University of New Mexico
UNM Digital Repository

Sociology ETDs Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Summer 8-1-2023

Disrupting Whiteness in Education Organizations: Community Testimonios of Strategy, Resistance, and Perseverance in Educational Justice Organizing

Florence E. Castillo
University of New Mexico

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/soc_etds

Part of the Sociology Commons

Recommended Citation
Castillo, Florence E.. "Disrupting Whiteness in Education Organizations: Community Testimonios of Strategy, Resistance, and Perseverance in Educational Justice Organizing." (2023). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/soc_etds/109

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

Florence Emilia Castillo

Candidate

Sociology

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Nancy López, PhD, Chairperson

Ranita Ray, PhD

Elizabeth Korver-Glenn, PhD

Nolan Cabrera, PhD

Disrupting Whiteness in Education Organizations: Community *Testimonios* of Strategy, Resistance, and Perseverance in Educational Justice Organizing

by

FLORENCE EMILIA CASTILLO

B.A., International Relations & Global Affairs; Spanish, 2006
M.A., Latin American Studies, 2013

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Sociology

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

August, 2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents Carmen Castillo Silos and Baldomero Castillo Chavira as well as to all the immigrants and children of immigrants who understand the struggle and perseverance necessary to survive and thrive in this country. It is not an easy path, and we are not all granted the same opportunities in this society. When one of us succeeds, we recognize that these degrees and accomplishments belong to all of us, collectively. This dissertation belongs to us all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My most heartfelt thanks to my dissertation chair and advisor, Dr. Nancy López, who has been my mentor, teacher, counselor, and family over the last decade. You are the type of mentor of which every woman of color attempting to survive academia with their soul intact dreams. Without you, I would not be the scholar-activist I am today. You have taught me how to use my position in academia to constantly engage in "good trouble," and for that, I am grateful. In addition, you have modeled for me how to bring all those things into academic spaces that make us who we are: convivencia, cariño, and consejos.

I also want to thank my dissertation committee for all their guidance throughout this process as well as their valuable feedback. Dr. Elizabeth Korver-Glenn, you taught me that allies and accomplices can maneuver in many ways, and I always appreciate how you have made space for me and been an advocate. I hope we continue to work together! Dr. Nolan Cabrera, thank you for having my back and for continuing to challenge and push me intellectually, even when it felt uncomfortable. I appreciate how you do this while simultaneously making me feel that I can reach those heights you set. Finally, Dr. Ranita Ray, your work has inspired me to push beyond the boundaries of sociology and make the field more radical. I only wish I had gotten to experience your kindness and encouragement sooner.

Thank you to my fiancé, partner, and friend Jeffrey B. Waddill. There were so many times I wanted to give up, and you pushed me to continue, reminding me that I was so close. Thank you for always listening to me vent, offering an ear to help me think through an idea, and being my support system when things became too overwhelming to handle alone. I love you and appreciate all you do for me (and Shuri), and I hope to repay that someday.

To all the staff and students at El Centro de la Raza, ustedes son mi corazón. My first year at this institution was rough. I would not have stayed in my program if I had not found a home and a comunidad with each of you. You are part of my chosen family, and I owe a debt of gratitude to Rosa Isela Cervantes, Jorge Garcia, Alejandro Mendiaz-Rivera, Daniel Torres-Chaparro, Rodolfo Becerril, Luis Calderon Reyes, Noemi Gutierrez, Armando Bustamante, and Yesenia Ruiz.

Alejandro, thank you for choosing me for El Puente so many years ago – you will never know how that changed my trajectory. Thank you to all my students who allowed me to mentor them through El Puente. You have made me a better listener, teacher, and leader, and I am overjoyed to see each of your successes. I also want to thank my fellow graduate research fellows over the years for helping me grow, being sounding boards for my research ideas, and always offering your time to give me feedback over the years. Gracias, especialmente to Natalia Toscano, Gustavo Garcia, and Ana Milan Hinostroza for your friendship, support, and willingness to embark on co-authorship together!

Finally, I must acknowledge the outstanding community members and friends that have always been vulnerable, sincere, and honest with me. Albuquerque would not have felt like home had I not found such amazingly open and empathetic people willing to make space for me and call me one of their own. Thank you to all the families, parents, students, teachers, principals, allied administrators, and to Families United for Education for continuing to push for liberatory education and who will not stop at anything less than one day fulfilling the community dream of educational justice.

Disrupting Whiteness in Education Organizations: Community *Testimonios* of Strategy, Resistance, and Perseverance in Educational Justice Organizing

by

FLORENCE EMILIA CASTILLO

B.A., International Relations & Global Affairs; Spanish, 2006
M.A., Latin American Studies, 2013
PhD, Sociology, 2023

ABSTRACT

Through this project, I utilize multiple approaches to disrupt whiteness. I make a case for centering Indigenous and non-Western methods, such as testimonio in sociological studies, to disrupt the academic whiteness of knowledge creation and validation. Whiteness itself is amorphous and looks different depending on circumstances, location, who holds power, and context (Hughey 2016). Utilizing a theory of racialized organizations, I shed light on how whiteness is normalized in education institutions through race-neutral, everyday actions (Ray 2019). This further disrupts whiteness by rendering it visible. Finally, I highlight the different modes of resistance that educational activists use to disrupt whiteness. This includes traditional organizing strategies such as power analysis, asset mapping, and actions that target the most powerful actors within the school district. I further theorize community care as a non-traditional form of resistance to white supremacy and illustrate how this is centered and what it looks like in action.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES viii

CHAPTER 1 Introduction........ 1

Positionality and Critical Self-Reflexivity 5

A Brief Roadmap of the Project 7

CHAPTER 2 Disrupting Whiteness through *Testimonios* of Ethnic Studies and Educational Justice Organizing: Centering Decolonizing Methods in Sociological Research 11

What is a testimonio? 13

Methods, Data Collection & Population 16

What is meant by decolonizing methods? 19

Principles of Indigenous Methodologies 21

Figure 1: Principles of Indigenous Methodologies by Dr. Constance Khupe 22

A Decolonizing Indigenous Framework 26

Figure 2: A Decolonizing Indigenous Framework – A Visual Representation Developed by Dr. Samuel B. Torres 27

Lessons Learned from Utilizing Testimonio........ 31

Sociological Impacts of Testimonio........ 38

CHAPTER 3: "Making Whiteness Strange": Applying Racialized Organizational Theory in an Analysis of a Southwest School District to Displace Whiteness 41

Theoretical Framework 45

Data and Analysis........ 49

Tenets of Racialized Organizations Observed in a Southwest School District........ 51

Tenet 1: Enhanced/Diminished Agency of Racial Groups 51

Tenet 2: Legitimizing Unequal Resource Distribution 55

Tenet 3: Racialization and Credentialing Whiteness........ 58

Tenet 4: Racialized Decoupling of Rules and Practices........ 61

Limitations of and Expansions to Theory of Racialized Organizations........ 64

Community Serving Schools 64

Whites Who Resist........ 66

The Need for Intersectionality 69

Conclusion........ 72

CHAPTER 4 Traditional Modes of Resistance and Community Care: How Community Organizers Challenge, Resist, and Survive White Supremacy in Educational Organizations 73
Theoretical Framework: Black and Chicana Feminist Theories of Liberatory Praxis.. 77
Methods and Data Analysis 79
Local Context 81
Traditional Modes of Resistance 83
Power Analysis through Power Mapping 84
Figure 3: Power Map developed by Education Justice Organizers 88
Asset Mapping 89
Anti-Racist Training & Workshops 91
Community-Sponsored School Board Candidate Forums 94
Interfacing with the School Board 96
Community Care and Convivencia as Resistance 100
Convivencia 100
Being a "net-work" 102
Joy and Gratitude 103
Love 104
Reflections and Conclusion 105
CHAPTER 5 Disrupting Whiteness as a Lifelong Commitment: 110
Reflections and Implications for Future Work 110
Sociological Implications 111
Expanding Sociological Boundaries 112
Studying the Meso-Level 113
Limitations 113
Future Projects and Research 114
REFERENCES 117

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Principles of Indigenous Methodologies by Dr. Constance Khupe 22

Figure 2: A Decolonizing Indigenous Framework – A Visual Representation Developed by Dr. Samuel B. Torres 27

Figure 3: Power Map developed by Education Justice Organizers 88

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

In 2016, I had the privilege of co-creating an ethnic studies research practice partnership alongside and under the guidance of my mentor and Principal Investigator (PI), Dr. Nancy López. We initially sought to measure the impacts of the ethnic studies curriculum on students enrolled in these classes. Our project seemed feasible on paper since we were living in the immediate aftermath of the New Mexico state legislation passing a law requiring ethnic studies to be offered as a high school elective across the state. This law resulted from years of educational justice activists organizing for the inclusion of ethnic studies.

We soon realized the naïveté in our assumptions that laws somehow reflected the will to fund and implement ethnic studies classes, even when trained, transformative teachers were ready to teach them. We discovered that the grim reality-ethnic studies implementation was fragmented at best and that the two or three schools with successful ethnic studies programs had dual-credit partnerships with the Chicana/o studies department at the university. Across the district, ethnic studies were the proverbial "black sheep" where "bad" teachers were forced to go as punishment for subpar teaching or where Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) teachers – sometimes from fields like biology or math - were randomly reassigned based solely on their BIPOC identity. These practices were exacerbated by the lack of training and workshops that teachers desperately wanted but that the school district "just could not afford."

Over the first few years of the project, there was one constant: roadblocks and challenges primarily attributed to funding, but that exposed a lack of will. Administrators in the district would inform us that they could not afford to pay for ethnic studies

professional development, it could not afford to pay substitutes for teachers to attend various full-day workshops throughout the year and could not implement changes without miles of bureaucratic red tape. As activist scholars, we quickly put our research agenda aside and asked teachers what they *needed* from us instead. From that feedback, we got to work- through community connections and grassroots networks of which my Principal Investigator (PI) and I are a part, we managed to knock on doors, fundraise, and apply for grants to fund a personalized two-day workshop led by teachers and facilitators from the Xicanx Institute for Teaching and Organizing (XITO) for ethnic studies educators in our district. We followed this up with four additional workshops created by community partners throughout the year, which followed XITO's model of transformative pedagogies. We even partnered with a local collective of immigrant *mujeres* to provide culturally centered lunches on-site at the local teacher’s union to encourage teachers to talk to one another and form a community together since the practices of *pláticas* and *convivencia* are central to Chicanx epistemologies.

We scheduled these workshops during teacher professional development days whenever possible. We hustled until we found a way that teachers could have substitutes paid for on the days that conflicted with the school calendar. We had an answer to ALL the concerns and roadblocks laid out by the administration, and in turn, all we needed from district administrators was to use their internal networks to advertise and spread the word. While we had between ten and fifteen teachers attend the various workshops, we knew many more teachers would benefit from this. So why were they not interested? We later found out that district officials buried the advertisement in the last pages of a district-wide monthly newsletter and that this had been the only attempt made by the

district to connect teachers with these free workshops. Again, we were reminded that the organizational will was non-existent.

The research showed many obstacles to successful ethnic studies implementation that teachers, schools, and principals faced. As a result, we created a policy brief to present to the district that included immediate recommendations that could be implemented at very little to no cost since we had constantly been reminded that money was the supposed barrier to implementation. We suggested several things the district could implement immediately after the meeting that would cost them nothing. We were so excited to present our findings and recommendations! We were even more emboldened in believing that the time for change was now, as then Congresswoman Deb Haaland, one of the first Indigenous women elected to Congress, had summoned us to her office after hearing about our work to see how she could support our efforts.

After our presentation, the lead administrator, a white woman who had only recently come into her position (the BIPOC woman that had primarily supported our work had recently left because her work environment grew more hostile each day) looked at us and sighed. After a long pause, she responded, "So much of this just seems unnecessary. We do not need a district-wide requirement. You know, every student does not need to be transformed." I do not remember much of the rest of the meeting, but I remember feeling as if I had been punched in the gut. I sat there processing all of this and was startled back into reality just as the meeting ended when I saw the look of horror on the face of an esteemed Black male principal that had supported our work since the beginning. As she left the room, the white administrator stopped to pat him on his head and touch his hair.

I remember thinking this woman was obviously racist, and it was just that she was the wrong person to approach for change. However, it was more than that. There was something inherently wrong with the structure and educational organization that allowed these actions to go unchallenged and to appear acceptable (Ray 2019). The experiences of that day promptly led me to shift my focus from curriculum implementation to the power structures and the hegemonic ideology of white supremacy that these educational interventions seek to disrupt. Hegemonic ideologies are most effective when normalized to the point of being rendered invisible. I realized that the abundant focus on transformative practices, critical pedagogies, and the enormous attention paid to what teachers could do in the classroom did not address the elephant in the room – that all these efforts are futile if scholars do nothing to name and disrupt the mechanisms of white supremacy that keep these transformative projects from taking root in the first place.

We went into that meeting informed by all the best scholars on curriculum, pedagogy, ethnic studies, anti-racism, and community-based educational models. We had answers for all the objections the district threw at us. Nevertheless, we were unsuccessful. To this day, while school board members and congresswomen have praised our recommendations, to our knowledge, they have yet to be adapted or implemented.

This project aims to disrupt whiteness through multiple approaches. First, theoretically, and methodologically, I make a case for centering Indigenous and non-Western methods, such as *testimonio* in social science inquiry, to disrupt whiteness in knowledge creation and validation. Whiteness is not a color, but rather a set of power relations and as such, can be replicated on a different color axis in the absence of a

white/nonwhite power dynamic (Mills 1997:127). Whiteness itself is amorphous and looks different depending on circumstances, location, who holds power, and context (Hughey 2016). To this point, I disrupt whiteness by making it strange and rendering it visible in seemingly race-neutral, everyday actions of racialized organizations (Ray 2019). Finally, I utilize the *testimonios* shared to highlight the traditional modes of resistance enacted by educational activists to disrupt whiteness and further theorize community care as resistance. Through this project, I ask three fundamental questions: 1) What does whiteness look like within a K-12 educational organization? 2) What mechanisms are used to uphold, protect, and render whiteness hegemonic by organizational actors who benefit from a racialized organization? and 3) What strategies do parents, community, and teachers (educational activists) fighting for educational justice deploy to fight against whiteness and white supremacy?

Positionality and Critical Self-Reflexivity

I am a Spanish-speaking Chicana and visibly Brown cis-gendered woman born in the barrio of Pleasant Grove in Dallas, TX. This barrio is composed primarily of Chicanos, Black Americans, and recent immigrants from Mexico and El Salvador. While we came from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, my neighborhood friends and I were united in our shared economic *pobreza*. Like many of us in that 'hood, I grew up impoverished as the daughter of working-class parents. I am the first in my immediate family to earn a four-year college degree and the only person in my entire extended family to earn a Ph.D. My mom is a second-generation Chicana whose family followed the *cosecha*, or harvest, in Nebraska, where they eventually settled in the late 1940s. My dad is the second oldest sibling in his family and came originally from Chihuahua,

México as an undocumented worker to help his parents support his surviving seven siblings. His father was a Bracero, a term referring to the thousands of immigrant men imported to the United States from México on short-term labor contracts under the Bracero Program of 1942. This program was established by an executive order called the Mexican Farm Labor Program (Library of Congress 2023).

I was robbed of this historical knowledge and of my grandfather's direct role in it until I began to learn more about Chicanx studies in my late twenties in a master's level independent study on the history of ethnic studies in 2012. At the time, I was following the well-publicized battle in Arizona, which began with the introduction of legislation to ban ethnic studies from Arizona's public-school curriculum. I was immediately drawn to ethnic studies and disillusioned with the education system because, as a Chicana from the hood, I had never been taught about the fundamental historical, political, and cultural contributions to United States society made by people who looked like me. All the students in the schools I attended from K-12 were predominately Brown and Black. Yet, we had never been exposed to Chicano, Black, or Indigenous Studies within my K-12 education – it was not until that master's course that I began to learn what Howard Zinn calls "the people's history of the United States" – the voices from the very people that had experienced U.S. led atrocities and marginalization in the name of "progress" and "nation" first-hand (Zinn 2005). This led me to seek out projects and research that allowed me to learn more about ethnic studies and their impact on BIPOC youth. I also learned how to engage in the critical pedagogical practices at the center of transformative ethnic studies in my own teaching.

Being of the barrio and having begun my social science training in anthropology, I became critical of the academic practices of "studying down" or "studying the Other," which usually meant research projects focused on communities such as my own that were framed in academically theoretical ways and rarely considered the positionality and personal framing of the academics undertaking these studies. My personal research ethics are born out of challenging this model and are shaped by the intentionality of centering the knowledges, lived experiences, cultural wealth, and the needs of the communities that are often the target of academic fetishization (Yosso 2005).

Constant reflexivity is central to my commitment to critically examine my social location and relationality in grids of power and my responsibility to my community. With this commitment comes an understanding and acknowledgment that, as an academic, I now possess privileges that I did not have before entering the institution and that are not usually afforded to people from my background. It is sometimes painful because it alienates me from my community, and I can no longer belong in the ways I once did. I occupy an uncomfortable space and live in a constant state of what Gloria Anzaldua calls "Nepantla" – a Nahuatl word that signifies the in-between space, ni de aquí ni de allá. As Anzaldúa shares, "It is very awkward, uncomfortable, and frustrating to be in that Nepantla because you are in the midst of transformation (Anzaldúa, 2012). I center this positionality and try to be intentional and thoughtful about my relationship with systems of power (Hill Collins 2009) as I navigate my interactions with community members that have historically been denied access to academic spaces.

A Brief Roadmap of the Project

This project is set up differently than traditional dissertation projects. For example, I do not include a literature review section in which to situate this project. This is by design. While each chapter is meant to stand alone as its own body of work that, when brought together with the other substantive chapters, speaks to a more extensive process of disrupting whiteness. The individual chapters are built upon their different theoretical frameworks, and I engage supporting literature throughout the chapter. Another key difference is that the methods chapter acts as its own substantive chapter. This is because I not only wanted to describe the methods that I used in this project, but part of the intervention this work aims to make is to disrupt what is considered "traditional" or "acceptable" research methods and design. However, one will notice that I include a brief overview and reminder of the methods in each chapter. Each chapter explains how data analysis was carried out for the research question governing that chapter.

In Chapter Two, I introduce *testimonio* as the method and methodology I used to carry out this project. *Testimonios* are first-hand narrative accounts of a significant political event, social struggle, or experience of oppression told by someone that is often silenced, marginalized, or rendered voiceless in traditional academic research and are understood as narratives of urgency and tools to give voice to silenced subaltern or marginalized persons through story-telling methods familiar to these communities (Reyes and Curry Rodriguez 2012). Throughout the chapter, I argue for including and accepting *testimonio* as a qualitative method in the social sciences, namely sociology. By unapologetically centering *testimonio,* I disrupt the whiteness of the academy by demonstrating the scientific value of utilizing Indigenous methods. I further position *testimonio* as an Indigenous research method and outline how I utilize *testimonio* and

conceptualize this project adhering to the tenets of Indigenous research methods. I conclude the chapter by discussing the implications of *testimonio* for more inclusive sociology by including it in our sociological toolkits (Headley, Jones, and Carter 2023).

Chapter Three is tasked with making whiteness strange. In this chapter, I take to heart Zeus Leonardo's call to make whiteness peculiar so that it can no longer be rendered normative (Leonardo 2013). For this task, I focus on rendering visible the ways that whiteness and white supremacy are maintained, protected, and normalized in education organizations. Here I use sociologist Victor Ray's theory of racialized organizations to unpack the everyday, seemingly race-neutral actions of people within meso-level organizations that ultimately work to further entrench and protect white supremacy. This chapter also heeds Ray's call to study meso-level institutions since research on racism and white supremacy tend to look at the structural macro systems or individual interactions but leave the meso-level understudied, which also fails to grasp the immense amount of power and social influence that presides at this level.

Chapter four focuses on community and educational justice activists themselves. In this chapter, I highlight how activists composed of teachers, students, parents, families, and other community members challenge, resist, and survive the white supremacy of racialized organizations they face in their struggles for educational equity. Communities resist in two critical ways. The first is through what I call "traditional" modes of resistance. This encompasses actions and organizing that most people engaged in activism may recognize because they embody actionable processes. The second is what I call community care, which encompasses how organizers build community together, share joy, celebrate love, and otherwise take care of each other as a means of self-care. I

base this analysis on Audre Lorde's concept of self-care and survival as an act of warfare (Lorde 1988).

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I discuss some of the possible implications of this work. I speak about the contributions this work can make to the field of sociology and the possibilities of normalizing decolonizing approaches to research in sociology writ large. I also acknowledge the limitations of this study and close with possibilities for future work.

CHAPTER 2 Disrupting Whiteness through *Testimonios* of Ethnic Studies and Educational Justice Organizing: Centering Decolonizing Methods in Sociological Research

> *Obviously, it's an ongoing conversation, so I like the concept of a testimonio because it's just like a little moment and like a little arrowhead that now we can contextualize some stuff. But I would like to see more of this where we're getting people, you know, that have a vision for how we can transform education, and we're documenting it, and we're getting that narrative out to the community. You know, so film through poetry, testimonio, and all this. – Chicano teacher and activist*

This work aims to highlight how white supremacy is maintained in the K-12 education system and outline the mechanisms that local community members engaged in educational justice actions employ to disrupt whiteness. While the next chapter will explore some of the difficulties of defining whiteness, I contend that whiteness is a system of unmarked privileges and advantages granted to White people under the unnamed political system of white supremacy that shapes the realities of all individuals in this hegemonic system (Mills 1997). The project itself goes beyond documentation and has been developed as an interventional manifestation of the praxis of displacing whiteness in academic research and practices with implications for how we can decolonize and reconstruct the power dynamics inherent in sociological research. For this reason, this project centers *on testimonio*, a decolonizing Chicana feminist research method that destabilizes the power dynamics between the researcher and community members (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona 2012; Reyes and Curry Rodriguez 2012).

