Students for Ethnic Studies:

Towards Disrupting and Divesting Whiteness Through YPAR

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2023

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Abstract

Students for Ethnic Studies:

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This dissertation shares the story of a youth participatory action research project working to ensure that Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial youth voices remain at the heart of a growing ethnic studies program in a suburban school system in the Pacific Northwest. After realizing the degree to which the ways of being in and with the world for our research group were rooted in whiteness, we adapted San Pedro's *Culturally Disruptive Pedagogy* to our project as we sought to disrupt and divest ourselves of whiteness. Our story covers the processes, conversations, resources, and tensions that filled our disruptive efforts. The fields of Critical White Studies, Critical Race Theory, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, and Settler Colonialism guided the project's aims, methods, and analysis. Our project

sheds light on the possibilities and opportunity the addition of Culturally Disruptive Pedagogy can have for youth participatory action research.

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Foundations of A Shared Dream

> ...what's missing is student voice. We are the ones that are being taught. This is our education and we need to take our hands on to it, off from the adults, and tell the adults what we want. (Kaley, Group Session Two)

When I was envisioning what my dissertation project could be, it was filled with declarations akin to Kaley's. I dreamt of students exerting their agency to shape and reshape the education they wanted and deserved, but had yet to receive. After working with a group of youth co-researchers who named themselves Students for Ethnic Studies, I would not be disappointed. Our time together created opportunities for the youth to not only voice their educational dreams but to also gather educational dreams from students across their school district. What was planned as a four month research project grew into a yearlong collaboration between me and a group of youth researchers focused on reshaping the education they and their 20,000 peers receive. As planned, our work focused on finding ways to ensure that youth voices are the driving force behind their district's expansion of an existing ethnic studies program, moving from mostly 12th grade courses to an integrated K-12 model. This would be a move away from courses reserved for students about to leave their educational system to something every student in every class, every grade, and in every building had access to. One year into the project, we are still working toward this.

With a genuine sense of awe, a core group of youth researchers, or co-researchers as I will now refer to them, met an average of three times a month since April 2022. This is well beyond what was originally planned, a full eight months longer and we're still going. Their ongoing commitment to the project has me constantly amazed. While I introduce the co-researchers in detail in the Methods section, I want to name this core group upfront; Katie,

Gabby, Isa (Isabella), Joshua, Maria, and Atlis. Each co-researcher brought their strengths, insights, and drive for change to the project what it is.

As I hoped and will articulate throughout the dissertation, this youth participatory action research (YPAR) project unfolded largely as expected. The co-researchers and I worked together to define and design our project around a shared goal. We learned together. We gathered and analyzed data together. We acted together. What was unexpected (maybe I was being naive), was how long it has taken to move through the YPAR process (Cammarota & Fine, 2008) in a genuine and student-led manner. For this reason, the written portions of this dissertation project focus on a small portion of the overall project, from April 2022 to June 2022. By focusing on this small window, I took an in-depth look at our early work as we strove to develop a shared vision for our project that was outside of the white gaze (Morrison, 1998; Paris & Alim, 2017). As I will argue, this allowed us to move towards the development of an educational futurity (Campt, 2017; Harjo, 2019) grounded in the hopes and dreams of the co-researchers and the intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial students of the Edmonds School District (ESD).

Like the duration of our project, the focus of these three months wasn't as I had anticipated. Instead of swiftly moving through the planning, learning, and gathering of data phases of the YPAR process, we made the decision to slow our work to address the many ways that whiteness (Leonardo, 2009; Matias et al., 2014) seemed to be limiting our shared and developing vision for the project. The research to date on YPAR that I used to guide our efforts (Bautista et al., 2013; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017) did not prepare me for the need to so purposefully address and disrupt (San Pedro, 2019) the ways whiteness was

impacting our collective work. The need to disrupt whiteness before we moved on, largely became the focus of the written portion of the dissertation.

My Dissertation Dreams

As I planned and implemented this project, I was driven by a core set of dreams. Regardless of where the project went (down both expected and unexpected pathways), I did my best to keep these dreams in the forefront of my efforts. My number one hope with this project was to better understand what it meant to work alongside and be in solidarity with (Erickson, 2012) intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial students as they worked to define and enact their visions for their education. With their school district, the ESD, planning to expand ethnic studies, this project aimed to keep student voice as the driving and guiding force. To move towards making the school system students knew should have always been, but was not yet.

I hoped to strengthen connections between K-12 ethnic studies, settler colonialism, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. While these connections exist (San Pedro, 2019; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020), much ethnic studies research and practices are more firmly grounded in critical race theory (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). I did not aim to critique the historic root of ethnic studies; rather I wanted to deepen and make more overt connections to settler colonialism (King, 2019; la paperson, 2017; LeRoy, 2016; Styres, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017).

As someone who is constantly trying to be in this world differently, I often turn towards ethnic studies as a model. For this project, I hoped the work co-researchers and I engaged in was structured around an ethnic studies framework of identity, praxis, addressing systems of power and resistance, and taking action. This is the framework that is used in the ESD for their ethnic

studies courses and it only felt right to use it to guide our efforts. Happily, these aims aligned nicely with the overall YPAR processes, making this feel like an easy dream to strive towards.

Last, I consciously worked to avoid several damaging behaviors. I tried not to have this project turn into a performance by creating a stage for students to share their hopes and dreams, but failing to support students in enacting them (Cahill, 2007; Cammarota, 2016). I also tried (and still am trying) to avoid regulating or engaging in *managerialist subterfuge* (Clay & Turner, 2021) by dampening or redirecting students towards actions that I want or envision.

The Shifting Nature of the Research Question

When I was learning the qualitative research process as part of the doctoral program, we were taught that the research question(s) we go into a project with may not be the research question(s) we leave with. At the time, I struggled to understand this idea of a shifting research question. I previously learned about research from a quantitative perspective where one's research question was fixed. It wasn't until this project that I began to better understand this reality of qualitative research because the question I entered the project with morphed. Originally, I hoped to understand the ways intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial students in the ESD envisioned their ethnic studies futurities. Specifically, I wanted to better understand how students envisioned K-12 ethnic studies as a way to enact the schooling system that should already be but is not. How do students' envisions and enactments of K-12 ethnic studies futurities play in the sustainment of their identities? How do students enact their futurities within a traditional school system? How does engaging in participatory action research for ethnic studies work to sustain participant identities? My intent was to frame the project to be about K-12 ethnic studies and its ability to be culturally sustaining, with a bit of YPAR on the side.

Various iterations of these questions are guiding the long term and ongoing nature of this project, but the focus of this portion of dissertation shifted as the co-researchers and I shaped the project together. As the project progressed, I realized that this portion of the dissertation was becoming less about ethnic studies and more about the YPAR process itself. To be clear, the youth were focused on ethnic studies, but my gaze shifted to a closer analysis of the question of "how do students enact their ethnic studies futurities within a traditional school system?"

In the end, with this portion of the dissertation I sought to better understand how students can enact their educational futurities through YPAR within the confines of a white settler colonial school system without reproducing these same harmful structures? This meant that I needed to better understand the questions: How does hegemonic whiteness manifest in student-led YPAR projects? How can hegemonic whiteness be disrupted as part of the YPAR process? How can a YPAR process function outside of the white settler colonial gaze? The expansion of ethnic studies was still our collective goal, but my focus shifted to better understanding the ways YPAR can be enacted through anticolonial and culturally sustaining lenses.

Positionality and Theory

> People entering into such a relation must be committed to figuring out what that mode of existence will be, how they will behave, what rules to establish by which to abide (Crawley, 2020, p. 30).

I identify as a white, cis-hetero, non-disabled, settler, male from an upper economic status living on the traditional homelands of the Tulalip Tribes. I was born and spent my first 18 years in the rural-suburbs of Minnesota. Despite being a mere 15 miles from St. Paul and Minneapolis, I grew up amidst forests, lakes, rows of corn, and sod farms. This oddly rural and suburban space

was very white and politically conservative. These places and spaces are where my worldview was molded and shaped. The views of race, Land (Styres, 2019), gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and socio-economic status from these spaces became my views for much of my life. Over the last 20 years, I have sought out new rules to redefine my existence, shape how I understand the world and my movements toward the abolition of whiteness (Leonardo, 2009), and my adoption of a white antiracism stand (Siedl & Friend, 2002; Utt & Tochluk, 2016). I am constantly learning how to be in relation with people, Land, and the world around me outside of the white gaze (Morrison, 1998; Paris & Alim 2017) as much as possible. I am always relearning.

Through this deeply personal work, I've come to understand the vital role theory can and should play in my personal, professional, and academic relearning efforts. When critically applied, theory can be used to "...explain to us how the world works…" (Love, 2019, p. 146), as well as to illuminate and offer explanations for what is occurring around us. When theory is grounded in and centered around the realities and experiences of those being oppressed, namely intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial communities, theory has the ability to "...take the whiteness glasses from our eyes" (Love, 2019, p. 147) to help us understand outside of the white gaze (Morrison, 1998). Unlike theory rooted in western epistemologies that largely work to entrap us in a cycle of domination (Simpson & Smith, 2014), embracing theories grounded in intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial communities can move us towards liberatory thinking and create spaces of self-recovery. hooks (1994)simply and powerfully noted that "theory can be a healing place" (p. 61). To guide my work throughout this dissertation process, I tried to ground myself in four theories, using elements of each to shape decisions, actions, and thoughts taken by myself and my fellow co-researchers.

Critical White Studies

As a critical race theory offspring, critical white studies (CWS) offers a powerful lens for naming and disrupting whiteness. As a field, CWS frames whiteness as an ontology; a way of being in and with the world (Gillborn, 2019; Leonardo, 2009; Lewis, 2004). CWS overtly names the systems, practices, and assumptions that are used by white people (a social construct) to dominate and exert power over intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial communities and their ways of being (Gillborn, 2019; Lewis, 2004). Alongside efforts to name, CWS also works to disrupt the ways of whiteness by directly challenging color-blind ideologies and the many manifestations of hegemonic whiteness (Gillborn, 2019; Leonardo, 2009; Lewis, 2004).

While it wasn't my original intent, CWS quickly became the dominant lens in this project. Almost immediately, it seemed that the co-researchers were struggling to reach beyond the white gaze they had learned throughout their lives. It seemed that the ways of whiteness were invisible (Leonardo, 2002; Lewis, 2004; San Pedro, 2019) to many of the co-researchers and until we could collectively name the ways of being of whiteness, our ability to work beyond its grasp would be severely limited.

Settler Colonial Theory

Settler colonialism offers a more complicated explanation of how the society functions. Settler colonialism states that our society, past and present, is understood to be an ongoing struggle between settlers seeking to privatize land and humans in order to maximize profits, and Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial communities fighting to maintain their relations to Land and personhood (la paperson, 2017; LeRoy, 2016; Nakano Glen, 2014). When settlers succeed, Indigenous peoples' physical, epistemological, and

ontological relations to Land are severed (Styres, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012). When settlers succeed, anti-Black technologies are applied to intersectional Black, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific Islanders, and multiracial communities, their relations to personhood are severed; they are no longer seen as human by the settlers (King, 2019; la paperson, 2017). In both cases, settler systems justify their actions by situating non-settlers outside the realm of normal (King, 2019; Robinson, 2020); thus, they are expendable.

Settler systems employ and enact specific tools and technologies as they seek to sever these relations. These tools and technologies include: erasure of cultural ways of being, acts of state sanctioned terrorism, the removal of peoples from their lands, containment of human bodies, restricting access to rights, exclusion from full citizenship, acts of segregation, and genocide (la paperson, 2017; Nakano Glenn, 2014). These tools and technologies are understood as acts of violence enacted throughout society, especially schooling systems.

Not only am I seeking to embrace this understanding of how the world works, but I am also working to embrace the stated goals of anticolonial efforts to simultaneously reestablish life in schools and beyond. For Indigenous communities, life is understood as the full restoration of relations between Land and Indigenous peoples (la paperson, 2017; Styres, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012). For intersectional Black, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific Islanders, and multiracial communities who have been dehumanized by anti-Blackness tools, life is understood as their rehumanization and centering of their joy (King, 2020; la paperson, 2017).

Beyond working to apply the general lens of settler colonialism to understand what was happening in the project, I elevated two important anticolonial concepts to guide the research goals and behaviors; refusal and futurity.

Refusal. Grounded in the rejection of settler colonial epistemological expectations (Grande 2018; Kelley, 2016; Simpson 2007, 2017), refusal is an overtly anticolonial stance that rejects the push to be recognized by the settler state. Instead of seeking the easily controlled act of recognition, refusal calls on us to move past this limited view and seek a liberated way of being (Grande, 2018; Simpson, 2007; Tuck, 2022). The goal is a liberation free from living by settler colonial logics that seek control and domination while placing intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial communities in control of their own fate. Refusing settler colonialism creates the possibility of fully addressing and ending racism and other state sanctioned violences (Au, 2021; Kelley, 2016), which is a truly rebellious act toward liberation (McKittrick, 2021).

Futurity. By refusing to seek recognition, the focus can shift to futurity. Situated in both Black and Indigenous studies, futurity is one way to seek liberation outside of a white settler gaze (Harjo, 2019; Simpson, 2007). Harjo (2019) discussed (Muskogee) futurity as engaging with local knowledges and ways of being that creates "...paths or maps to get us to the place we want to be, so that we choose our future and our future does not choose us" (p. 25). Similarly, Campt (2017) defined Black futurity as:

> A performance of a future that hasn't happened but must...the power to imagine beyond the current fact and to envision that which is not, but must be...a striving for the future you want to see, right now, in the present. (p. 17)

For me, futurity is an act for self-determination, taking back control from settler colonial systems.

Refusal and futurity were key for me and this project, pushing both to look beyond the white settler gaze. Personally, refusal and futurity provided ideals for me to be as I continuously

seek to reimagine who I am and how I interact with this world. This also meant that from the onset, I actively encouraged students to look beyond the norms and expectations of settler colonialism and the ESD to envision ethnic studies as they feel it should already be.

Critical Race Theory

Originating as critiques of the U.S. legal system, critical race theory became a vital lens for understanding the education system. In education, critical race theory (CRT) seeks to disrupt racism and other forms of oppression by advocating for radical and systemic changes that lead to healing and liberatory schooling systems (Cabrera, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005). Two key actions that this theory seeks to take toward healing and liberatory school systems is the disruption of whiteness (Cabrera, 2018; Harris, 1993) and the elevation of student counter-stories (Cabrera, 2018; Cabrera, 2018; Kumasi, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005).

It was personally important for me to use CRT as a lens in this project. First, I see the tenets of CRT as a form of futurity, offering guidance largely from Black communities for remaking the world as it should have always been. One of the key ways CRT offers this guidance is through counter-stories. I understand counter-stories to be one way of expressing reality and re/defining futurities by individuals and communities most impacted by racism and other forms of oppression.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

Culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) arose from the beauty and limitations of existing asset-based pedagogies, encouraging educational systems to dream bigger. At the core of these dreams is the call to "…disrupt the pervasive anti-Indigeneity, anti-Blackness, and related anti-Brownness…and model-minority myth…" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2) of our schooling

system by reimagining schools into as spaces that "...center and sustain the young people in their communities through teaching and learning while they grow and expand who young people are and can be through the process of education" (Paris, 2021, p. 365). While there is no singular manifestation or list of the ways to implement the CSP concepts, Paris (2021) noted recurring themes that provide clarity. These themes include the following: (a) the centering of student and community practices, values, and knowledges; (b) working alongside students and communities as expert collaborators; (c) explicitly working and being in relation with Land and communities; and (d) an emphasis on addressing forms of internalized oppressions. An underlying key to each theme is the intentionality that CSP directs educational systems use when looking outside of the white gaze and into the local communities for answers. For example, when CSP has been framed through an Indigenous lens, Indigenous scholars have noted how CSP also can be revitalizing. According to Lee and McCarty (2017), CSP becomes sustaining and revitalizing when it "…reclaims and revitalizes what has been disrupted by colonization" (p. 62).

CSP was a guiding theory for this project because I embraced it as one of my core foundational beliefs about schooling. As my understanding of CSP grew, I recognized it as the hope I have for what schooling could (and should) be when reimagined outside of the settler colonial and white gaze. This hope must be grounded in the communities schools serve and the communities most impacted by the anti-Indigeneity and anti-Blackness of settler colonialism. For me, the hope that CSP offers is a form of futurity I have embraced.

In Conversation

Separately, each of the above theories are powerful tools that support anticolonial efforts to research beyond the white gaze. Their real power comes when these theories are in conversation and relation with each other (Liborion, 2021). At its core, settler colonialism names

the past and ongoing violence that was and is inflicted upon intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial communities, naming some of the changes that must be made. CSP and settler colonialism offer futurities for schooling, of what is not but should have always been. Their anticolonial and culturally sustaining goals of being beyond the white gaze are intertwined and inseparable, offering possible pathways towards liberatory education. CWS offers some of the first steps and tools for naming whiteness so it can be disrupted and moved beyond. Through counter-stories, CRT offers pathways beyond the white gaze that lead toward the futurities envisioned by intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial communities. When examined together, these theories formed the theoretical map that guided how I wanted this project to unfold.

Ethnic Studies: A Futurity For Hope

A few pages earlier, I noted that when I first conceived of this project, I thought of it as an ethnic studies project developed through a YPAR lens. Yet as the project unfolded, I came to see it as more of a YPAR project built around dreams for ethnic studies. Regardless of how I understand the positionality of ethnic studies in the project, it remained foundational to the project. The co-researchers joined the project because it was about ethnic studies. Our collective work was always moving towards the expansion of ethnic studies in the ESD. As such, taking the time to share how I understand ethnic studies in K-12 school systems is essential because it clarifies my own internalized educational dreams that guided this project.

Like the post-secondary ethnic studies movement it evolved from, K-12 seeks to be a liberatory project (Hu-DeHart, 1993; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020) that aims to reimagine the what, how, and why of education, toward a rehumanizing system of teaching and learning that centers counter-narratives that challenge a racist and white-centric system. By centering the realities

faced by intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial communities, school systems can more fully address the ways racism and settler colonialism manifests throughout society. As part of the transformation that results from embracing ethnic studies, the epistemologies and cultures shared through the counter-narratives become sources of hope and liberation for students and teachers (Bonilla et al., 2021; de los Rios et al., 2015; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). As a field, K-12 ethnic studies programs address the intersectional and multiple identities of students, racism and other forms of systemic oppression, histories of resistance and resilience, and community orientation action (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2017; Sleeter, 2011; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020) within Black, Latinx, Asian American, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander communities. Simultaneously, the practice of ethnic studies seeks to grow critically conscious students (Cammarota, 2016; San Pedro, 2019; Vasquez & Altshuler, 2017) across racial identities. The ultimate dream of K-12 ethnic studies is to transform schooling into spaces of hope and liberation for students, teachers, and communities (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

A Plurality of Ethnic Studies

In their recent work, Sleeter and Zavala (2020) offered an updated overview of existing ethnic studies research. Their work highlights the many forms ethnic studies can take in K-12 schooling. Regardless of location, Sleeter and Zavala's work illustrates that educators and schools center their approach to ethnic studies by centering on the students they are serving.

In most cases, ethnic studies research elevates the work being done in racially segregated educational spaces by Black, Latinx, and Asian identifying educators as they work within historically segregated Black, Latinx, Asian American, Indigenous, Pacific Islander communities (Acosta, 2007; de los Rios et al., 2015; Dee & Penner, 2017; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020;

Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Vasquez & Alsthuser, 2017). Due to the segregated realities of these schooling systems, the ethnic studies programs that emerge tend to serve mono-racial or ethnic groups. This means that segregated schools that serve Black communities develop ethnic studies programs grounded in developing positive Black identities and centered on past, present, and future realities of Black communities (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). The same is true for schools that serve other largely segregated communities.

Another approach that can be taken is pan-ethnic studies. In pan-ethnic studies, the focus is on the "...collective struggle for racial and economic justice that includes members of all ethnic groups while still holding race and ethnicity as central to understanding power and privilege" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 138). With its focus on collective struggle, pan-ethnic studies programs strive to develop the positive identities of all students and center the realities of all racialized and ethnic groups the program serves. Research that calls out this approach to K-12 ethnic studies is quite limited (Dee & Penner, 2017; Duncan-Anrade & Morrell, 2008).

Calling out pan-ethnic studies is important for this project because there is currently a growing movement in suburban school systems to implement ethnic studies programs. While created to protect and perpetuate whiteness (Erickson, 2016; Garcia, 2018; Light, 2010; Singler et al., 2011), the suburbs have been rapidly changing. Due to gentrification, proud Black, Latinx, and Asian American urban communities are being priced and pushed out into the formerly segregated suburbs as white families move back to cities. As these families move into the suburbs, they enter school systems that were designed for white students (Erickson, 2016) but are serving more and more students of color. For example, the ESD now serves 56.1% students of color (22.8% of students identify as Latinx, 13.4% as Asian-American, 11% as multiracial, 7.6%

as Black, 0.9% as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.4% as Indigenous) and 43.9% white identifying students (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction[1]). In response to Black, Latinx, and Asian American students' demands for ethnic studies and the fact that they are serving a plurality of racial and ethnic communities, many suburban school systems are taking the pan-ethnic studies approach. Not only is this true for the ESD, but at least 10 surrounding suburban school systems as well.

Community Defined Ethnic Studies

Given that ethnic studies is locally defined, any efforts to develop an ethnic studies program must be centered around students and families. Specifically, students and families must be integral voices throughout the envisioning, developing, and implementing processes. Only then can the resultant program be rehumanizing and liberatory. To date, only a few studies articulate the ways communities have been engaged in the defining process.

In one study, Irizarry (2011; 2017) collaborated with seven Latinx youths to envision an ethnic studies space that aimed to create "...sustaining classroom environments for themselves and other Latinx students" (Irizarry, 2017, p. 83). This process involved students engaging in a research process to critically examine the educational experiences of themselves and their peers, co-design the structure and content of the course (Irizarry, 2017), as well as advocate for change within their school and beyond (Irizarry, 2011). In this case, students and their needs were the focus from the start and throughout the study. This intentionality by Irizarry to create a space for students to define their own educational needs highlights how ethnic studies can and should be locally defined.

The roles of community can also be seen in Valenzuela's (2019) account of the ongoing fight for ethnic studies in Texas. In their counter-narrative of their efforts to get a Mexican

American Studies course approved by the Texas State Board of Education, Valenzuela detailed how their PreK-12 committee, the collective fighting for the course, sought to collaborate with local Indigenous Nations. Their intent was to ensure their proposed Mexican American Studies course honored the "...the long, storied history of Indigeneity in Texas, including *mestizaje* (italics original), or blood mixture, across Indigenous tribes" (p. 199). Their act of collaboration yielded the committee to rethink and adjust key tenets of their proposed course to ensure it accurately reflected the desires of these Indigenous communities.

For this project, I grounded my actions and dreams around the understanding that our work as a research collective needed to be grounded in the intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial students of the ESD. The lived realities of the co-researchers needed to be the driving force for where the project went and how we got there.

Overview of Remaining Chapters

Situating it as epistemology, pedagogy, and methodology (Bautista et al., 2013; Fine & Cammarota, 2008), the Methods chapter offers an introduction to the YPAR literature that shaped this project. Space is dedicated to introduce the youth co-researchers who joined the project as well as the ESD. Finally, the methods chapter ends with a description of the major phases of our YPAR process from approval to action. Spending so much time on the YPAR process is needed because I viewed the phases as interdependent, almost like an ecosystem (Brown, 2017). That is, each phase felt like a necessary component upon which the other phases depended upon. With my personal commitment to ethnic studies and to be solidarity with co-researchers, choosing YPAR as my methodology felt like a given. Despite this commitment, I also recognized that I entered the project with a literature rooted understanding of YPAR but

very limited experiential knowledge. For example, I had yet to fully experience what it meant to actually research alongside youth (Annamma, 2018; Cahill et al., 2019) to support the efforts of their collective dream (Ishimaru et al., 2019). I chose YPAR as my research method because I genuinely believe in the ideals of YPAR, but I lacked the all too important experiential knowledge of putting these ideals into practice.

Understanding One, Towards a Collect Dream, analyzes the early weeks of our project as we sought to build a collective and shared dream (Ishimaru et al., 2019). Specifically, I identified three main types of emic knowledge, or knowings, that guided our YPAR process. One shared and foundational knowing was a sense that the world was an unjust place. To some degree, every co-researcher entered our space with an understanding of the wrongs that exist in society. The co-researchers also shared knowing around the power of voice(s) to positively impact systems. As youth voice became the focus of our project, the type of voice and reasoning for the power of that voice varied across co-researchers. The final knowing that arose through analysis was only demonstrated by one co-researcher. Coming into the project, only one of the co-researchers (Kaley, more on her later) had a strong understanding of ethnic studies. Not only was this co-researcher enrolled in an ethnic studies class at their high school, but they were an active state and national advocate for ethnic studies. Through analysis, it became clear that the ethnic studies knowings of this co-researcher had the power to lift up and (re)direct conversations in important and powerful ways. As the project unfolded, it also became clear that most of the co-researchers entered our space without a strong understanding of whiteness (Gillborn, 2019; Leonardo, 2009; Lewis, 2004) nor the ways it was impacting the emic knowings they brought into our space. This realization was incredibly important because the shared and collective dream that we were developing together was heavily impacted by whiteness.

In response to the realization that we were building a shared dream clouded by whiteness, Understanding Two, An Unexpected Disruption, examines our efforts to apply San Pedro's (2019) Culturally Disruptive Pedagogy (CDP) to our YPAR process. At its core, CDP offers guidance for making visible the many ways hegemonic whiteness impacts us. The idea being that with a deeper and complicated understanding of whiteness, we can see beyond its grasp towards a more hopeful and liberatory future. This chapter digs into our process of CDP as we sought to individually look beyond whiteness by grounding ourselves in ways of being with the world as articulated by the international Black Lives Matter movement, members of the Tulalip Tribes education department, and AsianCRIT scholars. The chapter seeks to elevate the impacts applying CDP seemed to have on the individual co-researchers in our YPAR project.

Building off the individual focus, Understanding Three, The Disruption Continues: Changing Relations With Our Shared Dream, closely examines how we integrated the CDP into our YPAR process and the impacts this seemed to have on our developing dream. Through analysis, a recurring pattern seemed to emerge that illustrated a tension filled ebb and flow process as we collectively worked to envision and develop our YPAR project outside of the white gaze. Through the give and take, strong evidence emerged to suggest that the individual work associated with the CDP process could also be applied to our larger and shared YPAR process. This feels especially relevant given the larger aims of ethnic studies and the field's desire to reimagine schooling in ways that are culturally sustaining (Paris, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017).

After a recounting of the Students for Ethnic Studies field trip, the Discussion chapter calls out larger takeaways and possible paths forwards. Central to the discussion is the danger unexamined whiteness can have on YPAR projects and the roles CDP can have in reducing these

dangers. Specifically, this project suggests that by embedding CDP practices into existing and established YPAR processes, more opportunities to address the ways whiteness functions systemically as well as internally are created. The Discussion also notes the potential of CDP in moving the YPAR project towards being spaces that can better address settler colonialism as well as be culturally sustaining. The discussion also includes some self-critiques of the project, noting areas of growth for my future as I continue to engage in the YPAR field.

Methodology Toward Futurity

Method-making is the generating and gathering of ideas--across-with-outside-within-against normative disciplines--that seek out liberation within our present system of knowledge. The goal is not to find liberation, but to seek it out…Seeking liberation is rebellious.

(McKittrick, 2021, p. 47-48)

Youth Participatory Action Research As Rebellious Research

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is an epistemological, pedagogical, and methodological stance that can be taken by researchers intent on enacting intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial youth visions' for a more liberatory and just educational system (Cahill, 2007; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017; Irizarry & Brown, 2014). YPAR can contribute to liberatory and justice centered efforts because the approach intentionally creates a space where young people can "...begin to re-vision and denaturalize the realities of their social worlds and then undertake forms of collective challenge based on the knowledge garnered through their critical inquiries,...all dedicated to speaking back and challenging conditions of injustice" (Cammarota & Fine, 2008, p. 2). Concisely, YPAR revolves around the belief that youth should be the determiners of their own futurities (Campt, 2017; Harjo, 2019), which creates opportunities for youth to seek out their own liberation.

One way that YPAR can accomplish this is through the embracement and elevation of the emic perspective. Epistemologically, YPAR is grounded in the belief that it is the voices of youth that should guide the research process. This is especially true when working with youth who are

being marginalized and oppressed, for they are truly the experts of their own lives (Anderson, 2020; Bautista et al., 2013; Cahill, 2007; Caraballo et al., 2017; Irizarry & Brown, 2014). YPAR believes that youth, particularly intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial youth, are producers of knowledge, researchers, and agents of change, capable of critically examining and improving their own present and futures (Bautista et al., 2013; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017). Importantly, with this expertise comes the innate authority to engage in refusal. In YPAR, youth control what is and is not shared (Simpson, 2007, 2017; Vecchio et al., 2017). This places youth in control of their narratives, revealing and sharing only those facets of their choosing because they believe it will add to the project while also protecting the things that others do not need to know.

The power of YPAR in seeking the liberation of youth rests in its commitment to the process of praxis (Freire, 2000). Woven throughout the YPAR process is the intention to "...demystify and deconstruct power structures, then transform them in order to construct a new reality" (Caraballo et al., 2017, p. 8). This requires that a YPAR project designs into its practice time, space, and support for youth to critically examine how systems of power and oppression are operating on their lives. This supports youth in seeing that the realities they experience are not their fault, but the result of purposeful actions taken by those exerting undo powers on them and their communities (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). With a growing sense of how the world is working around them, youth in YPAR then take actions to resist and transform their worlds (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), (re)positioning themselves as leaders in determining their own futurities (Bertrand, 2018). As a practice, YPAR should be crafted to create the opportunity for youth to critically reflect on and then take actions to reimagine their worlds.

As a methodology, YPAR is designed such that power is shared between youth and adults and co-researchers and researcher to allow the project to speak to the youth-defined systems of injustice. To be clear, the power disparities between adults and youths in YPAR projects are not eliminated, rather they are redirected so that the "...power is used with and not over" the youth (Irizarry & Brown, 2014, p. 65). When shared this way, the power disparities can be directed to supporting youth as they identify the issue, co-design the study, collectively analyze data, and carry out action. Further, this redirecting of power towards working with youth in YPAR can result in a more democratic research process that results in the changes youth deem necessary for their communities (Cahill, 2007; Caraballo et al., 2017).

Patterns In Youth Participatory Action Research

With these epistemological, pedagogical, and methodological foundations, and when working in solidarity with youth toward liberatory and just visions for their futurities, several patterns emerge. The first pattern of YPAR is that adults play a crucial role in supporting youth to develop, implement, evaluate, and enact their research project (Anderson, 2020; Cammarota & Fine, 2008). For this role, the adult ensures that the youth developed project adheres to the principles of scientific inquiry, is grounded in quality research question(s), and is built around relevant methodologies that allow the youth to answer their questions (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

Importantly, this means that the researcher does not consider themselves the sole researcher, but rather part of a collective of researchers working alongside youth (Erickson, 2012). As co-researchers, the youth are situated as objects of the study (Bautista et al., 2013), co-designers of the study (Bautista et al., 2013; Cammarota & Fine, 2008), and working toward the futurities of their design with the lead researcher. One purposeful action taken to demonstrate

this intent to research in solidarity is the use of "our" throughout the dissertation. My use of "our" is meant to signify that this was not my work alone but our work together.

As co-researchers and objects of study, the youth and their expertise are situated as the insider experts of the study. YPAR understands that youths are the experts of their own lives and that their knowledge is what drives the project and determines the actions that will be taken (Bautista et al., 2013; Cahill, 2007; Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

An essential trait of adult researcher(s) in YPAR projects is their overt commitment to critical theories. Tuck et al. (2008) identified a wide range of topics that YPAR scholars need to be versed in noting that YPAR research is "...an embedded and out loud critique of colonization, racism, misogyny, homophobia and heterosexism, classism, and xenophobia in our society" (p. 51). Cammarota and Fine (2008) noted the need for YPAR researchers to be versed in intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) because it allows them to "...analyze power relations through multiple axes" (p. 6) as Tuck et al. noted.

