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The American Way: A Historical Ethnographic Study of Asian American Student Leaders in Philadelphia

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Michael Masao Ishimoto

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The American Way: A Historical Ethnographic Study

of Asian American Student Leaders in Philadelphia

by

Michael Masao Ishimoto

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Daniel G. Solórzano, Chair

In 2009, Asian students were targeted in an act of perceived racial violence at South Philadelphia High School. Rather than physically retaliate, the Asian and the Asian American student leaders organized a school boycott and demanded that the central school district office listen to their previously silenced voices. In response to the organizing of the multiethnic alliances in Philadelphia, the U.S. Department of Justice took notice and officially cited the school district for violating the rights of Asian students.

Using Yamamoto's (2009) interracial justice framework, this research project investigates the campaign that occurred after the attacks in 2009 to understand how Asian American students built a political movement for safer schools and pushed for increased student voice in school policy decisions. I use critical race methodology (CRM) and historical ethnography to conduct 15 phenomenological interviews, document analysis, and record observations of youth organizing efforts in South Philadelphia and Chinatown (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Hunter, 2005).

This dissertation finds and discusses three key themes. The first theme challenges media representations of how different racial groups define multi-racial alliances and their responsibilities as a part of the alliance. From the media articles, it appeared that a multi-racial coalition was built and maintained throughout the boycott with strong relationships among the boycott participants. Although partially true, some interviewees expressed concern with using the term “coalitions” to describe the partnerships that developed during and after the boycott.

Second, interview participants highlighted the four-step process toward sustained interracial justice. It appears that the campaign’s participants successfully understood each other’s personal and community struggles. Also, the students went through the performative and material processes of interracial justice by rallying together and sharing resources to gain nation attention for their cause. However, they encountered a roadblock with sustained reflective reconstruction due to the difficulty of maintaining partnerships across organizations.

The final theme is the importance of women mentors for young Asian American men. Male leaders in the boycott pointed to the pivotal role of women community leaders in the boycott’s success, understanding the importance of interracial justice, and redefining masculinity as an Asian American.

The findings from this study on the process of transformational resistance of Asian American youth will provide an invaluable contribution to Asian American Studies, Gender Studies, and youth organizing research.

The dissertation of Michael Masao Ishimoto is approved.

John S. Rogers

Teresa L. McCarty

Shaun R. Harper

Daniel G. Solórzano, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

DEDICATION PAGE

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION ii

COMMITTEE PAGE........ iv

DEDICATION PAGE v

TABLE OF CONTENTS........ vi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS........ xii

VITA xiv

CHAPTER 1: Introduction 1

Guiding Questions 1

Goals and Impact 3

Limitations........ 5

Liminality........ 5

Explanation of Terminology: Asian; Asian American; American 6

Abbreviations 6

Outline of Dissertation 7

CHAPTER 2: Critical Review of Literature 9

Introduction 9

Theoretical Commitments 9

Critical Race Studies 9

Asian American Critical Race Studies in Education 11

Forever Foreigner 12

Model Minority 14

Racial Ambiguity 16

Violence and Resistance 18

Racist Violence 18

History of Black/Asian Relations 23

Critical Race Praxis and Asian Americans 28

Interracial Justice 30

Student Movements 31

Transformational Resistance 37

The Process of Mentorship and Thriving 40

Conclusion 41

CHAPTER 3: Methods 43

Research Design 43

Historical Ethnography 43

Counter Stories 46

Site and Participant Information 49

Site Information: South Philadelphia High School 50

Research Procedures 51

Recruitment 51

Interviews 52
Anonymity and Data Protection 54
Reciprocity 54
Documents and Field Notes: Finding Relevant Documents 55
Analysis 56
Conclusion 57
CHAPTER 4: Brief History of Asian American Activism and the Fight for Space in Philadelphia 58
Introduction: Bellwethers 58
Racial Tension and Violence 60
The Broad Street Line 64
December 3rd, 2009 70
Conclusion 72
CHAPTER 5: From Despair to Resistance 74
Introduction: A Small Incident 74
"Let's Retaliate" 77
"Instead of Staying Home or Going Back to School to Fight, Let's Meet and Talk" 81
Trauma 81
Moving from Trauma to Intersectional Understanding 82
Intersectional Racism 86

Moving Towards Interracial Conceptions for Justice 91

Developing Conceptual Understanding in the Media 91

Who Is at Fault? 95

Let's Boycott 101

CHAPTER 6 – Building a Multiethnic Coalition for Transformational Resistance 104

Introduction 104

Reconstruction and Reparations 105

Oppositional Resistance of South Philly 106

Fighting Each Other 107

Towards Transformational Resistance 111

Building a Multiethnic Coalition 116

Public Racial Expectations 122

If It Bleeds, It Leads. 124

Coalitional Distress 125

Coalitional Reflexivity and Causality 127

Conclusion 128

CHAPTER 7 – Alliances and Theories of Change – Mentors' Role in the Interracial Justice Framework. 130

Introduction 130

Wins and Systemic Changes 130

Youth Theory of Change 136

Recognizing the Power of Youth 136

Collective Capacity 139

Multiethnic Alliances 142

Omnitransformational Resistance 146

Challenges 153

Conclusion 155

CHAPTER 8 – (Re)framing Interracial Justice, History, and Race: Implications from Research 157

Introduction 157

Implication of Research on Youth Development 159

Reimagining Masculinity 159

Intersectionality 161

Contributions to Racial Frameworks 163

Interracial Justice Framework 163

Genesis Amnesia 164

Historical Ethnography 165

Limitations 167

Future Research 167

Conclusion 168

EPILOGUE: Paddling the Same Dragon Boat 171

APPENDICES 175

Appendix 1: Demographic Information of South Philadelphia High School (SDP, 2014) 175

Appendix 2: Demographic Information of the Philadelphia City School District (U.S. Census, 2010).. 175

Appendix 3: Consent Form 176

Appendix 4: Interview Protocol 178

WORK CITED …………………………………………………………………………………... 179

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To my family. Thank you for the love and support you have given me for all these years. Thank you for keeping me grounded and making sure that the research and advocacy I do is for the students. I will never forget where I came from and I will make sure I make you all proud.

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Ishimoto, M. M. (2016). *Restoring Dignity: Japanese American Internment in State Curriculum Standards.* Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Guiding Questions

In December of 2009, dozens of Asian students were targeted by their fellow South Philadelphia High School students in an act of racial violence. After the headlining series of incidents, the School District of Philadelphia, along with the school's principal, made a statement to the public that "a minor incident occurred on Thursday in school, with no injuries or arrests" (AALDEF, 2010). However, this could not have been further from the truth. Local newspapers and student victims reported that more than a dozen Asian students were sent to the hospital with minor to serious injuries. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* went into more graphic details by stating that "several Chinese students suffered face and head injuries, and one boy's nose was smashed, horribly broken and gushing blood" ("Heroes: South Philly High's Protesters," 2010).

Over the next week, Asian students at South Philadelphia High School and the Asian American community of Philadelphia organized a school boycott to demand that the school district listen to the often silenced voices of this perceived model minority. As time passed, Asian student leaders protested, built a multiethnic alliance, and gained support from the U.S. Department of Justice which determined that Asian students' civil rights were being violated.

More than five years later, the terrifying school attacks in South Philadelphia are not mentioned in local or national media. Instead of informing and reminding the public about the policy changes Asian students fought for, the school climate in Philadelphia seems to have reverted back to a time when Asian students feared being targeted (Iyer, 2015). Forgetting acts of oppression and discrimination like what the students of South Philadelphia experienced often leads to what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) refer to as "genesis amnesia." Genesis amnesia is a process through which those in power legitimize inequality and current social structures by

rewriting the history of oppressed groups. As a result, genesis amnesia produces implicit biases which manifest into discrimination, oppression, and racism (Lane, Kang, & Banaji, 2007; Solyom & Brayboy, 2012). Because of this process, Bourdieu and Passerson believe that understanding history is at the heart of social reproduction. To combat genesis amnesia and implicit biases, this dissertation investigates the youth-led campaign that followed the attacks on December 3rd in order to develop an understanding of Asian American student activism and multi-ethnic coalition building. The following questions guided me while I investigated the students of South Philadelphia's struggle to create interracial justice for the Asian American community of Philadelphia:

1. How did Asian American student leadership emerge in the context of the student movement following the December 3, 2009 incident at South Philadelphia High School?
2. How did interethnic coalition building occur among Philadelphia students?
3. What effects did the Asian American student coalition have on the Philadelphia community?

The guiding research questions are designed to highlight the student leader narratives of those involved with the campaign to advocate for safer schools. The narratives from this research study not only give voice to a marginalized community's history, but also examine the power of transformational resistance of Asian American students and other students of color.

These research questions also examine the heart of the social disconnect between the Asian American and Black communities of Philadelphia. Through these questions, my findings articulate how the student leaders of South Philadelphia were able to build a multiethnic coalition

that brought about transformative justice rather than repeating the status quo like so many past campaigns have done (Wu, 2003; Yamamoto, 1999).

Goals and Impact

This type of study has not been previously conducted in the field of education or sociology. A majority of youth activism research has focused on other communities of color and few have explored Asian American community activism (Kwon, 2006; Rogers, Mediratta, & Shah, 2012; Rogers & Terriquez, 2013). There are only a few studies that have investigated the tense relationship between the Asian American and Black communities in large urban school districts (Kurashige, 2010; Wu, 2003; Zia, 2001). One such study focuses on the use of music to express the Black community's frustrations with Asian shopkeepers (J. Chang, 1993). Finally, it is almost impossible to find a study that reveals how the Asian American and Black youth organizers have worked together to bring about transformative change (Yamamoto, 1999). This study will combine these three rarely discussed topics into one research project focusing on Asian American students.

The goal of this research study is to highlight the conditions and people that enable interethnic solidarity to occur. Through this illumination of context and process, I am certain that this research study will enhance the progress that has been made to bring cultural understanding to all students in the public K-12 education system. This study will also demonstrate the strong connections between theory and praxis through employing racial justice theories to bring about critical race praxis.

The findings from this study will provide an invaluable contribution to education at multiple levels of governance. In the classroom, teachers can use the student narratives to demonstrate how stereotypes of Asian Americans are a strategy to suppress the agency and voice

of the community. Frank Wu found that the pervasive stereotype of Asians and Asian Americans as naturally submissive led to lack of respect for Asian American activists,

> One of the things that is so frustrating, that is so depressing, is that when you stand up and speak out, you finally declare to yourself and others, "I'm going to do something about this," when you talk about Asian Americans, sometimes people who are civil rights leaders, who are African American or Hispanic look at you and say, "What do you have to complain about? You're trying to horn in on our movement." (Wu, 2015)

School districts and state departments of education around the nation can use this research to create programs that foster intercultural dialogue to prevent future acts of racial violence at schools and in the community (*United States v. The School District of Philadelphia*, 2010). These agencies can also learn to support the civic engagement of students by listening to the concerns and recommendations from students in their communities.

Policy makers will see the importance of funding programs that understand the importance of school climate to the safety and security for all students. This study aligns with the current campaigns of many foundations and former President's Barack Obama My Brother's Keeper initiative targeting the needs of males of color. For example The California Endowment has a current campaign promoting socio-emotional health in primary and secondary school through a discussion of school climate (The California Endowment, 2014). My study aligns with this campaign because I focus on how civic engagement through protests promotes a healthy school climate. Finally, by telling a story of violence, resistance, and reform, this study will demonstrate to the general public that the power of students cannot be ignored because they

know what is wrong with their respective school climates and address issues to generate education equity for all.

Limitations

It should be noted that this research project does not examine bullying or the specific reason for the events of December 3rd, 2009. Rather, the attacks on December 3rd are viewed as the catalyst for the campaign to bring about safer schools. This decision does not mean that I deem this event and its specific causes as unimportant for the Asian American community and the larger school district and city as a whole. The events on December 3rd are very important for understanding the significant impact violence has on the Asian American community, but I will leave that discussion for a later time.

Liminality

As an ethnographic researcher, it is important to include my liminality with the Asian American community of Philadelphia and the School District of Philadelphia (Johnson, 2007). These communities helped shape the findings and themes of this research through my interviews with them, document collection, and while I attended cultural and community events before and during my data collection.

Over the years, I have been participated in events and programming in the Asian American community of Philadelphia through my involvement with various local organizations like Asian Americans United (AAU). AAU is a non-profit organization in Philadelphia's Chinatown committed to addressing issues facing the Asian American community of Philadelphia. AAU and its members were integral in helping the students of South Philadelphia in their campaign for safer schools. In 2011, I joined AAU as a member and have maintained

contact with the director and staff. AAU staff and members assisted me with interviews and document collection.

While working as a consultant for the School District of Philadelphia's Renaissance School Program, I reported directly to high-ranking administrators and regional superintendents that were active during the 2009 academic year. Through my work with the Renaissance Program, I developed a strong rapport with those administrators.

Finally, through my involvement with Asian Americans Advancing Justice (a national advocacy organization focusing on legal issues in the Asian American community) and the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (an educational research institute at UCLA), I have developed professional relationships with lawyers and professors that worked directly with the School District of Philadelphia's administrators and attorneys involved with the 2009 student campaign.

Explanation of Terminology: Asian; Asian American; American

For this dissertation, when I refer to the whole group of boycotting students of Asian ancestry, I will use the term Asian to refer to their race. However, when I refer to individual participants, I will use the racial identification that the individual asked me to use. I understand that this is a politically controversial choice, but I believe that this decision will allow for a better understanding of the racial, political, and social climate of Philadelphia in 2009 and the present. For a more in-depth discussion of the diversity of Asian and Asian Americans, please refer to the section on racial ambiguity in the next chapter (Critical Review of Literature).

Abbreviations

AAU Asian Americans United

SPHS South Philadelphia High School

YUC Youth United for Change

PSU Philadelphia Student Union

AAPI Asian American and Pacific Islander

Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation is structured to be told as a historical ethnography with a focus on the counter stories of students, mentors, school staff, and community members of Philadelphia. I start with a review of theory and literature about Asian American racialization and student activism. I also combine critical race theory (CRT), Asian American studies, and interracial justice literature to create a platform to use a critical race grounded theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Takaki, 2008; Yamamoto, 1999). A grounded theory approach allowed me to develop a theory that captures the mechanisms and philosophy surrounding Asian American student leadership in this multiethnic campaign (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009).

Chapter 2 also delves into the literature on violence towards Asian Americans, the relationship between Black and Asian American communities, and the framework behind student movements, using the theoretical framework provided in the previous section (Kurashige, 2010; Zia, 2001). This literature review also highlights the few studies that have been conducted on building interracial justice by Law Professor Eric Yamamoto (Yamamoto, 1999). I complete this section by describing the context of this work within social justice, civic engagement, and interethnic relations research of Philadelphia (Hunter, 2015).

The methods chapter provides and overview of how I use ethnographic methods to conduct a combination of interviews, document analysis, and observations for this study (McCarty, 2002). I chose to use historical ethnographic methods in order to highlight the stories of those that never had the chance to speak up (Hunter, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Historical ethnographic methods also ensured that community voice is involved with this research study as much as possible to ensure appropriation and misrepresentation of history does not occur. (London, 2007).

Chapter four provides an overview of the history of the Philadelphia Asian American communities' struggles and resistance against violence and racism against them. This chapter provides the context of how the Asian American community learned and became prepared to organize for safer schools after the event on December 3rd, 2009.

Chapter five through seven contains the stories and analysis of how Asian American youth transitioned from, as Ginwright (2010) say, surviving to thriving by learning about transformational resistance, interracial justice, and the process of organizing a multiethnic alliance to address systemic racism in Philadelphia schools. Specifically, chapter five discusses the immediate aftermath of the December 3rd incident, including how the boycott started and how it was covered in the news. Chapter six discusses the breakdown of the interracial coalition that was created during the boycott and its ramifications for future youth activism projects. Chapter seven contains analysis of how the boycott shaped activism among different racial communities in Philadelphia today.

Finally, chapter eight reiterates the findings and analysis from my study and lessons that youth organizers can use in future campaigns for interracial justice. I end with an allegory on the complexities and necessity for interracial justice.

CHAPTER 2: Critical Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter examines three main areas of research that situate my dissertation within the existing literature on the complicated dynamics of racial violence and interracial justice. To accomplish this, I first theoretically ground my dissertation in what I call Asian American Critical Race Scholarship in Education. I combine this framework with the work of interracial justice scholars to explain the phenomenon of the youth-led campaign and boycott that took place in South Philadelphia High School. The second half of this chapter is an overview of the history of Asian American organizing and the mentorship that takes place among Asian American activist organizations and people. The goal of this chapter is to explore what lessons can be learned from critical race praxis in order to develop a deeper understanding of the history, context, and activism Asian American student leadership utilized in Philadelphia to bring about school reform.

Theoretical Commitments

Critical Race Studies Critical Race Theory (CRT) originated in the late 1980s as a response to the lack of representation and acknowledgment of race in critical theories of legal studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The founders of CRT argued that race should be central to the analyses of forms of subordination including classism, sexism, and homophobia (Crenshaw, 1991). By centralizing race, these scholars demonstrated the importance that race and racism plays in the subjugation of people of color. In the years following utilization of CRT in the legal field, other disciplines have taken up CRT to illuminate the centrality of race issues within their own fields. In education, Solórzano synthesized five key tenets of CRT as they relate to the field of education:

1. Centrality and intersectionality of race and racism: Race is central, endemic, and permanent in society. Race has deep connections with other forms of oppression including class, gender, age, etc. (Crenshaw, 1991; Solórzano, 1997).
2. Challenge to dominant ideology: CRT challenges traditional forms of knowledge, objectivity, and pedagogy through the use methods the narratives of the marginalized and the oppressed (Solórzano, 1989, 1997).
3. Commitment to social justice: CRT research and scholars must be committed to social justice through their scholarship and practice (Solórzano, 1997; Vélez, Huber, Lopez, Luz, & Solórzano, 2008).
4. Centrality of experiential knowledge: CRT promotes the narratives of marginalized communities as valid forms of knowledge. Counternarratives are an example of promoting narratives of the marginalized (Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2005).
5. Interdisciplinary perspective: CRT is an interdisciplinary theory that draws on the strengths of sociology, ethnic studies, anthropology, law, biology, etc. in order to develop a holistic approach to combat racism (Solórzano, 1997; Yosso & Solórzano, 2005).

Although CRT has made strides to foreground race in the field of education, there are two issues that hamper the power of CRT as a framework for my research. First, Cabrera (2017) argues that critical race theory is missing a key component for CRT to be identified as a theory due to a lack of racial framing within the theory's tenets. He adds a framework on White supremacy to create the missing racialization tenet CRT critically needs. Second, CRT in education fails to account for the struggles of *all* communities of color. The Asian American community has often been neglected in conversations of CRT. To combat this lack of an Asian

American voice, scholars in legal studies have pushed for Asian American jurisprudence to study issues facing the Asian American community.

Building upon the work of Cabrera, I argue that if CRT is to be used in the Asian and Asian American community, there must be a focus on Omi and Winant's (1994) race formation theory as well as Asian American racialization theories. I argue for these additions to the tenets of CRT to account for racial formation theory because of the complex and constant reorganization of the racialization of Asian Americans in the United States. I explain my additions through a discussion of the racial ambiguity of Asian and Asian Americans. I then demonstrate how CRT in combination with the additions of racial formation and the Asian American experience can be used to explore issues of racial violence and interracial justice.

Although I am introducing a novel way of thinking about Asian and Asian Americans in education, this theoretical approach is not new in and of itself. I build upon the work of critical race scholars in education and legal studies to reach a new understanding that will help me explain and comprehend the basis of interracial justice among Asian American and other communities of color. Therefore this is not a dismissal or replacement for the work of other scholars; rather, it is an addition to Asian American legal scholarship and CRS.

The next section introduces an Asian American Education addition to CRT to create a theory that will help explain the experiences of the Asian and Asian American communities in my study.

Asian American Critical Race Studies in Education Critical Race Theory provides race scholars with a framework to holistically and responsibly study communities of color. Some legal and education scholars have adapted the tenets of CRT to address specific communities through study (R. Chang, 1993; Solyom & Brayboy, 2012; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano,

2009). To frame my dissertation as a study on the racialized development of an Asian American community in Philadelphia, I have chosen to adapt CRT by adding a few key theories and conceptual frameworks from Asian American studies to fill in the theory's current gaps. My additions complement the work of Cabrera by including a discussion of the diverse and ambiguous racialization of Asian Americans in the United States. My goal in applying these Asian American additions is to demonstrate how Asian Americans are otherized through a process of foreignization, racial realism, and violence. The following sections provide a discussion of the essential elements of my additions to CRT to analyze the Asian American experience in the United States.

Although education scholars have developed frameworks including Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) (Museus, 2013; Teranishi, 2010), I have chosen not to use these theories because they lack a critical praxis element that I need to fully utilize historical ethnography as a method, as well as develop my findings to explain interracial justice. Thus my Asian American additions to CRT are not meant to replace the past work or AsianCrit scholars; they are designed to complement them and add another element of the racialization and interracial justice for consideration.

Forever Foreigner

Where are you from?

I am from California.

No, where are you really from?

Central California.

I mean, where are your parents from?

Salinas and Fresno.

What about your grandparents?

Salinas and the Bay Area of California.

What are you?

American.

I often have this conversation with people I meet for the first time. Instead of asking what ethnicity/race I am, people ask where I am from in order to figure out what "type of Asian" I am. They can never get the answer that they are looking for because I was not born in another country and I like to think of myself as Asian American. However, saying my entire family is from California is often not a sufficient answer for most people—they cannot grasp the fact that I am an Asian American and do not consider myself Japanese. Though I have never been to Japan, the implication these exchanges leave me with is that I will someday return to my ancestral homeland, perhaps because I do not belong in America. As Carlos Bulosan, a Pilipino-American Poet put it, I am a "stranger from a different shore" (Bulosan, 2014; Takaki, 1998). This "forever foreigner" sentiment is a strong racial ascription that has been placed on the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities since the earliest immigrants to the present.

Mia Tuan describes the "forever foreigner" stereotype as Asian Americans are never being able to achieve equal social status as American citizens because of their perceived foreignness (Tuan, 2001). The stereotype produces the assumption among Whites and other non-Asian groups that Asian Americans will go back to their supposed country of origin. Therefore, Asians in the United States should not be considered "real" Americans because they are not loyal or true citizens of the United States. This phenomenon creates a silenced class of people who are not deemed trustworthy by the dominant, White power structure. Therefore, when I am asked,

"Where are you really from?" the truth is not accepted. The inquisitor will keep repeating the question until they hear the "truthful" answer that I am actually from Asia.

One of the clearest examples of being forever foreign comes from the distrust Americans had towards Japanese Americans during World War II (Takaki, 1998). Although many second and third generation Japanese Americans did not have any connection with Japan save their ancestry, they were interned because of their perceived loyalty to Japan (Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, 1997). General DeWitt, Commander for the Western Region called these Japanese and Japanese Americans disloyal and a threat to the safety of the West Coast. "I have little confidence that the enemy aliens are law abiding or loyal in any sense of the word. Some of them, yes; many, no. Particularly the Japanese, I have no confidence in their loyalty whatsoever." (Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, 1997, p. 66, quoting transcript of meeting in DeWitt's office, Jan. 4, 1942; testimony before House Naval Affairs Subcommittee, April 13, 1943). After the war ended, the government released Japanese Americans from the internment camps. More than four decades later, after a long campaign for redress and reparations, President Ronald Regan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 acknowledging the federal government violated the civil liberties of Japanese American citizens during World War II. Around the time of the signing, the perception Asian Americans as not only the forever foreigner, but also as the model minority was a part of the accepted zeitgeist.

Model Minority In 1966, *The New York Times* published the first article claiming that Japanese Americans were the model minority (Peterson, 1966). Also in 1966, *U.S. News and World Report* wrote that "at the time when it is being proposed that hundreds of billions be spent to uplift Negroes and other minorities, the nation's 300,000 Chinese Americans are moving ahead

on their own-with no help from anyone" ("Success Story," 1966). *Newsweek* later promoted the accomplishments of the AAPI community by saying Asians were "outwhiting the Whites" ("Success Story: Outwhiting the Whites," 1971). The model minority stereotype asserts that AAPIs have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and have made it in America. Articles cite statistics that show the increasing number of AAPIs in college and both the population's higher than average income and employment rate compared to other communities of color. Also, as a model minority, the community's achievements give other communities of color something to strive for. As a meritocratic system, the U.S. believes that it is in a post racial society because a minority population has made it to the same social and economic standing as Whites. However, the statistics these articles and experts have cited are flawed and very misleading.

Since the passage of Proposition 209 (Prop 209)[1] in California, communities of color have seen a lack of representation in institutions of higher education (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2013). According to the University of California, Office of the President, the student body's racial diversity at both University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) and University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) decreased substantially after the passage of Prop 209 (University of California, Office of the President, 2010). Recently the Asian American student population attending a University of California campus has increased and are the largest student of color population on some campuses (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2013). However, these data are very misleading. At UCLA, while Taiwanese applicants are accepted to the UC system at 7.7 percent above the mean admit rate for Asian Americans, Hmong applicants are accepted 13.1

[1] Proposition 209 was a 1996 California proposition that outlawed, among other things, the consideration of race, sex, or ethnicity for admission to public education (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2013).

percent below the mean Asian American admit rate (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2013).

These disappointing higher education statistics translate into disappointing economic statistics. From 2006 to 2010, Pacific Islanders (PI) earned $21,472 per capita income while the population average was $29,188; the mean income for Whites was $42,052 (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2013). When disaggregated, the numbers become even more disheartening for some subpopulations within the PI community. Tongans have a 20 percent poverty rate and have one of the lowest per capita incomes at $12,506 (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2013).

Although the statistics show that some Asian American communities are struggling for representation in higher education and financial stability, many studies and scholars still aggregate all of Asia into one sweeping category. Through statistical manipulation of this sort, percentages are misrepresented to tell the story that Asian Americans are not struggling at all. In fact, the story asserts that Asian Americans are on par with Whites. This perception solidifies the existence of a racial hierarchy in which Asians are above other communities of color in a "tri-racial order."

Racial Ambiguity The tri-racial order was developed by Bonilla-Silva to describe the hierarchical racial model of the United States (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). The White racial category is at the top of this hierarchy and is considered the most desirable, and is comprised of Whites, East Asians, and White Latinos. The least desirable category is Black; those populating this category are the most subjugated and this includes Blacks, Latinos, Southeast Asians, and American Indians. Honorary White is in the middle category and is considered to be those moving towards whiteness, while not achieving White status. Honorary Whites include some Asians, Latinos, and

Eastern Europeans. Those in this category have a significant role in perpetuating the tri-racial hierarchy. Whites allow those in the honorary White designation a distorted power over the Black category; however, the group does not have the same power as Whites. Honorary Whites are also considered a wedge group that will allow the hierarchy to persist because of the limited power afforded to them (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Wallerstein (1976) explains this concept with world systems theory, which says those in power use the wedge group to protect their power and that of those above them.

Although Asians are moving towards Bonilla Silva's theorization of whiteness, they will never be able to reach a higher social/racial status above where they already are. Because of the forever foreign stereotype, Asian Americans are not seen as true citizens. They are unassimilable foreigners and therefore will never achieve a level of status on par with Whites. This racial ambiguity creates a special status for Asian Americans as important to the meritocratic ideals of accomplishing the American Dream, while never being able to fully achieve and live into the dream because they are foreigners (Kim, 1999). The triangulation creates an ambiguity within the racial formation of Asian Americans. Harpalani has described racial ambiguity as "the changing racial characterization of a person or group, depending on the local and historical context" (Harpalani, 2013, p. 6). He goes on to say that racial ambiguity is important for two distinct reasons: "1. It reveals the social meaning and stereotypes associated with race, which have been lost in recent American formalist race jurisprudence; and 2. It illustrates how these social meanings change across time" (Harpalani, 2013, p. 6). Due to their racial ambiguity, Asian Americans are in a unique position to both perpetuate racism and resist racism. Using the methods of critical race praxis permits Asian Americans a targeted approach to resist racism through a reduction of implicit bias.

Violence and Resistance

In order to reduce implicit bias, the remaining sections of this chapter explores literature that describes the effects of implicit biases on the Asian American community through three sections. The first section discusses literature on violence towards the Asian American community by focusing on the definition and cause of racist violence against the Asian American community. The second section focuses on the relationship between Asian American and Black communities, specifically the negative attitudes between the two and asks what role interracial justice plays in the relationship. The final section will focus on transformative resistance by examining Asian American student movements and multiethnic coalition building, using the San Francisco State ethnic studies strike and the Count-Me-In campaign as case studies.

Racist Violence Although news reports of violence against Asian Americans may seem infrequent, statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice show that violence against Asian Americans is still all too commonplace (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, 2013). This section counters the myth that Asian Americans are not victims of violence by covering three events: the silencing of the Indian American community, the murder of Vincent Chin, and the incarceration of Wen Ho Lee. These events highlight the persistent physical and symbolic violence against Asian Americans from the 1980s to the early 2000s.

Racist violence towards Asian Americans has a long history in the U.S. legal system dating back to the Gold Rush. In *People v. Hall* (1854), the court found that Asians were not allowed to testify against a White man. This decision had precedents with statutes that prohibited Blacks from testifying against Whites. Not until a decade later, was this practice found illegal in *People v. Awa* in 1865 (*People v. Awa*, 1865).