Testimonio challenges presuppositions of legitimate knowledge and objectivity grounded in white supremacy and whiteness. It uplifts the voices of community members,

essentially rendered silent by educational institutions. Because *testimonios* belong to the community member and are guided by their personal experiences in a struggle or event, the researcher's agenda takes a backseat to what the individual sharing their *testimonio* believes to be the most critical information, stories, recollection of events, and personal reflections. While some social scientists may argue that this method is not valid because it cannot lead to capturing prevalent themes or generalizability (Bowden and Green 2010: 106), the reality is that because *testimonios* focus on a particularly urgent or salient struggle which community members of differing intersectional social locations are all directly experiencing, common themes and codes begin to emerge within the first few *testimonios* shared with the researcher.

Although people experience and move through life differently based on their intersectional identities, "groups have shared history based on their social locations in relations of power" (Collins 1997), and through these shared histories, group members tend to convey similar concerns or critical themes. Suppose the researcher takes an inductive approach and keeps an open mind about what they will learn through these personal retellings. In that case, they will be rewarded with far richer data that reveals critical themes and ideas that are relevant to a holistic understanding of the issue and that the researcher may not initially see as inter-connected or would have thought to ask about in a more pre-organized approach like structured or semi-structured interviews or even focus groups, for example.

This chapter lays out the method of *testimonio*, its epistemological roots, and its centrality as a method of academic decolonization. However, this chapter moves beyond an explanation of the method and methodology. It lays out *testimonio* as a direct way of

disrupting whiteness as it posits the subaltern as knowledge creators and experts, elevates voices routinely silenced by academia, and celebrates the richness and validity of communal practices and knowledges of the home. Further, because decolonizing methods create moments where the person sharing their *testimonio* can potentially relive traumas, they can become both spaces of healing and processing if the researcher allows the space and is morally and ethically invested in the emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being of the *testimonio* sharer. In the spirit of relationality and vulnerability, I share my reflections on the data collection process and the emotional and spiritual challenges as a community-grounded researcher of processing and handling such personal and heartfelt *testimonios* full of passion, pain, disappointment, loss, joys, and hope. Finally, this chapter ends with a brief discussion of the implications of *testimonio* as a decolonizing method for sociology.

What is a testimonio?

Testimonio is a research method and methodology based on Latin American cultures and was adapted in academic spaces by Chicana feminist epistemology (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona 2012; Reyes and Curry Rodriguez 2012). It is primarily used in Chicanx studies, Latin American studies, education, and critical studies by subaltern scholars. In this work, I use "subaltern" similarly to how it is understood in postcolonial studies, which refers to groups that are subordinated or excluded from hierarchies of power based on oppressed identities such as race, class, language, culture, colonized status, gender, and beyond (Prakesh 1994). *Testimonios* are understood as narratives of urgency, a tool to give voice to the silenced subaltern or marginalized persons through storytelling methods that are familiar to and embraced by subaltern

communities and are centered in the political necessity and are employed as a mechanism to allow past experiences to inform future change (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012:363). This approach leads to new understandings about how marginalized communities build solidarity and respond to and resist dominant culture, laws, and policies perpetuating inequity" (ibid)." *Testimonio* is not to be kept secret but requires active participatory readers or listeners who act on behalf of the speaker to arrive at justice and redemption" (Reyes & Curry Rodriguez 2012:527). It differs from life narratives because there must be elements of struggle and resistance to a particular event the narrator has lived through for it to be a *testimonio*. It is a first-person account from someone who has lived through and, therefore, can bear witness to a particular social or politically significant event. *Testimonio* falls within the realm of critical race counternarratives or counterstories because they build community amongst the subaltern, can challenge perceived wisdom held by the dominant group, and nurture memory and resistance (Yosso 2006). However, because it is a methodology and method born out of Indigenous knowledges and championed primarily by Chicana feminists, it is essential not to use the two terms interchangeably or to erase the intricacies of *testimonio* as a method by simply calling it a counternarrative. While *testimonio* is a form of counternarrative, all counternarratives are not *testimonios*. Counternarratives encompass various tools and methods utilized by different communities to counter the dominant discourse, and *testimonio* is just one of these tools.

When carried out with intention and reflexivity, *testimonio* turns the researcher into a bridge or facilitator whereby they can utilize the power and privilege that they possess through their standing in academia to give space and center the experiences and

knowledges of folks rendered invisible but who often experience the brunt of policy and political decisions made for and about them (Arcilla 2008). As a Chicana academic and researcher, I often find myself at odds with colonized academia and its "approved" research methods because they often fail to align with the lived realities, practices, and experiences of the communities from which my strength and perseverance derive (Delgado Bernal and Villalpando 2002). Similarly, Chicana scholars Jessica M. Quintero and Cindy Peña argue, "Because we as Chicana/Latinas were not written into the traditional structure of research methodologies, we were, and still are, the women of color colonized and researched through continued marginalization and dehumanization" (2019:158). Through its subaltern roots and practices, *testimonio* provides the means for both our decolonization and the disruption of whiteness and colonization of the academy.

This project utilizes *testimonio* as both a methodology and a method throughout this project. As a methodology, *testimonio* allows and encourages the co-creation of knowledge between the researcher and the community (Quintero & Peña 2021) and balances the power dynamics. As a method, it is a freeform storytelling tool familiar to and often used by subaltern communities. It reveals data as critical as what a researcher may capture through traditional Western methods like interviews, surveys, or focus groups. Here in its activation as a method, it takes on more of a conversational style between the researcher and the community member predicated on intimate relationships built through years of collective and vulnerable coexistence and communal living known as *convivencia* (Castillo, Garcia, Mendiaz Rivera, Milán Hinostroza, Toscano 2023, Galván 2011, Galván 2015).

Methods, Data Collection & Population

For this work, I collected twenty-five *testimonios* from teachers, students, parents, former and current district administrators and board members, and other community stakeholders in a large urban school district in the Southwest. These community members ranged from people who had recently graduated from high school to retired administrators and elected officials. Racially, participants self-identified as white, biracial, multiracial, Black, Indigenous, and Chicanx or Latinx. In addition, there were fifteen self-identified cis-female participants and ten cis-males. The sample also included individuals that identified as straight, bisexual, and gay. While all participants were open and critically reflexive of their intersectional identities, because of the small sample size and the recognizability of organizers in this area, I intentionally kept identifiers vague to protect the anonymity of my community. When relevant to the context, identity indicators were shared, but all intersectional identities that the participant possesses were not disclosed together since this would make the person identifiable in most cases. Any names utilized in the work are pseudonyms to protect anonymity based on IRB approval guidelines.

Through organizing experience and networks in this area, I reached out to individuals known to engage in educational justice organizing as potential participants. I encouraged them to share my recruitment flyers with anyone they knew that they felt might meet the study's parameters. My only criterion for participation was an affirmative answer to one question: “Are you a parent, teacher, former student, board member, school district leader or administrator, or a community member that has engaged in the struggles for ethnic studies, educational justice, anti-racism trainings, or other social justice-centered educational changes?” I intentionally chose to not set parameters on defining “engagement in the struggle” because I wanted to capture a wide range of

experiences. This wording strategy helped attract folks involved in education justice work, either past or present, in some capacity, but that would have been self-excluded from the project if more structured parameters had been set. Because many of the *testimonios* come from community activists and allies that work in solidarity on a myriad of issues throughout the city, there were several instances of individuals contemplating excluding themselves from the study because they felt they had not "done enough" as other folks in the larger community. However, because the question parameters were left ambiguous, it allowed people interested in participating to contact me to see if they were fit for the study. All that reached out were eligible due to their work history in educational organizing spaces.

Each *testimonio* lasted 45-60 minutes with a couple where the person sharing their *testimonio* wanted to continue sharing. These lasted 90 and 120 minutes, respectively. The testimonios were collected in the most comfortable format for the participant – for some, this meant via Zoom; for others, it was at their private home or other community space. They were recorded and transcribed using Sonix.ai, an artificial intelligence transcription software. Afterward, I cleaned the transcripts correcting any misunderstood text and removing all identifiers. Every community member received compensation for their time through a visa gift card and a transcript of their completed *testimonio*.

Most *testimonios* were collected in a free-flowing conversational format. I explained to participants that I wanted to know about their personal experiences with education, what led them to get involved in their work with social justice-based educational organizing, and what educational equity looks like to them. I asked them to reflect on barriers or challenges they had faced, advice, and lessons learned for other

organizers and to reflect on how they "kept going" or celebrated victories. For most participants, and particularly for community members that self-identified as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), this was enough of a prompt. They shared their stories either as a conversation with me or as a collection of stories about their experiences with little interjection except for occasional follow-up questions when I wanted to know more about a particular story or situation they were sharing. For other participants, more often white-identifying community members, *testimonio* was not as familiar or intuitive to them and often needed prompts phrased as questions even after explaining that I wanted to hear what *they* felt was critical and did not necessarily have a protocol of questions for them. These questions varied by *testimonio* as I tried to focus on stories or experiences that they had felt were vital for them to share in the first place and would ask them questions that would give them room to reflect upon these experiences or to share more examples or details of these events.

All transcripts were uploaded into the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti9, where I began to code the *testimonios* line by line to develop codes that captured data relevant to supporting ideas that, as a researcher, I thought were relevant to my research questions. Through the coding process, I developed many codes that shed light on critical ideas, solutions, or connections that many community members shared throughout their *testimonios* that I would not have discovered had I utilized a more structured method. For this process, I took a grounded theory approach that allowed me to focus on what I was being told and what was prominent in the data rather than on what I hoped to find (Chametzky 2016). In this way, through the data analysis process, community members continue to be co-creators of knowledge. While I coded and analyzed the data alone

because this was my dissertation project, this method of knowledge co-creation through data analysis could be carried out with the community through community-based research practices (CBPR) (Wallerstein et al. 2018) such as participatory action research (PAR) and youth participatory action research (YPAR) with basic training in coding and reflection (Cammarota and Fine 2008).

What is meant by decolonizing methods?

My framework of decolonization practices and methods is derived from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's conceptualization of decolonization as a long-term process of cultural, linguistic, educational, and psychological divestment from colonialism (Smith 2012). This entails acknowledging and committing to undoing the harm that Western methods and methodologies have done to Black, Indigenous, and other people of color through their extractive and decontextualized practices and data collection processes. Decolonization goes further by recentering practices and knowledges that were inherent to these communities before colonization within the research process and reflecting upon how they (and their practitioners) have been denied a place in the academy through intentional practices that exalt Western practices as academically rigorous, objective, and scientific while simultaneously labeling non-Western practices as subjective, lazy, or less-rigorous and non-empirical (Harding 1992). Concerning the often uncritiqued weaponization of rigor and the accusations that decolonizing approaches lack it, I offer the following problematization of rigor:

> *"Within the context of a decolonizing interpretive analysis, critical subaltern researchers must enact these critical skills in a manner that consistently contends with the link between theory and practice and within their own labor as educators and researchers out in the world. Academic rigor within*

[this] context… must be understood then as not only a cognitive or abstract process of analysis. Rather, it also entails a deeply physical, emotional, and spiritual activity for subaltern researchers which, when practiced consistently, allows them to become more integral human beings through a creative epistemological process of what Freire called problematization and radicalization – an empowering process of knowledge construction that is also deeply rooted in the researcher's worldview" (Darder 2016: 4).

This project was designed with these considerations at the core of the research design and is one intervention into undoing the long-term processes of colonization. It also serves as an example of how Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies can be utilized respectfully and honorably in mainstream research instead of being relegated to Indigenous studies or studies that center on Indigenous populations and issues. After all, everyone in a settler-colonialist environment is impacted in some shape or form by colonization. Therefore, we all should become familiar with how we can decolonize academia for a just and equitable society, regardless of the focus of our research.

Decolonizing methods require the researcher to think of research in a holistic, dialogical manner and to attempt to undo the power relations that exist between the researcher and the community. It necessitates that, as researchers, we are constantly and continuously engaged in reflexivity and are critical about our positionality and its (un)intended impacts on the power dynamics, lenses of analysis, and suppositions in our research. In the United States, it also requires us to stop thinking of "Indigenous" as a strict synonym for Native American and consider the large populations of people, communities, ideas, and methods within the subaltern still experiencing, navigating, and surviving colonization daily. I grounded my methodology and methods in two Indigenous frameworks for this project. The first, developed by Dr. Constance Khupe (2014), lays out the principles of Indigenous methodologies, which I directly applied to my methodology and research design, methods, and data collection. I combine this with a

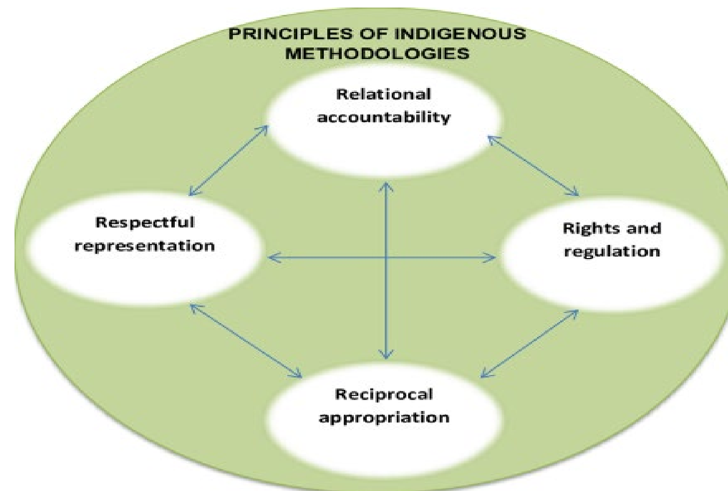
second decolonizing framework developed by Dr. Samuel B. Torres that names decolonizing practices that I incorporate throughout all aspects of my dissertation – from data collection and analysis to theoretical arguments, epistemological decisions, and how I have framed and conceptualized the larger project (Khupe 2014, Torres 2019).

Principles of Indigenous Methodologies

In her dissertation for the University of Johannesburg, Dr. Constance Khupe, a self-described Indigenous Black Zimbabwean, utilizes methodological concepts from Indigenous Hawaiian geographer Dr. Renee Pualani Louis on carrying out decolonized research and aligns them with the theoretical Indigenous African framework of Ubuntu (Khupe 2014). Ubuntu is a framework that embraces our collective connection and loosely translates to the concept of "*I am because we are,"* which is at the heart of her work. In addition, Khupe lays out the principles of Indigenous methodologies, which are interrelated and connected: relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights and regulation.

Figure 1 is a visual framework that Dr. Constance Khupe created and which I employed in my own research and data collection. I then follow with examples of how each of the principles she describes has been intentionally developed and practiced within this project.

Figure 1: Principles of Indigenous Methodologies by Dr. Constance Khupe



"Principles of Indigenous Methodologies" in Khupe, C. 2014. "Indigenous Knowledge and School Science Possibilities from Integration."

Relational accountability requires acknowledging and being accountable to all the familial and communal networks and relationships with the physical environment we hold. (Wilson 2008: 97). Within an academic research context, we must still answer to these communities first, and this obligation should lead researchers to conduct research respectfully and ethically. Rather than upholding concerns about utilizing traditional methods touted as the only ways to ensure validity and replicability, if relational accountability is engaged, the researcher will utilize the appropriate methods for their community and, through this process, will still develop a rigorous and enriching project.

In my work, relational accountability means utilizing familiar and comfortable methods for all community members and allowing space and grace for processing relived traumas as they share their *testimonio*. Through *convivencia*, a practice "born out of a communal understanding of existence in which none of us achieve, exist, or live as individuals" (Castillo et al., 2023), relational bonds are built between the researcher and the participants. It is this communal bond that allows individuals to be vulnerable in

sharing their *testimonios* with me, and as such, relational accountability means, as I embody simultaneous identities of community member and researcher, that I honor the fact that much of what is shared with me through the *testimonio* is premised on the bonds of mutual trust that exist between myself and the person sharing. In practicing relational accountability, it becomes my responsibility to reconcile any conflict between these two identities in a way that honors and protects my participants' emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical well-being. In some *testimonios*, it means allowing myself the space to empathize and feel emotion for the raw humanity shared through this method. In others, it means allowing space and privacy for someone to cry and continuously checking for consent as the process becomes difficult and reminding individuals that they can withdraw consent at any part of the research process and encouraging them to prioritize their well-being over any obligations they may feel to me and my research.

It also looks like constant check-ins with community members about the status of my research. There is a sense of urgency for sharing findings with them throughout the data analysis process because the organizing struggles in which they are involved are ongoing. Given the current anti-equity and reactionary political climate in which we find ourselves, there can be immediate implications from the data. Ultimately, it is crucial to understand how the findings can directly help communities strategize and build capacity in their organizing work and honor the utility of the data outside of project completion.

Respectful representation builds from relational accountability in that it requires that we build respectful and honest relationships with communities and honor and respect information shared with us as researchers. This demands that we learn to discern which information can be shared with larger audiences and what information belongs to the

group or community. It also requires us to challenge stereotypes and flattened representations created by Western or uncritical, colonized research.

Many of the stories and experiences shared with me include information that could potentially risk their jobs and/or open community members to harassment and retaliation if shared. While all participants understood the purpose of this research and were free to be as discrete as they chose about what they shared, I also recognize that much of what was shared with me is due to the relationships of trust and respect between myself and the community member, not the researcher and the individual. As such, it is my responsibility to discern what information can be shared in ways that respect these boundaries and these relationships, which ultimately do not violate any of my ethical and moral obligations to my participants.

For me, it also means being reflexive about the ways I represent and speak about participants in this study. One constant question at the forefront of my work is, "Do the ways I speak about or represent participants honor them holistically, or do they reduce an individual to a preconceived trope or stereotype?" In other words, as I think about the intersectional social location of an individual and the story that they share with me, am I ensuring that my analysis of their stories and experiences is taking into account social structures, institutions of power, hegemonic ideologies that diminish them or flatten them into caricatures (Cuadraz and Uttal 1999)? Am I disentangling the impacts of social structures and institutions from personal decisions and experiences and ensuring that my representations do not perpetuate narratives of victim-blaming or superhero notions of resilience (Webster and Rivers 2019)?

Reciprocal appropriation requires us as researchers to acknowledge that all research, by its nature, is extractive and appropriative to some degree. Reciprocal appropriation requires researchers to work with communities to create research projects that benefit everyone and that we are in constant communication and involved in a feedback loop with the community throughout the research process. Reciprocal appropriation asks that we go further than just researching to meet research goals. However, even after the research has been completed, there is an ethical obligation that we continuously seek feedback and share knowledge with our community stakeholders.

Everyone who shared their *testimonio* with me was aware that they would receive copies of my dissertation chapters before journal or book publication submission. The purpose of sharing dissertation chapters is to include them in the research process and to allow them an opportunity to review the use of their stories and confirm that their words were interpreted in the way they meant them to be when sharing them before their stories are committed to public access as a manuscript. It is also a way to ensure that all representations are respectful and a way to share the findings in their entirety with them. Finally, if they so desire, I will provide community members with copies of the dissertation upon completion.

Rights and Regulation: Understanding that the community should ultimately own the knowledge from a community-centered project, the rights and regulations set forth by communities should take precedence in a decolonizing project. Any research project is subject to the group's local community and cultural protocols, irrespective of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or other institutional bodies. It also calls on us to

ensure that we are constantly balancing the power dynamics between community members and the university.

Because the *testimonios* ultimately belong to the person who shared them, every participant will receive a transcribed copy of their *testimonio*. Although each person who participated in this project willingly shared their *testimonio* with me, it is critical to recognize that as a researcher, this is a personal *testimonio* entrusted to me to share and utilize for change. However, it does not belong to me. I did ensure the anonymity of each person that shared their *testimonio* with me, but several individuals expressed that they wanted their story known. For this reason, I will ask participants if they would like to deposit their *testimonio* in a digital repository that can be embargoed and released when desired so that others may hear their full stories.

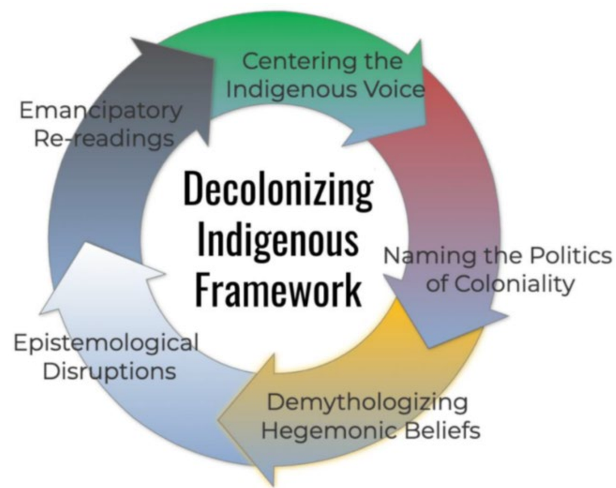
When the project has been completed, they will receive a digital copy of the dissertation if they desire it so that the findings and data may be used to inform their organizing goals and practices. Because this data ultimately belongs to the community, accessible vocabulary and writing care will be used so that it can be accessible to all community members, regardless of personal levels of educational attainment. Community data should be written in ways that are understandable to all, not in ways that further our academic clout as researchers.