Looking beyond researcher preparedness, YPAR projects themselves are critical in nature. Each project is designed to illuminate and challenge these same systems of power (Cahill et al., 2008) by uncovering systemic issues in their immediate worlds (Bautista et al., 2013). YPAR does not stop here. Moving past knowledge generation, YPAR projects take action that seeks to critically, collectively, and positively transform society (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017; Ginwright, 2008; Tuck et al., 2008).

Why Youth Participatory Action Research?

In their work, Ishimaru and colleagues (2019) noted how action research creates opportunities for *collective dreaming*, which is the coming together to shape and form a vision for what should have always been, but is not yet (Campt, 2017). For me, I hoped that this project

would be such a collective dream for students in the ESD. As the youth co-researchers and I collaborated to envision what an expanded and systemic ethnic studies program can be in their district, the potential to enact an anti-colonial system built around re-establishing relations to Land (Styres 2019) and humanity, that are grounded on the experiential knowledges that intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial youth feels just and right. A real possibility and a necessary act for rebellion in our current harmful assimilationist schooling system.

Youth Participatory Action Research and Ruptures

When envisioning this project, I also understood the rupture potential of YPAR projects. When thinking about ruptures, I ground myself in the works of two personally influential scholars. As part of their work on CDP and ethnic studies, Timothy San Pedro (2019) wrote about ruptures as spaces that counter whiteness. In spaces where whiteness is confronted, a rupture is created that allows for "...new knowledge and new identities to take hold" (p. 1221). In their antisettler colonial work *The Black Shoals*, Tiffany Lethabo King (2020) presented the metaphor of shoals to understand how grounding oneself outside of the white gaze and "...in Black thought, movement, aesthetics, resistance, and lived experience.." (p. 2) can create ruptures. Much like San Pedro's conception, King frames shoal induced ruptures as something positive, as spaces of possibility that "...requires new footing, different chords of embodied rhythms, and new conceptual tools to navigate its terrain" (p. 4).

I believe that when YPAR is enacted in solidarity with intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial students and communities, it can become a space of and for creating ruptures of possibility and hope that can provide new

footings, rhythms, knowledges, and identities not only for ourselves, but for the schooling system that our YPAR sought to reimagine.

The Real Experts

In alignment with these patterns of YPAR, I have been collaborating with a team of youth co-researchers from across the ESD on this project. While information on the formation of the research collective is covered in later sections, I felt it necessary to introduce the co-researchers separately to honor the ongoing roles as experts in their own right. When possible, each co-researcher had the opportunity to write, edit, and/or approve of their own introduction.

Willa joined the project for personal reasons. Willa identifies as Chinese-American, student, daughter, photographer, and friend. Importantly, she also includes being adopted as part of her identity. In conversation, Willa noted that she was adopted by a white couple and this resulted in her feeling disconnected from her Chinese roots. Recognizing this was the experience of many of her peers, Willa hoped that expanding ethnic studies in the ESD was one way students like herself can have a better understanding of who they are. Willa was part of the project from its inception until she graduated in June 2022.

Gabby's frustration with white-centric history courses and a strong desire to contribute to improving the education system for all led her to join the project. Her desire for an education that was more accurate, safe, and enriching for students also drove her to be part of building and district level equity committees. This system's level knowledge was crucial as we planned, researched, and acted. Her identities as an African-Eritrean American, student, sister, daughter, and granddaughter readily influenced how she approached the project by bringing a strong sense of community to our work. When I told Gabby about the project, she immediately joined and continues to be one of the essential leaders still with the project.

Like Gabby, Maria is tired of the whiteness in the ESD and wants school to be a space where teachers widen the scope of learning, introducing topics new to students. Her identities of white/German, biromantic, asexual, student, artist, hiker, friend, bilingual, and daughter greatly shaped how she engaged with the other co-researchers. Importantly, Maria recognized that her white/German identity required that she approach the project as an accomplice, in support of intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial co-researchers. Besides traveling to Germany to be with family over the summer of 2022, Maria was the first to officially join the project and continues to be an active researcher.

Kaley has a self-described passion for all things ethnic studies. As a member of the Washington NAACP Youth Council and national Coalition for Liberated Ethnic Studies, Kaley really does live and breathe for ethnic studies. Kaley shared how her identities as an Asian/Vietnamese, student, daughter, youth leader/activist, and Washington NAACP Youth Council member shaped her approach to our research collective. Her expertise in organizing for ethnic studies at the local, state, and national levels worked to inspire other members to dream big. Kaley joined the research group as a senior and since graduation supports the research collective from time to time.

Finn has a strong desire to make the world a better place and joined the research team to meet more people with a similar thinking process. He identifies as white, asexual, and aromatic. He too has a strong desire to disrupt the current white educational system and helped our team be more inclusive of gender and sexual identities within our dreams for ethnic studies in the ESD. Finn was part of our team until the summer of 2022 when transportation conflicts prevented him from continuing.

Joshua identifies as African-American/Ghanaian, student, brother, and son. He joined the team because he recognized the need for change within the district and sees ethnic studies as one of those key changes. Like many on the team, Joshua is actively seeking change in many spheres including his school's BSU and the University of Washington's Pan African Youth Leadership Program. Joshua joined the team early and was especially influential during the summer and fall of 2022 as we implemented the action phase of our research. As we joke together, Joshua's voice is rarely caught on tape, but his behind the scenes influence is strongly felt.

Isabella is one of the youngest members, joining the team as a 9th grader, and was recruited by Kaley. At first, Isabella saw the group as an opportunity to learn more about ethnic studies and quickly became an essential member, taking the lead in promoting the field trips with students and schools. Isabella identifies as Asian-American (half Indonesian and half Filipino), student, child, sibling, bisexual, genderfluid, and artist. They remain an active member in the group with especially strong impacts during the summer sessions.

Katie has always been interested in ethnic studies and knew they wanted to join the project the moment it was introduced to her. Noting how our schools have much room to grow, Katie sees ethnic studies as an integral piece of this growth. As leader of her school's LSU and feminist clubs, Katie brings strong leadership skills to the group. Katie identifies as Mexican-American, student, daughter, and sister. As Katie noted, she was eager to join the group and continues to be an active member despite an intense Advanced Placement course load and TSA competitor.

Atlis joined the research team because of their desire to be part of a community of like-minded folks focused on changing the ways things are taught and whose knowledge is spread at schools. Identifying as American, student, child, sibling, pansexual, polyamorous,

genderfluid, and friend, Atlis worked to ensure that LGBTQ+ priorities were kept centered in our work. Atlis joined the research team early and continues to be an active and pivotal member of the team.

Jilliana is an outspoken individual who wants to know more about topics that are important to her like racism and homophobia. Jilliana saw this research team as an opportunity to further educate herself and, like Isabella, became a key member of the team. She identifies as a Filipino, child of lesbians, unlabeled immigrant, and friend. Jilliana was active throughout the spring. After spending the summer with family in the Philippines, she was unable to rejoin the research team due to schedule conflicts.

While the co-researchers shared above reflect those who contributed much, our team was more fluid and benefitted from the expertise of several other co-researchers that I wanted to name: Vyna, Lizzy, Jesse, Ryan, Andrea, Seunghee, and Tia.

Our Context

Our Community: The Edmonds School District

Located on the traditional homelands of the Sdohobsh people, the ESD is 15 miles north of fast growing and gentrifying Seattle, Washington. The ESD serves nearly 21,000 students from five medium sized suburban communities that include Edmonds, Lynnwood, Mountlake Terrace, Brier, Woodway, and portions of unincorporated Snohomish County. The ESD has 34 schools; 23 elementary, four middle schools, four traditional high schools, and two alternative schools.

Over the last 15 years, the ESD communities and schools benefited from a growing number of Black, Asian, Latinx, multiracial, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous families moving into our communities. As of the 2021-2022 academic year, 22.8% of students identified as

Latinx, 13.4% as Asian-American, 11% as multiracial, 7.6% as Black, .9% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.4% Indigenous, and 43.9% as white (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction[1]). Historically, the student population of the ESD was largely white and this shift to serving a racial plurality is relatively new. The ESD's teaching force of 1,403 does not reflect this growing plurality with 5.3% of educators identifying as Asian-American, 2.9% Latinx, 2.1% multiracial, 1.6% Black, 0.4% Indigenous, 0.3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 86.3% white (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction[2]).

Four years ago, an important shift in district leadership occurred that is relevant to this study. In summer of 2019, the ESD hired Dr. Gustavo Balderas as Superintendent and Dr. Victor Vergara as Executive Director of Equity and Student Success. Both Dr. Balderas and Dr. Vergara identify as Hispanic males. Dr. Balderas is the first person of color to be hired as Superintendent. Part of Dr. Balderas' and Vergara's vision for the ESD was the expansion of ethnic studies so that every student experiences ethnic studies everyday by 2027. Also worth noting is that most of the district's Board of Directors are also in support of expanding ethnic studies into all K-12 classrooms.

A Brief History of Ethnic Studies and the Edmonds School District

The ESD began its ethnic studies journey in the summer of 2013. Then Assistant Superintendent Justin Irish and Manager of Equity Karena Hooks brought Ethnic Studies Educator Curtis Acosta to the district-wide summer professional development days. In a sun-drenched auditorium, 500 secondary educators listened to Acosta share the story of the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program at the Tucson Unified School District and screened the documentary *Precious Knowledge.* From this starting point, ethnic studies on a systems level

began to take root. For the following three summers, Justin and Karena brought Acosta and José Gonzalez, both from the MAS program, to lead weeklong summer learning. Individual educators began to shift their mindsets, practices, and curriculum toward an ethnic studies lens. This very much included me.

And then April 2015 happened. By the 2014-2015 academic year, the ESD was serving a predominantly Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial student body. But the curriculum still reflected the white portion of the student body. In response to frustrated efforts for change in their building, the Black Student Union at Lynnwood High presented a petition to the building administrator demanding an ethnic studies course supported by 49 student signatures. After 18 months of building level discussions, moving forwards then back, in 2016 a yearlong standalone Ethnic Studies course was submitted and unanimously approved for the 2017 academic year.

First offered in 2017, the yearlong senior level ethnic studies course housed in Social Studies started at just one high school but was so popular that it was offered at all five high schools in the ESD within three years. As of 2021, students enrolled in this course can earn college credit through Edmonds College. This system wide course is the most enrolled course for seniors across the district, out enrolling the traditional 12th grade course and AP offerings. In addition, the ESD also offers an English Language Arts senior level ethnic studies course at three of the high schools as well as a middle school U.S. History/Ethnic Studies course at three of the middle schools. Further, a growing number of individual elementary educators and teams are beginning to teach from ethnic studies stance. Excitedly, in the 2021-2022 academic year, one elementary school started their collective ethnic studies journey through professional development and self-reflection to revise their entire approach to teaching and learning through

an ethnic studies lens. This is all to say that in the ESD, ethnic studies has a solid foundation for growth with many teacher leaders seemingly ready to support its expansion.

As ethnic studies was introduced and expanded into new grade levels or content areas over the years, students were actively involved in the process. At the high school level, each collective of educators collaborated with the racial affinity groups at most schools, engaging in conversations to help identify the content they would want to learn in an ethnic studies course. At the middle school, a survey was developed and given to all students. The survey offered a menu of possible topics for the ethnic studies course and students indicated their preferences. Because we collected student racial identities, we prioritized the preferences of students who identified as Black, Indigenous, Asian-American, Latinx, Pacific-Islander, and multiracial.

My Relationship To Ethnic Studies in the ESD

From 2016 until the fall of 2021 , I was the Social Studies and Ethnic Studies Lead for the ESD. In this capacity, I had the honor of facilitating the development and growth of the ESD's Ethnic Studies Program. This role allowed me to work with educators, students, families, and communities as we built up the program. Importantly, it also meant that I am well versed in the originations, development, growth, and ongoing efforts to expand ethnic studies in the ESD. This includes the 2021 decision by Dr. Balderas and Dr. Vergara to formally announce their intention to expand ethnic studies into all classes K-12 of the ESD.

In September of 2021, my relationship with Ethnic Studies Program in the ESD suddenly changed. My role was unexpectedly cut and I moved back into the classroom to help address a teacher shortage. While this meant I had the absolute pleasure of teaching youth again, it also meant that organized efforts for systemic growth of the Ethnic Studies program seemingly halted. As the 2021-2022 academic year ended, I made a difficult decision to leave the ESD and

join a neighboring school district to re-vision their Social Studies program through an ethnic studies lens. The implications of both changes are still being uncovered.

Phases of Our YPAR Project

Our YPAR project unfolded through a series of phases spanning almost 18 months. The reality is that our project has not formally ended, but continues. It is important to reiterate that the focus on this dissertation write up is limited to a small (and important) three month window of our larger project. Given this narrow focus, I wanted to offer a bigger overview of the project, particularly those phases not covered later. As I describe the phases, the primary methods for data collection and analysis are identified.

Phase One: Approval and Establishing Research Protocols

To initiate the project, I connected with ESD leadership in early September of 2021 and shared my dissertation plan with them. Without exception, the leadership supported the plan, giving me the confidence to move forward. I spent September preparing the documentation for the IRB and was granted approval on November 1st, 2021. With university approval in hand, I submitted the necessary documentation for the ESD. Due to the many challenges of re-opening schools the ESD was facing, district leadership was unable to approve the project until February 2022.

During this waiting period and in anticipation of the approval of my research proposal, I also obtained the approval from building administrators. Specifically, if I wanted to recruit co-researchers from their building, ESD policy stated that I needed the permission of each building administrator. Happily, these meetings happened in quick succession and all administrators granted me permission.

Beginning in this phase and lasting throughout the project, I made extensive use of field notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Miles et al., 2014) to document and reflect on our work together. The field notes in this phase were used to keep track of the approval process and work through different barriers that arose. Later in the project, the field notes became a space to record and reflect on each of our sessions. Regardless of when the field notes were taken, they were a valuable tool for record keeping, reflection, and early efforts at analysis (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2018).

Phase Two: Recruiting from Affinity Spaces

With approval obtained, I began the recruitment process. Given the historic role racial affinity spaces played in the development and expansion of ethnic studies in the ESD, it felt right that I should continue this tradition. As such, I focused my recruitment efforts in the racial affinity spaces of the four traditional high schools in the ESD. Each high school had a Black Student Union (BSU), Latinx Student Union (LSU), and Asian Student Union (ASU). Several of the high schools have Arab, Indigenous, and Pacific-Islander Student Unions, but this is not uniform across the district. Similarly, each high school also has a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Club serving the needs of the schools LGBTQ+ students. As articulated by the students themselves, these affinity spaces offer a rare place in their buildings where they feel safe from racism and discrimination that occurs elsewhere in their buildings. Understanding the roles affinity spaces can have in providing individuals and communities with safe havens, I knew I needed to approach these sacred spaces with care.

One way that I sought to approach with care was to seek permission from the youth leaders to enter their youth run affinity spaces versus the adult advisors. Over the next six weeks, I sought and gained permission to meet with 12 different affinity groups across each of the high

schools: four BSUs, two LSUs, three ASUs, two GSAs, one Pacific Islander Club. I also visited one history class at our alternative high school per the recommendation of the building administrator because the school did not have affinity space clubs.

Beginning with a GSA in mid-February and ending with a BSU at the end of March, I actively recruited co-researchers. My presentation varied a bit each time, but I always shared a bit about myself and my family, defined ethnic studies, shared the history of ethnic studies in the ESD, introduced the tentative research project and questions, and then spent 10-20 minutes just talking together about our shared dreams for schooling. Thinking that many students could be more familiar with quantitative research methods, I explicitly noted that conversations like we had were actually a form of qualitative research and the type of research that we could be using. Regardless of the variations, I stressed how the project's goal was to ensure that youth voices continued to be the ones defining ethnic studies in the ESD as it expanded into the K-12. I was excited after each session because when asked who in the room might be interested in joining the project, I frequently gave permission slips to over 50% of club members.

By the end of recruitment, 18 students from four of the five high schools decided to join the project. Due to reasons that ranged from work conflicts and prioritizing school, this number was reduced to a cohort of 11 co-researchers from three of the high schools. See Table 1 below.

Table 1

Co-Researchers by Grade and School

Co-Researchers	School	Grade	Racial Identities
Willa	Edmonds- Woodway	12th	Chinese-American
Maria	High	11th	white / German
Gabby		11th	African-Eritrean American

Joshua		11th	African American / Ghanaian
Kaley	Meadowdale High	12th	Asian-American / Vietnamese
Isabella		9th	Asian-American / Filipino and
Julliana		9th	Indonesian / Filipino
Lizzy		10th	Mexican-American
Katie	Mountlake Terrace High	10th	Mexican-American
Atlis		10th	white American
Finn		9th	white

Phase Three: Foundations For Researching In Solidarity

With our research team formed, we held our first research session on March 29, 2022. As I prepared for this important first day, I understood that I needed to immediately implement certain practices that would lay a foundation for my intentions of researching in solidarity with these youth who agreed to join me. First and most importantly for me was the practice of co-designing our project together (Bautista et al., 2013; Cammarota & Fine, 2008). This practice started at our very first meeting where we collectively determined such basics as when to meet, how to meet, where to meet, how to communicate with each other, and what food to eat when we meet. While it may seem simple, the idea of planning our project around our lives was one way to make this our project. As our project grew, this co-designing grew to include the planning of our sessions. Starting with Session Three and lasting through June, at least one co-researcher and I planned and facilitated sessions. Another important practice to share power was our use of field journals (Bautista et al., 2013; Cammarota, 2016). At our first in-person meeting, I provided each co-researcher with a field journal exactly like mine. While these field journals were to be a form of data collection for me, they also symbolized our status as co-researchers. Our thoughts

and reflections were of equal importance. Interestingly, when I tried to collect these field journals, the co-researchers largely said no. As they explained to me, these journals became something personal and they did not want to share it with me. Given our status as co-researchers, I happily accepted their act of refusal (Simpson, 2007; 2017), keeping these personal insights out of the study.

Researching in solidarity also meant implementing practices that fostered strong relationships between the youth co-researchers. Each co-researcher entered our space with a multitude of identities and expertises (Bautista et al., 2013; Cahill, 2007; Cammarota & Fine, 2008). As such, much of the activities we did in the first five sessions were designed so the co-researchers could learn each other's strengths. For example, in Session Three co-researchers engaged in a stationed reading activity set up to help each other learn more about ethnic studies and highlight a variety of communication skills. This five station activity had co-researchers (a) read a short text, identify phrases, quotes, and/or ideas that stood out on a shared notetaker (big pieces of butcher paper); (b) read and reflect on what everyone wrote down (a gallery walk); and (c) engage in an extended conversation (everyone sat in a big circle and talked) to generate a shared understanding of ethnic studies. Through this process, the co-researchers also had different opportunities to showcase their varied strengths. For example, Willa and Kaley demonstrated a strong ability to challenge the ideas of others directly and respectfully; Gabby, Atlis, and Isabella showed everyone their ability of brainstorming, rapidly producing one idea after another; Maria showed their aptitude for systemic thinking; and Kaley pushed the conversation ever deeper into the heart of ethnic studies through personal narratives. Activities like this were run once or twice each session two through five. Through these acts, the

co-researchers began to see that each person was bringing in a set of strengths that would make the group stronger.

During this phase of the research we also spent a lot of time deciding what our project would be. Described in detail across Understanding One and Two, the co-researchers developed a shared vision for our group around gathering youth voices from across the district. The processes we engaged for this were like our work to collectively define ethnic studies described above; lots of dialogue and collaboration. By the end of Session Five, we decided that the co-researchers would gather student voices from across the ESD, by:

1) Developing a district-wide survey collect a wide range of youth voices around their visions for ethnic studies,
2) Hosting a series of youth forums focused on intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial , K-6, 7-8, and 9-12, to more intimately hear and gather the ethnic studies dreams of students through focus groups and interviews.

This became our project.

Throughout this phase and each future phase, the audio of our sessions was recorded using the Temi phone app. This easy to use and affordably priced app recorded and transcribed our conversations. The affordability of the app also meant that substantial cleaning up was required of each transcript. From gross misspellings to a seeming bias in accurately recognizing the words of the co-researchers who identified as Latinx and Black, each clean up took many hours. Despite being very time consuming, the act of cleaning each transcript required me to deeply listen to and engage with our research process and each co-researcher. Something I came to see as a gift.

I also began using analytic memos in this phase (Miles et al., 2014). About every month during Phase Three, Four, Five, Six, and Seven, I engaged in formal but brief analysis that I recorded as analytic memos. These memos were instrumental in helping me, for example, understand the need for Phase Four as well as a space to reexamine the intent of the project. A frequent memo topic revolved around the question, "What am I studying?"

Phase Four: Developing a Shared Vision Outside of the White Gaze and Interviews

Throughout these early sessions, I began to notice that many of the co-researchers seemed to be approaching our work firmly grounded in white culture. This was true for co-researchers who identified as white as well as Black, Latinx, and Asian American (see Understandings One). This was concerning on many levels, least that YPAR projects must be critical in nature, focused on illuminating and challenging systems of power (Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threatts, 2008); including white supremacy. If our YPAR collective was going to transform society critically, collectively, and positively (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017; Ginwright, 2008; Tuck et al., 2008), we needed to find a way to address the ways whiteness seemed to be threatening our project. We needed to engage in this work outside of the white gaze. Using San Pedro's (2019) work on culturally disrupting pedagogies as a guide, we engaged in a series of activities meant to disrupt the ways that whiteness seemed to be shaping our project. Covered in detail in Understandings Two and Three, we spent Sessions Six through Ten actively working to disrupt whiteness in ways that allowed us to unite around a shared vision that existed beyond the white gaze.

During this phase, we also engaged in one-on-one conversations (Bautista et al., 2013; Tuck et al, 2008). These conversations sought to provide a more intimate space where a co-researcher and I could spend time conversing around key ideas that were arising in this phase

of the project. For example, I asked each co-researcher about their understanding of whiteness and growing understanding of ethnic studies. When asked if we could have these individual conversations, a few co-researchers again engaged in their own act of refusal by saying no (Simpson, 2007; 2017). In the end, Kaley, Maria, Gabby, Finn, Atlis, and Katie agreed to the conversation.

My Dissertation Pause

This is the place where the dissertation write up stops. Constrained by a time schedule of the university system (and an urgent need to graduate), the decision was made to focus on these first few stages of our research process as we came together, developed our dream, and worked towards disrupting the ways of whiteness from our work. While these first few phases are full of rich experiences, we were not done. We continued to meet over the summer and into the fall, and as of spring 2023 we looked for a way to collectively wrap the project up. To offer a sense of where the project continued, I've offered a summary of these phases.

Phase Five: Summer of Interdependence and Coding

When the school year ended in late June of 2022, we spent a session planning our summer. Entering this space, I had hoped that the co-researchers would agree to keep meeting some over the summer, to keep the work going. To my amazement, not only did they want to meet over summer, but they wanted to meet much more than I could have expected. We agreed to meet five times, three hours each at a local library, over Zoom, and hybrid. We decided the day before how we would meet based upon everyone's schedule.

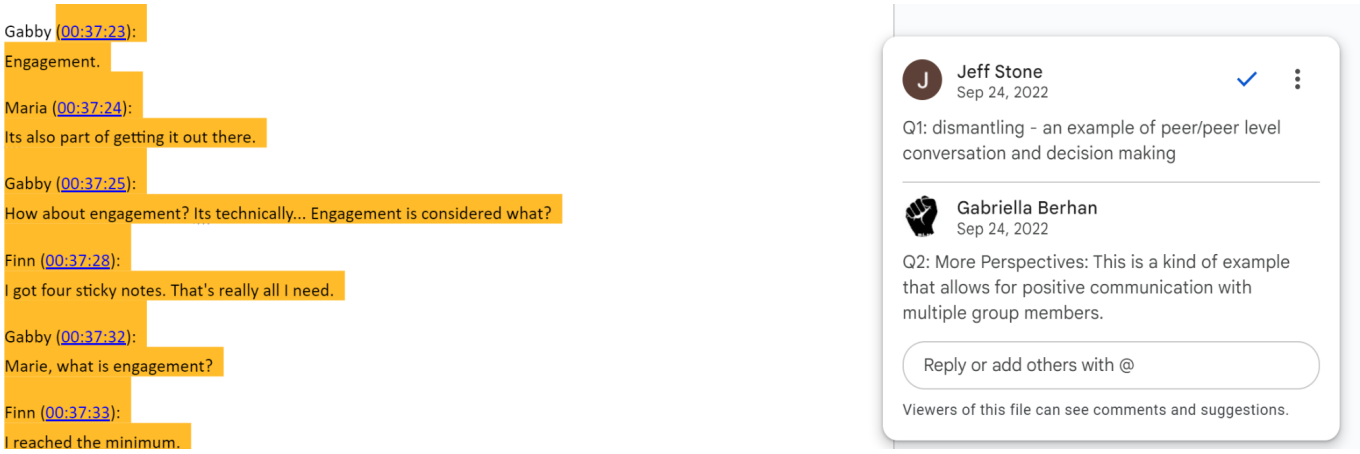
We were a smaller group. Three co-researchers were out of the country visiting family all summer and two had jobs. Summer vacations happily disrupted all our plans. We also saw three active members leave the group, Kaley, Willa, and Finn. This change in size also impacted how

we were functioning. From Sessions Five through Ten, when working on the plans for the gathering of student voices, we split into the following three work groups: (a) Survey, a group working on creating our survey; (b) Forum, a group planning the different student data gathering events; and (c) Outreach, a group promoting our plans. With summer and reduced participation, we dropped these divisions and united. Over these five sessions, we drafted our survey, located venues for the forum, outlined the forum, and spent time on these warm summer days just chatting and joking.

Summer also became a time for data analysis. Beginning in July and lasting through early fall, we coded the cleaned up transcripts from Sessions Two through Ten and the individual conversations. All co-researchers were invited to collaboratively code these transcripts with just Joshua and Gabby wanting to try coding. Through a modified coding clinic (Annamma, 2018; Cahill et al., 2019), I taught Joshua and Gabby what coding is and the methods we would be using. With a strong desire to maintain student voices at the center of our work, we predominantly used in vivo coding with some descriptive coding (Miles et al., 2014). Our primary method of coding used the comment feature on GoogleDocs. Figure 1 below offers a brief glimpse into the process. In this case, Gabby and I were co-coding Session Six. By this point we had a coding manual (Miles et al., 2014) constructed through a category construction process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Our practice was to highlight a passage that we thought illustrated a code and offer a brief explanation for added clarity. In this case, I highlighted a conversation and offered a descriptive code of *dismantling* and Gabby used the in vivo code *More Perspectives*.

Figure 1

Sample of Coding Process



Given the quantity to code, Joshua and Gabby co-coded two or three transcripts each, and I did most of the coding individually.

As part of the coding process Joshua, Gabby, and I started, we co-developed a coding manual that the three of us thought was accurate. Broken down using three guiding questions, we ended up with nine categories: (a) a humanizing space, (b) a space to confront white supremacy, (c) a space of voices of self-determination, (d) personal experiences, (e) critical lens, (f) power of voices, (g) systemic change, (h) in classes, and (i) fight. Each category had between one and 10 individual codes that were developed over three rounds of transcript coding. Figure 2 is an excerpt from our final coding manual.

Figure 2

Excerpt From Coding Manual

Personal Experiences (Personally) When a co-researcher personal desires and/or experiences shape the work.			Critical Lens		Power of Voices	
Activism (merging into one)	*activism*	co-r's prior work in activism influences their work in this project	*criticize*	Already aware of ways that the district needs to change.	*More perspectives*	Positive examples of what can happen when feeling multiple povs are used
	So quickly	Youth recognizing the complexity of organizing large events.	*Voices get lost*	recognizing that systems often soften/whiten work to make it more palatable, erasing the voices of the youth.	*Collect data*	The desire to know more perspectives is the key to the project.
	Other youth too	bringing in experiences of working in other activism spaces	*A lot of us know now*	Co-researchers are coming in already with a sense of injustices in the world; a critical lens already exists. Already aware of the impacts of whiteness.	*Bunch of student voices*	Calling out the need to have student voices driving force of the project
Identity	when a co-r recognizes that their identities impact how they approach this project.		*After school*	Noting the liminal space that clubs and other spaces have when it comes to addresses issues of race, identity, etc. AND how it is a barrier.	*Our voices are powerful*	A recognition that youth voices, especially from marginalized communities, are powerful
Family	the roles family play in shaping our understandings of the world				*What she said*	When the co-researchers say or act in ways that are building a collective/shared dream.

Given the narrow focus of the written portion of the dissertation and the wide variety of codes that emerged, our data holds potential for many more insights.

Phase 6: Listening to Student Voice

When school resumed in the fall of 2022, we reconvened. Back from visiting family, Maria and Katie rejoined Joshua, Gabby, Atlis, Isa, and I. From here on out, we were it. Having left summer with a strong sense of what our field trip would be, the seven of us set about making it happen. Over the next two months, we met weekly to craft our field trip and recruit students from across the district. The co-researchers focused on the field trip (planning the events they would eventually use to learn what their ESD peers wanted for the future of ethnic studies) and recruiting students to their field trip (see the Discussion for more details on their efforts). I largely focused on navigating the ESD policies and protocols for field trips. Despite a few building administrator erected barriers, this went fairly smoothly.

One reason this phase went relatively smoothly was the support of Dr. Sally Guzman. As the Family and Community Engagement Coordinator for the ESD (and longtime friend), Dr. Guzman worked behind the scenes. This included garnering support for the field trip from district leadership, handling phone calls from administrators, arranging free lunches for students,

and connecting me with Foundry10 (a local non-profit who supports youth-led activism for education) who paid for the school buses. While not formally a part of our project, Dr. Guzman was essential to our success.

Phase 7: Analysis

After taking a month off to rest and recoup from our super successful field trip, we met from late January through early March to analyze all the data we gathered at the field trip. While this exciting work is outside the scope of this paper, our collective analysis revealed a story that we felt the students who attended the field trip wanted us to share as we advocate for the expansion of ethnic studies in the ESD. This story identifies key areas of change that need to occur, actions that should be taken to achieve these changes, and an overall dream for their educational experience in the ESD that will shape our work going forward. This dream, as we are understanding it now, is the futurity we now working toward:

> Students want a schooling experience where we feel that our communities are strengthened, that we don't feel like we're alone and hurtling through space. This would mean that we leave school with a better understanding of and connection to our people. Where students see the beauty of our communities as well as our classmates. When one feels this connection, classes become safe spaces where students can appreciate and engage with people who identify from different racial groups and LGBTQ+ communities because they are not blamed for their realities. This safe space is free of hate and where Black, Indigenous, Asian, Native, Transgender, and Hispanic students each know that they matter. (Stone, Group Session 28)

Phase 8: Transitional Action

As of the end of March 2023, nearly one year since our first session, we have been talking about how we will act on the dreams our ESD peers have gifted us as well as how we will exit our research project in a manner that it can keep going. Gabby, Maria, and Joshua are all due to graduate in 10 weeks. Katie and Atlis will be seniors next year. Isa is a junior. I'm about to graduate too. And we're all feeling a need to move on while not letting this dream fade away. After much discussion, we've landed on the idea of building a coalition with the ethnic studies teachers of the ESD. We don't know what this means yet, but we recognize the power that can arise when multiple voices advocate for a shared dream. We're working to arrange a meeting right now. Our fingers are crossed and our efforts to find liberation will continue.

Towards A Collective Dream

It's Thursday, the 14th of April, the first time the co-researchers and I are meeting in person. Two weeks earlier, we had met on Zoom to collaboratively determine the details of our first meeting. Through the awkwardness of Zoom, we had settled on meeting Thursday afternoons, from 4:30 to 6:30. With youth from four of the five high schools being part of the project at this point, we decided to rotate from building to building, starting with Meadowdale High School. This worked for me too because I taught classes there each morning and knew the perfect place to meet, the C-Pod. With about 1,500 students, Meadowdale High School is a modestly large campus comprising three main buildings tightly packed together. In general, the classrooms at Meadowdale were far from private; thin walls and a history of teachers using their white rage (Love, 2019) to disrupt anything that smelled of racial justice. C-Pod was different. C-Pod was separated from most classrooms, literally in another building of just four classrooms around a shared common space. Of the four teachers in this pod, three were known supporters of ethnic studies. With relative safety, I made the decision to meet our first three sessions in C-Pod.