More recently, there has been an increase in violence and racial profiling of Muslim Americans and Indian Americans, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Sikhs have been targeted and attacked because they are perceived to be Muslim or a part of a terrorist organization. One of the most recent acts of violence occurred in 2012 at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin (Romell, 2012). A White man who was known to have negative perceptions of the Muslim community opened fire at the temple, killing multiple people. While this attack made national news and brought attention to the violence against Sikhs in the U.S., unpublished smaller microaggressions and personal acts of violence still occur on the street (S. J. Singh & Singh, 2012). An example of these microaggressions comes from Jersey City, New Jersey. Police received a letter from a gang calling themselves "Dotbusters" in reference to the bindi many Indian Women wear on their forehead. In the letter, the group wrote that they "will go to any extreme to get Indians to move out... If I'm walking down the street and I see a Hindu and the setting is right, I will just hit him or her. We plan some of our more extreme attacks...We use the phone book and look up the name Patel." (Takaki, 1998, p. 481) Although there were no reported incidences of violence in the area, Indian Americans were still afraid to leave their homes. This call to violence might have influenced another group of self-proclaimed "Dotbusters" which actually attacked Indian people in Long Beach, California and other parts of the United States (Kang, 1993). However, we rarely hear about these attacks because of the systemic racism that occurs when reporting hate crimes (J. Singh & Singh, 2013).

South Asian Americans often face the same threats of racial discrimination even by those that are trying to protect them. "The F.B.I. currently classifies nearly all hate violence against American Sikhs as instances of anti-Islamic or anti-Muslim hate crimes. As a result, we do not have official statistics on the extent of hate crimes in which Sikhs are targeted, despite a long

history of such violence" (S. J. Singh & Singh, 2012). The direct omission to classify Sikhs as a distinct group and classifying them with an entirely different religious group devalues the cultural wealth the Sikh community provides society. Rather than being able to report a hate crime, the Sikh community is rendered invisible within the very statistics that include them. Without the accurate language to properly identify these hate crimes and other forms of oppression, Sikhs and other Asian Americans will be silenced.

Because of the difficult nature of reporting each act of violence committed against Asian Americans, I want to differentiate the types of crimes. Kang (1993) describes two types of violence: rational targeting and racist violence. Rational targeting is described as using "common sense" and racial stereotypes to determine if a criminal will rob or attack an individual (Kang, 1993). This can be interpreted as a criminal choosing to rob an elderly man rather than a physically fit, middle-aged man coming from a gym. It is easier to rob someone that cannot fight back rather than someone that may fight back and injure the criminal. For Asian Americans, this can mean that criminals will target Asian Americans because of pervasive social stereotypes that classify Asians as submissive, timid, and weak.

Racist violence, on the other hand, "implicates race in a more essential and invidious manner. Acts of racist violence evince racial prejudice- interpersonal hostility toward people of Asian descent- based on the view that they do not merit treatment as equals or that they deserve blame for various societal ills" (Kang, 1993, p. 5). This type of violence can take the form of symbolic violence through the perception that Asian Americans are unfair competitors by using immoral and sometimes illegal methods to get ahead of other people of color. Also, the forever foreigner stereotype contributes to the notion that Asian Americans will take the money back to Asia, even if the person was born and raised in America.

For the purposes of this study, I will focus on incidences of racist violence. This focus does not discount the importance of rational violence, but is selected because racist violence has a deep-rooted problem stemming from the American color line. Racist violence is also a way for me to explain the intentions of the Asian American campaigns after incidences of targeted racial violence. Finally, racist violence will allow for a deeper discussion of how Asian American stereotypes play into issues such as turf wars and scapegoating.

In 1982, Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, was beaten to death by two White unemployed autoworkers in Detroit (Zia, 2001). The trouble started in a strip club, when Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz were reportedly annoyed that Chin and his friends received more attention from the dancers than they did. Eben used racial epithets to express his frustration and also said, “It’s because of motherfuckers like you that we’re out of work” (Zia, 2001, p. 58). A fight ensued and the bouncers ejected Ebens and Nitz from the club. Outside of the club, the two men hunted for Chin and his friends in the streets of Detroit. After catching up to Chin, witnesses said that Ebens and Nitz beat Chin to death with baseball bats while yelling anti-Japanese slurs. Although there were multiple witnesses and the evidence pointed to homicide, the judge in the case allowed both defendants to leave the court on the charge of manslaughter and were given probation (Choy & Tajima-Pena, 1987).

The crimes against Vincent Chin can be classified under the racial violence category of “turf war.” A racial turf war occurs along the borderland (cultural and physical) between those that see themselves as native and those they view as foreigners. Kang describes a turf war as “protecting the racial purity of one’s territory or neighborhood [that] provides one such justification for hostility towards Asian Americans who ‘invade’ the ‘turf’ of another racial community” (Kang, 1993, p. 7). In the case of Mr. Chin, the two White men saw him and the

Japanese race as moving in on their employment, neighborhood, and livelihood. This may be due in part to the widespread attention during the 1980s of advances by the Japanese automotive industry, whose success in the U.S. threatened the American automotive industry and led to massive layoffs in Detroit's manufacturing district (Takaki, 1998). The two White men saw Asians as the forever foreigner and believed that the only solution to regaining their "turf" was to remove Chin from their land.

Although turf wars are, at times, easier to identify, there is another reason for hostility towards Asian Americans. Racial scapegoating draws its power from the model minority myth's description of Asian Americans as undeserving of the recognition they receive. The logic of scapegoating argues that Asian Americans' model minority status is actually responsible for social problems in the United States. Although Asian Americans are not the cause of the problem, their intentions are still seen as nefarious and dishonest. An example of this occurred when China started to make inroads in military technology. The FBI did not believe that China had the capability or capacity to invent and advance with the technology without assistance from others. As a result, Wen Ho Lee was accused of selling classified material to China.

Wen Ho Lee, a Taiwanese immigrant and naturalized citizen of the United States, worked as a hydrodynamics expert at the Los Alamos laboratories in New Mexico. During a massive counterespionage operation, Lee was picked up by FBI agents who accused him of selling national secrets to the Chinese government (W. H. Lee & Zia, 2002). Although there was insufficient evidence that proved he was a spy, the Justice Department and the FBI believed he was guilty of espionage. The media portrayed Lee as a devious spy that gave away the U.S.'s "crown jewels." Fueled by the thought that Lee was the worst spy since the Rosenbergs, he was put into solitary confinement without due process. Upon further investigation, it was found that

the lead agent on the case used false information and racially profiled Lee. The lead investigator was rumored to have commented that, "Just the fact that there are five Chinese restaurants here [in Los Alamos] meant that the Chinese government had an interest" (Wu, 2003). After over 200 days in solitary confinement, Lee was given a trial and pled guilty to the misdemeanor of taking home non-classified information. Lee was acquitted of all other charges and was issued an apology by the judge, who called the case "an embarrassment to the nation" (Wu, 2003, p. 184). In the end, Lee's story shows how institutions use racial stereotypes to justify the otherization of the Asian American community and push them to the margins of society.

History of Black/Asian Relations This section investigates the complicated relationship between Asian American and Black communities by focusing on two main events. First, the confrontational relationship between Asian American merchants and the black community will be explored. I will end this section with a discussion of creating transformational relationships to address issues of violence.

The best way to describe the relationship between the Asian and Black communities in the United States is "tricky." Many of the issues have stemmed from economic turf wars and scapegoating. Physical or economic conflict has often arisen and continues to arise from the relationship between Asian American merchants/store owners and Black patrons. In Ice Cube's *Black Korea*, the L.A.-based rapper's lyrics vocalize the encroachment of Korean owned businesses into Los Angeles as a threat to the Black community. His song states that the "oriental one-penny countin motherfuckers" are watching every move Black patrons make because "they hope I don't pull out a gat and try to rob" (Ice Cube, 1991). He then tells the Korean store owners that if the "little Chinese motherfuckers" do not stop following him as a patron around their store, the store owner's "little chop suey ass'll be a target of the nationwide boycott; Juice with

the people, that's what the boy got; So pay respect to the black fist; or we'll burn your store, right down to a crisp." (Ice Cube, 1991)

Ice Cube's lyrics articulate the distrust Korean shop owners have with Black patrons stealing from them and the Black community's distrust of being presumed thieves by Korean store owners (J. Chang, 1993). This relationship of distrust came to public attention when Latasha Harlins was shot by convenience store owner Soon Ja Du in 1991, 13 days after the beating of Rodney King by the Los Angeles police officers. Du was given a fine and sentenced to five years probation for the shooting (The *Los Angeles Times* Staff, 1991). The sentence of Du helped fuel multiple protests of Korean-owned businesses around the United States and the 1991 Los Angeles Uprising. In 1988, at a bodega in Brooklyn, an argument ensued between a Black patron and Korean American store owners. A community-based campaign was organized to respond to the tensions through a boycott of Korean owned businesses. The campaign believed that, "The Korean boycott must be seen as an overall campaign to control our community and not a campaign against the Korean people… Korean, Arab and Jewish owned stores in our community is economic warfare" (Zia, 2001, p. 86). Although community members from the Korean American and Black communities attempted to create a pact to find a solution to the economic turf war, the agreement between parties was insufficient for many on both sides of the conflict. As a result, the store was closed and apologies were given, but the resolution was incomplete and tension between the communities continued.

The way I have described issues of economic sovereignty to this point makes it seem as if the field of battle is only between the Asian American and Black communities. Often policy makers, researchers, and the public will solely focus interethnic conflicts among communities of color. This type of rhetoric can further divide communities of color and lead to further

interethnic conflict. Rather than focus solely on violence committed between communities of color, I will demonstrate how interethnic conflicts typically occur under the purview of systematic racism and whiteness as property through Stacy Lee's examination of racial stereotypes in an East Coast high school (Lee, 2009). I will then provide a method of challenging the racial hierarchy of systematic racism with a discussion of agency for change.

The racial stereotypes associated with Asian Americans extend from the streets to the classroom. In a study conducted at a prestigious magnet Northeastern High school, Stacy Lee (2009) found that racial stereotyping among students was very prevalent. White students saw all Asian Americans as Asian. These students and teachers viewed Asian students as members of the model minority and occasional competition for academic prestige. While African American students held the same attitudes towards Asians, these students saw the overrepresentation of the Asian American student population at their school as hampering their access to limited resources and opportunities at the school. This sentiment could have come from the then recent policy change to allow English as a second language (ESL) students into the school with English test scores that were comparatively low to those of native-born applicants. Through this policy, the Asian student population increased while the admission of Black students admitted decreased. Although the African American students were critical of the increase in the Asian American students, they did not question the consistently high rate of White students at the school. Many African American students felt like their path to become insiders at the school through academics was being challenged by the Asian Americans. The school administration and staff did not help with this unfair and skewed perspective. The administration would often use the success of the Asian American students to denigrate the efforts of the African American students - thus

implying they were less as a racial group or the "bad minority", creating greater racial biases and model minority stereotyping (S. J. Lee, 2009).

On the other hand, the Asian American students held equally toxic perceptions of the African American students. Many recent immigrated and Korean students identified African Americans as being “lazy, uneducated welfare cheats” (S. J. Lee, 2009, p. 114). Again, the school did not help the situation, and instead ignored the problem. The teachers described the school as a “model UN where students of all races get along.” (S. J. Lee, 2009, p. 118). Perhaps the model UN sentiment held by the teachers is superficially true, but there was still no questioning of the prevailing logic of scarcity that made it seem reasonable to have a small number of slots for high quality education in the city that led to the underlying tension all the students experienced.

Although I am focused on the relationship between the Asian American and Black community, it does not mean that racism is caused by the tensions between these two communities. Systematic racism governs the institutions that create the situations that Asian American merchants and Black patrons or Asian and Black students find themselves in. Rather than playing on the stereotypes of each group, as has been done in the past, there needs to be a reframing of racial group agency and responsibility.

Yamamoto (1999) identifies two key points that must be addressed when framing agency and responsibility: simultaneity and differentiation. Simultaneity investigates a group’s positionality within the structures of racism by considering the origins and redeployment of status when an oppressed group manages to gain some power (Yamamoto, 1999). How will the once oppressed group use their new power? This redeployment must take into account how their positionality and social alignment can oppress another group. If simultaneity is not taken into

account, the once oppressed group will become oppressors. Acknowledgment of the social, economic, and cultural context within Anzaldúa's (2012) conception of the borderland is important to consider when addressing agency and responsibility in any community in the United States.

It is within these borderlands that simultaneity takes shape to create different types of identity and social structures, therefore influencing the agency and responsibilities of a group in the larger community. This differentiation of racial categories and hierarchies creates differing racial meanings for each group. These differentiations result from the fluidity in defining race and racial categories. In their seminal piece, Omi and Winant theorize race as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). The sociohistorical process that Omi and Winant discuss is dependent upon the racial microclime of the area. Robert Chang describes racial microclimes as "local settings with particular social and political dynamics that affect racialization processes. … Attention to the local microclime is crucial for understanding how discrimination operates and what kinds of interventions would disrupt or remedy this discrimination" (R. Chang, 2012, p. 1924). This means that even within each racial category, differentiation can occur through economic, social, and legal resources. These differentiations among different forms of oppression affect the available range of responses by a group or an individual to a call for action. Therefore, the amount of agency and responsibilities a group has will vary wildly. When each group is aware of the simultaneity and differentiation among its members, the group can reduce the need to strive for dominance and increase the need to strive for transformation.

By taking simultaneity and differentiation into account, each group can begin to develop a transformative relationship. For the purposes of this research proposal, a transformative relationship is when,

> the more dominant group not only advances and develops itself without denigrating or subordinating the other group, thereby discharging its responsibility to act in a nonoppressive manner. It also acts to repair the damage of oppressive exercises of power over the other, thereby discharging its responsibility to rectify past injustice in the relationship (Yamamoto, 1999, p. 124).

This definition of transformative relationship takes into account the multiple realities that we find ourselves in and how activists can bring about genuine transformative change through interracial justice. The next section will examine one method of developing a transformative relationship through the use of student movements to bring about interracial justice. By examining student movements, I can draw upon the transformative resistance of the Asian American community and the methods of resistance its members used. Analyzing these methods explains how they were able to build bridges to create a multiethnic coalition to bring about school reform.

Critical Race Praxis and Asian Americans Using this Asian American addition to CRT, scholars will be able to develop race praxis that directly targets Asian American communities. Yamamoto describes race praxis as a set of important stages to bring about interracial justice through actionable steps. Taking the lessons from Yamamoto's race praxis, David Stovall introduced an addition to CRT to ensure that praxis is an integral part of CRT in education

(Stovall, 2013). Building upon the tenets of CRT as described by Solórzano and the process of race praxis from Yamamoto, Stovall synthesized five tenets of critical race praxis.

1. Commitment to on-the-ground work: This tenet ensures that theory is not developed for the sake of theory. Theory and research needs to make a cultural, social, economic, etc. impact in communities experiencing educational inequities.
2. Social justice as an experienced phenomenon: Scholars must have a commitment to on-the-ground work with oppressed communities. Personal experiences help the scholar understand the depth of experiential knowledge a community holds.
3. Utilization of interdisciplinary approaches: This is a commitment to using all available and relevant resources from a variety of disciplines to fully understand the economic, social, physiological context of a community
4. Training others to move beyond the intellectual exercise of challenging dominant ideologies: The heart of this tenet calls upon senior scholars and mentors to train and build the capacity of future CRT scholars to engage and continue the research of elders
5. Commitment to self-care: Mentoring alone is insufficient to ensure research continues. Self-care ensures that scholars are able to continue to mentor and produce research that pushes for change (Stovall, 2013).

Together these tenets promise to move us towards praxis-oriented research that will have a deep impact in the community in which we work. However, I suggest that there is one tenet missing from Stovall's tenets of critical race praxis.

I propose an additional tenet that draws upon the theme of interracial justice from Yamamoto's work. My additional, sixth tenet would be *building and maintaining relationships*

with the greater multiracial community. This tenet builds upon a commitment to interdisciplinary knowledge to include the experiential knowledge from on the ground work (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso & Solórzano, 2005). This tenet differs from Stovall's first tenet in pushing for the opportunity and necessity for cross-racial collaboration to occur. With a commitment to cross-racial collaboration, more narratives can be accounted for and there is a greater chance for coalition building that truly strives for interracial justice (Wu, 2003; Yamamoto, 1997).

Interracial Justice In Yamamoto's definition of race praxis, there are four steps: conceptual, performative, material, and reflexive (Yamamoto, 1997, 1999). First, the conceptual explores sociolegal theories and analysis to understand the world of race and racism in a community. Second, the performative determines what practical steps a group or person can take to be responsive to specific claims and how to act on these claims. Third, the material hypothesizes and tests the viability of the intended material consequences of the conceptual and performative—for instance, programs like access to fair housing and equitable education. Finally, the reflexive is a commitment for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to learn from the conceptual, material, and performative in order to reintegrate their experiences into their research or praxis (Yamamoto, 1999). Being a reflexive researcher means that there is a consistent review of theory to ensure that theories are responsive to contemporary society.

Critical race praxis offers the basis of interracial justice. Yamamoto theorizes interracial justice as offering communities of color in conflict a method to consider and analyze their situations and issues with each other and the racial environment they find themselves in. There are four dimensions: recognition, responsibility, reconstruction, and reparations. This framework provides a path for reconciliation rather than conciliation because it theorizes a path for transformation rather than dispute resolution.

The following section uses examples of social movements to illustrate the use of Yamamoto's interracial justice framework and critical race praxis frameworks.

Student Movements What solution will diffuse the mistrust and violence between the Asian American community and other communities? One method to get at rectifying the problem has been to highlight the issues facing the Asian American community through revolutionary movements and protests. In this section, I will discuss the importance of youth organizing and how student-led movements have fostered changes in legislation, community perception of Asian Americans, and an increased partnership between the Asian American and Black communities. This is followed by an exploration of two historical events in Asian American student activism to highlight the importance of student activism and coalition building. I will begin with a discussion of when Asian American student involvement in a multiethnic coalition at California State University at San Francisco in calling for a Third World College and Ethnic Studies Department. I will conclude this section with a look at the vital role transformational resistance played in the 2007 Count-Me-In campaign at the University of California's Berkeley and Los Angeles campuses.

For the purposes of this study, I will focus on high school youth activism as described by Sullivan et. al. (2003) as a process for developing "within a neighborhood or community a base of young people committed to altering power relationships and creating meaningful institutional change" (Sullivan, Edwards, Johnson, & McGillicuddy, 2003, p. 9). This is not to say that older mentors play no role in organizing with youth. Since high school students do not commonly have experience with organizing, older mentors are necessary for the success of a campaign. Ginwright and James (2002) found that mentor organizers help youth understand their lives in relation to different forms of power and oppression.

I am using the definition of Sullivan et. al. (2003) because they highlight the importance of creating meaningful institutional change. For this study, the Asian American students sought not only to challenge the lack of attention and resources they were receiving, but also change the communities' perspective of Asian Americans. Using the same definition of student organizing, Rogers et al. found that "youth organizing represents a potential strategy for equalizing the opportunities for civic learning and development and energizing civic participation. Targeting low income urban neighborhoods, organizing serves young people with the least access to quality civic learning opportunities" (Rogers et al., 2012, p. 47). This assessment of youth organizing is telling because one of the student leaders of the South Philadelphia High School boycott said, "…in Chinese culture, you can't tell about problems… If you tell about problems, you are a bad student. You're not allowed to question authority." (Miller III, 2009) Along with an understanding of agency, organizing also helps youth adopt a critical stance on government and other powerful institutions (Rogers et al., 2012). This transformation towards developing a critical consciousness creates a change in the youth's civic identity. After the South Philadelphia High School boycott, the same Chinese student stated, "I never thought I could do this before… I guess now I'm American" (Miller III, 2009).

Although the definition provided by Sullivan et al. (2003) explains what youth organizing is, the next question is how can student movements ensure that they can bring about transformative change without falling into a redevelopment of oppression? Yamamoto provides four key attributes to the production of interracial justice: recognition, responsibility, reconstruction, and reparation.

Recognition is typically the first and most difficult attribute towards interracial justice. This attribute requires that all members of a community understand, recognize, and empathize

with those that have been oppressed and wounded by injustices. In addition, parties involved must also "acknowledge the disabling constraints imposed by one group on another and the resulting group wounds; to identify related justice grievances often underlying current group conflict and critically examine stock stories of racial group attributes and interracial relations ostensibly legitimating those disabling constraints and justice grievances" (Yamamoto, 1999, p. 175).

Responsibility returns to the simultaneity and differentiation of a group. Groups need to understand what responsibility they have to the historically victimized and victimizer in order to bring about interracial justice. This responsibility will be dependent upon the simultaneity and differentiation of the groups involved (Yamamoto, 1999).

Reconstruction entails using praxis to bring about change. Groups must take actionable steps towards social and physical healing. This could mean providing an oppressed group with a space to air out all of its members grievances or provide those that were harmed with medical care (Yamamoto, 1999).

Finally, reparations are used to "repair the damage to the material conditions of racial group life in order to attenuate one group's power over another." (Yamamoto, 1999, p. 203) For Japanese Americans that were interned during the Second World War, reparations came in the form of $20,000 for each living former internee (Foley, 1987). Although this might be considered a large sum of money, it was seen as insufficient by many in the Japanese American community (Yamamoto, Chon, Izumi, & Wu, 2001). Similar reparations are being sought by members of the African American community for their ancestors' enslavement during the formative years of the United States (Yamamoto, 1999). Reparations do not always come in the

form of money, however—they can also be in the form of housing, meeting spaces, and academic resources to fund remedies of past injustices.

Each of these four attributes is critical to bringing together communities that might not interact with each other otherwise. It is also important to possess all these attributes; the absence of any one of the four can bring incalculable damage to interethnic relationships. For example, a public letter of apology can help recognize injustices committed, but without continued support and conversations, there will be more fallout.

Through transformative youth activism using the four attributes of interracial justice, students are able to enhance their understanding of simultaneity and differentiation through an engagement of civic learning and development while organizing for institutional change. Multiple studies have found that organizing helps youth critically challenge racial inequalities because they develop intercultural and intergroup competencies by working in a multicultural environment (Rogers & Terriquez, 2013; Watkins, Larson, & Sullivan, 2007). The next example demonstrates how each of the four attributes was used to call for the California State University and University of California system to create a Third World College to atone for past injustices committed upon communities of color in education and society.

The campaign for a Third World College started during a very turbulent time in the late 1960s and early 1970s on the California State University, San Francisco (SFSU) campus (Chan, 2005). Within the strike for Ethnic Studies and the Third World College, Asian Americans protested alongside other communities of color and created a multiethnic coalition that provided a united front in the fight. Some key Asian American organizations involved in the strike included the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action, Philippine-American Collegiate Endeavor, and Asian American Political Alliance (Umemoto, 2007). Students within these

organizations saw the importance of building relationships with other ethnicities to facilitate a "cross-pollination of ideas" (Umemoto, 2007, p. 38). During the strike, these Asian American organizations joined forces with other students of color through the Third World Liberation Front.

The Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) was a coalition of many minority serving organizations that led the SF State campus through one of the longest strikes in United States history ("College of Ethnic Studies at SFSU," 2014). The TWLF wanted the university to increase access to education for communities of color, less academic discrimination, and a counternarrative to the historical misrepresentations of people of color in the curriculum ("College of Ethnic Studies at SFSU," 2014). In their list of demands, TWLF sought creation of a Third World College within academic departments devoted to the study of communities of color (Cook, 2001). The university president at the time, Samuel Ichiye Hayakawa, resisted change to the university he was running (Hu-Dehart, 1993). However, by the end of the student protest, Hayakawa finally met some of the TWLF's demands. The students of the university were given their ethnic studies college and the various departments they asked for. Alongside SF State, UC Berkeley also met the TWLF's demands and gave the students a Department of Ethnic Studies (Shiekh, 2008). Although some of the demands of the TWLF were met, many of those demands are not being upheld today. The fight for ethnic studies is not an easy one however, in part because "promoting inclusive, multicultural curriculum and epistemologies in higher education means concurrently encountering resistance" (Cook, 2010).

To explore how political movements have continued since the SF State strike, I will discuss the different types of resistance and campaign building methods through a review of

transformational resistance and the Count-Me-In Campaign at the University of California, Berkeley.

During my time as an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley, I was a part of the Count-Me-In Campaign that fought for the disaggregation of the term Asian American on the University of California (UC) admission application. We wanted the UC system to expand the term Asian American from eight ethnic sub-groups to 23 ethnic sub-groups, so data can be gathered on underrepresented Asian American communities. With the support of various UC Chancellors, professors, students, staff, and community members, our campaign was successful. Almost a decade later. a report from the National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (CARE) led by Professor Robert Teranishi published a report showing the “surprising” results of the efforts of thousands of students fighting for equal representation in the UC system.

After the Count-Me-In Campaign brought a more accurate representation of Asian American admissions data, Professor Teranishi and CARE developed a report highlighting the underrepresentation of some communities under the Asian American umbrella. For example, their report found that the admission rate for Hmong, Bangladeshi, and Filipino students was more than 10 percent lower than the mean admission rate for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. They also found that Filipinos, Southeast Asians, and Pacific Islanders made up a lower representation of AAPIs applicants to UC Berkeley relative to their representation as residents in California (National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, 2013). The larger report identified the need for a data quality movement to challenge the preconceived notion of Asian Americans as a monolithic model minority.

To reorient people to what the Asian American community is and what it is not, a breakdown of conceptual blockages is necessary. A few conceptual blockages for Asian Americans have been the Black-White binary, the invisibility of Asian Americans, and Asian Americans being used as a reference group for comparison among other communities of color (Teranishi, 2010). The work that Teranishi conducts with the data quality movement attempts to transcend the conceptual blockages to honestly study the plight of the Asian American community by highlighting the diversity of representation within the community.

Teranishi further challenged the stereotypes of Asian Americans in his book *Asians in the Ivory Tower*. In the book, Teranishi uses stories from students and their parents along with empirical data to challenge the dominant narrative that the Asian American community is a homogeneous model minority (Teranishi, 2010). The various levels of aspirations and reasons for attending college are as varied as any other group. However, Asian Americans are still seen through normative frameworks that "unfairly, and often incorrectly, position Asian American and Pacific Islander students as the least in need of academic, financial, social, or psychological support" (Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009, p. 65).

Transformational Resistance The movement at SF State and the work of Teranishi and his colleagues are examples of the power of bringing about interracial justice through a process known as transformational resistance. Grounded in critical race theory and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) frameworks, transformational resistance is a reformation of old deficit-oriented work on self-defeating resistance theories. Solórzano and Delgado Bernal assert, "…that for too long, researchers have focused on the self-defeating resistance of working-class students without acknowledging and studying other forms of resistance that may lead to social transformation" (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 310). Through this assertion, they formulated a theory

based on the tenants of CRT and LatCrit that would acknowledge Chicana and Chicano student resistance in a gender and race conscious framework. The following exploration of transformational resistance will provide a framework on which to examine the South Philadelphia student campaign. By demonstrating how the student campaign used transformational resistance, we can learn the steps Asian American student leadership took in Philadelphia to bring about school reform to develop best practices for Asian American student movements.

Using CRT and LatCrit, Solórzano and Delgado Bernal adapt Henry Giroux's theory of resistance into a grid that acknowledges different forms of resistance (Giroux, 1983; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). The X and Y axis for resistance are a student's critique of oppression and a student's motivation for social justice respectively (Giroux, 1983). School resistance contains four types of student oppositional behavior: reactionary behavior, self-defeating resistance, conformist resistance, and transformational resistance (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Reactionary behavior is oppositional behavior but should not be considered resistance behavior. In this case, the "student lacks both a critique of her or his oppressive conditions and is not motivated by social justice." (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 317) An example of this is the student who causes disruptions on campus, but has no motivation to pursue social justice. This could be a student that rips up flyers and throws them on the ground just to generate a reaction from others.

Self-defeating resistance occurs when a student is aware of their oppression, but engages in resistance devoid of motivation for social justice (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This could be the student that is a part of the Count-Me-In Campaign who realizes that oppression is

occurring in their community, yet engages in sabotage of other social justice campaigns to direct more attention to Count-Me-In.

Conformist resistance occurs when the student is motivated by a need for social justice, but does not understand the system of oppression they find themselves in (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This would be the Count-Me-In member that would advocate changing the way the UC counts Asian American students, but stops there. Rather than asking questions or challenging who has access to the UC system or why some students are not being accepted at the same rate, this student only sees the need to count students.

The final oppositional behavior is transformational resistance. Transformational resistance occurs when the student understands the system of oppression they are in and is motivated by social justice (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). An example of this would be the member of the Count-Me-In campaign that recognizes the need to collect more data on Asian American admission rates and use that data to challenge the admission and recruiting processes of the UC system.

Of course, within all of these quadrants, the level of knowledge of oppression and commitment of social justice will vary. Thus, a student with more knowledge of oppression and a greater commitment of social justice will be able to obtain a greater level of change than a student in any of the other oppositional behavior quadrants. Transformational resistance also has two types of resistance. External transformational resistance refers to students that engage in visible and physical forms of resistance. This could be the student that attends many rallies and is often the leader of most march. On the opposing end of the spectrum to external transformational resistance, is internal transformational resistance. This is the student that may not necessarily lead every rally, but is “consciously engaged in a critique of oppression” (Solórzano & Delgado

Bernal, 2001, p. 324). Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) see this student as the person that goes to graduate school to challenge oppression and advocate for social justice through their scholarship. This would be a student that may lead the rallies, but is motivated to study Asian American student movements through a social justice lens.

