EMPOWERING YOUTH: HOW ENGAGEMENT AS YOUNG ACTIVIST INTERNS DEVELOPS THE CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN YOUTH

by

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ABSTRACT

KATHRYN WAGNER. Empowering Youth: How engagement as Young Activist interns develops the critical consciousness of Southeast Asian youth. (Under the direction of DR. LAN KOLANO)

This qualitative dissertation, positioned within a critical consciousness conceptual framework examined the shared experiences of eight Southeast Asian youth, as they engaged in an activism internship at a movement-based youth program. It documented the internship, within the context of the youth program, where the researcher served as a mentor and advocate for six years. This dissertation study followed the interns as they engaged in lessons and direct actions focused on social, racial, and gender justice. Further, it explored how engagement as an intern shaped the immigrant youth experiences and developed their critical consciousness in the face of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, and systemic discrimination.

Data were collected, first informally for five years preceding this study, in the form of field observations as the researcher engaged as a mentor and advocate with the youth program. During the course of the activism internship, data were collected through individual interviews, field observations, and archived data analysis. Each participant's experiences were examined, and themes emerged through the development of a short case study using their interviews, observations, and data collected through the examination of their final projects. The youth participants' shared experiences along with an analysis through a critical consciousness lens reveal that engagement in an activism internship developed their critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action.

The findings of this study indicated that the shared experiences of the participants, including engagement as an activism intern, allowed for the development of their critical consciousness. While this process was ongoing, and each participant approached their time as an intern at different points in the development process, the activism internship exposed the participants to issues impacting the Southeast Asian community. Engagement as an intern also allowed the participants to examine the systems within which they live, and learn how to take action against those systems. Further, this study exposed how community-based organizations allow immigrant youth the space and experiences to deeply examine anti-immigrant systems and policies. Findings of this study added to *critical consciousness theory* scholarship, which empowers marginalized peoples to take action against oppressive forces. It informed future research by exposing the need for community-based organizations to incorporate activism and advocacy programming.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> I feel like I've grown a lot with [YoSEA]. Knowledge-wise, mentally, emotionally, things like that. I just got to discover more like my gender identity as well, and that played a big role into like my life changes and things like that. But it was really here that I got to just know like terms and self and feel comfortable in myself. I was always trying to figure out like, "why do I feel like I don't fit in here and I don't fit in here?" But like when I heard more of these terms, it's like okay this sounds like me. So...finding myself but also uplifting other people. - Senri Wayne[1]

The excerpt above was taken from one of the participants' interviews during this dissertation study, and exemplifies the role of the Youth Organization for Southeast Asians (YoSEA[2]) in their life and development of self. The seven other youth participants in this study demonstrated how engaging as an activism intern at YoSEA allowed them to discover their role within oppressive systems, and the actions to make change. Community-based youth organizations (CBYOs) were developed in order to address the needs of youth in high poverty communities (O'Donoghue, 2006). Often, CBYOs offer the potential to be spaces for urban youth to investigate important issues impacting their communities, but do not truly give youth the power to do this exploration and work. Therefore, the urban youth who take part in CBYOs are not able to "transform themselves into powerful public actors and effect change on the very social, political, and economic contexts that contribute to their marginalization," (O'Donoghue, 2006, p. 230).

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[1] Senri Wayne is the pseudonym for one of the participants in this study who engaged as both a Young Activist and Student Organizer intern at YoSEA.
[2] YoSEA is a pseudonym used for the organization.

Further, youth in high poverty communities often employ social networks through family members, community-based organizations, peers, and afterschool programs in order to combat the inadequate resources offered by their schools (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007). As a result, the need to organize community resources is recognized in many high needs neighborhoods.

Moreover, as immigrant families settle in low income, urban centers, and the prevalence of anti-immigration rhetoric and policies continue to impact this population, CBYOs become a place for immigrant youth to explore their intersecting identities, and identify the needs of their communities (Roffman, Suarez-Orozco, & Rhodes, 2003; Seif, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009; Van Ngo, 2009; Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best, Diversi, McLaughlin, Silbereisen, 2002). Further, the current immigration rhetoric in the United States focuses on Latinx immigrants and securing the southern border, yet Southeast Asian communities have been targets of deportation for nearly two decades (Dunst, 2018; Lam & Hui, 2016; SEARAC, 2019; Wiltz, 2016). Following the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War, which led to the resettlement of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian immigrants, often in low income, poverty-stricken neighborhoods, Southeast Asian refugees were offered protections by the United States' government; now these protections, including those who came as refugees following the war, are in danger (AAAJ-ALC, 2019; Chen, 2019; Dean, 2018). The role of CBYOs become ever more critical, as Southeast Asian families face issues such as these.