C-Pod was also located directly next to the parking lot, so it was easy to help students and families find the place. As I was finishing setting up in the common space, placing chairs in a circle and making sure the pizzas were ready to eat, I looked out the window and started to laugh. Out of Kaley's Toyota Corolla stumbled Vyna, Jilliana, Isabella, Ryan, Andrea, and Kaley. I had no idea how they all fit into her car, but I took it as a good sign that some of the youth were coming into this space already in community with each other. By the time 4:30 rolled around, Joshua, Maria, Finn, Willa, Katie, Atlis, Jesse, and Tia joined us. And as would become pretty normal, Gabby's dad dropped her off 15 minutes late and she apologized profusely.

While several of the youth joining us today chose to not to return (Tia, Ryan, and Andrea) and some stuck around until our original end date of June (Willa, Jesse, Vyna, Jilliana, Finn, and Kaley), our core group was here. Nearly six months later, Gabby, Joshua, Katie, Isabella, Maria, and Atlis would name themselves and their mission. They were Students for Ethnic Studies.

But that would be later, we had other work to do first. Entering this project, one of my goals was to co-create a space in which the co-researchers could use their existing expertise and knowings of the world around them to collectively design and implement a YPAR project that would illuminate the shared dreams that the students in the ESD had for their own schooling. With the methodology to support the development of this collective dream described in the Methods chapter, this chapter seeks to name the ways the emic knowledges (what I'm calling *knowings*) the co-researchers entered our ecosystem with shaped and reshaped their collective dream for the project. These knowings not only defined what our project would be, but they also became the pathway our project would take to get there.

Through analysis, three major knowings rose to the surface. One knowing that was shared by every co-researcher was their already developed/ing senses of injustices related to whiteness. This collective understanding of the injustices of whiteness seemed to serve as a common and shared grounding that the co-researchers could unite around. Interestingly and importantly to an ethnic studies focused YPAR project, it quickly became apparent that the depth of understanding of whiteness were not the same among the co-researchers. Black, Latinx, and Asian-American co-researchers held a much deeper, more experientially rooted understanding of whiteness than the white co-researchers (Guinier, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This experiential expertise of the Black, Latinx, and Asian-American co-researchers proved essential.

A second knowing that shaped our project was the belief in the power of voice. While not every co-researcher talked about voice, two major conversations around voice came about in our early sessions that were key in shaping what our project would become. For some, they entered our project aware of the power their individual voice can have in influencing other individuals and systems. That said, this knowledge came with the warning that it is extremely difficult to be the lone voice, particularly the lone youth voice, when seeking change. The other conversation around voice was the understanding that exposure to multiple voices and the perspectives that they are sharing is very valuable. Together, these two thoughts on voice became a throughline in shaping their collective dream for our project.

The final knowing that arose was largely confined to one co-researcher, but was essential to the entire process. It seemed like several co-researchers came into our space with an understanding that the more voices one has, the better they will be able to address the injustices they see in the world, regardless of the racial identity of the voices. For a project that was grounded in and fighting for ethnic studies, this general desire to include all voices seemed off. One co-researcher entered our shared space with an extensive knowledge of ethnic studies that seemed to function like the wind, rising on occasion to push a conversation to be more aligned with radical and ethnic studies.

Injustices of Whiteness

"It's Time To Open Up"

Without exception, one injustice the youth who joined the project shared was an awareness of the overwhelming dominance whiteness was having on their education. Critical race theorists and critical white scholars have long noted the relationships between whiteness and education (Gillborn, 2019; Harris, 1993; Leonardo, 2002; Leonardo 2013; Lewis, 2004; Mathias

et al., 2014). Throughout Sessions Two through Five, co-researchers rarely if ever used the phrase whiteness to describe how their education was being impacted. They typically used variations of the word eurocentrism in a way that most aligned with Leonardo's (2002) definition of whiteness and Lewis' (2004) definition of hegemonic whiteness. In the *Souls of White Folks* (2002), Leonardo discussed the many facets of whiteness and offers a summary statement that equates whiteness to "... a racial perspective or worldview" (p. 31). Lewis (2004) noted the impact of having a worldview grounded in whiteness. They note how whiteness "...provides frameworks for understanding our social existence, providing a way of making sense of the world" (p. 632), and when this way of making sense of the world becomes naturalized as the status quo, it can be termed hegemonic whiteness (p. 632). Again, the co-researchers did not use these phrases and terms, but the stories and experiences they shared in these early meetings reflected an awareness that this was their current reality.

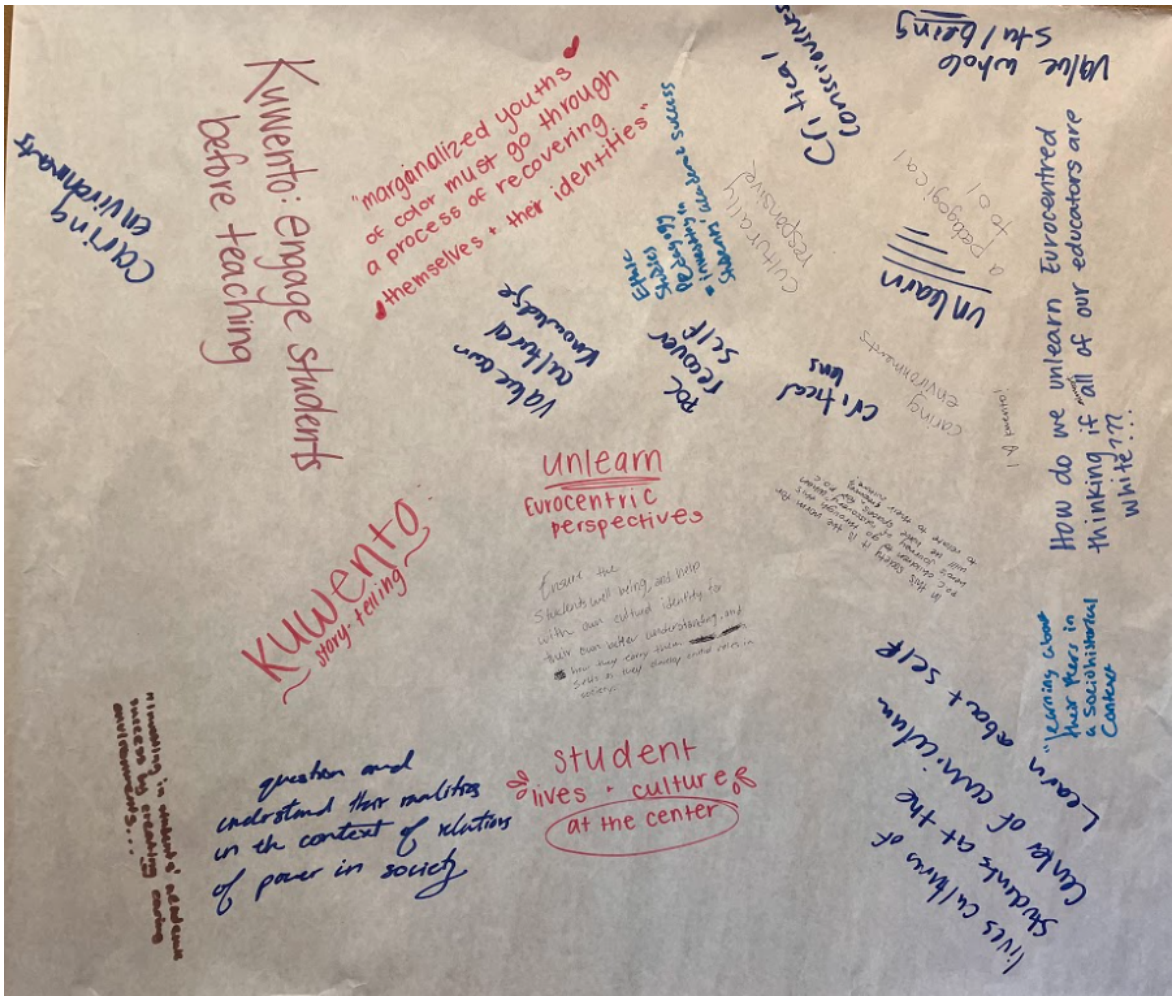
Coming into the project, only Kaley (Asian/Vietnamese) had actually taken an ethnic studies course and/or would say they were confident in what ethnic studies meant. During our second meeting together, I designed an activity to support the development of a shared understanding of ethnic studies. In the safety of our C-Pod, I set up four stations. Each had a large sheet of poster paper, a set of markers, and an excerpt from *Rethinking Ethnic Studies* on Ethnic Studies Pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019). Working at their own pace, the co-researchers and I worked our way around the Pod, reading and writing down key ideas and phrases that stood out to us as being important.

Figure 3 below captures what stood out to us after we read an excerpt on ethnic studies pedagogy. As the co-researchers were writing their ideas down, I realized that I should have assigned markers to co-researchers, which would have allowed me to identify who wrote what,

but it was too late. I did not want to interrupt their work. So I don't know who wrote what. With the idea that this activity would help us develop a shared understanding of ethnic studies, for some of the co-researchers the idea of unlearning an Eurocentric perspective was of great importance for at least three of the co-researchers, who wrote variations of the phrase. Both at the time and when coded, I took the fact that some of the co-researchers were calling out the need to unlearn the ways whiteness was an indication that they were already aware that whiteness was already impacting them.

Figure 3

Co-Researcher Created Poster, April 21, 2022



Equally interesting was that two of the co-researcher wrote down *kuwento* as being an important phrase. During the activity, I had forgotten what kuwento meant. And as I returned to the reading to find a definition, I was reminded that it was a form of Filipino storytelling that the reading described as a useful classroom teaching method. I understood this as a pedagogy that is grounded in a Filipino worldview for interacting with others. Kuwento works to draw people into a conversation and help them stay engaged (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019). After some asking around, I learned that Jilliana (Filipina) was one of the students who wrote this down. I asked them if there were teachers using that in their classes right now. With a little chuckle, they gave a clear, "no." While Jilliana didn't say much, there were implications around whiteness and hegemonic whiteness, the fact that they recognized that kuwento was missing from their education suggested that they knew that their cultural way of being are not present in school. In fact, their chuckled *no* response seems like a recognition that Filipino culture is absent in school, maybe even unwelcome. Schooling systems grounded in whiteness and hegemonic whiteness leave no room for ways of being not aligned with similar values. Jilliana seemed to know this coming into the project.

As we continued to meet and build a shared understanding of ethnic studies, I conducted one-on-one conversations with the co-researchers. In each of the interviews, the topic of whiteness arose in one way or another. When coding these interviews, I noticed something interesting about the specificity of the awareness the co-researchers had on the ways whiteness and hegemonic whiteness was impacting their education. For the white identifying students, these knowings were more broad and fairly impersonal.

As Finn (white) and I sat below the sweeping staircases that led to the cafeteria, counseling offices, and locker rooms doing our one-on-one conversation after school one spring

day, I asked Finn about his dreams for ethnic studies. After a moment of reflection, Finn shared a frustration he repeatedly shared during our weekly meetings, which demonstrated he understood one way hegemonic whiteness was showing up in his history class. Finn shared that he kept learning about European and U.S. history and not the histories from "...all across the world." He went to say that he understood "..that we need to learn our history. But what about everyone else?" Each time Finn brought up this frustration, he kept his responses to what he was, or wasn't, learning in his history class.

A couple of days later, Atlis (white) and I were sitting under the same staircase having our formal one-on-one conversation when the content of their history courses came up. Like Finn, Atlis shared their frustration that their teachers "...just go over the same things every year. And I know that's good to remember and stuff, but every year it's the same way of teaching. And almost the same textbooks." A few minutes later, they added, "And I think it's really important to start doing other things, learning more about different cultures and not blocking out everything." I find Finn's and Atlis' responses similar. Finn's "what about everyone else" and Atlis' "learning about different cultures" comments suggests that both have an awareness that the worldview of whiteness is actively shaping what they are and are not learning in their history classes. While an important insight to have, their other comments related to the ways whiteness impacts seemed to stop there. As if their awareness of whiteness was limited to the general and not at a personal level (Cabrera, 2018; Lewis, 2004).

When the Black, Latinx, and Asian-American co-researchers discussed the ways whiteness impacted their schooling, their focus was different, more personal. In our one-to-one conversations, Gabby (African-Eritrean American) expressed their awareness of whiteness in a way that it impacts her beyond a surface level. For our one-on-one conversation, Gabby and I

found a space at our school. I say our school because while I started each morning at Meadowdale High, I finished each day at Edmonds-Woodway High, where Gabby attended. Sitting in the common space outside my office where we often sat and chatted after classes as teachers and students wandered about, I asked about their dream for this project. Gabby shared that their dream is:

> …that people could be able to learn other cultures and their background besides the white European culture and their background. Cause I already know, I know their white people and the whole European culture inside and out. You ask me, …it's time to open up past our …white gaze.

Gabby continued, noting that she, along with other POC, "...get tired of it." Like Finn and Atlis, Gabby recognized the content limits imposed by whiteness. Powerfully, her voice cracked as she shared how tired she was with that reality. It got personal. As I listened to the frustration in her voice, it seemed like something deeper was going on. Gabby was aware of the ways she was being intellectually and emotionally impacted by whiteness in her classes. I got the feeling that Gabby found the education she was getting was so steeped in whiteness that it was simply intellectually dull and insulting. She seemed to be craving something more personal and relevant out of their education. This craving for something more was a powerful knowing she was able to bring into our community.

When Katie (Mexican-American) and I had our one-on-one conversation a couple of days later, Katie shared similar sentiments as Finn, Atlis, and Gabby. As Katie and I sat at a local coffee house, bristling with conversations, coffee orders being shouted across the room, and the heat from a fireplace warming us all, Katie made a comment that she thought "...it'd be really important to just teach about different cultures and stuff like that," but their reasoning quickly

and repeatedly got deeper. Katie shared how only learning through whiteness, putting the stories and cultures of white people above others, made it seem that, "...as a person of color, that does kind of make you feel not valid." Connecting the impacts of whiteness on her education to a perceived devaluation of personal herself suggested a deeper knowing of whiteness. In fact, Katie ended up sharing that she had a goal of having elementary students "...not go through what I went through…I think my main goal is for elementary [students] to feel acknowledged in their education. Specifically POC elementary schoolers." Sparing future generations of students from the invalidation they experienced in school is a profound understanding of whiteness in education and a powerful underlying motivation for being part of this project.

"A Lot of Us Now Know"

In addition to their awareness of ways whiteness impacted their education, every co-researcher entered our shared space understanding that the larger world outside other classrooms were also full of injustices. Like their experiences with whiteness in education, the Black, Latinx, and Asian-American co-researchers seemed to make deeper and more systemic connections to these injustices.

Coming into Session Two, our first day in C-Pod, one of my goals was to have the co-researchers practice being researchers. The activity I planned was very simple. Prior to arriving at this session, the co-researchers were asked to complete one of two tasks. One task had students reflect and respond to the questions, "What is your dream for ethnic studies?" and "What actions should we take to make your dreams come true?" The other option was to ask a friend these same questions and record their responses. After completing the ethnic studies activity described in the previous section, I asked students to rejoin our circle and pull out their

reflections and/or interviews. Almost every co-researcher chose the self-reflection option with Atlis choosing to interview a friend.

Sitting around the circle in C-Pod, I explained to the group that we were going to practice being researchers by reading another person's dreams and actions for ethnic studies. We started by throwing our reflections and interviews into a pile at the center of our circle. Being part of this research process myself, I placed my reflection among the co-researchers. After a quick shuffle, I asked everyone to grab another person's reflection/interview and sit back down. After the usual quick adjustments because someone ended up with their own reflection, I asked everyone to read their peer's work. As they read, they were also asked to identify this person's dreams for ethnic studies as well as the actions they wanted to take to make their dreams a reality. Everyone sat around the circle quietly reading and processing this other dream.

When folks seemed done and ready to go, I asked the co-researchers to form smaller groups to discuss the dream and actions they had just read. I placed my phone with Finn (white), Atlis (white), Gabby (African-Eritrean American) and Willa (Chinese-American) to record their conversation. But after just a few minutes, Jesse (Puerto Rican/Venezuelan), Katie (Mexican-American), and Maria (white) came over and formed a larger group. As the group began to converse in earnest, the following conversation occurred. I'm calling this particular segment out because all but one member of this seven member group contributed, shared, or elevated a societal injustice that they each understand to be. Taken as a whole, it illustrates this idea of a shared understanding. Picking up midway through a conversation, Atlis is speaking.

> Atlis: I feel like we should also take away holidays. Now I know that's a big thing, but some holidays now, why do we celebrate this? Like Columbus day? Like why? A lot of us now know that he slaughtered people.

Finn: Slaughtered people and convinced the king to get a boat.

Jesse: Hasn't Columbus Day already been changed to Indigenous Peoples' Day?

Finn: Yeah.

Gabby: In some places they still celebrate Columbus Day.

Collective: Yeah.

Willa: But those are the stubborn people. So we can't really...

Finn: Washington is a more democratic of the state.

Willa: It's difficult to try to convince people to stop doing…<inaudible due to background noise>.

Maria: I've read some stuff about what's going on in Texas and banning books left and right. You know. They've changed the language cuz they always want America to be the hero. We need to remove that kind of agenda.

Finn: Personally I'm anti-patriarchy America. And it's like, I don't like it.

Maria: It's really sad that the conservatives have claimed that American flag as a symbol. Cause now like if you're liberal, you can't have the flag up. Like you can't be proud, I guess, of your country without being perceived as far right. You know?

Atlis: Yeah.

Finn: Yeah.

Maria: And that's, I feel like that's one issue, one thing that's causing kind of a partisan divide. Cause the Republicans think that Democrats are unpatriotic and are anti-America. And really our political opinions are just to improve America.

The level of conversation is superficial. After all, it was their first session in person and learning who each other was. But this conversation covered a broad swath of national debates; Indigenous

vs. Columbus day, attacks on critical race theory, the patriarchy, and the deep partisan divide in America. For me, this conversation seemed to show that the co-researchers are entering this space with at least some level of understanding of injustices that exist across a spectrum of topics.

This shared knowing around injustices ended up being really important for a project centered around ethnic studies. Two goals of ethnic studies are to (a) disrupt systems of oppression both in and outside of schools (de los Rios et al., 2015; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020) and (b) grow critically conscious students (Cammarota, 2016; San Pedro, 2019). While the intent was for the students to discuss their dreams for ethnic studies, these conversations also proved to be invaluable as a space for the co-researchers to demonstrate to each other that they possessed some degree of awareness of the ways systems of oppression function in society and demonstrate that they were developing their critical consciousness of how the world was functioning around them. This shared awareness seemed key, possibly allowing the co-researchers a space to model their own ongoing ruptures of possibility and hope (King, 2020; San Pedro, 2019). In this conversation, we heard the white identifying co-researchers Atlis, Finn, and Maria share their understandings that the world is an unjust place. Maria talked about her awareness of racial textbooks, Finn about the patriarchy, Atlis discussed their disgust of Columbus. As this is happening, Jesse, Katie, Gabby, and Willa largely listened and seem to urge Maria, Finn, and Atlis to keep talking with short bursts of affirmation, Gabby's "In some places they still celebrate Columbus Day," and Willa's "It's difficult to try to convince people to stop" comments seem to encourage Maria and Finn to keep talking, to further demonstrate their level of awareness and the degree to which they have already worked to disrupt whiteness in their own lives. As the co-researchers, particularity the white identifying co-researchers, shared their understandings of

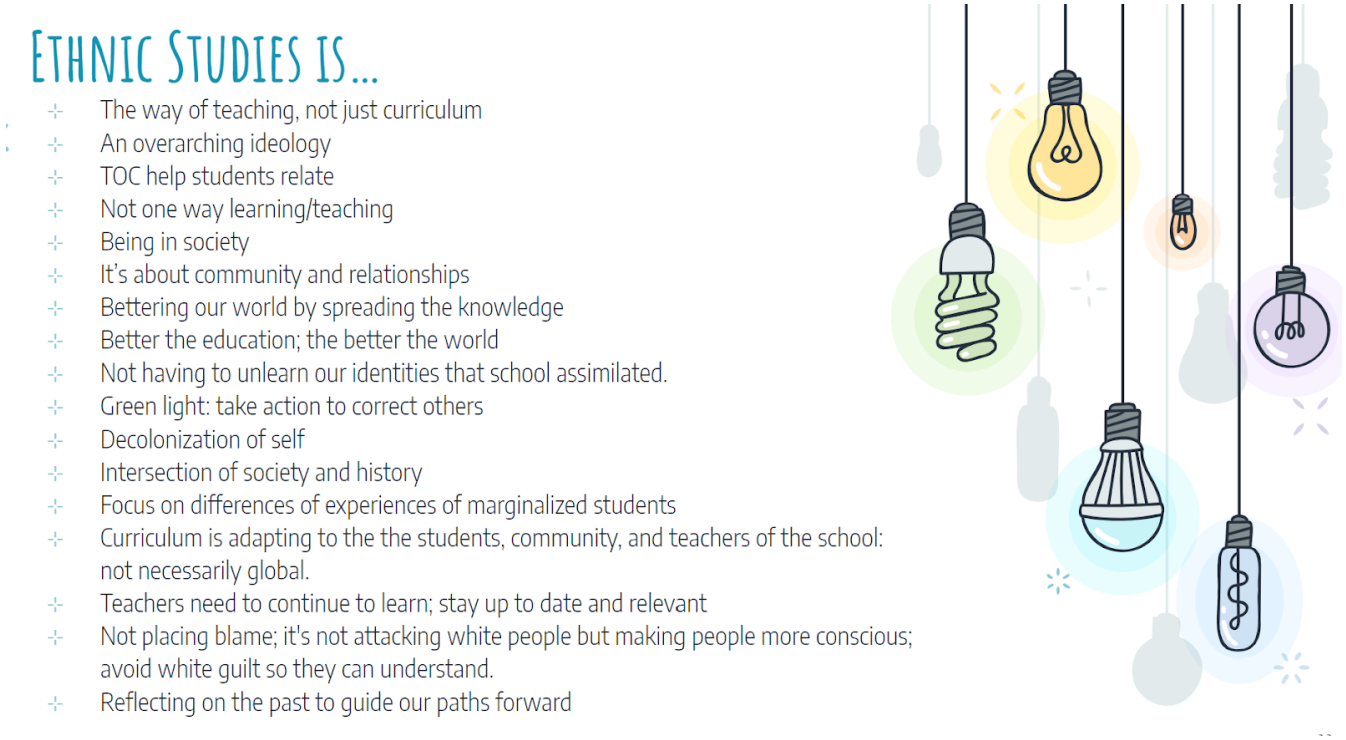
the world, it was like they are trying to signal to Jesse, Katie, Gabby, and Willa that had been engaging in their own rupturous learnings, telling them that they are safe to work with. Still superficial. Still important to the development of the group focusing on ethnic studies.

Like their experiences with whiteness, the Black, Latinx, and Asian-American co-researchers were largely able to move beyond surface level conversations and make deeper connections to the injustice they were calling out. In many cases, the connections showed that the Black, Latinx, and Asian-American co-researchers see (at least to some degree) how they are impacted by systems of oppression.

Having just completed the "what is ethnic studies?" poster activity described above, we moved into an adjoining room where the co-researchers could collectively process their thoughts on ethnic studies. The classroom we were borrowing was set up in a fairly traditional manner; teacher's workstation at the front, rows of student desks facing forwards, not great, but it was our space for now. As I sat with my laptop, projecting on the overhead display, I asked the co-researchers to share their current understanding of ethnic studies and recorded their thoughts on a Google Slide. After quickly calling out their major takeaways, Lizzy (Mexican American) shared a personal key takeaway, ethnic studies is a "Focus on differences of experiences of marginalized students."

Figure 4

Co-Researcher Responses, April 21, 2022



Seemingly inspired by Lizzy's takeaway, Jilliana (Filipina) spoke up and shared one of their current frustrations, the college application process. Though this would eventually change, when we were talking as a larger group, Jilliana wasn't speaking much so I knew that this was a big deal for them. Even though Jilliana was only a 9th grader at this point in the project, she was already planning to attend college and struggling with the fact that the only school counselors that were available to support her in this process were white. And as a white person counselor,

> ...they don't understand what people of color, the students are going through. Especially with college education. Like most of our parents didn't do college, so we don't understand it and they don't understand what we're not getting.

Here, Jilliana highlighted her awareness of the systemic barriers students of color face when seeking college. Her "we don't understand it" suggested that this is part of her experience, that as she is trying to learn the college application hustle, there isn't the same familiar support as non-first generation college students have.

Gabby, who was a junior for this conversation, added onto Jilliana's injustice by noting how the college application process is further impacted when you're part of a family who has migrated to the United States.

> And also a lot of things I'm doing as first generation, being first generation American, Having immigrant parents stuff, the culture imbalance sometimes is difficult. And also like if you're not gonna get support from home, where is that support?

Like Jilliana, Gabby deepened the conversation through her personal experiences of being Black/African and having immigrant parents unfamiliar with the college application process in the United States and counselors who just don't understand. Although they are not naming the systems level forces working against them, Jilliana's and Gabby's experiences of applying to colleges as a first generation students shows their awareness of systemic racism works to erect barriers to keep students of color from post-secondary education (Acevedo-Gil, 2019; Hines et al., 2019) and how those impact them on a personal level.

These awarenesses of the ways systems impact individuals also came up during our one-on-one conversations. One great example came up when Kaley and I unexpectedly had our conversation. From Session Three through ten and in various combinations, Willa, Gabby, Kaley, and I co-planned and co-led each session. As Kaley and I were wrapping up one of these planning sessions on Zoom, I asked if we could schedule a conversation in the near future. To my surprise, she said she could do it "right now." After a quick reset, we had our one-on-one conversation right then. At one point, Kaley and I were talking about our families and the ways they impact our lives and we ended up talking about systemic sexism. Like Jilliana and Gabby above, Kaley discussed sexism in ways that showed she had a personal connection to the topic as well as a sense of how systemic sexism impacted her directly. In the conversation, Kaley shared

her understanding of the patriarchy, living in a male dominated culture, and immediately went into how she has reflected on the ways she does and doesn't see this in her family. Noting that she and her sister are being raised by their dad, Kaley happily discusses that she does not see her dad as being sexist that she has not had "...the experience of men are just dominating, or men are the center, or male centered values and things. And I think that is passed down to me." In what felt like a rare positive conversation around systemic oppression, it seemed that Kaley understood how sexism functions as a system by talking about male dominance. Importantly, her comments also suggest an awareness that systems can be refused or disrupted by the actions of individuals like her father.

Making these connections between injustices of the world, like living within a patriarchal system and the college application process, and your personal life was something that the co-researchers who identified as Black, Latinx, and Asian-American repeatedly seemed able to articulate. Collectively and to varying degrees, they were able to see themselves in relation to larger systems. While the white co-researchers may have been able to make these connections, these deeper or personal connections did not arise during the large or small group conversations. Even when prompted to do so during future white affinity space conversations, the white co-researchers seemed to struggle to make personal connections to larger injustices of our society.

One way to understand this difference can be found in San Pedro's work on CDP. According to San Pedro (2019), CDP works to make "...visible the socializing of Whiteness" and the "...disruption of hegemonic cultural norms" (p. 1196-1197) because of the ways whiteness is systemically made invisible. San Pedro further noted that these "...norms, identities, and ideologies [of whiteness] are not always realized or understood, particularly by those who may

benefit from whiteness" (p. 1210), and one of the reasons CDP was developed out of their work with white students. Using this lens, the overall surface level contributions that Atlis, Finn, and Maria offered to this early stage of the project made a bit more sense. It suggests that they understood that whiteness, and other forms of systemic oppression, cause injustices throughout society. Yet, these understandings remain superficial because they are systemically benefiting from these injustices and the impacts are (to some degree) invisible to their eyes. This felt different to the experiences shared by the Black, Latinx, and Asian-American co-researchers. It seemed that the co-researchers who were Black, Latinx, and Asian American had a different filter that was shopping how they were understanding whiteness because their lives are intimately impacted by whiteness and other systems. Stated more directly, Gabby, Jilliana, and Kaley seemed to offer examples of the ways Black, Latinx, and Asian American youth see themselves in relation to the systems of oppression while Maria, Finn, and Atlis had not yet seen themselves in relation to these same systems at such a level. As San Pedro noted, this is not unexpected. Nor was this the fault of Maria, Finn, or Atlis. This is how whiteness works.

After School and At the Margins

There was a particular injustice that came up just twice in these early meetings but the degree to which the group collectively agreed, it seemed to become one of the grounding objectives that our project would seek to address- being kept at the margins. Specifically, the co-researchers noted that the spaces where they felt the most safe, comfortable, and seen at their schools (their LSU, ASU, BSU, and GSA clubs) were limited to times outside the official school day.

In the first occurrence, Jilliana (Filipina and ASU member) brought up the topic of marginal spaces during our third meeting by sharing a frustration with how the existing school

system limited larger student engagement in clubs like the ASU because they must meet after school. This seemed to prompt Gabby and Lizzy to share their experiences with their BSU and LSU. Gabby is the president of the BSU at her school and was frustrated that she can't get more students to regularly attend the meetings because "...it doesn't always fit with student schedules cuz they're so busy and stuff. We need to find a schedule that works with students, but also works with staff who [facilitate] those meetings." Lizzy followed Gabby with a similar frustration with the LSU she leads, adding insight into the potential harm of being limited to after school spaces. After noting the positivity that affinity clubs like LSU can have in efforts to belong in school, Lizzy shared her frustration with LSU being in the margins. The LSU at her school was once bigger and well attended by students, allowing them to make murals and host larger community events, positive experiences that made her feel like she belonged. But now she feels that because it is so difficult for students to stay after school for meetings, the LSU is diminished, "...kinda pushed aside" by the schooling system.

The second occurrence arose a few weeks later. Maria (white and GSA member) noted how she had been reflecting on this conversation and the barriers rigid school schedules create for collective student work and affinity space gatherings. Referring to them as supplemental spaces, Maria defined these as, "The spaces that we're a part of that are on the outskirts of the system, like the clubs that we're in and the things that we're doing in addition to school, but not the system and the big umbrella that we're operating under." I appreciated Maria's attempt to articulate how she sees the system pushing these youth spaces of safety aside, outside the large systemic umbrella, forcing students who want to be part of these spaces to navigate the additional labor, beyond the school work they are already doing, to attend. The unfairness of being forced to the outskirts of the ESD was clearly felt.

This briefly mentioned but wholly shared frustration with being forced to the margins ended up being a key driver of this project. As would be clarified over the next few meetings, the focus of our project would be to connect with students from across the district to build a shared vision for how ethnic studies could be implemented in all grades and subjects across the district. This frustration of being in the margins led to the eventual idea of a field trip. Emerging in later weeks (more on this in Understanding Three), the co-researchers were adamant that the event we were planning had to be held on a regular school day and during regular school hours. They felt that this would increase the accessibility of our event by allowing students regardless of the lives they lived after school to attend. They did not want our event to perpetuate the use of marginal spaces. One likely reason for this insistence is that every co-researcher was recruited from a marginal space within the district. As active members of a BSU, LSU, ASU, and/or GSA the co-researchers were already part of organizations founded in and existing in the margins of the ESD. They knew from personal experience that they did not want to continue this practice.

