

Binghamton University

The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB)

Research Days Posters 2021

Division of Research

2021

Parallel Barriers: A Self Study in the Struggles in Implementing a YPAR Project with High-Risk High School Students

Mandy Skinner

Binghamton University--SUNY

Follow this and additional works at: https://orb.binghamton.edu/research_days_posters_2021

Recommended Citation

Skinner, Mandy, "Parallel Barriers: A Self Study in the Struggles in Implementing a YPAR Project with High-Risk High School Students" (2021). *Research Days Posters 2021*. 69.

https://orb.binghamton.edu/research_days_posters_2021/69

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Division of Research at The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Days Posters 2021 by an authorized administrator of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

Parallel Barriers: A Self Study in YPAR

The goal of this project was to empower high school students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence that they need in order to unveil some of the barriers that students from marginalized backgrounds face in their journey to graduate from high school. In doing so, I faced many barriers of my own.

Methods

This study contributes to self-study research regarding the tensions and barriers that I, as an educator and researcher, faced in attempting to engage students in YPAR projects that addresses educational inequality in their high school. Data for this study was collected before, during, and after research team meetings in my own research journal. Here, I made plans for the meetings, took notes of the students' contributions, ideas, and feedback, and reflected on all of it through my own perspective as a researcher-educator. I collected data through transcribing discussions by the research team, journaling, and mind mapping. This variety of data offers various perspectives on this research.

Findings

While attempting to conduct a YPAR study with local high school students, I was faced with many barriers that hindered the success of the project. Each barrier fell under one of following six themes.

Barrier #1 – Uncertainty

By nature, YPAR studies are directed by the youth themselves, giving them control over the process and outcomes. As a teacher, I often have full control over the content, resources, assessments, and assignments that my students study, however this control is lost in YPAR. This creates a real deal of autonomy for them, however this also creates a great deal of uncertainty for me, the lead researcher. It is difficult to plan and implement a research project when you don't know how it will manifest itself.

Barrier #2 – Connection

Working collaboratively across age, gender, and race lines requires strong interpersonal connections. Some individuals connect with others easily; some do not. Creating a strong connection within the group was imperative, but proved to be difficult. As a teacher, I spend a lot of time building relationships, but that was not possible with our limited meeting times and sporadic attendance. As a researcher, I was not sure how to build these relationships and create connections without deviating from the research that needed to be done.

Barrier #3 - Pressure

As teachers, we are constantly faced with the pressure to work through the curriculum, build skills, and assess quickly. As researchers, we feel pressure to conduct research that is impactful and worthy of publication. As a researcher-educator, I felt both.

Barrier #4 - Guilt

The students often shared their struggles with overwhelming work loads and lack of support with their school work. As a teacher, I felt guilty asking them to do even more work. As a researcher, I felt guilty with the potential to benefit from this struggle. As a researcher-educator, guilt was something I wrestled with knowing how badly I wanted to give these students a voice and help them become agents of change for themselves and their peers.

Barrier #5 – Powerlessness

As a teacher, I knew what I wanted my team of students to learn; I knew what they were capable of accomplishing. I had high hopes for them. As a researcher, I visions of how this project would reach educators and scholars alike, providing real world examples of the struggles that marginalized students face. In neither of these roles did I possess the power to make the students show up and do the work. The research, project, and impact were under their control.

