

Title: Liminagraphy: Lessons in life-affirming research practices for collective liberation

Abstract:

In *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* Audre Lorde asks us to take seriously the question “What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy?” she goes on to answer “It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable” (2017 [1979]: 17)<sup>1</sup>. Using Lorde’s dictum as an anchor, this thesis provides a decolonial feminist critique of the modern/colonial knowledge system whilst simultaneously arguing for a reclaiming of knowledges and research practice. In doing so it highlights the need for radical alternatives in our approaches to knowledge, justice and collective liberation, offering Liminagraphy as one possible pathway.

The research undertaken set out to find the ways in which we can cultivate knowledge that is epistemically non-violent in the context of the racialized, gendered, colonial and neoliberal university. Through conversations with women of colour and those who resist the logics of dominant knowledge production, it was learned that this involves the simultaneous processes of decolonizing the self, dispelling myths around gender and identity, refusing knowledge production as a practice, embracing multiple forms of knowing, and lastly, underscoring the necessity of building coalition across difference for collective liberation. These lessons then provided the fertile ground upon which liminagraphy germinated. Embedded in a decolonial feminist and transformative justice approach, with a relational-ethics at its core, Liminagraphy provides tools and practices which address the ‘how’ of decolonizing, ensuring that erasure, extraction and harm are mitigated in the research process. Thus, Liminagraphy is envisioned as an epistemically non-violent approach to research, which attempts to transcend Lorde’s “narrow perimeters” through relationality, reciprocity, accountability and coalition.

Whilst this thesis builds upon the many valuable contributions to decolonizing specific disciplines and methodology its particular focus is on the unlearning of the researcher as expert and their reorientation towards life-affirming practices through being/becoming in relation. As such its main contribution is to debates on decolonizing methodology. In addition, it also contributes to discussions on anti-colonial approaches to development studies by radically questioning the inequities that underpin mainstream developmental research practices, thus highlighting disciplinary limitations. Using a radical approach which interrogates the practice of research, at the level of epistemology, ontology, methodology, axiology and the written form, this thesis contributes to generatively conceptualizing knowledge beyond disciplinary and western frameworks. Using poetry, storytelling and podcast as forms of enfolded theorizing, its innovation lies in its refusal of taken-for-granted research protocols, providing a new approach to research which meaningfully engages with intersectional-positionality, abolitionist practices and what it means to dream-live-feel-think-sense-practice collective liberation.

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<sup>1</sup> Lorde, A. (2017) *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*. Penguin Classics, UK.