This focus on marginal spaces is also aligned with the ways ethnic studies is often implemented in and across school systems. Frequently offered to high school students as stand-alone courses (Dee & Penner, 2017; de los Rios et al., 2015) and/or opt-in classes (Cabrera et al., 2014; Vasquez & Altshuler, 2017) in the humanities, ethnic studies courses offer students much needed access to culturally relevant, sustaining, and/or revitalizing learning experiences (Fernandez, 2019; Lee & McCarty, 2017; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Yet, as stand-alone courses or separate programs, ethnic studies courses still function at the margins with the majority of curricula continuing to perpetuate whiteness at other grades and in other subject areas. The dominating systems of whiteness remain unchanged, with a veneer of reform allowing educational systems and leaders to maintain the status quo (San Pedro, 2019). This early

agreement to avoid perpetuating marginal spaces would end up shaping both our project in ways that sought to disrupt the status quo and shape our shared dream for ethnic studies in Edmonds.

Our Collective Dream - Our Voices Are Powerful

> ...what's missing is student voice. We are the ones that are being taught. This is our education and we need to take our hands on to it, off from the adults, and tell the adults what we want. (Kaley, Session Two).

Alongside a shared but differentiated understanding of the injustices our schools and society are built on, the co-researchers also seemed to enter our space with a common understanding around the power of voice. By the time our third session was over, the co-researchers began to coalesce around a shared dream that student voices could and should be the driving force of this project. Threaded through the conversations of Sessions Two, Session Three, and the individual interviews are hints as to why gathering student voices as a tool to advocate for ethnic studies became the focus of our project. The reasoning or motivation behind the co-researchers' focus on voice fell into one of two categories, a recognition of the individual voice and the power of the collective youth voice.

"My Voice Is Not Second, It's First!"

As Gabby and I neared the end of our one-on-one conversation in our school's common space, I was explaining how she had full authority over her transcript, that she could add, edit, delete, and revise anything she said during the conversation. This, "you have full authority" prompted Gabby to share one more thing, "I think voices need to be heard and that I don't wanna sit in the back anymore. I wanna sit in the front. My voice is not second, it's first!" This intense feeling that students' voices, particularly the voices of students of color, should matter was held particularly by Gabby.

As Gabby proudly shares with folks, she is an active member of her school's Equity Team and BSU. She recognizes and cherishes that her voice matters in both spaces. Gabby goes out of the way to make sure her voice is first in these spaces. Yet this pride of her individual voice comes with a cost. As the co-researchers discussed the importance of voice, Gabby shared a key frustration she has faced when using her voice:

> So there's not enough student voice and this is really cause we have students that come in and out, but I'm a consistent student and we need more student voice in school because we have a lot of problems. You and I both know we have a lot of problems in our school, but that happens and we need more student input, student perspective, student everything. And I can't be the only giving perspective. Cause I'm tired of it…I can't stress enough. We have to figure out how to get students engaged.

In this statement, Gabby called out several important issues around student voice that impacted this project. First, Gabby clearly called out the need for more student voice in the school system's decision making structures. She also called out the challenge of keeping students involved in decision making spaces like Equity Teams and the BSU. Having been in the same Equity Team as Gabby, I understood her frustration with the fluid nature of the committee members, students and adults alike. Last and probably most important, one impact of being the only voice in these spaces is the absolute fatigue it leads to. This "I'm tired of it" phrase from Gabby was a common phrase of frustration she used throughout the project. When one person bears the responsibility of speaking up, it feels like a heavy weight to lift.

Kaley also talked about individual voice in a way that impacted what our project became in what felt like a more optimistic light. During our one-on-one conversation over Zoom, we

were talking about the importance of the identities we each hold, she started talking about the pride and normalcy of using her voice:

> ...as a Vietnamese woman, I feel like a lot of the time with stereotypes, we're perceived as quiet, or things like that. But I've really noticed even within my own family and things are how our voices are so powerful. And also how our voices are really just the emphasis of speaking up is something that I've always experienced.

In talking with Kaley, you get the sense that she experienced situations in which her voice has and does matter, that it has become a normal part of her identity and daily experience. Kaley seemed to find strength in making sure her voice was heard and mattered.

Gabby and Kaley's differing experiences with voice elevated a specific goal I had in this project. As the lead facilitator of our shared space, I sought to foster an environment where each student would experience that positive and affirming sensation of being heard, that their voice has the power to impact systems that Kaley feels. I also sought an environment where the weight of using one's voice, as Gabby described, is absent.

"Our Voices Are Powerful"

In addition to recognizing the importance of honoring individual voices, the co-researchers understood that one of their greatest potentials for influencing the present and future of ethnic studies in the ESD was by harnessing the voices of their peers. In Session Two, Kaley succinctly summarized the group's underlying understanding of the power and role that collective voice would play in our project, "Student voice drives all action." This shared agreement that our project would be driven by student voice manifested in several ways. From the co-researchers using their voices to define and develop the project to the culminating forum event (re-framed as a field trip later) to hear the voices and ideas of their peers, the youth were

put in the driver's seat. Given the co-researchers' experiences with collective voice, this made sense. Coming into our project, the co-researchers had a variety of experiences with voice in which they understood that when you include a variety of voices, you have the power to change people and systems.

During Session Two, Willa discussed a positive and personal experience she had when exposed to multiple perspectives. The co-researchers talked in small groups around the C-Pod, sharing some of their own dreams for ethnic studies with each other when Atlis noted that in their classes, they were only exposed to the "white side" of history. Willa, who normally takes time to process her thoughts and spoke when she felt strongly about something, immediately jumped into the conversation:

> I'm gonna counter a little…I think in high school I've definitely got a lot of perspectives and I got the brutal perspectives…But in my experience of this, I have a more well-rounded education of what historical events have gone on. I feel confident in what I learned.

Willa's comment illustrated one way that perspectives have the potential to change people. When an individual is exposed to different ideas and experiences, they can gain deeper understandings of the ways the world is. This more "well-rounded" view can positively impact one's sense of self, having confidence in what you understand to be true.

During our one-on-one conversations, Kaley shared a positive experience in which multiple perspectives positively changed people. Kaley was talking about the ethnic studies class she was currently taking and shared her appreciation for the way the teacher runs the course in which students engaged in lots of conversations that allowed everyone in class to be exposed to many different experiences. While Kaley appreciated these perspectives herself, "I've learned a

lot in my ethnic studies class," she was more impressed "...how even just having that one class has really shaped different people." Kaley seemed aware that the sharing of stories, different perspectives on life experiences, can help people change, to grow and learn. While coming from two different places, Willa and Kaley's experiences suggest that being exposed to and interacting with a multitude of perspectives can be an integral part of one's praxis (Woldeyes & Offord, 2018).

During Session Three, Jilliana shared a different and really important insight into why they supported harnessing the voices of her ESD peers. The co-researchers had just self-selected into small groups to talk about a question I posed, "What does student voice look like?" Jilliana started their groups' conversation by talking about a student leadership conference she (and most of the co-researchers) attended a few weeks prior. Planned by students from the ESD and held at the local convention center, ESD youth listened to a variety of voices, all centered on the topic of people acting for change. As this conversation started, Jilliana shared a realization about a panel she observed at this conference that seemed to help her to express the importance and power of youth voices:

> The panel that happened at the leadership assembly made me think if the school district can see how many students can rally up together and ask them to improve our education, you think they'll see how many of us actually want change. Anything like that can be good.

Jilliana's comment highlights her understanding that voices speaking together have the power to change systems.

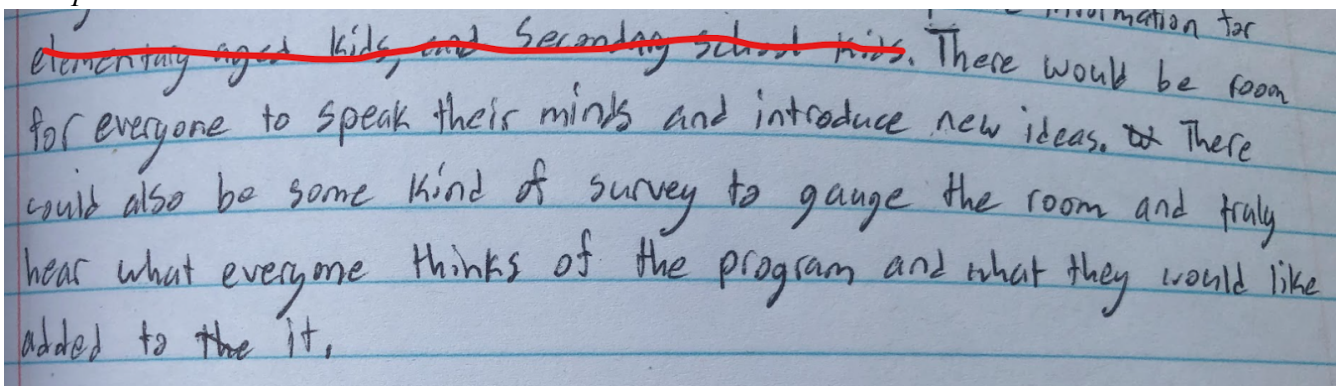
By the end of Session Three, we decided that our project would revolve around the student voices. We hadn't figured out what this actually meant, but we had a foundation upon which to build our project.

Towards A Collective Dream

After deciding that their dream for this project would revolve around using student voice to influence what ethnic studies would like in the ESD as it was expanded, our focus turned to defining what this meant. Beginning in Session Three and becoming more formal in later Sessions Seven and Eight, we examined what student voice meant to the research group. We started by having each co-researcher respond to the question, "How can we gather student voices?" in their field journals. As explained earlier, only Joshua shared excerpts of his field journal with me. Here is an excerpt of his response (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Excerpt From Joshua's Journal



[Transcription: There would be room for everyone to speak their minds and introduce new ideas. There could also be some kind of survey to gauge the room and truly hear what everyone thinks of the program and what they would like added to it.]

Joshua's responses tended to be to the point. But based on the conversations that followed, his ideas around gathering the voices of his peers in a way that ensured we "...truly

hear what everyone thinks…" aligned with his peers. With these individual responses ready, the co-researchers moved into small groups to share and discuss their individual ideas.

Three ideas for gathering student voices emerged from these conversations; hosting a youth forum, giving a youth survey to all ESD, and doing classroom visits. While no single idea was settled on, it felt like there was a lot of energy around a survey that would gather as many voices as possible from students across the ESD. I couldn't put my finger on it at that moment, but something felt off to me. To focus our work on gathering as many voices as possible felt in contrast to the work we had been doing to develop a shared understanding of ethnic studies. In these conversations, we spent a lot of time focusing on how ethnic studies should elevate Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-American, Pacific-Islander, and multiracial voices. With a focus on getting as many voices as possible, I was worried that we would inadvertently erase or minimize (Sasa & Yellow Horse, 2022) the voices ethnic studies seeks to center. For example, the survey was discussed as a way to learn what every student in Edmonds wanted for ethnic studies and the goal of the forum was to invite as many students as possible. It was during these conversations that I had a critical realization about our research group.

As would become clearer in Session Six, nearly every co-researcher seemed to be unaware of the deep relationship they each had with whiteness and how it shaped their world view. Yes, the co-researchers shared a sense of how whiteness impacted them, but there did not seem to be an awareness of how whiteness had been internalized. This unexamined relation to whiteness would, at times, make it feel like we were moving our project in ways that inadvertently perpetuated the power and dominance of whiteness (Gillborn, 2019; Lewis, 2004) despite our stated ethnic studies intentions.

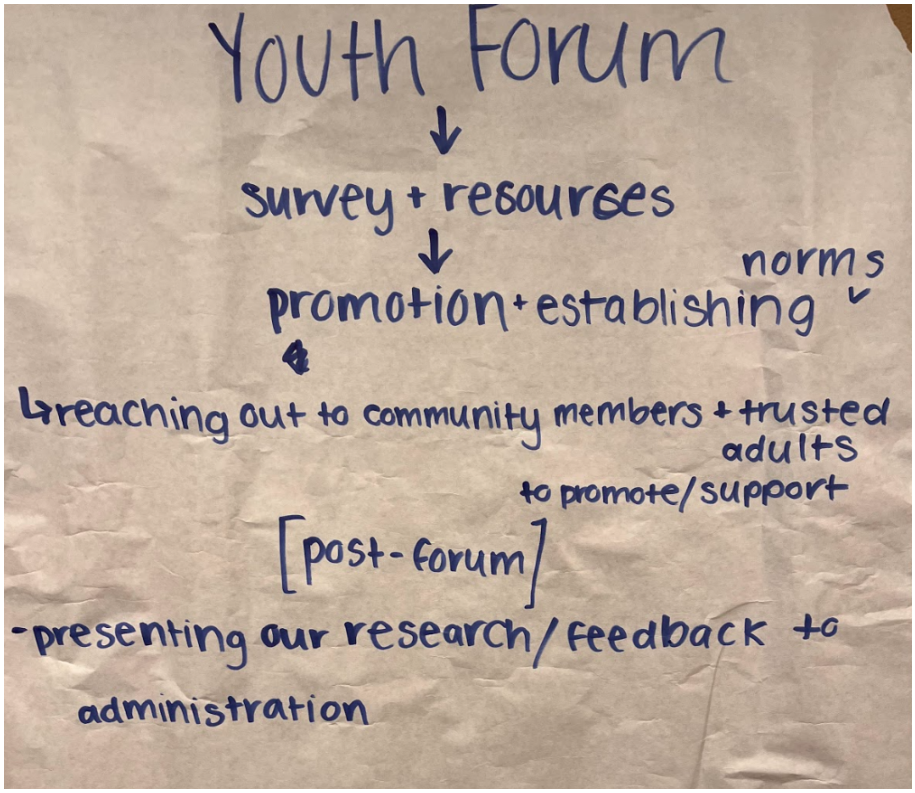
Kaley's Push

Going into Session Four, I noted in my field journal that based on the conversations that were occurring, the group was largely leaning towards using a school district wide survey as a major tool for gathering student voices. Lizzy and Kaley had proposed other ideas, but the energy around the survey seemed to be taking over. With three ideas for student voice still on the table (forum, survey, and classroom visits), Willa and I co-planned an activity in which we hoped the co-researchers would narrow down their different ideas on gathering youth voices to one single idea. Our idea was to have proponents of each idea write a description on a large Post-It/butcher paper and then have the co-researchers engage in a conversational gallery walk, dissecting each poster as they went. Once the walk was done, Willa and I decided to hold a vote to select the one idea to move forward with as a group.

When the co-researchers got to the gallery walk, I began to observe something else happening. Instead of the co-researchers moving from poster to poster, the small groups began to join together, forming bigger groups. This happened until the co-researchers were all standing around one table, talking about the three ideas. This activity was too hectic to record, so I was taking observational notes, trying to describe what was happening. As I rapidly jotted down notes, I realized that Kaley was facilitating the growing conversation, pulling folks into her BIPOC youth forum while also finding space for the classroom visits and the survey as supporting events for the forum itself. While I was unable to capture this fast moving conversation, I jotted down that “Kaley really is pushing a more radical agenda. Pushing for more realistic and aggressive (in a good way) and more ethnic studies stand :)” (emoji is original). In 20 minutes, Kaley seemed to shift the group's leanings from a survey toward a BIPOC youth forum as the centerpiece for youth voices. In the end, they gathered around a fourth Post-It (see Figure 6) and wrote down what this united focus on student voice would be.

Figure 6

Youth Forum Post-It



Admittedly, what I witnessed made complete sense. I've known Kaley for several years because of her work with the Washington State NAACP Youth Council, National Coalition of Liberated Ethnic Studies, and we've even run several professional learning sessions for teachers in the ESD together. She is someone that I actively recruited for this project because she embraced ethnic studies not just as a way of schooling, but as a way of being. Ethnic studies is a key part of Kaley's identity.

It may have been this grasp of ethnic studies that seemed to allow Kaley to notice the way the collective discussed the survey that wasn't lining up to the ideals of ethnic studies and take action to shift the group's focus. For example, as we were talking in our one-on-one interview, she shared that:

> … I've grown to learn that white people don't need to be in spaces for POC all the time. And I think that even sometimes hearing it from other POC in the research group makes me reflect back on that. I don't want to call people [out] or anything, but I'm thinking about the importance of remembering our purpose here and the purpose of ethnic studies. I think a lot of the time there might need to be a reminder.

Without using specifics, Kaley was talking about the large, all student voice survey that was being advocated for. I made a similar observation in my field journal from May 5th, noting that the push for the survey felt disingenuous to ethnic studies because, "...surveys tend not to be aligned to values and intentions of ethnic studies. They seek mass appeal [and] tend to be completed by white people."

Another way Kaley seemed to have taken on an ethnic studies identity is her commitment to action. Besides her obvious involvement in organizations that are fighting for ethnic studies, she also shared ways that she takes action in her classes by being "...someone who pushes for more. Usually in class, I'm talking. I'm pushing. I'm talking about white supremacy and I'm talking about capitalism and I'm talking about colonization and all that." When Kaley entered this space, her prior experiences that may have helped her see the direction our project was taking, the inadvertent reinforcement of whiteness, and a willingness to push the conversation in another direction.

Pulling This Together

One of the beautiful grounding ideals of YPAR is the belief that youth contain valuable and powerful knowings, and these knowings should shape their project. And we were experiencing this. The group's shared awareness and frustration of the negative impacts of marginalized spaces drove us to host an event during school hours, reducing barriers to

participation. The co-researchers shared a belief in the power of voice, which became the driving purpose of our work together. The co-researchers also entered the project with a shared understanding of the injustices of whiteness. Finn, Atlis, and Maria's each held understandings of the ways whiteness worked in general, whereas Gabby, Jilliana, and Katie seemed to possess a more personal understanding of the ways whiteness was impacting them. What was becoming clearer as we continued to plan was that the co-researchers at large seemed unaware of the ways internalized whiteness was subtly, and without fanfare, beginning to shape how our project was unfolding.

Our early sessions focused on building a common dream for our group, one that aligned with the ideals of ethnic studies. We took steps to move in this direction and it seemed like we kept falling short. As Kaley and I noticed more and more, whiteness kept working its way into our dream. As would become more and more apparent, the youth's collective proximity to whiteness began to feel like a growing barrier to enacting a collective dream grounded in ethnic studies. As covered in Understanding Two, Kaley, Willa, and I took steps toward disrupting and divesting whiteness from within our YPAR group.

This is all to say that every co-researcher brought their own knowings and emic knowledge into our research collective in beautiful and potentially negative ways. As we leave Sessions Two-Five, these knowings shaped what our project would become. Given the pervasiveness of whiteness, its creeping tendrils threatened to pull our group in ways that were misaligned with ethnic studies. The next chapter looks at the processes we took to disrupt whiteness and center the experiences of the Black, Latinx, and Asian-American co-researchers.

An Unexpected Disruption

Over the last 20 years, I've actively worked to redefine my relationships with the world around me. This has meant working on my own rebirth (Freire, 2012), learning to be with the world in a different way. I've not always known what this has meant, to be in relation with the world differently, much less the required actions. Much of the time, I still don't. Ten years ago, as I sat in a room full of my educator peers during a back-to-school event, I received a gift that continues to guide my redefining efforts. In the summer of 2013, I was introduced to ethnic studies by then Tucson, Arizona, Mexican American Studies (MAS) educator and activist Curtis Acosta. As Acosta shared his story and the stories of his MAS peers, I began to realize that the field of ethnic studies offered me a way to relearn how to be in this world. Years later, I would understand that ethnic studies offers a way to see and be in this world outside of the white gaze (Morrison, 1998; Paris & Alim 2017). As previously noted, ethnic studies seeks to be a liberatory project (Hu-DeHart, 1997; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020), one that supports students and communities to transform their world into the one they wish it to be. Central to this reimagining work is a focus on the systemic form of racism and other oppressions, counter-narrative based curriculum, positive and healthy identity formation, ongoing reflection practices, and engaging with communities to enact change (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2017; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Given my white racial and cultural identity, I understand ethnic studies can serve as a portal for being in this world differently, working to be in relation to the world outside of this harmful gaze. Over the years, I learned that divesting myself from the white gaze often means following the leadership of communities of color, including youth of color.

Some of my earliest learning of ethnic studies involved the use of YPAR in the banned and disbanded Mexican American Studies (MAS) program out of the Tucson School District. As

described by Cammarota (2016), one element of the MAS program was the Social Justice Education Project (SJEP), which used YPAR to support the development of student's critical consciousness as they struggled for their own liberation. As plans for this research project began to form, I never hesitated on the idea that I would use YPAR methodology. As I had learned, YPAR holds the potential to create a space for "...personal and social transformation: in other words, as a process of 'opening' our own eyes and seeing the world through 'different eyes,' coupled with a desire to open others' eyes" (Cahill et al., 2008, p. 90). These words speak truth for me and my personal journey. They also speak truth for the intent of this project, which was to form a collective of young researchers set on transforming the educational futurities of themselves and the school district.

As I prepared for the project, I understood that one of my responsibilities was to work with the co-researchers in ways that would uncover and work to dismantle systems of oppression that were impacting their lives (Baustista et al., 2013; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Irizarry 2011; 2017). As I planned and began the early stages of the project, I thought of the traditional school system as *the* system of oppression that we would focus on. Similarly, I saw the expansion of ethnic studies as a project for liberation that could dismantle the current oppressive school system. I thought it all made sense. By the end of our fifth meeting together, I realized that I missed something.

As discussed in the previous findings chapter, the co-researchers' understandings of whiteness varied. The white identifying co-researchers articulated the ways whiteness manifested in their curricula, but struggled to go deeper. The Black, Latinx, and Asian American co-researchers understood whiteness on deeper levels, articulating the ways it personally impacted them. To varying degrees, the co-researchers also reflected outwards, identifying the

impacts of whiteness upon themselves. Based upon the conversations we were having, I began to think that few of the co-researchers were gazing inward (Paris & Alim, 2017), understanding the ways whiteness had been internalized as status quo (Lewis, 2004), and was shaping their perceptions of how to be and act in society. This made sense, whiteness is meant to be invisible (Leonardo, 2002; Lewis, 2004; San Pedro, 2019) and to function without people knowing it is there. But if the co-researchers cannot see the ways whiteness had been internalized, then their abilities to create a project for liberation and justice would still exist within the confines of whiteness. Now aware of this need, a key piece of our project became making whiteness visible while also offering ways of being outside the white gaze that would allow us to dream of a futurity untethered by whiteness.

Student Voice and The Veil of Whiteness

With our early decision to center our collective work around student voice, learning what students in the ESD wanted in an expanded ethnic studies program, we largely focused around how to gather these voices. Jesse (Puerto Rican/Venezuelan), a hesitant and soft spoken junior active in his school's LSU, joined the research group off and on during the first two months as he tried to balance a full Advanced Placement course load. During our second meeting and as we were talking about the question, "What does student voice look like?" Jesse shared the following statement, "So I think in a simplistic sense, the best way to gather student voices is to allow students to use their voice and to speak. And it's really kind of straightforward…" I appreciated Jesse's optimistic comment around student voice because I think it accurately reflected my own thoughts about the project at this point. As we entered our planning stages for the research group, I was thinking, how hard should it be to make a plan where students can just speak? After all, I ran events created for the purpose of letting students speak. In my brain, I was thinking, so how

hard would this be? What I didn't understand was that although the youth already understood the power of voice, or experiential knowledge (Cabrerra, 2018; Kumasi, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005), too many were shrouded in a veil of whiteness that was seemingly preventing them from pushing beyond what most had learned as normal and acceptable, limiting the early stages of the project. While the focus will shift to the efforts to disrupt this veil, the following pages start with an attempt to describe the ways that the invisibility of hegemonic whiteness seemed to creep into our project for liberation and justice.

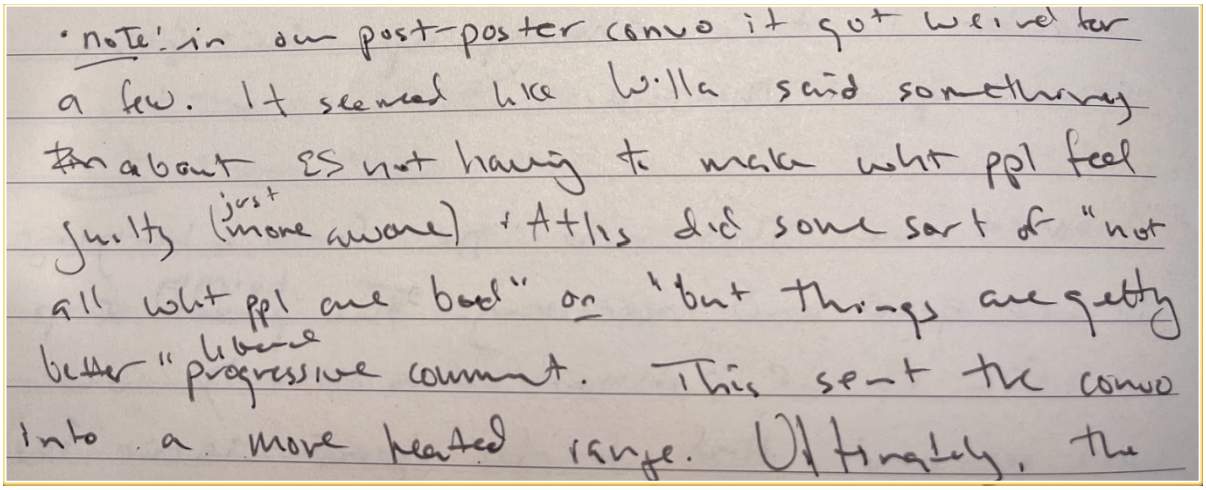
Co-Planning and A Sense of Urgency

As I waited for district leadership to approve my project, I spent much time reflecting on the patterns of YPAR I had been learning. With my positionality and role as lead-researcher, one pattern occupied most of my time was trying to figure out different ways to ensure that the co-researchers and I designed the study together (Bautista et al., 2013; Cammarota & Fine, 2008) as much as possible and to the degree they wanted. One thought, really one hope, was that the co-researchers would want to plan and facilitate our larger group meetings. I was not sure where to start though. And then an opportunity presented itself.

It was our third meeting and we were in C-POD . We had just completed the, "What is ethnic studies?" learning event (see Understanding One for more details) and were debriefing. Although I couldn't record the debrief conversation, I recorded my observations in my field journal later that night. In the field journal, I wrote the following (see Figure 7):

Figure 7

Excerpt of Stone Field Journal One



[Transcription: in our post-poster convo it got weird for a few. It seemed like Willa said something about ES not having to make wht ppl feel guilty (just more aware) & Atlis did some sort of "not all wht ppl are bad" or "but things are getting better" comment. This sent the convo into a more heated range…]

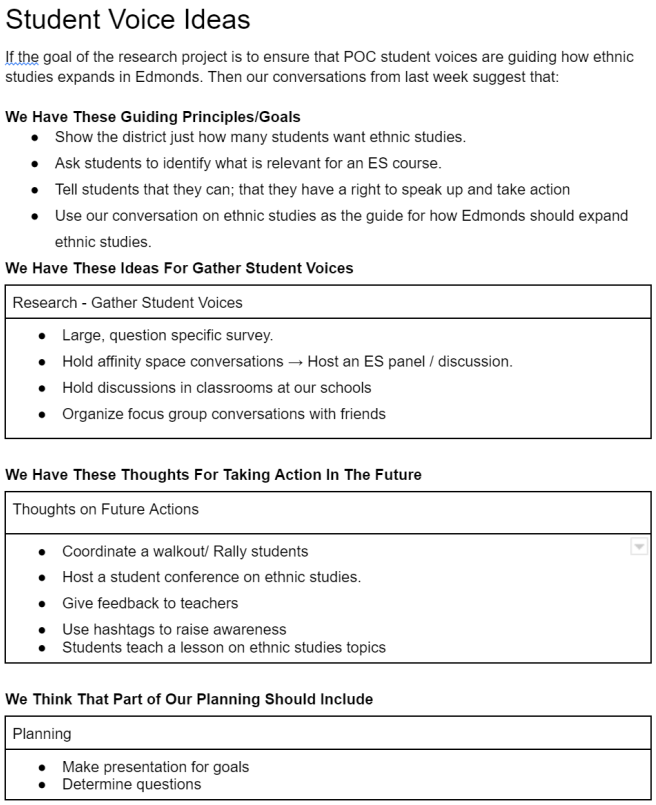
This moment of tension, as Atlis' (white) seemed to unintentionally dismiss Willa's (Chinese American) comments around ethnic studies, seemed to upset Willa. I couldn't connect with Willa then and there, but I noted on the next page, "Willa help co-plan?" Four days later, when I saw Willa studying in the common space at Edmonds-Woodway, I asked if we could talk. After a quick check in, I learned that they weren't upset or frustrated about the last meeting and were more interested in moving the conversation forward (Stone Field Journal One, p. 90). This felt like an opening to ask Willa if they would want to co-plan. I asked. She said yes.

On April 25, I sat at my dinner table and called Willa. Over the course of an hour, we planned out Session Four. It was in this conversation that I began to feel that Willa seemed to be working with a strong sense of urgency around this project. As part of my own white identity work, I had learned that the sense of urgency was a hallmark of white supremacy culture. Specifically, within white culture, getting things done quickly was valued over "...democratic

and thoughtful decision-making" (Okun, 2022). As Willa and I talked, we came up with the following plan for Session Four. After an icebreaker focused on preferred methods of communication and a conversation on word choices, we moved into an activity meant to identify one singular approach that we could all get behind for gathering student voice. As Willa and I planned, we came up with an activity that sought to narrow our vision. We started by showing everyone the document Willa and I created during our planning meeting, *Student Voice Ideas* (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Student Voices Ideas



Student Voice Ideas

If the goal of the research project is to ensure that POC student voices are guiding how ethnic studies expands in Edmonds. Then our conversations from last week suggest that:

We Have These Guiding Principles/Goals

- Show the district just how many students want ethnic studies.
- Ask students to identify what is relevant for an ES course.
- Tell students that they can; that they have a right to speak up and take action
- Use our conversation on ethnic studies as the guide for how Edmonds should expand ethnic studies.

We Have These Ideas For Gather Student Voices

Research - Gather Student Voices
• Large, question specific survey. • Hold affinity space conversations → Host an ES panel / discussion. • Hold discussions in classrooms at our schools • Organize focus group conversations with friends

We Have These Thoughts For Taking Action In The Future

Thoughts on Future Actions
• Coordinate a walkout/ Rally students • Host a student conference on ethnic studies. • Give feedback to teachers • Use hashtags to raise awareness • Students teach a lesson on ethnic studies topics

We Think That Part of Our Planning Should Include

Planning
• Make presentation for goals • Determine questions

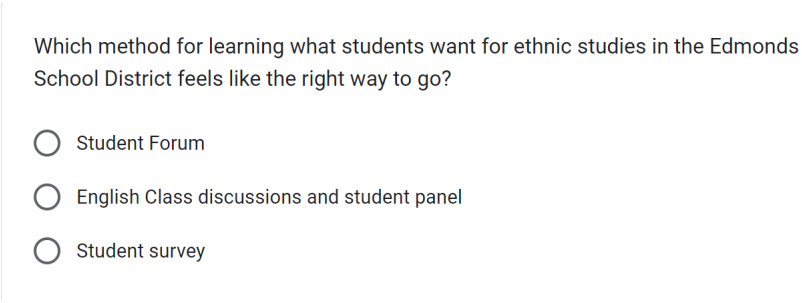
Focusing our conversation on the Research - Gather Student Voices section, Willa and I asked our co-researchers to journal on the question, "Which <u>one</u> of the ideas for gathering student voices do you like best? Describe what you think this would look like." After 10 minutes, we

asked folks to form groups of three in which they were to share what they wrote in their journals and then come to an agreement on one idea they could all get behind. Then, each group was asked to write their plan up on a large Post-It. Three ideas emerged: a student forum, visiting English classes to hold discussion and have a student panel, and a large-scale student survey. The plan for the next step was to have co-researchers engage in a gallery walk and jot down any notes and questions that arose. Up to this point and in reflection, our plan felt very democratic and deliberative, ensuring that each co-researcher's voice was heard and understood. I felt good about the plan so far. It was the next steps where in reflection the sense of urgency showed up.

After the gallery walk, the plan was to ask co-researchers to individually journal around which idea for gathering student voices they wanted the group to pursue. From here, co-researchers would each have 30 seconds to share their thoughts. The next step was to use a Google Form to vote (see Figure 9). Our intention was that this vote would be our final decision. Boom. Moving on.