The role of community organizations and after school youth programs is significant in the academic and social development of immigrant youth as well.

Community organizations allow youth to accomplish more in terms of academic, social, formal, and informal growth (McLaughlin, 2000). Further, relationships and resources offered to youth by the adults in the community organizations are invaluable to the growth and development of their social capital (Jarrett, Sullivan, & Watkins, 2005). Community organizations provide numerous opportunities for youth, beyond tutoring or social development. "Afterschool and summer learning programs provide youth opportunities to learn about careers, participate in internships or work experiences, participate in community service projects, or earn stipends for work" (Brand & Valent, 2014, p. 2). Further, in this anti-immigrant climate in the United States, CBYOs offer legal guidance, citizenship paperwork processing, and education to the Southeast Asian immigrant community (SEARAC, 2019; SEARaids, n.d.)

This qualitative case study examined the shared experiences of eight Southeast Asian youth, as they engaged in an activism internship at a movement-based youth program. It documented the internship, within the context of the youth program, where I served as a mentor and advocate for six years. This dissertation study followed the interns as they engaged in lessons and direct actions focused on social, racial, and gender justice. Further, it explored how engagement as an intern shaped the immigrant youth experiences and developed their critical consciousness[3] in the face of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, in addition to systemic discrimination. While the process of critical consciousness development is ongoing, and each participant approached their time as an intern at different points, the activism internship exposes the participants to issues impacting the Southeast Asian community. Engagement as an intern also allowed the

[3] Critical consciousness is a term defined by Paulo Freire (1974/2017) as the "development of the awakening of critical awareness" (p. 15) through reflection and action.

participants to examine the systems within which they live, and learn how to take action against oppression. Further, this study exposed how community-based organizations allowed immigrant youth the space and experiences to deeply examine anti-immigrant systems and policies.

Findings of this study add to *critical consciousness theory* scholarship, which empowers marginalized peoples to take action against oppressive forces. Moreover, this study focuses on Southeast Asian youth, and dismantling the "model minority myth". This myth homogenizes Asians as successful and the "model" minority, pitting marginalized groups against each other. It is also problematic, as it fails to account for the history of discrimination and exclusion they have experienced throughout their time in the United States (Gutierrez, 2015). Finally, this study informs future research by exposing the need for community-based organizations to incorporate activism and advocacy programming that specifically examines immigrant communities and other marginalized populations.

Definitions

In this research inquiry, the youth participants are called *activism interns* or *Young Activists (YAs),* as that was the title they assumed once selected for the internship. Prior to engaging in the internship, each of the participants attended the YoSEA youth program weekly, on Tuesday nights. After submitting an application and resume, and sitting for an interview with one of the YoSEA leadership staff members, they were chosen as Young Activists for the six month internship. As an intern, the youth attended a second night of programming, on Thursdays, had to arrange their own transportation to

and from the internship meetings, research and present on a chosen topic, and were paid a small monthly stipend.

The term *Student Organizer intern (SO)* was also used, as it was the extension of the YA internship. After a youth completes at least one YA internship, they are eligible to apply for and participate as a SO intern. The SO internship includes added responsibility such as leading Tuesday night youth programming, YA meetings, and planning major events such as the annual fundraiser or retreat.

Likewise, the term *mentorvisor* (a combination of *mentor* and *supervisor*) was used throughout the study, as it was a position given to three adult mentors who participated in the YA internship. The mentorvisors volunteered to work with 2 YAs each, and during the course of the internship, served as mentors and leaders that their interns could consult during their research. The mentors were expected to attend all YA meetings, be present during the meetings, learned along with the YAs, and be available to provide last minute transportation to direct actions scheduled outside of the regularly scheduled YA meetings.

Throughout the internship and this research study, the interns and mentors took part in *direct actions*. In the context of this internship, direct actions are considered to be activities that deepened the young activists' understanding of the community. Additionally, the direct actions revolved around a variety of themes including (1) social justice (2) racial justice (3) gender justice, or (4) civic engagement. The direct actions were organized as protests, volunteering in the community, and door canvassing during the Cohort 5.0 internship.