The Process of Mentorship and Thriving Throughout this theory and literature review, the focus has been on the social activists that make changes in their communities. There is a plethora of research on how students have practiced transformational resistance and the strategies for effective protest and resistance. However, there is significantly less research on those who mentored many of these students. There is even less research on the processes by which mentors affect the development (emotional, cognitive, identity) of youth (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; R. Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998). This final section of the literature review will explore research that has been conducted on the process and outcomes of mentoring youth of color.

The theory that positive mentoring is beneficial to youth is generally accepted as fact. Rhodes has found that mentoring youth can help the young person with and escape of daily stress, improving social relationships with others, and increasing emotion regulation (Rhodes, 2006). In a review of mentoring research, Rhodes et. al (2006) created a conceptual framework that demonstrates three connected processes for mentoring: “(1) enhancement of social and emotional development; (2) improvements in cognitive functioning through conversation, joint activity, and guided instruction; and (3) promotion of positive identity development” (p. 701). These development outcomes are dependent upon the level of mentoring a student receives. Mentors that are able to create a bond can be a sounding board for youth that are uncomfortable expressing their feelings to parents or other adults (Darling, Hamilton, Toyokawa, & Matsuda,

2002). A strong bond can also assist the mentor to become sensitive to the needs of the mentee in order to be a more effective partner in the student's emotional development (Allen & Eby, 2003). However, these bonds are often very difficult to form. When a bond fails to form, the length of time the mentor and mentee spend together does not result in a positive impact (Rhodes et al, 2006).

Although there are studies on the benefits of mentoring, there is little research on specific benefits of mentoring for students of color and cross-gender mentoring. When large-scale research studies are conducted, they are typically based on established mentoring programs (i.e. Big Brother, Big Sisters) and contain so many dependent variables (age, race, time in mentoring, time on waitlist, etc.) correlations can be sparse (Rhodes et al, 2006). For example, in a study of cross-gender mentorship, Rhodes et al. (2006) found that there is little benefit or negatives to cross-gender mentorship. However, the researchers also recognized that these findings are not determinate because each mentoring relationship they looked at has unique circumstances that made the pairing a success or failure. They called upon a qualitative researcher to conduct a more in depth exploration of what makes a mentor paring more or less successful.

Conclusion

The works of Takaki, Rhodes, Yamamoto, Delgado Bernal, Teranishi, and Solórzano are integral to the research I propose to conduct. By understanding racial violence towards Asian Americans, I can fully develop a line of inquiry that acknowledges past injustices while also pushing for interracial justice through transformational resistance. By using this line of inquiry, I have discovered that there is a scholarly void regarding Asian American student activism and transformational change that can be filled with research on the Asian American student movement in South Philadelphia. By using the works of CRT and interracial justice scholars, I

will develop a methodology that allows for the voices of silenced students to speak louder than the dominant narrative. The next chapter will discuss the methodology I have developed through an in-depth review of literature to answer the guiding questions proposed in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 3: Methods

Based on the literature review of the previous chapters, studies on the transformational resistance of Asian American youth are few and far between. While many of these studies have focused on a specific event (e.g.,1990 studies on the establishment of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State), the intent of this study is to both provide a space for those involved to talk about their lived experiences and show the causality of the actions of the campaign for today's activists. This unique perspective of history calls for the employment of methodologies that speak to historical ethnography and racial counternarratives to allow for the legitimacy of participants' stories while acknowledging the presence of structures and institutions that have silenced these participants in the past.

The goal of this chapter is to cover in detail the process and reasons I have decided to answer the research questions I proposed in the first chapter. To achieve this goal, this chapter is divided into three sections: research design, sample selection, and analysis. Research design will describe how I employed historical ethnography with a focus on counter stories to emphasize the racialized and intersectional stories of the students and mentors involved with the campaign for interracial justice. Next, I will discuss the reasons for my sample selection and the process for data collection. The final section will discuss analysis procedures.

Research Design

Historical Ethnography Although ethnography typically alludes to studying contemporary communities, I believe that ethnography can and should be applied to past communities. The history of a community can help develop a deeper understanding of the motivations and actions of contemporary communities. Because this research project is designed to study how events of the past affect the contemporary Asian American community, I used historical ethnography.

Historical ethnography is not a widely used methodology in education; however it has been used in anthropology. Yet, a cursory review of historical ethnographic anthropological studies often shows a disregard for the Indigenous community's voice the researcher is studying (R. B. Lee & Guenther, 1993; Mintz, 1989; W. M. Reddy, 1992). For this reason, I have decided to use a more sociological and racialized approach to historical ethnography.

In his historical ethnographic update to DuBois's 1899 study of Philadelphia's 9th Ward, Hunter (2015) identifies three key areas of historical ethnography: access, representation, and causality. These three areas are similar to tenets of ethnography; the key difference is how relationships are forged with the community.

Access is the first and often most crucial step to gather information about the community. Without adequate access, it is extremely difficult for the researcher to develop an understanding of a community's culture and practices.

> From the beginning, the historical ethnographer has to forge an ethnographic relationship with people (i.e., the archivists), place (i.e., the library or archive), and documents (i.e., ephemera, new media, institutional records, and letters) who's liminality must be examined so as to produce the tools effectively conduct historical ethnographic research analysis. (Hunter, 2015, p. 227)

As Hunter states, one form of access is the ability to enter the archives. Archives manifest in the form of traditional archives found at universities or historical associations, but can also be found in people's garages and storage areas. Access to the archives acts as entering a community. A researcher needs to develop a relationship with the archivist to gain access to people "who, to a greater or lesser extent, 'speak' through the historical documents" (Fenske, 2007, p. 76).

Because most participants in the boycott for safer schools are still living, access to interview participants is also a significant component of the historical ethnographic process. For the purposes of this study, access to participants included contacting organizations and leaders that were once a part of the campaign for safer schools. Similar to developing a relationship with the archivist, I had to convince organizations of my commitment to telling their story and ensuring I practice ethical research procedures.

Once access is granted, the next step is to ensure that there is representation of the greater research site community's members. Representation comes in the form of ensuring that all sides of the story are told.

For this study, many important archival documents came not only from government or media sources, but also from interviews with students, mentors, politicians, and reporters. These diverse sources provided the data needed to triangulate and confirm the findings from the study. Triangulation of the data also allowed for the ability to ensure that I was able to develop a comprehensive narrative of the history of the community and contemporary stories.

With a representative data sample, the final step of historical ethnographers is to connect the historical testimonies, documents, and observations to contemporary communities through causality and theory development. Hunter explains the goal of a historical ethnographer as,

> demonstrating the impact of the actions and attitudes of peoples and organizations both across and within time, historical ethnographers can offer theories that bring together seemingly dissonant historical players and moments into a more comprehensive narrative of change across micro, meso, and macro lines. (Hunter, 2015, p. 233)

Historical ethnography also relies on what Vaughan (2004) calls the "longitudinal filter," to theorize how history impacts and compares across different social and temporal contexts. My study of a past campaign for school reform uses this longitudinal filter to ensure that my analysis accounts for the dominant narrative of the time, while also legitimizing the stories of those that were silenced or forgotten. Hunter (2015) believes that this cycling is necessary to produce theories that are dependent upon the local community while recognizing the teleology of the modern world. Because of the dependency upon the "ground-up" stories, I use counter storytelling as a secondary methodological framework focused on legitimizing the stories of the community as a complement to historical ethnography.

Counter Stories In his review of civil rights scholars, Delgado found that the inner circle of 26 male White civil rights scholars exclusively cited each other and rarely cited scholars of color to support their claims. Delgado argued that this practice of self-selected citing leads to scholarship on communities of color that is "blunted, skewed, and riddled with omissions" (Delgado, 1992, p. 1349). Investigating further, Delgado believed that one of the reasons these White male scholars did not cite scholars of color is because of a perceived bias of non-objective methods, analysis, etc., when scholars of color conduct research on oppressed communities. In his recommendations, Delgado called on scholars of color to challenge the implicit and explicit bias of the White researchers who fail to cite or even work with scholars of color.

I reference this article because, as I have stated above, historical ethnography in anthropology has taken on the imperial scholarship that Delgado refers to. Many times, historical anthropologists fail to cite or work within the community to uncover the full story of traditions, locations, and daily life at the site they are working studying (Reddy, 1992). To combat the imperial scholar framework, scholars of color, especially Indigenous scholars, have created

methodological frameworks that are focused on dismantling imperial frameworks while introducing critical decolonized methodologies that tell the fuller story (Brayboy, 2005). With these goals in mind, I will be using historical ethnography with a focus on storytelling.

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) describe storytelling as a method of preserving culture and preventing genesis amnesia. Bishop (1996) further describes storytelling as a way of representing the truth of a community even though it might not align with what has been said by researchers in the past. These stories allow for the individual telling the story to retain their autonomy from the researcher collecting the story. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) explains that stories are special because "their themes tell us about our cultures" (p. 145). She goes on to state that storytelling is methodology because stories "employ familiar characters and motifs which can reassure as well as challenge. Familiar characters can be invested with the qualities of an individual or can be used to invoke a set of shared understandings and histories" (p. 145).

Although storytelling can be a powerful and effective method of gathering data, stories from communities of color are often excluded from what Solórzano and Yosso (2002) refer to as "majoritarian stories." As a result, experiences of communities of color are misrepresented, as Delgado as said, or are forced to the footnotes of majoritarian stories. To redefine what counts as a valid story, Solórzano and Yosso build upon the work of critical scholars of color to introduce a difference form of storytelling known as counter-storytelling.

Counter-storytelling is "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" and "a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privileges [that] can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 24-32). The purpose and goals of counter-stories include the building of community by connecting praxis and theory,

challenging dominate narratives by employing theories that transform traditional forms of knowledge, highlighting the voices of marginalized communities to show systemic problems and success, and showcasing the powerful nature of storytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) described three types of counternarratives in their article. First, counternarratives can be told through personal stories that recount an individual's experience with different forms of oppression including racism, sexism, and xenophobia. These personal counternarratives are an effective way to understand and appreciate individual experiences and connect those experiences to a larger critique of systematic racism. Second, composite narratives draw upon a variety of data sources to "recount the racialized, sexualized, and classed experiences of people of color" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, pp. 33). For this dissertation, by solely using personal counter-stories, I build voice for those that are oppressed, challenge the preconceived notions of only one community's voice being objective, and demonstrate the importance of storytelling and history to debunk stereotypes and implicit biases (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Finally, I have chosen to use counter-stories as a part of historical ethnography because this combination of methodological frameworks addresses the liminality of my participants. My research questions focus on leadership development and community building. Employing Counter-storytelling underscores development processes of the Asian American organizing community while validating its members' experiences and examining underlying structural forces that were and are acting on Asian Americans in Philadelphia. Together through a casual investigation of the past via the stories from my interviewees, archival documents from the school district, and legal documents from the civil rights suit, news reports, etc., will provide a

holistic representation of the boycott's events and how the legacy of Asian and Asian American activism affects Philadelphia today.

Site and Participant Information

The following are a list of people I interviewed, categories of documents I collected, and description on analytic memos.

- Interviews

First Name	Category
Alix	Community Member
Julius	Community Member
Teresa	Mentor
Ellen	Mentor
Neeta	Mentor
Helen	Mentor
Lai Har	Mentor
Mary	Mentor
Hiram	Mentor
George	News Reporter
Hackney	School Staff
David	School Staff
Pedro	School Staff
Xu	Youth Organizer
Wei	Youth Organizer
Duong	Youth Organizer

- Documents
    - News reports
    - School Reform Commission meeting minutes
    - Flyers, journals, and notes from the boycott
    - Legal documents
- Analytic Memos
    - Observation and process memos from working in different archives
    - Analytics memos from site visits at school and community organization meetings
    - Observation memos from community cultural events

Site Information: South Philadelphia High School South Philadelphia High School is a public high school located in the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) on the south side of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. SPHS is a single building neighborhood school that accepts all students within its boundaries. SPHS's demographics largely reflect the racial and socioeconomic demographics of the surrounding neighborhood, but not those of greater Philadelphia. In the most recent demographic information provided by SDP (2014), SPHS has 761 students of which about a quarter are English language learners and more than a quarter are students with disabilities. A majority (59.7%) of the students in SPHS identify as African American, 19.6% identify as Asian, about 10% identify as Latino, and less than 10% are White (SDP, 2014) (See Appendix 1 for more information). SPHS has a more diverse racial student population than most other schools in the Philadelphia School District. In the district as a whole, Whites and African Americans make up about 43.4% and 42.4% respectively, while Latinos are at 11%, and Asians are the smallest population at 5.5% (U.S. Census, 2010) (See Appendix 2 for more information).

Inside the school, SPHS has widespread and very apparent problems. Before 2009, the school failed to achieve a standardized measure of student performance based on Adequate Yearly Progress measures in academics for eight years. Beyond academics, the school is considered one of the most dangerous high schools in Philadelphia and the United States. SPHS was considered “persistently dangerous” for four years before 2010 and recorded 534 reported assaults in five years (AALDEF, 2010; Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2016; Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2010).

Research Procedures

This section of the methods will explain in detail my executed plan for recruitment, interviews, archives, and analysis for this dissertation.

Recruitment Recruitment for interviews consisted of diversity sampling using opportunistic and snowball approaches. I drew upon my contacts within the Asian American community of Philadelphia, the School District of Philadelphia, and Asian American legal networks, to build my interview pool.

Participants were purposefully selected to produce a representative sample of members involved with the campaign for safer schools, staff from the School District of Philadelphia, and contemporary organizers in the Philadelphia region.

Former students were selected because they could provide personal narratives and share their firsthand experiences with the process of the student-led campaign. Within the category of former students, a majority will be student leaders in the campaign.

Coalition members were selected to provide context and a mentor’s view of how students become leaders in the Asian American community. Different types of mentors were selected to

ensure a holistic story of political, social, and economic factors that went into developing and succeeding in the campaign.

The final category of interviewees is comprised of outsiders to the student campaign. This category was developed for triangulation purposes to ensure all sides of the story are told. This category will also help understand what concessions and strategies used by the student campaign worked to change the minds of administrators.

Interviews Seidman (2013) advocates for a three phenomenological interview series that is structured for the research to build rapport while "exploring the meanings of peoples' life experiences in the context of their lives" (p. 20). The three interview series are semi-structured interviews that: 1) first focuses on a life history that puts the interviewee's life experiences within the context their community and the events I am studying; 2) next, has interviewees detail their experiences with the boycott and campaign for safer schools and an end to systematic racism; 3) finally, has interviewees reflect on the meaning of their experiences with and/or within the boycott and campaign (Seidman, 2013). For a full phenomenological interview series, Seidman called for each of the three interviews to last about 90 minutes and occur in the space of approximately four weeks with at least three days in between each interview.

To be cognizant of the interviewees' time, I used a modified Seidman framework that condensed the three interviews into one longer interview. I retained parts of the Seidman phenomenological framework that I felt were important. Specifically, the interviews I conducted still contained the three parts of the interview series (life history, context, and reflection) with equal time was devoted to each component. I also offered interviewees the option of meeting with me later if they had additional reflections on the boycott and campaign. I retained these attributes of the interview series because I felt that in order to follow the tenets of historical

ethnography and counter-storytelling, context, access to grassroots information, and a detailed analysis of the causality were too important to not to include.

The interview protocol was developed to allow the interviewee to focus on one section of the Seidman framework at a time. The protocol's first section asks the interviewee to recall the context and emotions associated with coming to Philadelphia. I then asked the interviewee to describe the events of December 3rd and the immediate aftermath of that day. These questions helped me develop a historical setting for the remainder of the interview and allowed me to build rapport with the interviewee by not asking unnecessarily difficult or complicated questions.

The second section of the protocol focused on the boycott and campaign. Questions in this section honed in on specific details of the weeks, months, and years during and after the boycott. I focused my inquiry on the reasons and processes to develop and sustain the successful campaign. These questions helped me understand the different perspectives of the same time and events in history. Mentors, students, school officials, and community members, helped create a holistic story that counter-balanced what was being told by local and national news outlets.

The third and final section of the interview protocol asked the interviewees to reflect on their experiences of the campaign and how it affects them today. My questions were geared towards finding out the causality of the boycott and campaign on today's Asian community of Philadelphia. I asked open-ended questions that allowed interviewees to tell their counter-stories in a safe and comfortable environment. These causality questions helped me draw connections among theories, praxis, and policy. It also helped me develop and strengthen theories and areas of research that have been ignored in the past.

An interview protocol is provided in Appendix 5.

Interviews were conducted at the convenience of the interviewee. Most interviews either took place at the Folk Arts and Cultural Traditions Charter School in Chinatown, Philadelphia or the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn). At FACTS, interviews were held at the Asian American United office or in an empty conference room. Interviews that took place at UPenn took place in a private office at the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the Graduate School of Education. Some interviewees also requested to have the interview in a space that was closer and more convenient for them. Because of difficulties with Philadelphia public transit during 2016, I often met interviewees in South Philadelphia.

Anonymity and Data Protection Interviewees were given the option to divulge or anonymize their name, associations, and any other identifying information. Interviewees were also offered the choice of allowing me to audio record the interviews. Regardless of anonymity, all interview and observation data sets were stored on an encrypted external hard drive and on a password protected computer. Artifacts and physical data were stored in a locked cabinet that only I have access to. Data were not housed in unsecure online storage or public locations. All interviewees granted permission for their names and associations to be identified for this study.

Reciprocity Participants in my study were compensated for their time and input. A grant from the Intercultural American Cultures Department at the University of California, Los Angeles allowed me to compensate the time and opinions of my interviewees with an Amazon gift code. Interviewees were not told about the gift code before meeting. Upon completion of transcription of the interview, interview participants were given their interview transcripts and the gift code.

While conducting my interviews for this dissertation, I was asked many questions about my commitment to the community and what my intentions for the research would be. Although I had participated in many events and volunteered with AAU, there was still an initial mistrust of

me coming into the community in a non-volunteer capacity as a researcher. I had to show that I could be a trusted messenger for their stories. I also needed to show that I would not misrepresent their stories and histories for my benefit. They were right in questioning my intentions and motivations for the research. There are other researchers that have, could, or will misrepresent their stories or enter a community, conduct interviews, and leave without any reciprocity for their time. However, I continued to be a part of the community through volunteer work, attending various events, and consistent dialogue about my research and the intentions of my work. I did not gain any financial benefit from this dissertation or participating in Asian Americans United.

Documents and Field Notes: Finding Relevant Documents Documents and artifacts included newspapers, media coverage, district documents, and any declassified documents from the U.S. Department of Justice's investigation of the incident. These documents were obtained through a variety of methods and sources. As described by Hunter, I used historical ethnographic techniques in the archives of Temple University, University of Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Folklore Project. Because I used ethnographic methods in the archives, I took extensive field notes and made observations of the relationships I formed with archivists as well as my search on online media and news archives such as LexisNexis.

During my observations, I took notes in a notebook on the following: physical setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and my own behavior (Merriam, 2009).

Field notes, observations, and gathered documents allowed for the triangulation of data with my interviews. My field notes helped answer all of the proposed research questions. Media sources and government documents provided some context of the Philadelphia atmosphere and

provided another angle on the boycott and campaign. Documents provided by AALDEF and local community organizations provided details on the aftermath and the official government response to the incident of December 3rd and the boycott. Legal documents and internal school district memos provided the details I needed to create a counter story to that of the school district.

Analysis Because this is a study focused on interviews and archival documents, qualitative analysis was used to analyze the data. To determine historical ethnographic causality, interviews and archival documents were inductively coded using an affective method (Seidman, 2013). Initial coding focused on subjective qualities including emotions, values, and judgments of the interviewee or document. I used this coding method to highlight the voices of interviewees' life experiences, while also determining the motivation for their actions. My second round of coding created categories from prominent initial inductive coding. Prominent codes had a high frequency or a significant value to the participant or the research questions (Bazeley, 2013). Once secondary code categories were produced, member checking with research participants and consultations with my dissertation committee at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) were conducted to ensure all stories are told with the upmost respect and accuracy.

Documents and artifacts were additionally analyzed and coded using a critical race policy analysis framework (CRPA). Developed from the tenets of CRT, CRPA recognizes historical legacies and relationships between communities of color while also acknowledging the guise of color-blindness inherent in policies and official documents (Gotanda, 1991; Guadalupe Vallas & Villalpando, 2013). This policy analysis framework works in conversation with counternarratives from interviews to dispel color-blindness by centralizing race and other forms of oppression

within the rhetoric of the document. Finally, CRPA allowed me to use the documents and artifacts to check the accuracy and authenticity of interviews and observations through data triangulation.

Conclusion

I have chosen to combine historical ethnographic methods and critical race methodology frameworks as my procedure for data collection to highlight the life histories of the youth and mentors in the Philadelphia Asian American community. These methods also allow me the ability to learn more about and continue to integrate myself into a community that I have been a part of for many years. Finally, my choice of methodology will provide a historical counternarrative of Asian American youth agency and transformational resistance.

The next chapter will use the historical ethnographic methods I described above to provide historical context to the Asian American youth's campaign against systemic racism in Philadelphia.

CHAPTER 4: Brief History of Asian American Activism and the Fight for Space in Philadelphia

Introduction: Bellwethers

This chapter is focused on the activism efforts of Asian and Asian Americans in Philadelphia from the 2000 to 2008 to preserve cultural space and create safe environments for youth. During this decade, the Asian American community made significant strides towards equity for all communities in Philadelphia through grassroots organizing and sustained activism.

Philadelphia Magazine described the turf war origins in the city as occurring in small, nearly unnoticeable ways.

> One more sign went up in an indecipherable script. One more family moved onto the block. Another corner store changed ownership. And along the way, resentment—deep, and deeply unfair — gradually gripped people's minds, then their children's. No one can articulate the exact moment it started because there wasn't one moment. There were millions. ("Heroes: South Philly High's Protesters," 2010)

Although the author of this piece portrays Asian immigrants as a negative occupying force, the author is not wrong about the changes that had been occurring in Philadelphia since the 1980s. The 1980s through 2000s were a time of rapid population growth for the Asian population of Philadelphia (Wilson, 2015). As with other large cities, Philadelphia's Asian population was facing similar racial discord with the local community during this time of rapid growth. This discord often led to the exploitation of and violence against vulnerable Asian immigrant populations. A couple of cases stand out as bellwethers for the future of Asian relations with the police and local Philadelphia government: the Chinatown Stadium and Casino.

Although Chinatown organizations fought and ultimately lost their bid to stop a freeway from being constructed through the heart of Philadelphia's Chinatown, the community did not give up its fight to retain and reclaim cultural and community space from developers and the government. In 2000, Mayor John Street's administration announced plans to potentially move the Philadelphia Phillies baseball stadium to his preferred site of Chinatown (Wilson, 2015, p. 129). The city's proposal claimed that this would help local businesses prosper. Chinatown community organizations knew that the payoff of a stadium would hurt rather than benefit the community, as evidenced by the freeway and the recently installed convention center. Chinatown's community members further said that the stadium would change Chinatown from a residential to commercial neighborhood, pricing people out of their homes (Wilson, 2015).

Learning from past protests and rallies, the community met with city officials and marched in the streets holding signs like "Stadium out of Chinatown." On June 8th of 2000, over 75 percent of Chinatown business owners boycotted and marched to city hall (*Philadelphia Inquirer,* April 22, 2000 in Wilson, 2015). Using the community voice, political pressure, legal strategies, and economic strength of Chinatown, the local community resisted and the city decided to place the stadium in the industrial section of South Philadelphia.

Not to be outdone, the city later tried twice in 2009 and 2013 to build a casino in Chinatown. In 2009, as a part of the No Casino in the Heart of Our City Coalition, which included Asian Americans United (AAU), Liberty Resources, Inc., Arch Street United Methodist Church, Black Clergy of Philadelphia, and the Media Mobilizing Project, the various organizations and communities again fought to prevent the destruction of the Chinatown community. In the end, the community had another victory under its belt (Wilson, 2015). However, the city is reconsidering building a casino a block away from Chinatown. Again, it

appears that this is the preferred location for developers and the city government. Based on the legacy of activism and organization in Chinatown and Philadelphia, there is no doubt that communities will protest and fight to retain their cultural community space. Debbie Wei, a mentor at AAU, was quoted, “There is a legacy of resistance that has been passed on in the community, so like it or not—or whether people even realize it—there is a legacy of resistance, and it’s kind of cool, because I think the city itself also knows about the legacy of resistance. I think if Chinatown didn’t have its track record, that casino would have been built.” (Wilson, 2015, p. 125).

Racial Tension and Violence

As Asian immigrants moved into neighborhoods once occupied by Black families, the fear and hostility in a social turf war resulted in an increased number of microaggressions and violent incidences directed towards Asian Americans. Newspapers described the violence towards Asian Americans in a very nonchalant and matter of fact way. For example *Philadelphia Magazine* described the violence towards Asian Americans as non-incidences: “…dozens of the alleged incidents are relatively minor-name-callings, verbal threats, petty robberies, random punches in the head while walking down stairwells, and general intimidation” (“Heroes: South Philly High’s Protesters,” 2010). Some of these ‘minor’ incidents included eight students robbing a Chinese student five days into the 2009 school year. The next day, students threw oranges at Asian students in the cafeteria (AALDEF, 2010; Gammage, 2011; “Heroes: South Philly High’s Protesters,” 2010; Miller III, 2009). These “relatively minor” incident often escalated to aggressive acts of physical violence and intimidation. In October of 2008, a group of 30 students attacked five Chinese students after school in a subway station in South Philadelphia (Miller III, 2009). Only one of the attackers was identified and transferred out of South

Philadelphia High School. Assistant Principal of a North Philadelphia High School, Ellen Coutts, told reporters that these attacks are completely random. "A person who would be perceived as unable to defend his or herself, such as a person whose first language is a foreign language or a person who is mentally challenged, they were randomly being jumped for no reason. It wasn't to rob them or get revenge or a continuation of a neighborhood feud. It was just completely random" (Miller III, 2009).

This culture of silencing the Asian American community is endured by the students. Duong Ly, a student activist, expressed his concern that "there was a culture in the school that allowed young people to beat each other" (Ly, 2012). He held the school district accountable because of their "indifference toward the harsh anti-Asian, anti-immigrant climate contributed to a culture of normalized violence that hurt all students, especially and including Asian immigrant youth" (Ly, 2012).

In 1989, Heng Lim, a Cambodian refugee, was pulled from his family van by a White pedestrian who beat him with a piece of lumber; Lim later died in the hospital. Members of Lim's family were also attacked and served as witnesses to the violent beating. Rather than allow Lim's family to travel with him to the hospital, police detained them for four hours while Lim was dying in the hospital (Thayer, 1990). Not knowing where to go for help, Lim's family went to Asian Americans United to ask for assistance. It was discovered that the attacker used racial slurs and police knew his identity but had not made an arrest. After a community coalition was formed, and meetings were held with the police, district attorney, and public officials, the police still refused to identify the attack a hate crime. "It became this community push to one, prosecute, hold somebody responsible and, two, categorize what was obvious to us as a hate crime" (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016).

A couple of years later in Southwest Philly, an incident at a park that further strained the relationship between police, the Asian community, and the greater Philadelphian community. A group of Vietnamese youth were hanging out when a group of White youth tell them to get out of “their” park. The yelling escalated to a fight with weapons and a White youth was stabbed to death. Rather than the subtle news that publicized Lim’s attack and murder, the local news created a firestorm of accusations and demands for the perpetrator to be caught. And unlike Lim’s case, there was an immediate arrest of an Asian bystander, who according to the community, had an alibi during the event. The bystander was held for months until police made another arrest and released the bystander. All Vietnamese youth that were in the park were charged with conspiracy to commit first-degree murder, even though only one youth had the knife.

For organizers in the Asian community, how the story was covered demonstrated the inherent racial bias of the news media in Philadelphia. Ellen describes the news at the time: “Heng Lim was a sentence in an article about a weekend of violence and this guy killed. Whereas this White kid gets killed and it's these huge front page papers, basketball star, full of promise. Killed by Asians wielding meat cleavers. He wasn't stabbed by a meat cleaver. This whole image of these crazed immoral Asians attacking White youth.” She goes on to explain that the park was a notorious gathering place for White power meetings, which the White victim might have been a part of. Because of how the news covered the fight, she and others felt the “anti-Asian context in which Asian youth fought back and no one's going to justify the stabbing death of a White youth but what happened was the whole city was inflamed.” For many in the Asian community, it began to feel very unsafe because of the negative stereotypes and fear of

retaliation. This atmosphere of racial hostility against Asians was felt throughout the United States.

To combat the negative racial hostility towards the Asian community, various community organizations became established in major cities (Zia, 2001). In Philadelphia, one of the first organizations was Asian Americans United (AAU). Founded in 1985, AAU became a community organization focused on building leadership among the Asian American community and advocacy force for the rights of all oppressed communities. During their inception years, AAU was focused on a multitude of issues affecting the Southeast Asian refugee population. Along with protesting the casino, some of their early work included the struggle to secure affordable and habitable housing for refugees that were suffering in apartment buildings with no heat, water, or power. AAU later expanded to include more youth organizing and leadership development. This line of support ultimately resulted in the establishment of a charter school in Philadelphia's Chinatown focused on promoting cultural practices and advancing education equity.

The Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School (FACTS) was opened in 2005 through a partnership among AAU, the Philadelphia Folklore Project, and the Philadelphia Chinatown community ("FACTS," 2014). The primary charter school focused on cultural traditions and social justice in many different communities, not just the Asian American community. FACTS's first principal wanted the school to be "multiracial, and in particular we wanted to be immigrant friendly, and we needed to be in a neighborhood where immigrants could come and feel like it's okay to be an immigrant in this neighborhood" (Wilson, 2015, p. 153). FACTS has allowed for community organization to use the space available to hold meetings and events. From its opening to today, FACTS has held an important space for the community of Chinatown and Philadelphia.

The community space created by FACTS became the center of life for many community members, including those that have experienced hostile racial environments at other schools. During the boycott of South Philadelphia High School, FACTS was the place where students met, planned, and learned until South Philly High made changes.

The Broad Street Line

The quick response of Wei and others in the Asian American community to the December 3rd incident was not a new experience for many of the student organizers. The ability to call the right people to assist the students mentally, emotional, physically, and legally was a skill developed long before the first punch was thrown in the school that day. To understand the development of this boycott, it is essential to know about the leadership development that occurred during the previous years of violence against Asian students in South Philadelphia. This section will tell the counter story of Wei Chen's development as a student leader a year before the incident at South Philly High. I highlight this history to demonstrate that youth leadership is stems from a process that is developed over time. The history also provides context for why certain processes in the South Philly High boycott were emphasized over others.

Several months before the events at the school, there were a series of fights that took place at the campus's lunchroom and near subway stops in South Philly. The first day of the 2009 school year, a fight broke out in the lunchroom between a Chinese student and a Black student. This fight led to 30 students (a mixture of South Philly and other neighborhood schools) chasing five Asian students from the school to the nearest subway stop. A fight ensued until police were able to break it up (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016).

The next day (Thursday), rumors about more retaliation against Asian students made its way through the halls of the school. Although administration and school safety officers were

aware of the unease among Asian students, it was seen as, according to Wei, as "a cultural problem" (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016). When nothing was being done to help Asian students, Wei called classmates to meet on the second floor to discuss what they could do. The principal at the time went to the second floor to meet with the Asian students. According to Wei, rather than support and listen to the students' concerns, she, "…was pushing all responsibility to the student, and didn't talk about the issue in the school. She had no idea how to protect student." From this meeting, Wei and other Asian students were angry. "I was angry because I got beat up twice … I was really angry about her [the principal] reaction" (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016). That was when the students decided not to go back to school until something changed.

This boycott started off slowly on Friday. Wei and other students had less than 24 hours to reach as many students as they could to ask them to not attend school on Friday. Through their last-minute effort, some Asian students attended school, but many more did not. The boycott created enough of an effect that the principal was said to have been very angry with the students who participated in the Friday boycott.

Because Monday was a holiday, Wei knew that he had three days to organize an effort to create a safe space for his fellow peers at South Philly. Although Wei had organized this effort, he was still young and inexperienced with activism. He reached out to local Chinese leaders until he was able to get in contact with Mabel Chen, owner of a local Philadelphia restaurant and a community activist leader in Chinatown. She offered her restaurant as an option for students to go during their boycott. "Don't worry, call your student constitution at our restaurant, we'll meet in there," recalled Wei (personal communication, July 6, 2016).

On Monday, Mabel's restaurant was filled with students, community leaders, and local organizers. Mabel specifically reached out to Asian Americans United because of its long history with activism and organizing on behalf of students. The goals of the meeting included listening to the students, what can be done, and what should be the next steps (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016; X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). By the end of the meeting, the gathered students decided to continue the boycott for at least a second day.

The second day started with students going to the school to spread the word that a boycott was in progress and that everyone should meet at an office close to the school. After an initial push for support, most Asian students left school to attend the meeting. Wei remembers the meeting as a great intra-ethnic gathering of Asian students that were tired of the lack of school district support (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016). Through multiple translators (English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese), students continued to talk about their experiences with racism and bullying in the school. With more support from the Asian student population, the principal agreed to have a meeting with the students and adult organizers. However, the principal failed to understand the plight of the students. Wei recalls the principal pushing on to the Asian American students all of the responsibility for staying safe. Perhaps in a misguided attempt for racial unity in the school, the principal touted that "All students in my school get beat up" (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016).

Upon reaching an agreement to create programs to address bullying and racial bias, the boycotting students returned to school. Meetings between the students, adult organizers, and the principal continued with some progress towards racial equity and school reform. During this time, Wei became more involved with organizing in AAU under the mentorship of Xu, Ellen, Hellen, and others (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016). Learning from these

mentors, Wei was able to strengthen the organizing skills he would later need during the next academic year when a new principal came to South Philly High.

Conditions at South Philly High before the 2009-2010 Academic Year

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, although South Philadelphia High School has been classified as a persistently dangerous high school from about 2007-2012, it was making strides to improve the safety for its students and teachers. Regional Superintendent Michael Silverman told a reporter that, "…attacks on Asian students were down 38 percent from the previous year [2008]" (AALDEF, 2010). Silverman went on to say that, "…the principal here is new, and I'm sure as she's here longer, I'm sure the trust will grow, and kids will tell her more of what's going on in the community". Another un-named district officials corroborated his claims, adding that overall violence was down by 55 percent and "inroads have been made" (AALDEF, 2010). When Superintendent Arlene Ackerman was first hired to lead the school district, she admitted to being, "…a little surprised when I got to town to learn that the only school district in Pennsylvania that had persistently dangerous schools was Philadelphia" (6actionnews, 2009). LaGretta Brown, the principal of South Philly in 2009, reiterated the sentiment of her colleagues. Her goal was to increase understanding and tolerance among her students. "Instead of looking at one other, pointing out each other's faults and tearing each other apart because we're different," Brown says, "we can celebrate our differences and celebrate that we're more alike than not" (Miller III, 2009).

Although district officials communicated a sense of increased safety and acceptance, Asian students did not feel the same way. After the previous principal left and Brown was placed in charge, Wei Chen and other Asian students met with her to ensure that the racially discriminatory policies and practices of the previous principal would not be repeated. Although

these meetings appeared successful, little was done my Principal Brown to alleviate any of the continued racial tensions experienced by Asian students.

In their suit against the School District of Philadelphia, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF, 2010) stated, "Principal LaGreta Brown repeatedly displayed a discriminatory attitude towards Asian students at South Philadelphia High School, such as terming the advocacy on the behalf of Asian immigrant students at South Philadelphia High School as 'the Asian Agenda' and referring to the 2nd floor ESOL program as "that dynasty." AALDEF went on to state that Asian students have reported harassment directly to school administrators with little to no effect. In fact, many of the Asian students reported that faculty referred to them as "Yo, Chinese"(*Philly Weekly*) or "Yo, Dragonball" ("Heroes: South Philly High's Protesters," 2010).

Rather than "celebrate our differences," Principal Brown contributed to the racially hostile environment. During her tenure, Asian students were racially segregated through de facto methods. When Principal Brown referred to the second floor as "that dynasty" it was not only because English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs were housed there (South Philly has non-English speakers from non-Asian countries like Latin American and Africa), it was also because Asian students would congregate on the second floor which was the only place on campus where they felt safe and accepted. "Students avoided the lunch room. They were scared to walk home. They stayed in the ESOL Department until their parents picked them up." (Miller III, 2009)

In an interview with *Philadelphia Magazine*, then new teacher Jennifer Sommerkorn talked about her brief, but transformational, stay at South Philly. On her first day, she witnessed a Vietnamese student with a wired-jaw because he was beat up the previous week. She tried to

create a safe place in her classroom for students that were being bullied after witnessing multiple Asian students being beaten or assaulted by other students. Although she believed that this was the right thing to do, an assistant principal asked her, “[Why do] these kids get special treatment?” She left the school the next year. *Philadelphia Magazine* went on to hypothesize that this happened to many of the teachers at South Philly. They saw what was happening and tried to help, but ultimately joined in the racial humiliation (“Heroes: South Philly High’s Protesters,” 2010).

The students at South Philly could feel the humiliation and racial animosity every day on campus. Wei’s first impressions of the school were that, “…it was dark, there's a fence, and people shouting at each other... So it wasn't what I expected.” Many immigrant students expected something better than what they had found at South Philly High. At the time, Chinese community members who lived in South Philadelphia would tell new students to attend South Philly High over the other schools because of the significant Chinese population at the school. However, the high number of Asian and Chinese students at the school did not translate to better conditions. In the school’s English as a Second Language class, Wei recalls his first day,

> It was my first time see so many Asian people, different nationality, different ethnicity, but I did not speak anything, so I put my head on the table for a whole period of class. And my teacher ask me what happen, why? I had no idea what he saying. I had to go to the bathroom, I even don't know how to say bathroom, I don't know how to say bathroom. I hear people say see-saw, chiso in Cantonese means bathroom, so I thought that was English. So I talk to my teacher say, "I want to go see-saw bad." A lot of people laughed at me. (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016)

Some students, like Wei, were aware of the violence that had taken place for many years before they enrolled. As stated earlier, the fear of being attacked was a daily emotion that would not fade. The violence and racial bias experienced by the Asian students at SPH culminated in the events of December 3rd, 2009.

December 3rd, 2009

The morning of December 3rd 2009 started like many other Philadelphia school days. However, this day would be a living nightmare for Asian students at South Philadelphia High School (SPH).

The day began with groups of non-Asian students moving through the halls searching for Asian students to beat up. At 9 a.m., one group of SPH students waited for class to dismiss and physically attacked an Asian student (Department of Justice, 2010). An hour later, eight Vietnamese students told the on-duty police school sergeant that they felt threatened and unsafe in the school. While the officer was walking with the students to the administration office, the Vietnamese students and the sergeant were confronted by another group of mostly Black students. School security officers were able to control and mediate the situation. ("Heroes: South Philly High's Protesters," 2010)

Following the confrontation, Principal LaGreta Brown responded to a disturbance on the second floor of the school. When she made it to the second floor she witnessed some "suspicious behavior" from a group of Black students. The suspicious behavior caused her to put the school on lock-down. However, the lock-down did nothing to prevent what was coming next. ("Heroes: South Philly High's Protesters," 2010)

During the lunch period, a group consisting primarily of 70 Black students moved through the halls outside of the cafeteria attacking any Asian students that were in the area. The

Asian students “formally asked a teacher to let them not go to the lunchroom, and they were told they had to go to the lunchroom," said Helen Gym an advocate for Asian Americans United. (Rawlins, 2009)

Inside the cafeteria, the chaos continued. *Philadelphia* magazine described the scene:

> Several Chinese students suffered face and head injuries, and one boy’s nose was smashed, horribly broken and gushing blood. The campaign moved into the lunchroom, where the 70 or so attackers and supporters found a handful more Asian kids. Some in the crowd seemed to serve as pointers, directing the fighters toward new victims. Cafeteria workers, following school policy, pulled down steel doors to shut off themselves and the possibility the fighters could grab kitchen utensils to use as weapons. The school police arrived, but were shielded for several moments from reaching the victims by the crowd around them. (“Heroes: South Philly High’s Protesters,” 2010)

At the same time, another group of Black students amassed on the second floor (a location where Asian students usually ate lunch) looking for Asian students and pushing school security officers out of the way. However, by the time the group made their way to the hallway, Asian students were able to make it into nearby locked classrooms. (“Heroes: South Philly High’s Protesters,” 2010)

After the events in the lunchroom, Principal Brown started to release the whole school a little at a time to prevent further problems. However, the violence did not stop with the release. A group of 30 Vietnamese students asked Principal Brown and other staff to walk home with them because they were scared of being attacked. Principal Brown and the staff walked the students to the edge of school property. Once off school property, groups of predominantly Black students

chased and attacked the group of Vietnamese students. By the end of the day, more than a dozen students were taken to emergency room. (AALDEF, 2010)

In contrast to the violent events of December 3rd, what came next was a massive call to action by the Asian American community of Philadelphia to demand that the School District of Philadelphia recognize the racial injustices committed against Asian students throughout the city. Asian American student leaders used a combination of boycotts, media strategies, political sway, and a lawsuit to make changes to the system. The boycott of school began on the next day and continued for eight days. During this time more than 50 Asian students got together to learn about and discuss topics ranging from systemic racism to interracial justice (Philadelphia Magazine, 2010). These students and community organizers met with local and school district officials during the boycott and over the next month to discuss things that need to change before they feel safe enough to return to school. On January 19th, 2010, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund filed a civil rights complaint to the U.S. Department of Justice on behalf of the students. After a year of negotiations on December 15th, 2010, *United States of America v. The School District of Philadelphia and The School Reform Commission* was settled with the School District of Philadelphia making significant changes to their racial discrimination policies and promises to create a more welcoming educational environment (United States Department of Justice, 2010; Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, 2010).

Conclusion

December 3rd became a call to action for all students of Philadelphia, not just Asian American students, to demand increased attention to the lack of school safety. The mistrust, absence of support from teachers, fear of violence, and lack of understanding brewed a perfect storm of racial tension that was forecasted by organizers and students. Yet, staff and

administration did nothing to alleviate or prepare for when the inevitable storm finally did make landfall and caused massive damage to the students, school, and the integrity of the school district. Due to the lack of acknowledgement of and precautions against the racial aggression toward Asian students, the events of December 3rd occurred and further motivated victimized students to rise up and tell the district that they were no longer going to be the silent model minority. The remaining chapters investigate the boycott and protest campaign that occurred after the attacks in December 2009 to understand how Asian American students were able to build a political movement for safer schools and greater accountability for the perceived “model minority”. (Thompson, 2015)

CHAPTER 5: From Despair to Resistance

Introduction: A Small Incident

On the afternoon of December 3rd, 2009, while students were being dismissed, school staff and parents stood outside South Philadelphia High School as chaos ensued and no one with a full understanding of what was happening or what to do next. Students were scrambling to help each other patch up wounds and stop the bleeding. With his training and connections within the larger community, Wei made several calls to people he trusted who could help triage the situation. These calls included people like Xu and George from a local Philadelphia newspaper. Although they were at their respective jobs at the time, both did what they could to ensure the safety and voices of the students were not ignored or misrepresented. Xu recalled the moment Wei called him from the school: “I was attending this tenant organizing conference and I just dropped everything. I took the train to the school. I was like, this is ridiculous” (personal communication, October 24, 2016). At the time of the call, George was lecturing to a group of over 200 students and was unable to travel to South Philly, but he knew the importance of ensuring that the story was properly covered. “I couldn't get down there, and even if I could get down there, there was nothing I could do. That's when I called the newspaper and tried to get people down there” (G. Miller, personal communication, September 29, 2016).

When the calls came in and organizers began to arrive, all were shocked at the scene of chaos and confusion. Xu recalled his experience: “I came out from the subway station, and at the four corners of Broad Street ... There was just hundreds of people there… I was like, ‘Whoa, this is not right. How come so many people are standing here and they're not going home?’ I was like, ‘Okay, let me just get to the school’ (personal communication, October 24, 2016). As Xu walked towards the school, more confusion and at times anger at the treatment of parents and

students, ensued. School administrators were yelling at Asian parents and students, ordering them to go home.

Instead of leaving, Xu and other organizers at the scene interviewed students. “I asked them, "Was the police called?" They were like, "Well, no, I don't think so.” With a vice principal still shouting at the parents and students leave the campus, Xu called the Philadelphia police, 9-1-1, as well as Victim Witness Services for the students that still did not receive medical care. “I came over. I was like, "Hey, nobody's leaving. I just called 9-1-1. They are on their way.” At this point, the tone of the vice principal and school administers changed from one of hostility to care. Xu recalled the vice principal inviting them in to the school, “Whoa, whoa, if you guys want to wait, you can wait inside” (personal communication, October 24, 2016).

Some seriously injured students were still not transported to the hospital for evaluation. Many of these students refused to go to the hospital because they were afraid of the cost of medical treatment or did not have health insurance. Luckily, a representative from Victim Witness Services of South Philadelphia told students and their parents that their organization would help with the medical coverage and sent more than a dozen students to the hospital for treatment.

Still recovering from his injuries, Chaofei Zheng spoke with a reporter from the Philadelphia Inquirer. Through a translator, the freshman student told the reporter, “I’m scared to go to school” (Yu, 2009). Many Asian students and their parents shared the fear escalating racial violence and death because of the school’s climate prior to and following the events of December 3rd. It was not uncommon for these students and parents to be afraid of attending school.

Indeed, it was commonplace for students to be subjected to violence from classmates both on and off of school grounds. However, this time it was different. School administrators were denying that anything serious had happened. Ellen, a mentor in the Asian American community, recalls calling Regional Superintendent to explain the situation, “I called [him] the day we first met with students, I think it was December 4th and I said, ‘What are you hearing?’ He said, ‘Heard it was a small incident, no injuries.’ I was like, ‘we have a problem if that's what you're hearing’" (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016). Rather than accept the stories of school district officials, organizers started to collect testimonies from firsthand sources - the students.

> We have adults who are really listening and trying to understand our experience and what happened. Just collecting the documentation and the students sharing with each other, because they were seeing different parts of the thing too. Just because this happened to me in the lunch room but I didn't know what was happening in the stairwell and I didn't know what happened in the street. As students are sharing all these experience and adults are listening, it became clear that it was a much more structural failure on the part of the school. (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016)

The events following the incident at South Philly High began the movement to gather and organize all of the students affected by the event of December 3rd to ensure their safety and educate them on what they could do to ensure their oppressive conditions changed. This chapter is a counter-story that opens with the immediate aftermath of the December 3rd incident at South Philadelphia High School and ends with the conceptual understanding of interracial justice and the initial decision for a boycott. The chapter will demonstrate the various histories, motivations,

and processes of key stakeholders in the aftermath of the incident, while also giving voice to those that have been silenced in the past.

"Let's Retaliate"

While some students were looking for a place to understand the events of the previous day, other students did not want to talk about the Dec 3rd incident, but instead wanted to discuss retaliation. Physical retaliation was often seen by many as a valid and the only solution to the issue of racial bullying. It is not that these students wanted to fight their peers; their frustration stemmed from a sense of hopelessness due to the lack of support from their teachers and staff at the school. This hopelessness and lack of support did not just appear at South Philadelphia during this specific incident. A former student in South Philadelphia expressed how many students felt about going to school: "I remember I was always in fear. Always in fear. Always taking shit from everybody" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). Another said, "I was beat up in 2007, January, first month of my school… while I walk to a math class, try to get book from the locker, I was getting punch from behind. And no one come to me, ask if I'm okay, people even speak my language, they just go around me" (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016) The normality of violence against Asian students was wide spread. There are multiple documented cases of teachers and staff not providing the adequate care and attention expected of school staff for new students at the school. One such case comes from the life experience of Xu. Before becoming a mentor to the students at South Philly High, he experienced immense pressure from the systematic and wholly inadequate accountability of the school district to retaliate for not just the protection of his own life, but also the protection of other students at his school. Using his own life experience, Xu became a voice for students that believed the only way for protection and respect after the December 3rd incident was physical

retaliation. Rather than ignore the built-up anger and fear among Asian students of South Philly, Xu demonstrated through his counter-story that physical retaliation is not the only response available. The following counter-story demonstrates the path of Xu's enlightenment through the awesome power mentorship from hatred to interracial justice.

Immigration to the United States is extremely stressful and adding racism and xenophobia to that stress creates a sense of hopelessness and lack of safety for many immigrant students. Xu explained that his first week in a Philadelphia school was filled with both misunderstanding and violence. "I enrolled at Furness High School, and in my first week of school, I got into like three fights" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). Entering this new school with limited English and a lack of support from teachers and staff, Xu came to the decision that, "Obviously, the school people don't care. People just don't care. We're Asian, we're immigrants, nobody cares. I guess I made a mental decision to take things in my own hands" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016).

By always being in groups, Xu and his fellow students felt like they were safer from students that wanted to hurt them because of perceived differences and motivations. At some point, fighting and retaliation became a part of being an Asian immigrant student in Philadelphia. "Between me and my brother and all our friends, we were just fighting all the time. Every fight, it was just like four people against how many big that group is. It was like almost fights every week, and then every few months, there's a big fight involving a lot of people" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016).

Gathering together for protection became a necessity for the students at South Philly. Protecting one another and staying with teachers that would support them was the only way to survive the hostile environment. "It was really sad moment, you know? Come here for the hope,

for the better environment, but I got beat up. And then, as soon as I find out I wasn't the only student, people get bully in the bathroom, hallway, lunch room. And then when we going home, we have to get with each other, we have to protect each other" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). Future South Philly High principal, Otis Hackney, recalled noticing at the beginning of his tenure that Asian students regardless of physical or emotional trauma were saying comments like, "I'm terrified. Please get me out of here" (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

Self-protection in such settings can only last for a limited amount of time. At some point, the violence became too much to handle. In an act of retaliation to a previous fight, Xu and his friends beat the group of students that had attacked them the day before. As the security guard separated the fight, the student that had just been beaten shouted, "I'm going to kill you! I'm going to kill you all!" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). Xu expressed that this was the first time he felt like something serious might happen to him and his friends. "I'm thinking like, 'Whoa, this guy is trying to kill me. What am I going to do?' That's when I started thinking about finding weapons. Really, like life at that point, it was just suffering. It was a lot of suffering, and I was like, 'I'm going to find weapons. I'm going to kill this guy, I'm going to kill others, I'm going to kill myself. I'm going to teach this school a lesson. I'm going to teach these guys a lesson'" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016).

Because Xu's parents were also new to the United States, it was difficult for them to relate to the struggles of their children or know what resources were available. "She [his mother] didn't know ... I guess that's the first time being in my experience, in her life, that she didn't know what kind of advice to give me" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). Even if the school district provided Xu's parents with information about anti-violence resources, acting

upon the information would also require skills and time they would not necessarily have. It is not a lack of caring for or trying to create a better life for their family, but rather a lack of resources to know their rights as immigrants to the United States that often lead to harsh experiences like those of Xu. “Then pretty much the same thing for my dad. My dad was just silent. Then he was like, ‘Well, if they bother you, just walk away. If they bother you, just walk away. We are guests here. We can't fight them’” (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016).

For Xu, fighting was no longer about protection from the “suffering.” It had become an essential survival tactic reach 18 years of age. A school counselor recognized the dilemma that Xu was in and directed him to AAU. At AAU, he met with a staff member and for the first time felt that there was finally someone who cared about his experiences in school and knew what to do.

The impact of mentorship on young males like Xu can have a significant impact on their emotional, mental, and physical health (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). Those students that are particularly vulnerable often have the greatest need for mentorship, but often do not have the opportunity to gain access to an effective mentor. Xu said that he was “lucky” when he was referred to AAU to seek help. At AAU, he met with Dee who listened to him rather than dictate what he should do. “She listened first. I think our parents tend to speak ... They tend to lecture us a lot. They tend to have the first word and the last word in any conversation. They didn't want to know what we had to say, but my mentor listened and then she cared. Then she cared enough that she helped to organize a meeting for the Chinese students and the school principal” (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). By telling his counter story, Xu became more and more interested in what racism and interracial justice were. Through support from his mentor, Xu attended various conferences and came to understand that communities of color all face similar

problems, but often do not work with each other. Through these experiences, he "met people from different communities and they showed me a lot of love, especially a few Black organizers" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). This was the beginning of Xu's journey to understand interracial justice and becoming a mentor for the students that will follow him. The mentoring and support by Dee and others at AAU helped Xu understand the systematic racism and better prepare him for the trauma and healing of the violence on December 3rd while developing interracial justice.

"Instead of Staying Home or Going Back to School to Fight, Let's Meet and Talk"

As the dust settled over the previous day, Wei and other community activists planned for the first meetings among students that were afraid to return to school and who wanted something to change so they could attend a school that cared about them. The planning and goals for these meetings were less about uprising and blaming the aggressors, and more focused on the students' health, wellbeing, and transformational resistance through interracial justice. The following sections explore some of the main themes that arose during the initial meeting students began to transform their trauma into resistance.

Trauma Through word of mouth, the first meeting was held on the first floor of the Folk Arts and Cultural Traditions Charter School in Philadelphia's Chinatown. Students from South Philly met to discuss what occurred the day before. Although approximately a dozen students attended the first meeting, it became the impetus to move forward with an organized resistance to the violence occurring in their school. For many of the students who attended this meeting, feelings of the unknown ran through them because they had never been participated in any kind of similar experience. "It was weird because it was like we were cutting school to talk about what had happened. I was like, how is this going to help?" (D. Ly, personal communication,

January 27, 2017) Talking about the incident was not something many students wanted to do. The trauma caused by the event prevented many students from being able to express how they felt. This meeting was also the first time many of these students were given the opportunity to talk about their experiences with emotional and physical violence, a task that is often taboo in the Asian immigrant community.

One of the first calls Wei made was to Victim Witness Services of Philadelphia (VWS). The organization helped him in the past and knew that students would greatly benefit from the assistance the organization provides. Together with AAU and Boat People SOS (a local organization focused on immigration issues), VWS met with students and worked with mentors to ensure that students were taken care of mentally and physically. However, VWS also advised students about their rights and worked with community organizations to ensure that appropriate accommodations and actions were taken to hold people accountable.

Moving from Trauma to Intersectional Understanding For the adult organizers, the first meetings of the boycott had too many different concerns. First, there was the need to break down the stereotype that Asians should not rock the boat. For American-born Asian Americans, deconstructing the model minority myth is not too difficult because many are told stories of Asian American activists like Yuri Kochiyama and Grace Lee Boggs. However, for many immigrant Asian students, breaking down the model minority and silent Asian tropes are much more challenging. For some students, like Duong, this was the first time they had been a part of a movement or had spoken up for their rights. “At that time, I was pretty much apolitical. The entire time, the whole entirety of immigrant parents are like, okay we're here because we want a better future, you shouldn't rock the boat, you shouldn't do anything that would get you identified and get you targeted, no matter how hard it is. Just the refugee mentality of having to go through

the hardships anyways" (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017). The deconstruction of the model minority and the construction of an activist mentality were difficult concepts for many of the students to grasp. Students were experiencing trauma and others wanted retaliation on their attackers. Rather than just heal the students' physical and emotional wounds, the organizers wanted the students to thrive. This began the students' introduction to the conceptual phase of interracial justice and the foundation for transformational resistance.

Yamamoto (1999) describes the conceptual phase of interracial justice as requiring that students understand the basis of systematic racism and how it affects all communities of color. When taken alongside critical race studies, systematic racism includes understanding its intersectionalities with other forms of oppression including sexism. For many of the students involved with the safer school campaign, sexism and social norms of Asian masculinity were not often discussed. It took the conscious involvement of women in the movement to begin a reformation of identity among the young Asian men.

It was important to begin with a reformation of masculinity not because it was the most prominent issue facing the campaign for safer schools, but because it was the most essential factor in the creation of hope and racial self-efficacy for many of the students in the campaign. The stereotypes of Asian and Asian American masculinity are as bipolar as the racial stereotypes associated with the community. On one side, we see the model minority as a quiet and studious Asian man. He is asexual and unwilling to fight. Asian men are perceived as workers who will not complain and get work done (Wu, 2003). On the other side, we have the hyper aggressive Bruce Lee fighter. Skilled in fighting, this Asian man is cold, calculating, and willing to deceive and cheat in order to get ahead (ibid.). In both stereotypes, the Asian man is seen as devoid of emotions. For the male students involved with the campaign, discussing emotions was not

something they accustomed to doing. They believed that sharing their emotional distress among their fellow community would create the perception that they were not strong enough to be a part of the patriarchal society.

For the mentors and organizers, the initial stages of the boycott was an opportunity to break down masculinity, which became a goal towards discussing physical and mental trauma of the day. Xu was one of the mentors that provided an initial crack in the stereotyped notion of masculinity. He told the students about his traumatic high school experiences and how he used retaliation as a coping mechanism. "Instead of saying, 'Hey, violence is wrong,' or, 'You can't do this,' my approach was, 'Hey, guys, I tried this. I totally understand what you're thinking. I totally understand because I went through this and I did it. It didn't work out.'" I shared my stories constantly" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). He also discussed his loss of hope and faith that he would live to see the next day. It took the intervention of women mentors to help break Xu out of his antiquated notions of masculinity. "My mentor was a strong woman, and I learned a lot of things from her. I know in our society, a lot of men didn't learn to be emotionally expressive. With male students in our group, I would try to share more. I would get emotional. I would be vulnerable. I was trying to show them that it's okay to experience things they were experiencing" (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016).

When describing Chicana feminists, Arrendondo et al. wrote that Chicana feminists occupy a metaphorical space in which they "actively contest the silencing that has been used against us. As it has been for other feminists of color, "talking back" has been an important form of disruption for Chicanas. Talking back creates waves of disturbance that establish women's humanity, agency and worth" (Zavella, Arredondo, Hurtado, Klahn, & Najera-Ramirez, 2003, p. 2). The Asian American women mentors echoed the need for "talking back" to challenge

masculinity. Through the mentorship of women leaders in Philadelphia's Asian American community, Xu reevaluated his ideals of hyper-masculinity and how it hampered his healing. Asian American women in Philadelphia have a history of activism and organizing that began in the 1980s. Although the reason for the large number of women leadership in social justice movements in Philadelphia is somewhat uncertain (as I described in Chapter 3), what is clear is the significant role they played in helping mentor and advise the students during the boycott.