Figure 9

Google Form For Voting



For Willa, this was how we could keep the conversation moving forward. We offered space for people to reflect, quickly share, and then vote; majority votes would dictate our future plans.

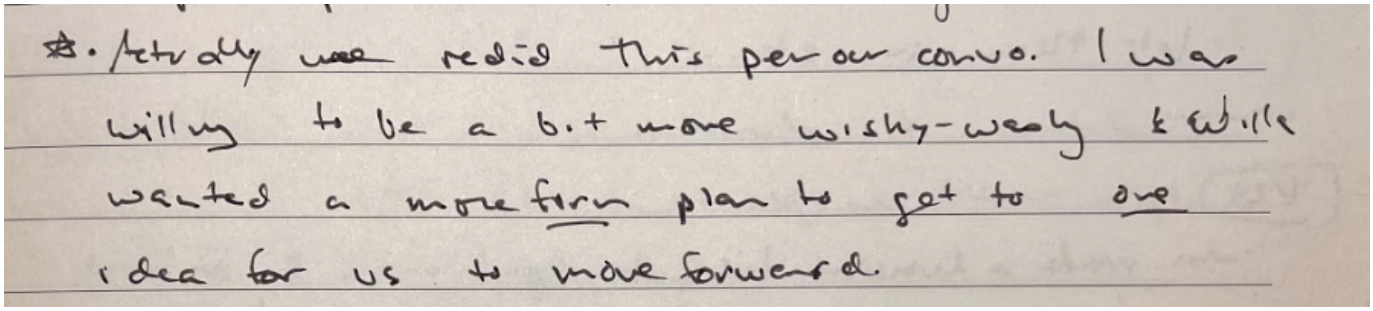
While Willa's drive to keep things moving felt small at the time, even appreciated, later I thought about these pushes for progress, speed, and the individual votes as possible

manifestations of whiteness. Over the last 10 years, I've come to appreciate Okun's (2022) work on white supremacy culture because it can be used as a tool to combat the invisibility of whiteness (Lewis, 2004; San Pedro, 2019). Okun's work has this potential because they offer names for the behaviors and values of white culture, which helps us to better notice its presence and its impact. Specifically, naming something allows the invisible to be seen. Having used variations of Okun's work for my personal growth and teacher focused professional development, I was aware of the power it held for naming what was supposed to be invisible to myself and others.

After our co-planning, I recorded in my field journal some notes on the session. One stood out around the decision to use a Google Form to make our final decision and suggests that I was beginning to see that the veil of whiteness was impacting our plans. I wrote (see Figure 10):

Figure 10

Excerpt From Stone Field Journal



[Actually we redid this per our convo. I was willing to be a bit more wishy-washy and Willa wanted a more firm plan to get to one idea for us to move forward.]

One consistency within my field journaling practices was to star (*) any comment that stands out as important, even if I didn't know why at the time. As I looked back at my notes, I recognized

this as the start of me beginning to recognize my potential oversight, that whiteness had seemed to be framing our plans for gathering student voices.

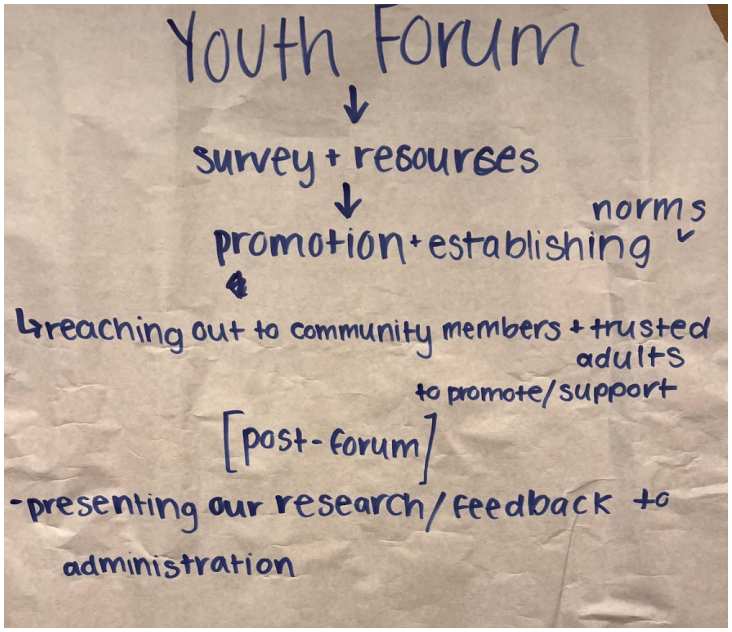
Large Survey and Quantity Over Quality

During the conversations around gathering student voices that Willa and I planned in Session Four and then Gabby and I planned in Session V, I really began to notice how whiteness seemed to be skewing our work. Over and over again, as we discussed how we would gather student voices, the co-researchers brought up the idea that the more student voices we can have, the better our data will be. This idea of quantity of voice over quality of the voices is another trait of white supremacy culture (Okun, 2022) and seemed to go largely unnoticed by the research collective. First emerging in Session Three with the introduction of a large-scale survey by Maria (white), it was kept alive throughout the journaling, gallery walks, and conversations that occurred in Session Four and Session Five by the collective of co-researchers.

Thanks to an intervention by Kaley in Session Four (see *Kaley's Push* in Understanding One), the research group ditched the vote that Willa and I planned, coming instead to a plan through consensus. Instead of selecting one singular path forwards, we united the three different ideas into one large project. Part youth forum, a gathering of students from across the district that centered around a student panel. Part student survey, a traditional gathering of student data from across the district. As Kaley recorded the results of the conversation (see Figure 11), the focus of our research group our collective dream (Ishimaru, 2019) started to come into focus.

Figure 11

Youth Forum Post-It



In planning Session Five, Gabby (Eritrean American) and I decided that our goal for the day would be to spend our time as a group trying to figure out what this poster, our collective dream created at the end of Session four, meant.

For Session Five, we moved locations. Away from C-Pod and over to Edmonds-Woodway High School. Located in the southwest quadrant of the ESD and the academic home for Gabby (Eritrean American), Joshua (African-American/Ghanaian), and Maria (white) as well as where I spent most of my teaching time, Edmonds-Woodway offered similar comforts and safety for the group. By the time we met at 4:30 p.m., the building was nearly empty except for the stray athlete or two roaming the halls. We had a similar setup as the C-Pod in our E100 area. We used one of my classrooms and a large common space for our work. A bonus was that my office was 30 feet away, making it easy for me to grab extra copies and supplies as needed. The main annoyance was the distance from the locked front doors and our work space, meaning I often had to run down the hallways to admit various co-researchers as they straggled in due to homework, late rides, and graduation preparations. All-in-all, our space

offered the privacy we looked for.

As the research group entered our E100 space this first time, Gabby and I had our plan for the day all set. We opened with a review of Session Four, focused on how we came to our decision to host a forum. As we planned, Gabby and I thought it important to not only share a dream for a project, but also share the memory of how we came to our decision. Using the Youth Forum poster as a talking point, we verbally recapped how the process that Willa, myself, and (ultimately) Kaley (Vietnamese) led us through. Next, we had folks journal for five minutes on their ideal student forum (see Figure 12), pushing the co-researchers to really think about what they wanted from a gathering of youth.

Figure 12

Slideshow Reflection Directions

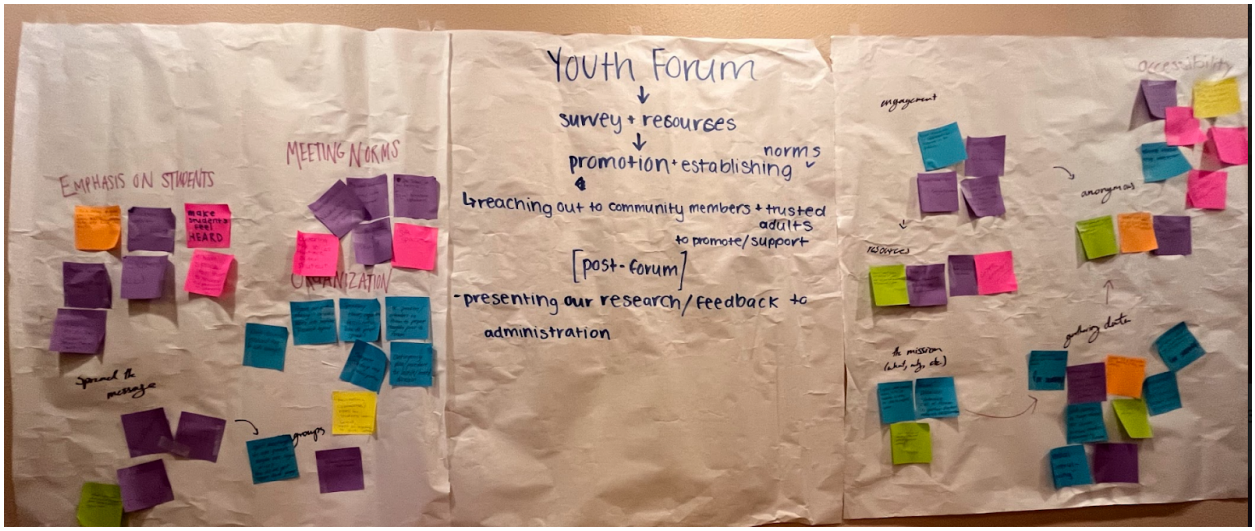
After the reflection, Gabby and I had our co-researchers select 4-6 key points from their reflection on the forum and write them on Post-It notes. As they thought about what to write, I urged them to select the things that mattered most to them, the things they each really wanted to see happen as part of our forum.

Up until now, the work had been individual, offering space for each person to shape our developing dream for the forum. But we sought to develop a shared vision. With Post-Its in hand, each co-researcher moved to the common space and placed their key points for the ideal forum

on a large piece of butcher paper that would become our canvas for the day. In the center of this canvas was our simple description of the youth forum we created at the end of Session Four. On each side, randomly strewn Post-Its from each co-researcher. Gabby started us off, telling us to categorize the different Post-Its into themes or groups. Our hope was for a cacophony of noise as our co-researchers talked, discussed, and challenged each other as we developed this shared vision of the forum. In the end, we ended up with the following piece of conversational art and decision model (see Figure 13).

Figure 13

Conversational Art and Decision Model



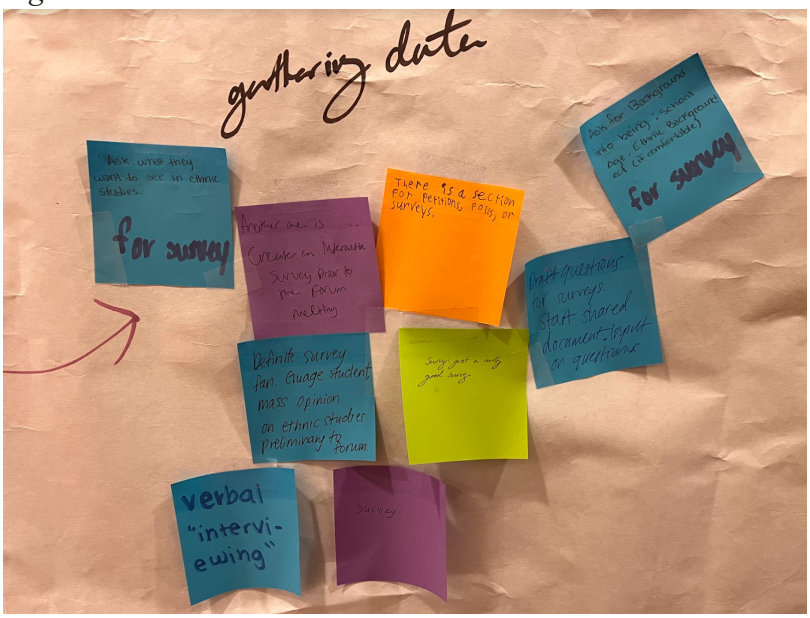
Together, the co-researchers organized their ideas into the following categories: Emphasis On Students, Meeting Norms, Spread the message, groups, engagement, resources, anonymous, the mission (what, why, etc.), gathering data, and accessibility (capitalization matches original). As the co-researchers categorized together, they turned their minimally defined Youth Forum into a more clear vision.

After much discussion, they decided to host three hybrid events/forums, one for K-6, 7-8, and 9-12. The goal of each event was to gather student ideas for ethnic studies in Edmonds. A

key element would be a survey and notetaking on conversations/discussions that would happen at the forum. At first glance, this looked wonderful! Yet as I listened and read the poster, I noticed their ideas for gathering data, the voices for ethnic studies, were largely rooted in a survey (see Figure 14).

Figure 14

Ideas For Gathering Data



[Transcription of individual Post-Its: For survey: Ask what they want to see in ethnic studies. Create an interactive survey prior to the forum meeting. There is a section for petitions, polls, or surveys. Ask for background info being: school, age, ethnic background, etc. (if comfortable). Definite survey fan. Gauge student, mass opinion on ethnic studies preliminary to forum. Survey: Just a really good survey. Draft questions for surveys. Start a shared document. Input on questions. Verbal "interviewing." Survey.]

There is nothing inherently wrong with surveys. They are efficient tools for gathering a large quantity of data in a short amount of time (Marshal & Rossman, 2006). But there was something about the way the survey was being framed that was bugging me.

At various times in our conversation, the survey was framed as essential, "...the most important thing, I feel, at first is letting everybody know that they can participate…that's how we're going to get the most engagement" (Maria, Group Session, May 5, 2022). At one point, I offered a verbal check to see if I was hearing the conversation correctly and asked, "I'm curious about gathering the data. What kind of things do we want to do in order to gather the student voices? I saw surveys." To this both Gabby and Lizzy (Mexican American) offered immediate support and agreement, and then the conversation moved on. No discussion. No questions. When gathering data through other methods, for example individual interviews, were brought up by Vyna (Vietnamese), it felt like the idea was dismissed, being pushed aside as being an alternative to the survey, because they were "a little bit complicated" (Gabby, Group Session, May 5, 2022) and would be better served as "a follow up plan" to the survey (Kaley, Group Session, May 5, 2022). After another 12 minutes of discussion around gathering student voices, I asked one last question to make sure I was hearing them correctly, "[For] gathering data, surveys seems to be…the dominant one talked about so far?" To which Kaley responded for the group, "I think this sounds good." I couldn't articulate it on the spot, but I had had enough of this survey.

A few days later, as I reflected in my field journal, I found myself able to articulate what bothered me so much. I wrote:

> " I've been reflecting on the whole survey thing. As in the persistent desire to do a survey. Part of my hesitation/worry is that surveys tend NOT to be aligned to the values and intentions of ES. They seek mass appeal, tend to be completed by white ppl, and present a limited amount of data that is in the VOICES of ppl." (Stone, Field Journal, p. 119).

Having myself learned the power and importance of individual stories in the fight for racial

justice (Cabrerra, 2018; Kumasi, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005), I felt that these focus on surveys was off. While a survey designed to gain mass appeal from students across the district would yield a larger quantity of data to guide our work, it seemed problematic. Given the racial demographics of the ESD (22.8% of students identify as Latinx, 13.4% as Asian-American, 11% as multiracial, 7.6% as Black, 0.9% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, .4% Indigenous, and 43.9% as white) (Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction[1]) and ethnic studies' focus on intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islanders, and multiracial communities, I worried that this approach would mask and/or erase the voices ethnic studies is supposed to elevate. While I greatly appreciated the developing vision of our group around student voice driving all action, I was struggling with a plan that did not explicitly center BIPOC voices above white voices. The conversation the co-researchers were having around the survey seemed to elevate the idea that the more voices they could gather, the better their data would be. I also realized that this desire for mass appeal/quantity/everyone's voice could be a manifestation of whiteness and it didn't seem like the co-researchers knew this. So I made a decision. In Session Six, I was going to (a) "remind folks of the goals/principles of ethnic studies" by taking the ethnic studies posters from Session Three and turn it into some sort of 'rubric' to keep us on track, and (b) "introduce the principles of white supremacy, noting that many/most research practices we're used to are grounded here; in white supremacy. And we don't want to replicate…which means that we needed to do things different" (Stone, Field Journal, p. 119-120). I decided it was time for a rupture.

A Planned Rupture: Seeking Beyond The White Gaze

If our YPAR project for the expansion of ethnic studies in the ESD was to move toward re-visioned educational possibilities (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), a new futurity, then we needed

to collectively challenge (Caraballo et al., 2017) the whiteness that seemed to be limiting our group. As part of their work on ethnic studies, San Pedro (2019) offered the idea of a *culturally disruptive pedagogy* (CDP), a method to "...build toward solidarity and hope" by "creating ruptures in schooling and social systems that counter the normalizing of Whiteness (p. 1221). The counter move of CDP works to make "...visible the socializing of Whiteness" in ways that leads to the "...disruption of hegemonic cultural norms" (p. 1196-1197). Put simply, CDP is one method for making whiteness visible with the intent of its disruption to see a more hopeful present and future. As our plans for gathering student voices was coming into focus, it was the realization that white, middle class social cultural values seemed to be guiding and framing what the actions my co-researchers wanted to take (Leonardo, 2002; Lewis, 2004); we seemed stuck in the white gaze (Morrison, 1998; Paris & Alim, 2017). Following the general pathway laid out by San Pedro (2019) for enacting CDP, a plan to move forward, out of the white gaze emerged.

The Disruption

Four days after our last session, Willa, Kaley, and I sat down over Zoom to plan our upcoming session. Coming into our planning meeting, I decided that we needed to address the whiteness in the room and quickly shared my intent. Happily, both agreed. Working together we came up with and co-led the following plan: attempt to disrupt the whiteness within our collective midst.

Framed around the idea of *looking in,* I would start our disruptive afternoon by sharing the recently created Ideals of Ethnic Studies. This came from the various keywords and phrases co-researchers wrote down in our Session Three activity around ethnic studies (see Figure 15).

Figure 15

Ideals of Ethnic Studies

Ideals of Ethnic Studies

POC-Centric	Liberatory	Community
• Culturally Responsive • Culture and cultural experiences are validated and celebrated. • Value own cultural knowledge • Unlearning eurocentric thinking.	• Eliminates racism. • POC recover self. • Agency: Acting to improve own lives. • Claiming of our intellectual identities. • Centered on systemic changes.	• Community responsive: Addresses needs of community. • Building relationships with students and wider communities. • Seeing self and community. • Creating caring environments

This simple table would be repeatedly used as a focal point or north star (Love, 2019), something that guided our work as a check of sorts, ensuring that our work stayed true to ethnic studies.

Kaley gladly offered to introduce our rupture. As part of our planning, I suggested that we use a Okun based White Supremacy Culture handout as our primary tool of disruption. Kaley came across this document in one of their other spaces and felt confident in introducing it. We agreed that this version of Okun's (2022) well-known work (see Figure 16) offered a quick introduction to the lesser thought of traits of white supremacy.

Figure 16

Okun's (2022) Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture

Kaley started us off, with a powerful introduction to the traits of white supremacy:

> So I'm just here to talk about kind of why it's important to bring [white supremacy] up and why are we bringing it up within this space? So when we were planning for today, Jeff had brought up the importance of bringing up these traits cause he noticed some of them within our space and within our planning…I know that I personally noticed some of the characteristics of it as well in our conversations, in our space. And it's just important to really recognize and acknowledge it as white supremacy cultures. These traits, they'll come up in our lives all the time through ourselves and through others as well. And it's also important to recognize that it's not anyone's fault because this is what the system puts onto us…

I interpreted Kaley's opening to be an invitation, inviting our co-researchers to join us as we collectively looked inward, to examine our work so far, and to do so without guilt. Afterall, it wasn't our fault, it was the system's. With this contextualizing opening, Kaley asked her peers to take10 minutes to quietly read through the Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture. The introduction of this document was meant to function as the muscular tear that San Pedro (2019) uses to describe the process of rupturing, "In order for a muscle to grow stronger, they must undergo small ruptures and tears in the fibers in order for new tissue to form as it heals" (p. 1221). We hoped that naming these largely invisible traits of whiteness would tear at our individual and collective thoughts around our developing and shared dream for our group.

If we were going to make this slight tear into a full born rupture, we knew that folks would need time and space to process our offering. To facilitate this process, San Pedro (2019) discussed the importance of creating a sacred truth space; a space of growth through the discussion of multiple truths that encourage their individual grappling with whiteness. Understanding the role discussion can play in unveiling systems of oppression (Freire, 2012), I suggested to Kaley and Willa that we take time to process these characteristics of white culture in affinity spaces. Based upon prior experiences, I had seen the safety that often comes from affinity space conversations. Allowing Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Pacific-Islander, Asian Americans, and multiracial individuals to openly discuss issues around race without having to worry about explaining themselves or their experiences to white people as well as avoiding white rage (Love, 2019). I had also seen how white affinity spaces can force white people to talk to each other about racial issues, without avoiding contributions by deferring to POC individuals (Blitz & Kohl, 2012; Pour-Khorshid, 2018). Happily they agreed and here's where Willa stepped in. Using a question generated by Kaley, "Where do we see these traits of white supremacy in

our lives and schools?," our goal was to determine if we could make visible the relations our group had to this system of power (San Pedro, 2019). With Willa giving directions, the white co-researchers and I moved into the common space of the E100 area and the Black, Latinx, and Asian American co-researchers stayed in the room.

As soon as Willa closed the door, their discussions began. Over the course of nearly 45 minutes, Willa (Chinese American), Kaley (Vietnamese), Gabby (Eritrean-American), Jesse (Puerto Rican/Venezuelan) , Katie (Mexican American), Vyna (Vietnamese), and Lizzy (Mexican American) delved into the ways they saw how white supremacy was showing up in their lives and schools. Gabby, Willa, Vyna, and Katie opened the conversation sharing their insights on how the trait of defensiveness is super common.

> Gabby: The first thing that popped to me is defensiveness. Because I have called out people, and they been like, oh no, I would never be like this. Or they would just become like, oh my gosh, no, I would never do that. You know, my best friend's Black or I would never do that cause, oh, I never wanted to be like that….
>
> Willa: ...So then it's hard cuz then they get defensive and they say they're not racist, but then it's still affecting your life and you have to live with them saying that. So it just gets a little bit annoying…
>
> Vyna: Yeah. I used to see that a lot where people don't realize the undertones behind what they've said or done. And I think that is also really important. The fact that people choose to be defensive and deny accusations of white supremacy rather than trying to understand another person's point of view and actually educate themselves rather than trying to improve. They're just trying to deny the existence in the first place.

> Katie: For me personally…when you are arguing with them, they try to play the blame card, let's not solve this with our emotions. I get told a lot of the time when I'm arguing, typically with a white person about racism that I'm being over emotional and that it shouldn't be solved with emotion. And I think that really stuck out because I feel like that's automatic defense for them.

I appreciated this first conversation for a couple of reasons. First, it showed that the co-researchers were not taking crap from anyone. Despite the frustrations they all experienced in doing so, when confronted with people making racist comments each one pushed back. To me, it showed that the co-researchers see themselves as agents of change, believing that their actions can improve their lives. Second, I liked how their first open discussion of grappling with whiteness in our group started with a safer outward gaze. In describing the defensiveness they've seen in the behaviors and attitudes of white people, they opened the conversation, inviting the others to join, without risking something too personal. As I listened afterwards, it felt like a safe way to begin.

After this opening outward look, the conversation turned inward, gradually moving from outward examples around the fear of open conflict and toward deeply personal introspection. Kaley started the conversation by sharing how they see a "...fear of open conflict…I think the emphasis is on raising difficult issues instead of facing those issues and being able to communicate and talk about it." Gabby continued Kaley's outward look, noting her frustration of "...teachers saying that we don't wanna talk about race because then they don't want their students to get mad at them. And how do you expect to solve issues of racism if you don't want to talk about it?" From here, Katie made a sharp turn inward, making a connection between the fear of open conflict, family, culture, and the ways systems of power work:

> …in my case, it was like, I always grew up with the idea of 'don't say anything ever.' You know, try not to be a burden. Even if my mom was disrespected…my mom would even take it…we're expected to just take what we're given. And I think overall all the characteristics on this list, even in some ways affected our culture, like not speaking up and trying to be the best at something. And you know, I think in some ways white supremacy has affected our own cultures in some way, because…I think it's like rooted so far down.

Katie's brave inward looking share seemed to open the conversation up. Both Kaley and Willa then shared how they see the fear of open conflict manifesting in their families. Willa's example stands out as a prime example of what a rupture in progress could sound like.

Willa started by sharing that she was adopted by two white parents who hid from her examples of hate speech directed at Asian Americans. As part of this conversation, she noted:

> It's just kind of frustrating because if I have to live as a Chinese person, but in a white society, then I'm going to need to know terms that might be used against me, you know? And if they knew about them, then I just don't understand why they didn't tell me.

I so appreciate the risk Willa took as she moved the conversation from family to herself. That realization that her parents' drive to avoid conflicts meant she wasn't prepared for the world upset her. She then took it further, offering one of our first unmaskings of whiteness by noting how whiteness is difficult to see; "...it's kind of hard to blame them because like how are you supposed to know how to raise a child who isn't white, if you're white, you know?" She then offers a comment that I would call a tear, what felt like part of the larger rupture process in Willa's understanding of whiteness:

> So that's something that is kind of eye opening for me. Cause I wouldn't have necessarily associated that with white supremacy. And there's also that thing where I don't think my parents are white supremacists at all, but it's, there's definitely traits of white supremacy in them that they might just not even know about. So that's something to think about a long time.

San Pedro (2019) wrote about the importance of tension as sources of knowledge to recognize as part of the disruption process. Even without hearing Willa's voice, you can feel the internal conflicts coursing through Willa as she made connections between her identity as a Chinese American, her white parents, and how she is trying to navigate through the world. She verbalized a recognition that her parents' inability to see whiteness has impacted what it means to understand the world around her. I wondered if the invisible shroud of whiteness that had shaped Willa's understanding of the world was starting to shred?

The conversation continued and after a retreat into an outwards focus, sharing examples of when they've seen power hoarding, white savior complex, and teaching skills grounded in whiteness, Jesse brought the conversation to a topic that nearly everyone could relate to, perfectionism. For the next 20 minutes, the affinity space conversation discussed the ways they were realizing that white supremacy's drive for perfection impacted them in a variety of ways. Jesse started by talking about perfectionism and perceptions of success when seen through a white supremacy cultural lens:

> I think one of the traits that really stuck out to me was perfectionism where it says mistakes seen as personal failings. As an AP student and someone who's in some of the higher classes, I feel like that really resonated with me, Mm-Hmm (affirmations of support from the group), because I feel like school culture in general…you're a bad

person if you fail. That kind of culture just makes you feel like you're a bad person, if you don't do well.

While Jesse earns high grades in his AP courses, that fear of not getting good grades, of being seen as a failure, lives within him. Listening to Jesse, Katie added a layer to their conversation, making explicit connections to her identity as a Person of Color and the schooling system:

> I think that's rooted in our education system. Especially now that they want diversity, they're expecting a lot from POCs and POCs feel the need to step up to the plate essentially. And I think the characteristic of being perfect in white supremacy is being pushed onto people of color.

Katie's recognition that white supremacy is pushed onto POC students, further opened the conversation to different ways the co-researchers were understanding how their lives were being impacted. Often, the topics that were covered were not new to them, but having the language of white cultural supremacy seemed to allow them to speak about them in ways they hadn't before. For example, Vyna and Willa discussed the extra layer of perfectionism they felt was thrust upon them by the college application process, both sharing how as Asian Americans they were explicitly told by school counselors that they needed to make themselves standout, be more perfect than their peers, if they wanted to get in.

One of the ways that the co-researchers talked of standing out was their grades. Really, the drive to get perfect grades. Kaley, Vyna, Jesse, Gabby, and Katie ended up sharing stories where they felt the real need to get and maintain 4.0 grade point averages. Some of these needs were framed as being imposed upon them by the schooling system, some themselves, and some their families. After a few more minutes of talking about grades, perfectionism, and perceptions of a student's moral quality, Gabby took the conversation inward, noting how the tensions that

she feels because the expectation of perfect grades is imposed upon her by both the school system and her family; “I feel like there’s just so much pressure that I, I crack, I crack under pressure and then I don’t do well. But you know, it’s harder when you have a lot of expectations…” Gabby’s comment about cracking under pressure seemed to give other co-researchers permission to open up. Vyna noted that:

> I have all A's, but it's not like a hundred, a hundred. But for me, it's like all honors and AP and it just feels like those classes are the standard. So even when I have A's in those classes, I feel like I'm failing. The standard is so high. It shouldn't be. It shouldn't feel like that is normal.

Unable to live up to the pressure of perfection, as Vyna said to be seen as “normal,” seemed to make her feel as though she failed. This led Katie to make a statement that seemed to rip the conversation open:

> “...the thought that perfectionism is a lens for people of color, I feel like we have so much pressure that we have to be ‘successful,’ we have to do this and that. But do you? It makes you really think of what do you define success as? Is that what the white people are doing? Because I'm not gonna do that.”

For the first time in the conversation, Katie moved the conversation from impacts of whiteness towards a form of refusal (Simpson, 2007; Grande, 2018). While the others may have been thinking along the same lines, Katie’s “I’m not gonna do that” was the first to make a verbal commitment that suggests the desire and ability to live outside of the white gaze.

As the other co-researchers quickly chimed in, one after the other, you could hear the tension as they grappled with Katie’s “I’m not gonna do that” proclamation and the pull of white

supremacy they feel on their lives. You can almost hear the sounds of white supremacy pulling them back, one after the other, in a surprisingly quick succession:

Willa: …what if I just stop?

Katie: Yeah. It's really hard to convince myself to keep going.

Gabby: It would be less hectic…

Katie: Once you give up a little bit, it feels nice...

Vyna: And then you get stressful.

Katie: …it affects you in some way.

Collective: Yeah. Yeah.

Katie: And then it's like,

Willa No, no, I need to go back.

Vyna: Or when I do relax, like I'm not really relaxing cuz in the back of my mind, I'm like I should be doing that.

Collective: Yeah. Yeah.

Vyna: I should be studying right now. Yeah. It's just like, I can never rest. Even when I am resting.

Katie: It's so rooted in you in a lot of ways. Like the idea of just oh, I need to be doing something at all times. Like I need to be productive at all times.

After a quick, *yes we can* positive energy, the pull of whiteness seemed to drag the co-researchers back to the realization that breaking from the strangling effects of whiteness wouldn't be easy.

These excerpts from the larger conversation that unfolded offer insights into how disruptions can unfold. Unfold is the keyword here because CDP is ultimately a process and not

a product. A process that teaches "...youth to better understand themselves in relation to larger systems…" through dialogue, stories, and being in relation to others in ways that creates opportunities to make hegemonic whiteness visible whereby we can "...grow to become someone better" (San Pedro, 2019, p. 1221 - 1222). I would argue that by this point in our co-planned session, the conversations shared in this affinity space had begun to shred the corners of the veil of whiteness, beginning to make visible the ways whiteness was present in previously unnoticed ways. But that was it, a tearing of the corners. As the last excerpt shows, even when whiteness was noticed, something was missing. At this point in our intervention, we may have made the veil noticeable, but we needed to offer something to the co-researchers that would allow them to grow, to look beyond this veiled white gaze. Something grounded in hope.

