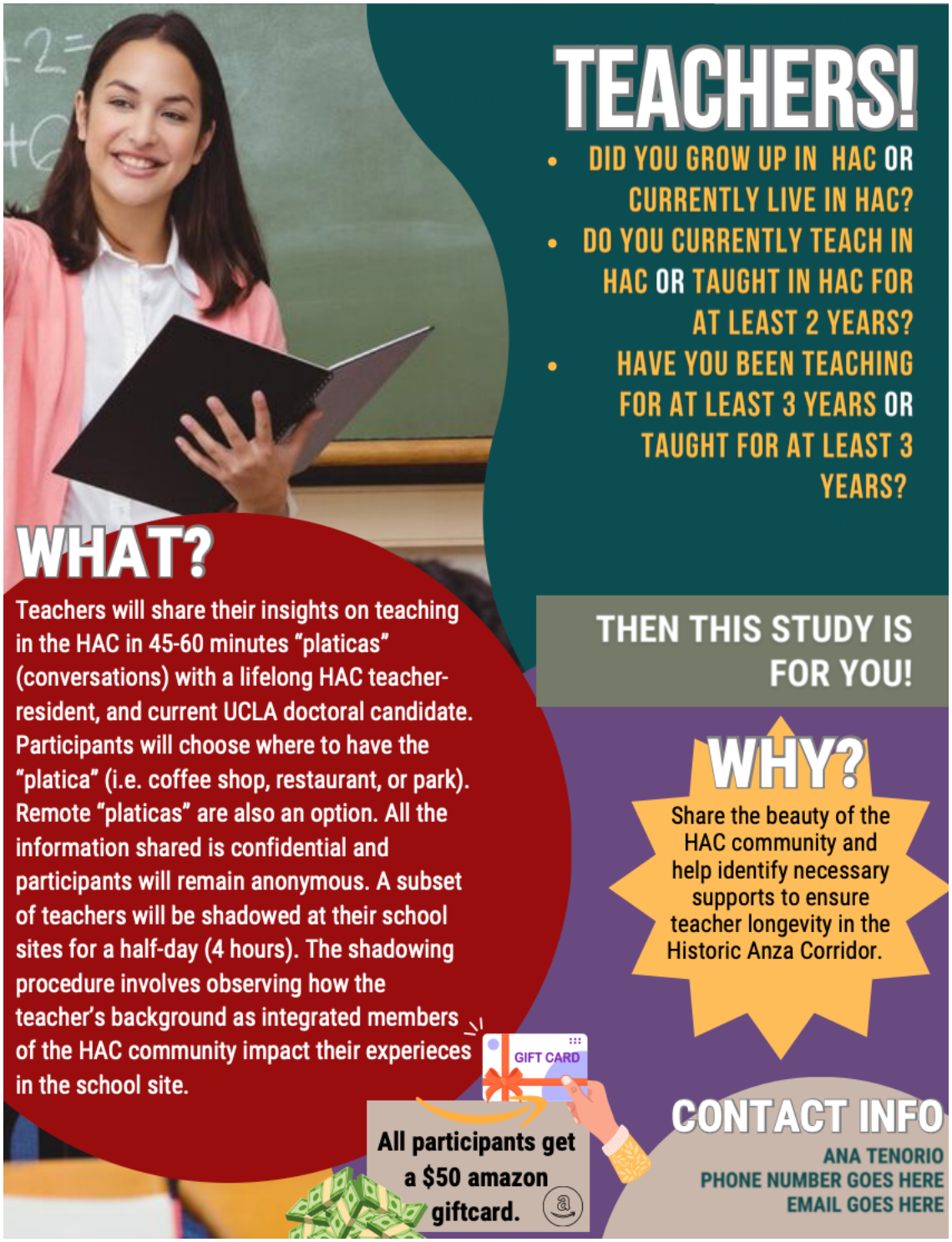
In exchange for their support, I am offering a $50 AMAZON gift card to participating teachers and a professional development workshop to onboard teachers who are new to the Historic Anza Corridor school community.

Please forward the attached information about my research study to your teachers so that those who are interested in participating can initiate contact with me at the email address and phone number provided.