I refer to YoSEA as a *movement-based organization* throughout the dissertation. This term iss critical to the understanding of the study for two reasons. First, the mission and vision of YoSEA transformed over time as needs, resources, and staff grew. Lucy, the executive director, always had a vision for the youth program to meet the various needs of the Southeast Asian community. At the beginning, they referred to YoSEA as an organization with a movement-based youth program. The youth program offered homework help along with lessons in social justice and cultural education. As the needs of the youth and the community changed, the mission of YoSEA transformed. Where once the youth and mentors were meeting to learn about each other's cultures and attending protests against deportations, now YoSEA empowers the youth to plan protests and direct actions, organize resources for the grassroots system in the city, and facilitate rapid response trainings pertinent to social, racial, and gender justice.

Finally, I also used the term *activist* throughout this study, and, as one of the participants pointed out to me during our interview, recognize that this was an increasingly broad term. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) posit that activism is "everyday acts of defiance" (p. 283), therefore expanding that to the definition of an activist. Further, being an activist is one that participates in a collective action or movement (Bobel, 2007). At YoSEA, every youth was invited to participate in lessons, discussions, and direct actions alongside the leadership staff and mentors, creating a movement or collective action. According to the Young Activist internship handbook, the internship exists to help youth build a political foundation, provide a safe space to discuss issues in their communities, explore solutions, and how they can spread awareness. The

internship facilitates this learning through targeted lessons, Young Activist collaborative learning, and direct actions.

Purpose of the Research

This qualitative case study research serves three purposes. First, while traditional youth programs serving immigrants and students of color in high poverty neighborhoods offer homework help or English tutoring, YoSEA incorporates a social justice curriculum that features all students' cultures, activism, community service, and outreach projects (Kolano & Davila, 2019). As O'Donoghue (2006) found, CBYOs offer youth a place to explore relevant issues impacting them and their communities, and I argue that YoSEA takes this role further, by teaching the youth how to actively impart change on the issues. Second, this research responds to the needs of urban youth, by addressing the gaps in their school curricula. The issues impacting immigrant youth are rarely addressed in the Eurocentric American school curriculums, and CBYOs that serve urban youth address the issues that shape their lives and experiences. Finally, there is a gap in the literature that focus on critical consciousness development in Southeast Asian youth, and my research addresses this gap. This research project allowed me to examine the shared experiences of the Southeast Asian youth that participate in the YoSEA programming and internship. Their shared experiences challenged anti-immigrant rhetoric, as well as dispelling the model minority myth.

Research Questions

Through my sustained involvement with the youth program, I made informal field observations for five years. This, coupled with a clear gap in the literature that focused on

critical consciousness development in Southeast Asian youth, led me to the following research questions:

1. How does engagement as a Young Activist intern at a movement-based youth program develop the critical consciousness of the Southeast Asian youth?
    a. How do the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns reveal their processes of critical consciousness development?
    b. How does engagement in the YoSEA youth program shape the Young Activist interns understanding of social justice?

Critical Frameworks

Following the colonization of Brazil, resulting in oppression, marginalization, and discrimination, change makers around the country recognized the need for freedom from their oppressors. Freire (1974/2017) examined how education and critical literacy was the key to this freedom. First, man must be critical of society, and move toward solutions that were with the oppressed, and not for or on them. Further, one must move from a naiveté to a critical consciousness, integrating context, reflection, and a critical attitude. In more concrete terms, Freire (1974/2017) designed a literacy program that allowed oppressed populations an opportunity to become literate through critical examinations of social conditions (Diemer & Li, 2011). It was through this reflection and empowerment that the oppressed populations were able to enact change onto their unjust conditions.

The development of a critical consciousness allows for marginalized populations to identify, examine, and the power to enact change upon their oppressive conditions. Through this process of critical consciousness development, the oppressed gain the awareness of connections between those in their group, the community, and the larger

systems (Freire, 1970/2016; Turner-Essel, 2013). In this study, the participants engaged in an educational and transformative process, which made them aware of the oppressive conditions impacting their community.

Measurement

For this research inquiry, the process of critical consciousness development was operationalized in order to explore how engagement as Young Activist interns developed the critical consciousness of Southeast Asian youth. Watts, Griffith, and Abdul-Adil (1999) offered five areas that guided the measurement of critical consciousness development:

- What did you *see*? perception based on the stimulus;
- What does it *mean*? interpretation and meaning;
- Why do you *think* that? defense of interpretations;
- How do you *feel* about it? emotional and intuitive responses to the stimulus; and
- What can you *do* about it? action strategies - what constructive actions could be taken to improve the situation (p. 264).