The Pause

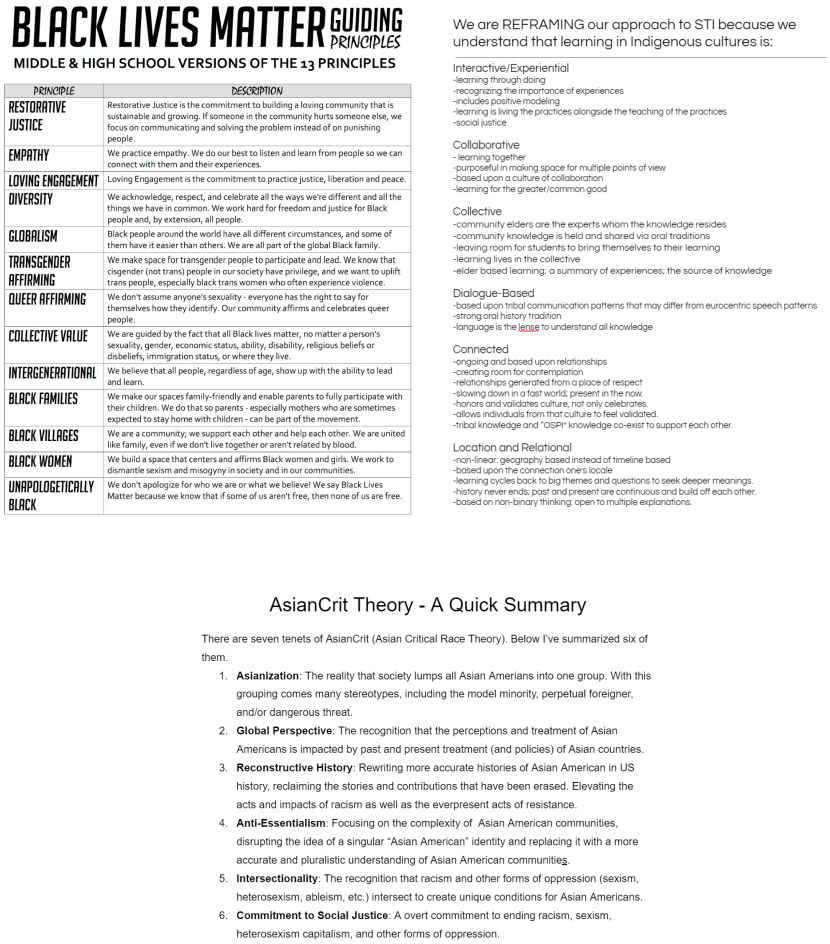
San Pedro wrote about a meaningful pause as an essential part of the CDP process This purposefully enacted moment of reflection asks us to examine different ideas and thoughts we've been exposed to to look in and ask ourselves, "What truths do I want to hold as my own and what pieces of my prior cultural understandings must I disrupt and let go to make room for this new reality?" (p. 1221-1222). For our disruption to continue, we needed to offer some other realities to the co-researchers, ways of being with the world outside of the white gaze.

As Kaley, Willa, and I were planning this session, I shared an idea for this. By giving the co-researchers a tool to name the cultural and hegemonic traits of whiteness, we opened the door for them to consider other ways of being in relation to others and the world around them. Drawing from my own personal growth efforts and using resources I've been using with adult learners, I suggested that we introduce the Black Lives Matter 13 Guiding Principles (Black Live Matter At School), a document that was co-created with the Tulalip Tribes entitled Indigenous

Pedagogies (Collaborative Tulalip Curriculum Project), and a summary of AsianCRIT theory I put together for the co-researchers (thank you Kayla) (see Figure 17). I found that these resources provided educators raised within the white gaze with an introduction to worldviews and epistemologies that many seemed to lack. My thinking was if it worked for teachers, why can't it work with my co-researchers? After a quick discussion about each one, Willa and Kaley agreed that we should use these resources to offer more truths, cultural ways of being, and realities for understanding the way the world works grounded in Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities.

Figure 17

Ways of Being In Relation Resources



BLACK LIVES MATTER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL VERSIONS OF THE 13 PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	Restorative Justice is the commitment to building a loving community that is sustainable and growing. If someone in the community hurts someone else, we focus on communicating and solving the problem instead of on punishing people.
EMPATHY	We practice empathy. We do our best to listen and learn from people so we can connect with them and their experiences.
LOVING ENGAGEMENT	Loving Engagement is the commitment to practice justice, liberation and peace.
DIVERSITY	We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate all the ways we're different and all the things we have in common. We work hard for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.
GLOBALISM	Black people around the world have all different circumstances, and some of them have it easier than others. We are all part of the global Black family.
TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING	We make space for transgender people to participate and lead. We know that cisgender (not trans) people in our society have privilege, and we want to uplift trans people, especially black trans women who often experience violence.
QUEER AFFIRMING	We don't assume anyone's sexuality - everyone has the right to say for themselves how they identify. Our community affirms and celebrates queer people.
COLLECTIVE VALUE	We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, no matter a person's sexuality, gender, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or where they live.
INTERGENERATIONAL	We believe that all people, regardless of age, show up with the ability to lead and learn.
BLACK FAMILIES	We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children. We do that so parents - especially mothers who are sometimes expected to stay home with children - can be part of the movement.
BLACK VILLAGES	We are a community; we support each other and help each other. We are united like family, even if we don't live together or aren't related by blood.
BLACK WOMEN	We build a space that centers and affirms Black women and girls. We work to dismantle sexism and misogyny in society and in our communities.
UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK	We don't apologize for who we are or what we believe! We say Black Lives Matter because we know that if some of us aren't free, then none of us are free.

We are REFRAMING our approach to STI because we understand that learning in Indigenous cultures is:

Interactive/Experiential
-learning through doing
-recognizing the importance of experiences
-includes positive modeling
-learning is living the practices alongside the teaching of the practices
-social justice

Collaborative
- learning together
-purposeful in making space for multiple points of view
-based upon a culture of collaboration
-learning for the greater/common good

Collective
-community elders are the experts whom the knowledge resides
-community knowledge is held and shared via oral traditions
-leaving room for students to bring themselves to their learning
-learning lives in the collective
-elder based learning; a summary of experiences; the source of knowledge

Dialogue-Based
-based upon tribal communication patterns that may differ from eurocentric speech patterns
-strong oral history tradition
-language is the lense to understand all knowledge

Connected
-ongoing and based upon relationships
-creating room for contemplation
-relationships generated from a place of respect
-slowing down in a fast world; present in the now.
-honors and validates culture, not only celebrates.
-allows individuals from that culture to feel validated.
-tribal knowledge and "OSPI" knowledge co-exist to support each other.

Location and Relational
-non-linear; geography based instead of timeline based
-based upon the connection one's locale
-learning cycles back to big themes and questions to seek deeper meanings.
-history never ends; past and present are continuous and build off each other.
-based on non-binary thinking; open to multiple explanations.

AsianCrit Theory - A Quick Summary

There are seven tenets of AsianCrit (Asian Critical Race Theory). Below I've summarized six of them.

1. **Asianization**: The reality that society lumps all Asian Amerians into one group. With this grouping comes many stereotypes, including the model minority, perpetual foreigner, and/or dangerous threat.
2. **Global Perspective**: The recognition that the perceptions and treatment of Asian Americans is impacted by past and present treatment (and policies) of Asian countries.
3. **Reconstructive History**: Rewriting more accurate histories of Asian American in US history, reclaiming the stories and contributions that have been erased. Elevating the acts and impacts of racism as well as the everpresent acts of resistance.
4. **Anti-Essentialism**: Focusing on the complexity of Asian American communities, disrupting the idea of a singular "Asian American" identity and replacing it with a more accurate and pluralistic understanding of Asian American communities.
5. **Intersectionality**: The recognition that racism and other forms of oppression (sexism, heterosexism, ableism, etc.) intersect to create unique conditions for Asian Americans.
6. **Commitment to Social Justice**: A overt commitment to ending racism, sexism, heterosexism capitalism, and other forms of oppression.

Back in our E100 space, Kaley and I took the lead introducing these documents to our co-researchers. I offered a broad overview of where each document came from, what they said, etc., while Kaley explicitly stated the reason we were going to look at these was to disrupt the "traits of white person culture" by:

> ...taking the time to look into these different pedagogies and principles and ways where we can go about…disrupting white supremacy culture is really important because these come from people of color themselves. These come from the roots of our cultures…

Kaley's personal message of situating the knowings being shared in these resources in Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities was a powerful message for all to hear. After Kaley and I tag-teamed through directions, we moved back into our affinity spaces. The Willa and Kaley led POC affinity space stayed in the room while the white affinity space led by me went into the common space. Our shared task was to reflect on another question of Kaley's, "Where do we see these ways of being in and with the world in our lives and our school?" as we processed the three guides to being outside the white gaze. Our hope was to create a space where we all could find new realities, new ways of being in the world, to move toward replacing our existing and learned ways that were grounded in whiteness. As Kaley already noted earlier in the session, it wasn't anyone's fault that we largely see through a white lens, "...this is what the system puts onto us," but we could offer something better.

I admittedly wasn't sure how the conversations would go. I hoped the conversation would turn positive, offering a sense of hope and joy grounded in ways of being more aligned with their cultural identities. What seemed to happen were conversations around specific principles and/or ideals that took a critically reflective turn. For 30 minutes one co-researcher would state a principle or ideal from the Black Lives Matter, Indigenous Pedagogy, and/or AsianCRIT

resources, sharing how they didn't see this in their own lives. From here, other co-researchers would chime in, adding to the conversation. Taken together, this dialogue pattern seemed to illustrate the purpose of the pause. The co-researchers seemed to be examining their experiences, their truths, trying to decide what to hold onto, what to leave, and what to make room for.

As often happened, Gabby offered the first opportunity to examine a truth. Noting the commonality of justice (social and restorative justice in this case) that was shared by these ways of being, Gabby shared a negative experience she had with the practice of restorative justice in which she became the focus of the conversation rather than the act of harm that led to the circle. But she immediately followed by saying, "But I feel like restorative justice is something we should work on and try to implement better because after situations of racism, the way to recover is by having a good restorative justice conversation." Looking back on the conversation, it reads as if Gabby had examined a truth she held around justice and decided that the idea of restorative justice was what she wanted to hold onto.

Katie spoke up next. "I think one thing that stood out when the Black Lives Matter guiding principles was diversity and the line, 'work hard for freedom and justice for Black people and by extension, all people." She went on to share a realization she made during the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in 2020 and the inter-racial finger pointing of blame she observed. Ultimately she shared:

> I think something that needs to be taught is we're all trying to help each other. You know what I mean? Like, I think in a lot of ways POCs are put against each other. And that just really sticks out to me with that as a principle…At the end of the day, there's a Black Lives Matter movement, but it's really supporting everyone.

Like Gabby, Katie's conversation seemed to follow the same path. Katie started with a principle. She shared something negative she has witnessed related to the principle. And finished with a strong statement indicating her support of the way of being in the world. What followed was a cascade of shared stories and affirmations of agreement that we needed to better follow the diversity principle called out as part of the Black Lives Matter movement: "...we really need to stop conflicting between minoritized groups cuz that just makes us even more, even smaller" (Vyna); "…we need to be able to support each other at the end of the day" (Katie); and "...we don't need to hate each other. We're being hated on…" (Gabby).

Inspired by the AsianCRIT summary, the conversation switched to intersectionality, especially the importance of using this lens because otherwise the experiences of POC women are just overlooked or downplayed. Vyna and Willa, who both identify as Asian American, brought up the ways racism and sexism work together to fetishize Asian American women in ways that result in their portrayal as "...innocent and like children" (Willa). When Katie brought in the sexualization of Latinx girls, both pointed out the need to disrupt these practices.

Underlying all this dialogue felt like a growing sense of possibility, that just because this is how things are currently done does not mean we have to continue to work this way. There are other ways to see and be in relation to people, communities, and cultures. Just like it was important for the co-researchers to learn to name the traits of whiteness, learning the vocabulary of ways of being grounded in Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities was important. Their conversations suggest it was an opportunity to see the world through other veils that offer hope because they offer the possibility for living a better life- a life more aligned with their cultural and racial identities. If the process of rupturing can be framed as muscular tears that occur as we seek to build physical strength, then we can view these conversations as examples of

the co-researchers building the strength needed to engage in the lengthy and ongoing process of disrupting whiteness.

The White Affinity Space

As Willa, Kaley, and I agreed, when the time came for affinity space conversations, I would leave my recorder with them, but myself, Maria, and Finn would find another location for our own white affinity space conversation. Once ready, Maria, Finn, and I relocated to the shared E100 space for our affinity group conversations. We started out by examining the Okun inspired Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture, noting how we see this in our own lives and school. Like the POC affinity space conversation, there were natural ebbs and flows as we talked about external manifestations of whiteness we recognized along with a few moments of looking in. During our first conversation, we stuck to two main topics, grades and college applications. Maria seemed most ready to engage in the reflective nature required for the process of disruption, recognizing that whiteness is "...like a mindset that I've been trained to do." Through our dialogue, Maria named how the white cultural trait of *one right way* was consistent with the ways whiteness showed up through grades and "...students only caring about their grades and not really their learning…we're putting the wrong kinda values in the forefronts of education…" She also noted how the college application process was grounded the white ideal of *power hoarding* and hindered white people from being in solidarity with POC communities because a:

> ...good college application puts yourself in a position of power. That's what they want. They want leadership. But at the same time…accomplishment is more than just putting yourself in power, I guess. Like I can do things that are really valuable while taking a back seat. Especially in this kind of environment here. I am here to take a backseat and help with the people of color in this space.

I greatly appreciated Maria's insights and felt leaving our first conversation that Maria "Really grasped it" (Stone, Field Journal, p. 131), she seemed to be able to make those external and internal connections to whiteness essential to the disruption process.

In our affinity space conversations, Finn really seemed to struggle with the internal reflection requirement of the process. While Finn repeatedly demonstrated that he was aware that whiteness impacted what he was learning, he seemed to struggle to name the ways whiteness was part of him. Unlike Maria's whiteness is a mindset insight, Finn didn't seem like he would make that leap, limiting his conversations to the familiar pressure to get good grades (Stone, Field Journal, p. 131).

When we returned to our white affinity space after being introduced to the Black Lives Matter Guiding Principles, Indigenous Pedagogies, and AsianCRIT resources for examining ways of being in the world outside of the white gaze, Maria and Finn observed that demonstrated they were moving toward seeing outside of the veil of whiteness, but were not quite there yet. As we discussed where we see these ways of being in and with the world in our lives and school, Maria noted that she only sees them in:

> Supplemental spaces. The spaces that we're a part of, that are on the outskirts of the system. Like the clubs that we're in and the things that we're doing in addition to school. But not the system and the big umbrella that we're operating under.

Here, Finn added a nice example, "It's like our clubs, specifically GSA. It's…actively disconnected from the school, just a club." Their collective point that ways of being outside of the white gaze are not part of the formal school day demonstrated a base awareness of what these shared ways of being could look like, but it did not feel like their conversation moved towards looking in. It seemed that their reflective mirror of introspection still pointed outward. This

outward focus would be a recurring struggle during our time together as a research team, particularly for Maria, Finn, and Atlis (white) who was absent on this day.

The reality that the white co-researchers generally struggled to see whiteness was not surprising. While everyone who is socialized in whiteness is implicitly taught to see this way of being as normal (DiAngelo, 2012; San Pedro, 2019) and thus invisible (Leonardo, 2002; Lewis, 2004; San Pedro, 2019), seeing white people struggle to gaze inward to understand how whiteness impacted their lives should not be unexpected. When I reflect on my ongoing efforts to disrupt whiteness in myself, something I started much later than my white co-researchers, some of my most vivid memories are from when I was forced to confront the ways I had internalized whiteness. One of these memories of struggle that I find myself frequently drawn to was when I was first introduced to the Okun (2022) resource on white cultural supremacy. It was at the start of the ESD's racial equity work and my principal at the time was actively working to raise awareness around whiteness with white staff. I still recall the feelings of anger and frustration that coursed through my body as I analyzed the cultural practices I lived with (and perpetuated) my entire life as a form of white supremacy. This was also the moment, a rupture, that reignited the racial identity work I had put aside years prior. As I analyzed our experiences in the white affinity group, I found myself understanding Finn's reactions. I also noticed a sense of pride in how quickly Maria seemed to be developing her awareness of white cultural characteristics. It gave me hope.

Reflecting on CDP and Settler Colonialism

San Pedro (2019) framed CDP as a process for "...making visible the socializing of Whiteness" (p. 1196) and disrupting the "...unquestioned norms" (p. 1197) of whiteness as the status quo that society functions under. San Pedro further framed CDP around the realization of

whiteness as "...training to see how one's race and culture has impacted another…" (p. 1210). Taken together, CDP seems to be a process meant for white people. But as our project unfolded, I strongly felt that it wasn't just the white co-researchers who were firmly grounding themselves in white cultural ways of being, but all the co-researchers regardless of racial identity felt grounded in the invisible white cultural norms. Recognizing that one of the uniting factors for all the co-researchers was that they all came from the same school system and schools are sites of whiteness and major tools for maintaining the dominance of whiteness (Kohli et al., 2017; Orozco, 2019), this made sense.

This need to disrupt the whiteness in all of us seemed clearer when I reflected more on settler colonialism. As I reflected, I was reminded that one of the primary logics of settler colonialism is the erasure of cultural ways of being (la paperson, 2017; Nakano Glenn, 2014; Styres, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012) and the severing of the relationship between oneself and one's culture. The latter refers to the dehumanization of who we are and how we will be in and with the world around us. One mechanism of erasure in the United States is our schooling system. Built around white cultural ways of being, schools socialize us into thinking that these ways of whiteness are the norm that defines how we should all act (Masta, 2018; Tuck & Gorlewski, 2016). Anyone seeking to live outside these norms is viewed as dangerous and subject to extraneous threats of violence (King, 2019; Robinson, 2020). Unless the connection to one's cultural ways of being is re-connected, the lens for understanding how to be in the world for many intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial peoples is hemmed in by whiteness. Through this revisit, it became clearer to me why we all needed to break free from these constraints.

In further reflection on settler colonial lens, I understood the CDP process we started could also be framed as an act of refusal (Grande 2018; Kelley, 2016; Simpson 2007). Whereas the naming of white cultural traits was to make visible the hegemonic nature of whiteness, the sharing of cultural ways of being from Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities created opportunities for the youth researchers to refuse to let whiteness define our project, offering us possibilities to be in and with others in ways that had the potential to shift our project. By shifting our gaze to Black, Indigenous, and Asian American epistemologies, we created opportunities to act in ways that aligned with the ideals of ethnic studies. By engaging in CDP, we were creating the possibility of untethering our dream from the constraints of whiteness.

Reflecting On CDP, YPAR, and Settler Colonialism

By creating opportunities for youth to reimagine aspects of their lives through critical inquiry and action (the YPAR process), I saw the potential for positively impacting both the research and our communities (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). One reason for this ability is that YPAR seeks to elevate and embrace youth researchers' emic knowings (Bautista et al., 2013; Carabello et al., 2017; Irizarry & Brown, 2014). This core belief in youth as experts of their own lives is key to every YPAR project. As an epistemology, YPAR understands youth as capable of critically examining their own present and future selves (Bautista et al., 2013; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017). That they are able to look within and grow. From our experiences thus far, one critical element of this critical examination of self should include something akin to the CDP process. Not only can the CDP process work to make whiteness visible, but it can also be used to reconnect relationships to ways of being that allow youth researchers to examine their truths, giving them space to decide what to hold onto, what to leave,

and what to make room for as they seek to change their world for the better. At this point in our project, I felt like we were onto something.

We're Not Done Yet

After our second affinity space conversations around the Black Lives Matter 13 Guiding Principles, Indigenous Pedagogies, and AsianCRIT, our time for Session Six was up. It was 6:30 p.m.. Rides were outside and homework awaited. It wasn't how Kayla, Willa, and I planned the end, but the day had gone about as good as any of us could have hoped for. And we were not done yet. Over the next weeks, we worked together to examine our developing dream for the project, working to name and uproot the ways we inadvertently perpetuated whiteness as a research collective. This continuation is our focus of Understanding Three.

The Disruption Continues: Changing Relations With Our Shared Dream

As I described in Understandings Two, I see ethnic studies as a portal for me to be in and with the world differently. To maintain this portal, I find myself constantly seeking relations with the knowledge shared by individuals and communities on their own pathways towards rebirth, revitalization, and refusal. In the beginning, I looked towards white scholars who were critical of existing power structures like DiAngelo (2016) because they were easy to relate to; one white person writing to another white person. This only took me so far in helping to make whiteness more visible, but not offering a path away from its hold. Over time and thanks to my work with ethnic studies and graduate school, I was relating with a broad spectrum of scholars. From community-level activists to leaders of their academic fields, each offered a pathway to follow so I could be in this world anew. One of the more recent pathways that was shared led to the concept of futurity.

I was introduced to futurity through Black and Indigenous scholarship (Campt, 2017; Harjo, 2019; Simpson, 2007; Smith et al., 2019). Of these, I most connected with the ways Harjo (2010) and Campt (2017) discussed futurity. From Harjo (Muskogee), I understand that by grounding ourselves in community-based knowings, pathways that were once erased by settler colonialism can again be made visible. By being in relation with these paths, communities can find ways to enact their agency over their futures instead of white settler colonialism enacting their agency upon them. Campt's work on Black futurity pushed my understanding by framing it as the act of seeing beyond what is, to what should have always been. Building off these framings, I believe that we all can make pathways for being in this world visible. Many of these pathways survived the violence of settler colonialism and offer options for moving towards a future as it should have always been, but not yet free of the white settler colonial gaze. To

reimagine a future grounded in the past and present. Given my white racial identity and familiar history with this land, calling out the importance of scholars like Harjo and Campt are relevant for me as I learn other essential pathways for being in and with this world. As someone who continuously granted unearned systemic privileges, despite personal efforts to disrupt my own relations to whiteness and settler colonialism, articulating my intentions to learn from communities who these pathways sustain is one way I can demonstrate my anti-racist and anticolonial goals. I am not claiming these pathways as my own, but trying to learn how to live with others as they are offered to others outside of their communities.

My early recognition of the ways whiteness negatively influenced how our project unfolded seemed to threaten the possibility of a future beyond its tendrils. If our project was to move towards a futurity free of the white settler colonialism, we would have to do more than personal introspection. We would have to critically examine the dream we developed over the last weeks, applying the act of culturally disruptive pedagogies (CDP) (San Pedro, 2019), not only to ourselves but to our project.

Framed By Whiteness

As we all walked away from Session Six, I had a sense of excited relief. I knew that we were not done, that 90 minutes of focused conversation around whiteness would not uproot it from our lives. But it was exciting that Kaley, Willa, and I seemed to successfully design an intervention that started this disruption process. Through the work of Okun (2022), we seemed to have created a rupture of possibility and hope (King, 2020; San Pedro, 2019) that was working to help the co-researchers make whiteness visible by naming the ways whiteness (and what I would later recognize as settler colonial logics) shaped how we were in relation to the world around us. Importantly, we also shared ways of being outside of this limited gaze by offering the 13

Principles of the Black Lives Matter movement (Black Live Matter At School), Indigenous Pedagogies (Collaborative Tulalip Curriculum Project), and AsianCRIT as sources for making visible new/different truths to live in and with this world.

Our hope was that by providing our co-researchers with the tools to name the ways whiteness was part of our lives and how it shaped how we interacted with the world around us, we would apply this knowledge and skill to our project. The result, we hoped, would help us make shifts in our shared dream for the project towards pathways that were not formed by whiteness but grounded in Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities. By doing so, we hoped to provide an essential piece of YPAR, namely, the ability of YPAR to directly confront the injustices in our schooling systems (Cammarota & Fine, 2008) like hegemonic whiteness. Using the knowledge we all gained from Session Six, our plan for Sessions Seven, Session Eight, and Session Nine was to critically examine our developing and shared dream for our project, attempting to uproot the ways we perpetuated hegemonic whiteness (Leonardo, 2002; Lewis, 2004; San Pedro, 2019) and replacing them with ways of being grounded Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities. Not only were we going to make time and space to create opportunities to engage in the process of CDP in our own lives, but we were also going to simultaneously make visible the ways our developing shared dream for gathering student voices to reimagine schooling in the ESD was framed by whiteness. If we wanted an ethnic studies futurity that was truly different, one grounded in the intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multicultural communities served by the ESD, we needed to examine the pathway our project was heading toward. If we could build our collective vision around the ways of being and pathways used by Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities, the possibility of a different future felt more promising. To be clear, we were not

seeking a new path, but attempting to relate to existing pathways and shared dreams that reflected what should have always been but was not yet. This is where our YPAR project is a tool for futurity (Camp, 2017; Harjo, 2019). By developing a shared dream grounded in relation to being in (and with) this world outside of the white settler colonial gaze, the possibility to move towards a future ESD schooling reality seemed more possible.

Our process of disruption began by looking in at ourselves. It continued as we made moves to sever the tendrils of white settler colonial gaze from within our project. Not surprisingly, these tendrils were slippery and whenever we got a hold of one, it seemed to slip from our grasps.

Pathways Towards Voice Untethered From Whiteness

As part of the CDP process, San Pedro (2019) noted the importance of forwarding the "...questions, comments and moments of tension as legitimate sources of knowledge" (p. 1221). Over the next three sessions (seven, eight, and nine), we would be in tension filled dialogue with each other around uprooting the whiteness from our project. These tensions could be understood as our struggle to step off the path shaped by whiteness and onto pathways ground in truths we were learning outside of the white settler colonial gaze. These conversations suggest that the process of disruption is complicated and non-linear, more like the ebb and flow of the tides. At times, it seemed like the disruption was working. We would effectively be calling out whiteness and recentering our work around one of the Ideals of Ethnic Studies, BLM principles, Indigenous pedagogies, and/or AsianCRIT tenets. At other times, it felt as if our progress would suddenly recede as some of the co-researchers struggled to figure out which truths to hold onto and which to let go of (San Pedro, 2019). For the most part, it seemed like our efforts to develop a vision for our project outside of the white gaze progressed in a positive direction.

To illustrate this tension-filled ebb and flow as the co-researchers sought to disrupt the whiteness from our project, I want to focus on one recurring topic that I found illustrative of this give and take process. In Understandings One, I established that the youth's personal experiences led to the decision to make our project focus on student voice. As our conversation to determine what this meant evolved, they seemed to focus largely on getting the most voices possible versus getting the "right" voices. This quantity over quality emphasis made me feel like we were moving down a pathway that would perpetuate whiteness and is a major reason why Kaley, Willa, and I decided to engage in a CDP process.

Towards Uprooting the Whiteness From Our Collective Dream

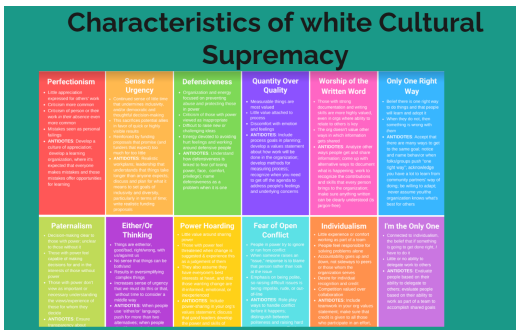
I spent the days leading up to Session Seven listening to the transcript from the POC affinity space and reflecting on our conversations in the white affinity space. I saw the possibility of major changes and could not wait to continue our disruptive efforts. This positive anticipation got me through a long day of work and I was ready to keep this movement going. As I set up for the day, opening our classroom in the E100 space at Edmonds-Woodway, setting our food out, and reviewing over plans, I realized I forgot the beverages in my car. As I ran out to grab them I opened the front door to the school building and saw that our normally empty parking lot was full of cars. As I watched, people streamed from their cars and into the school's stadium. I realized that there was a huge track meet drawing folks from around the district and there wouldn't be parking for the co-researchers or their families. I sent a quick "Parking lot chaos!" warning on our GroupMe chat and hoped for the best. Despite having to park a quarter mile away and being stuck in lines to get in the parking lot, the co-researchers started being dropped off and walking in, most of them 30 minutes late. This was not the start I envisioned.

The session was to pick up where Willa, Kaley and I had left off last week (and the focus of Understandings Two). Our goal was to move our disruptive gaze away from ourselves to our project. Could we make visible the ways whiteness was ingrained in our project so we could uproot them and replace them with ways of being outside of the white settler colonial gaze? We also learned an important lesson last time, we needed to slow down and allot more time for conversations and processing. The effort to unmask whiteness would be slow deliberate work. Over the next 90 minutes we continued the CDP process, this time shifting the focus from personal disruptions to a disruption of the collective dream we were co-creating. By the end of the day's session, we hoped that the Forum that was coming into focus would begin to move away from being grounded in whiteness and toward something grounded more outside of the white gaze.

As we began our work for the day, I expected individual co-researchers to be at various places within their own disruptions. I was of course, and still am, somewhere in my own journey of disruption. Some would demonstrate a deeper understanding of these different ways of being grounded Black, Indigenous, Asian American, and white cultural groups, and others less. As I offered a quick review of out last meeting, projecting the Okun's (2022) Characteristics of White Cultural Supremacy, and the 13 BLM Guiding Principles, Indigenous Pedagogies, and AsianCRIT documents from last session on the board (see Figure 18).

Figure 18

Projected Review Documents



A conversation unexpectedly started up. Just two minutes into our session, Gabby (Eritrean American) shared the type of insight we were pushing for last time, verbalizing the work she did to gaze inward as she continued to examine her own relationship with whiteness and what she was doing about it:

> These traits were important to go over last time because I really didn't understand and evaluate my whole self. And although last time I said I understand these traits, when you actually go through something and you have to reevaluate and evaluate that, it was a little bit shocking that I was involved in this stuff. I see these traits and I didn't acknowledge them. And I think people can say, oh we really know, but do you truthfully understand? Or do you truthfully know? And I'm glad that we learned this last time and I'm glad I was able to use it outside of this space. And that's what is most important that we use this outside of this space…

As Gabby shared how she was reflecting on the impacts of whiteness on her life, I could sense the tension, the constructive tension in this case, as she examined her relations to the system of whiteness. Indicating that this disruptive work might be helping Gabby to see her identity as more fluid and able to change (Paris, 2016; 2021; San Pedro, 2019). If our efforts at CDP were to be life changing, it was essential that each co-researcher see this too.

Kaley (Vietnamese) followed up in a way that affirmed and strengthened Gabby's sharing while also pushing anyone who was absent last time (Isabella (Indonesian/Filipino), Atlis (white), and Juliana (Filipina) in this case) to engage in their own reflection:

> And just adding on, even though I think I said something similar last time, but even though I've seen it before too, after our conversations I took some time to process and just think about it. And I continued to self-reflect throughout the week, just thinking about and noticing it, like you said outside of the space too. Noticing it in our classrooms or noticing it with my own behavior and actions and thinking. Like hey, I should do this instead of that and things like that. So it was really helpful.
>
> And I think that for those who weren't here last time, taking some time after today to look into it because it really is the process of unlearning those traits and things that we've been ingrained in.

Like Gabby, Kaley's comments indicate that she had spent time over the last week reflecting on her relationship with whiteness. Kaley also seemed to model another piece of our CDP efforts, working to identify truths to let go of while identifying other truths to guide her way of being in the world anew (San Pedro, 2019). Taken together, Gabby and Kaley's comments suggest that efforts to disrupt the ways whiteness is normalized in our lives was having an impact.

With such a hope filled start to our time together, we turned our attention to the developing dream of our project. Based upon the work from two sessions ago, I put together a summary of our project. I simply typed up the Post-Its notes from the group poster for easier access (see Figure 19).

Figure 19

Our Forum

-Our Forum -

Organizational	Data Collection	Outreach
Topics and Notes	**Topics and Notes**	**Topics and Notes**
Mission • Explain what ethnic studies is to all student so they can respond better • "Focused" discussion: introduce the goal of the forum (to gather student research for ESD/curriculum. • What are we doing? Clear and precise so anyone can understand. Accessibility • Host multiple meetings • Have language interpreters • Accessible to all students • Hybrid Emphasis on Students • Majority of moderators are students or at least a higher moderator rank than any adult can access. • Teacher support, NOT taking over. • Make students feel heard. • Mainly student led/Student led. • A safe space for students to share experiences and dreams. • It's time to let the student speak, not the staff. Meeting Norms • Equal discussion opportunities. • Centering the voices that are often shut out. • Safe space. • Everyone gets heard.	Gathering Data • For survey: Ask what they want to see in ethnic studies. • Create an interactive survey prior to the forum meeting. • There is a section for petitions, polls, or surveys. • Ask for background info being: school, age, ethnic background, etc (if comfortable). • Definite survey fan. Gauge student, mass opinion on ethnic studies preliminary to forum. • Survey: Just a really good survey. • Draft questions for surveys. Start shared document. Input on questions. • Verbal "interviewing" • Survey Anonymous • Interactive place for anonymous question and comments so people feel safe. People can choose to be anonymous to not get targeted. • Protect student identity.	Spread the Message • #standtogether • K-12 • Where and when are we having in person parts? How to engage more? • Get it out THERE. • Flyers, talking points, schools, student social media. • Someone is there to take notes to communicate back to higher-ups. Groups • Split meetings for age groups; maybe one larger K-12? How do we get support from young? • Different information for different grades.
• Respect for all speakers, one at a time. Organization • Draft discussion questions? Maybe after the survey? • Figure out notetaking: organize notes into sections/research aspects. • Speaking time, organization, facilitation, how do people speak? • Ask speakers/attendees to the forum to prepare thoughts prior to the forum. • Delegate leading and participation. • Contingency plan/procedure for hostile/head discussion. • Facilitate committees/roles for students taking lead, meat altogether to give updates. Groups • Split meetings for age groups; maybe one larger K-12? How do we get support from young? • Different information for different grades. Engagement • Demands for district • Making sure the district is given hours and information about the forum. • Full engagement. • Forum should ask students for their experiences in the district.		