Students identified the support women mentors gave them during the beginning stages of the campaign. "I feel comfortable. Because AAU's leadership was a whole bunch of women, so they were thinking more detailed, they were thinking more about humanity. I didn't learn about gender equality until it was 2010," Wei recalls (personal communication, July 6, 2016). Humanity and allowing students to share their emotions whether they are about fear, retaliation, or hurt, began an immediate healing process from the systemic violence the students experienced.

This is not to imply that women only played a kind and nurturing mother role. While allowing for students to challenge the masculine idea of not showing emotions, women mentors also instilled a sense of honor and strength among students. Drawing upon the strength of family and community, women mentors recalled their motivations for speaking up for justice. Lai Har pointed to her family as a source of inspiration that she wanted to show the students, "Women being in charge or women having a say so and things like that is very normal. I think my grandmother was a very forceful and strong woman. My mom was a strong woman. I kind of expect women to be strong and powerful. That's the norm for me. That's what I expect actually … So me taking leadership is no big deal" (personal communication, May 25, 2016). Duong also noticed that the organizing and activist power of women outperformed many of the men in the

community: “I feel like there's a lot of reflection on also the maleness and masculinity, and the unwillingness to put more work into it. I feel like there's still a lot of potential in the young people I work with, but more likely than not, the women are the ones putting a lot more work into it, which is real disappointing to the men” (personal communication, January 27, 2017).

One area where women mentors have had a major impact is leadership development. For example, Duong points to his mentor as helping him develop as a leader. “She's been a really crucial part of my process of political development, because a lot of time I would be trapped with her in her car when she was driving around to different conferences, and that's when I was curious, having conversations with her, talking a lot about the feelings and the action and all of that” (personal communication, January 27, 2017). Duong would later take the lessons and skills his mentor gave him to develop the next generation of organizers. Although he is happy with the number of girls and women volunteering for youth leadership positions in organizations, he is dissatisfied with the lack of male participation. This is not because he believes that males are better equipped to lead, but rather that women have put in so much work already: “These women are really strong, but at the same time, they are also overworked, right?” He goes on to say that what he is, “…trying to do right now is really uplift all the work of the women are doing, at the same time challenging the men to take more leadership role too. Because they can't just let the women do all the work” (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

Intersectional Racism The mentors and organizers to these young students had a goal of healing the student’s trauma through naming their pain by educating them on systemic racism. Stevenson calls this type of healing Racial Encounter Coping Appraisal and Socialization Theory (RECAST) (Adams-Bass, Bentley-Edwards, & Stevenson, 2014; Stevenson, 2014). Although the organizers in the group did not specifically identify RECAST as their healing method (RECAST

was developed after the 2009), they still followed the steps necessary for racial coping and healing. The first goal of the initial meetings was to evoke the following: racial literacy, racial coping, and racial self-efficacy.

Racial literacy entailed working with the students to develop the language for and an awareness of self-forms of action towards a conceptual understanding of racism. For the students, this meant they needed to develop a critique of stereotypes and have active engagement in identity development. Duong described the meetings as a place to talk about how "Racial tension was the reason, but the root cause was because the institutional indifference, the institutional negligence of the students' safety." This sentiment was echoed throughout the first meeting. "Well, first of all, for honesty, in the beginning, when I got attacked, I wasn't really understand about the racial dynamic. I wasn't understand about. I was hate them. I hate them. Because they beat me up" (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017). However, talking about systematic racism in an immigrant population might not be the easiest task. Because race is a social construct, nations outside of the United States have differing definitions of race. For many of the Asian immigrant students, race was not something discussed in their homes. Because of the constant stream of violence in schools and the development of racial stereotypes on television and through daily conversation, many of the Asian students that attended the meetings felt as if the Black community of Philadelphia was completely against the Asian community of Philadelphia. This assumption may be simple, but it is powerful to think of and easy to demonstrate through the conditions of South Philly High.

Before the boycott and the significant changes to core administration at the school and school district, racial climate conditions could be analogized as a war for limited resources in which the victor gained everything and the loser received nothing. Asian and Black students both

accused each other of receiving preferential treatment, resources, and support. This may appear to be a pedantic argument among greedy teens, but their arguments were supported by evidence and misconceptions perpetuated by faculty and staff.

To break down the biases that were built up over many years at South Philly High, mentors had to foreground the importance of conceptual understanding whenever they discussed racism and the experiences of the students. Hiram, director of Philadelphia Student Union (PSU)[2], emphasized the need for all students to know, "…that even though they came from different communities, even though they came from different nations, different families that as young people they had a lot in common" (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016). Because of the years of isolation between the Black and Asian students, it became imperative that students meet with each other. When these systematically imposed borders were broken down, students started to question and reform their biases to account for what they did not know in the past. Xu explains that his conceptual understanding of interracial justice came from meeting with members of the Black community that supported and loved him. Through his interactions with organizers from the Black community, Xu also began to understand systematic racism from the perspective of White supremacy, "I was like, 'Wow, everybody's having problems with everybody. The only people that's missing from all the struggles and fights are the White people. How come people are not in conflict with them?' It's because they don't live in our community" (personal communication, October 24, 2016). Xu started to understand that a system of perpetual isolation allowed for greater misunderstanding among the Black and Asian students (personal communication, October 24, 2016). Teachers, staff, and principals

[2] Philadelphia Student Union is a racially diverse youth led organization that focuses on advocating for high quality education for all students in Philadelphia. PSU houses leadership development programs and brings together diverse groups of students to discuss solutions to issues facing the community (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016; Rivera, 2018).

participated in the isolation of Asian students through verbal microaggressions by making racial slurs and *de facto* segregation, as the principal said, “that dynasty” on the second floor. As a result, teachers, staff, and the principals at South Philly High could not truly understand what these students were experiencing because they were actually contributing to the isolation. Some teachers did try to help the Asian students, but they did not understand intensity and persistence of the racism they were experiencing.

Taking what he learned from his experiences, Xu talked and listened to students that did not understand White supremacy or interracial justice. Duong recalled the enormous amount of time organizers spent in the initial meetings trying to get the students to understand the root causes of the racial attacks on them. Organizers at the initial meetings made sure that students understood that, “…they might have beaten us, but there were reasons why, and there was the root cause. Racial tension was the reason, but the root cause was because the institutional indifference, the institutional negligence of the students' safety” (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

To help the students understand what racism is and how it manifests itself, Nancy showed a video on community organizing to the students. “That was a really heavy documentary, and Nancy showed it to us, and I remember not understanding a lot, but starting to see different pieces of the puzzle” (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017). Nancy knew the video was not enough to encourage the students to continue to questioning and learning about racism. She fostered a relationship with them to nourish their hunger for more knowledge. Duong remembers that he, “…just started craving for more information. Nancy just developed a curriculum about cultural appropriation, about racism, about genders, and about different things like that” (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017). At this point in the student’s

development, they began to develop racial self-efficacy. This meant that the student was building upon their identity development to create and reaffirm their comfort in their personal racial identity. They were starting to understand what it means to be an Asian immigrant in the context of South Philadelphia High School and how that identity fit within the systemic racism they experienced as a student.

Ellen's approach took the next step and related theories of racism to the students' on campus experiences in the school to racial coping. This does not mean that the student will accept the racial hierarchy they find themselves in. Rather students are encouraged to take what they learned and transform that into action.

> You hear that this violence happened at the school and it's taking a while to listen to all the students to try to understand actually what was going on, what did happen because honestly I can imagine a scenario in which 26 Asian students get beat up in a school and could've just been a whatever, a lunch brawl. Could've been anything. The more you learned about this incident, you combine it with the whole history working with the school and then you combine it with happening through an entire school day and it not being stopped, then it became a different kind of problem. (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016)

Ellen wanted to bring awareness of social forms of action with the goal of developing the students' social problematizing of the school district's racial hierarchies and systems of racism. The hope was that students would institute their own solutions to community and social problems to affect their lived experiences. Both Ellen and Nancy's approaches created an environment for the students to put words to how they were feeling and articulate to others what was happening at the school beyond starting larger racial conflict.

Moving Towards Interracial Conceptions for Justice

On the morning of December 4th, a boycott of South Philadelphia High School started with the goal of student peacefully protesting until something is changed. Wei described the decision for the boycott as the only choice. “We don't know what we're going to do, and we didn't know who got beat up, who got attacked” (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016). To answer these questions, the following counter-stories will describe the process people took towards using their conceptual understanding of interracial justice to determine who was at fault and who the ultimate victims of the attack were. The counter-stories begin with how the media created a narrative that not only told the story of the oppression of Asian American youth at the hand of systemic racism, but also began the process of determining who was really at fault for the horrid environment for Asian students. This is followed by a deeper look at how students determined who was at fault for an environment that prides itself on stamping out racism while also promoting a racial hierarchy through implicit bias. Using all the counter-stories from the students and organizers, I will use the Black Korean Alliance of Los Angeles as an example of what happens when a conceptual understanding does not take in order to show the causation among the South Philly High campaign for safer schools and other interracial coalitions.

Developing Conceptual Understanding in the Media During the news-feeding storm, it might have been difficult for many to remember that there was one news organization that wrote about the racial violence Asian and Asian Americans faced a couple of months before the December 3rd event occurred. The September 1st, article was an exposé on Wei Chen and the violence Asian students consistently endured in Philadelphia’s schools. The article was titled “Asian Students Under Assault” and written by George Miller for *Philadelphia Weekly*.

His article starts as others have before, with a vignette of a Chinese immigrant being bullied and harassed at a school in Philadelphia. However, Miller's article was a bit different than other articles covering the violence in schools. Rather than focusing on the Asian students as only a victim and Black students as the aggressors, Miller created a narrative of resistance by the Asian students and placed blame on the school district as the aggressor for creating an environment that allowed and perpetuated racial aggression against Asian students. Although the article did not garner as much traction as Miller had hoped in its initial run, it became important a couple of months later when the incident at South Philly High took place. It became a critical contribution for not only showcasing the systematic violence Asian students face, but also the importance of talking to students and framing the article in a way that did not squarely blame those that are also oppressed in a system of White supremacy.

As if Miller was following the process for counter-storytelling, the inception of the article came from his interactions with the community. During a community meeting on development projects in Chinatown, Miller began a conversation with a local leader about tensions between the development projects and the local Chinatown community. He was taken aback when the local leader casually talked about students getting beat up in school and that he should talk to Xu. "Yeah, you know, we've got Asian kids getting beat up," Miller recalls Xu saying. Xu started talking about the incidences that were occurring over the past few years, including his story about getting into fights when he first arrived in the U.S. At this point, Miller knew that "There seemed to be this long standing institutionalized acceptance of violence against Asian kids" (G. Miller, personal communication, September 29, 2016).

In the process of writing the article, Miller reached out to Wei, students, teachers, and some administrators. His motivation for the article upon talking with a variety of people was to

focus on the diversity of counter-narratives of the Asian students, rather than portray the Asian students as forever foreign and immigrants. In his opinion, many Asian students were targeted. "I think it started with the ESL kids, but I think it was anybody who looked different, and the Asian kids looked different. Whether they were second [or] third generation Americans, Philadelphians, they looked different from the majority of students in those schools, so to me it was violence Asian, Asian American kids" (G. Miller, personal communication, September 29, 2016). Pulling information from student diaries, he found that the issue of violence was not just in South Philadelphia, but a systemic issue in schools throughout the city.

As someone who has lived in Philadelphia for much of his life, Miller knew the community well. He concluded that it was really the school that allowed the racial animosity towards Asian students to persist and he wanted to know why nothing was being done about it. Using the newspaper article as his way to reach as many people as possible to help them understand the conceptual understanding required to truly empathize with the Asian student, he succeeded in bringing to light issues surrounding the school district, but was initially ignored by the district.

Miller said he continuously contacted the school district, but was dismissed until he received enough information to say, "Hey listen, I talked to these people and I've got a detail of this many incidents and all these different things." Speaking to a regional superintendent in person and the district superintendent over the phone, he asked them to clarify what they intended to do to reduce incidences of violence. According to Miller, the district officials, "…kept telling me about school culture, school climate and all that stuff." Although Miller pushed the district for answers about actionable steps the district could take, he heard very little

from them. According to Miller, there was little mention of the persistent racial discrimination or what steps the district would take (G. Miller, personal communication, September 29, 2016).

Upon completing a first draft of the article, Miller and an editor reviewed the piece. Miller believed that his initial draft was inflammatory against the Black students. Much of the animosity stemmed from student and staff quotes. Miller and the editor believed that this could have potential negative consequences for both the Asian and Black communities. He recalls the editor saying, "Well we need to think about this. What's the situation that we're creating here, because it ultimately could create something that's going to be worse for everybody" (G. Miller, personal communication, September 29, 2016). As Miller and the editor edited the piece, they first decided to focus on the victimization of Asian students. However, as their conversation continued, they came to the realization that the question they should focus on answering the question, “what's the school district doing?" recalled Miller (personal communication, September 29, 2016). The article then became a counter-story that focused on the resistance of Asian students for educational equity.

Philadelphia Weekly published Miller’s article a week before the 2009-2010 school year began. Unlike the simplicity of the TV news sound bites, the article was nuanced and drove at the issue of systematic oppression on students of color in the schools. Upon publication and up to December 3rd, policy within the school district had not changed. Miller and other writers tried to expose the issue of school violence in a way that did not blame those who were oppressed, but did not achieve the reforms they were striving for. However, their efforts with counter-storytelling created the process to move beyond conceptual understanding for interracial justice to performative.

Along with educating Philadelphia about the diversity of Asian students and their struggles with violence, Miller's article was also a first step towards creating a performance space for organizers to express support for their brothers and sisters of other races and ethnicities. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the local news became a performative space for organizers to express their concern for school district policy and eventually led to the Department of Justice's suit against the district for violating the civil rights of its Asian students.

Who Is at Fault?

> You have the superintendent saying, "This all happened when an Asian youth beat up a disabled African American youth." You immediately go to victim blaming. Then them saying it wasn't structural. That meeting at the church, at Chinese Christian Church on December 4th when the students are sharing their stories, understanding a little what's going on and then inviting the school district people to come. Honestly, we thought this was going to be an important time for the school district to hear from the youth what happened. We were stunned when person after person from the school, from the school district said, "Come back to school. You're safe. Come back to school. We want you there," before hearing a single sentence from the students about what happened. (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016)

Upon understanding the theoretical concept of racism, students were more prepared to fight for their civil rights. However, there was still a need for students to gain the experiences of putting their new understanding of justice into practice. It was decided that a boycott of school would take place and students would peacefully protest until something is changed. Wei described the decision for the boycott as the only choice. "We don't know what we're going to

do, and we didn't know who got beat up, who got attacked" (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016). Wei's question, "Who got attacked?" is not as trivial as one might think. Yes, Asian students were physically beaten, but if we take a larger view of the racial climate of South Philly High, the number of students "attacked" increases exponentially. The students of color at the school were all suffering from the oppressive gaze of school district policies. However, without a deep understanding of systemic racism, the students practiced racial oppressive practices among themselves. "Well, first of all, for honesty, in the beginning, when I got attacked, I wasn't really understand about the racial dynamic. I wasn't understand about" (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016).

Through vigorous lessons on systemic racism the racial veil was beginning lift for some students, but the processes required an understanding from all sides that they all live within different sections of a system of White supremacy. Many interracial justice coalitions claim that we all face similar issues and therefore we must band together to eradicate racism. However, this is blue sky thinking that will further marginalize and divide communities of color. Before describing the steps the South Philly High students took to build their multiethnic coalition, I will describe another incident of multiethnic coalition building that had positive intentions, but ultimately failed because of the thought that multiethnic coalitions will solve racism.

While Philadelphia was plagued with news stories of Black aggression and the school district did all it could to help the "unassuming Asian kids," Asian and Black community organizations started to create alliances to combat the negative biases against their communities. Asian and Black community organizations assisted students on their journey to understand the importance and effectiveness of conceptual understanding of interracial justice. Black-Asian history dictates that these two communities should not and cannot work together because of the

legacy of violence and mistrust between them. Asian and Black organizers were quick to realize that in order to disrupt the mistrust among communities they would need to tell students that their communities were not at fault for the separation between them. It was the system of racism and White supremacy created a racial hierarchy within the school and effectively deprioritized resources and services for both communities of students.

This strife should have created a conflict between communities that could have resulted in another Los Angeles, New York, or Detroit-based fight that leaves thousands of people with material damages and increased emotional distrust of one another. However, there was a shift toward conceptual understanding between both the Black and Asian communities of Philadelphia. Achieving this understanding became one of the only goals that mentors and organizers pushed. They saw the importance of understanding and how past attempts of interracial collaborations often fail because of the assumption that everyone involved understands the systemic racism and systematic White supremacy that governs much of the School District of Philadelphia. Instead of blaming each other for the conditions that both populations were in, the students resolved that the problem was not among the students themselves, but the school for not allowing understanding and conversation among students to occur. Rather, the school physically and mentally segregated students through disciplinary processes based on race and failed to recognize the signs of discord among students.

The process of conceptual understanding seems to be the same as the path organizers from the Korean and Black communities of Los Angeles took after the Rodney King uprising[3]. These two communities created the Black Korean Alliance (BKA) as a was to bring the communities together by disseminating positive information about Korean/Black relations and

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[3] The Rodney King Uprising was a racial justice movement in Los Angles in response to the acquittal of Los Angeles Police Department officers on the charges of beating Rodney King.

prevent future violence between communities (Diaz-Veizades & Chang, 1996). BKA's activities included sponsored food distribution events, cultural and violence prevention seminars, and created a code of ethics for Korean owned establishments (ibid). Although organizers in Los Angeles created the BKA as a way to increase collaboration and discussion among communities, the BKA ultimately failed to produce much progress towards interracial justice because of internal power dynamics, external pressures, and poor attendance (Wu, 2003). Diaz-Veizades and Chang found that there was a lack of understanding of the other group's culture and how to engage in the process of dialogue and politics (1996). Although there were workshops on these issues, members and community members still felt like they "just had better things to do" (*New York Times, 1992*). The *New York Times* also reported that by the end of the coalition "antagonism between the two groups worse than before" (*New York Times*, 1992).

Reviewing the general facts of South Philly High and the Rodney King uprising, it seems that the reasons for Black and Asian violence are similar. In both cases, there were perceived impressions among the Black student community that Asian students were given preferential treatment and at time taking advantage of their favored position to further oppress the Black community. On the other hand, many in the Asian community were first generation immigrants and did not understand the concepts of racism or of cultural norms in each city. Much of what they learned was from TV or from family and friends already living in the states. As I explained before, news outlets and media have often portrayed the Black community as aggressive people that will attack anyone without provocation.

The difference between South Philly and Los Angeles was the attention given to the healing as well as a focus on the conceptual understanding of racism and White supremacy. In Los Angeles, both communities used trusted messengers from their respective communities to

relay information. Philly started with trusted messengers, but expanded to a dialogue among all communities. It was not enough to talk about each other without the "other" in the room.

In Philadelphia, students were not visioning the same outcomes organizers in the BKA were striving for. South Philly High students wanted to create collective hope. Ginwright (2015) describes collective hope as "shared vision of what could be, with a shared commitment and determination to make it a reality" (p. 21).

Building a shared experience is the most difficult undertaking for multiethnic coalitions to develop, as evidenced by the BKA's experience. Ellen describes the complicated nature of a adhering to a classic form of interracial shared experiences.

> I feel like there's a problem that we don't have sophisticated enough analysis or language around racism to deal with it well. It either becomes we're all facing the same thing, which we're not. The minute you try to say Asians face the same thing that Blacks face, you've lost it. It's not right. I don't know. Until we can get to the point where different communities can recognize and understand their own relationship to how other communities are oppressed and how those are very specific, those are very specific. Then it's hard to come together to fight around stuff because either you're diminishing somebody else's experience by pretending it's the same as yours when it clearly isn't or you're saying that. (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016)

What the students of South Philly High did differently was to first understand their own positionality within the school and Philadelphia. "Until you can have some way for people to be allies on the basis of understanding their own privilege and relationship to others and your own particular form of oppression that you face then it just becomes hard for people to work together.

I think that even when we were trying to come together across different organizations to address issues like just school safety it just became hard" (T. Engst, personal communication, June 15, 2016).

This brings me to the final level of awareness: global forms of action. Drawing connections to others' struggles creates a community that conceptually understands the effects of racism on each individual. "I just think it's really important that we recognize where our young people are, where our communities are. Because this vision of multiethnic, multicultural work, I think, is something to strive for, but the reality is that there's a lot of racism within our communities" (T. Engst, personal communication, June 15, 2016). Teresa is right, there is a lot of racism/prejudice among our communities that keeps us from working with each other. Teresa goes on to say, "I just think that that's a huge amount of work and investment. And takes a lot of trust between organizations…" (personal communication, June 15, 2016). That work and investment was placed upon the students as their responsibility for community support and buy-in. The following is an example of the initial steps Wei took to begin to develop a shared experience between the Asian and Black communities of Philadelphia.

> Well, first of all, in the beginning, when I got attacked, I didn't really understand the racial dynamics of the school. I hated [the African American Students]! I hated them! Because they beat me up. I did use racial slur words. So, I felt like I needed to get some people to help me. I need to get some people in the community help me understand.
>
> During the boycott, we needed more support behind the project, so we had community dinners. It went well, people sent me to them to speak on the stage about the struggling student base.

> At one event, it was not fancy, it was really small, people squished into each other, and we talked. I was received really warmly there. And then I talked to them and they said we have an active ally in the Arch Union Church [Historical Black Church]. They said they would come out to support. They talked about their work and their support of Asian students. Other community leaders [from the Black and Asian communities] came out to support us at the event. I was really moved. I was really moved. I feel happy.
>
> I didn't know how to present my feelings. Sometimes I was really emotional and really sad for how I thought before, but my face still smiled for the support I got at the event. I think you can find a video where I say something on stage and smiled. I see them [organizations at the event] still working in this community. I feel moved. I feel strongly to continue working as a youth organizer, to inspire next generation of people. (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016)

After this meeting and a few others held in churches, community centers, and schools, Wei developed a collective vision through shared experiences. It was then time for all students of color to tap into their radical imaginations and develop the critical action aspect of interracial justice performance through a boycott.

Let's Boycott

> The lack of interest in hearing what did happen, the lack of exploration or the willingness of these administrators to say, "Come back to school. It's safe," when they had no way of ascertaining it was safe because they hadn't even found out

what happened. As these things unfolded, it became clearer that it was a bigger struggle. It wasn't a stay away for two days kind of thing. (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016)

While planning for the first meetings, Xu and others from AAU found out that some students were thinking of retaliating for the events of December 3rd. Over the weekend, Xu, Wei, and other community members contacted as many students as possible to understand what actions students were thinking of taking. “We're like, ‘Hey, instead of fighting back, let's do something.’ A lot of students didn't plan to go back to school anyway. We're like, ‘Hey, guys, let's meet and talk. Instead of staying home or going back to school to fight, let's meet and talk’” (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016). The strategy seemed to work, because on the following Monday, students went to the first floor of FACTS. Using the same techniques of listening that Xu was given and taught, all the attendees shared each other’s stories for the first time. Stories were told in whatever language that the respective students found most comfortable. Mandarin, Vietnamese, Khmer, Cantonese, and English were used in these first meetings. Upon listening to the stories, organizers began to help the students understand the system of racism they were living in and the concept of interracial justice. They discussed the importance of not placing ultimate blame on the students that attacked them, and that the racially hostile climate the school district created was the origin of the aggression, misunderstanding, and isolation of all students at the school.

As students learned about what systemic racism is, using the knowledge of previous student-led movements, a collective decision to boycott the school was made. The decision was about more than just telling students not to attend school; it was a direct method to demand reform.

> I think there's two different things. One is when something really explosive and racial happens at these schools, a lot of people know instinctively just don't show up for a while. I think there was that response of people not going to school. You can call that a boycott or you can call that people not going to school. With the December 3rd thing, I think having a really purposeful strategy about it and actually doing work, mobilizing as people are not going to school was a different thing. I don't think they're equivalent things. (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016)

This quote by Ellen highlights the intentionality by the student organizers to move towards interracial justice through transformational resistance. The next chapter will discuss the difficult process of convincing students to move beyond reactionary behavior to transformational resistance for interracial justice.

CHAPTER 6 – Building a Multiethnic Coalition for Transformational Resistance

Introduction

This chapter continues the path of Yamamoto's interracial justice praxis framework. It will explore the reconstruction and reparations of the Asian, Asian American, and Black communities of Philadelphia to promote interracial justice. Through an exploration of reconstruction and reparations of these communities, I will show how an incomplete understanding of recognition and responsibility of each other's role in the racial structures of the United States and rushed processes towards justice led to a breakdown of coalitions and interracial relationships. However, a true conceptual understanding of interracial justice and following a process of reconstruction and reparations through a critical race praxis framework can bring warring communities one step closer to interracial alliances for social and racial justice.

I will use the concepts of reconstruction and reparations within the framework of critical race praxis to structure this chapter on coalitional development. First, I will provide a description of the conceptual understanding of oppositional resistance and how it developed the resistance identity of the Asian student leaders. This will lead into a discussion on the performative aspect of the boycott and campaign for safer schools. There will be an emphasis on the development of group resistance and the multiethnic coalition. Third, I will explore reparations as a multifaceted issue that combines a reformation of the structural space with input from all within the coalition to have "true" reparations. The chapter will end with highly complex and often forgotten aspect of reflexivity. Although the campaign for safer schools accomplished many positive reforms to the school district, the sustainability of a multiethnic coalition did not come to fruition. However,

from the breakdown of the multiethnic coalition arose a youth-driven push for a new theory of change based on students' reflexive life perspectives.

Reconstruction and Reparations

This chapter's framework is built upon the final two Rs (reconstruction and reparations) of Yamamoto's interracial justice praxis framework. Reconstruction is the third R in the framework of interracial justice. This R requires the individuals or groups in conflict taking active steps to physically and mentally heal together. Examples of appropriate gestures and measures include apologizing for past wrongdoings and sincere forgiveness by those that were oppressed (Yamamoto, 1999). As the name suggests, reconstruction also consists of a reformulation of the intra and inter group relationship among those groups. Closely related to reconstruction is the final R, reparations. Reparations entail repairing any material and mental damage that might have been cause by the hostile relationship among the groups seeking interracial justice. Reparations can include monetary contributions to the victim up to a change in the structural and social barriers that isolated the two communities (Yamamoto, 1999).

The final two Rs require more active participation to achieve their goals than recognition and responsibility. Critical race praxis is the framework that Yamamoto employs to guide people through these two Rs. Yamamoto's (1999) framework for critical race praxis is slightly different from Stovall's (2013) tenets, but both share the common theme of translating research into a change of praxis. Yamamoto's (1999) framework includes four distinct aspects. First, the conceptual explores sociolegal theories and analysis to understand the world of race and racism in a community. Second, the performative determines what practical steps a group or person can take to be responsive to specific claims and how to act on these claims. Third, the material hypothesizes and tests the viability of the intended material consequences of the conceptual and

performative—for instance, programs like access to fair housing and equitable education. Finally, the reflexive is a commitment for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to learn from the conceptual, material, and performative in order to reintegrate their experiences into their research or praxis (Yamamoto, 1999). Being a reflexive researcher means that there is a consistent review of theory to ensure that theories are responsive to contemporary society.

Using the framework of reconstruction, reparations, and critical race praxis, the next section will show how a conceptual understanding of resistance is important for the reconstruction of the identity of the Asian student boycotters.

Oppositional Resistance of South Philly

Reconstructing a relationship after a traumatic event requires time and understanding. Time was not something that was given to the Asian students of South Philadelphia High. The students and mentors needed to quickly reconstruct a community of healing and conceptual understanding of racism that extended beyond understanding only Bonilla Silva's racial hierarchy (2013) and Feagin's White Supremacy (2006) frameworks. The conceptual understanding that mentors needed to instill within the students and student leaders included an comprehension of the actions that must occur to reconstruct relationships among the communities of color of South Philadelphia. The reconstruction that the mentors pushed for was to redefine and reframe the process of oppositional resistance for the Asian youth. This section will explore the process the mentors and students took to develop a reframing of oppositional resistance using Giroux's resistance theories, as well as, Solórzano's and Delgado Bernal's transformational resistance frameworks. I cover the process of reconstruction through the use of transformational resistance because it provides the conceptual framework the students require to fully participate in critical race praxis.

Fighting Each Other "Mentally, I was prepared to fight back, to fight to the end," recalls Xu (mentor) after a fight in his early days in high school (personal communication, October 24, 2016). Xu remembers his time in high school as a survival of the fittest. He and his friends had to be stronger and willing to fight back to survive another day. They were not concerned about social justice or fully aware of the reasons of their oppressive conditions. They were only concerned about retaliation and living another day.