A Decolonizing Indigenous Framework

In her work on decolonizing interpretive frameworks, Darder posits that one of the main goals of utilizing decolonizing Indigenous frameworks is to give subaltern scholars and educators a lens for implicating and countering colonizing ideologies and paradigms in our institutions. As such, "decolonizing interpretive research is inextricably

tied to the communal subaltern voice or the 'I am because we are' voice" (Darder 2019:5). Using Darder's framework, indigenous Chicano scholar Samuel B. Torres (2019) creates a decolonizing framework that has practical application for all aspects of research design from conceptualization to publication. In his framework, which he presents as an interconnected circle, he outlines how decolonized research should center Indigenous voices, should be intentional and unapologetic about naming the politics of coloniality, undertake the work of demythologizing hegemonic beliefs, put forward epistemological disruptions, and engage in an emancipatory re-reading of subaltern narratives and experiences. Below is Torres's visual representation, followed by a brief explanation of how each practice is employed in this project.

Figure 2: A Decolonizing Indigenous Framework – A Visual Representation Developed by Dr. Samuel B. Torres



A Decolonizing Indigenous Framework. Visual developed by Samuel B. Torres from framework adapted from "The Decolonizing Interpretive Research Methodology" in *Decolonizing Interpretive Research: A Subaltern Methodology for Social Change*, by A. Darder 2019.

Centering the subaltern voice attempts to challenge and correct the practices of epistemic violence and exclusion of subaltern ways of being and knowing in hegemonic spaces such as academia. Further, in these spaces, western hegemonic ideologies have the

ultimate say in what is considered legitimate knowledge, and through this practice, Indigenous and subaltern voices are rendered invisible and/or discredited (Delgado Bernal and Villalpando 2002). Torres points out that by centering Indigenous and subaltern voices, we allow for these voices to become what bell hook calls the "authority of lived experience" (Torres 2019: 34). Indigenous and subaltern voices are given space that goes far past ideas of resiliency and survival only but are acknowledged as whole human beings with the capacity to create and disseminate critical knowledge about the world around them.

When covering issues about schools and public education, mainstream media often prioritizes the voice and "expertise" of administrators, superintendents, and other individuals in positions of power within the institution. Rarely, if ever, do news brokers seek the stories or insights from those most impacted by the educational system. For this reason, I decided to only collect *testimonios* from community organizers, educators, parents, and students – the very individuals that are often excluded from decision-making practices by the school district but who are ultimately the most impacted stakeholders in these decisions.

Naming the Politics of Coloniality: In their work on systems of privilege, Wildman and Davis point out that "The invisibility of privilege strengthens the power it creates and maintains. The invisible cannot be combated, and as a result, privilege is allowed to perpetuate, regenerate, and re-create itself (Wildman and Davis 2016:137). Similarly, other studies have shown that naming and becoming comfortable talking about racism is imperative to disrupting institutional racism and white supremacy (Kulkarni, Lawrence, and Roberts 2023).

Over the years, in previous research studies involving the local school district, the inability to talk about or even name racism or white supremacy in practice was a great source of frustration for me. Similarly, as a member of an educational justice organization, I and many other community members implored the school board and administrators to require anti-racism training and workshops for teachers, principals, and administrators. We asked them to participate in these workshops as well. Unfortunately, through this process, the denial of racism and white supremacy permeated through all levels of the school district. We heard comments ranging from colorblind racism (Bonilla Silva 2013) to outright refusal to participate in what some teachers and administrators perceived as a "woke agenda." How could we even begin to address the impacts of white supremacy and the pervasiveness of whiteness when we could not even name it?

In this vein, I engage in naming and systematically unpacking how whiteness operates in educational institutions. I argue that it is precisely because it is not named and systematically exposed that whiteness is protected and white supremacy is upheld through seemingly mundane, everyday practices. White supremacy is one portion of a larger politics of coloniality and colonization, so it is essential to name and expose it in any decolonizing project. It is important here to remember that white supremacy would and could not exist without colonization.

Demythologizing Hegemonic Beliefs: Tuhiwai Smith posits that dismissing subaltern interpretations of history and society was essential to asserting the dominance of colonial ideal both because colonizers treated viewed Indigenous peoples as less than human, illiterate, and in need of saving, but mainly because indulging such views endangered the success of the mission of colonization (Smith 2012:30-32). As colonial

ideologies become hegemonic and universalized, they codify myths of superiority, objectivity, and Western-based interpretations of the world. Part of decolonial research involves critiquing the origins of foundational texts and theories. Foundational for who? And to what end?

By utilizing non-Western methodologies and theories from the subaltern, the very framework of this project is centered on demythologizing these beliefs. As an academic, it can feel precarious to be unapologetic about pushing back on methods and theories that are considered foundational and central to one's discipline. However, as a scholar-activist committed to decolonizing the academy and making it a space where Indigenous and subaltern people can be knowledge producers instead of objects of study, it is imperative to take up this mantle.

Epistemological Disruptions: Epistemological disruptions are born from the inherent tension that exists between Western epistemologies and the theories, methods, and practices born from subaltern experiences and ways of knowing (Darder 2019:27). When the two come into conflict, the tendency in the academy is to defer to Western practices justified by arguments of "scientific validity" over the deeply developed yet open and fluid knowledge productions systems of the subaltern (ibid). In this work, I interpret oppositional interpretation as a call to deep and continuous critical reflection on the data, the stories, and the process. It also means continuously questioning sanctioned or "acceptable" data collection and theory-building methods.

It is a call to go beyond the immediate and readily available sociological interpretations of interactions, events, memories, and experiences made famous by foundational scholars (predominantly white, middle to upper-class men) as the discipline

itself is rooted in systems and practices that uphold white supremacy. While this is not to say that we throw the baby out with the proverbial bathwater, an epistemological disruption requires we propose new methods of "doing" social science rooted in how our ancestors made meaning of the world around us before they were deemed savage and uneducated. Disruption of hegemonic notions of “objective science” or "valid methods," as this project attempts to do, opens a world of abundant possibilities for re-imaging how research can be, whom it can include, and how it can ultimately be a liberatory practice.

Emancipatory Re-Readings: This epistemological disruption and the inclusion of subaltern epistemologies creates room for emancipatory re-readings that can be done by centering survivance narratives. “By forthrightly engaging with survivance narratives through the intentional spaces opened up in the deliberate rethinking of Western historicity through the decolonial imaginary, the possibilities for emancipatory retellings emerge as plentiful” (Torres 2019:219). Through emancipatory re-reading, *testimonios* function as survivance narratives of the subaltern. Using *testimonio*, therefore, pushes the researcher to re-read the research process and to engage in the emancipation of knowledge production by inviting participants to engage in the process alongside them. Further, by collecting and uplifting these survivance narratives, both researcher and the *testimonio* sharer challenge the “official story” and urge the process of emancipatory re-reading.

Lessons Learned from Utilizing Testimonio

Many community members are intimidated or suspicious of traditional research methods. As individuals contacted me about participating, community

members shared that they did not feel like they were "smart enough" or could substantially contribute to the research because they were not "an expert." This, unfortunately, is in line with how the academy deems someone an expert based on their title and academic trajectory and tends to discount personal lived experiences. I would respond to these doubts by assuring everyone they had so much insight they could offer by being involved in this work. I explained *testimonio* to everyone as a conversational recollection of their own experiences with educational justice organizing and that they could share as little or as much as they wanted. I told them I wanted them to reflect on their experiences and decide what they felt was important, including any of their own analysis. I informed them that I was more interested in the larger theme and would only ask follow-up questions to learn more about their shared experiences or stories. I also assured them that nobody's *testimonio* would look and sound the same and that there was no “right or wrong way” of giving their *testimonio*.

After explaining how *testimonios* work, there tended to be expressions of relief. Several community members vocalized, "Oh, well, I can do that!" or "I can tell you so many stories about my own experiences!" They felt validated as knowledge creators and experts and were therefore willing to participate and share the expertise that they possessed more readily. Throughout the *testimonio* collection process, I heard comments from individuals such as, "Thank you for hearing my story" or "Nobody ever asks me to share my experiences with them.” A couple of people even shared a sense of pride in being able to share strategies and lessons that had helped them in their organizing journeys with others who might read this research.

A few community members told me that they usually do not participate in research but chose to participate in this project because of the relationships and trust I had built with them. While I did not ask follow-up questions about their experience with research, these echo sentiments shared by Indigenous and subaltern communities within decolonization literature about the extractive practices of the research process. This is especially true of university towns where the town and its various populations are the continuous targets of research projects and practices (Clark 2008). However, in this case, *testimonio* helped to overcome this trepidation because I had established a long history of convivencia with potential participants, and community members had vetted and learned my intentions and values over years of working alongside them on a variety of issues impacting the community.

Even without codified research questions, *testimonios* still allow the researcher to identify themes and patterns: A common pushback against using narrative forms of data collection in social sciences is the belief that they do not allow for patterns to emerge or that the research cannot say anything definitive because there is a lack of systematic questions. However, multiple *testimonios* about a similar event or struggle tend to have similar themes, ideas, and reflections. Community members that share *testimonios* are simultaneously engaged in critical reflection and meaning making as they reflect on their experiences and relive what they have seen, heard, or felt. As I began to collect more *testimonios*, recurrent themes quickly emerged, including shared solutions or critical components of their struggles that I would not have asked about in a more structured interview because I had little to no knowledge of them or did not recognize the connection between those topics and this struggle in which community members were

engaged. An example of this was the consistent emergence of community schools as a space for hope and change and where community members saw the most opportunity to change individual schools' climate. From my hypothesis, I would have been primed to ask questions directly connected to administrators, institutions, and macro-level players. Through an open *testimonio* process, community members were still able to touch upon topics and themes critical to better understanding the components of my research question. However, by allowing them to be co-creators of this project through their *testimonios*, they could prioritize stories and experiences that they felt were important for providing the complexity of the historical and social context in which they were mobilizing. They could likewise offer ideas or solutions at educational institutions' micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. In other words, even though the project focuses on the macro-level decisions and interactions, by utilizing *testimonios* and allowing them to be the decision-makers on what was important data to share, community members were able to paint a complex picture of micro-level and meso-level resistance to the policies enacted by individuals in power.

Sharing *testimonios* can cause both participants and the researcher to relive the trauma, but it can also become a space for healing. As decolonizing researchers, we must be ready to handle this in a way that is responsible and respectful of the participants' holistic well-being. Several participants took breaks while giving their *testimonio,* and about a quarter of participants cried or shared deeply emotional stories; in some cases, they were stories or experiences that they had not ever vocalized and shared. For example, one participant shared with me that this had been the first time he had allowed himself to reflect and feel all the pain that working for the district had caused

him because it would have been too much to process while he was still employed with them. Another participant shared that she had not expected the process to be so triggering to her but that it was allowing her to process and think through many of the experiences at the district that had led to her being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Indeed, a common response from individuals was that this process had served as one part of healing from some of the trauma they experienced at the hands of educational institutions.

After collecting *testimonios* and having them transcribed, I began cleaning to correct any mistakes and miscomprehensions from the transcription software. Of all stages of the dissertation, this process was the slowest, and after about a month of stalled progress, I recognized that I was avoiding this work. Upon reflection, I realized that listening to these *testimonios* had become mentally and emotionally draining for me as the researcher. Not only was I overcome with empathy for the pain and the stories shared with me, but in hearing their stories, I was reminded of and reliving many of my own negative experiences with institutional racism, discrimination, and the educational system. Once I acknowledged what was causing my procrastination, I developed strategies for data cleaning. I ensured that I was preparing myself beforehand for the emotional toll the data would have on me. While I employed a strategy that worked for me, what researchers should take away from my experience is the need to be reflexive about how research and data collection can directly affect their socio-emotional well-being. It is critical for researchers to also think about their well-being through this process and develop the strategies that they can rely upon to help them cope with some of the unexpected emotional and mental strain that research can have on us, particularly

those of us who exist in the subaltern and experience firsthand the impact that this has on our whole selves. It is also worth noting that academia is rife with individuals that will question our ability to produce objective research. However, in the face of these critiques, it is essential to remember that all research is subjective and that we all approach a research subject with particular lenses, lived experiences, and research agendas (Bowden and Green 2010, Harding 1992, Montuschi 2004; Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). Some researchers are simply more open to critical self-reflection and being honest about this than others. One last note: while I experienced an emotional toll in completing this research, I was also inspired by the stories of joy and hope shared with me, even in the face of challenges and defeat. In this way, not only did *testimonios* provide a complex collection of experiences, but they also helped with my own healing. In understanding and acknowledging the power storytelling had on my life, I hope it has made me a better and more thoughtful researcher.

Community members want more decolonizing methods to be used in research. Approximately three-quarters of my participants voiced their excitement over *testimonio* as a method. Many of them did not know this type of research was possible, and some asked me why other researchers do not use more of these methods. More community members are willing to participate when research methods center on ways that subalterns build community or practice *convivencia*, share experiences, and vital information, and tell stories.

It also created excitement for them to share the project with other community members, and the participants began recruiting others to the project. One community member shared that she was initially unsure what a *testimonio* was. However, after

sharing hers, she was excited about the project and more confident about referring her friend and another organizer with whom she worked. At least four *testimonios* that I collected were referrals from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community members who were excited about using *testimonios*.

Subaltern researchers in sociology want more discipline-level acceptance of this method: After being awarded the Beth B. Hess Memorial Scholarship from Sociologists for Women in Society to complete my dissertation research, I had the opportunity to speak to some of the selection committee. Across the board, these women in sociology all expressed that my proposal to use *testimonio* as my method led to them selecting me. In addition, following this award and its publication on their website, several BIPOC women in sociology Ph.D. programs have asked me for advice on how to "sell" *testimonio* to their committees and their departments.

There is a desire to incorporate this method within the more extensive qualitative sociological toolkit. However, both journals and dissertation committees continue to invalidate *testimonio* as a method because it has yet to be widely accepted in sociology. This is not because subaltern sociologists are not using it, but instead that they tend to publish in other field journals after sociological journals (and sociology graduate committees) turn them away. In collecting literature for the *testimonio* portion of my literature review, I found only one article published in sociology that utilized *testimonio* (Arcilla 2008). A quick search of all the top journals in the discipline will confirm this. While *testimonio* as a method has been around for decades, it has historically only been deemed legitimate within disciplines like education, Chicanx studies, Latin American studies, or gender studies.

Part of the rejection of this method is the multiple layers of consideration that one must engage in throughout the process. It is not a "quick and dirty" method that can be used to increase publication and productivity perceptions. For researchers, getting through *testimonios* required patience, empathy, understanding, and continuous reassurance to the *testimonio* sharer that they were free to stop sharing at any moment- that the power was in *their* hands. Several times I remember telling a participant that their emotional well-being and self-care were more important than the project. For those of us engaged in fields where qualitative research is central to our success and accomplishment, having participants withdraw from the research may seem daunting.

However, as a decolonizing scholar, I recognize that these *testimonios* do not belong to me and that I have been granted permission to be a steward of stories. It is ultimately up to the participant to decide how much of their story and knowledge they will share, and as both a researcher and fellow human, I must respect and make peace with this. This echoes the decolonizing practice of *answerability*. As a researcher, I must "answer to a different set of ethical coordinates than settler colonialism" and rethink Western notions of stewardship and ownership (Patel 2016: 73-74). I encourage researchers who feel discomfort with this possibility to reflect on how this is a fundamental shift of the power dynamics inherent in research. Does the discomfort derive from Western academic training that tells us that, as researchers, we must always be in control of data and knowledge creation?

Sociological Impacts of Testimonio

Testimonio allows for a more robust understanding of social inequity because it acknowledges the ivory tower's colonizing process and attempts to rectify this by

centering the voices and experiences of the subaltern. It moderates the power of the intellectual by privileging the storyteller's voice. In a field obsessed with objectivity sought through careful research design and control of the research process, *testimonio* neutralizes the researcher and utilizes them as a vessel. The researcher's questions and agenda take a backseat, and the voice of the subaltern becomes the expert voice.

Reflecting on *testimonio*'s connection to Bourdieu's conceptualization of reflexivity, Filipino sociologist Chester Arcilla argues that *testimonio* minimizes the distance between the researcher and the narrator and that the "cultural and symbolic capital of the intellectual is lent to the narrator so that the bourgeois public may listen to the silenced voice" (Arcilla 2008:109). While this may seem daunting to researchers, ceding control to individuals who have much to share but are rarely allowed a voice leads to more complex and richer research findings. As the adage reminds us, 'We don't know what we don't know,' yet as researchers, we rarely allow ourselves the space to admit this. *Testimonio* allows others to inform us what we do not know, and attaining this new knowledge inevitably leads to more holistic theory-building and understanding of our social world.

Provides a model for sociological praxis: Because *testimonios* are meant to be shared and are done so with a sense of urgency to address a societal struggle or challenge that the subaltern community is facing, it puts the onus on the researcher to develop a course of action so that the research leads to change and/or is not confined to theorization in academic spaces. Engaging in *testimonio* collection requires the researcher to build relationships beyond simple rapport with participants. This is not to invalidate qualitative methods that are centered around rapport-building. Instead, since *testimonios* are usually

shared with someone with whom the storyteller has formulated a communal relationship of trust, they require engagement with individuals beyond a researcher/participant relationship. Often, building the type of relationship in which a person feels comfortable sharing their *testimonio* requires community-building where academics transform their knowledge and academic power into direct engagement with issues important to the community and over which they possess knowledge and access paired with a commitment to a code of ethics far beyond the institution.

Signals to researchers from the subaltern that sociology is open to decolonization: Researchers and scholars of color and the subaltern often reflect on how they are not accepted or made to feel welcome in their discipline. While there are many factors for this, including the reality that academic institutions also operate and maintain ideologies of white supremacy, the inability to use methods that speak to their cultural and home knowledges and practices further adds to this isolation. Allowing space for *testimonio* and other decolonized methods would go a long way in making Black, Indigenous, and other People of color feel seen and included in discipline spaces.

CHAPTER 3: "Making Whiteness Strange": Applying Racialized Organizational Theory in an Analysis of a Southwest School District to Displace Whiteness

In December 2021, a student of color at a predominantly white school in a middle to upper-class neighborhood anonymously received two disturbing images via Airdrop from a classmate. The first image depicted a game of "rock, paper, scissors" with a white hand in a sieg heil salute, "beating" a Black lives matter/Black Power fist, and a gun being retrieved from a school background in a classroom setting. Community organizations became aware of the issue when the student's mom reached out to grassroots organizers, officials in the City of Albuquerque, and the FBI for help after being stonewalled by the school principal. In addition, the parent recounted the same experience to various local media outlets and at several townhall and community meetings set up to offer the family and the Black students at this school support.

The principal met with her daughter and told her to delete the pictures and not to talk about them to anyone. Later that day, according to various teachers at the school via social media, the principal placed a gag order on teachers prohibiting them from talking about the incidents with students, families, or outsiders. Meanwhile, in interviews with local news outlets, the principal claimed, "If a student gives me information that impacts student safety, we act with the urgency that the situation dictates. In this case, it was clear immediately that one of the photos in question had been distributed to several students, so the student wasn't being targeted by any one individual" (Martinez 2021). She further went on to say that the pictures were memes that had been widely circulated, and because of this, they posed no credible threat.

While the parents themselves continued to reach out to the superintendent and the principal, they were met with silence and avoidance. White allied parents at one town hall

meeting shared a different experience – not only did the school administration reach out to them to ensure that they knew their students were safe, but they also relayed that they were in constant communication with the district superintendent as well. The frustrations felt by parents of color were compounded: as they attempted to advocate for the safety of their children, they were met with a lack of action and what appeared to them a lack of care for the fears their students felt. One student framed the more significant issue of racial violence and racism that students of color endure in silence at this school and that had never been acknowledged: "They didn't even address the racism when they came on the announcement, and that was what shocked me and a lot of other students. "Even if it's fake, it sends a mental message" (Martinez 2021).

While the community met several times and supported the fledgling Black student union at the school, the district handed the investigation of the incident over to the police and, with that action, declared their job done. The city's African American Community Liaison, along with leaders across the city, called on the district "to conduct a thorough investigation of the entire incident – both the gun violence threat and the racist image sent to the student- and not to separate the two as both are forms of violence. We stand with the students who received the messages and with their families. Ignoring the racist elements of this incident is a form of erasure. We would like to offer resources to the student unions and help improve the culture at [the school district] that has made students feel afraid to speak out about racism, afraid of retaliation and with no recourse" (City of Albuquerque 2021). Students, parents, and community members saw this as a watershed moment to address the racism that has characterized the school for years and continues to cause mental, emotional, and physical harm to students and teachers of color on that

campus. However, the conversations did not continue, anti-racism trainings were not held, and students were not supported beyond the initial incident and the support offered by city leadership and various community organizations. Because the event occurred right before the end of the semester and the start of winter break, it was largely ignored and swept under the rug with the hope that the holiday break would cause students to forget anything that had happened.

The attempted erasure of the incident and to pretend it never happened that are sanctioned through inaction or lack of appropriate action on the part of the school superintendent and zone superintendent are part of a larger context of complacency and acceptance of a white supremacist ideology within the organization. It exemplifies how whiteness is upheld through a seemingly race-neutral bureaucratic process. How does this acceptance directly influence and reinforce the way lower-level leaders and individuals within the organization enact racism, uphold whiteness, and continue to disempower and marginalize racialized minorities within the organization? How can we map the social construction of whiteness in educational institutions in the Southwest?

Critical race and intersectionality scholar Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw has maintained that the urgency of intersectionality is because our society lacks a frame to understand the injustices that people of intersectional social constructed categories endure (Crenshaw 1991). She argues that “when there's no name for a problem, you can't solve it” (Crenshaw 2016). Here too, lies the problem with whiteness. While a name does exist for the problem, the elusiveness of its nature means that it lacks a consistent frame of understanding or a consensus of definition around which society can begin to address the problem. Rather than demarcating apparent aspects and criteria of whiteness, historically,

it has been defined by what it is *not* (Haney-Lopez 2006) or the absence of culture, color, or uniqueness – a variation from the unquestioned status quo (Frankenberg 1993), or taken further, whiteness is seen as 'just human' (Dyer 2016:11). Others define it as a set of privileges (McIntosh 1990) and as an inherent set of rights identical to those in property ownership based on skin color alone (rights to use, enjoyment and exclusion among others) (Harris 1993).