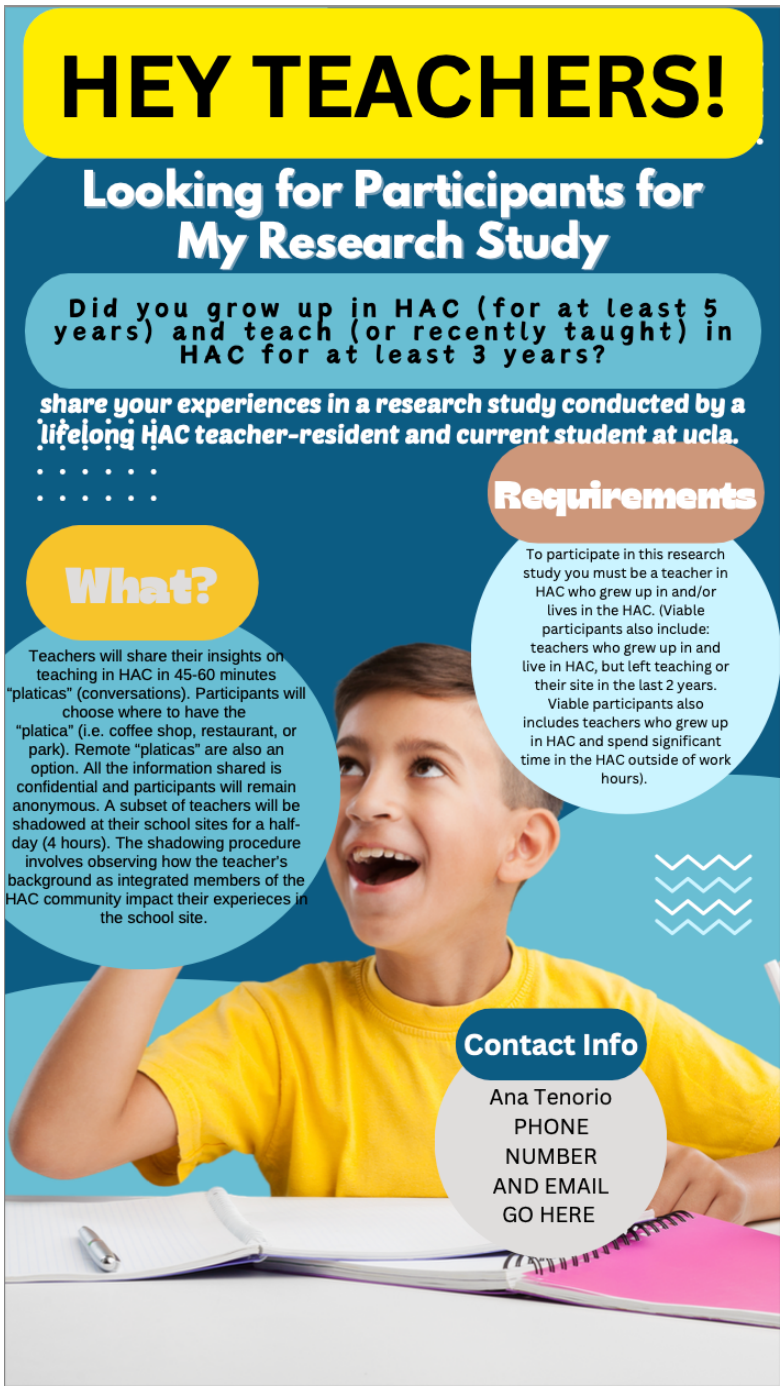
Thank you for your consideration.

All my best,
Ana Maria Tenorio

APPENDIX B: Participant Recruitment Flier



APPENDIX C: Participant Recruitment Instagram Story Post



APPENDIX D: Interview Questions

WARM-UP QUESTIONS:

1. What is your fondest memory of growing up in the Historic Anza Corridor?
2. What is your fondest memory of being a student in the Historic Anza Corridor?
3. What is your fondest memory of teaching in the Historic Anza Corridor?

ORIGIN QUESTIONS:

4. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
5. Why did you choose to teach in the Historic Anza Corridor?
6. How, if at all, did growing up in your community shape your desire to teach in the Historic Anza Corridor?

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER ORIGIN AND PRACTICE:

7. How has teaching in the neighborhood you grew up in and live in inform your education philosophy (or philosophies)?
    a. What is/are your education philosophy (or philosophies)?
    b. How do you honor that education philosophy in your classroom?
    c. What are some concrete examples where your philosophy manifests itself in your classroom?
8. How does being from Historic Anza Corridor inform your classroom practice?
    a. What academic benefits have you noticed for students?
9. How does being from Historic Anza Corridor inform how you build classroom culture?
    a. Can you describe examples where your understanding of the community helped you create an effective learning environment for students?
10. How does being from Historic Anza Corridor inform how you build relationships with students?

IMPACT ON STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY

11. What impact does your status as Historic Anza Corridor native, resident, and teacher have on your students?
12. What impact does your status have on the school community at large?
13. What impact does your status have on the Historic Anza Corridor community at large?
14. What do you hope to achieve for students through your work as a classroom teacher in Historic Anza Corridor?

15. What do you hope to achieve for your community through your work as a classroom teacher in Historic Anza Corridor?

CHALLENGES FOR HISTORIC ANZA CORRIDOR TEACHERS:

16. How does being from Historic Anza Corridor inform how you navigate the school space outside of your classroom? This includes, but is not limited to, professional development, low or high stakes reviews, faculty meetings, informal conversations with colleagues, formal conversations with colleagues, etc.…

17. What, if any, have been some challenges you have experienced in the school setting as a teacher in the Historic Anza Corridor?

    a. These may include challenges working with students, parents, colleagues, existing systems, etc.…

18. What might be some resources available to you as a teacher who lives and grew up in the Historic Anza Corridor? Can you provide concrete examples of resources you have used to support your work?