Like Xu, the students involved with the December 3rd incident believed that the only way to survive was to fight back. The day following the incident, Duong (student leader) was worried about how the Asian students would retaliate against their aggressors. His fear was not unfounded (personal communication, January 27, 2017). Many of the Asian students did not have a complete conceptual understanding of their systemic oppressive conditions in their American school. For many the only way they knew how to conceptualize survival was through reactionary behavior. Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) describe reactionary behavior as occurring when the "student lacks both a critique of her or his oppressive conditions and is not motivated by social justice." (p. 317)

Many of the students at South Philly High during the 2009 school year were immigrants and refugees that recently moved to the United States from Eastern and Southeast Asia. Most of these students did not have a critique of American schooling upon arrival to the United States. They grew up in households under oppressive regimes that discouraged government-opposed policies or those against positions of power. Having been socialized in societies that discouraged uprisings, many students and parents reluctantly accepted the oppressive conditions of the school. Duong described the conversation he has had with his parents: "The entire time, the whole entirety of immigrant parents are like, okay we're here because we want a better future,

you shouldn't rock the boat, you shouldn't do anything that would get you identified and get you targeted, no matter how hard it is" (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017). In the context of his parents' generation, resistance took the form of "gaman." In Japanese, gaman is meant to represent when a person performs resistance by enduring suffering. Giroux (1983) wrote that resistance theory allows people to exercise their varied forms of agency and power depending upon the social context and structures of dominance and oppression. So it is not that the students did not have a critical critique of their oppressive situation, it was that they did not have the "American tools" to challenge those in authority. Physically fighting the aggressors became the students' method of exercising their power in the structure of American schooling.

Although reactionary behavior is often seen as self-defeating, it is still a form of resistance to the power structures that were in place by the school district. Unless there was a change in how students of different races and ethnicities were treated, students would continue to resist through aggression and their fists. However, reactionary behavior often does not create a stable campaign of resistance for change. Fighting between groups will continue until everyone is hurt and blinded in a zero sum war. Student leaders saw their world being blinded because of the eye for an eye ethos among the students. Ellen (mentor) remembers the school district placing blame for the December 3rd incident on the Asian students. "You have the superintendent saying, 'This all happened when an Asian youth beat up a disabled African American youth.' You immediately go to victim blaming. Then them saying it wasn't structural" (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016).

The mentors and students also wanted to avoid anything that Solórzano and Delgado Bernal call self-defeating resistance. Self-defeating resistance occurs when a student is aware of their oppression, but engages in resistance that is not motivated by or for social justice

(Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Many of the students that wanted to fight back did so to show the school district their oppressive conditions. As Xu kept fighting every week for survival, the practice became more about showing the trauma he was experiencing to the school, district or any administrator that could bear witness. After a fight in which another student said he was going to kill Xu, Xu lost hope. “Really, like life at that point, it was just suffering. It was a lot of suffering, and I was like, ‘I'm going to find weapons. I'm going to kill this guy, I'm going to kill others, I'm going to kill myself. I'm going to teach the school a lesson. I'm going to teach these guys a lesson’ (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016). To prevent further chaos and trauma from occurring, leaders brought students together to prevent future reactionary fights and move towards more sustainable forms of resistance.

This sustainable form of resistance followed the principles set by Giroux. The students’ idea of resistance became, a dialectical notion of human agency that sees systematic oppression as a dynamic process (Giroux, 1983). Student leaders knew that when they began their boycott, the school would do all within its power to placate the students into coming back to school without addressing the root causes of the racially hostile environment. For example, at one of the first community meetings, Ellen recalled inviting school district officials to attend and listen to the concerns of the students (personal communication, August 2, 2016). Rather than listen, the district officials spoke first and tried to convince the students to return to the school without listening to a word the students said. In the school district board meeting held a week following the event, official notes from the district seemed to indicate that only a few minutes at the beginning of the meeting were used to discuss the incident. The notes further appear to indicate the small programmatic changes would be coming to the school. The notes stated the following: “Dr. Ackerman [Philadelphia School District Superintendent] offered opening remarks and

provided a recap of recent events which occurred at South Philadelphia High School. She stated that the District is taking steps to address the immediate needs of the students with additional security, an additional administrator, student ambassadors, implementation of the Spirit Program, safe corridors, the Taskforce for Racial Harmony, and an updated Safety Plan" (School District of Philadelphia, 2009). However, there were many students and parents at this meeting voicing the atrocities that were occurring at South Philly High. Duong recalls "seeing my peers actually standing up talking in front of the superintendent, and really questioning her and all of that. In turn, the superintendent wasn't so threatening to us, the boycotters, because they were like, oh, you have to go back to school or you're going to get detention, or you're going to get expelled and all of that. We're like, they'd been doing that throughout the boycott, but I think at that time we were like, damn these adults, you know? They really just want to cover their asses" (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017).

The sentiment of Band-Aid practices was later echoed by the hiring of a school safety officer that would serve as a contact person for the students. In the presence of news cameras, the superintendent introduced the Mandarin speaking officer in front of students at the school. Unrecognized by the school district, many of the Asian students at South Philadelphia High spoke Cantonese and Vietnamese. Although this might have been an unintentional misunderstanding, it is still apparent that the school district practiced what Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) call conformist behavior. Conformist resistance occurs when the student is motivated by a need for social justice, but does not understand the system of oppression they find themselves in. It is clear that the school district wanted to promote some form of social justice by showing the Asian American community that the campus intended to provide a safer

environment for the students, but its administrators failed to see their own part in the systematic oppression placed upon all the students of color at the school.

Watching the performative response from the school district demonstrated to student leaders that perhaps the district wanted to help but did not want to listen to their stories. With all of their training from mentors, such as Ellen and Nancy, the students wanted to do something that was not reactionary, self-defeating, or conformist. Having a boycott of school without a sense of the systemic racism that the students were fighting would only lead to conformist changes or perhaps none at all.

Towards Transformational Resistance Giroux wrote that resistance is a powerful and radical notion that is expressed in the hope for radical transformation and transcendence. Transformational resistance adds an additional layer by challenging hegemonic dominance and autonomy through a reformation of the power hierarchy in racially charged institutions (Giroux, 1983). This does not mean that all the students had to go out on the streets and march. Resistance allows for the deliberative action of understanding the conceptual meanings around race while also being able to perform resistance through a multitude of methods. Giroux (1983) said, "Resistance theory rejects the positivist notion that the meaning of behavior is synonymous with a literal reading based on immediate action. Instead, resistance must be viewed from a theoretical starting point that links the display of behavior to the interest it embodies, going beyond the immediacy of behavior to the interest that underlies its often hidden logic, a logic that also must be interpreted trough the historical and cultural mediations that shape it" (p. 291). However, this is not to say that resistance prompts change through systems. Rather, it is up to individuals to reformulate society in a way that will challenge systems to allow more equitable opportunities for their respective communities. Giroux (1983) said, "…there has been an overemphasis on how

structural determinants promote economic and cultural inequality, and an under emphasis on how human agency accommodates, mediates, and resists the logic of capital and its dominating social practices." (pg. 282)

This leads to transformational resistance. Transformational resistance occurs when the student understands the system of oppression they are in and is motivated by social justice (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). For Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, there is an emphasis placed on the individual's navigation with their own understanding of systems of oppression and how it affects them and their community in a variety of ways. Duong talked about the intersectionality of transformational resistance: "I think it's more important for us to push for that land, because resilience based organizing, environmental justice issues, food sovereignty issues, it's connected with other things like immigrant rights, women's rights, racial justice, economic justice" (personal communication, January 27, 2017). To the Asian students, the boycott was more than not attending school because it was unsafe, it was a response to how the district allowed for a system of racism to continue. For Ellen (mentor), the boycott had a significant relationship with transformational resistance: "…you can call that a boycott or you can call that people not going to school. With the December 3rd thing, I think having a really purposeful strategy about it and actually doing work, mobilizing as people are not going to school was a different thing" (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016). As Ellen stated, this was a time for the students to navigate the press, school district, community members, and police.

Navigation with key stakeholders requires more than just a cause to fight for; it involves the second step in Yamamoto's critical race praxis framework: the performative. The performative determines what practical steps a group or person can take to be responsive to

specific claims and how to act in response to these claims (Yamamoto, 1999). Yamamoto wrote that the performative aspect of critical race praxis entailed two parts. The first aspect of the performative concerns the practical steps that can be taken to address the situation at hand and the context that the communities find themselves in. The second aspect addresses the persons and groups who are involved with the actions that needed to address the situation and context. The first aspect of performance often takes the form of what Delgado Bernal call external transformational resistance. External resistance takes the form of protests, rallies, and other public displays of organizing. This type of performative resistance creates the public acknowledgement that there are others overtly involved with the movement for social justice. A former teacher from the Philadelphia School District remembers the school boycott generating an impact on awareness of issues in the district: "I would like to think that [the boycott] might have raised more public consciousness about what happened. It basically held the school district accountable and so I think that some of the news about the school district's cover up of it and all that stuff entered the public consciousness in part because of the movement at the time" (D. Kirui, personal communication, June 18, 2016). Student participation in overt forms of resistance helped the public observe how the Asian students defied the silent model minority stereotype. For the mentors and student leaders, that boycott was the preferred method of external resistance to show that the racially hostile climate at the school was too severe and unsafe for students to attend another day.

Along with the external resistance through a boycott against the school district, internal forms of resistance concurrently took place. Internal resistance often appears to follow a conformist approach to resistance, while, the individual is engaged in understanding systemic oppression. Although it may appear that those students participating in internal resistance are not

doing anything to support the boycott, these students are doing as much, if not more, work to advance the agenda of the those that are practicing external resistance. For example, Folk Arts and Cultural Traditions Charter School's school board opened up the first floor of the school building for the youth to meet during the boycott. Community members would help the boycotting students by going to the school and bringing back the school and homework the students had missed because of the boycott. Finally, there were volunteers that would check students in as they arrived at 8 a.m. and check them out at 3 p.m. similar to a regular school day to show to parents and school officials that students were not hanging out or playing around.

Along with showing the community that there were unsafe conditions in the school, the external performative resistance of the boycott also created a way for non-Asian Americans to get involved. Those student organizers in the boycott that practiced internal resistance were learning more about interracial justice and race to create productive meetings with local leaders that would build the interracial coalition. Giroux says that understanding of resistance takes more than just external resistance. There is an "importance of mediation, power, and culture in understanding the complex relations between schools and the dominant society" (Giroux, 1983, p. 282).

For the student leaders who were reaching out to the school district and other communities, there was an emphasis on understanding the racial differences that they were operating within. Ellen said, "…when the youth came to us about the issue, I think the organizers were very clear that we had to really think carefully about how this issue was framed up because it could so easily go into this Black/Asian narrative and the demonization of black youth and the criminalization of black youth" (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016). George (reporter) furthered Ellen's sentiment when he told me about a conversation he had with

his editor on the process of writing an article that would motivate people to come together rather than enforce stereotypes of Black aggression. “Well we need to think about this. What's the situation that we're creating here, because it ultimately could create something that's going to be worse for everybody” (G. Miller, personal communication, September 29, 2016). Through the process of reaching out for help from other communities of color, there were multiple community meetings to discuss and learn about the culture and power that the school district held over its the students of color. These “fourth meetings”[4] were held at South Philadelphia High School with the goal of having students of all racial backgrounds talk with each other. Hiram, director of the Philadelphia Student Union, recalled the fourth meetings as

> allowing young people to just be in space together. They're never in space together. They have their preconceived notions about what the other's like, what they do, who they are as people. When they would do these little poems. They would act as like bio-poems. Bio-poems are basically poems about yourself and there's a structure to them. Most of the poem is written out and it's like my name is blank. Society thinks or people think I only care about ABC, but what I really love is boom-boom-boom. (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016)

These sessions helped the students grow to understand each other’s culture and issues with the school district.

Oppositional behavior and resistance theories are rooted in the individual and provide significant contributions to the development of the movements. However, these theories do not analyze the importance of what happens when individuals gather to create organizational

[4] Fourth meetings were named from a Taco Bell Ad promoting their campaign for a meal after dinner called the ‘fourth meal’. Student took that idea and named their after school program the fourth meeting. (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016)

resistance or agencies of change. The next section of this chapter will explore the second feature of critical race praxis's performative aspect: the people involved in the movement. This section will apply the second aspect through discussion of how to advance the theories of oppositional behavior to address how the individual can become a part of a group of likeminded people to create a platform for reparations and interracial justice.

Building a Multiethnic Coalition

Author bell hooks wrote, "I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between the marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance—as location of radical openness and possibility" (hooks, 1989, p. 23). For many students of color in Philadelphia, the margin is where they are often placed within an oppressive school system. The margin created by the school district is one grounded in racial turf wars and interracial conflict. However, as bell hooks has stated, one can also use the margins as a space of resistance if they are located in radical openness. It is in the marginal space of resistance that the students of South Philadelphia came together to create a space in which dialogue and healing could be developed and maintained.

A reconstruction of the marginal space is important to the process of reparations within the interracial justice framework because of two aspects. First, reparations require a space that is not grounded in individualism and neutrality. Reparations is a method to repair past injustices committed by one group over other. Matsuda (1991) goes further to state that reparations "condemns exploitation and adopts a vision of a more just world." Although individuals can participate in exploitation, reparations goes further to ask society to repent for the conditions it created to allow for exploitation to occur.

Second, for reparations to be successful, there must be a creation of social structures that support equity and material change. This could mean important monetary and property payments, but also a dismantling of former social structures and the development of a racial realist social structure. There have been many scholars that have theorized the disruption and creation of the new space. Chang has written that due to the debate among scholars about the validity of narratives, there must be a reconstructed post-structural space that allows for subjectivity and the voices of people of color as valid data points. Chang goes on to say that no current space is available for people of color, especially Asian Americans, to express their thoughts, so a new undeveloped space must be created. To create a marginal space of resistance, a grounded framework to disrupt the racial structures that were put in place before must first be present. Matsuda identifies the "first step in producing a counter-ideology of antisubordination, as acknowledging the psychology of dominance that accompanies subordination" (Matsuda,1991, p. 1398). The mentors realized that the current space the students were in was filled with hate and provided no voice for students.

To help create a space for students to develop their identities, the mentors listened to the students' fears and concerns about the school district. Mentors then took what they heard and wove that into teaching the conceptual understanding of race and racism. This helped disrupt the marginal space created by the school district through creating a space that intersected within that while also being empty of the fear and hate. Instead, this recreated space allowed for the generation and development of self-identity similar to what Anzaldúa calls the Coatlicue (Anzaldúa, 2012).

Through my interviews and archival research, I found an important addition to Coatlicue to help explain interracial justice. This addition develops from the student's ability to form

partnerships and common goals with persons and organizations among all communities of color. The Asian students' intentional process towards developing partnerships with Philadelphia's Black community led to a multiethnic group with a common goal of reforming school safety. This coalitional space became important because it developed a place for the groups of students to come together. Single individuals cannot practice interracial justice on their own, it is a group effort. This is especially true for the process of reparations. Yamamoto (1991) said, "Reparations is grounded in group, rather than individual, rights and responsibilities and provides tangible benefits to those wronged by those in power." (p. 203) To develop a space for group resistance, the mentors allowed all students in Philadelphia to attend. I believe they created a space as a place that would follow something similar to Covarrubias's and Revilla's agency of transformational resistance. Agencies for transformational resistance provide the groundwork for organizations to support their members on their journey for individual transformational resistance and include the following tenets:

1. They create a community of inclusiveness.
2. They provide valuable resources for community members.
3. They provide a critical voice for the community regarding community issues.
4. They empower the community through the expansion of resources and development of skills.
5. They help members of the community develop a raised level of consciousness and a commitment to social justice.
6. They provide hope for educational advancement of many community members. (Covarrubias & Revilla, 2003)

Fortunately, the students accessed organizations that provided the tenets described by Covarrubias and Revilla. Asian American United (AAU) and Philadelphia Student Union (PSU) provided the high schoolers with the space and the resources to create a community of inclusiveness. AAU worked with the Folk Arts and Cultural Traditions Charter School in Chinatown to open up the first floor of the school building for the youth to meet during the boycott. AAU leadership provided mentorship to the students by empowering them to develop a raised level of consciousness and the skills needed to conduct the boycott while pushing the district to create safer schools.

PSU provided the critical voice for the Asian students and other students of color through their vast network of student leaders around Philadelphia. The current director of PSU, Hiram, describes the goals of PSU as "ensuring that student voice is at the center of the decisions that are made regarding the schools in Philadelphia. The vision of a school system and school districts across the state that are fully funded, adequately resourced and staffed, and provide the best education for all students regardless of race, gender, etc." PSU also contributed its valuable resources and contacts to advance the campaign for safer schools at a much quicker pace than the Asian students at South Philly High could have done alone (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016). Together, AAU and PSU built a partnership that helped strengthen the multiethnic coalition for safer schools. Duong said, "…we actually go to each organization, focusing on building our base so that we have a collective understanding of local control and staff determination, whatever that means for our community. The collective fight is for the local control of the school, currently controlled by School Reform Commission [Philadelphia School Board], which has been a disaster" (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017). They

provided the hope that students and the larger local Asian community needed to campaign for safer schools and the advancement of education for students of color around Philadelphia.

To add to the work of Covarrubias and Revilla, it is important to also address individual student development as a key component in the collaboration of multiple agencies within the framework of agencies for transformational resistance for interracial justice. Specifically, the mentors and students in the boycott talked about their understanding and development of best practices to develop a campaign for interracial justice. The following are the critical aspects toward developing a space for collaboration among organizations and individuals for interracial justice: understanding, inclusiveness, and partnerships.

Understanding is arguably the most important contributor to developing a space for collaboration. Similar to Yamamoto's recognition, understanding encompasses a wide range of knowledge about race and interracial justice. This includes a deep level of consciousness about institutional racism, resistance theories, and historical context of the local community. Teresa, a mentor from AAU, highlighted the importance of understanding the local community: "It's really important that we recognize where our young people are, where our communities are. Because this vision of multiethnic, multicultural work, I think, is something to strive for, but the reality is that there's a lot of racism within our communities." She goes on to say that it takes an investment from all communities to educate and enlighten one another about their respective cultures. Understanding also draws from agencies of transformational resistance in that it asks its members to commit to social justice by educating one another about their respective communities. Participants in the boycott highlighted the importance of developing an understanding of how all students of color were being oppressed in different and unique ways. For the Asian students, there was a limiting duality between the forever foreign and model

minority stereotypes. The Black students were seen as the aggressors and jealous of the Asian students. It took a concerted effort by both communities to come together and talk about the way in which the school district was using Bonilla Silva's racial hierarchy to create conflict among the students.

The second aspect of developing interracial collaboration is creating a space that values inclusiveness of all people. As Yamamoto (1991) and Covarrubias and Revilla (2003) stated, the people in the room are just as important as what is being done. Mentors in the Asian community highlighted the importance of ensuring that no one was left out of the initial conversation regarding the campaign for safer schools (N. Petal, personal communication, August 4, 2016; M. Yee, personal communication, October 18, 2016). Although it may appear that inclusiveness is an easily attainable goal, it became much more difficult to achieve when accounting for the history of mistrust and violence among oppressed communities. Teresa recognized that the work of multiethnic relationship building between the Asian and Black communities is a long and arduous process: "There's a lot of tension and in particular in the Black community and Asian community, that's real. I think part of what we're trying to do is recognize the amount of work it's going to take and it takes for us to be responsive to these issues and understand where some of these troubles are and understand why these tensions exist" (T. Engst, personal communication, June 15, 2016). To avoid further mistrust and "fake inclusiveness" the people and organizations in the room must understand that everyone is present because they are committed to social justice. Even though everyone in the room is advocating social justice, there must be an understanding that they are all partners and allies. This leads to the final aspect.

When developing a collaborative space for interracial justice, the third aspect highlights building partnerships among the organizations and people in the room. While understanding and

including groups and individuals in the conversation is crucial, they are not praxis oriented. Building a partnership is a more praxis oriented skill and process. Creating and maintaining partnerships is a long process that requires trust and sharing of resources to succeed. Teresa stated that building partnership is a difficult process, "…that's a huge amount of work and investment. And takes a lot of trust between organizations and leadership of different organizations coming together and being able to have conversations and trust that we're holding our own folks that we work with accountable" (T. Engst, personal communication, June 15, 2016). For the students and mentors in the push for safer schools, the partnerships that were created were essential for the campaign's success. AAU, PSU, and other organizations shared resource and staff capacity to reach as many people and key stakeholders as they could to make the greatest impact.

Through the marginal space for collaboration, the students developed partnerships that helped them create a successful boycott of the school and gain public attention for their cause. However, gaining public attention can become more of a hindrance toward progress than a helpful ally in the campaign for interracial justice. The next section will explore how various news media outlets were able to distort the gains of the campaign and boycott for safer schools to promote a sense of dread and racialized violence in the Philadelphia School District.

Public Racial Expectations

Although a strong bond formed that allowed for the communities of color to develop a successful multiethnic coalition, it faced external opposition from public expectations. The material aspect of critical race praxis asks the students address the intended consequences of their conceptual understanding and the performative. This means that there has to be some change to the material conditions of those involved in two significant parts. There must be

changes to the social structure (i.e. changes to the school climate and education) and racial representations (i.e. changes to the public perception of the oppressed groups). Although there was a change in the social structure of the school and relationship between the Black and Asian communities, there were fewer changes in the public perception of both populations. The breakdown came from the news media's coverage of the event and persistent ideologies and stereotypes of both communities. News outlets broke down the coalition into a simplified story of racial turf wars and government incompetence to protect the Asian students. Rather than focus on the unprecedented development of grassroots multiethnic coalition for safer schools, there was a retrenchment of racial stereotypes and hierarchy. It was not a story of resistance and boycotts, but one of violence and racism between Blacks and Asians and then the School District of Philadelphia and Asians. Rather than focus on the stories of the students, a majority of news reporters exclusively interviewed district officials before asking students for their stories. When translated or transcribed for print, the words of the students seemed to be lost in the monotony of normalizing black violence. As Yamamoto warned, "Interracial grievances, even as a predicate to intergroup healing, can be misused simply to sensationalize divisions among racial groups, to mis-imply pathology in all interracial interactions." (1999, p. 204)

While organizers of the boycott were working to understand forms of systematic racism, local and national news outlets were labeling the incident at South Philly High as the height of violence by the Black students upon the helpless Asian students. News headlines filled Facebook and social media news feeds with titles like "Racial Tensions Grow Violent At Philly High School" and "Can Philadelphia School End Black vs. Asian Violence." The coverage of violence in Philadelphia schools is complex and requires a cultural understanding of the local area to create a testimony that serves to highlight the community's accomplishments while also

demonstrating the strides that still must be taken to fight oppression. However, many of the major newspapers and news magazines ultimately failed to address the underlying issues of the school district and the unfair conditions present at South Philly High. A reporter told me that many news outlets failed to cover the complexity: "…you've got a particular incident where it was like 27 kids or something getting jumped, and so I think that made for an easy simple story to react to. The Inquirer did it, The Daily News did it, TV stations did it." Nelson goes further in her article analyzing the news media's lack of response to the underlining issues: "It is important to go beyond the sensationalist media coverage that ignores this violence as part of a longer history of interethnic violence in South Philadelphia." (Nelson, 2011, pg. 22)

If It Bleeds, It Leads. The Philadelphia news organization's fascinated focus on school violence ultimately led to winning the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* series on the violence in Philadelphia schools. In their reporting, the *Inquirer* created the sense that this was a Black/White issue with the Black students being a large majority of the aggressors and White students, teachers, and staff being the victims of these Black children. The series fails to acknowledge the Asian American or Latino communities that are increasingly key stakeholders as a result of the rise of immigration into the city. The series also fails to show the underlying causes of violence in the schools. This Pulitzer-winning series gives no context to the conditions of the schools or the racism that some teachers exhibited toward their students. A respected professor of journalism called the series "borderline racist." The professor goes on to say that, "some of our faculty here said that we shouldn't send the students to work at the *[Philadelphia*] *Inquirer* because of the … underlying racism there that they thought came through in those stories." This is not to say that the *Philadelphia Inquirer* does not conduct

professional reporting, but publishing stories that increase the implicit racial biases of its readers does more of a disservice to the community than publishing a minstrel show.

Along with implicitly reigniting racial tension, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* also appeared to take credit for reforming the Philadelphia School District's policy on violence. In the official statement from the Pulitzers Prize's website describes the *Inquirer's* reporting as important, "for its exploration of pervasive violence in the city's schools, using powerful print narratives and videos to illuminate crimes committed by children against children and to stir reforms to improve safety for teachers and students." While the statement is partially true, this assertion appears to imply that the *Inquirer* did it alone without the help of the students of color involved with the campaign for safer schools. Many of the reforms made by the school district came well before the *Inquirer* started to publish their series on violence in the schools. By not representing the significant work of the students of color, especially the Asian students, it reinforces many of the stereotypes like the silent model minority. Leaving Asian students out of the conversation also rejects the idea that they face very racially hostile climates in the past and present.

The work done by the mentors and students in the boycott and campaign were minimalized through the underrepresentation of a non-deficit narrative about the resistance and resilience of students of Philadelphia to make a difference. The underrepresentation of the students by news outlets helped lead to coalitional distress among the organizations involved and the growing lack of hope for a sustained multiracial coalition.

Coalitional Distress

There have not been many stories of sustained multiracial coalitions in the United States, especially centered on Black and Asian communities. Although the Philadelphia student multiracial coalition's goals were noble and the participants accomplished a great deal, tensions

among the leaders and communities were still present and eventually led to the partial breakdown of the campaign. History might not always repeat itself, but it does often rhyme. This section will provide analysis of the inevitable fall of multiethnic coalitions by drawing causation between past Black and Asian multiethnic coalitions and the student movement for safer schools. I will also theorize a new space for youth to develop their own framework of change.

The final aspect of critical race praxis as it relates to interracial justice is reflexivity. Reflexivity asks individuals and groups to learn from the past and adapt to changing social situations. Reflexivity allows those involved in interracial justice to continually reconstruct and provide reparations as new information arises and resistance skills are developed. In the early stages of the multiethnic coalition for school reform, students and mentors adapted and changed their strategies based on the responses of the school district and the community of Philadelphia. However, in the later stages as small changes were being made, challenging established institutions of Whiteness became much more difficult. Ellen became frustrated by how difficult it was to be funded to address issues like institutional racism: "…all this money was flowing to all these different places to do all these different ways of dancing around the fundamental issue at heart" (E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016). Once the interest convergences among the Asian, Black, and school district communities were satisfied and reasons for pushing for more racial and social justice reform became much more difficult to agree on. Bell (1980) defines interest convergence as the process in which the interests of communities of color will only be accommodated when it aligns with the interests of Whites. The closing of this chapter investigates how interest convergence of a coalition lends itself to mistrust, misguidance, and misunderstanding. Ultimately, multiethnic coalitions will dissolve because they most often lack the foundation of interracial justice reflexivity. However, this does not mean that all multiethnic

collaborations will fail. In the case of the students of color in Philadelphia, the multiethnic coalition did not materialize to become the coalition most people wanted. Even so, the youth learned from the past and adapted the aspect of reflexivity to develop their own theory of change.

Coalitional Reflexivity and Causality

As the multiethnic coalitions started to gain and maintain support from the community, there were some underlining issues that were not being met by the mentors or the students. One of the biggest questions asked the goals of the coalitions. On the surface, the goals were to create a safer school environment for all the students at South Philly High, secure a greater commitment by the school district to address issues facing English language learners, and solicit a promise to address issues of *de facto* and *de jure* racism present in the school district. Although, these goals are noble, they do not address the issues of reconstruction and reparations for the students of color at South Philadelphia High and beyond. Instead, the goals are framed in a way that advocates for interest convergence and allows for *de facto* racism to occur.

Some of the goals mentioned seemed to not go far enough or were specific enough for some mentors in the Asian American community (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016; E. Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016). The proposed remedies did not provide enough individualized responses to repair the damage made to the material conditions perpetrated by the school district. The remedies also did not do enough to bring parity or equity to the power of one group over another. For reparations to occur, reconciliations (transformation) rather than conciliation (dispute resolution) must occur. Yamamoto (1991) states that reconciliation allows for the "material changes in the structure of the relationship to guard against "cheap reconciliation," in which healing efforts are "just talk." (p. 204)

It appears that some of the lacking remedies did not come from one racial group, but from generational gaps between the youth and the adults. Sustaining a movement is not as much for the adults it is for the youth. “That's a very honest organizational tension. Once the adults were removed from the picture I saw the fourth meetings as a success” (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016). As Hiram stated, removing adults from the room creates greater opportunities for the self-determination of youth. The youth understood that coalitions are a single entity with many voices speaking at once. A retooling must occur that allows for partnerships and allyship. It is difficult to change the perception of a community using the predetermined structures. That is why the Coatlicue marginal space is important to reframe what it means to have interracial justice.

Conclusion

Coalitions create opportunities for some. However, multiethnic coalitions often lead to more mistrust and breakdowns between members because of interest convergences inherent in a coalition’s structure of procedures and goals. Using the aspects of reconstruction and reparations, there are opportunities for youth to take a significant role in creating their own space for collaboration and building multiethnic alliances. Youth leaders understand the context in which they live and are best able to determine the optimal path for interracial justice. With the assistance and mentoring from adult organizers, youth can be taught how to use the tools of past campaigns and integrate them into their own campaigns.