In his summation of whiteness, which gets closest to its amorphous nature, Matthew Hughey posits that "the meaning of whiteness varies spatially (by location), temporally (by historical eras and across individual life span), contextually (by the relative culture), differentially (by power), and intersectionally" (Hughey 2016:212-213). This inability to reach a consensus clearly and tangibly on what constitutes whiteness is of course, by design. Whiteness is a manifestation of white supremacy, "the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today" (Mills 1997). It is precisely this unnamed quality that allows a hegemonic ideology to take root and become accepted, ignored, and reproduced by all members of a society (Lukes 2005). Whiteness then becomes unquestioned, taken for granted, and as invisible to those living within this dominant ideology as water becomes for the fish that swims and breathes in it. Once whiteness has become entrenched and familiar, to begin to critique and displace it, it "must be made strange" and "no longer able to disguise itself as normative, Whiteness becomes peculiar once it is located" (Leonardo 2013:85).

This chapter aims to render whiteness visible, to name it, and to ultimately make whiteness so strange that it can no longer disguise itself as normal, and the processes that uphold it can no longer be seen as race neutral. I ask: (1) What does whiteness look like

within a K-12 educational organization? Furthermore, (2) What mechanisms are used to uphold, protect, and render whiteness hegemonic by organizational actors who benefit from this system? Using testimonios, I explore how race-neutral and bureaucratic practices perpetuate processes that uphold and maintain whiteness and begin to name what these processes look like in practice. I begin by placing this project in the context of a CRT of the state and then utilize a theory of racialized organizations to make meaning of the practices and actions that render organizations racialized spaces that uphold white supremacy.

We know that whether it is recognized or not, Whites, the dominant group that controls the power structure in U.S. society, have a possessive investment in maintaining and upholding whiteness (Lipsitz 2016) and that white individuals actively practice racialized discretion within the organizational rule structure to this end in other meso-level institutions (Korver-Glenn 2021:106). These processes occur at all societal levels, yet when talking about white supremacy, there is a tendency for the scholarship to focus on individual micro-interactions or the large macro-structures that govern and organize our society. At the same time, the meso-level is largely left understudied. This project attempts to explicitly name a few of the ways these practices take shape within the most prominent meso-level racialized organization within the institution of education: the local K-12 school district.

Theoretical Framework

Because whiteness is the ideology put in place by those in the dominant group that directly benefit from it, this chapter is predicated on the articulation of the state as a tool utilized for white racial domination (Mills 1997) and Glenn Bracey's articulation of a

critical race theory (CRT) of the state (Bracey II 2015). As such, Whites in power utilize a plethora of tools to maintain white supremacy and education is one of the primary tools (Love 2019:23). Unlike Omi and Winant's racial state theory, a CRT of the state explicitly indicts Whites in the perpetuation of white supremacy and outlines how Whites utilize the state in this endeavor. This understanding of the state is critical in naming and disrupting whiteness because it challenges and negates the assumptions upon which racial state theory is built – that the state is a race-neutral entity. By outlining how a state is merely a tool used to perpetuate white supremacy by the white ruling class and that its power is directly derived from a White dominant group with vested interests in protecting and upholding whiteness, the CRT of the state explicitly names the stakeholders and actors in racialized institutions.

Whereas racial state theory posits itself as interrogating the relationship between the state and people of color (Omi & Winant 2015), CRT of the state explicitly implicates Whites as those in control of the state and therefore reframes the tension between Whites in power and racialized minorities (Bracey II 2015: 559). Within the larger aim of naming and disrupting whiteness, utilizing CRT of the state over a racial state theory is critical since not talking about or normalizing whiteness as state actions or as "the will of the state" absolves Whites from their role and their control of a white supremacist system (Omi and Winant 2015:121-122). Furthermore, this theory allows us to analyze institutions from an understanding that institutions within the state are racialized because the state is a white institutional space (Bracey II 2015:561). Finally, it is important to note that racial formation theory posits that while "the state may represent the core of a racial regime, no state can encompass all of civil society" (Omi and Winant 2015: 137).

A CRT of the state, however, argues that challenges and racial projects by agents in civil society (the Civil Rights movement, for example) are still subject to success insomuch as there is interest convergence between the social act demanded and the benefit/gain to the actors who control and benefit directly from a white supremacist state.

Further, a CRT of the state outlines how Whites design institutions to explicitly reproduce white privilege through direct and indirect actions (Bracey II 2015:561-562). This articulation of the state provides a theoretical foundation upon which to unpack and apply Victor Ray's theory of racialized organizations (TRO) to analyze a Southwest school district as a racialized meso-level organization. In this vein, I intentionally avoid treating organizations as amorphous entities when discussing actions that uphold racialized organizations. Instead, I place the onus, particularly on the individuals, and when possible, name the precise positions and roles within racialized organizational spaces that uphold and enact racial projects to protect whiteness within the organization rather than speaking about the organization in dehumanized and removed terms. I refer to the organization in general when addressing its racialized nature. However, in speaking about the processes and actions entrenching this racialization, I acknowledge the agency and use of power by white actors that render organizations racialized in the first place.

In this chapter, I utilize Victor Ray's theory of racialized organizations (TRO) to analyze how a large, urban school district, a meso-level institution, enacts its own racialized processes that can influence other racialized processes at the state level as well as the individual level. In TRO, Ray argues that organizations and meso-level institutions of this nature are often overlooked in the process of understanding racialization. He brings attention to how the meso-level is often conflated or incorporated into macro-level

systems and/or that the relationship between micro-level interactions and "more than a mere 'link' between macro- and micro-level processes, organizations are key to stability and change for the entire racial order. Organizations magnify the power and depth of racial projects and are a primary terrain of racial contestation" (Ray 2019:30). In other words, by focusing on organizations, such as school districts that occupy meso-level spaces in society and the people within them that maintain organizational power and control, we can see how the meso-level has the most power to allocate state-level resources, but also empowers and justifies individual racial interactions and racial animus.

Any work that is genuinely interested in disrupting whiteness and pushing forth structural changes that lead to racial equity and justice in education MUST look to local school districts- the very definition of meso-level educational organizations- as the space where white supremacy is enacted in ways that both influence the state and individual attitudes and actions. However, we must go further and recognize and name how individual racism and racial prejudice are enacted in these spaces. To this end, Ray provides us with four tenets to recognize the actions, rhetoric, processes, decisions, and practices enacted by individuals within racialized organizations. These mechanisms render these spaces binding sites for the perpetuation of racism and uphold the white supremacist structure that continues to oppress people of color in our society while simultaneously benefiting members of the White dominant racial group dedicated to upholding these practices that empower a white supremacist hegemonic ideology. Throughout this chapter, I name the everyday actions and manifestations of Ray's four tenets of racialized organizations: (1) the enhanced or diminished agency of racial

groups, (2) the legitimization of unequal resource distribution, (3) the credentialization of whiteness, and (4) the racialized decoupling of formal rules from their practices (Ray 2019:36-43).

Further, I utilize testimonios of community members with the shared goal of educational justice to shed light on what these practices look like and how they impact the individuals that experience them, students, schools, and community members writ large. I show how everyday actions and language used in race-neutral ways but that ultimately perpetuate whiteness are direct manifestations of these four tenets. Further, based on the experiences shared throughout the testimonios collected, I will outline how these meso-level actions directly impact and influence the culture and the experiences of racialized individuals in micro-level spaces like schools.

Data and Analysis

For this work, I transcribed twenty-five testimonios shared by community members involved in different roles and organizations and with different relationships and access to the local school district. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the specific intersectional race-gender-class social locations of community members and activists participating in this project have been kept vague since the number of folks engaged in educational organizing in this area is small and highly recognizable. Giving further specifics would allow most people who have interfaced with my participants in solidarity and contexts of unequal power dynamics to identify them. In some instances, even definitive gender-binary pronouns render community members identifiable – in these instances, I purposely use they/them pronouns for additional ambiguity and protection.

The common link between all participants is their dedication to educational equity and justice, their commitment to abolishing racism and discrimination in educational institutions, and their work towards access to critical and transformative education for all students in this Southwest school district. Of the twenty-five community members, sixteen testimonios were from self-identified people of color, and nine were from self-identified white people. All but one of the white individuals involved in this project had a partner of a different race, biracial children, or family members of varying races and ethnicities. I call attention to this white/non-white binary because although these individuals self-identify as white, they are individuals who have constantly and consistently engaged in critical self-reflexivity and who have, in the words of one participant, felt the calling and the need upon having her eyes opened to systems of oppression “to use my privilege and power for good."

The testimonios were coded in Atlas.ti9. They were first coded using codes describing the pejorative action or process being discussed – some examples of these are retaliation, gatekeeping, and differential policies and rules based on race. After this step, I revisited Ray's theory of racialized organizations to determine which of these experiences, if any, were examples of the four tenets outlined. Those codes that did serve as direct examples based on his definition of the tenet were given a secondary code that reflected that tenet. Through this process, I could determine which actions and processes that upheld whiteness were explained through TRO. This also allowed me to see moments in the data, which I still believe are mechanisms that allow whiteness to be upheld but that required explanation and theorization outside of TRO. Since these moments do not directly contradict or take away from TRO, I will explain them

separately as areas where I believe TRO could be expanded upon and where I see this work contributing to his framework.

Tenets of Racialized Organizations Observed in a Southwest School District

Since racialized organization theory is the foundation for the data analysis for this project, I divide my analysis and findings into four sections by tenet for clarity. In these sections, I give a brief overview and interpretation of the tenet and operationalization of these tenets within the data. I follow this with analysis and mean-making of the data shared through the testimonios. Finally, data contributing to the theoretical conceptualization of racialized organizations that are not considered within the tenets created and defined by Ray are discussed separately.

Tenet 1: Enhanced/Diminished Agency of Racial Groups

TRO posits that the power differentials in racialized organizations lead to a diminished or limited agency of racialized actors within these institutions. This is because individuals of color are often hired for positions at the bottom rungs of a racialized organization and because of the myriad ways that racialized bodies are controlled within these organizations (Ray 2019:36). For example, through different expectations and rules controlling one's use of time (Mills 2014), appropriate emotions and notions of 'professionalism' enacted upon Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) (Wingfield 2010), racialized organizations limit the ways that non-Whites or Whites working engaged in anti-racist racial projects can act upon their own will, decisions, and ideas.

In this story, the community member, a person of color employed with the district at the time, shared how they attempted to find alternative ways to secure funds to help students experiencing homelessness, food, and economic insecurity because of COVID. They taught at a school in a part of town labeled as low socioeconomic status that was made up mainly of students of color. After being told by the district that there was no funding available for additional support, this teacher relied on their contacts with legislators they knew through community organizing and ties and was able to secure a sizeable amount of money that would have made a significant difference in the lives of the most vulnerable students. However, while attempting to go through the proper channels to ensure the money would go to serve their students, they recall:

> *My job was threatened. They said it was a mismanagement of money, even though no money had ever been exchanged, and that it could be career-ending for us. So it was those systems that are in place. You know, when you start really trying to challenge and change things and the ways that exist, you're met with a lot of resistance and it can get really ugly, really fast.*

Aware of the impacts that food and housing insecurity have on students' ability to focus on the classroom, this teacher searched for solutions to address the immediate needs and inequities their students faced. However, they recall that during the meeting in which their job was threatened, they and their project partner were accused of attempting to undermine the organization. Representatives of the district- lawyers and members of the community school partnership, an organization tasked to help develop community schools in the district- were concerned with how the legislator, an agent of the state, would perceive the organization. No alternatives or solutions were given to address the needs of the students, and the project was shut down at a time when students were the most in need. Here, we see firsthand how agency is diminished for people of color in a

racialized organization by district representatives through threats of termination of a teacher that had served students and communities for almost two decades at the time of this occurrence. One could argue that the teacher could exert agency by opting out of the school system and allowing themselves to be fired or quit. However, as Ray points out, this option leads to a loss of resources, opportunities, and economic security that are often precarious for people of color in a white supremacist system (Ray 2019:38).

Another striking example of the diminished agency in racialized organizations comes from the experiences of a white person formerly employed by the district, who ultimately left for their own mental and emotional well-being due to the toxicity of working for the school district. This individual was not only vilified to new employees as a "troublemaker" by his direct superiors within the district once he was labeled what he self-describes as a "race traitor" (Ignatiev and Garvey 1996) but was placed under surveillance and had his actions within the organization severely limited.

> I got a new boss… and she showed me a memo in a file all by itself, not supposed to have personnel files, apart from a personnel file a memo that was written to me that forbade me from doing anything related to ethnic studies or anti-racism. And that when I was in those spaces, I was not to introduce myself as a [school district] employee.

Similarly, during his tenure with the organization, this employee was disturbed to discover that he was being spied upon:

> *A recent coworker of mine basically let me know that her boss had told her to kind of spy on me and she had enough integrity to say, "I'm not going to do that" and so she actually stepped away from that position because she didn't like that.*

In this testimonio, the maintenance of whiteness takes the form of surveillance and controlling the way that the individual identified himself as a member of the racialized

organization in public spaces where he was directly involved in organizing or trainings related to ethnic studies or anti-racism. Further, throughout the testimonio, this community member shared that his supervisors and those managing him made him feel paranoid or crazy when he voiced his concerns about retaliation. When he confronted them on another occasion for a separate incident meant to defame him, supervisors assured him that what he perceived to be happening was not true. In this way, individuals in positions of power also engaged in gaslighting to control his agency in working on efforts to promote educational equity and disrupt white supremacy.

Another testimonio shared by a teacher of color focused on how they had agency diminished by being made to bring empirical evidence to support their ideas to increase educational equity only for it to have been an exercise of futility:

> *"[Principal's name], I am the first person that you require to present papers in order to support my view. Nobody else has been required to do that. So I put them together, and they're right here, and you're going to have a vote before we even discuss them?" And they had the vote before even discussing them.*

White educators are rarely, if ever, are asked to justify their curriculum or pedagogical decisions before implementing them. However, in this case, because the teacher was directly calling out the inherent racism in the actions that white teachers and white administrators were taking in a predominately Latinx school with a failing rank, he was made to bring in empirical evidence that supported his analysis of the administrative approaches as damaging to students of color. Unfortunately, on top of redirecting him to spend his already limited personal time compiling the evidence, the actions of the white principal demonstrate that the request had not been in good faith and that she was utilizing it as a tactic to send the teacher on a futile wild-goose chase.

In these examples, we can see some of how whiteness is maintained and protected by racialized organizations through a diminishing of agency. As a result, individuals working in earnest to defy white supremacy have their job security threatened. We see this happening through beneficiaries of racialized organizations exerting control over their agency through actions such as gaslighting, spying, strict boundaries on identifying themselves as members of an organization, and futile distractions made in bad faith.

Tenet 2: Legitimizing Unequal Resource Distribution

Even in the face of desegregation orders and organizational policies around increasing diversity, equity, and inclusions, racialized organizations legitimate inequitable distribution of resources through racist hiring practices and allocation of funding and resources that are read as race-neutral but that are constructed on a long history of racial discrimination and exclusion from access to educational systems and white spaces (Ray 2019: 38-39). While policies and practices can be put in place to increase the number of people of color in an organization, "once racialized hierarchies become taken-for-granted" within an organization, it becomes difficult for people of color to occupy positions of power within a racialized organization (Ray 2019: 40). Equally important when programs or actors within an organization are granted access to resources, funding and allocation of resources is mainly incumbent upon these actors not "rocking the boat" or challenging the established racial order within the organization (Williamson 2004).

Within the actions of school district administration, we see the use of language around funding and budgets as a way of legitimizing access to resources and funds for programs and initiatives that challenge a white supremacist racial order. Throughout the testimonios, the legitimation of unequal resource distribution was present at the district

level, when speaking to mid-level managers, and within conversations with the director of curriculum and instruction at the time. Further, this unequal distribution of resources was legitimated and justified using the language of equality and fairness. For example, a former school board member who identifies as a man of color shared his reaction upon learning how funding is allocated across the district when he was advocating for community schools to be created to serve the most neglected schools in the district, which also have the most significant percentages of students of color, and that were in the zone he represented. The process for allocating funding here resembles similar processes of colorblind allocation seen at Hispanic serving institutions (HSI) today (Vargas and Villa-Palomino 2019):

> *And that's when I found out, for example, that not all the Title I monies were spread evenly amongst not even me, but the monies were shared across the district, even for schools that didn't qualify for Title One or for bilingual or whatever, because they didn't feel it was fair for them to not to be penalized for not having poor students. I'm like, "What kind of fucking logic is that?"*

Another teacher and community organizer that works with refugee students shared similar frustrations. This teacher outlined how the state funds students of varying educational needs, a process they described after months of research on the issue as "one of the most equitable in the nation." The teacher had spent months going back and forth with their school board member to find out where the extra money goes that is allocated by the state for newcomer students and how they could access it to serve their newcomer population:

> *[My board member] said it does go into that big pot and it gets distributed amongst everybody, which is maddening. So there's that money that is being used inequitably. There's money from the state also for newcomer students, for students that are within their first three years in the country, I think they*

get an extra like $700 per student. And I found out while I was working at [this school], but then I really found out like, actually, like saw it on paper [at the district headquarters].

While Title I is a federal program that "provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards" (United States Department of Education 2018), and the district as whole qualifies for the funding because of its status as one of the poorest districts in the country, administrators in charge of Title I funds at the district level decided to distribute the monies equally. Similarly, the district qualifies for many federal and state funds to support students with various needs – special education students, bilingual students, newcomer/refugee students, and other social locations that expose students to forms of oppression and limit access to students from these communities. Equality and equity have long been contested and controversial when used interchangeably, but justice-based approaches must be based on equity rather than egalitarian ones (Espinoza 2007, Marin 1981). This approach that utilizes equality over equity may be seen as simple ignorance but is fundamentally a "non-knowing, that is not contingent, but in which race—white racism and/or white racial domination and their ramifications—plays a crucial causal role" (Mills 2007:20).

In both cases, funding is allocated through different sources to the district that is earmarked to help attain educational equity. The governor and legislators in the state have centered child well-being and access to quality education in their legislative agendas. However, here, we see how a racialized organization legitimizes inequitable resource distribution under the guise of equality. While students at these schools remain

underfunded and neglected, other schools receive funds for these student populations and do not have them, or the population is so tiny that they are rendered invisible. Instead, these schools utilize these monies for other means. This teacher lamented how another school in the district that has little to no newcomer students on their campus utilizes this money for a health and wellness curriculum that they wish they could implement at their school to teach their students: a full-time yoga teacher on staff. However, these are aspirational goals for this teacher as they still need help finding funding to meet their basic educational needs. These examples also challenge Ray's choice of terms in his tenets – while the tenet he lays out paints a picture of *inequitable* resource distribution, he also uses equal and equitable interchangeably in this article.

Tenet 3: Racialization and Credentialing Whiteness

As whiteness is normalized within racialized organizations, it becomes a "credential providing access to organizational resources, legitimizing work hierarchies, and expanding White agency" (Ray 2019:41). Because race becomes a stand-in for attributes such as work ethic and drive, which are scrutinized in the credentialing process, Ray argues that whiteness itself becomes the credential upon which access and opportunity are granted (Ray 2019:41). Further since much of the criteria that are used in the process of credentialing is based on access to resources and institutions such as education which is often severely limited to non-White individuals in this country, this criterion itself becomes a way of exalting Whiteness utilizing a process that has been rendered "race-neutral" through bureaucratic practices (Ray 2019:42).

This practice is not new and has been written about for decades, but here we see its application to the racialization of organizations themselves. In his work on the

psychological wage of whiteness, Du Bois calls attention to the credentialing of whiteness to offset any unrest amongst the poor white class for the low wages they received for their labor (Du Bois 1998[1935]). With no regard for qualifications or training, “the police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, depending on their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their voices selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and deference shown to them (Du Bois 1998[1935]:700-701). In this way, whiteness becomes THE credential that supersedes all others and upon which the upholding of a white supremacist system is upheld. Whiteness as a credential only holds weight insomuch as the racial order that gives whiteness its power is maintained.

Credentialization of whiteness in the examples shared through the testimonio looks like passing over people of color that have gone through the hoops of the highly problematic and inequitable credentialization systems to obtain “legitimate credentials” (Collins 2019, Pillay and Asadi 2021) on top of enduring the racism of inequitable workloads imposed on women of color (Dhamoon 2020). For example, one Latina teacher and vocal community member shared the following:

> *It's hard as a Latina to advance yourself. And, you know, no matter how much education you have because I feel like I have a fair amount of education in comparison to possibly like all other principals, but I still can't get I can't get up. I can't get up there. And it's inherently frustrating and I feel like I would do really good by those young people and by the people of the community.*

This frustration is understandable. Based on the details shared about her personal life and education, this teacher is over-qualified and over-educated for the position she aspires to

have. However, this was one of several examples she shared where she had been replaced or overlooked by a white colleague throughout her career. This is particularly frustrating given the authentic relationships (Valenzuela 1999) she builds with her students. While sharing her testimonio, students popped in and out of her class to say hello or goodbye. It was evident through how she set up her classroom that her focus as an educator was informed by her love and commitment to the students she served. In another instance she shared, she was replaced as an ethnic studies teacher by a white woman who was both new to the school and to the subject despite the years that she had worked with the community to require the district to offer ethnic studies to high school students as a requirement.