Having taken the first steps to make whiteness visible in our own lives, we wanted to look for and name the ways whiteness showed up in each piece of our unfolding project. Once visible, the hope was that those tendrils of whiteness could be uprooted. Building off Gabby and Kaley's unexpected and encouraging opening words, the plan was to have the co-researchers apply their developing skills of CDP to critically examine their project and name the ways whiteness shaped their dream so we could uproot and replace them. Specifically, we offered the research group a set of maps that offered pathways for making whiteness visible while also offering pathways more aligned with ethnic studies.

As the co-researchers moved into smaller groups to practice examining our project to uproot the whiteness within, the early conversations continued to be promising. Unable to record all conversations, I placed my phone with Kaley (Vietnamese), Isabella (Indonesian/Filipino),

Finn (white), Jilliana (Filipina), and Gabby (Eritrean American). As they examined the Forum document from above, they quickly noted how our plans seemed to be grounded in whiteness:

> Kaley: Okay. For me, I'm more of a talker. There's one thing I noticed is, especially for data collection, there's a lot of survey, survey, surveys. Survey is fine. I just noticing the emphasis is quantity over quality. So I just noticed a lot of the repetitiveness of having a survey. It shows up at least five times.
>
> Isabella: Yeah, it threw me off when I just saw the last bullet point just be 'survey.'
>
> Kaley: Oh yeah, that too. And I guess that kind of also goes under, worship of like the written word too.
>
> Gabby: How many surveys are on here?
>
> Kaley: Yeah. There's a lot.
>
> Jeff: So remember, I did not edit the list.
>
> Gabby: You literally copy and pasted what we wrote.
>
> Kaley: Okay.
>
> Jeff: I copied and pasted the bullets. So each bullet is a post-it note. So if it says survey multiple times it's because multiple folks had 'survey' on a post-it note. So when it repeats, that's why it's repeated.
>
> Finn: It was us all along.

As I listened in on the conversation, I was thrilled. In a span of 45 seconds, the co-researchers seemed able to name two ways of whiteness that Okun's (2022) guiding document offered, worship of the written word and quantity over quality. Further, Finn's "It was us all along" tag on at the end suggested a budding understanding of how the veil of whiteness shapes our lens, illuminating the pathway of whiteness we seemed to be on.

A couple of minutes later, Kaley identified another characteristic of whiteness visible within our project. Focusing on the meeting norms portion of the Forum document, Kaley shared how one of the norms felt off. Originally, a norm that was identified on a Post-It stated, "everyone's voice gets heard." In reading this, Kaley pushed back, saying that instead of seeking input from every student, we should center:

> ...POC voices and those away from educational justice the most…I mean some people, if we're talking about white voices, they're always heard. So do they really need to be equal towards [all voices], especially in this space? I guess continuing to just say things making sure that BIPOC voices are heard.

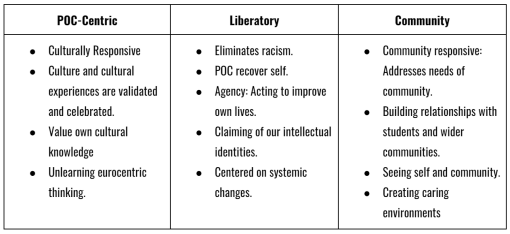
The collective response from the co-researchers was an enthusiastic "mm-hmm" of agreement. At this point, I was so happy that I almost fell off my chair. It seemed like the CDP process was working and working incredibly fast as well! The co-researchers, largely led by Kaley, were demonstrating their abilities to critically examine their own project to name the ways their early thoughts were leading down a path we may not want to take. Almost on cue, Gabby chimed in, "What do we do now with that now that we know what to say?"

Early Moments of Hope

After this initial examination of our project in which we named ways whiteness shaped our developing dream, we moved to the next step of replacing these harmful ways. Working in some previously established groups (Organizational, Data Collection, and Outreach), we tasked each group to formally critique the Forum to (a) identify the ways their portion was perpetuating whiteness and (b) use the 13 Guiding Principles of the Black Lives Matter movement, Indigenous Pedagogies, AsianCRIT document, and the Ideals of Ethnic Studies to find new ways to be (see Figure 20).

Figure 20

New Ways To Be Documents



Ideals of Ethnic Studies

POC-Centric	Liberatory	Community
• Culturally Responsive • Culture and cultural experiences are validated and celebrated. • Value own cultural knowledge • Unlearning eurocentric thinking.	• Eliminates racism. • POC recover self. • Agency: Acting to improve own lives. • Claiming of our intellectual identities. • Centered on systemic changes.	• Community responsive: Addresses needs of community. • Building relationships with students and wider communities. • Seeing self and community. • Creating caring environments

Perfectionism
- Little appreciation expressed for others' work
- Criticism more common
- Criticism of person or their work in their absence even more common
- Mistakes seen as personal failings
- ANTIDOTES: Develop a culture of appreciation; develop a learning organization, where it's expected that everyone makes mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning

Sense of Urgency
- Continued sense of little time that undermines inclusivity, and/or democratic and thoughtful decision-making
- This sacrifices potential allies in favor of quick or highly visible results
- Reinforced by funding proposals that promise (and funders that expect) too much for too little
- ANTIDOTES: Realistic workplans; leadership that understands that things take longer than anyone expects; discuss and plan for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time; write realistic funding proposals

Defensiveness
- Organization and energy focused on preventing abuse and protecting those in power
- Criticism of those with power viewed as inappropriate
- Difficult to raise new or challenging ideas
- Energy devoted to avoiding hurt feelings and working around defensive people
- ANTIDOTES: Understand how defensiveness is linked to fear (of losing power, face, comfort, privilege); name defensiveness as a problem when it is one

Quantity Over Quality
- Measurable things are most valued
- Little value attached to process
- Discomfort with emotion and feelings
- ANTIDOTES: Include process goals in planning; develop a values statement about how work will be done in the organization; develop methods for measuring process; recognize when you need to get off the agenda to address people's feelings and underlying concerns

Worship of the Written Word
- Those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in orgs where ability to relate to others is key
- The org doesn't value other ways in which information gets shared
- ANTIDOTES: Analyze other ways people get and share information; come up with alternative ways to document what is happening; work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization; make sure anything written can be clearly understood (is jargon-free)

Only One Right Way
- Belief there is one right way to do things and that people will learn and adopt it
- When they do not, then something is wrong with them
- ANTIDOTES: Accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; notice and name behavior when folks/groups push "one right way"; acknowledge you have a lot to learn from community partners' way of doing; be willing to adapt; never assume you/the organization knows what's best for others

Paternalism
- Decision-making clear to those with power; unclear to those without it
- Those with power feel capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power
- Those with power don't view as important or necessary understanding the views/experience of those for whom they decide
- ANTIDOTES: Ensure transparency about decision-making; include people affected by decisions in the process

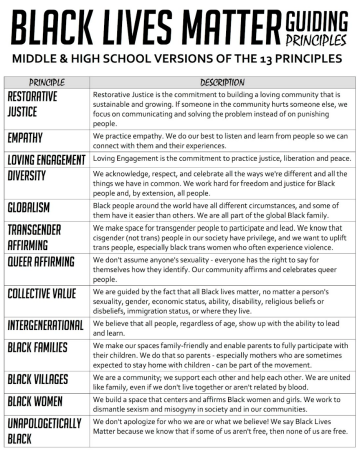
Either/Or Thinking
- Things are either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us
- No sense that things can be both/and
- Results in oversimplifying complex things
- Increases sense of urgency that we must do this or that, without time to consider a middle way
- ANTIDOTES: When people use 'either/or' language, push for more than two alternatives; when people simplify complex issues, encourage deeper analysis; with urgent decisions, make sure people have time to think creatively

Power Hoarding
- Little value around sharing power
- Those with power feel threatened when change is suggested & experience this as a judgment of them
- They also assume they have everyone's best interests at heart, and that those wanting change are ill-informed, emotional, or inexperienced
- ANTIDOTES: Include power-sharing in your org's values statement; discuss that good leaders develop the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and that challenges to leadership can be productive and healthy

Fear of Open Conflict
- People in power try to ignore or run from conflict
- When someone raises an "issue," response is to blame that person rather than look at the issue
- Emphasis on being polite, so raising difficult issues is being impolite, rude, or out-of-line
- ANTIDOTES: Role play ways to handle conflict before it happens; distinguish between politeness and raising hard issues; once a conflict is resolved, reflect on how it was resolved and/or might have been handled differently

Individualism
- Little experience or comfort working as part of a team
- People feel responsible for solving problems alone
- Accountability goes up and down, not sideways to peers or those whom the organization serves
- Desire for individual recognition and credit
- Competition valued over collaboration
- ANTIDOTES: Include teamwork in your org values statement; make sure that credit is given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders; practice group (not individual) accountability; use meetings to solve problems, not just report activities

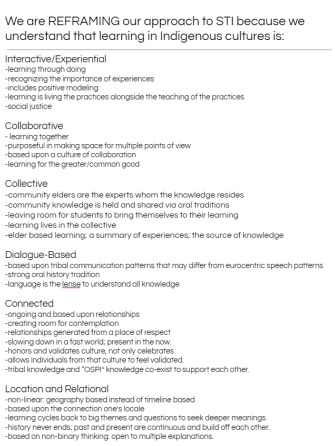
I'm the Only One
- Connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, / have to do it
- Little or no ability to delegate work to others
- ANTIDOTES: Evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals



BLACK LIVES MATTER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL VERSIONS OF THE 13 PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	Restorative Justice is the commitment to building a loving community that is sustainable and growing. If someone in the community hurts someone else, we focus on communicating and solving the problem instead of on punishing people.
EMPATHY	We practice empathy. We do our best to listen and learn from people so we can connect with them and their experiences.
LOVING ENGAGEMENT	Loving Engagement is the commitment to practice justice, liberation and peace.
DIVERSITY	We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate all the ways we're different and all the things we have in common. We work hard for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.
GLOBALISM	Black people around the world have all different circumstances, and some of them have it easier than others. We are all part of the global Black family.
TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING	We make space for transgender people to participate and lead. We know that cisgender (not trans) people in our society have privilege, and we want to uplift trans people, especially black trans women who often experience violence.
QUEER AFFIRMING	We don't assume anyone's sexuality - everyone has the right to say for themselves how they identify. Our community affirms and celebrates queer people.
COLLECTIVE VALUE	We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, no matter a person's sexuality, gender, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or where they live.
INTERGENERATIONAL	We believe that all people, regardless of age, show up with the ability to lead and learn.
BLACK FAMILIES	We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children. We do that so parents - especially mothers who are sometimes expected to stay home with children - can be part of the movement.
BLACK VILLAGES	We are a community; we support each other and help each other. We are united like family, even if we don't live together or aren't related by blood.
BLACK WOMEN	We build a space that centers and affirms Black women and girls. We work to dismantle sexism and misogyny in society and in our communities.
UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK	We don't apologize for who we are or what we believe! We say Black Lives Matter because we know that if some of us aren't free, then none of us are free.



We are REFRAMING our approach to STI because we understand that learning in Indigenous cultures is:

Interactive/Experiential
-learning through doing
-recognizing the importance of experiences
-includes positive modeling
-learning is living the practices alongside the teaching of the practices
-social justice

Collaborative
- learning together
-purposeful in making space for multiple points of view
-based upon a culture of collaboration
-learning for the greater/common good

Collective
-community elders are the experts whom the knowledge resides
-community knowledge is held and shared via oral traditions
-leaving room for students to bring themselves to their learning
-learning lives in the collective
-elder based learning; a summary of experiences; the source of knowledge

Dialogue-Based
-based upon tribal communication patterns that may differ from eurocentric speech patterns
-strong oral history tradition
-language is the lense to understand all knowledge

Connected
-ongoing and based upon relationships
-creating room for contemplation
-relationships generated from a place of respect
-slowing down in a fast world; present in the now.
-honors and validates culture, not only celebrates.
-allows individuals from that culture to feel validated.
-tribal knowledge and "OSPI" knowledge co-exist to support each other.

Location and Relational
-non-linear; geography based instead of timeline based
-based upon the connection one's locale
-learning cycles back to big themes and questions to seek deeper meanings.
-history never ends; past and present are continuous and build off each other.
-based on non-binary thinking; open to multiple explanations.

AsianCrit Theory - A Quick Summary

There are seven tenets of AsianCrit (Asian Critical Race Theory). Below I've summarized six of them.

1. **Asianization**: The reality that society lumps all Asian Amerians into one group. With this grouping comes many stereotypes, including the model minority, perpetual foreigner, and/or dangerous threat.
2. **Global Perspective**: The recognition that the perceptions and treatment of Asian Americans is impacted by past and present treatment (and policies) of Asian countries.
3. **Reconstructive History**: Rewriting more accurate histories of Asian American in US history, reclaiming the stories and contributions that have been erased. Elevating the acts and impacts of racism as well as the everpresent acts of resistance.
4. **Anti-Essentialism**: Focusing on the complexity of Asian American communities, disrupting the idea of a singular "Asian American" identity and replacing it with a more accurate and pluralistic understanding of Asian American communities.
5. **Intersectionality**: The recognition that racism and other forms of oppression (sexism, heterosexism, ableism, etc.) intersect to create unique conditions for Asian Americans.
6. **Commitment to Social Justice**: A overt commitment to ending racism, sexism, heterosexism capitalism, and other forms of oppression.

Since the plans being generated by the Data Gathering group (Willa (Chinese American), Maria (white), Finn (white), Jilliana (Filipina), and Atlis (white)) were causing me the most concern, I recorded their conversations. With everyone around the same table, the group dissected the existing thoughts around the survey and started by discussing if the survey should be anonymous or not with Willa wondering, "Who are we trying to protect?" by being anonymous, "it's the white supremacy thing, it's kind of defensiveness." That was it. For the remainder of their time together, the group seemed to struggle with the task, never bringing up the traits of whiteness again. Instead the conversations floated between who would read

responses to the survey and how many surveys to give. As this conversation continued, there seemed to be either a difference in the understanding of the traits of white supremacy or the connection between these traits with the actions this data gathering group were focused on. For example, Finn suggested that we give "...like 50 individual surveys. Every week or so, we release a new survey to collect new perspectives as a weekly thing." While an extreme example, whenever the survey was discussed, the conversation kept leaning towards getting as many students as possible to respond, without discussing how this focus on getting a lot of voices seemed grounded in the quantity over quality trait of white cultural supremacy (Okun, 2022). One of my original concerns with how hegemonic whiteness was invisibly shaping the ways the co-researchers discussed data collection seemed to be getting more pronounced despite efforts of disruption.

At one point, the group promisingly turned their conversation to another data collection idea from "Our Forum," the interview. While the conversation was not linear, they ended up noting that interviews are important because they would "Help people feel seen" (Finn) and grounded the data in "...an actual person" (Jilliana). Ultimately, the group landed on the idea that the interviews would center "... POC voices cause we have enough of white words taking over. So we want to center POC voices more" (Jilliana). This move seemed to align with Kaley's early comment on centering POC voices over white voices and a sign of hope that our uprooting efforts may be having an effect.

By the end of this conversation, the data collection group settled on three ideas for gathering data as part of the project, something arts-based, a survey, and interviews. Again, after Willa's early attempt to name or unmask whiteness, the conversations never returned to the topic. It makes sense. If whiteness was so easily unmasked and disrupted, it wouldn't be such a

powerful system of control. Even though this group of co-researchers did not use the terminology around the white cultural supremacy, I felt that the results of their decisions had begun to shift their gaze. This group's inclusion of art as a data source was pushing back on white culture's elevation of the written word that Kaley also briefly mentioned. Although the mass survey for all students was still present, their decision to center POC voices through interviews felt like the start of a shift away from focusing just on a quantity of voices, recognizing that some voices were more important and should be lifted up as part of our project. Even the idea for using multiple methods pushed back on the white cultural ideal of there being one right way to do something. It was early, but the co-researchers seemed to be beginning to think differently, to try on some new truths.

The Illusion of Progress

After spending the last three sessions at Edmonds-Woodway, we agreed to move to our third school, Mountlake Terrace High, for our next three sessions. Mountlake Terrace was located on the other side of the district and was the school Katie (Mexican American), Finn, Atlis's, and Jesse (Puerto Rican/Venezuelan) who was still popping in and out of sessions) attended. Our home at Mountlake Terrace was the College and Career Readiness Center. Located downstairs between the cafeteria and the counseling office, the center was a safe space for Katie and Atlis because of the College and Career Readiness Specialist who ran the Center. The Center was the home to many student clubs, a space to escape the daily stresses of school, a source of nourishment (literally, there were snacks everywhere!), and it had limited doors and windows to ensure privacy. Every time we met there, it seemed like there was a community basketball event going on. So as we were discussing and planning, the sounds of the court would filter into the room creating an oddly calming background noise. The presence of basketball players also made

this the most accessible of schools for us because the front door was always unlocked. No one had to stand outside and wait to be let in. We felt welcome there.

Having left the last session feeling confident that we were all moving in the right direction, I really wanted to focus the next couple of sessions on thoroughly mapping the Forum. This included getting specifics for the actual event we would host, how we would collect student voices, and how we would promote the event. At this point, everything was loosely defined and not knowing what our summer time together would look like, I wanted as much defined as possible. Between the ongoing CDP efforts to reshape our project outside of the white gaze and my push to narrow things down, the conversations of the next two sessions (Sessions Eight and Session Nine) seemed to grow more tenuous, as if the progress I thought we were making had been an illusion. In our efforts to find new pathways towards a better future, every tear in the veil of whiteness seemed to keep quickly mend, shielding those pathways grounded in Black, Indigenous, and Asian American ways of being. I was realizing how resilient whiteness would be.

Session Eight began back in our Forum planning groups. For some reason, we were a small but mighty group this day of just Katie, Gabby, Atlis, Maria, Finn, and myself. Despite so few co-researchers in attendance, we continued our uprooting and replacement efforts. I chose to focus on Katie and Gabby for this session, recording their conversation and planning around the actual Forum. Up to this point, the Forum had been thought of as a series of four after school or weekend events; one to introduce their idea and one each for grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. As Katie, Gabby, and I started to discuss these plans, tensions around the quality over quantity trait of white cultural supremacy quickly emerged.

Early in this conversation, Katie vocalized that asking students and their families to attend multiple events was not sitting with her right. Instead, Katie suggested that we limit our Forum to one day instead. Gabby responded by saying:

> Gabby: What if they can't make it to the day that we have the event? How are we gonna make sure we get more voice?
>
> Jeff: And you're not gonna get everybody. Even though those who show up for the [forum], not everybody's gonna want to be part of the interviewing process either.
>
> Katie: Yeah.

This brief snippet of a conversation signaled the start of a larger tension that would surface and resurface throughout the day. One in which there was a push for ways to ensure that our event attracted lots of students and me pushing back on the emphasis of quantity. Recognizing this tension, Katie suggested that the Forum be a field trip instead because:

> …a lot of people don't have the privilege to have their parent take them, you know? And I think with this opportunity, a lot of people are able to go and a lot of parents don't bug them. If they're going on a field trip that's, you know, provided by the school kind of thing. So that's why I was focusing on what kind of day it should be. Not what day, but like what kind of day it should be and like how we get people there.
>
> Jeff: Okay. You're creating four really cool options. So you could do a field trip, but have three different field trips. One for elementary, one for middle, and one for high school.
>
> Katie: Yeah.
>
> Jeff: And I wanna push on you a little bit. Who says you need 300 people there?
>
> Katie: Yeah.
>
> Gabby: No, it is not about like...

Jeff: What if you got 30 kids, 40 to show up?

Gabby: Doesn't feel like an entire arena of people. I think it's just, we need to focus on doing the agenda or like the objective of this whole thing. It's not about the amount of people.

Jeff: You could strategically do the outreach, that's what Isabella could work on. She could strategically reach out to schools that are predominantly POC.

Gabby: Actually, you know what I'm thinking about it now, the field trip would be more sense.

After affirming the idea of a field trip during school hours, I wanted to push back on Katie's "a lot of people will be able to go" comment, to add tension to the conversation around the quantity of people they were imagining. Like the previous example, Katie seemed to agree right away, suggesting that she was coming to grips with the reality that we would not need tons of students to attend the field trip for us to gather quality data. Gabby's initial "arena" response offered an insight into what she was thinking around the number of students she wanted; our success seemed tied to the quantity of students who attended. But, after another quick push, Gabby agreed to the field trip and was open to the suggestion of targeted advertising. I thought we made a solid inroad into the disruption of Katie and Gabby's over-valuing of quantity.

A bit later in the session, Katie and Gabby explained their idea of a field trip to Atlis and Maria. In this instance, Katie seemed more accepting of the truth that quantity is not more important than quality when Maria asked, "So how do we handle hundreds of students?" Katie replied, "That's something that we can't guarantee, that hundreds of people are going to [attend]." Katie's quick response to Maria isn't a repudiation of having hundreds of students, but her

response suggested that it may no longer be her primary concern. For Katie, the focus seemed to be getting students there and not worrying about how many attended.

With Maria bringing quantity back into the conversation about the field trip, I wanted to add that tension back into the conversation like I did with Gabby and Katie minutes earlier. Gabby's response to this push surprised me a bit but offers an example of the ebb and flow of the CDP process and the hold of whiteness:

> Jeff: And I wanna keep pushing back on the idea of hundreds and hundreds, right?
>
> Katie: Yeah.
>
> Jeff: I don't think you want hundreds and hundreds.
>
> Gabby: What would be like the main against? Why are you against the hundred and anti-hundred hundreds? Not the quality of quantity thing. That's a result. Besides that?
>
> Jeff: That's the reason. Cuz it's focusing on such a large number,
>
> Gabby: But that's just a basic answer.
>
> Jeff: I feel like you lose that quality of conversations. It becomes harder to engage.
>
> Gabby: But that's just the basic answer though.

While not conveyed in a transcript, the frustration in Gabby's voice was clear. Her voice shuddered and the tension was visible. Despite what I thought I heard earlier, Gabby's responses suggest that her struggle with whiteness was more intense than I had thought. As she did before, Katie moved the conversation forward, describing what she meant by a field trip. This shift in the conversation allowed the tension to momentarily settle, a pause in the conversation, to offer time to think.

In the meantime, it seemed like Maria had been reflecting, considering the quality instead of quantity push being made and once Katie was done explaining her idea for a field trip, Maria made this suggestion:

> Maria: No, that sounds good. I just think that you might need to cap the number of students. Cause I'm not saying you're gonna have hundreds and hundreds, but you might. If there's like 300 students, you're not gonna be really able to have any sort of conversation with them. I'm not saying that we need to gather that much data there, but it makes it kind of impersonal if it's an auditorium of people.
>
> Katie: Yeah.
>
> Maria: …But if you wanna talk to them too, then you might have to have them sign up and be like, okay, we're capping it at like 80 people…

Like Katie earlier, Maria seemed to be recognizing and accepting the truth that quantity isn't always the goal. After addinging in that we should market the field trip to affinity groups in schools, it seemed like Maria was also seeing data in a new way and was on board with a smaller, POC focused event. I also noticed that Gabby became unusually quiet. Normally, Gabby's voice was a strong contributor to all conversations. In this moment, her contributions were sparse and when she spoke up it was uncharacteristically quick and to the point.

As Gabby and Katie were discussing the field trip in Session Eight, Atlis, Maria, and Finn were across the room talking data. We entered Session Eight with a super general idea that we would gather student voice through a survey, interviews, and something art-based. Their ask for that session was to clarify and come to terms with how they would collect data. Their conversations were largely missed during this session as much of my attention was focused on the forum (which turned into a field trip) work group. As we prepared to end Session Eight, each

group offered summaries of their decisions. When it was their turn to share what the data gathering group worked on, Maria shared the following:

> So we're gonna kinda just basically take a triangle approach, really broad and then we narrow it down. So we start with some sort of pretty basic survey that goes out to absolutely everybody, try to get it to every single student in the Edmonds school district. Basically so that they can share. And then we just have data points and we can look at that and visualize trends and see what people's opinions are. And maybe that will kind of inform how we do the forum in a way. Then, at the forum, have some sort of exit survey, that's a lot more specific to what we talked about and also give options for people to participate more in individual interviews. And I think there were like a few other options there that you mentioned.

After the co-researchers peppered Maria and Atlis with a bunch of questions about the types of questions they would ask, their response scales, and how they would deal with inappropriate answers, nearly 10 minutes passed. During this time, no one questioned their focus on every student in the ESD. Like before, I wanted to help make the pathway of whiteness we seemed to be on visible by adding tension to the conversation and asked, "Do we care what every student in Edmonds thinks about ethnic studies?" Hoping that the prompt would remind them of our ethnic studies ideals that center POC-voices and push back on the emphasis on quantity. Finn and Atlis both chimed in with a clear, "no." But the reasoning shared wasn't what I expected, Finn noted that some students won't give serious answers and Atlis wondered how we would filter those answers out. The connection between quantity over quality and ethnic studies relations to POC seemed to be missed. So I pushed a bit harder, asking if we even need to survey non-POC students:

Gabby: Do we wanna exclude non-POC? Is that the agenda?

Jeff: We can.

Atlis: But I feel like we shouldn't.

Gabby: But then there's gonna be backlash to that.

Finn: Yes.

Gabby: Have you considered that, where you exclude?

Katie: Personally, I don't think we should exclude them, but not because of backlash. I don't really care. But some do have some opinions and it's sometimes nice to have a white person's perspective of what's going on. It also would be, if we're talking about the event, it would also be, it could be a learning experience for them.

Maria: There are a lot of LGBTQ white people or people who, there's a lot of economic insecurity and that affects their school experience. Even if they are white, I think those people have a lot to say a lot of the times and their opinions are valid. And I agree with you, there's going to be some BS responses. Yeah. And we can probably filter those out ourselves.

I hoped someone would make a connection to the traits of whiteness we tried to make visible like we did in the field trip conversation, but it seems something was missing and that connection would not be made. Despite the promise I felt just minutes before, the co-researchers each ended up speaking in favor of the larger survey that sought all voices. It was not what I hoped for or expected, but as time ran out that is how we ended Session Eight. It was quickly approaching 6:30 and time to head home for the week. It also felt like the co-researchers had enough tension for the day. Our timing was about right.

In hindsight, the built in weekly breaks seemed to function as the necessary pause of the CDP process that San Pedro discussed. A pause to allow the tensions that arose in each session to rest as well as giving time for the co-researchers to reflect on the truths we kept pushing against and for. As I reflected on how strongly Gabby entered our space that day, the confidence she seemed to exude regarding the importance of examining the ways we have embraced whiteness, her departure felt to be in contrast. Nurturing this productive tension would require a deft hand.

The Power of Pausing

We returned to the College and Career Center the next week for Session Nine and began with a much needed recap. After such small numbers in attendance the previous week, the co-researchers were back in full force with six folks attending who were absent last time. There was a lot to catch up on. Gabby and Katie began by explaining the changes they made, moving from a forum to a field trip. As they explained their decision, I felt that Gabby really took the last session to heart and had the time to examine what she held as true. With moral support from Katie and as they explained the field trip, Gabby offered this realization: "It's quality over quantity. I had troubles with that last time…It's a lesson, a learning lesson…I kind of lost that in going for quantity." Hearing these words from Gabby were reassuring after the stress and tension that the last session seemed to elicit. I was genuinely worried that I had pushed Gabby too hard last time. But it seemed that our literal pause over the last week allowed Gabby to, as San Pedro (2019) wrote about, "...have moments to consider the many positions they've been exposed to…" as they consider which truths they want to hold onto and which they will let go (p. 1221-1222). I felt again that glimmer of hope, that our planned disruption was working. Gabby then offered what felt like a confirmation of this hope:

> I feel like it's just, it's a thing that I would assume that quantity matters. But coming to realize, it's probably the quality that's best. It's. You just say, oh, you should know that is standard. But I think applying it to real life situations like this kind of thing is hard…But I will say, I think the point is we're trying to bring in ethnic studies and talk about it and that's what's important.

As Maria and Katie had seemed to last time, Gabby might have taken the time between our sessions to engage in her own pauses. Was she in the process of letting go of a false belief grounded in white cultural supremacy? I especially appreciated her recognition that applying what one learns to real life situations is difficult work. Learning the names for the ways whiteness works invisibly is one thing, but noticing and uprooting these in yourself is another and more difficult process.

Or Maybe Not, The Triangle Approach

As mentioned above, when we returned to the College and Career Center the following week, six of the co-researchers present that day needed to be caught up on the plans for data collection. After a humorously rousing conversation around whose school was the worst, we settled in. As already described, Katie and Gabby started the recap by discussing the switch to the field trip. Gabby shared her reflection on whiteness described above. Maria then introduced the plan for collecting data before and during the field trip while trying to address the quality over quantity discussion from last time. Her sharing highlighted how the CDP process is fluid and non-linear:

> So it's kind of the quality over quantity, but we're gonna start with quantity and then kind of narrow it down. You know, kinda like a triangle. So we're gonna start with a district wide survey where we just get a really, really broad impression of what are students

> thinking? And that's everybody, not just POC students, everybody's super broad data…And then at the [field trip], we're obviously gonna be gathering data. Do some breakout rooms. Maybe take some notes on what people are saying. And then give them the option to engage as much as they want through…art and photography, and signing up for an interview. And that's where we can really narrow it down and then really center POC voices, because we're going to see everybody who wants to participate…

Maria's recap offered a bit more clarity around their plans for data collection than what she shared at the end of the prior session. Even with the new details, the centering of quantity over quality was present and going unnamed. As I was gearing up to push back, to add tension to the conversation, Kaley beat me to it:

> I'm going to push back and challenge this for a little, just a little bit because for me, I felt like I see the point of getting everybody's broad opinions first, but sometimes when you think in the ethnic studies lens it just rubbed me the wrong way. The fact that it's everybody, including white people first and then, oh we're gonna get POC centric after, it makes it feel like we have to wait for us to be centered…I felt like we might need to reflect on that a little bit…because I think that ethnic studies is POC centric in the first place. Especially at the forefront.

For me, this push back by Kaley (along with her other push backs) suggested that she was further along in the process of disruption than the other co-researchers. Not only does whiteness seem less invisible to her, but her "...it just rubbed me the wrong way" comment indicated that she may have decided to hold onto different truths, that her voice as an Asian American woman is more important than the general voices of white students. It was a powerful statement to make. But it seemed to have limited impact.

The rest of the data gathering recap, another eight minutes, Gabby, Lizzy (Mexican American), Maria, Katie, and Atlis seemed to grapple with the idea of how to make the survey POC centric. Maria noted that survey takers would be given the chance to share their demographic information, which allow us to "... choose what we focus on and we'll still be, you know, POC centric with that." In what felt like a contraction from her opening reflection on quantity and quality, Gabby noted that, "...it would make more sense to be broad and then narrow down to POC just because it's good to get perspective before we start. Cause we shouldn't be going out to excluding groups of people." Hearing a rise in tension, I offered a question that I hoped would help connect this conversation to Kaley's early statement, "Is it excluding or is it centering?" Which seemed to prompt Kaley to push even harder, "...do we need the voices of white people to tell me about their experience of ethnic studies and their opinions on ethnic studies?" What followed was several minutes of back and forth, Maria and Gabby defending the triangle approach for data collection and Kaley pushing for POC voices only. The tension in the room was growing rapidly. Feeling that we were beginning to dig trenches, I brought up the ways intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) is often used in the field of ethnic studies to maintain a race first lens while creating really valuable space to examine the ways other systems of oppression interact. Using the overly simple phrase *race and* as a way to talk about intersectionality that aligned with ethnic studies race first approach, I asked the group, "And so when you think about the survey, could you do it in a way where you center race and?" It was my hope to push the survey to be more POC orientated. It did not seem effective:

> Lizzy: …then you would have to go kind of broad instead of just going to one specific group. To get 'and,' you need the broad...Or else you're just gonna get one perspective and you're not gonna get the and.