Through a comprehensive process of building a youth driven theory of change, youth in Philadelphia began to build a multiethnic alliance out of the dissolution of past attempts for interracial justice. The youths’ ability to apply the aspects of critical race praxis allowed them to begin reconstructing a space for resistance and to develop a process for reparations.

By being reflexive with the constantly changing times and situations, youth salvaged and rebuilt relationships among students of color in Philadelphia and called for more meaningful changes beyond the parameters of interest convergence. The next chapter will delve further into the process the youth took toward developing their own theory of change.

CHAPTER 7 – Alliances and Theories of Change – Mentors' Role in the Interracial Justice Framework.

Introduction

Hunter's (2015) definition of historical ethnography highlights the need for researchers to understand the histories of communities in order to draw causal influences and reflect on events occurring today. This chapter will explore the outcomes of the multiethnic campaign for school safety, Asian youth leadership development, and the process of youth developing a new theory of change focused on interracial justice. Through an exploration of the motivations of youth and guidance of mentors, I will develop a framework that helps explain how youth see alliance building today. Specifically, this new youth theory of change will rely on lessons learned from the campaign for safer schools to develop a linkage between the past and present day organizing in the Asian American community.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will describe the wins and systemic changes that were made to South Philadelphia High School and the Philadelphia School District after a Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation. This is followed by an in-depth investigation and theorization of a youth developed theory of change for interracial justice in three parts. The first subsection will recognize the power of youth to develop their own theory of change. This is followed by development of multiethnic alliances through collective capacity. The final subsection will explore challenges and solutions when developing multiethnic alliances.

Wins and Systemic Changes

> The Justice Department today announced a settlement agreement with the School District of Philadelphia and the School Reform Commission to resolve an

investigation into a complaint of race, color and/or national origin-based harassment of Asian students at South Philadelphia High School, and allegations that the school district was deliberately indifferent to the severe and pervasive harassment. (AALDEF, 2010)

In early January, attorneys from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) regarding the discrimination of Asian students at South Philly High on behalf of the students, parents, and community affected by that day's events. Lawyers argued that the district and school violated students' rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution as well as violating the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 for English Language Learner students.

As promised by *Brown v. Board*, schools and districts are expected to provide their students with an equal opportunity to learn. In the majority opinion, Chief Justice Warren wrote, "…in these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms" (*Brown v. Board of Education*, May 17, 1954). However, as previously discussed, the School District of Philadelphia failed to provide equal opportunities to all its students, including the Asian students that attended South Philly High. Although the complaint focuses on the rights of Asian students, the multiethnic alliance of students, activists, and parents all pushed for the complaint to be investigated by the DOJ. They saw the need for school reform and the complaint to the DOJ as a method to voice their concerns.

Eventually, the January 2010 complaint from AALDEF was filed and investigated by the DOJ. After receiving official complaints filed by Asian Americans United, Boat People SOS, Victim Witness Services of South Philadelphia, and five individual students, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission joined the U.S. DOJ to jointly investigate the incidences of racial and xenophobic discrimination. In response to the complaints, the DOJ officially filed

> a complaint commencing a civil action, against Defendants School District of Philadelphia and School Reform Commission pursuant to Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000c-6, et seq., and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, alleging unlawful discrimination against Asian students based on their race, color, and/or national origin at South Philadelphia High School in the School District of Philadelphia. (Department of Justice, 2010)

After months of negotiations and arbitration, the School District of Philadelphia settled the case against it. In the agreement, the school district was told to implement plans to prevent the events of December 3rd from happening again, as well as include rules against racial discrimination and increase cultural awareness programs (Department of Justice, 2010).

Along with the changes to policy, significant changes were made to the administration at South Philly High. After the dismissal of Principal Brown, the district hired Otis Hackney. Unlike some past principals, Hackney knew what he was getting himself into because of his familiarity with South Philadelphia's racial issues. He was also an assistant principal at the South Philly High early in his administration career before becoming a principal at a local suburban school.

Upon entering South Philly High, Hackney met with students, parents, and organizers to understand the underlying racial, gender, and socio-economic issues facing his students, staff, and faculty. One of the first things he noticed was the perpetuation of stereotypes created by the faculty and staff. Hackney noticed the preferential treatment some students received over others in the school.

"The language barrier is real," Hackney told me (personal communication, April 5, 2016). As the school began to internally racially desegregate, many students still found the language barrier challenging. Hackney identified that "the toughest piece with the children will always be the language issues" (personal communication, April 5, 2016). He knew that the lack of communication skills among ELL students and native English speakers created tensions that would never be resolved if self- and systemic isolation based on language continued. When students were placed into integrated math courses at South Philly High, there was a more amicable feeling within classroom dynamics. Language misunderstandings, which manifested into language isolation had been one of the major influences on the racialized violence at South Philly High.

Although the previous administration claimed to treat all students equally, it appears that their conception of equality was distorted in such a way as to create preferential treatment based on specific situations. For example, the act of being tardy to school was an offense that required students to serve a pre-class suspension in the auditorium. However, when ELL students arrived late, they were immediately taken out of the auditorium and placed in their normal class routine. Although former Principal Brown and teachers perceived this as a benign act, Black students said this was preferential treatment to students they perceived as "model minorities." "All right. So they did get special treatment," Hackney argued (personal communication, April 5, 2016). He

believed that the Black students were right. There was an unequal accountability process that gave a pass for tardiness and other offenses to Asian and other ELL students because they were perceived as special circumstances.

Upon entering the school, Hackney changed this pseudo-policy. His goal was to create an environment of equal accountability under his administration. In my interview with Principal Hackney, he emphasized the need for a change to the perception of equity among students, parents, and staff. “That was really the primary reason why I did it. It wasn't to go in and try to save a particular group. It was just to go in and help fix the school and help fix the children that attend, so the particular group of students, I wasn't worried about. It was just all of them, and that has just been my approach” (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016). He placed a stop on teachers coming down to retrieve tardy students from the auditorium. Although the rules had changed, teachers would still try to exercise the old rule. "Oh, no, no, no. They can come up with me," teachers would tell him (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016). This created some tension among staff and Asian students. Asian students would become disgruntled and give Hackney as much attitude as any other student whose privileges were taken away from them. "What do you mean I can't?" an Asian student would often say. Hackney’s retort would be, "No, you can't go. You're late. Go [to the auditorium]" (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

Under Hackney, accountability measures were implemented under an equitable system. His goal was to create an environment of accountability in which everyone was treated fairly and equally. All students would feel as protected as the student sitting in the desk across from them. Although the changes were drastic to previous iterations of policy implementations, adoption of

the new equal accountability practices caught on slowly and were eventually accepted by students (W. Chen, personal communication, July 6, 2016).

This new system of accountability and equitable treatment required time and an understanding of the nuances of systemic racism and how the local context manifests inequality and inequity. Before arriving at South Philly High, Hackney was a principal at a majority White populated Philadelphia suburban school. There, he found a bias among the White parents that he would only focus on the Black students in the school. “Over time, they saw that, ‘No, he really is here for all the kids.’ I said, ‘Now. Does that mean that the black kids are getting special attention or more attention?’ I would say, ‘Yes, because it depends on where the starting point was with the level of attention they were getting.’" It took a concerted effort on his part to convince the parents that he would support all students at the school, but in a much more equitable way than in the past. “Folks were confused by that,” Hackney told me (personal communication, April 5, 2016). He used the same argument at South Philly High, but focused on the local racial context.

> It's the same approach with students at South Philly. They're like, "Oh, you're giving the Asian kids more attention." I said, "You are correct. I am giving them more attention." I said, "More than what they were receiving, but not more than anybody else." "Oh," and then they would get a little upset about it. I mean, some would get upset and say, "Okay, all right, I get it." That's all it was. That's all it took. (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016)

However, as Hackney said in our interview, “It's a very nuanced argument and some folks wrestle with that and some folks get it” (personal communication, April 5, 2016). To support his argument, he used his status as a trusted messenger between the local community and the school

to gain the legitimacy to address these nuanced racial issues. The next section will discuss what a trusted messenger is and how one impacts the success of alliance building among youth.

Youth Theory of Change

Youth have an amazing ability to recognize inequities in their community, develop an understanding of why inequities exist, and act to address the inequities. However, it does take commitment of mentors to help develop the process and ensure the youths' action do not become reactionary oppressive behavior. While mentoring youth, it is imperative that adults and mentors understand that their main responsibility is to provide assistance and not direct the youth towards a specific theory of change because youth are capable of developing their own theories of change. This final section investigates a new theory of change developed by the South Philadelphia High School youth that is further refined by historical and scholarly precedent to become adaptable for other contexts and communities of color in the United States.

Recognizing the Power of Youth Youth are often passed over by the older generation of organizers as being naive and inexperienced with the process of organizing and activism. While somewhat accurate, this sentiment does not account for the experiential knowledge of youth. "All around us, young people are at the forefront of asking how we imagine a different future, but their theorizing goes unnoticed because youth are still seen as the junior partners of the social movement" (Kelley, 2013, p. 88). Alex, Director of Asian Americans United, recognized the power of youth organizing together to develop their own theory of change,

> To be able to really work together towards something and actually be able to see and empathize with the differences between our different populations of folks and yet to really build connection is amazing. To have the young people get to know each other. To be friends maybe. To respect each other. Feel the struggle together.

> Also, to be able to be really united and fight for something would be pretty amazing. (A. Webb, personal communication, June 1, 2016)

Hiram, the director of Philadelphia Student Union (PSU), told me during an interview that the youth, "were doing more political education reform… You saw them move towards that direction where they weren't just participating in youth development, but they were also running campaigns and putting their students out there to challenge power and to fight for the policies that they saw" (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016). He saw that the youth were developing their own theory of change and were tackling larger issues than what was expected.

The adults and mentors in Philadelphia understood the importance and power of the youth leaders. Part of what made the campaign for safer schools relevant and successful was the autonomy given to students to name and address the issues that were affecting them. Teresa, an Asian Americans United (AAU) mentor, identified the importance of recognizing the power of youth: "…part of it is recognizing the political moment where we are and then recognizing that we have some amazing young people we work with and we want to be able to build the power that they have. And that power that grows, we're able to think together in some ways and raise the issues" (T. Engst, personal communication, June 15, 2016). Many race scholars write that naming the oppression is the first step towards healing and thriving (Ginwright, 2010; Yamamoto, 1999). For youth in Philadelphia, the issue was the lack of support and recognition of their power by stakeholders in the school district.

Principal Hackney observed the lack of recognition given to the students at South Philadelphia High School and sought to change the "adults know best" attitude many teachers and staff held. Hackney implemented policies that allowed students to develop their agency to confront adults if they felt that their rights were being abused. Hackney wanted to become a

messenger that the students could approach if they felt wrongdoing was taking place. As the new policy was being implemented, Hackney became a person the students trusted: "…they saw where I was coming from" (personal communication, April 5, 2016). Hackney told students, "…if I make a mistake, tell me. If I do something, come to me so that way I can fix it. If I do something that offends you, just please let me know, because if you walk away and don't tell me, that's more of a problem" (personal communication, April 5, 2016). Hackney goes on to state that if "something happens in the school and I hear it from the outside before I hear it from you, then the level of trust lessens. So, if you want to make this work, we have to build a certain level of trust, so if there's an issue, you need to tell me first" (personal communication, April 5, 2016).

For the students, Hackney became much more than a messenger, he became a *trusted messenger*. Although messenger and trusted messenger seem like identical terms, the differences are complex. The phrase "don't shoot the messenger" is a popular saying when a person is relaying bad news. These messengers are afraid that the group receiving the bad news will take their anger or frustration out on them even though they are just relaying a message and have no relationship to either group. Relaying information through a messenger is difficult and has many complexities. Sometimes the receiving group does not believe the messenger because the messenger does not come from their community. Other times the messenger does not relay the message in a way that the group understands. These messengers do not have a community insider status that would allow them to fully relay the subtext of the message nor provide the information necessary to help the receiving group make a decision.

A trusted messenger, on the other hand, is someone that is not concerned about receiving retaliation from the group receiving the bad news because the group trusts that the messenger will relay a message that is culturally relevant and provides the subtext of the original message.

As a result, many trusted messengers are from their respective communities. Hackney built trust with the students because he also built trust with community advocates. Unlike the last administration at the school, Hackney made a concerted effort to meet with community members and learn about the cultural and contextual contexts that make up the diverse South Philadelphia community. Through his effort to listen to the students and the community, he created a culture of youth driven reform at the school. Youth leaders like Wei and Doung would talk with him about issues that they saw in the school. Hackney would listen to the concerns and make changes that would help the students.

As trusted messengers are developed, more communication among communities occur. The communication among communities becomes more frequent and relationships begin to develop at a faster rate. Communities begin to understand the cultural nuances that might have disrupted efforts to come together in the past. Through these trusted messengers, communities start to come together to have discussions regarding the conceptual understanding of social justice through an interracial justice framework. The following sections of this chapter will describe the elements that are needed to build multiethnic alliances through collective capacity.

Collective Capacity Trusted messengers do more than just transmit the intentions and goals among groups, they also provide a space for what the youth call collective capacity. Collective capacity is, as Teresa explains, "…trying to think of another way where we're coming together where it isn't like, we're all agreeing to this. But we're actually talking about group work that we're doing, the issues that are affecting our communities, and how we're trying to tackle that" (T. Engst, personal communication, June 15, 2016). In this dissertation, I expand on Teresa's explanation by defining collective capacity as the process of coming together to help one another by providing support in various areas including staff and volunteer capacity,

monetary and physical resources, and other partnerships without mission creep or goal manipulation. Collective capacity uses reparations from Yamamoto's interracial justice framework as the foundation for praxis. Reparations is the process for repairing any material or mental damages caused because of the discordant relationship among the groups seeking interracial justice (Yamamoto, 1997). Collective capacity entails similar themes, but occurs further in the relationship among the groups seeking interracial justice. It assumes that reparations have been distributed and redress has been given. Collective capacity asserts that although the interracial justice groups have gone through the process of redress and reparations, they are participating in an altruistic relationship.

The Philadelphia youth understood that in order to survive, the Asian and Black communities of South Philly High had to altruistically support each other in order to thrive at the school. For example, the Asian community would lean on the Black community to help spread the word of racial injustices occurring at the school, and the Black community would rely on the Asian community for capacity support. Both groups of students knew that in order to thrive they would need to rely on each other's strengths and support each other to make up for their respective weaknesses. As the youth were supporting each other, they did not demand that the other group compromise their values to join the cause of the other. The youth leaders understood that the other participants had their own issues and had to address them while using their own social justice methods. A pertinent example of the support for collective capacity came during the Black Lives Matter movement in Philadelphia.

To bring attention to how the Black Lives Matter movement affected youth, there was a student led rally in front of the school district. The rally was well attended, but it was not what

the organizers expected. As the event started, Hiram described the moment when students from various Asian American student organizations came to contribute to the rally.

> Like a scene out of movie, marching down the street is like 40 Asian students coming with signs, these Black Lives Matter signs, written in both Chinese characters and English. Beautiful signs in the way they did them with Chinese characters and in English. Coming down and just joined right at the last second, which sent our members crazy. All the young people started cheering and they're all happy. It was powerful moment. The Asian students also understood what they were doing. They came in while all the PSU members and the black people who were in attendance be the ones who would do the die-in. Everyone else just kind of sit-in but not in solidarity. The young people understood that. If you look at the pictures, there's students laid out on mock dead around. You see a gang of Asian students around sitting, holding signs that say black lives matter in both Chinese characters and English. (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016)

The Asian students understood their role as participants in the rally and executed this in a more effective way than if they decided to join in the die-in. Everyone in the rally played their part with the Black students leading the rally and the Asian students providing the collective capacity to show that this is an issue that affects all communities of color in different ways. However, this type of collaboration does not happen often.

Ellen, a mentor, was skeptical that we are not at a time in which we are able to work together while realizing that communities of color face different challenges:

> Until we can get to the point where different communities can recognize and understand their own relationship to how other communities are oppressed and

> how those are very specific. Then it's hard to come together to fight around stuff because either you're diminishing somebody else's experience by pretending it's the same as yours when it clearly isn't or you're saying that (Somekawa, personal communication, August 2, 2016).

The youth leaders today have shown that they are prepared to take the first step towards an understanding of collective capacity to work together without demanding assimilation. The next section will further develop the process youth took towards developing a new theory of change that incorporates interracial justice frameworks and alliance building.

Multiethnic Alliances The process of collective capacity provides the foundation for the development of alliances. While collective capacity is the process of providing support, multiethnic alliances are the formal organizations created from people and groups that are participating in collective capacity around the same subject or issue. Based on my interviews with youth leaders and their mentors, interethnic alliances are based upon three organizational tenets.

1. Consistent dialogue among the members of the alliance
2. Consistent support towards collective capacity
3. Consistent reflection of issues facing each community and solutions for those issues

These tenets are intended to reflect the importance of maintaining constant contact among the members and organizations of the interethnic alliance. As many of the mentors mentioned, it was often of the upmost importance that there was an understanding of each other’s community. Once all the students began to understand the common and conflicting cultural practices of each other’s communities, the process of reconciliation began. As Yamamoto (1997) theorized, reconciliation is important for the transformation of a community through the process of

interracial justice. Consistent contact among the members allows for the process of interracial justice to occur and thrive.

The first tenet of interethnic alliances is maintaining a consistent dialogue among the members of the alliance. For the youth involved with the campaign for safer schools, this tenet meant that they would have to learn to communicate with each other. Wei and AAU determined that they needed to reach out to the Black community of Philadelphia to create a dialogue of interracial justice. They attended gatherings and Wei told his story of bullying at the hands of the racially hostile climate created by the school district and the staff at South Philadelphia High. Through the process of reaching out, Wei became a trusted messenger. Becoming a trusted messenger, as I described before, allowed communities of color in Philadelphia to listen to and trust that Wei would have their best interests at heart.

PSU decided that the best way to develop understanding among students was for the students to share the same physical space and talk through a program called the fourth meetings. Through the fourth meetings, the students were forced to listen to each other and understand the concerns of others in a productive manner. PSU, in collaboration with AAU and Boat People SOS, wanted the fourth meetings to be a place that would, in the words of Hiram, "resolve some of the underlying root causes of the problems as well as some of the underlying tensions that existed among the students" (personal communication, April 15, 2016). The students would meet every week for about an hour and half after school to engage in political education and discuss issues that were circulating among the students. Hiram explained the success of the fourth meetings as a place that students would come to understand the underlying issues that were forcing them to become isolated (personal communication, April 15, 2016).

The student driven fourth meeting is a prime example of a transformational counterspace. Allowing students to develop their own space, created a physical and spiritual place for students to discuss issues without relying on conventional meeting structures. Hiram described the fourth meeting proceedings in the following except.

> One thing that stood out obviously the most, probably the thing that stood out from the events at South in 2009, was a lack of any form of real relationship between black students and the Asian students. They were always represented different. They were different communities within the overall Asian community. What they fourth meetings were - were that every last meeting of the month all three groups would get together and have one joint meeting. That'd be translated in three different languages. Go through different projects and workshops with the young people in attempt to build the relationships, create some sort of dialog, understanding between all the students, and ideally through the young people those communities that exist in South Philadelphia High School. (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016)

As the youth leaders and adult mentors realized early in the campaign, increased communication increases understanding and reduces hatred among students. In particular, listening to each other was the missing factor towards understanding. Listening can be difficult, especially when youth do not speak the same language. During the fourth meetings and other events with youth, translators were needed to relay the information from English to Cantonese to Vietnamese and back to English. The conversation among students took time, but the youth were more interested in listening to and supporting their peers than the length of the meetings.

The second tenet of multiethnic alliances requires that the alliance consistently support collective capacity. Because of an alliance's altruistic nature, it is imperative that consistent and effective support be given to organizations in need. As explained earlier, collective capacity is the responsibility of individuals and organizations to assist others when they need support without interfering with an organization's mission and goals.

This second tenet is the most time and resource intensive because of calls for consistent collective capacity and long-term stability of relationships. Many of my interviewees said that monetary and member capacity is often the most difficult part of running their organizations. The quest for funds and volunteers comes to a head when organizations compete for the same grant. This quest for funds is not something that can be solved through alliance building alone, but alliances and capacity building can produce a path that will lead to a strategic sharing of funds. This path could include advocating for organizations and foundations to fund collective grants that support collaboration among organizations.

The third tenet asks multiethnic alliances to constantly reflect on the continuously changing context at the local, state, federal, and global levels. Yamamoto's (1997) interracial justice framework is built upon the idea that the context will change the racial dynamics of the community in which it is implemented. In addition, Omi's and Winant's (2013) racial formation theory states that racial projects in the area will alter the racial formation of a group of people. Therefore, multiethnic alliances must be aware of the changes that are occurring in their local context over time. This will help them prepare for unexpected events and allow for faster mobilization. As stated before, a conceptual understanding of the effects of systemic racism is the first step towards interracial justice.

School districts in the United States change at an alarming rate. Sometimes school reform brings about equity and sometimes it creates tension and stress among the students. For example, as previously described, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in Philadelphia has changed how Asian Americans are organizing and supporting the Black community in their efforts. Multiethnic alliances must be flexible to adapt to the changing contexts they might find themselves in.

Alliance reflexivity not only applies to time, but also to locality. The student leaders of Philadelphia created change within Philadelphia, but their tactics might not be as effective in a place like Oakland, California. As alliances expand beyond the local context or are asked to consult with community members outside their own, they need to be equipped to explain that youth organizing will take on a different form based on the local context.

These tenets are meant to lay the groundwork for interethnic alliances to be established and grow. However, these tenets do not discuss the outcomes that will manifest once all of the required pieces are in place. The next section will discusses the outcomes interethnic alliances can strive for.

Omnitransformational Resistance As alliances become stronger, there comes a time when the groups and individuals involved begin to have a significant impact on structural and organizational forms of oppression – what I refer to as omnitransformational. Omnitransformational resistance is when the process of interracial justice occurs in conjunction with collective capacity to create an alliance that impacts multiple aspects of society, including the daily lives of people in the community and organizations like a school district, in order to disrupt systemic forms of intersectional oppression. This framework adds to Solórzano's and Delgado Bernal's (2001) transformational resistance and Covarrubias's and Revilla's (2003)

agencies of transformational resistance by acknowledging the process of multiethnic alliances organizations and individuals take to address intersectionality. The idea of omnitransformational resistance also addresses the outcomes of intersectionality of oppression on individuals and organizations.

Solórzano's and Delgado Bernal's (2001) transformational resistance is a type of oppositional behavior in which the student understands the system of oppression they find themselves in and is motivated by social justice. Agency of transformational resistance provides the groundwork for organizations to support their members on their journeys for individual transformational resistance. Together, these scholars' transformational resistance frameworks provide a broader framework of considering how individuals and groups support individuals' process towards transformational resistance. Omnitransformational resistance framework is intended to place a greater focus on the group/s/organization's relationship with transformational resistance. This framework also addresses an individual's responsibility to move towards an understanding of oppression and social justice in all its forms.

For the youth leaders in Philadelphia, omnitransformational resistance occurred in three distinct sectors: school reform, systemic change, and generational memory. School reform refers to the changes that were made at the school and in the school district. Some of the changes at the school district were a change in campus administration, new policies to promote cultural understanding, and systematic changes in the school district. These items are included in the list of omnitransformation because each of the school district's changes affected not only racial issues, but also issues with language ability, socio-economic status, and tracking. For example, dismantling the *de facto* segregation of the second floor.

Prior to the December 3rd incident, school leadership engaged in questionable and isolating practices that created a racially hostile climate at South Philadelphia High School. Much of the isolation of Asian students came from the *de facto* segregation practices of isolating the English as a Second Language programs to the second floor of the school. The second floor became one of the few places in the school where Asian students felt safe. The 2nd floor ESOL program became infamous for being the place that Asian students stayed. AALDEF reported that school leadership including former Principal Brown allegedly referred to the second floor as "that dynasty" in reference to the ancient Chinese dynasties. Hiram described the second floor as a place to isolate the Asian students: "I'm in Philadelphia where, and it's very clear at South Philly High was that all the English language learner students, which at South were almost exclusively Asian, were put on a separate floor of the building. They had separate teachers, separate resources to aid in their education. Everyone else was forbidden from being on that floor." The segregation of the second floor created misunderstanding and a jealous perception by non-Asian students that their Asian peers were being treated better than everyone else. Hiram describes this by saying that "[Black students] have no books. They've got teachers yelling at them. They get suspended for every little thing. It's just like a prison. There's a special floor where this doesn't happen. They're getting stuff that we don't get. We don't have anything. But because they're not black. Because they're Asian somehow they're special and made to be better than us."

Outside of the second floor, Asian students faced constant racial microaggressions and bullying. Neeta, a mentor from Asian Americans United, described the subtle yet impactful microaggressions that were ignored by school staff.

> This should not be happening in your school. If students have been complaining about things, you should have made some changes, you should be able to figure out how to respond in a way that creates a safe community for everybody. I'm a firm believer that little things add up to big things, so it's like the heckling, the bullying, not the physical violence that matters. (N. Petal, personal communication, August 4, 2016)

Philadelphia Magazine (2010) reported that Asian students were called “Hey, Chinese” and “Yo, Dragonball” by staff members. In the same *Philadelphia Magazine* article, an interview with Jennifer Sommerkorn, a former teacher, revealed that school leadership did not intervene when Asian students were being harassed by peers or by school staff: “One day an assistant principal stopped her to address the Asian kids seeking refuge in her classroom during lunch. He asked, “Why do these kids get special treatment?” That assistant principal may have truly believed that the Asian students were receiving special treatment from Sommerkorn, but the assistant principal and Sommerkorn were using very different rubrics to determine what constitutes special treatment (Philadelphia Magazine, 2010).

Once Principal Hackney’s tenure started, he made some significant changes to the *de facto* segregation that was occurring - including the reputation of the second floor. His motivation behind the change was to create opportunities for students to talk with each other in whatever language most comfortable for them. He said, “I got rid of the second floor. I moved ELL classes throughout the building. Part of developing cultural competency is to be around the other culture and let the other culture see you. If you isolate them, it doesn't help the situation."

With the proper training, staff followed the example set by Hackney and started to listen to the concerns of the students. Hackney consistently heard from students what the adults had

done and their suggestions on how to improve the situation. Hackney's training philosophy focused on modifying the behavior of adults before significant changes could be made to student behavior. Hackney said in my interview with him, "…sounds like I don't need to change student behavior. I need to change adult behavior. If adults begin to do things differently, then children will behave differently, so we did a lot of work with the staff. I made my expectations very clear. My interactions with the community, and we'll focus on the adult aspect of it, changing their behavior."

There were many systematic things that changed at the school to assist in the modification of teacher behaviors and attitudes towards students. "Obviously if it's an adult that works for you, there's different things you can do administratively, but in the end, it's just still to modify the behavior of those people so that way it improves." (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016). Changes in staff and the after-school programs were modified to allow all students to participate and connect with one another. Hiram described to me some of the after-school programs to "try to figure out what are those issues that we can work together on. What are those issues that young people can continue to work together on" (personal communication, April 15, 2016). By listening to the students, school leadership and organizers began to understand the changes that needed to be made to the school and the school's role in helping make systemic changes to break down barriers to multiethnic collaboration.

Second, systemic changes were made to Philadelphia's perception of the Asian and Black communities as a result of the boycott and preceding campaign for safer schools. Perception changed by bringing attention to the Asian American organizations that have been doing work in the community for decades. Hiram recalled, "…PSU members came to a deeper understanding and appreciation for the Asian students who were at South, not only South, but other

organizations so they know that those organizations exist" (personal communication, April 15, 2016).

The campaign for safer schools resulted in the perceived reduction of implicit bias in the Asian and Black communities against each other, as well as, the increased attention given to historically racist institutions and practices. The Philadelphia community came to understand the election of President Obama the year before does not mean the end to racism and that *Brown v. Board* did not mean the end to school segregation. Asian Americans are not self-isolating themselves into ethnic enclaves. The Philadelphia community saw that *de facto* segregation was occurring to the Asian community in schools around the city and nothing was being done about it. Principal Hackney acknowledged the horrid history of the community around the school.

> South Philly had always been such a segregated ... it's always been the worst part of the city, but it's also been very segregated. There were certain neighborhoods you couldn't go through, and I said, "One group that has been there, not one of the groups has been there for one of the longest times are African American." I said, "And they've been segregated for generation upon generation." I said, "And now you segregate them even in their own school." (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

As Principal Hackney's statement says, the issue of school segregation and oppression became a much more complicated issue in the perception of the public because of the issues that arose in 2009. Segregation was no longer a Black/White dichotomous issue, it was a multiracial issue that contained many nuances.

These racial and cultural nuances are a result of the onmitransformational resistance. By recognizing and accounting for the nuances, organizers are better able to articulate the multiple

forms of oppression and its intersectionality. Principal Hackney emphasized the need to have the nuances when identifying oppression. He trained his staff to identify whether "[an incident] is just typical adolescent behavior or was this a bullying incident." Soon the teachers and staff had enough training to be able to talk and name when a bullying incident took place.

> If it's never addressed, if you're the Asian kid that gets bumped or accidentally hit into a locker while these kids are playing and no one ever addresses it, then you go back and make a report, like, "I was pushed and no one said anything," and la da da da da. Then it looks like black kids were pushing Asian kids. It's like, "That's not what happened," but you had to get down in the weeds. (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016)

Finally, generational memory was created from the boycott and campaign for safer schools. This is a bit different from the other sectors (school reform and systemic change) in that it focuses on time and memory. On an individual level, generational memory recognizes the process of former students transitioning into mentors and training the next cohort of organizers. While reflecting on how the boycott affected them today, the youth leaders talked about how they have become mentors.