Whiteness as a credential also looks like making assumptions about one's skills based on race above all else. Several former students who now work in organizing spaces shared how they came from the BIPOC feeder middle school into one of the largest high schools in the district only to find themselves amongst a racially diverse school where they were immediately seen as less credentialed than their white counterparts. Here whiteness was credentialed by school-level administrators such as guidance counselors. One former student shares her experience advocating to be allowed to take honors classes after taking an honors curriculum at the BIPOC middle school:

> *When I was in ninth grade, I had trouble getting into honors classes because they said, well, my counselor literally told me, "Well, you're coming from [BIPOC] middle school, so you probably don't have the skill to be in this class."*

Other students shared similar stories of how the white students from the white feeder school were allowed to enroll in AP classes without question. In this case, we see how formal credentials, such as test scores and GPA are cast aside and superseded by the

credential of Whiteness. We know that whiteness is seen as giftedness, and as a result, white students are vastly overrepresented in honors, gifted, and AP programs while their non-White counterparts are read as non-gifted (Staiger 2004). The argument of credentialization takes Staiger's work further by linking it directly to access and opportunities that further serve to credential whiteness. In this example, we simultaneously see the credentialing of whiteness and what Ray calls the normalization of racialized exclusion (Ray 2019:41). Here we also witness the pathologizing of racialized students (Ray 2022a) as well as the erasure of student intellect based on the intersection of gender and race (Ray 2022b). While we can see credentialization of whiteness in action in this testimonio, this also points to the need to incorporate an approach that understands the race-gender gap as it points to an "intersecting racialization and gendering process" (López 2003:5). This student was eventually allowed to take honors classes, but only after she and her former middle school teacher and mentor advocated for her to be allowed in those courses.

Tenet 4: Racialized Decoupling of Rules and Practices

TRO posits that "'objective' rules and practices may be enforced in ways that disadvantage non-Whites, or rules aimed at diversifying or ending discrimination may be ignored" (Ray 2019:42). Not only are they ignored, but the rules are broken or are applied differently depending on the race of the individual subject to them. In this way, clear messages are sent about who is bound by the rules, how they are applied to different individuals, and who is immune from them altogether.

A prevalent theme throughout the testimonios was how individuals would bring up policies or laws designed to protect people of color or created to promote educational

equity of BIPOC communities but were often ignored by administrators at the district. In some instances, stories were shared about how existing court rulings meant to protect communities of color or enforce equity were perversely applied to have the opposite impact on the most vulnerable students of color in the district. For example, one teacher shares a moment where what they felt would be a welcome solution based on empirical evidence of the positive impacts of newcomer programs for newly arrived students was met with forceful refusal:

> *And the [Language and Cultural Equity] lady was like, "No, absolutely not." And we're like, "Why would you say no?" And they were like, "We're in this lawsuit that we've been in for over 20 years about segregating kids, and we're not going to segregate these kids so we're not going to segregate these kids to these classes." A desegregation one from probably 25, 30, years ago that is still going on. And she was like, "We're not doing that. We're not segregating the kids." And really, it's not segregating them. It's providing them with much-needed support, though. And she was like, "Absolutely not. We're not touching this. Shut it down."*

Here, the teacher had created a 90-page proposal of what this program could look like that was based on models throughout many states across the country to support newcomer students as they navigated learning English while struggling with a new cultural and social context as well as processing the circumstances that caused them to flee their home country in the first place. Interestingly, this is also an area where the disconnect between the district's board of education and mid-level administrators was most visible. Policies and actions designed to promote anti-racism or increase equity, including solutions to help refugee students attain better outcomes, were lauded and approved by the board, only to be ignored by the administrators within the organization in charge of ensuring their implementation.

Another example Ray's model explicitly calls attention to is the decoupling of formal processes and enforcement of anti-discrimination mandates to protect racialized groups. Without the will to enforce or mechanisms to address discrimination in the workplace, organizations utilize bureaucratic procedures to render a process race-neutral but that fail to change the acts of discrimination experienced in the first place (Ray 2019: 42). Here, an employee of the district calls attention to the complaint process put in place to protect him against racial discrimination after he filed a complaint against his boss:

> *And I filed the complaint and I demanded that the policies be stopped until they were based on research and not just pure ideology. But the district by that time had changed. So the EOC office was within [the district], but it was independent. So the second time I went, they had closed that office more or less. And all the work got privatized. So now complaints are handled by law firms that put in a bid for the work. So all my complaints were investigated by one guy. A huge investigation was given to one guy. And then he found that I was the one that was harassing the others. And they were about to fire me. By that time, I had already gotten a lawyer and sued them because I did a three-pronged attack. I attacked him with a lawyer, then I went and attacked them through the Human Rights Commission, and then I went in and attacked them with their own EOC office.*

Here the employee illustrates how he has learned from previous interactions with the district that he would need to approach his complaint through multiple channels to protect himself. In this example, the employee filed a complaint against the deficit and criminalizing language that the principal and other administrators at his predominantly BIPOC school were utilizing to justify new policies that further criminalized students. Through various complaints, advocacy to his union, and knowledge of the threats against him for attempting to file complaints based on his own experiences of discrimination, including whistleblowing, he knew he would have to take extra measures to protect himself from termination.

Limitations of and Expansions to Theory of Racialized Organizations

In my analysis of this Southwest school district as a racialized organization, the tenets of TRO served as a critical framework for empirical analysis. Nevertheless, it did not fully answer how whiteness manifests and is protected within the district, nor did it account for empirical evidence of micro-level challenges to whiteness that live outside of meso-level influence. In the first section on community serving schools, I expand upon this point of empiricism that is not explained by Ray's tenets. The sections on whites who resist and the need for intersectionality are two key areas where this project can contribute to and expand on the theory of racial organizations. Through a consideration of Whites' agency to enact individual ethical and moral frameworks that supersede "sense of group" sensibilities (Blumer 1958) and in employing an intersectional lens to analyze racial inequalities that are compounded by other marginalized intersecting identities such as of gender, sexual orientation, class, tribal status, and other components (Crenshaw 1991) as well as an application of intersectionality as heuristics (Collins 2019), I address the empirical findings that fall outside of Ray's theorization and expand upon his theory of racialized organizations.

Community Serving Schools

Throughout the testimonios, about half of the educational organizers that work within the district shared examples of being able to challenge whiteness and grow individual school initiatives that centered communities of color and educational equity despite the influence of the meso-level on individual racial animus. In these examples, folks within the district demonstrated the importance of having positive gatekeepers in administrative positions (Corra and Willen 2002). Several believed that the district was

too big, and that because of this, it allowed individuals to resist and move in ways that challenged the educational organization undetected. This tended to happen in community schools, but the label of community schools to ensure this would happen. Rather, in the stories shared with me, it was the combination of a community school with administrators that were committed to social justice and equity that made the difference.

One white teacher shared how she was able to get several programs off the ground that were in direct defiance of the instructions from district-level administrators:

> *Having a supportive administrator and administration in general was incredibly helpful. Nothing would have happened if they weren't as supportive as they were. He was always willing to listen and always open to hear my ideas about it and trusted me as a teacher. And then when he went to his bosses and administration and other people said no, but the rest of them said yes, he just didn't include the naysayers anymore. "Okay, we're going to keep moving forward and they're just not invited to our conversations anymore."*

Similarly, her principal shared that his school was successful in serving its students through a community school framework and that it happened outside of the system, because the needs of his students were too important to wait for the district to approve his actions:

> *I'm proud of the fact that we built something maybe before it was ready to be acknowledged or even maybe being resourced. I'm proud of that aspect because obviously it directly impacts our families or students and where we need to go and where we need to be going.*

The community model that this school has implemented attempts to serve the needs of students holistically – from ensuring they have access to clothing, shelter, thinking

through some of the transportation issues they face and working with the city to address these directly (and consequently bypassing the district because these students utilize the public transportation system). This administrator demonstrates that there is power in the local school administration to defy meso-level practices and ideologies. These examples further elucidate that as we pay more attention to the impacts of the meso-level, we must also unpack the tensions that resist between the meso and the micro. Here, Ray's model runs the risk of overgeneralizing the direct influence that meso-level organizations have on the micro level and does not unpack all the other factors that influence micro-level actors such as the relationships created with students and families. Schools serving the community provide a direct challenge to this lack of theorization – after all, the micro level is still composed of individuals who act upon their own agency.

Whites Who Resist

When we speak of institutions, organizations, and states in abstract terms, we risk anthropomorphizing inanimate spaces that only enact the values, goals, and missions of the *people* who hold positions of power within them. Ray contends that organizations are not race-neutral, but in and of themselves, organizations have no motives or reasons for being. By failing to acknowledge that the tenets of racialized organization theory exist only insofar as there are people with interests in maintaining and upholding white supremacy (even when these individuals together constitute the dominant majority in our racist society), Ray risks essentializing all White people as invested in upholding racial hierarchies and white supremacy. In fact, Ray posits that *"the racialized organizations perspective… sees Whites' emotional expectations—as the primary beneficiaries of the racial system—as equally if not more important in reinforcing that system"* and lists the

emotional expectations of Whites as "expectations of deference, or the assumption of menial tasks for people of color" (Ray 2019:37). While Ray is correct in his assessment of Whites as the primary beneficiaries of the racial system, the omission of an analysis of white people as individual actors leaves little room to make sense of the motives, actions, and consequences of white people who actively and intentionally engage in disrupting whiteness.

The white community activists who shared their testimonios would be considered allies and accomplices by organizers of color who have routinely placed themselves in precarious positions to fight against injustice and oppression. A white supremacist system would view them as "race-traitors" (Ignatiev and Garvey 1996) as these individuals are among the "praiseworthy Whites- anti-colonialists, abolitionists, opponents of imperialism, civil rights activists, resisters of apartheid- who have recognized the existence of the immorality of Whiteness as a political system, challenged its legitimacy, and insofar as possible, refused the [Racial] Contract" (Mills 1997: 107). We must acknowledge that people of color are not blindingly bestowed with "automatic insight" about the Racial Contract and that Whites are not excluded from a complex understanding of the immorality of this contract, but rather that "standpoint theory is about epistemic location, not individuals" (Mills 2013: 36). Similarly, bell hooks reminds us, "if we fail to acknowledge the value and significance of individual anti-racist white people, we not only diminish the work they have done, but we prevent other white people from learning by their example" (hooks 2003:57). Anthropomorphizing organizations allows for TRO to diminish the work of white anti-racists and in essentializing all

Whites, it renders invisible the agency of whites who resist the racial contract and the reproduction of whiteness.

Including these white accomplices and co-conspirators (Desnoyers-Colas 2019) is critical for understanding the mechanisms used by white actors (and non-white actors that benefit from their proximity to whiteness) to enforce and maintain whiteness in organizations. Whiteness is reproduced and maintained not solely because it benefits those invested in it but also because there are direct consequences and repercussions for white people who repudiate, expose, and fight against it, as seen in some of the data above. This does not negate that all "whites are *beneficiaries* of the Racial Contract though some may not be *signatories* to it" (Mills 1997:11). Instead, these examples emphasize the consequences of not being signatories to it, and of Whites' attempts to utilize their inherent benefits to disrupt and challenge the very systems that grant them these benefits in the first place. In these actions, white community members relayed experiences that elucidate characteristics of this school district as a racialized organization. It is also worth noting that the white individuals that shared their testimonios engage in convivencia, or intentional communion and community-making based on mutual love, respect, and human connection (Galván 2015; Castillo, Garcia, Mendiaz Rivera, Milan Hinostroza, and Toscano 2023) with their non-white comrades both when organizing and in their personal lives including intentional practices that center community well-being and health. It is critical to call attention to these actions since the disruption of epistemologies of ignorance (Mills 1997, 2007) does not "happen in isolation" and engaging in these types of relationships allows Whites to listen to non-

Whites and continuously engage in humanizing pedagogy and practice (Cabrera 2019:113).

The Need for Intersectionality

The second area where this empirical application of TRO reveals a space for theoretical expansion is the necessity for an intersectional framework within racialized organizations. Although I agree with Ray that "racial inequality is not merely 'in' organizations but 'of them, as racial processes are foundational to organizational formation and continuity" (Ray 2019:48), and much of the data collected in this project supports this, racial inequality is never uniform in its impact, nor does it act independently from gender or sexual orientation for people and groups who are categorized and constructed as embodying multiple marginalized social locations simultaneously (Crenshaw 1991, 2016). Incorporating an intersectional approach in this theory addresses the multiple systems of oppression that are simultaneously enacted on individuals that are constructed as ‘other’ through categories of difference that uphold these systems. Further, as Patricia Hill Collins reminds us, “experience as a way of knowing is routinely dismissed as mere opinion rather than informed testimony that illuminates the truths of being silenced and subordinated (Collins 2019:137). Experience matters, and academics run the risk in engaging in epistemic violence when not including the knowledge gained from experience, particularly the experiences of people that embody multiple oppressed identities.

TRO lends itself to critical application for understanding how organizations have been normalized and accepted as race-neutral, but it does not account for the

intersectional nature of racialized processes. While it does recognize the tendency for structured organizations to make deference to men in professional organizational hierarchies, analyzing this school district allows us to theorize and expand upon his work by acknowledging and thinking about the relationships between patriarchal structures and white supremacy. A common theme within the testimonios of women was how they were treated or discounted based on their gender. In some instances, they also experienced discrimination through various intersecting categories of race, gender, and sexual orientation difference as simultaneous social locations systems of oppression and resistance. For instance, in one testimonio, a community member reflected upon a position she had quit because she felt that she was intentionally prevented from engaging in work that would meaningfully impact students of color in the district:

> *When I look at [the district], and I just see the things that the men are able to do, it's like their word, their influence has so much more power behind it. And so even in my [former position], now [a white-presenting male] is in that position and I mean he's been able to do a lot! A lot. He has a staff of 15 people. And I was in this windowless office [doing remedial and inconsequential busy work]. And he admitted that. In his first three months, we had a conversation he was like, "I think it's partly sexism that I'm able to do all the stuff that you were not able to. We're both trying to get the same thing accomplished. And I'm getting a lot further than you were."*

The position she left has district-wide implications and allocation of resources for some of the most vulnerable BIPOC populations in the district, and she recognized that she was not taken seriously or allowed to implement any meaningful changes based on a patriarchal system that empowered her supervisors to see her knowledge and contributions as inferior based on her identity as a woman. The direct beneficiaries of the program are students of color. While the former employee interpreted some of the lack of will behind the position as racism against the population she served, she also realized that

sexism in the workplace contributed to further racial discrimination and inequities for the students her programs would have served. Gendered discrimination, in this case, had direct implications for racial disenfranchisement. This example illustrates how "all contexts of domination incorporate some combination of intersection oppressions" (Collins 2009:246) and the need to examine how the matrix of domination organizes and enacts these various systems of oppression simultaneously in multiple social locations.

Because these instances lead to further marginalization of BIPOC communities and employees within the organization, it is essential to include an intersectional analysis here and ask how centering an intersectional lens within the theory of racialized organizations can lead us to a clearer understanding of the multiple ways that organizations are racialized and going further, elucidate the multiple systems of oppression upon which power is arranged (Collins 2009, 2019). This also directs us to the importance of engaging in scholarship that seeks to disrupt both whiteness and heteropatriarchy by shedding light on how both are part of a more extensive system of colonization. It is not enough to attempt to disrupt racism and racial oppression by unpacking whiteness alone. We must begin to see whiteness within the larger frame of settler-colonialism that simultaneously imposes multiple systems of oppression upon us (Smith 2016). Only in this way can we fully dismantle whiteness in all its seemingly amorphous manifestations as part of the process of naming whiteness demands that we identify and make strange the myriad systems of oppression implicated in upholding it.

By using intersectionality as a heuristic, or a method of problem-solving that allows people to learn from their own experiences, we can move beyond naming whiteness to praxis. Ray's tenets provide a framework for naming and analyzing what

whiteness looks like in a meso-level institute, but once we have named whiteness, what do we do about it? Intersectionality allows both researchers and educational organizers to make steps towards "action strategies for *how* to move forward in solving social problems and in grappling with existing puzzles" and "heuristics offer guidance, as rules of thumbs or common practices, for social action" (Collins 2019:34, italicized in the original). For community organizers, intersectionality provides a toolkit for taking the knowledge gleaned by an application of TRO to meso-level processes in the racialized organization of a school district.

Conclusion

Though this is only a tiny portion of the data, we see how school districts are racialized organizations. Given the current political climate where political groups and right-wing activists are pushing to reshape our schools as bastions of white supremacy at the further detriment of communities of color in this country, we must recognize the role of the school district as a racialized organization to impose racist ideologies and practices on its employees, its students, and the larger community of stakeholders. Further, through processes that render these practices race-neutral as they are filtered through a meso-level organization, white supremacy is sanctioned locally under the guise of policy, practices, and professionalism. Naming whiteness in action and framing seemingly mundane organizational practices as mechanisms to uphold whiteness allows us to make whiteness strange, to dislodge it from the normalized position that it has enjoyed, and which has supported it in our current white supremacist, capitalist, imperialist hegemonic system.

CHAPTER 4 Traditional Modes of Resistance and Community Care: How Community Organizers Challenge, Resist, and Survive White Supremacy in Educational Organizations

> *One thing we talk about as organizers is we lead with love. And for us to also, as organizers, know that we're learning. Be on a learning journey. Like you're always learning. There are other folks who've been doing this work that we can learn from, and maybe we may have some ideas to contribute to, but there are other folks who've been leading this work. – Community Organizer of Color*

> *We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation [are] us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters, and our community, which allows us to continue our struggle and work.*
>
> *– The Combahee River Collective*

The first quote was shared with me by a woman of color who has spent decades organizing and advocating with youth in multiple capacities in the county. For her, this work is what she describes as "heart work." She spoke about the importance of ensuring that she was leading with love in all aspects of community organizing in which she was involved. Throughout the testimonios, a common theme amongst organizers was the overwhelming sense of love and responsibility for all community members and engagement in flexible solidarity (Collins 2019). All organizers expressed this ethical commitment in some articulation or another. One striking message from this quote was that it paralleled the politics at the root of intersectional organizing work by the Combahee River Collective. Both the organizer and the Collective's statement express how their work is rooted in communal love and a recognition that they are all part of and responsible for the well-being of a larger community (Combahee River Collective 2014).

Some of the most inspiring and rewarding moments in listening to the testimonios for this project was hearing community members reflect on why they engaged in this work in the first place. They shared stories of hope that their children and communities could one day experience equitable schooling where they have access to every opportunity to succeed and in a space that did not inflict trauma upon them. They shared visions of what educational justice could look like-visions that inform and fuel their work and are rooted in educational freedom. Some community members shared experiences from their schooling experiences in other cities, states, and countries that instilled in them a clear sense of what is possible in our public schools when there is pressure and motivation to enact equitable practices and policies in educational spaces.

In this chapter, I ask: What strategies do parents, community, and teachers fighting for educational justice deploy to fight against whiteness and white supremacy? Community members engage in multiple approaches and methods of resistance as they pursue systemic change. I aim to articulate this work in action and highlight what one of my participants describes as the "folks who have been doing this work that we can learn from." Community finds ways to resist, survive, thrive, find joy, and lead with love with or without the presence of academics and researchers. So, it is with humility and honor that I approach their spaces and have embarked upon assisting them in their work throughout the past decade.

This chapter aims to share the work already being done and from which communities across the country engaged in abolitionist teaching and organizing can learn. I merely act as an interlocuter that utilizes theories of liberation to contextualize the processes and actions observed. It would be arrogant and disingenuous of me to assume

that I somehow have the answers or that the strategies are mine, as many community members have shared with me that their work is engrained in the fabric of their being. For example, one educator and community member shared, "*I think my grandmothers speak through me, and my ancestors speak through me. I live in the space of love, and I know that education is love*." With this long legacy of ancestors that have survived and resisted and this knowledge that education, at its core, is an act of love, I make sense of and present the work upon which community members in a Southwest city engage in pursuing educational justice.

I found that community members engage in multiple approaches to displace whiteness while engaging in abolitionist work. They shared strategies and practices that allowed them to create focused organizing plans to make the work actionable. This includes work easily identifiable as grassroots organizing and includes practices such as community asset mapping and power mapping and analysis. I will cover this in detail below. However, I also share practices typically not seen as resistance – convivencia, caring for one another, engaging in restorative practices, and celebrating joy. Audre Lorde reminds us that "caring for [ourselves] is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde 1988). Finally, I give space to reflect upon what community members see as lessons learned.

Through the testimonios, folks shared actions that they felt were both successful and others that they lamented or expressed frustration because they viewed them as failures. Drawing from both the matrix of domination (Collins 2009), as well as the articulation of the macro, meso, and micro level of racialized institutions (Ray 2019), I contend that community members express more sentiments of success and victory when

they successfully match interventions to the specific levels of influence and power (macro, meso, micro) that those interventions are meant to disrupt.

The potential power of an individual community-centric school, for example, comes in that it is usually too small a forum for the meso-level to monitor fully but that it has enough of a structure that some practices can be institutionalized in the small-scale sphere of that school's particular school culture and climate. However, because the meso-level shapes and reinforces individual racial animus (Ray 2019) by promoting a "race-neutral racism,"- a combination of colorblind racism (Bonilla Silva 2013) and the race-neutral stances that institutionalized organizations tend to take, - transformational changes at the individual schools may not be sustainable because the culture is ultimately dependent upon the longevity of allied school leaders. For example, one elementary school had a vibrant community garden program that drew community members to the school and built connections between the students, community leaders, and elders. However, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the principal at this school was replaced. The first order of business of the new principal was to shut down the community garden without ever having stepped foot in the school or learning about the program's positive impacts on the students. While I do not see these moments as failures because they serve as learning moments for the community that help them to solidify their organizing further, it is worth naming the source of the frustration and why some community organizers may see them as failures to improve upon them going forward.