These guiding reflection questions were used throughout the study, during the semi-structured interviews. Due to the nature of the Young Activist internship, the stimulus noted in question one might be different for each intern. For example, one intern chose to explore police brutality and another examined toxic masculinity.

Further, I employed a case study research approach for this dissertation study as it appropriately described the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns while they learn together about the anti-immigrant systems and policies impacting their communities. A case study research approach, within a critical consciousness conceptual

framework, allowed me to describe the experiences of the youth as they learned about conditions that were oppressing their community. According to critical consciousness theory, marginalized people identified, examined, and enacted change upon their oppressive conditions. By examining this internship through a critical consciousness conceptual framework, I contextualized the processes of critical reflection, efficacy, and critical action as the youth learned together.

Data Sources

Data were formally collected in 2018 – 2019 over the course of six months in three ways, in order to examine the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns as they engaged in their internship. I employed the use of in-depth interviews in order to allow the youth to explain their experiences during the internship, along with six months of field participant observations. The interviews, in conjunction with the observations, allowed me to contextualize the full experience of the internship, and examine the interns as they moved through the processes of critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. Finally, I observed four of the interns' final projects, and analyzed each of these. After transcribing each of the interviews, I constructed short case studies on each of the participants in order to contextualize their experiences, within their greater time at YoSEA. I then coded and themed the case studies and interviews in order to address my research questions guiding this research inquiry. The themes that emerged from the case studies and interviews were discussed further in chapter five.

Research Site

The research site for this study was with the Youth Organization for Southeast Asians, a coalition that aids immigrant families with citizenship paperwork, legal

guidance, translation services, and a youth program. I engaged as a mentor and volunteer at YoSEA for the five years preceding my research (August 2013 – August 2018). During these five years, I learned from the staff and youth, participated in learning sessions and direct actions, transported youth to and from the program, attended high school graduations, and built up years of trust that were critical as a white, adult female entering the space of youth of color. Due to the sustained relationship that was built over five years, I chose to collect data for my dissertation study at YoSEA from September 2018 – April 2019. I conducted the dissertation study during the 2018 – 2019 academic year, as it aligned with the schedule of Cohort 5.0 Young Activist Internship. Due to the time required to collect applications, interview, and hire interns, formal data collection occurred between October 2018 and April 2019.

Selection of Research Participants

I had a heterogeneous sampling of participants including 8 nonrandom volunteers who were purposefully selected, as they were the YoSEA Young Activist interns from 2016 through 2019. Each of my participants identified as Southeast Asian or Southeast Asian American, attended high school in the United States, and were a current or former Young Activist intern. All of the participants spoke at least one other language in addition to English, four were born in the United States to Thai, Burmese, Vietnamese, and Lao immigrant parents, and four were born in Thailand, Burma, or Vietnam.

Significance of the Study

This study has implications beyond education, as YoSEA is a community-based coalition with a youth program that developed out of a need expressed by the community members and youth. Through this study, community stakeholders and non-profit

organizations can develop programming and curriculum for the specific needs of immigrant and minority youth.

In addition, it addresses the need for research on the development of critical consciousness in Southeast Asian youth. The "model minority" stereotype continues to be pervasive across American society and public schooling, while Southeast Asian youth are simultaneously struggling to succeed in school (Ngo & Lee, 2007).

Further, Southeast Asian immigrants are facing more deportations than in previous decades (Dizon Mariategue, 2017), and struggle with increased policing in their neighborhoods, racism, and poverty (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Specifically, in the Southeastern United States, and the city where this study took place, the heightened enforcement of raids on immigrant communities caused unrest. In the weeks following Donald Trump's inauguration into office, ICE agents arrested 84 people across the state. In February 2019, agents detained 275 people, in one week, in response to the newly elected sheriff dismantling ICE collaboration through the 287(g) policy (Cooper & Armus, 2019). Further, since 2008, over 15,000 people have been deported in this state through the use of technology that sends fingerprint data from local law enforcement to FBI, and then to Homeland Security (Coleman, 2019). Systems such as these target immigrants, and are an attempt to fast-track deportations (Boraks, 2019). Finally, in September 2019, a number of community organizations, such as YoSEA, were alerted to raids targeting Cambodian immigrants in the county, and across the country.

This study responds to the critical issues impacting the Young Activist interns by calling awareness to the shared experiences of the participants.