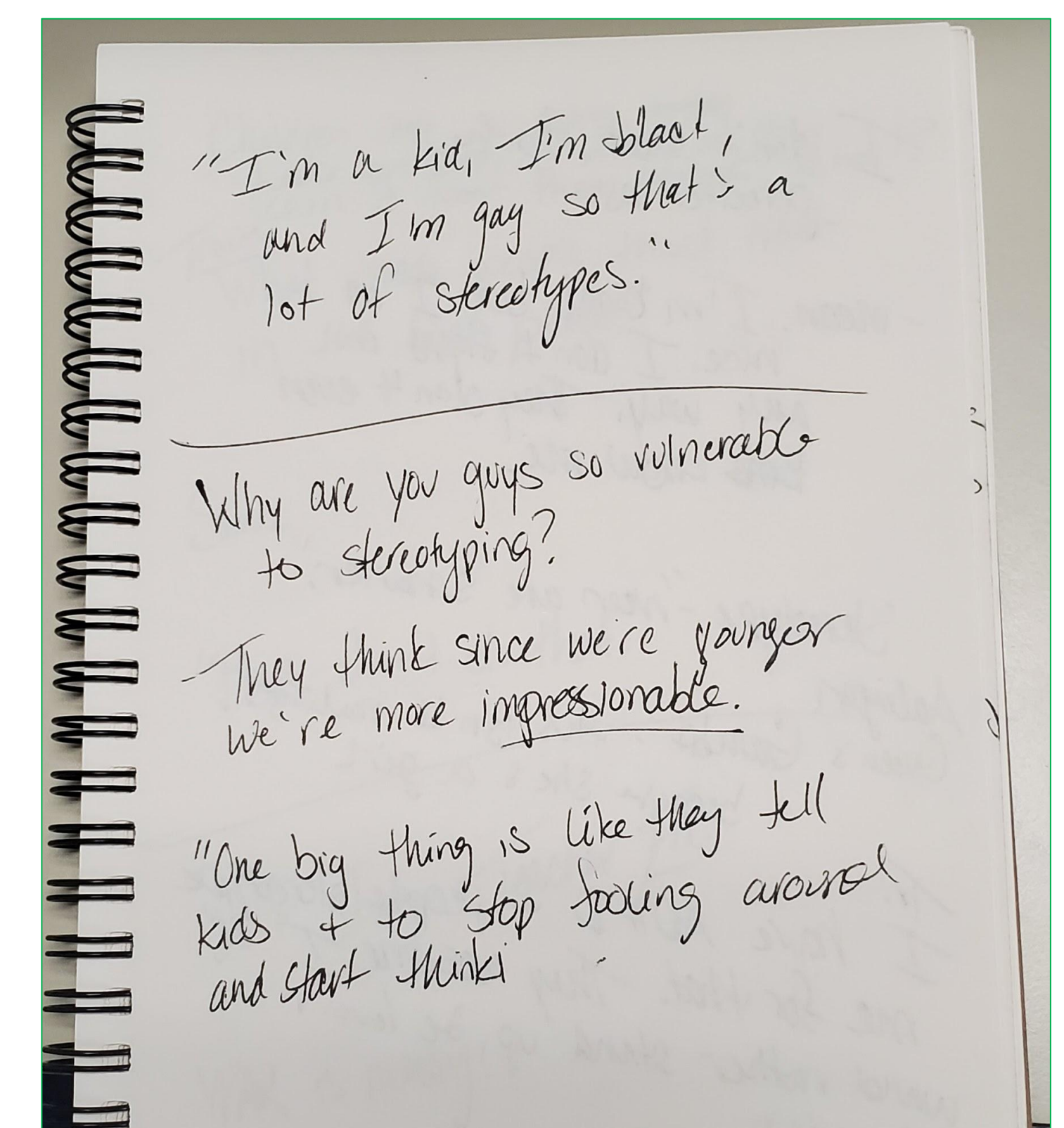
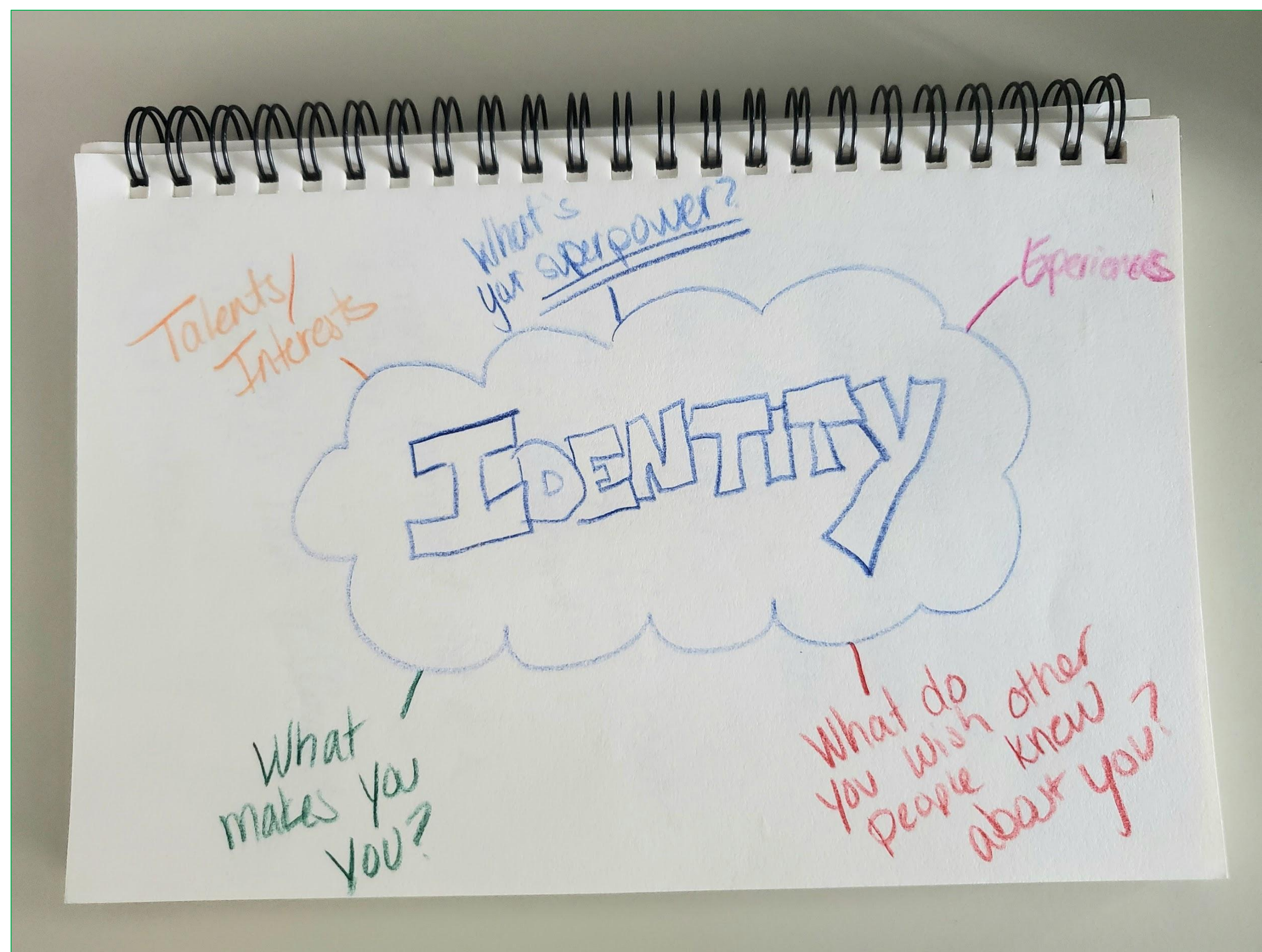
Barrier #6 - Belonging

As a teacher, I have always felt comfortable in the classroom; after all, most days I spend more time there than at home. However, when discussing content around race, ethnicity, and stereotyping, I feel uncomfortable. I want my students to find a safe haven in my classroom; one where they do not have to defend themselves against these issues. However, this project brought those topics front and center to our discussion. As a researcher, I sometimes feel like I do not belong in conversations regarding critical race theory and have no right to lead research surrounding it.

Discussion

Although there were many struggles in our journey to create impactful, lasting change in their educational environment, the barriers I faced as researcher-educator fell into one of seven overarching themes. In order to conduct a successful YPAR study in the future, I will have to plan and implement strategies to prevent or overcome the many barriers that I will encounter.

Students on the research team discuss the impacts that stereotypes have on them as individuals.



References

Baggett, H. C., & Andrzejewski, C. E. (2017). "Man, Somebody Tell That Kid to Shut Up": YPAR Implementation at a Rural, Alternative School in the Deep South. *Critical Questions in Education*, 8(4), 400. Retrieved from <https://search-ebshost-com.proxy.binghamton.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1159313&site=ehost-live>

Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion. (2010). (n.p.): Taylor & Francis.