Doung is overseeing two youth projects focused on mentoring. Philly Roots and Viet Roots are meant to train English and Vietnamese speaking students, respectively, to become more politically active and work closely with leadership in the Vietnamese and Asian communities of Philadelphia. These programs are meant to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

> I've been recognizing, okay, this is what we're going to teach them. Things that they never learn in school, or barely learn in school. Then after they learn that,

what do they do? They can't just learn it and then go home like nothing happened. There has to be something going along with that, like a project, like an action. I think that was when I was like okay, this is how I learn and this is how I am going to work with the students. (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017)

Along with individual youth leaders training and mentoring the younger generation, during Principal Hackney's tenure at South Philly High, he started every school year with a discussion on what happened in 2009. Even though the racial climate at the school had improved, he felt it necessary to discuss the history that once occurred in the hallways. New students were skeptical that the events of 2009 happened. The teachers and staff would hear them say comments such as, "No, not here. No, we're fine here." Students of color would see others "smiling in the hall, and I'm talking about Asian or immigrants, walking through the hallways smiling, laughing, no more walking with their head down and all that because that was the picture of an easy kid at South Philly was, you're walking with your head down and bumped kids in the hallway" (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016). To ensure that future generations did not develop historical amnesia, Hackney and the teachers openly address racial issues and cultural awareness. They also listen to students' concerns. Principal Hackney would often invite former students back to the school to talk about what happened and lead a discussion on racial issues facing youth in the city.

Challenges As an alliance grows, it starts to become more difficult to maintain meaningful relationships among the member groups. If alliances begin to lose control and mission creep occurs, superficial coalition has a much greater chance of being developed through a lack of capacity. Although coalitions are not inherently destructive, coalitions create interest convergence that does not allow for systemic change for all communities. Often coalitions do not

allow for the minority voices in the room to have a say. These smaller organizations must expend resources to support an event that might not be a part of their goal. Unlike coalitions, alliances allow for organizations with less resources the ability to step aside from events that they may not want to support with resources but will support by attending. Through collective capacity, alliances allow for the sharing of resources and partnering on grants for specific causes and campaigns. Many of the interviewed adult and student leaders named monetary resources as a major cause of contention among civil rights organizations in Philadelphia. Because there are few grants available, the organizations will fight each other for whatever they can. However, the leaders were quick to say that they do have allies that will partner with them to secure a grant that will benefit all the organizations involved.

It is also important to have trusted allies and a process to introduce allies to the community. At some point, there will be organizations that will want or claim to be a part of the alliance. However, it is important that the organizations and people involved with the alliance are trusted because one non-committal organization can disrupt and dissolve alliances. Mary, a mentor, talked about her experiences of infiltration from non-trusted sources:

> We had police infiltration. It was documented. We have actual police documents or whatever that say that they did it. We know they were in there and it caused a lot of problems. They disrupted things and I just feel like, I don't know, this is political. Who knows what the stand will be if these four organizations of young people actually do this. We don't actually know what will happen. I think there will be real challenges to this alliance and I think they'll be fragile. (M. Yee, personal communication, October 18, 2016)

Mary's sentiment has historical roots in many other movements throughout the United States. Learning from the past, the student organizers are very skeptical of outsiders coming into their community while claiming that they want to help. However, with proper processes, people with the intention of causing disruption can be identified and asked to leave the organization or given resources to educate them on transformational resistance.

Conclusion

Scholars must recognize that youth have their own theories of change based on their context. Scholar and mentors do have to assist in the development of youth based on their own experiences. We must not reinvent the wheel, but we also have to allow for the advancement of the wheel to be more efficient and relevant to today's road conditions. Youth must learn from the past because history rhymes. Using the history of multiethnic coalitions, youth in Philadelphia developed their own framework of alliance building. Using Yamamoto's interracial justice framework and Covarrubias's and Revilla's agency of transformational resistance, this chapter developed the concept of collective capacity and onmitransformational resistance as key aspects of multiracial alliance building. When organizers come together, change may occur in small doses, but ultimately leads to transformational change. The youth in Philadelphia continue to maintain their multiethnic alliance to advocate for school reform and educational equity for all students. In these tumultuous times, the multiethnic alliances of youth are the future of fighting for the promises of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." (Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000c-6, et seq.)

The final chapter of this dissertation will provide a (re)framing of history through a synopsis of the process the youth created to challenge the authority of the Philadelphia School District. The chapter will also advocate for the importance of ensuring that the history of Asian Americans in not forgotten or miswritten. Allowing for genesis amnesia of the resistance of Asian American youth is both dangerous and reprehensible. An African proverb about history and storytelling captures it well: The lion's story will never be known if the hunter tells the story.

CHAPTER 8 – (Re)framing Interracial Justice, History, and Race: Implications from Research

Introduction

Philadelphia is a city with a long history of advocacy and protests of unfair practices and policy. Events include the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the first general strike in the United States in 1835, and the 2009 resistance to a casino in Philadelphia's Chinatown (Wilson, 2015). This history of protest and advocacy continues today with protests like the 2009 Asian American student boycott for safer schools. The interviewees in this dissertation discussed the legacy of the movement as a guide for future campaigns for racial equity. They recognize that the fight for racial equity in schools is ongoing and will continue in perpetuity. However, some interviewees were optimistic that the partnership and interracial alliances are becoming stronger among the youth. In his interview, Hiram, the director of the Philadelphia Student Union, conveyed the time he realized the power of the interracial alliances that have been built through the student leadership.

He recalled a Black Lives Matter event at the School District of Philadelphia's main office in which youth protested the unjust treatment of Black and African American students in the schools. As the event was about to begin, the attendance of youth was underwhelming. Hiram recalls thinking that "students were getting nervous. Folks were getting nervous it's going to be a flop. Folks weren't coming" (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016). However, right when PSU members started the introduction for the protest, the Asian and Asian American students turned a corner and began chanting.

> The youth from [the Asian American] organizations mobilized about 30 to 40 Asian students to come out to our Black Lives Matter die-in, and to stand in

> solidarity with the students. Asian students standing in solidarity with the movement. Which I think wouldn't have happened if we didn't do that work in south Philadelphia. (H. Rivera, personal communication, April 15, 2016)

More important than increasing the size and racial diversity of the event, was that Asian and Asian American students understood that they were there to support the Black students. Rather than participate in the die-in, Asian and Asian American students sat in silence around the Black student die-in participants. The young people understood their roles in the event to have the greatest impact for the specific cause they were advancing.

This final chapter will summarize the lasting legacy of the Philadelphia Asian student boycott through a discussion of implications and recommendations for further research. The stories of the students involved in the boycott and the building of multiethnic alliances in Philadelphia have faded from many people's memory. However, the student leaders in the boycott have continued to work with all communities of color to disrupt the model minority myth and have become leaders and mentors in the Philadelphia community to spread their knowledge of organizing to younger generations. In this chapter, I will describe important lessons we can draw from the findings and the narratives of the community. The first section will describe implications for youth organizing and youth development, followed by theoretical contributions, and finally, limitations of the findings and recommendations for future research considerations. Before covering the lessons from the findings, the following are the research questions I used to guide my dissertation.

1. How did Asian American student leadership emerge in the context of the student movement following the December 3, 2009 incident at South Philadelphia High School?

2. How did interethnic coalition building happen among Philadelphia students?
    a. What effects did the Asian American student coalition have on the Philadelphia community?

Implication of Research on Youth Development

Yamamoto's interracial justice framework advocates for reflection and reflexivity to transform the bounds of racial justice in the United States. Although much of the literature on youth organizing for racial justice has focused on communities of color, Asian American youth are greatly underrepresented. This dissertation used interracial justice and the counter narratives of the Asian American community to demonstrate the complex and diverse racialization process of Asian American youth leaders. In this section, I will highlight reimagining masculinity and intersectionality as important factors that contribute to the continued success of developing interracial justice.

Reimagining Masculinity One of the most important findings from my research was the role female Asian American mentors played in the positive development of the young male Asian American organizers. Almost all of the young organizers named at least one woman mentor that helped to break down societal ideals of masculinity by educating them on systemic racism, sexism, and how toxic masculinity leads to pervasive emotional distress. In my findings, I argue the reidentification of masculinity allowed male youth to develop into effective leaders as evidenced by their interracial and cross-gender approach to organizing. Through a feminist framework, mentors worked with the youth leaders to help them understand how toxic masculinity will lead to undesirable consequences. Mentors assisted the male youth leaders to rebuild their sense of masculinity that emphasized interdependency, community, and intersectionality.

These findings shed light on the importance of challenging masculinity in the Asian and Asian American communities, especially for young males. Xu believed that the mentorship he received helped him develop his own mentorship strategies to connect with young males in the community.

> Yeah, I think because of my identity, I was able to connect with the students more, and there was more trust and understanding, and because I was exposed to different kinds of mentorship, I was able to bring something new to them. Parents will come to me and say things like, "Well, my kids are terrible, they don't listen at all." They would ask me, "How come they listen to you?" I would tell them, "Well, my experience with them is very different. They are great and I love them." (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016)

The ability to connect with the young male mentees was something that all the mentors struggled with. Xu connected with the mentees by listening and telling the mentees that it was okay to express their feelings. Xu and other mentors believed that this predisposition to guard their feelings was a part of the toxic masculinity that permeated through the Asian American and Asian immigrant community. Doung, a youth leader, talked about the difficulty of addressing emotions when trying to deconstruct masculinity and while constructing a more positive identity for the youth.

> I think also, a lot of self-doubt and insecurity, so not entirely masculinity at work, but really to push them to do that so that they could be the next youth apprentices, for example. I feel like a lot of groundwork is needed to really do a one-on-one like that. (D. Ly, personal communication, January 27, 2017)

With the renewed effort on the part of foundations and community organizations to research and support the development of and advocate for the success of boys and men of color, there must be a recommitment to ensure that women are an integral part of the conversation. Women mentors provide a perspective of masculinity that cannot be obtained by men alone. Much of the conversation in the boys and men of color space focuses on the relationships between males, not among females. This dissertation demonstrates that, especially for Asian Americans, women play as big, or bigger, role as their male counterparts in reimagining what masculinity entails. More emphasis on the female mentorship of young men would allow for a complex and layered understanding of masculinity, sexism, and the steps towards understanding intersectionality.

Intersectionality While interrogating their masculinity, male mentees began to understand the intersectionality of oppression that extends beyond race alone to also include sex, citizenship status, language ability, etc. As Terriquez found, understanding the intersectionality of oppression has been demonstrated as a key factor in the development of youth organizing (Terriquez, 2015). Through the experiences and narratives of the Asian American organizers in Philadelphia, this study adds to this research by detailing an origin or entry point to understanding intersectionality. Doung's development as a leader began in a similar manner. Doung and the other mentees felt that by reimagining their own masculinity, they fully grasped the concept of intersectionality.

Youth reported that once they started to fully understand the effects of systemic racism through intersectionality, they began to empathize with other communities of color. Xu recalled a conference he attended in which he fully understood how White supremacy and intersectionality can unite communities of color,

> I was like, "Wow, everybody's having problem with everybody. The only people that's missing from all the struggles and fights are the White people. How come people are not in conflict with them?" It's because they don't live in our community. Their conditions, compared to people of color, their conditions are better. I met people from different communities and they showed me a lot of love, especially a few Black organizers. They really showed me love, and that was like that ... Because I had a lot of anger towards the black community too, because of what their students in our school did to us. [The Black organizers] changed my experience and I wanted to find out why we were fighting each other. (X. Lin, personal communication, October 24, 2016)

Developing an understanding of systemic racism helped lead to the success of the multiethnic alliance for safer schools. Although there was a breakdown of the coalition because of competing goals, youth were able to reimagine what interracial justice practice could look like. Youth were also determined to find a method to support all communities of color in Philadelphia in the fight for educational equity without compromising their own goals.

Through long conversations among community organizations, the youth developed their own theory of change. The general agenda for the youth was to bring communities together to combat systemic racism in schools and other institutions. Youth understood that each community has different issues and strengths to solve those issues. Although each policy has different implications for each community, youth still have the opportunity to discuss and advocate for how this policy will affect them. By promoting and fostering the growth of each community, youth are developing a system of shared governance for advocacy that should lead to a renaissance of youth organizing.

Contributions to Racial Frameworks

Along with the implications for youth organizing, my dissertation also makes significant contributions to interracial justice frameworks, Asian American critical race studies in education, and using ethnographic historical methods to study race.

Interracial Justice Framework Youth organizers have a unique ability to identify and find solutions to issues facing their communities. The Asian and Asian American youth in Philadelphia were able to quickly identify the structural issues that were hampering their survival and created a framework for organizing that led to practical and systemic changes to the school district. They were able to move quickly because they understood Yamamoto's interracial justice framework and adapted it to develop positive relationships with other communities of color. Much of development of the youths' knowledge of interracial justice of their knowledge of intersectionality was based on their reidentification of masculinity. Although Yamamoto does not emphasize gender in the interracial justice, I argue that the role of gender is essential to the development of an intersectional approach to interracial justice. Specifically, interracial justice must adapt the lessons from critical feminist theories like Chicana feminism which emphasized experiential knowledge and a third space, among other important themes (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Integration of critical feminist theories will lead to a reidentification of masculinity and begin the process of the youth's understanding of interracial justice. Therefore, gender must be an integral element to the development of an intersectional approach to interracial justice.

Yamamoto's interracial justice praxis framework has four steps to achieve social justice. First, recognition asks individuals and groups to develop a conceptual understanding of systemic oppression. Second, responsibility requests that those who have caused harm to understand their part in the act of oppression and take responsibility for their actions. Third, reconstruction entails

redeveloping positive relationships among individuals and groups to build social capital among themselves to prevent trouble in the future. Finally, reparations seal the new relationship with a sharing and distribution of resources to atone for past wrongdoing and create a sense of dependency to achieve interracial justice. Although these four steps are praxis oriented, the youth in this dissertation have shown that it is also important to reformulate what interracial justice is. Therefore, the final step to Yamamoto's interracial justice framework should be to support the reimagination of interracial justice. Reimagination calls for individuals and groups to evolve interracial justice for their local context. Geography, history, sexual identity, and other identities associated with race must be taken into account when developing a plan for interracial justice. The youth of Philadelphia understood this and made it a priority to focus on the intersectional oppression all communities were facing.

Genesis Amnesia Rev. Dr. Michael Eric Dyson once said in a speech that nostalgia is often wrapped in historical amnesia (Davis, personal communication, October 10, 2017). He made this comment in reference to those that believe that racialized events like slavery were not as horrific as they are written in history books. This type of thinking erases the generational racism and oppression experienced by many communities of color. For Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), the recording of history has a direct linage to the creation of power and subordination of communities. Bourdieu and Passeron described this phenomenon, genesis amnesia, as the process of those with power creating and teaching the oppressed a version of history that benefits those in power while further subjugating the oppressed. Although Bourdieu and Passeron theorized the concept of genesis amnesia, they did not fully conceptualize a method to prevent or remedy its effects. This dissertation adds to the remedy of genesis amnesia by demonstrating that

through activism and consistent debunking of stereotypes, communities of color can produce a more nuanced history of the oppressed.

There is an African proverb that says, “The lion’s story will never be told if the hunter tells it”. The hunter or the dominant culture often dictates what is remembered and what can be forgotten. Those in power often reposition those that lost or are oppressed in history. For example, Japanese American internment was considered a necessary evil to prevent sabotage on the United States mainland. In the 1980s, the perception of internment changed as Japanese Americans gained power through business and the government. Now internment is considered a prime example of racial profiling and a violation of a group of people based on their ethnicity.

The stories of the students involved in the boycott and the building of multiethnic alliances in Philadelphia have faded from many people’s memory. Since then, public perception of the Asian community has shifted back to believing in the model minority with honorary White status. However, the student leaders in the boycott have become key stakeholders in the Asian American community of Philadelphia and continue to push to disrupt the model minority myth. Their stories help reaffirm that genesis amnesia plays a key role in the propagation of racism.

The youth leaders who emerged during the boycott used their experiences to advocate against genesis amnesia’s occurrence. They use the history of Asian American activism as drive to continue their community organizing with all communities of color in an alliance. Hopefully, their activism helps dismantle genesis amnesia while building a more accurate representation of the Asian American community of Philadelphia.

Historical Ethnography To combat genesis amnesia and highlight the stories of the Asian American youth organizers and mentors in Philadelphia, I used historical ethnography in combination with critical race methodologies. By using counter storytelling with the three tenets

of historical ethnography identified by Hunter (2015) (access, representation, and causality), I was able to intimately link race and history in such a way that the narratives of the youth organizers and mentors told a story about racism, resistance, alliance building, and interracial justice. By telling these stories, I was able to draw connections and develop causal relationships between youth organizing in Philadelphia in 2009 and how it has evolved in the many years since the initial 2009 boycott.

Historical ethnography provides race historians the tools to find the forgotten voices in the archives, represent the life histories of the silenced, and adapt historical techniques of combating systemic racism to address contemporary racial issues like genesis amnesia. Using historical ethnography to study historical racial issues can directly combat genesis amnesia because of its rigor as a methodology, focus on representing all voices, and ensuring that we do not think the effects of history are only in the past. James Baldwin (1966) echoes the importance of understanding history in a piece he wrote for *Ebony*,

> History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations. (Baldwin, 1966, p. 174)

Understanding that our living histories are what guide our biases, drives, and dreams is the first step towards dismantling genesis amnesia and recreating our identities.

Limitations

Although this dissertation provides many insights into the process and outcomes of youth organizing and development, there are aspects to this study that I must acknowledge if the findings are going to be generalized to the greater community of organizers. First, this study focused on a particular moment and place as a means to analyze the complex process of youth organizing and development. Although my interviews and archival samples do provide a view of the Asian American organizing community, there are limits to talking about Asian American organizing so generally. Also, given that significant time has passed since the original campaign for school safety, some key informants in the Philadelphia community were unavailable because of death or discontinued contact. For these reasons, it is necessary to continue research on the past and present experiences and developmental processes of Asian American youth organizers across the country to account for the ethnic, geographic, and generational diversity of the Asian American community.

Future Research

To assist youth in their work for racial equity in schools, further research must be conducted. First, more interviews with Asian American youth organizers about their experiences, techniques, and identify formation across the United States will further understanding of the diversity of issues Asian American youth face around the country. Continued interviews with Asian American youth around the United States will also allow researchers to highlight best practices, examine issues youth experience in local communities, and analyze race and racism. Through an expanded interview pool, we deepen our understanding of the understudied and rapidly growing Asian American communities while creating opportunities for the growth and prosperity of Asian American youth.

Interviewing Asian American youth organizers across the country will also allow us to understand the nuances in intergenerational, citizenship status, gender, and sexuality in the mentoring process. Because the Asian American community is so diverse, it is important to disaggregate and highlight the important work conducted in LGBT rights, undocumented students, and political rights in schools.

To advance these studies, more thought and research must go into studying the historical and contemporary roots of activism in Asian American communities. Historical ethnography methodology must further theorize and develop to help researchers understand the benefits of studying the causality between the past and the present. History has been used to oppress communities of color through methods like genesis amnesia. The more we can revive and support our communities through storytelling, the more we will be able to combat the negative effects of racism, and advance the cause for racial equity.

Conclusion

Youth organizers are doing amazing work to combat racial inequity in schools and create equitable access to educational opportunities for all students. In 2017, the city council of Philadelphia held a public town hall meeting to talk about the racial conditions in the city's schools. Some of the first students to speak were from the Asian and Asian American communities. The students spoke in Cantonese, English, and Vietnamese to express their concerns with the lack of counselors, ESL teachers, and the way they have been treated in their respective schools. As the Asian and Asian American students spoke, it became apparent to the people in the room that these students were experiencing schooling in a radically different way than they had previously thought because of the model minority myth. After the students spoke, the other speakers in the room continually referenced the power and impact the narratives of the

Asian students had on them. The audience seemed to agree that the school district needs to do more to address and remedy the concerns of all students that were experiencing oppression because of their race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, etc.

As I reflected on this town hall, I was determined that this dissertation would challenge the majoritarian narrative in two ways: first, to demonstrate that Asian Americans are not the silent model minority that history has made them out to be; and second, to disrupt the process of remembering the history of those in power. Through interviews with community leaders and document analysis of archival materials, this dissertation showcased the narratives of youth, mentors, and community members from the South Philadelphia High School 2009 boycott and campaign for safer schools. Youth showed that they were able to quickly and effectively develop as leaders in the Asian American community to challenge the school district over its racially hostile practices and policies. Youth were also able to develop and maintain intra and interethnic alliances among all the communities of color in Philadelphia that are still active today as evidenced by strategic support of the Black Lives Matter Movement I described earlier.

Asian Americans should not and cannot continue to be perceived by social justice organizations as the silent model minority. The Asian American community has the willingness and ability to assist in the creation of a larger political movement for social and racial justice in the United States. Through a lens of critical race studies and interracial justice, this study validates the power of Asian American youth and highlights the strength of interracial justice frameworks.

In sum, this research built upon the works of critical race scholars, interracial justice frameworks, and historical methods. Through qualitative inquiry based on historical ethnography, this dissertation adds a critical lens to the experiences of youth organizers,

interracial alliances, and challenging masculinity. As scholars advance our understanding of the development of youth organizers, we must continue to recognize that research must have practical implications for the communities we study and are a part of. We must acknowledge our responsibility and power as critical scholars to nurture our communities through our research.

EPILOGUE: Paddling the Same Dragon Boat

During my conversations with my interview participants and with community members, I was constantly invited to participate in Dragon Boat. Dragon Boat is a Chinese rowing sport that requires a team of people to row a long boat from one point to another. Upon reflection, I saw the direct parallels between the youth's theory of alliances and dragon boat.

After a horrific event in his family, Xu decided to take a hiatus from formal community organizing and spend more time with his kin. His family recently opened a restaurant in Chinatown. I would often go to the restaurant to write and have milk tea and a snack. On a wall in the middle of the restaurant is a shelf with multiple trophies and a couple of boat paddles. The trophies and paddles are from the dragon boat competitions that AAU participate in.

Dragon Boat has become a significant summertime activity for youth of AAU and the greater Asian community of Philadelphia. Every week, community members will make their way to the Schuylkill River and paddle up and down the river for practice. At the end of my interview with Wei, he invited me out to the water and talked about the significance of the Dragon Boat team. "The Dragon Boat is really awesome right now. It is an event that many young are participating in, because we able to make it a fun activity." Our discussion of the Dragon Boat helped me draw comparisons between the youth driven multiethnic alliances that were being developed in Philadelphia and what it means to be a part of a dragon boat team.

Before getting onto the water, the team needs to be assembled. When the Philadelphia dragon boat team started, a small group of community members from Asian Americans United got together around a common interest. The rowers that participated spoke their own languages and brought their own issues. Wei explained that, "…many of our older participants don't speak English, the only thing they can do is casino." Often language or cultural barriers create tensions

among people from different backgrounds. At the school district, these tensions created misperceptions and violence. As Principal Hackney explained,

> [The students] couldn't really communicate with each other. It gave this impression of oh they think they're better than us. Without an explanation and segregating the student populations and not having them go to class with each other and not aiding in the language barriers, you have a lot of Asian students who then stick to other Asian students because those are the ones they can communicate with. Those are the ones they go to class with. There's no mechanism for introducing them or really integrating them into the school population. It creates these misperceptions. (O. Hackney, personal communication, April 5, 2016)

On the water, these misperceptions can cause a team to struggle or stray off course. As with an alliance, the Dragon Boat rowers need to maintain consistent dialogue, support collective capacity, and reflect on the situation to adapt to changing situations. It takes a concerted effort to understand each person's strengths, weaknesses, common practices, and personality. Although little dialogue occurs on the water, non-verbal forms of communication are still present and essential to the team's success. Team members must understand and look for the non-verbal cues from team members that are rowing out of sync or struggling to maintain pace. At these times, the other rowers must adapt their tactics and offer collective support through encouragement, physical training, or improving rowing techniques. Although it would be easy to dismiss the rower from the team, the dragon boat team takes the time and effort to build the group's collective capacity to build community and achieve success.

On the water, there are many things that can go wrong. The weather on race day could be stormy and create waves and turbulence. When this happens, the rowers must be able to adapt and change their tactics to make it safe enough to row together. An alliance has to deal with similar issues. Its members should not anticipate ideal environmental conditions or an absence of issues and unexpected distractions. Principal Hackney acknowledged that he could not protect all the students all of the time: "…every once in a while, an issue would come up, but nothing major, and it was more so how you handled it because I told everybody, I said, 'I will never promise you that we won't have another incident, but I will promise you that we will address it quickly and appropriately.'" Alliances need to understand that there will be challenges to the stability to member organizations. For example, people having reactionary oppositional behavioral tendencies and people that actively work to disrupt the progress that has been made. This is when members must educate those people about the benefits of transformational resistance. Dragon Boat racing requires much more than each team member paddling as fast as she can go. Such reactionary behavior leads to disorganization and more difficult navigation because of the misalignment of the boat. The Dragon Boat rowers practice a form of transformational behavior to understand that they are working towards the same goal of moving down the river at a fast pace.

Although Dragon Boat is a small aspect of Philadelphia's Chinese community, it has a significant cultural impact for many Chinese and Asian youth. Wei told me that Dragon Boat is more than just winning trophies at competitions: "…this is our activity, this is our tradition, and this is a team-building game." Together the team is moving towards the goal by supporting each other. Everyone has to paddle in the same direction. Each relies on the other to move forward. Wei emphasizes that "we want to bring team pride back to the community. I think that those are

also valuable for now, for me to continue doing it, because this is a peaceful, and a thing to teach young people. That we are really on the same boat. If they not paddling, we're all gonna lose." We are paddling against the tide of racism and we all need to be paddling in the same direction, make it upstream.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Demographic Information of South Philadelphia High School (SDP, 2014)

Total Enrollment: 761
Percent of Students Classified as English Language Learner: 21.7%
Percent of Students with Disabilities: 28.8%
Race/Ethnicity Breakdown:

- White: 8.3%
- African American: 59.7%
- Asian: 19.6%
- Latino: 10.6%
- Pacific Islander: 0%
- American Indian: 0.1%
- Other: 1.7%

Appendix 2: Demographic Information of the Philadelphia City School District (U.S. Census, 2010)

Population Total: 1,447,395

- Male: 677,492
- Female: 769,903

School Enrollment:

- Total Enrollment: 403,589
- Preschool: 6.3%
- Kindergarten: 4.2%
- Elementary School (grades 1-8): 38.2%
- High School: (grades 9-12) 20.7%
- College or Graduate School: 30.6%

Race/Ethnicity Breakdown:

- White: 42.4%
- African American: 43.4%
- Asian: 5.5%
- Latino: 11.3%
- Pacific Islander: 0%
- American Indian: 0.4%

Citizenship Status Breakdown:

- Native: 89.5%
- Foreign-Born: 10.5%

Appendix 3: Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Civic participation in the Asian American community

Michael Ishimoto, from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your knowledge about the 2009 student campaign in Philadelphia to create safer schools. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

This study will examine what factors go into creating student leaders and student led campaigns for school reform. The goal of this study is to understand best practices towards developing interethnic student coalitions.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Participate in three hour long audiotaped interview

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation will take a total of about three hours over two months.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

- There is no potential risk or discomfort to participating in this study

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

The results of the research may influence how Asian American student leaders reach out to other ethnic communities to develop coalitional support.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of a secure computer and a lockbox located at

UCLA. You have the right to review, edit or erase the research tapes of your participation in whole or in part.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

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

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

- **The research team:**
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers.

  Principle Investigator
  Michael Ishimoto – mishimoto@ucla.edu

  Faculty Sponsor
  Dr. Daniel Solórzano, PhD – Solórzano@gseis.ucla.edu

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**
  If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

  UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
  11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
  Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

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

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

____
Name of Participant

____ ________________________
Signature of Participant Date

Appendix 5: Interview Protocol

Part I: Focused Life History – Placing Participants' Experience in Context

a. Tell me about how you came to live and study in Philadelphia.
b. Tell me about your experiences living in Philadelphia before 2009.
c. Tell me about your experiences in South Philadelphia High School before 2009.
    i. Focus on the school racial climate.
d. Tell me a little about your prior experiences with student activism.
e. Tell me about what happened on December 9th, 2009.

Part II: Details of Experience – Concrete Details of Student Campaign Experience

a. Tell me about what happened immediately after December 9th, 2009
b. What was your strategy for your call to action?
c. What happened in the following days after the campaign started?
d. What was the response of other communities around the campaign?
e. What techniques did you and the other student leaders use to develop solidarity in the Philadelphia community?
f. Did the campaign bring about change? If so, what kind of change?

Part III: Reflections of Meaning – Intellectual and Emotion Connection to History

a. How important is this campaign to the Philadelphia and Asian American community?
b. Have you experienced any positive or negative consequences to participating in the campaign?
c. How do you think the Philadelphia community sees Asian Americans today?
d. Have interethnic relations changed in Philadelphia, if so how?
e. What things are important when developing a campaign?

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