Chapter Organization

Chapter one outlined the role of CBYOs in the lives of immigrant youth, as well as the purpose and approaches used in this research study. The goal of chapter two is to review the literature that guides this study. The literature review first outlines the critical consciousness theory and how it was conceptualized in this study. It reviews the history of immigrant students within the context of urban education, and further explores the schooling experiences of Southeast Asian students in American schools. Chapter two also historicizes youth activism and social justice education, then moves into the literature on the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian youth.

In chapter three, I introduce my positionality and assumptions leading into this research study, which both informed my choice of critical consciousness theory and a case study research approach. Following, I present my research site, participant selection, the lessons and direct actions that took place during the internship, along with the process of data collection, coding, and analysis.

Chapter four showcases each of my participants' case studies, in which I introduce the reader to the youth through their interviews and my field observations. Likewise, in chapter five I present the overarching themes from this study that emerged during the case study analysis. In chapter five, I also employ critical consciousness theory to analyze the themes.

Finally, in chapter six, I discuss the findings of my study through the lens of the critical consciousness theory and my research questions. I then present the implications of my research, and the possibilities for future research based on the findings of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine the shared experiences of eight Southeast Asian youth, as they engaged in an activism internship at a movement-based youth program. I documented their experiences as they moved through the processes of critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. The concept of critical consciousness has been applied in a number of research studies (Turner-Essel, 2013; Wallin-Ruschman, 2018; Godfrey & Wolf, 2016; Monzó, 2016) examining urban classrooms, marginalized groups, and immigrant populations.

This dissertation specifically examines an immigrant group, Southeast Asian youth, that is absent from the critical consciousness literature. The Southeast Asian immigrant population in the United States experiences an increase in deportations, policing of their neighborhoods, episodes of racism, and inequitable education (SEARAC, 2019; Lam & Hui, 2016; Wiltz, 2016; Dunst, 2018; Lee, 2016; Tan, 2017), and my participants engaged in an internship to deeply explore those topics, while acquiring the skills to enact change in their communities.

This chapter reviews the literature and conceptual perspectives, which informed my research study. First, I synthesize the societal views on immigrants at the national, state, and local levels (Dizon Mariategue, 2017; Spring, 2013), as these views impact the opportunities afforded to the youth in this study.

Second, I discuss the historical and current perspectives on urban education in the United States, followed by an exploration of the school experiences of Southeast Asian youth; often the societal and political issues affecting immigrant youth are not addressed

in school (Adler, 2004), and these youth seek out opportunities to explore and correct the issues outside of the classroom. Third, I examine literature on youth activism and social justice work done in communities of color and immigrants, as this is paramount to the study, and aims to add to this body of literature through the examination of a movement-based youth program working with Southeast Asian youth, specifically. Next, I synthesize the literature on Southeast Asians and critical consciousness development, as it is critical to the study. The goal of this dissertation is to explore how engagement as a social justice intern at a movement-based youth program shapes the critical consciousness of the Southeast Asian youth, and I aim to add to this body of literature. Finally, I present my rationale for examining this study through the lens of critical consciousness.

Societal Views on Immigrants

Society's views of immigrants shifted throughout the history of the United States, depending on the political climate (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Jones, 2016); currently, divisive rhetoric has fueled legislation allowing a ban of refugees coming from some of the world's most war-torn countries in the Middle East and Asia. Additionally, our current administration is seeking funding to build a wall on the border of the United States and Mexico, sending a clear message that immigrants from countries to our south are not welcome. Moreover, in North Carolina, Southeast Asian communities are targeted for deportation. According to the Southeast Asian Resource Action Center (SEARAC), more than 16,000 Southeast Asian Americans have been issued orders of deportation since 1998 (SEARAC, 2019). Further, the current Trump Administration restricted visa

sanctions on Cambodia and Laos, and continue to pressure the government to disregard Vietnamese refugees that were protected under a 2008 agreement (SEARAC, 2019).