Gabby: We need multiple perspectives. That's how you do that.

Katie: Yeah. Either way in every situation you're gonna need more than one perspective. In that way, we do have the control to make it more POC centric.

Collective: Yeah.

Katie: With the questions we're asking. With the data that we actually keep. At the end of the day, we have that control…So in that way we do have the control, but it is really important to get a broad sense of what the district is thinking because we're making it for the district.

Atlis: Like Jeffrey said, we don't want to exclude, we want to center. So we want that "and," not just.

Gabby: Yeah. Yeah.

Not fully sure where the conversation was going, I threw out a question I asked last session:

Jeff: Can you not ask somebody and still center them. Can they still be centered? Likewise, to not ask someone, is that excluding? Or is that just creating space that's been denied to other folks in the past?

Finn: It depends on perspective.

Katie: Honestly it depends on the situation, in my opinion. In this case, if we were to not ask non-POCs, I don't think it would really be considered excluding…

Lizzy: I don't think it would be excluding, but…I feel like getting a sense of everybody first, and then everybody knowingly goes into it focusing on POCs. But if we don't get [everyones] input at least, how do we know how much they know and how much of a curriculum we have to make or how, what difference do we have to do here and there?

In the end and to a chorus of "yeahs," the essence of the co-researcher collective decision would be summed up by Katie, "... in every situation you're gonna need more than one perspective." Despite a few more pushes by Kaley and myself, the value of more voices, specifically white voices, seemed largely unchanged. While the co-researchers looked for other ways to center the intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific-Islander and multiracial student voices in the survey, the topic of quantity over quality would not surface again until the fall. For me, this series of exchanges illustrated one of the realities of the CDP process within a YPAR setting, namely that changing one's ideas and identity is slow, iterative work (San Pedro, 2019). There is no magical switch that can be flipped. Learning to see whiteness is one thing, learning to let go of what it values in a society built on whiteness is another.

Ultimately, much of this effort to disrupt the nature of the survey seemed for naught. As time progressed and we continued to meet over the summer and into the fall, the focus of the survey seemed to slip away. While we created a draft survey with one set of questions for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial students and another set of questions for white students that was intended to be offered to every student in the ESD, the survey never went anywhere for a variety of reasons.

A Different Type of Pause

At this point in the project, it was June and we began transitioning into the summer. Kaley and Willa were graduating in a few weeks. Everyone seemed to have finals on the horizon. We already decided that we would continue to work over the summer and into the fall to make our dream of ensuring student voices remained the driving force of ethnic studies in the ESD. For everyone involved, we recognized it was time to slow down and pause our work, making more room for the busy lives of co-researchers. We met two more times in June. Once we met to

watch *Precious Knowledge*, the story of the fight to preserve the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson. We met another time to plan what our summer would look like. While beyond the scope of this project, Gabby, Atlis, Katie, Isabella, and sometimes Joshua would meet up almost weekly over the summer. When fall rolled around, Maria and Joshua consistently rejoined. Working through the fall, the co-researchers successfully planned and held their field trip. After careful recruiting and a bunch of red tape, the co-researchers (who now called themselves Students for Ethnic Studies) brought 52 secondary students from across the ESD together to learn about ethnic studies, to share their educational experiences, and offer their educational dreams that kept them going. As of this submission, Students for Ethnic Studies is analyzing their data and deciding their next steps. Will they follow settler colonial neoliberal norms (Tuck, 2022) and pursue their dreams through traditional channels? Or will they refuse past these limiting ideologies and elevate the voices, really the educational futurities, of their peers through other actions? Another disruption may be on the horizon.

Our Unfinished Project

As I reflected on the Understandings from this chapter, I genuinely struggled to identify anything that I felt was definitive or clear. It was as if these later sessions produced more of a muddled pathway forward than a clear one. Sitting on this feeling for a few weeks, I was eventually reminded of the ways Sleeter and Savala (2019) discussed ethnic studies as an unfinished project. While their specific reference to the idea of an *unfinished project* sought to elevate the need for ethnic studies to be anticolonial and antiracist, the underlying message is that projects for ethnic studies movements are ongoing political, cultural, economic, and epistemic struggles that navigate the ideals of liberation movements and the confines of settler colonial logics and capitalistic institutions. This reminded me that our project for expanding ethnic

studies in the ESD was fighting against immense forces of domination and our one small project could not disrupt and repair all the harm done (and continues to be done) to the co-researchers through our schooling system, not to mention the harm that results from living in the United States. As the co-researchers and I were in the proverbial trenches of fighting whiteness, the grandness of what we were fighting against became obscured. I failed to grasp the immensity of our fight.

As I struggled to identify a clear finding for this chapter, I also revisited Paolo Freire's (2012) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Over the years, I found his words to be a sort of meditation for me; when I am feeling lost or in need of grounding I return to this work to relocate myself on pathways that I believe lead towards a more liberating present and future. As I reflected on his words this time, I was reminded that dialogue, what the co-researchers and I were engaged in, creates opportunities "...to confront reality critically" (p. 39), but opportunities are not enough. To enact actual change, we needed to do something that moved us past dialogue and into action. To this point in the project, our work had been to unveil the limitations of whiteness and nothing more, we had yet to act. This reminder from Freire reiterated another way that our project was an unfinished one and I pushed myself to understand that a legitimate finding can (maybe even should) be the unfinished nature of a project.

With the understanding that this chapter is more about the unfinished nature of our project, it feels right to discuss the ways I understood some ways our CDP process was more complicated than initially expected and thus incomplete

The Unfinished Relationship Between Culturally Disruptive Pedagogy and YPAR

As we worked to uproot whiteness and shape our collective dream for advancing ethnic studies in the ESD, the application of CDP to our group processes and decisions was essential.

After realizing that the veil of whiteness was shaping our project, keeping the other pathways from our view, we implemented a plan for its disruption. Using the guidance of San Pedro (2019), and working with Kaley and Willa, the research collective began the process of making whiteness visible to uproot and let it go, replacing it with new truths grounded outside of the white gaze. Recognizing the ongoing nature of the work, I would argue that the use of Okun's (2022) Characteristics of White Cultural Supremacy, Black Lives Matter's 13 Principles (Black Live Matter At School), Indigenous Pedagogies (Collaborative Tulalip Curriculum Project), and AsianCRIT created a rupture of possibility and hope (King, 2019; San Pedro, 2019). Over four sessions, through dialogue, situational pushes, and the offering of new knowledge, we encouraged everyone to examine the truths that we each held dear. To pause and reflect on our identities as well deepening our understanding of the ways whiteness was shaping our project.

In their original offering, San Pedro (2019) seems to frame CDP as something personal, "...to learn with another how we can disrupt social norms in order to grow to become someone better" by disrupting "...that which is in us that has led to oppressive and dehumanizing relationships" (p. 1222). The focus of Understandings Two seemed to be in alignment with the personal focus. The understandings in this chapter have the potential to help us understand what it looks like as we try to be "someone better" and push against social norms grounded in hegemonic whiteness in a YPAR space. Gabby and Maria offer two great examples of this. Both seem to be successfully developing the skills to make whiteness visible at a societal and personal level. That is, both seem to demonstrate an understanding of the ways traits white hegemonic culture shows up in their lives and ways they have internalized it. Yet, as this work is ongoing, their experiences also illustrate the unfinished nature of the work as they repeatedly struggled to apply this set of knowings to the dream they were shaping as part of our YPAR process. For me,

the recognition of unfinishedness holds the possibility of illustrating a pathway for increasing the impact of YPAR projects. Namely that the efforts for CDP can and should look beyond the individual and to the processes of YPAR projects themselves. This holds the potential for YPAR projects to be spaces where youth can act towards their self-determined futurity, where they choose the path that leads them towards a future of their own choosing versus a path already chosen for them by whiteness (Harjo, 2019).

Our Unfinished Culturally Sustaining YPAR Space

In their original offering of CDP, San Pedro (2019) noted their intent to contribute to the field of CSP. As a movement, CSP asks us to "…disrupt the pervasive anti-Indigeneity, anti-Blackness, and related anti-Brownness…and model-minority myth…" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2) of our schooling system by reimagining schools into as spaces that "...center and sustain the young people in their communities through teaching and learning while they grow and expand who young people are and can be through the process of education" (Paris, 2021, p. 365). Through CSP, schooling can move towards spaces where students can remain whole and where a plurality of cultural identities thrive side-by-side (Paris, 2016). As I think about where I hoped our YPAR project would take us, I must admit I dreamt that our work would become a culturally sustaining space. I dreamt that the pathway the co-researchers would naturally take would be grounded in their cultural identities, almost automatically producing a vision for the education present-future that was sustaining. I think that these understandings demonstrate that at this point in the project, this was an unfinished dream.

Through conversation, I was reminded to revisit a piece Paris wrote in 2021. As I reflected on it, I came to an understanding that the fight against whiteness the co-researchers were engaging was also a form of action that, with more time and support, could move our space

towards one that sustained their cultural identities. In this piece, Paris noted that spaces that are culturally sustaining create "...structured opportunities to contend with internalized oppressions, false choices, and inward gazes…" (p. 367). In many ways, this chapter offered examples of the co-researchers struggling against their internalized whiteness and the false (and limiting) choices this internalization imposed on our project. Our fight to dislodge whiteness from our group is a form of action that must be recognized as part of the larger YPAR process and understood to be of an unfinished nature.

In this same piece, Paris (2021) also noted that as educators move towards spaces that are culturally sustaining, they need to give up "...White normed practices and bodies as superior-which means educators invested in whiteness must be willing to give something up" (p. 368). Recognizing that the following stretches beyond Paris' original intent, I feel that this explicit shedding of whiteness can and should be applied to YPAR projects too. For me, this need to let go of whiteness offers insight and explanation as to why our project was so grounded in whiteness and unfinished. As individual researchers, we were gaining deeper insights into the ways whiteness impacted us as well as how we internalized it. But as co-researchers, we were in the process of working together to find ways to let go. Until we could collectively move in this direction, together, my hopes for our YPAR space being culturally sustaining would be deferred. Not to say that we would never "get there," but we had more action to take with each other before we more strongly moved in that direction. In certain ways, the futurity of my dream to be a culturally sustaining space was still possible, but we had more individual and collective struggles to work through.

Towards What End?

December 6, 2022

It's 9:45 a.m. and I'm standing outside the Alderwood Boys and Girls Club waiting for the buses to arrive. They should have been here by now, but they are nowhere in sight. I'm getting nervous because today is the day we worked toward for the last eight months. Today is our field trip and we have 52 middle and high school students from across the ESD joining us to talk about the future of ethnic studies in the Edmonds School District. But where are they? I send a GroupMe to the co-researchers, "Where are the buses at?" Katie lets me know, "We are almost there. Like one minute." As if on cue, I heard the buses grumbling though the neighborhood. They were here!

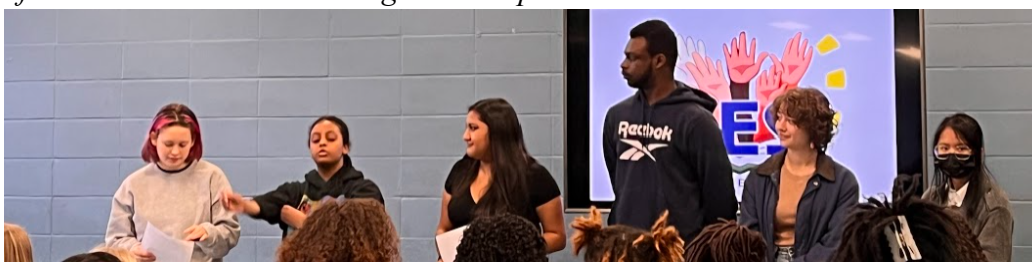
The focus on the written portion of the dissertation ends in June of 2022 just as we agreed to use a field trip as our primary data gathering event. We would spend the next six months working together to make our shared dream become a reality. Over the summer, Gabby, Joshua, Atlis, Isa, and I met each week at a local library to continue our work. Maria and Katie were out of the country, visiting family. Kaley and Willa graduated and moved on to the next stage of their lives. For Lizzy, Jesse, Jilliana, Vyna, and Finn, summer marked the end of their participation in the project. In the fall of 2022 as school restarted, Maria and Katie returned, rejoining Gabby, Joshua, Atlis, and Isa.

During these six months, we planned a three hour data gathering field trip. We secured a host site, the Alderwood Boys and Girls Club. Using a recruitment video we made, 52 middle and high school students from across the ESD signed-up for the field trip. As was our aim, the students that joined us largely identified as Black, Latinx, Asian American, multiracial, and/or LGBTQ+. Many of those who identified as LGBTQ+ also identified as white.

The students clambered off the buses, slipped their way through the icy parking lot and into the Boys and Girls Club. With little wiggle room in our agenda, the co-researchers kicked the event off by collectively welcoming the middle and high school students and sharing the agenda for the day (see Figure 20).

Figure 20

Students for Ethnic Studies Welcoming Field Trip Attendees



(from left to right: Atlis, Gabby, Katie, Joshua, Maria, and Isa)

We planned a two part event. Before lunch, the co-researchers offered two different activities aimed at ensuring the 52 students had a sense of what ethnic studies was. Isa and Atlis led one session where they watched and discussed *Precious Knowledge*, the story of the fight for the Mexican American Studies/Raza program in Tucson, Arizona. Joshua, Gabby, Katie, and Maria led a conversation around some of the challenges students faced in their schools and explained how ethnic studies was one way to help address these problems (see Figure 21).

Figure 21

Students for Ethnic Studies Conversation

We had a working lunch, where Kaley and a peer from NAACP Youth Council of Washington led a session covering some of the basics of ethnic studies.

From this shared grounding, the co-researchers invited the 52 attendees to join one of three data gathering activities to learn what they wanted for their educational futurities. Gabby prepared a small group conversation activity where students could share their hopes and dreams for schooling through written reflection, individual interviews, or small group conversations. Maria, Joshua, and Atlis hosted a group poster conversation, where students could engage in group conversations around a series of prompts and record their thoughts on poster paper. Katie and Isa hosted our arts-based data event. Using provided paper, colored pencils, and crayons, Katie and Isa asked students to represent their dreams for ethnic studies through art. Unexpectedly, this ended up being the most popular data activity, which produced some amazing visual stories (because the 52 attending students are not part of my research project, samples of their beautiful work are sadly not included). And then it was time to go. Our three hours flew by in a whirlwind of semi-structured chaos and it was time for everyone to return to the buses and back to school.

As I reflected on the day and all that led up to it, I was thrilled. Yes, we made a few adjustments on the fly (Kaley was an hour late because of traffic, there was a set of directions that led to a bit of confusion), but that was it. The co-researchers and I pulled off a predominantly youth-led, youth-focused event. Of great importance to me, we not only pulled off a major data gathering event during school hours, but our event seemed to live up to the ideals of ethnic studies that we had been working so hard on. When we recruited, we weren't enticed by the draw of quantity voices but focused on quality; explicitly inviting intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander and multiracial youth as well as youth from the LBGTQ+ communities through a recruitment video (see Figure 22).

Figure 22

QR Code For Recruitment Video

This created the opportunity to center their shared experiences and stories at the core of the data we collected. Their methods used by the co-researchers pushed back on the dominance of the written language by centering data collection around dialogue and the arts. They did this collaboratively and in community with each other; no one co-researcher dominated the event. While much of the work that led to these successes are beyond the scope of this work, the data suggests that the culturally disruptive work we engaged in eight months prior was instrumental. Recognizing that the process of disrupting and divesting ourselves of whiteness is always ongoing, I strongly feel that our CDP efforts were key to the successes of the day.

Distilled Relations

Two years ago, Dr. Eve Tuck introduced me to Max Liboiron. In their work on anticolonial research methods, Liboiron (2021) urged researchers to move away from an extraction mentality and towards a relational approach. In essence, Liboiron urged researchers to do "...good relations within a text, through a text" (p.1). Inspired by Liboiron, my intent for the discussion is to explain the ways I am trying to understand the relations that occurred within and through our YPAR project that created the possibilities we experienced together.

Disrupting Whiteness From Within: On Multiple Levels

Cammarota and Fine (2008) stated that YPAR projects can be critical and liberatory spaces because youth can "...begin to re-vision and denaturalize the realities of their social worlds and then undertake forms of collective challenge…[for] speaking back and challenging conditions of injustice" (p. 2). Based upon our experiences in the early stages of the project

together, I believe we illustrated a potentially dangerous relationship between whiteness and YPAR projects that could limit these possibilities Cammarota and Fine identified. Specifically, unless efforts are taken to make visible the relations we individually have with and to whiteness, the actions taken collectively as part of YPAR have the potential to inadvertently perpetuate whiteness. This seems due to the ways whiteness functions invisibly as our society's status quo worldview (Leonardo, 2002; Lewis, 2004). Importantly, the experiences in our YPAR project suggest that when a process for disrupting the ways we have individually internalized whiteness is implemented alongside existing practices of YPAR, the hope for re-visioning beyond the status quo lens of whiteness becomes more possible. For our project, the application of a CDP to our group seemed to help make whiteness more visible for each co-researcher, allowing us to more directly challenge the impact of whiteness head on through our YPAR actions.

Though San Pedro (2019) seemed to frame CDP as a process for white students, particularly white students in ethnic studies classes, our work suggests that a CDP process could be used with Black, Latinx, and Asian American youth. One of the reasons we decided to bring the CDP process into our project was because of the ways whiteness seemed to be the status quo worldview of most of the co-researchers, regardless of racial identity. As Paris and Alim indicated, there is a need for both white people and communities of color to gaze inwards, to engage in deep reflection and analysis, to identify the ways we have internalized whiteness (Paris, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2017). Our individual and collective failures to engage in such work is one way we can perpetuate whiteness (Paris & Alim, 2017).

At this point, I would suggest that the CDP process we engaged in was more impactful for Katie, Gabby, Isa, Kaley, Joshua, and Willa than for Maria, Atlis, or Finn. One possible reason for this may be the process for CDP we used, especially the use of racial affinity groups.

Through analysis of the emic knowings the youth entered our project with, it seemed likely that the Black, Asian American, and Latinx co-researchers held a deeper and more personal understanding of whiteness. Particularly around the ways whiteness personally impacted them. It may be that in the racial affinity spaces, because of these more complex connections, the Black, Asian American and Latinx youth could more readily and deeply engage in conversations that helped to make the ways they were internalizing whiteness more visible. From our experiences, it feels justified to encourage folks in more spaces that work to reimagine more critical and liberatory schooling systems to engage in their own CDP efforts.

Disruptions and Divestment: Partners for Hope and Possibility

When Kaley, Willa and I placed CDP in relation with our YPAR project, we created ongoing moments of rupture of possibility and hope (King, 2020; San Pedro, 2019). These ruptures not only helped illuminate the relationship between ourselves and whiteness, but they also introduced new relationships we could embrace as we sought to divest ourselves from the tendrils of whiteness. Through the introduction of the 13 Black Lives Matter Principles, Indigenous Pedagogy, and AsianCRIT, we offered everyone in our project ways of being and knowing that they could build new relations with. This (re)introduction of ways to be outside of whiteness was essential to our CDP process because once the ways of whiteness were made visible there seemed to be a sense (an energy really) of hope. These relations seemed to offer ways of being in and with this world as we began the process to divest ourselves and our project from whiteness.

The analysis of these first three months of the project only show what the early stages of disruption and divestment process can look like. I believe that some of the best evidence of the impact CDP had on our relation to YPAR were seen (and felt) on December 6th, 2022. After six

months of ongoing efforts to keep CDP in relation with our YPAR process, the co-researchers led a beautiful youth centered data gathering event that felt grounded in the ways of being we had been learning with Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities. Of course there was room to grow, but so many of the battles that were waged against whiteness through the CDP process in May and June felt like they were working six months later.

I believe that our evidence strongly suggests that when youth are explicitly taught to see the ways of whiteness through the CDP process, the hope for being (living, thinking, and understanding) in and with the world outside of the white gaze becomes more possible. These new relations seem to increase the possibility for imagining a futurity grounded in intersectional, Black, Latinx, and Asian American communities. When we examined the ways whiteness can look like in the systems they are seeking to reimagine, we gained a deeper and more complicated understanding of the space we are seeking to disrupt. The introduction of new relationships creates opportunities to divest, moving us towards a more hopeful future. Adding CDP into the YPAR relation feels like it should have always been, but largely is not yet.

I also believe that these feelings of hope and possibility should not be limited to youth spaces. Given my experiences in K-12 education, youth too often play limited and marginal roles (if any) in educational reform. Most power is held and wielded by the adults that run the schooling systems. Given this reality, I wonder what an adult focused, possibly district leadership level, CDP process could look like? As San Pedro (2019) wrote, an aim of CDP is to ground ourselves in new truths outside of whiteness. I wonder what new possibilities (maybe even the rhythms and movements King (2019) wrote about) and dreams would emerge if district leaders let go of whiteness and ground their work in the increasingly Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander and multiracial communities they are supposed to serve.

The Relational Importance of Critical Emic Knowings in YPAR

Our project also suggests that whiteness can be disrupted and divested while still honoring the relationships that exist between the youth researchers, their emic knowings, and YPAR methods. Our experience suggests that even as we engaged in the process of CDP, the emic knowings that the co-researchers brought into our space were largely still honored. In our case, the co-researchers came into our space with a strong belief in the power of youth voices in shaping and reshaping education. Their decision to center our project around the collection of youth voices for ethnic studies in the ESD reflects this shared knowing. Excitedly, as we worked to disrupt and divest ourselves of whiteness, we kept the goal of youth voices at the center of our work while finding new ways to gather them. This is most clear from our experiences on December 6th as the co-researchers engaged in research where they collected youth voices for ethnic studies. But they used methodologies that were largely grounded outside of traditional white culturally centered research practices. Excitedly, our application of CDP in YPAR suggests that youth can critically examine their own knowings and understandings of the world in ways that maintain (change and strengthen even) their relations to these knowings. I believe this respect as we disrupt and divest was a reason for some of our collective successes.

Disrupting and Divesting Towards CSP

I cannot imagine that I am alone in wanting YPAR research projects to also be spaces that are culturally sustaining. For researchers like me, putting CDP in relation with the larger YPAR processes seemed to offer a pathway in that direction. I strongly believe that Understandings Two and Three offer strong evidence of this possibility. Paris (2021) articulated four features that capture the larger movements for CSP: the centering of student and community practices, values, and knowledges; working alongside students and communities as expert collaborators; explicitly

working and being in relation with Land and communities; and an emphasis on addressing forms of internalized oppressions (p. 367). In general, existing approaches to YPAR already create opportunities for the centering of student knowledge and working alongside youth as experts. With the addition of CDP, YPAR projects can move closer to being part of the larger CSP movement because it creates those opportunities to address the many forms of internalized oppression as well as further center the pathways (Harjo, 2019) (those practices and values) of Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities that we brought into our project. For us, the processes we took toward disrupting and divesting ourselves and our project of whiteness seemed to allow us to name the ways we internalized whiteness and centered ways of being for some Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities within our collective work. These are small steps towards a culturally sustaining YPAR project. One indicator of this movement our research group made because of adding CDP to our YPAR process was who and how we recruited ESD youth to the December 6th event. Despite the tensions that permeated our planning efforts illustrated in the Understandings chapters, we shifted our work in ways that were more in relation to the Black Lives Matter principles, Indigenous Pedagogies, and AsianCRIT ideals. We actively recruited students from Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian American, Pacific Islander, multiracial, and LGBTQ+ communities. We engaged in research practices that centered the youth as experts, learned their stories through dialogue and arts-based activities. While I feel strongly about the impacts of our work, I also recognized that our steps are just that, early indicators that YPAR can be spaces that can more fully become spaces that can be culturally sustaining.

A Bigger Picture

As I begin to put these discussion points together, a growing sense of how my approaches to YPAR are evolving comes into focus. In the simplest sense, I'm gaining an understanding that YPAR can be a more authentic space toward societal (and school) transformation when there is a strong focus on personal transformations as well. For our research collective, the personal transformations around our relations to and with whiteness opened doors to ways of being grounded in Black, Indigenous, and Asian American communities. I understand these relations with ways of being outside of the white gaze as a key feature for YPAR projects that seek to be critical and liberatory in nature. This growing understanding offers me my own hope for what my YPAR practices can grow into.

In many ways, I should not be surprised by this distillation. In my professional work for the implementation and expansion of ethnic studies in K-12 settings, I always start with a focus on the teacher mindset. Like the co-researchers, most classroom educators who want to enact ethnic studies in their spaces already recognize that societal injustices exist. This awareness is often their drive to work toward ethnic studies. But I've learned that many teachers have yet to look in and engage in the evaluation of their identity and their relations to whiteness. When working with teachers, this inward look is essential to being ethnic studies teachers regardless of their racial identity (Cammarota, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Given the shared lineage of ethnic studies and YPAR (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008), it makes sense to start with a focus on mindset in YPAR projects too.

Future Implications

Expanding the Disruptions

As I entered this research project, one goal was to more explicitly connect to settler colonialism. Specifically, one of my research questions focused on how students can enact their

educational futurities through YPAR within the confines of a white settler colonial school system without reproducing these same harmful structures. Throughout the project and the write-up, I intentionally and repeatedly referred to futurity, a concept firmly grounded in antisettler colonial movements. I discussed an element of settler colonialism, but I also recognize that I did not overtly address settler colonialism. As a group, we never actually talked about it. In part, I understand this reflects the difficulty of the CDP process in general, that whiteness is so deeply embedded in society and ourselves that it took up a lot of our energy and time.

As I continue to engage in YPAR research and to ground myself in antisettler colonial efforts, I recognize the need to expand the disruption/divestment processes that are implemented through YPAR. I am proud of the steps we took towards the disruption and divestment of whiteness, but the reality is that whiteness is but one system that needs divesting from and failure to look beyond this actually serves to further perpetuate the harm caused by settler colonialism and its many tools of injustice. Patel (2018) wrote about the need to think about the ways we challenge harmful systems in more complex ways. Too often when we act for greater justice, our actions focus on one injustice while perpetuating other injustices. When we think in a limited manner; we fail to see the complex nature of reality under a settler colonial system. Patel (2018) encouraged us to seek out the intertwined nature of systems when we act to disrupt.

In future research, I recognize the need to be more complex and move beyond tangential connections to settler colonialism and anticolonial efforts to more comprehensively name, disrupt, and divest ourselves from settler colonialism as part of the YPAR process. Importantly, this will open future work to more directly confront systems neglected in this study like racial capitalism, sexism, transphobia, and more systems of oppression. It also opens conversations to discuss connections to Land and land (Styres, 2019), which we did not discuss. For me, this

future focus on settler colonialism also offers a pathway for me to deepen my efforts to enact YPAR projects that are also moving towards being culturally sustaining (Paris, 2021).

Self Work

Through the dissertation process, I realized I need to spend more time to process the relationships between race and settler colonialism. Specifically, Paris (2021) and Patel (2018) reminded me of the intertwined nature of race and settler colonialism (not to mention capitalism), and that to divest ourselves of one requires the divestment of all. Entering this project, I felt pretty confident in my own work for disrupting and divesting myself of whiteness, working towards white abolitionism (Leonardo, 2009). While whiteness is an element of settler colonialism (and something I must continue to focus on), it is just that, one element of a larger system that must be divested from. To support my efforts toward these divestments, I need to extend my relationship with antisettler colonial scholars (Styre, Tuck, Tuck and Yang, King, and Robinson all stand out as relations to revisit). Like the youth I've been working with, it seems that I need to extend my own CDP efforts to make visible the ways of settler colonialism and racial capitalism so I can find new ways of being to be in relation with.

The Toe Curl

Over the last many pages, I attempted to tell a story of our YPAR group. As an academic project, the story was focused on our efforts to disrupt and divest ourselves and our project from the limited lens of whiteness. I am proud of this story. Along the way, I sought to explain our actions in relation to existing research and scholars. In no uncertain terms, I tried to demonstrate my competence as a researcher. While I happily did this, I wanted to end with a much simpler and direct story about this work. This was a story about ending the toe curl.

The toe curl came about in Session Six during the first racial affinity conversation of the day that focused on whiteness. Kaley, Lizzy, and Katie had just shared stories of the wrong and hurtful behaviors of white people in their lives. As Katie finished her story, she trailed off with the phrase "...the way my toes curled." After the laughter died down, it became clear that every co-researcher in that conversation understood exactly what she meant. They had all had that feeling when someone around them said or did something harmful but did not know it. These subtle, physical, and pained reactions to racism were all too common of an experience in the community and at school. Yes, our story was still about working with youth to expand ethnic studies in the ESD through YPAR, but it was also something more. Our story was about how we worked together to find ways to change their schooling experiences in ways that would not cause their or their peers' to curl their toes anymore.

Post-Defense Reflections Forward

After a successful dissertation defense, several pathways for the future of my own research became clearer. Recognizing that the write up of a dissertation is as much about the research project as it is about my own growth as a researcher, I felt right to include these forward facing reflections before ending this work.

One important reflection that emerged focused on the caution I took in this project. As a researcher for ethnic studies, I am always cautious about what I offer to the field of ethnic studies. This hesitancy is firmly grounded in what I've learned about engaging in ethnic studies advocacy work given my identities as a white, cis-hetero, non-disabled, settler male from an upper economic status. As a field, ethnic studies largely seeks to disrupt the power structures associated with these identities. The caution and hesitation with which I engage with ethnic studies is very much warranted, actually needed. Without this sense of caution, I risk

overstepping or stepping out of the roles open to white people engaging in the fight for ethnic studies. As I continue to find ways to be in and of ethnic studies, I cannot lose this important and tempering awareness.

One of the conversations that arose during the defense encouraged me to reflect deeper around the idea of disruption. Specifically, I was encouraged to reflect on the questions; As I engage in work to disrupt whiteness, what am I disrupting for? and If we disrupt whiteness, what's on the other side? I am recognizing that my first reaction, which was something akin to "a more liberatory future free of the white gaze," was too superficial and lacking in something I cannot yet articulate. As I continue to reflect on these question, I think my starting point is to continue to deepen my understandings around whiteness, while also further immersing myself in the knowings and communities of intersectional Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial community spaces. Together, these offer me opportunities to better understand how each community is thinking about their futurities and what can be on the other side. If I am to continue to move towards being in solidarity personally and professionally, I must strengthen the foundations upon which I am starting from.

Finally, the Dissertation Committee encouraged me to pursue a couple of exciting pathways forward that I wanted to share. First, I was encouraged to write more about the role of white researchers engaging in YPAR alongside youth of color. Through our conversations, the committee noted that much of the existing critical YPAR literature and guidance is being produced by scholars of color from their work with communities of color. This is exactly as it should be. And for those white researchers engaging in critical YPAR, it will be important to articulate some of the key moves that we need to take as we fight for liberatory and just educational systems in solidarity. The other pathway I was encouraged to follow focuses on the

roles of adults in YPAR. Existing YPAR literature offers excellent guidance on the tenets of YPAR. For example, the works of Bautista et al., 2013 and Caraballo et al., 2017 both clearly lay out key structures of YPAR that make it possible for youth to be the driving force of projects. One of these tenets is the idea of co-researchers and the sharing of power that need to occur within YPAR spaces. Through our conversations at the defense, the committee expressed a need to clarify what the sharing of power can look like in YPAR projects. Specifically, offering guidance that researchers should consider as they determine when it is appropriate to step forward to take on certain responsibilities within YPAR projects and when it is appropriate to center youth more by stepping back.

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