19. What are some challenges teachers in Historic Anza Corridor face when trying to fulfill their job effectively?

20. What might be some resources teachers in the Historic Anza Corridor need to do their job effectively?

    a. Who do you think can provide those resources?

    b. How would you like to see those systems of support implemented?

    c. Who do you think should ensure those needs are met?

21. In one word or phrase, what does being a teacher who lives and teaches in Historic Anza Corridor mean to you?

22. Is there anything else you would like to get off your chest before we conclude this interview?

23. How would you like to see the findings of this research study disseminated amongst the Historic Anza Corridor educator community?

A. Would you like to personally partake in the creation or dissemination of such materials?

APPENDIX E: Shadowing Guide

- Write the research questions at the top of the paper to be used for notetaking.
- Take free range notes but be guided by the research questions. Ensure that you are looking out for elements that respond to those three questions.
- Write as detailed as possible, use abbreviations when necessary for continuity of writing.
- If the teacher permits: audio record the sounds of the classroom for future reference and precise capturing of the events that unfold.

APPENDIX F: Participant Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Retaining Teachers in Disenfranchised Urban Schools

INTRODUCTION

Ana Tenorio and Dr. Inmaculada Garcia – Sanchez, from the Educational Leadership Program at the University of California, Los Angeles are conducting a research study. This study is being funded by the Educational Leadership Program. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a teacher who grew up in, lives in, and teaches in the Historic Anza Corridor and have valuable insight on the conditions of teachers in this area. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

This research study is meant to determine the successes and challenges teachers in the Historic Anza Corridor experience. The insights from teachers will be used to assure teachers stay in the profession for the long-haul.

HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST AND WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?

Participation will take a total of about 60 minutes. 4 teachers will be asked to be shadowed for 4 hours at their school site.
If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Bring an artifact that represents a positive memory of the Historic Anza Corridor or school.
- Participate in an organic conversation known as a plática to discuss your reasons for teaching in Historic Anza Corridor, your successes, and your needs to stay in your profession.
- Participate in the plática in the location of your choice which may include, but is not limited to: a coffee shop, a restaurant, a park, or your home. The plática may also be held remotely via Zoom.
- Participants will be shadowed in their school sites.
- The pláticas will be audio recorded.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS IF I PARTICIPATE?

Pláticas can induce recollections which are sometimes profound, heartfelt, and can stir an array of emotions. The plática may be paused or stopped at any time. The plática may resume later or not at all. Participants have full control of their participation in this study and may withdraw at any time.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?
You may benefit from the study by contributing to the creation of teacher retention strategies and efforts. The results of the research may contribute to the longevity of teachers in schools in the Historic Anza Corridor. Their built experience over time will enable them to empower students academically, socially, and emotionally. Over time, this academic empowerment can enable the entire community to prosper socioeconomically.

HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME AND MY PARTICIPATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?
The researchers will do their best to make sure that your private information is kept confidential. Information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible, but participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security.

USE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION THAT CAN IDENTIFY YOU:
All the personal information that can be used to identify you such as first and last name, school site names, names of people from the school community or neighborhood, landmarks in the neighborhood, specific streets in the neighborhood, and the neighborhood itself will be given pseudonyms to protect your identity.

HOW INFORMATION ABOUT YOU WILL BE STORED:
All information will be preserved in a password protected laptop. The only individual with access to this laptop is the principal investigator, Ana Tenorio.

PEOPLE AND AGENCIES THAT WILL HAVE ACCESS TO YOUR INFORMATION:
The dissertation chair and committee (Dr.'s Inmaculada Garcia Sanchez, Mark Hansen, and Nicole Mancevice) will have access to the data to support the principal investigator in her analysis of the data. The data will be shared verbally and visually during one-on-one meetings. Sharing of data will be limited to these meetings.

HOW LONG INFORMATION FROM THE STUDY WILL BE KEPT:
Data will be maintained for a 10-month period after the date of the *pláticas* and shadowing. The audio recordings will be used to complete my dissertation and to complete any subsequent materials that might be produced in support of the participants, their schools, and educator community in the Historic Anza Corridor. During this period, I will use the information in this study to complete data collection, data analysis, suggestions for future research, and tangible items that can support the participants in their work such as, but not limited to, professional development session, presentations, panel discussions, or any novel and feasible ideas that result from the *pláticas* with participants.

USE OF DATA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
Your data, including de-identified data may be kept for use in future research.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
The research team:
If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact Ana Tenorio via email at ana.tenorio.rosas@gmail.com or via phone call at 323-684-1482, or Dr. Inmaculada Garcia- Sanchez at igarcias@gseis.ucla.edu.

UCLA OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM (OHRPP):
If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

- You can choose whether you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and remain in the study.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

HOW DO I INDICATE MY AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE?

If you want to participate in this study you should sign and date below.

SIGNATURE OF THE PARTICIPANT

_____
Name of Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

_____ _____
Name of Person Obtaining Consent Contact Number

_____ _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

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