In the following sections, I elaborate on the theoretical framework of Black feminist liberatory praxis that I apply in unpacking community members' strategies and actions in resisting whiteness and white supremacy (Combahee River Collective 2014;

Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2009). I then describe the methods and data analysis process and elucidate the local context in which these education struggles exist. After this, I share relevant findings that include traditional organizing tactics to engage in a war of position – a war of resistance to regimes of whiteness where opposition is mobilized directly against the system by those most impacted by oppression (Omi and Winant 2015:142-143). However, I also include community care modes of resistance that may not be seen as traditional, recognizable mobilizing against power but are crucial for long-term organizing. These include moments of joy, self-care, convivencia (the intentional creation of spaces where we live together), and celebration and can be read as a "war of maneuver," in which the community acts outside of the system, in created spaces. I then conclude with my reflections and observations from the testimonios.

Theoretical Framework: Black and Chicana Feminist Theories of Liberatory Praxis

I utilize a Black feminist framework based on community action and intersectional, applied scholarship. Because this chapter is informed by and written with the community in mind, I have intentionally chosen to utilize Dr. Bettina Love's work on abolitionist teaching and educational freedom as a framework to map community-driven practices and actions of disruption (Love 2019). Her articulation of abolitionist teaching exemplifies what the testimonios and my experience working in educational organizing have shown me. It is "the practice of teaching and working in solidarity with communities of color while drawing on the imagination, creativity, refusal, (re)membering, visionary thinking, healing, rebellious spirit, boldness, determination, and subversiveness of abolitionists to eradicate injustice in and outside of schools" (Love 2019:2). Both the practices of solidarity and drawing on what "can be" are present in the

work upon which community activists in educational justice organizing embark. In addition, this framework is heavily informed by Black feminist thought and intersectional organizing since Black feminist theories and approaches are based on liberatory and anti-oppression praxis (Combahee River Collective 2014; Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2019; hooks 1994; hooks 2003; Lorde 2007).

In my approach, I include Yuval-Davis's (1999) concept of transversal politics as part of the theoretical framework for understanding this praxis. Transversal politics call upon community organizers and activists to understand their roles as advocates and promote the cause of educational justice rather than being seen as the official speaker or spokesperson for any one group (Yuval-Davis 1999). In this way, transversal politics provides a framework for understanding what intersectional organizing, that is, organizing that centers and commits the inherent privilege and marginalization of the various social locations of community members engaged in the work and how they are utilized to further their work and message through "rooting and shifting" (Collins 2019; Yuval-Davis 2017). In addition, this concept calls upon activists to constantly engage in critical self-reflection to ensure that they are aware of their differences, positions of power, and privilege and where there is synergy between their lived experience and that of other community members (Yuval-Davis 2017).

I apply Patricia Hill Collins' articulation of flexible solidarity (Collins 2017a, 2017b, 2019) to make sense of how community members organize in this unique space. Flexible solidarity as a commitment to loving and just communities, establishes and builds solidarity among and across political communities (Collins 2019: 169-170). As explained in the section on local context, this has been a highly effective way to organize

and maintain urgency around educational justice issues. Moreover, it is critical for disrupting whiteness as it is founded upon the critical understanding that Black survival MUST be at the root of ALL liberatory organizing and practice.

In developing the concept of community care as resistance, I extend upon Audre Lorde's idea of self-care as a form of resistance and warfare (Lorde 1988). Feminists of color have spoken and written about the mental, physical, and emotional toll that just living in a white supremacist heteropatriarchy causes on our minds, body, and soul for decades (Combahee River Collective 2014; Collins 2009; hooks 1994; Rendón 2009; Sosa-Provencio et al. 2020). The ability to thrive and find joy amid all this is almost super-human. I utilize these theoretical frameworks from Black and Chicana feminists to outline what community care as resistance looks like in praxis.

Methods and Data Analysis

I collected testimonios from twenty-five community members and organizers of varying intersectional social locations. Community members who participated identify as Black, Indigenous, Chicanx, Latinx, mixed-race, and white. About half identified as middle to lower class and half as middle to upper class. Of the testimonios collected, sixteen came from self-identified people of color, and nine were from white community members. Regarding sexual orientation, community members identified as gay, straight, and bisexual. Ten identified as male, and fifteen self-identified as women. All participants identified as cis-gendered. The omission of trans voices was not intentional and was solely the result of the people willing to share their testimonios. As testimonios are personal, I did not feel it was appropriate of me to continuously reach out to trans

organizers that did not respond to the initial calls for community participation. As in the previous chapter, the specific intersectional social locations of folks participating in this project are kept intentionally vague since giving more specified information would render them highly recognizable. In some instances, I use they/them pronouns to protect anonymity and not because they are the personal pronouns of that person. In the interest of transparency, because I have been intimately involved in organizing in these spaces over several years, some of the insights and analysis are part of my personal testimonio as a Chicana organizer and sociologist.

The testimonios were transcribed and coded using Atlas.ti9. With each testimonio, I coded conversations that focused on victories in organizing and frustrations and perceived failures. I also coded for lessons learned in organizing and community members' advice or insights for other people working in these spaces. Further, I utilized codes that identified tangible and executable actions shared throughout the testimonios. These included conversations about asset mapping, power mapping, and power analysis tools, speaking at school board meetings, organizing press conferences, and community-focused interventions such as anti-racism trainings and community-sponsored school board candidate forums. Regarding the themes of joy and self-care in organizing, I used both these codes and incorporated codes that referenced acts of convivencia, building community, love for community, and taking care of others. Some of these codes overlapped – for example, there were moments when a person would describe an action taken by the community and then speak about how they viewed it as a success or a failure and why they felt that way.

Local Context

The city where this work is rooted is often described as a majority-minority city. The city is a border town, and the district crosses multiple borders of Indigenous territories. The city is one of the nation's largest receivers of resettled refugees, and the local school district incorporates these newly arrived students into its educational institutions. This city is a site of settler-colonialism, and the repercussions and impacts of a violent settler-colonial project continue to heavily impact the opportunities, access, well-being, and racial dynamics of the city's inhabitants in the present day. District administrators and power holders still largely ignore multiple federal and state court orders around educational equity. These include federal desegregation orders stemming from the Civil Rights Movement to a recent state court order that found that Indigenous and Spanish-speaking students did not have access to an equitable and quality education in the state.

The landscape for abolitionist education work in this Southwest city is unique in its fluidity and coalition-based structure. Several spaces and organizations in the city work on issues of educational justice. The testimonios collected here come from individuals working in several of these spaces – either as central organizers or on the periphery. One prominent organization that interfaces with the district is a coalition space that defies hierarchical structures of leadership seen in many non-profit organizations and is not a registered non-profit itself. Instead, it relies solely on voluntary people-power. It acts as a "hub" or "incubator" that creates a liminal space for different education-based issues that arise throughout the year. People come and go depending on their capacity to do the work, but the space is always open and welcoming for people to return.

In moments where immediate issues require action, such as impending policy changes or board votes that would harm students of marginalized groups, this organization sees a swell of active members. In addition, multiple non-profit organizations will come to this space to rally community support. One example was when a new, majority right-wing school board attempted to pass a parental rights policy modeled after the ones passed across the nation in the summer of 2022. Youth organizers and youth-based organizations see the potential of this policy to limit the protection of LGBTQ+ students as parents would have the right to ask school administrators for their child's counseling records, which advocates feared could out students to parents and families that the student considered unsafe. I mention this organization for two reasons. The first is that community members that organize for abolitionist education may interface in the space of this grassroots organization either because they consider themselves a direct member of it or because they are acting as the spokesperson or liaison representing the interests of a different community organization in this shared space. The testimonios used in this project were shared by people who fall into both camps, and a couple of community members who work more on the periphery of this group.

The second reason is that since there is no one agenda about what educational justice looks like, there is room for any city resident to work and reach out for assistance on the concerns of their smaller constituencies. In this regard, educational organizing encompasses issues that may be seen as unrelated by other entities (and many times by the school district itself) but that families and community see as directly related to the ability of students to be successful in school spaces and which exemplify flexible solidarity (Collins 2017a, 2017b, 2019). These include the creation and adaptation of

policies for refugee and undocumented immigrant students, addressing the large population of homelessness amongst students, policing and criminalization of students of color, food justice and community garden creation, and accessible public transportation, among other issues. For this reason, there is no singular vision of what educational justice means. As one organizer shared, "*Educational justice would be like us building our educational system that was designed by us and for us, and so I cannot fully [say] exactly what it would look like because it would be co-created with lots of folks.*"

Traditional Modes of Resistance

> *"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to, and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those they oppress." – Frederick Douglass.*

Throughout the testimonios, several community members shared similar examples of what I have labeled "traditional" modes of resisting whiteness and white supremacy. It should be noted that there is nothing "traditional" about these actions, but I use the term to refer to easily identifiable actions, campaigns, and tactics in organizing. They embody public-facing actions that characterize a "war of position," or the ways that organizations fight against and resist an overwhelming hegemonic power frontal engagement with the state – in this case, the ways that local community members fight and resist white supremacist actions and policies carried out by white actors in the school district (Omi and Winant 2015:140-143). Some prevalent examples throughout the testimonios I will discuss are power analysis through power mapping, asset mapping,

anti-racist trainings and workshops, community-led school board candidate forums, and interfacing with the school board.

Power Analysis through Power Mapping

In conversations with district officials, a tension that often comes up is the assumption that community members lack the credentials or the knowledge to advocate for liberatory education. We know that credentialization has long been used as a strategy of dispossession built upon ideologies of legitimate knowledge and is often used to render people of color and traditional knowledge inadequate (Collins 2019; Delgado Bernal and Villalpando 2002; Pillay and Asadi 2021). Contrary to these assumptions, education activists know the district's power dynamics and clearly understand the multiple power levels and where to "work the cracks" (Collins 2019) or find solidarity and support for their agendas. Community members do this through the collaborative creation of a power map that allows them to engage in a critical power analysis of the district. Before engaging in action, community organizers create a power analysis that allows them to "map" out the terrain to determine how they can best proceed. A power map "identifies key actors within a particular field of action, defines the power that these actors have in relation to particular decisions or resources, and assesses the relationships of these actors with each other and with oneself" (Noy 2008:4). This is an exercise that community groups engage in regularly, making changes to reflect new actors on the field, including new grassroots organizations as well as new politically elected officials with the power to disrupt existing power dynamics.

Within educational justice, the power map exercise is an adaptation of Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education's (SCOPE) power analysis tool. SCOPE's

mission is to "build grassroots power to create social and economic justice for low-income, female, immigrant, black, and brown communities in Los Angeles." A woman of color with a long history of organizing in different capacities took part in SCOPE training while organizing in a different capacity. She developed her knowledge of this tool and brought that knowledge back to share with other community organizers. In terms of sharing the knowledge from the training she received, she stated:

> *Yeah, those things are encouraged when you go to those kinds of training because knowledge can't be stuck with one person. Because if they get burned out, leave the work, or God forbid, die, then the knowledge goes with that person. So, the Power Tools Book is what they give you when you go to the training, and you are allowed to use it to teach others in your organizations to use the tool.*

The training manual for this tool is available online through the California Budget and Policy Center and is freely accessible to the public.[1]

The chapter itself is detailed and overwhelming, but her training allowed her to facilitate a power mapping session with the community in a way that made it accessible to everyone who joined. As a result, the power mapping sessions were some of the most attended, and individuals representing many different organizations that interface with the district were present to help create this map. In Figure 1, we see the adaptation of the power map educational organizers created to map out allies and coalitions with which they could find solidarity and their opponents. Understanding that most organizations and individuals do not operate on extremes, the grid style of the power map allows them to map sources of power on a gradient ranging from those most likely to support the community's efforts to those most opposed.

The power mapping exercise served multiple purposes. First, it allowed community organizers to have a visual representation of the axis of power in the local school district. Through conversations and consensus, they could map each board member at various levels on the gradient from "Die Hard Supporter of our Agenda" to "Die Hard Opposing Agenda." Because board members carry power and influence to make decisions that impact the entire district, they assigned them closer to 10 on the scale as having "decisive decision-making power." This activity also allowed community members to reflect on how power manifests at the meso-level or within the body of the district administration itself. Through this reflection, folks could recognize how mid-level administrators who are unnoticed in these struggles often possess some of the most significant amounts of power. This included the superintendent, but more importantly, it led to serious conversations about the roles of assistant or zone superintendents and their power to ignore board desires and decisions.

For some folks, engaging in power mapping allowed them to see for the first time who holds different levels of power within the district and to understand why there is political interest in electing officials of specific partisan affiliation, even though the school board elections are non-partisan. For example, the Chicana organizer who shared the power mapping exercise reflected:

> *I think power mapping for me has taught me that there's so much power on the board and that there's so much power within school boards. And I know for a fact that conservative folks have identified that as a tactic because every year for the past five years, the Tea Party has put in a significant amount of money. But also nationally, after Trump, the conservatives have identified school boards as another opportunity to like, build power. And*

---

[1]The link to the chapter on "Power Analysis" is attached. Unfortunately, it has become difficult to cite the original source due to how often it has been disseminated online and through organizing groups without a title page. https://calbudgetcenter.org/app/uploads/SCOPE-Power-Analysis-Chapter.pdf

people who have control in schools are really able to indoctrinate children one way or another.

By engaging in power mapping, she was able to make the connections between larger, national-level political agendas and the recent upswing of post-Trump white supremacy, and the long-term consequences of the local school board election (Crenshaw 2020). So often, the local and the national are treated and seen as existing in two different spheres, but through power mapping, it became easier to identify how special-interest money can impact school board elections and understand the need to have community members running for those positions. As a result of this exercise, this organizer ran for school board in a predominantly Latinx and liberal zone. She further used power mapping during her own campaign to identify legislators and influential city and state leaders that would endorse her campaign and to understand which board members she could rely on for support. Unfortunately, although she had grassroots organizers from all areas of the city campaigning and canvassing for her (a testament to the relationships she has cultivated with community members throughout the years) and received a significant amount of the total vote, her conservative opponent largely outspent her. It was ultimately not enough to overcome what several organizations said was the largest amount of money ever spent on a school board race in history.

Figure 3: Power Map developed by Education Justice Organizers

Our Agenda	Our Agenda						Opposing Agenda
10 decisive decision making power							
9							
8 active participant in decision making							
7							
6 power to influence							
5							
4 taken into account							
3 can get attention							
2 not on radar							
1							
	Die Hard	Active Participant	Inclined Towards	Neutral	Inclined Towards	Active Participant	Die Hard

Another purpose for this exercise is that it allowed individuals to understand the "people power" within the community. As a result, they could identify organizations with whom they could build coalitions and rely on for flexible solidarity. Finally, similar to how they mapped the power of individuals within the district, they mapped the power that each community organization held and assigned them a place on the gradient regarding interest convergence between their agendas and educational justice.

Ultimately, one of the participants, a white man, explained that an equally important but unforeseen purpose of this exercise is that community members were able to identify the power that they held:

> *But the relationships we've built, and in [the] power maps that we've done, we can also see [our] power is increased. You know, I think people know about us and stuff, not that that's all that important, but I think we have a certain reputation, I think, that we will show up and we will stand up.*

This education activist reflects on just how much their organizing efforts have grown their organization and educational organizers' standing within the larger community. This realization is powerful as it helps sustain individuals and movements in the face of adversity and moments of burnout. This reflection about the organization's role and how other community members perceive them also helps them reflect on areas where they could be more engaged or where there is room for growth and improvement. Through this exercise, this community member shared how this type of work allows them to see "our own limitations, our own blind spots, [and] our own holes in our organizing."

Asset Mapping

Another tool that educational organizers spoke about was asset mapping. Asset mapping allows groups and organizations to take stock of the skills, resources, expertise, and tools the community possesses and can often call upon when necessary. Community members regularly update their asset maps by examining the current list of assets they have, adding new ones, and reaching out to people and organizations that could be useful (Arriero and Griffin 2018; Morgan, Bengochea, and Reed 2022). This can happen informally and is part of how community members solve issues that arise unexpectedly, but it is also used formally when more prominent events are organized. Informally, by keeping a "mental Rolodex" of the skills and assets possessed across the community, organizers can quickly pair up those in need with those that can help them resolve the issue. More than that, this practice ensures that community members are working

effectively and efficiently and engaging in communication with one another across groups, as needs and agendas often overlap:

> *There are other folks who've been doing this work that we can learn from, and maybe we may have some ideas to contribute to, but there's other folks who've been like leading this work. I remember someone had asked us to do something, and I was like, "Have you all gone to [Education Justice Organizers}? [Education Justice Organizers] is working on that." You know, like, how do we connect to other organizations that are already doing the work? And it's not being territorial. It's like honor and valuing the work that's come before us, right? Like all the tremendous work that's happened, and the work that we're fighting in education is what our ancestors were even fighting.*

Here, this community member demonstrates how she uses asset mapping to match community members in need with community groups engaged in the type of work the person needs. This is one example of how community members utilize an asset-mapping mindset to meet the needs of their community in the face of barriers and challenges created by a white supremacist system. She also invokes a reminder that this work is not new, that fighting for educational justice is a fight in which our ancestors have been involved, and as such, community members must ensure they are utilizing the strategies created before them through a history of fighting, struggling, and convivencia (coexisting together in community). Asset mapping is a practice that invokes the concept of community cultural wealth, or the ability to see the assets and resources that one possesses by being part of a larger community, and that is often used to challenge the deficit narrative that schools place on students of color (Yosso 2005).

Asset mapping is also used more formally when planning more extensive actions or community events. One example was during a rally held at the district headquarters at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Organizers were concerned that the district was taking seriously the differing impacts of Covid based on race and socioeconomic status.

There were also concerns that remote learning allowed many vulnerable kids to fall behind or leave school. In fact, during 2020-2021, the local school district "lost" approximately 6,000 students, attributed mainly to the Covid-19 pandemic.[2]

During one meeting, Education Justice Organizers quickly determined which organizations they could call on to support their agenda. They also quickly identified community members who possessed sound systems, which media connections they knew would be willing to write a piece for the local paper or send out a news team to cover the action for the local evening news and were able to get several community organization members to join their protest action at the district headquarters. In this way, they ensured that the issue of socioeconomic and racial inequities did not fall by the wayside since people were not physically in school spaces and were able to show solidarity with student groups attempting to sound the alarm about these issues with the school board as well. This last point was critical since student groups had surveyed students and families about the disparities and the struggles they faced due to the Covid-19 pandemic they were presenting to the board. The momentum around the action alerted students that Educational Justice Organizers would be willing to support their presentation to the local school board.

Anti-Racist Training & Workshops

Hosting and advocating for the school district to invest financially in anti-racist training and workshops has been one of the most critical ways that Education Justice Organizers have challenged and disrupted whiteness within the school district. Organizing these Undoing Racism workshops has been done in collaboration with multiple organizations across the city invested in racial justice and equity. Because of the

[2] https://sites.google.com/aps.edu/sapr/aps-dashboard/enrollment-and-demographics

consistent organizing, this training is now required at city hall and available throughout the school district. The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond must train individual trainers to facilitate this training. The People's Institute[3] is a nationally recognized training project founded by Dr. James Norman Dunn and Mr. Ronald Chisom, two African American organizers dedicated to the Civil Rights Movement and racial equity. The People's Institute has trained several community members in the city to facilitate these workshops, either at their own cost or through their work in other non-profit organizations. Individuals trained in facilitating these workshops must make themselves available to facilitate when fellow community members and organizations ask them to do so.

To date, educational activists have successfully gotten several board members to commit to participating in these workshops once elected to the board. This has led to individual-level changes in perceptions that have led to impactful changes at the meso-level. For example, when an older, retired white male ran for and won a school board seat, he committed to participating in these workshops. After participating in the Undoing Racism curriculum, this board member (the board president) switched his stance regarding the ethnic studies curriculum and actively supported community efforts to make ethnic studies a mainstay in the district curriculum.

Aside from voluntary participation by elected school board members, the district has agreed to mandate these workshops for principals and has financially invested in these workshops for teachers to attend if they would like to (they are not mandated for teachers as they are for principals). These workshops result from years of organizing between several different racial justice-based organizations in the city. However, while

[3] Undoing Racism: The People's Institute to Survival and Beyond: https://pisab.org/ https://pisab.org/

all the community members who shared their testimonio supported the idea of these workshops, there is mixed sentiment on their effectiveness. One self-identified white woman shared:

> *I feel like some of those trainings, we just created people who can talk about racism more effectively but still don't acknowledge or do anything. Like, I feel like [the superintendant] is like on point when he talks about racism now and I'm like, "Man, I think he heard that in that training." But I don't think he's making headway with anything.*

Several other organizers shared this sentiment. While many community members celebrated that their efforts had led to requiring these trainings, others felt frustration and concern that the training had only provided administrators and people in power with the language to utilize buzzwords that allowed them to use politically or morally correct words and phrases to make the individual appear invested in doing the right thing without engaging in anything more than performative action. While the frustrations shared are valid, the frustrations expressed seem to stem from an expectation that the undoing racism training, a micro-level intervention, would have a meso-level impact and results (Ray 2019). Suppose we view this as an intervention to change daily interpersonal interactions between white people and people of color. In that case, there is success in them in that they can change the nature of individual interactions. I would argue that anti-racism training is not meant to have a systemic impact – it is meant to disrupt whiteness on a personal level, which causes direct harm to the individual people of color that must interact with the white person unaware of their racist language, actions, or practices. The workshops themselves do not offer systems-level solutions, and it would not be prudent to rely on individuals just newly coming to terms with the way they enact racism to come out of these workshops with the solutions for institutional change, especially given the

complex nature of racialized organizations (Ray 2019). Further, the workshops do not claim to offer systems-level solutions as they aim to get white people to engage in critical self-reflection that will hopefully lead them to change their actions.

Community-Sponsored School Board Candidate Forums

Another way that community members have resisted whiteness has been by hosting community-sponsored school board candidate forums. After years of frustration that the candidate forums held by the district did not represent the concerns or desires of the community, Education Justice Organizers began to host their candidate forums where the community could have direct dialogue with the candidates running for school board. Unlike the debate style set up by the district, when community organizers held these in person, they were strategic in ensuring that the forums were held in community centers that were accessible and central to the constituents of each school zone. In addition, the forums were set up in a dialogue style, with the candidates sitting in the center of the room in a circle and community members sitting around them. In this way, they also signaled to candidates that they were supposed to be part of the community and not above them.

Through these forums, parents, families, students, and organizers could ask candidate members candid questions about how they would serve the community and could share some of the adverse experiences they had with schooling. They were further able to secure promises from candidates to complete anti-racism trainings if they were elected. These forums led to more transparency and frank answers since candidates could not prepare an answer ahead of time since the questions depended on the families, parents, and students that attended the forums. One teacher and organizer shared:

> *I'm a part of [Education Justice Organizers], and every year they do candidate forums for the Board of Education. And those candidate forums proved very influential in those elections at certain times, sometimes not. But the shift that happened in the board happened as not solely a result, but it can't be understated, I think the result of elections. That certain people got ousted, and other people got in. And those people are more representative of the interests of the community. And there was really this sort of perfect alignment of events that happened at one time. And that was the elections that elected board members who were supportive of ethnic studies, the push of community people and organizations at Board of Education meetings, and in communications with board members for ethnic studies.*

Because families and community members were able to speak directly to candidates, they could find out exactly where they stood on initiatives and curricula that mattered to the well-being of their children. In the example above, the teacher shares how the candidate forums were instrumental in ensuring that candidates supportive of ethnic studies were curriculum, which was one of the issues of greatest priority during the election cycle he recalls. Similarly, ensuing candidate forums have allowed students and families to directly engage candidates and get their stance on issues such as deteriorating infrastructures at schools predominantly serving students of color, their stances on standardized testing, and their support for LGBTQIA+ student protection and inclusion, among other things.

The previous school board election also speaks to these candidate forums' impact, even amongst candidates themselves. For example, in the previous election, candidates running on right-wing anti-Critical Race Theory (CRT), anti-trans, and anti-vaccination platforms saw these forums as a liability and chose not to participate. They instead utilized their lack of face recognition within the community alongside heavy out-of-state and special interest group spending on their campaigns to outspend community-based candidates. Before this influx of special interest money, a phenomenon happening across

the United States, the community forums greatly impacted the outcomes of the election. Now organizers are beginning to strategize how to leverage these forums alongside other measures to ensure community-minded school board members are elected for the next election cycle.

Interfacing with the School Board

One of the most common strategies used by education organizers across the city was ensuring that they were in constant contact and conversation with the school board. There was disagreement amongst those that shared their testimonios with me about the receptiveness of the school board members, but all agreed that interacting with them was critical, nevertheless. One Chicano organizer involved in various community spaces, as well as educational organizing shared this sentiment throughout his testimonio in the following three quotes. I share the three quotes because they speak to the different ways that the community leverages the school board for their needs and aims:

> *We need to be involved in spaces as much as we can in board meetings and just really build relationships and figure out what we want to do.*

Here he speaks about the importance of being a presence and taking up space in the meetings and utilizing this space as a first step to building deeper and more meaningful relationships with the board. For him, part of interacting with the board is a humanizing act – humanizing himself and the students he advocates for and, in turn, seeing the board as human. Through his constant presence at the board meetings, he has managed to build relationships with individual board members. As a result, he has also largely identified those that will act as allies when pressing issues and agendas arise.

There was one board meeting where there was an ethnic studies class there, and they shared their art and poetry, and just hearing what they said and all the poetry and the art, it just inspired me.

In this example, he leverages board meetings as another platform through which community members can keep the school district and each other aware of the different campaigns for educational equity that are currently being worked on. This activist, for example, steps in and out of education organizing spaces because he advocates for various school-related issues and focuses mainly on food justice and community gardens. This quote also illustrates the power that presenting at school board meetings holds. In this example, ethnic students are bringing their curriculum into a space that has historically been contested and allowing board members and communities to see it as praxis. Further, through participating in this action, students also become aware of the spaces where the politics around their curriculum and their rights play out.

I think it's great to testify because I've been wanting to talk about it at a board meeting too, of like, we just got evaluated by the superintendent and he came in with an evaluation tool, if you will. And none of the stuff, none of the garden stuff or the murals or the social emotional learning was captured in the evaluation, you know.

This final quote shows this activist and teacher leveraging the school board as a space for accountability and changes in evaluative processes. Aware of the language and policies that the school district had enacted around increasing social-emotional learning, he challenged the evaluation tools that should have included community gardens in their assessment. Throughout his testimonio, he cited the connections between school gardens and art with social-emotional learning outcomes and countered that Western-based evaluative tools were not equipped to measure the transformative effect of these programs (Lohr et al. 2021; Pollin and Retzlaff-Fürst 2021). At the board, he could speak

about both his experience as a teacher and the literature connecting the program to beneficial outcomes.

However, speaking to the board is not without consequences, and community members are aware of this. While some folks spoke about the negative perceptions that school district officials have of them, and their organizing work, those community activists who were also employed by the district were most at risk when speaking out. A male student advocate working for the district shared:

> *[School district officials] like outside of the board are pretty touchy when you talk with the board. That's a pretty quick way for me to burn my bridge.*

Because of this community member's work within the district, he understands the need to navigate white defensiveness and white rage within the organization. The success of his initiatives for marginalized students in the district depends on him maintaining good relationships with district administrators and not "burning bridges." Other teachers or administrators shared similar stories of being reprimanded or disciplined for speaking to board members about an initiative or program for which they were attempting to garner support. However, this does not keep him from organizing alongside community members outside the district. This individual, for example, spoke about the power and weight that interfacing with the board carries. Instead of directly speaking to the board himself, he is strategic in utilizing community organizations to advocate for the needs of the constituency he serves, often ensuring that families and parents are aware of the boundaries or current challenges his students face, as well as how to connect with and participate in public comments at the board meetings so they can bring the issues to the board directly.

Similarly, other community organizers were aware of the privilege they possessed by working outside of the district and were willing to leverage themselves for the needs of the community:

> *And I've told people like, "You are in the system, it's not safe for you to voice stuff that's going to be on record like this." I said, "Let me be the loud squeaky wheel that the board ends up not liking and it has no repercussion on me because I'm a community member." But then that allows us to get into the space as community where you can speak on the record at the board meeting and you are part of a collective, so you're not gonna be singled out if you're in a room like, for example, the policy meeting, you can't speak, there's no public comment. We showed up with signs and stuff as a collective. So, you're not getting targeted.*

This community organizer works as an advocate for LGBTQIA+ programs in the school district and, given the current conservative climate, understands the danger that others within the district face when attempting to address the lack of inclusion or issues of safety that trans students face within the district. In his capacity, he can challenge the school board and understands the importance of getting issues like this on the record. School board meetings have public comment where the board theoretically hears and responds to community concerns. However, because the minutes are recorded for each meeting, having multiple community members speak about a particular issue ensures that it is included in the minutes and forces the board members to respond. While the response is not always favorable to communities, it nevertheless puts board members on the record supporting or against a particular issue. Community members can then use this information to create more effective and targeted actions for that issue. However, this organizer also understands the importance of protecting the advocates and allies within the system and willingly offers to take on the fallout that may come from speaking at board meetings.

Community Care and Convivencia as Resistance

In this section, I share examples from the testimonios of community members engaging in community care and convivencia as resistance. This idea is predicated on Audre Lorde's idea that self-care and survival are resistance (Lorde 1988). Throughout the testimonios, organizers shared their experiences with burnout and feeling like giving up. However, amidst these feelings, they spoke about community care and how the relationship with community helps them continue to resist oppression and perceived failures. Since community care is not a direct attack on the institution and instead encompasses action centered around creating and uplifting community, it can be read as a war of maneuver (Omi and Winant 2015:142-143).

Community members' health and well-being are at the forefront of the actions taken and the larger community itself. For example, during the pandemic, educational justice organizers worked with other organizations in the area to create a mutual aid program in the city that still provides aid to many families to this day. Members of the groups that organized for education also spent time collecting donations and distributing goods through the newly founded mutual aid society.

Convivencia

One of the most present ways that folks engaged in community care as resistance is through the act of convivencia. The concept of convivencia is rooted in Mexican tradition and ways of being. It is a coexistence rooted in building authentic relationships of love and shared humanity, where individuals become part of the communal body and tend to the well-being of one another (Castillo, Garcia, Mendiaz Rivera, Milan Hinostroza, and Toscano 2023; Galván 2011; Galván 2015). Through convivencia, we

find strength and support through collective action, which contradicts Western individualism and self-preservation ideologies. It is the basis of concepts such as In La'kech (I am because you are) (Arce 2016; Valdez quoted in Love 2019: 105) and Ubuntu – an African concept of humanity that emphasizes community and echoes the sentiments of In La'kech (Battle 2009).

For one African-identifying organizer, this stewardship of community is central to all she does:

> *Like that African proverb when we talked about the long run, "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." And just like really holding space to go together because there will be times where we're going to be tired because oppression is exhausting. We're fighting a huge system that's embedded and ingrained in all our life. And so that's not easy to take on. So we can't take that on alone, that we have to take that on together. And if we could organize and do it together collectively, the more effective we can be as a community.*

In her testimonio, she went on to talk about the intentional distractions of capitalism and how being beholden to a capitalist system for survival makes it so that, as individuals, we are all struggling to survive. However, she sees community care as an antidote to this and to fight against the oppression of individualism. She further expanded on this idea and talked about being kind to ourselves and giving ourselves grace as we continue doing this work because it allows us to embrace our humanity and being human means making mistakes.

Relating community care to food justice, the Chicano organizer I spoke to shared his thoughts about what it meant to be in a community with one another:

> *"El que pone saca" is the dicho that guides us. You know, put in and take out and harvest and share. So, creating these spaces is just powerful because it's almost like a beacon of light or like a portal of transformative energy where*

> *people think about coming together and doing events and sharing and it just brings life and camaraderie.*

The saying he quotes roughly translates to "he who puts in take out." While the direct translation could be read in a capitalistic way as only having access to take out if one puts in, here, the meaning of "taking out" has a much deeper meaning. Taking out refers to the joy of participating in communal space and the satisfaction of providing for one another. This also refers to much more than just physical contributions. We take out what we put in emotionally and mentally, and if we invest in others and in growing the community, we will see that and help that flourish.

Being a "net-work"

Another organizer whom the People's Institute had trained shared a concept he learned from their organizing space that spoke to authentic caring (Valenzuela 1999):

> *"A net that works," that networking is about caring about each other, you know, not just about meeting people and kind of being on this kind of surface level, but really being invested in each other's welfare and well-being and stuff. You know, we brought up [another community member]. I worry about her. You know, I mean, she's gone through some really hard times.*

He shared that being part of a net that works means being able to catch people when they fall. To do this effectively, however, he acknowledged that community members must engage in deeper relationships and invest in one another. During his testimonio, he voiced his concern for another community member and followed up after he finished sharing by texting her to check-in. For him, it was about much more than just the thought – there had to be action behind it. He also acknowledges the damage that navigating educational inequity has on families in bringing up this community member. The hard times she had been experiencing resulted directly from her students' hardships in the

district. Her student was enrolled in middle school in the district and had recently begun transitioning and was facing unprecedented challenges finding the resources to support her during this process.

Joy and Gratitude

For two other white-identifying women, part of community care meant expressing joy and gratitude for being held in community spaces. Both women felt supported in this organizing work. They were quick to acknowledge that the hard work of others often went unnoticed by the district or was left uncelebrated when community members were burdened with a plethora of issues one after another.

> *Organizing has been joyful at times. It's been a joyful journey. Most of the time, I would much prefer to be on this journey than to be on a journey where I was compliant and didn't question things. I really do mean it when I say that my students and my fellow teachers and some of the people I met were the ones that made me question this system. And so, I'm so happy that I'm on this path with them, rather than a compliant one.*

This organizer expressed her joy both at being in community with other activists and also shared her joy of being taught how to question systems and being able to reflect on their oppressive nature critically. Throughout her testimonio, she expressed her happiness about her work. She was mindful of always understanding that her ability to engage in this work was because of the work she was willing to do to unpack her own privileges as an upper-middle-class, white cis-woman. She was also willing to show up and work in solidarity in whatever capacity was needed. Understanding her privileges allowed her to reflect upon how she could show up and use her privilege in ways other people of marginalized social locations may not have been able to do.

With regards to gratitude, another white upper-middle-class woman shared this:

> *I'm just really grateful for all the people working to improve the lives of the kids in [the district]. And I just think it's such important work, like it's just so valuable to try to make the schools as safe, emotionally, physically as possible. Socially, emotionally. And I am grateful for the people on the ground in the schools doing that work. And I'm grateful to all the community members doing that work. And there's an endless amount of work to do. So I'm grateful for the people who taught me along the way.*

While this woman has been organizing with educational equity groups for several years, she still sees herself as a newer activist who is still learning. Her gratitude for the work of others highlights the trepidation she feels in putting herself in the category of those "people working to improve the lives of kids in the district." However, she has been actively involved in many of these same facets of organizing. Nevertheless, her gratitude here is important because it acknowledges the energy organizers have put into these actions over the years. Interestingly, she mentions the people who have taught her along the way but fails to recognize how much she has taught the community herself. Because of her professional skills, she possesses the knowledge to advise community members on different actions and how to approach particular issues best (here I speak vaguely because giving further information about her skillset could identify her) with the legislation and in challenging school board policies.

Love

Finally, the topic of love as resistance and the reason *for* resistance was central in many of the testimonios shared. For example, one Chicana organizer that has spent decades working in educational organizing stated reflected on why she does this work:

> *And it has to do with community and it has to do with love of people.*

For her, it was simple and matter of fact. She spoke about not having any other option but to be brave and stand up to administrators because she loves her community. For her, it is

a calling and part of the reciprocal relationships at the core of her Indigenous framework and identity (Wilson 2008). Basing her idea on her identity as Mexica, she did not differentiate between her own goals and those of the community. For her, they were the same.

Another teacher shared her understanding of In La'kech as both a teaching pedagogy and a community framework:

> *And our first unit is In La'kech, I am you and you are me. And so we really bring home this idea of loving one another to love ourselves and loving ourselves to love one another.*

Xicanx scholars have summarized the power of In La'kech as allowing us "to see the sacredness in others as a direct reflection of the sacredness in ourselves" (Arce 2016). This relationality is based on a deeper love we hold for the humanity we share. The teacher that shared this testimonio further expanded her discussion of this concept by saying that she not only taught it to her students and practiced it in the way she developed convivencia in her classroom but that this Indigenous concept also informed the way she held space in organizing circles.

Reflections and Conclusion

In the examples shared throughout this chapter, I shed light on how communities resist whiteness in racialized organizations such as local school districts. Through traditional tools and modes of resistance, community members engage in a war of position (Omi & Winant 2015) against the local school district utilizing tools and practices rooted in transversal politics (Yuval-Davis 1999, 2017) as well as flexible solidarity (Collins 2019). The traditionally recognized modes of resistance referenced most within the

testimonios shared were power analysis and power mapping, asset mapping, anti-racist trainings and workshops, community-sponsored school board candidate forums, and interfacing with the active school board.

By engaging in the collaborative creation of a power map, educational justice organizers can identify the key players that wield power and engage in impactful decision-making at the different levels within the school district. They can also position themselves and their own collective power within this system and identify allies and organizations with whom they can form solidarity coalitions. This allows them to create informed strategies and targeted interventions and actions as they create organizing plans. Power mapping provides the framework for all future-directed actions by organizers and activists mobilizing for abolitionist, justice-based education.

Community members also engage in continuous asset mapping. They do this in two critical ways. The first is through an asset mapping mindset that immediately addresses arising needs by matching community needs to community resources. The second way is a more structured effort to map out the various assets available in the community. This includes material resources such as sound systems, community-owned businesses and venues, and available community spaces. It also includes mapping the professional resources and skills that individual community members possess, including lawyers, educators, trainers, social workers, translators, media personnel, legislators, and policy writers. In this way, the community can swiftly activate their networks to meet all the logistical needs of a given action or mobilization or call-in community members that possess specific professional skills needed by community members such as lawyers,

translators, and policy writers in the wake of anti-immigrant laws and policies shortly after Trump's election.

Concerning racial equity and direct challenges to outright white supremacy and whiteness, education activists have pushed for and created pathways within the district and the city to offer anti-racism training and workshops. These efforts are designed to make white people with institutional power aware of their implicit and explicit racist actions and introduce them to critical self-reflection with the hope that they will continue to do this work on their own. All education activists supported the institutionalization of the workshops.

Community members were split in seeing these actions as successes since they could point to how the school board president's participation in these workshops was directly responsible for his change of heart regarding his support for ethnic studies. Others saw it as a failure because it gave white administrators justice-based language they could use to pay lip service to ending racism within the racialized organization with little to no actionable plan for doing so. I argue that because these workshops target micro-level racism and are meant for individual, intrapersonal change, they are seen as failures when community members erroneously expect meso-level changes to occur from micro-level interactions. However, since the training is not designed to provide participants with ways to impact structural change, the workshops are successful insofar as they can persuade white people to act in anti-racist ways in their daily lives.

Another meaningful way that community activists resisted whiteness is through hosting and sponsoring their own school board candidate forums. Aware and frustrated with the ways that the district ran a race-neutral, colorblind forum for potential

candidates, community members demanded more. After realizing that the district would not press candidates on topics such as racism, racialization, and the criminalizing practices of the district used against students of color, organizers began holding their candidate forums where they could hear directly from the candidates themselves where they stood on critical issues that communities of color, students with impairments, refugee and undocumented students, LGBTQIA+ students, and other marginalized students populations faced each day in their schools. They also secured promises from school board candidates to participate in the anti-racist workshops upon their election. While these forums have been successful in yielding influence over the school board elections, the recent unprecedented special interest funding of conservative, right-wing school board candidates has provided a new challenge with which future candidate forums must contend if they are to continue to have the impact they had in the past.

The final way in which education activists can resist and challenge the impacts of white supremacy is by interfacing with the school board and leveraging it to get their issues heard. While the way that school board meetings allow for community comments to take place could be better, it nevertheless allows pressing issues to become a matter of public record and forces school board members to respond to community concerns. In addition, while it can be a contentious and dangerous space for activists who also work within the school district, other community members have found ways to utilize the privilege that safeguards them to take a stand for individuals who are at risk of retaliation or disciplinary action if they approach the board with their concerns.

Community members utilize a multi-pronged approach to organizing and ensuring their personal and community well-being for the long haul. Since many organizers see

their work as lifelong work, they understand the importance of keeping the community and the individual healthy. They engage in community care that is based on convivencia and Indigenous practices and knowledges and which is at the forefront of Black feminists' articulation of surviving and thriving (Arce 2016; Combahee River Collective 2014; Collins 2009; Collins 2019; Lorde 1988; Love 2019; Wilson 2008). Throughout the chapter, I also utilize the Chicana feminist concept of convivencia to articulate what this looks like in practice (Castillo et al. 2023; Galván 2011; Galván 2015).

Through this process of convivencia, community members could further articulate precisely how they coexisted and supported each other. Some of the ways they elucidated were in sharing expressions of joy and gratitude, remembering that their work was founded and guided by love, and in a reimagination of what it means to be a network for community members in need. Of course, so much more can be shared, but the purpose of this chapter is to name practices in action that are often marginalized or taken for granted to the point that they are not explicitly named. I hope that in the process of shedding light and naming these practices, I have been able to do so in a way that brings honor to community members that have held space for and with me and that I can mirror the resistance, survival, thriving, joy, love, hope, and gratitude that they have expressed and shared with me.

CHAPTER 5 Disrupting Whiteness as a Lifelong Commitment: Reflections and Implications for Future Work

We wrote a family engagement policy. It would eventually pass by the School Board, and it's still in existence today. And then since then I've done a bunch of organizing around everything from trying to get ethnic studies to be institutionalized at all public schools, trying to get all kinds of stuff around school board elections, to try to get the right people in the right spaces that represent the community, to be there around the hiring of different superintendents and around all kinds of stuff, like everything you could think of. I've been so engaged I can't even think about it. – Chicana organizer and mom

I end this project with the above quote from a Chicana education organizer who identifies as a mom and a product of the district. The quote, in many ways, sums up the way that whiteness operates in racialized organizations and exemplifies the tenacity of organizers and how they stay committed for the long term. On the one hand, policies rendered race-neutral and seen as bureaucratic are agreed upon and implemented. She talks about how this policy sets up guidelines to make schools welcoming spaces for community-engaged learning and where families feel at home. However, because this policy was demanded by families of color who are often on the receiving end of racial injustice, the district as a racialized organization can ignore policies meant to end discrimination (Ray 2019: 42).

This portion of her *testimonio* also tells us several things about her as a mother, activist, and community member. First, we see her perseverance and unwillingness to allow setbacks to deter her from the work needed. She demonstrates how she resists the white supremacy of the school district by attacking multiple levels simultaneously. She hints at her concern for having the right people in place because she understands the implications of not doing so for her kids and the larger community. And finally, she gives us a glimpse of the exhaustion she feels from doing this work – she does so much and is

so busy she is not able to entirely stop to think and appreciate the multiple ways she is engaged.

For me, this project is a labor of love and a way to give back to the community that has helped me grow as a scholar and activist. In this way, I unapologetically disrupt whiteness and denounce the idea that one can only engage in positivist inquiry to pursue the truth (Headey, Jones, and Carter 2023). The impetus for this work stems from seeing first-hand how hard community members, teachers, students, and other activists work to make changes to a school system that was born of white supremacy. They do this because they are tired of schools being sites where people of color and other intersecting oppressions are spirit-murdered “for the benefit of the educational survival complex” (Love 2019:39).

I conclude this chapter with a discussion of some of the implications of this project for sociology. I acknowledge some limitations that stood out to me, which should be considered when reading this work and applying it in a different context. Finally, I close with some possible directions for future research.

Sociological Implications

There are a couple of critical implications from this study to which I want to call attention. The first is that this project helps us expand sociological boundaries and the types of studies and methods that we consider to be sociology. The second implication is that by utilizing a theory of racialized organizations to understand how whiteness is maintained in meso-level organizations, I create a model for applying sociological theory

to everyday organizations and making sense of how whiteness is replicated in these spaces.

Expanding Sociological Boundaries

As I have argued in Chapter Two, *testimonio* allows us to push the boundaries of how we can do sociology and be sociologists. Used as both a method and a methodology, Chicana feminists have long engaged in this type of inquiry and have written abundantly about its origins, its uses, and its implications for the people that share their stories (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona 2012; Reyes and Curry Rodriguez 2012). By utilizing a decolonizing method for this project, I illustrate that Indigenous and decolonizing methods have value and utility beyond application to Indigenous studies and subject matter.

As subaltern scholars, we must push for change and remember that "power concedes nothing without demand" (Frederick Douglass). How can we exist in a discipline founded mainly by a Black scholar and allow white gatekeepers to continue to ignore the contributions and voices of people from the subaltern (Headey, Jones, and Carter 2023; Morris 2015)? Suppose sociology truly wishes to be the disciplinary home for studying social structures and society. In that case, it must adapt (or be adapted) to make room for every experience and population present in our global community without prejudice. In this work, I have laid out a model of how applying methods from the subaltern can look. Doing so is as valid and rigorous as methods already legitimated by the discipline.

Studying the Meso-Level

As Victor Ray points out, race scholars spend much of their careers studying racism and white supremacy primarily at our society's micro and macro levels (Ray 2019). He develops his framework and tenets and provides a theoretical model that we can apply to meso-level organization analysis. Though he published his theory relatively recently and has been widely cited, I have not run across a project that utilizes it as a framework for studying and making sense of the processes employed to protect whiteness in meso-level institutions. Given the considerable power possessed by meso-level organizations and their ability to exert influence both at the micro and macro levels, as sociologists, we must commit to embarking upon more work that allows us to demystify the processes undertaken in meso-level arenas. I expand upon Ray by including evidence and centering the importance of White actors that reject the racial contract. These individuals hold power within the institution because of their whiteness and, as such, are subject to consequences and discipline that attempt to keep them in their place. Further, there is a need for a tenet that centers on the intersectionality of systems of oppression and allows us to unpack how this intersectional marginalization directly contributes to upholding whiteness and is present in racialized organizations. While the work can sometimes feel tedious, it is nevertheless vital if we are to get closer to developing a holistic understanding of the multiple spheres in which power exists and how it is enacted at each of these societal levels.

Limitations

No project is without its limitations, and this one is no exception. One limitation of this project is that the successful use of testimonio requires a specific context and an

established relationship of trust between the researcher and the person sharing their testimonio. In addition, it requires connection and convivencia, or a shared experience of existing together in a communal way (Galván 2011, 2015). This can deter social scientists from engaging in this method, mainly when short-term project deadlines must take precedence.

Another limitation is that although testimonios can be guided, it is primarily up to the testimonio sharer to determine what they will share through this method. For this project, this did not pose a project since the shared identity of education justice activists allowed for similar themes to emerge through the data. In cases where the researcher cannot provide even a general guiding frame and is unfamiliar with this method, the data collected might prove harder to comprehend.

Finally, while it may not be a limitation, it is essential to note that context matters. Although this project aims to provide community members that engage in abolitionist education with some strategies implemented by activists in this context, they may prove challenging to implement in a different context. Although I highlighted the strategies learned and adapted from more universal organizations, adaptation and refinement are essential before applying any strategy shared here.

Future Projects and Research

As with any project, the data collection for this project left me with far more data than I could ever make sense of or incorporate into this work. There are several projects that I can envision that would honor the entirety of the collected data. A common theme that I did not explore in this work was the impacts of navigating and living within a white supremacist educational system. Teachers and students alike spoke of the ongoing post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) they suffered because of what they endured in this institution. Others spoke about other forms of trauma and the emotional toll of survival (Collins 2009; Love 2019). One future vein of research would focus on the mental and emotional consequences and scars inflicted by schools. Along these lines, I would also like to spend more time understanding the consequences and benefits to mental health experienced by those who devote their lives to this type of educational organizing. As stories of exhaustion and losing hope came up, some folks shared their need for therapy and medication to cope. Keeping with the notions of community care, I want to explore how these actions impact or undo the harm caused by white supremacist institutions.

Along these same lines and expanding on the ideas of agency and acting upon personal ethics and morals, I would like to learn more about the emotional, mental, and spiritual consequences experienced by White folks. James Baldwin wrote extensively about the damage racism has on white folks and people of color (Baldwin 1995). He mainly talked about the damage that upholding racism has on White people's souls. However, in this project, I discovered a toll and sense of alienation experienced by white people who rejected the racial contract and actively fought against it (Mills 1997). In future research, I would like to delve deeper into this topic and understand how White people that make these decisions find solace, build community, and otherwise make sense of a white supremacist society that has rejected them as they have rejected it.

It was my honor to be deemed worthy of receiving and holding community organizers' vibrant and complex stories. Understanding the urgency of sharing testimonios drives me to continue to engage the data in further analysis that will

eventually shape an in-progress book. I hope this work has done their stories justice, and that I have handled the private moments made public with humility, grace, and humanity.

REFERENCES

Arce, Martín Sean. 2016. "Xicana/o Indigenous Epistemologies: Toward a Liberatory and Decolonizing Education for Xicana/o Youth." In *"White" Washing American Education Volume I:The New Culture Wars in Ethnic Studies* edited by D.M. Sandoval, A.J. Ratcliff, T.L. Buenavista, and J.R. Marín. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Arcilla, Chester C. 2008. "If I Were in her Shoes, I Would Doubtless Be and Think Like Her: Methodological Reflections on Bourdieu and 'Testimonio.'" *Philippine Sociological Review* Vol. 56 (January-December 2008), pp. 107-131.

Arriero, Elisabeth, and Dana Griffin. "¡Adelante! A Community Asset Mapping Approach to Increase College and Career Readiness for Rural Latinx High School Students." *Professional School Counseling* 22(1):1-9.

Anzaldúa, Gloria, Norma E. Cantú, and Aída Hurtado. 2012. *Borderlands = La Frontera: The New Mestiza, 4th Edition*. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

Baldwin, James. 1995. *The Fire Next Time*. New York, NY: Modern Library.

Battle, M. 2009. *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*. New York: Seasbury Publishing

Blackpast. 2007. "(1857) Frederick Douglass, 'If There is No Struggle, There is No Progress." *Blackpast: African American History*, January 25. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress/.

Blumer, Herbert. 1958. "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position." *Pacific Sociological Review* 1(1):3–7.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2013. *Racism without Racists: Colorblind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*, 4th edition. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Bowden, John A., and Pamela J. Green. 2010. "Relationality and the Myth of Objectivity in Research Involving Human Participants" in *Researching Practice: A Discourse on Qualitative Methodologies*, edited by J. Higgs, N. Cherry, R. Macklin, and R. Ajjawi. Boston, MA: Sense.

Bracey II, Glenn E. 2015. "Towards a Critical Race Theory of State." *Critical Sociology* 41(3) 553–572.

Cabrera, Nolan L. 2019. *White Guys on Campus: Racism, White Immuity, and the Mythe of "Post-Racial" Higher Education*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Cammarota, Julio, and Michelle Fine. 2008. *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion*. London, UK: Taylor & Francis Group.

Castillo, Florence Emilia, Gustavo Garcia, Alejandro Mendiaz Rivera, Ana Milan Hinostroza, and Natalia Toscano. 2023. "Collectively Building Bridges for First-Generation Working-Class Students: *Pláticas* Centering the Pedagogical Practices of *Convivencia* in El Puente Research Fellowship."*Teaching Sociology Special Issue (forthcoming)*.

Chametzky, Barry. 2016. "Coding in Classic Grounded Theory: I've Done an Interview; Now What?". *Sociology Mind*, 6, 163-172.

City of Albuquerque. 2021. "City Advocates and Experts Stand Up Against Racist Threats of Violence Directed at APS Students: Urged APS Board to Address Acts

of Hatred, Offer Support and Coordination." https://www.cabq.gov/office-of-equity-inclusion/news/city-advocates-and-experts-stand-up-against-racist-threats-of-violence-directed-at-aps-students

Clark, Tom. 2008. "We're Over-researched Here! Exploring Accounts of Research Fatigue within Qualitative Research Engagements." *Sociology* 42(5): 953–70.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1997. "Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited': Where's the Power?" *Signs* 22(2): 375-381.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2009. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, 2nd edition*. New York: Routledge.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2017a. "On Violence, Intersectionality, and Transversal Politics." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(9):1460-1473.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2017b. "The Difference that Power Makes: Intersectionality and Participatory Democracy." *Investigaciones Feministas* 8(1): 19-39.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2019. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Collins, Randall. 2019. "The Rise of the Credential System." Pp. 120-173 in *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Corra, Mamadi, and David Willer. 2002. "The Gatekeeper." *Sociological Theory* 20:181-206.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43(6):1241-1299.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 2016. “The Urgency of Intersectionality.” Produced by TED Talks. December 7. Video, 18:49. https://youtu.be/akOe5-UsQ2o.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 2020. “The Unacceptable Costs of Appeasing MAGA Nation.” *The New Republic*. https://newrepublic.com/article/160654/trump-supporters-white-supremacy-appeasement.

Cuádraz, Gloria Holguín, and Lynet Uttal. 1999. “Intersectionality and In-depth Interviews: Methodological Strategies for Analyzing Race, Class, and Gender.” *Race, Gender & Class* 6(3),156-186.

Curtis, Tiffany. 2022. “Community Care — Not Just Self-Care — Is Key to Our Collective Wellbeing.” *Livestrong*. April 23, 2022. https://www.livestrong.com/article/13771535-self-care-vs-community-care.

Dancy, T. Elon, Kristen T. Edwards, and James Earl Davis. 2018. “Historically White Universities and Plantation Politics: Anti-Blackness and Higher Education in the Black Lives Matter Era.” *Urban Education* 53(2), 176-195.

Darder, Antonia. 2019. *Decolonizing Interpretive Research: A Subaltern Methodology for Social Change*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Delgado Bernal, Dolores, Rebeca Burciaga, and Judith Flores Carmona, J. 2012. Chicana/Latina "Testimonios": Mapping the Methodological, Pedagogical, and Political.” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 45(3), 363-372.

Delgado Bernal, Dolores, and Octavio Villalpando. 2002. “An Apartheid of Knowledge in Academia: The Struggle over the “Legitimate” Knowledge of Faculty of Color.” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 35(2): 169-180.

Desnoyers-Colas, Elizabeth F. 2019. “Talking Loud and Saying Nothing: Kicking Faux Ally-ness to the Curb by Battling Racial Battle Fatigue Using White Accomplice-ment.” *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 8(4): 100-105.

Dhamoon, Rita Kaur. 2020. “Racism as a Workload and Bargaining Issue.” *The Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies* 14(1) 1-22.

Du Bois, W.E.B. 1998[1935]. *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Dyer, Richard. 2016. “The Matter of Whiteness. Pp. 9-13 in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism, 5th Edition*, edited by P. S. Rothenberg. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

Espinoza, Oscar. 2007. “Solving the Equity–Equality Conceptual Dilemma: A New Model for Analysis of the Educational Process. *Educational Research*, 49, 343–363.

Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness.* Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Galván, Ruth Trinidad. 2011. “Chicana Transborder Vivencias and Autoherteorias: Reflections from the Field.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 17(6):552–557.

Galván, Ruth Trinidad 2015. “Pedagogical Spaces of Convivencia and Healing.” In *Women Who Stay Behind: Pedagogies of Survival in Rural Transmigrant Mexico*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.

Haney-Lopez, Ian F. 2006. *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. New York: New York University Press.

Harding, Sandra. 1992. “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is ‘Strong Objectivity’?” *The Centennial Review* 36(3), 437–470.

Harris, Cheryl. 1993. “Whiteness as Property.” *Harvard Law Review* 106(8), 1707–1791.

Headley, Vernon, Annie Jones, and Shannon K. Carter. 2023. “Beyond the Positivism/Non-Positivism Binary as a Step Toward Inclusive Sociology.” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 0(0). https://doi-org.libproxy.unm.edu/10.1177/23326492231170533

hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

hooks, bell. 2003. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hughey, Matthew W. 2016. “Hegemonic Whiteness: From Structure and Agency to Identity Allegiance.” Pp. 212-233 in *The Construction of Whiteness: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Race Formation and the Meaning of White Identity*, edited by S. Middleton, D.R. Roediger, and D.M. Shaffer. Jackson, MS: The University Press of Mississippi.

Ignatiev, Noel, and John Garvey. 1996. *Race Traitor*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Khupe, Constance. 2014. "Indigenous Knowledge and School Science: Possibilities for Integration.” Ph.D. Thesis, Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Korver-Glenn, Elizabeth. 2021. *Race Brokers: Housing Markets and Segregation in 21st Century Urban America.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Kulkarni, Shanti J., Michelle Lawrence, and Elizabeth Roberts. 2023. "'We're Constantly Learning': Identifying and Disrupting White Supremacy Within a Victim Services Organization." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 38(1/2), NP1187-NP1203.

Leonardo, Zeus. 2013. "Whiteness Studies and Educational Supremacy: The Unbearable Whiteness of Schooling." Pp. 82-113 in *Race Frameworks: A Multidimensional Theory of Racism and Education*, edited by J. A. Banks. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Lewis, Amanda E. 2004. *Race in the Schoolyard: Negotiating the Color Line in Classrooms and Communities.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Lewis, Amanda E., and John B. Diamond. 2015. *Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress. 2023. "1942: Bracero Program." *A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events in the United States.* Retrieved April 30, 2023. https://guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights/bracero-program

Lipsitz, George. 2016. "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness." Pp. 97-118 in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism, 5th Edition*, edited by P. S. Rothenberg. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

Lohr, Abby M., Keegan C. Krause, D. Jean McClelland, Noah Van Gorden, Lynn B Gerald, Vincent Del Casino Jr., Ada Wilkinson-Lee, and Scott C. Carvajal. 2021. "The Impact of School Gardens on Youth Social and Emotional Learning: A Scoping Review." *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* 21(4):371-384.

López, Nancy. 2003. *Hopeful Girls, Troubled Boys: Race and Gender Disparity in Urban Education.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Lorde, Audre. 1988. *A Burst of Light*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books.

Lorde, Audre. 2007. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Revised edition. Berkeley: Crossing Press.

Louis, Renee Pualani. 2007. "Can you Hear us Now? Voices from the Margin: Using Indigenous Methodologies in Geographic Research." *Geographical Research - Blackwell Publishing* 45(2), 130–139.

Love, Bettina. 2019. *We Want to do More than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Lukes, Steven. 2005. *Power: A Radical View (2nd Edition)*. New York: Palgrave McMillan.

Marin, G. 1981. "Perceiving Justice across Cultures: Equity Vs. Equality in Colombia and in the United States." *International Journal of Psychology*, 16(3), 153. https://doi-org.libproxy.unm.edu/10.1080/00207598108247412.

Martinez, Pilar. 2021. "Photo of Gun in Backpack Stirs Fears at La Cueva." *Albuquerque Journal*, December 8. https://www.abqjournal.com/2452798/photo-of-gun-in-backpack-stirs-fears-at-la-cueva.html

McIntosh, Peggy. 1990. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." *Independent School* 49(2), 31.

Mills, Charles. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Mills, Charles. 1998. *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Mills, Charles. 2007 "White Ignorance." Pp. 13-38 in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, edited by S. Sullivan and N. Tuana. New York: State University of New York Press.

Mills, Charles. 2013. "An Illuminating Blackness." *The Black Scholar* 43(4): 32-37.

Mills, Charles. 2014. "White Time: The Chronic Injustice of Ideal Theory." *Du Bois Review-Social Science Research on Race* 11(1): 27-42.

Montuschi, Eleonora. 2004. "Rethinking Objectivity in Social Science." *Social Epistemology* 18:2-3, 109-122.

Morgan, Joseph J., Alain Bengochea, and Johnny Reed. 2022. "Asset Mapping in Urban Environments to Support Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders." *Intervention in School and Clinic* 58(2):100-109.

Morris, Aldon. 2015. *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Noy, Darren. 2008. "Power Mapping: Enhancing Sociological Knowledge by Developing Generalizable Analytical Public Tools." *The American Sociologist* 39(1):3–18.

Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. 2015. *Racial Formation in the United States, 3rd Edition*. New York: Routledge.

Patel, Leigh. 2016. *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pillay, Thashika and Neda Asadi. 2021. "Disrupting the Capitalist Narrative of De/Credentialization: An Anticolonial Feminist Theorization of Justice." Pp. 157-169 in *Critical Theorizations of Education*. Boston, MA: Brill Publishing.

Pollin, Susan and Carolin Retzlaff-Fürst. 2021. “The School Garden: A Social and Emotional Place.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 12(567720):1-11.

Prakesh, Gyan. 1994. “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism.” *The American Historical Review* 99(5): 1475–90.

Quintero, Jessica M., and Cindy Peña. 2021. “Proposing a New Research Method: Convivencia Testimonial.” Paper presented at the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education 2020 Conference, Online, Oct 27-30, 2020.

Ranita, Ray. 2022a. “Race-Conscious Racism: Alibis for Racial Harm in the Classroom.” *Social Problems*, 00, 1–16.

Ray, Ranita. 2022b. “School as a Hostile Institution: How Black and Immigrant Girls of Color Experience the Classroom.” *Gender and Society* 36(1), 88-111.

Ray, Victor. 2019. "A Theory of Racialized Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 84(1) 26–53.

Rendón, Laura I. 2009. *Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice, and Liberation*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Reyes, Kathryn B., and Julia E. Curry Rodriguez. 2012. "Testimonio": Origins, Terms, and Resources.*” Equity & Excellence in Education* 45(3): 525-538.

Sánchez, V., Sanchez, Y. S., Dickson, E., Burgess, E., Haozous, E., Trickett, E., Baker, E., & Wallerstein, N. (2021). CBPR Implementation Framework for Community-Academic Partnerships. American Journal of Community Psychology, 67(3/4), 284–296.

Sleeter, Christine. “White Silence, White Solidarity.” Pp. 257-265 in *Race Traitor*, edited by N. Ignatiev and J. Garvey. New York, NY: Routledge.

Smith, Andrea. 2016. “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing.” Pp. 60-72 in *Are All the Women Still White? Rethinking Race, Expanding Feminisms,* edited by J. Hobson. State University of New York Press.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* London, England: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Soares, Kristie. 2021. “Joy, Rage, and Activism: The Gendered Politics of Affect in the Young Lords Party.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 46(4):939–962.

Sosa-Provencio, Mia Angélica, Annmarie Sheahan, Shiv Desai and Shawn Sacatero. 2020. “Tenets of Body-Soul Rooted Pedagogy: Teaching for Critical Consciousness, Nourished Resistance, and Healing.” Critical Studies in Education 61(3):345-362.

Staiger, Annegret. 2004. “Whiteness as Giftedness: Racial Formation at an Urban High School. *Social Problems* 51(2): 161-181.

Sue, Derald Wing. 2016. "Invisible Whiteness of Being: Whiteness, White Supremacy, White Privilege, and Racism. Pp. 19-28 in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism, 5th Edition*, edited by P. S. Rothenberg. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

The Combahee River Collective. 2014. “A Black Feminist Statement”. *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 42(3/4), 271-280.

Torres, Samuel B. 2019. “Beyond Colonizing Epistemicides: Toward a Decolonizing Framework for Indigenous Education." Ph.D. dissertation, School of Education, Loyola Marymount University.

United States Department of Education. 2018. “Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (Title I, Part A).” https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html.

Valenzuela, Angela. 1999. *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring.* Albany, NY: SUNY University Press.

Vargas, Nicholas, and Julio Villa-Palomino. 2019. “Racing to Serve or Race-ing for Money? Hispanic-Serving Institutions and the Colorblind Allocation of Racialized Federal Funding.” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 5(3), 401-415.

Wallerstein, Nina, Bonnie Duran, John G. Oetzel, and Meredith Minkler. 2018. *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: Advancing Social and Health Equity, 3rd edition.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Webster, David, and Nicola Rivers. 2019. “Resisting Resilience: Disrupting Discourses of Self-Efficacy, Pedagogy." *Culture & Society* 27:4, 523-535.

Wildman, Stephanie M., and Adrienne D. Davis. 2016. “Making Systems of Privilege Visible.” In *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, edited by P.S. Rothenberg. New York: Worth Publishers.

Williamson, Joy Ann. 2004. “‘This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling’: Institutional Autonomy in the Civil Rights Era.” *History of Education Quarterly* 44(4):554-76.

Wilson, Shawn. 2008. *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Halifax, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Wingfield, A. H. 2010. "Are Some Emotions Marked 'Whites Only'? Racialized Feeling Rules in Professional Workplaces." *Social Problems*, 57(2), 251–268.

Yosso, Tara J. 2005. "Whose Culture has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth." *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 8(1):69–92.

Yosso, Tara J. 2006. *Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline.* New York: Routledge.

Yuval Davis, Nira. 1999. "What is 'Transversal Politics'?" *Soundings* 12:94-98.

Yuval Davis, Nira. 2017. *Recognition, Intersectionality and Transversal Politics*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Zinn, Howard. 2005. *A People's History of the United States:1492-Present*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Zuberi, Tufuku and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. 2008. *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.