United States

Spring (2013) documented the history of racism toward Asian immigrants throughout the United States' history. Migration from Asia to the United States began in the mid-19th century when Chinese immigrants came to work in the gold mines and on the railroads. The first Chinese migrants arrived in the United States via California in the 1850s, followed by Japanese migrants to Hawaii in the 1860s. Following, throughout the early 20th century, Korean, Asian Indian, and Filipino migrants immigrated to Hawaii and the West Coast, accounting for a small percentage of the foreign-born population through the 1930s. Following the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965, the number of immigrants from Asia rose from 491,000 in 1960 to 12.8 million in 2014. More specifically, the number immigrants from Southeast Asia grew from under 500,000 in 1960 to 4.2 million in 2014 (Zong & Batalova, 2016). Between 1980 and 2000, Southeast Asian immigrants were settling in California, Texas, and Minnesota. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, the number of immigrants from Southeast Asia in North Carolina grew to over 34,000 (Walcott, 2012).

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, a number of laws were passed to allow and then ban immigrants from Asia into the United States (American Immigration Center, 2016). These laws, along with discriminatory propaganda, oppressed Asian immigrants, thus affecting their citizenship, right to land ownership, and education. Spring (2013) defined the five different kinds of Asian immigrant, as described by white Americans - "the coolie, the deviant, the yellow peril, the model minority, and the gook"

(p. 76). The “coolie” image was one of an Asian worker in poor living conditions and working endless hours at a low wage. The “deviant” image was one of the “Chinese opium den and Asian sexual freedom” (p. 76). The “yellow peril” image was one of Asian immigrants flooding into the United States. The “gook” image grew from the United States defeat in the Vietnam War and was one of a faceless and powerful enemy willing to do anything in order to destroy their enemy. These stereotypes are still deeply embedded in American public opinion of Asian immigrants. For example, the model minority stereotype, which is further addressed within the context of Southeast Asian youth school experiences, continues to be pervasive across education.

In a broader sense, the American public opinion of immigrants has shifted both positively and negatively since the 18th century. According to a report published by the Pew Research Center, 63% of the population found that immigrants were a burden to the country in 1994. However, as recently as 2011, that number decreased to 44% (Jones, 2016).

Yet, an examination of current legislation and recent trends in policy demonstrate that immigrants from certain countries still face discrimination and oppression. DREAMers, undocumented young adults who were brought to the United States as children, were in danger of losing their legal status as funding for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was in consideration for being discontinued (Redden, 2018). Further, over 1 million Southeast Asian refugees who fled their war-torn countries following the Vietnam War are in danger of losing their protections under the current administration (AAAJ-ALC, 2019; Dean, 2018).

In 1996, congress passed two immigration laws in the face of a terrorist attack carried out by a United States citizen, but ultimately those laws impacted noncitizens. The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) expanded the definition of various crimes under immigration law (Dean, 2018), targeting both lawful permanent residents and noncitizens alike. Both AEDPA and IIRIRA targeted immigrants with old criminal records, in which time has been served, and increased their likelihood for orders of removal and deportation to countries they may have left at very young ages and have no tie to any longer (Chen, 2019; Constante, 2018; Constante, 2018; Dean, 2018).

Further, both Vietnamese and Cambodian governments signed repatriation agreements with the United States in 2008 and 2002, respectively. The Vietnamese agreement states that travel documents will be considered for only people who came to the United States on or after July 12, 1995, when diplomatic relations were restored between the two nations (SEARaids, n.d.). In 2019, the current administration reinterpreted the agreement to include more refugees, even lawful permanent residents (Dunst, 2019). The Cambodian agreement resulted in about 800 deportations, with an increase beginning in 2017 (SEARaids, n.d.). The United States State Department imposed visa sanctions on Cambodian officials who traditionally have traveled to the United States to interview detained Cambodians before deportation (Associated Press, 2017; SEARaids, n.d.).

North Carolina

In North Carolina, the federal decisions concerning immigration directly impact the 794,684 foreign-born population (American Immigration Council, 2017).

Specifically, a rise in the detention and deportation of Southeast Asian immigrants sparked action within the city where YoSEA was located. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers, in conjunction with the local sheriff's office detained hundreds of Cambodian and Vietnamese Americans in 2017 (Dizon Mariategue, 2017). Local and regional coalitions organized in order to abolish the 287(g) program and re-elect a sheriff that opposes the program.

The 287(g) program allowed a state or local law enforcement entity to enter into a partnership with ICE in order to receive delegated authority for immigration enforcement within their jurisdictions. In 2009, ICE revised the 287(g) delegated authority program, strengthening public safety and ensuring consistency in immigration enforcement across the country by prioritizing the arrest and detention of criminal aliens (Immigration Enforcement, n.d.). With the futures of both documented and undocumented immigrants uncertain due to oppressive legislation and restrictive policies, many immigrant youth depend on support from their schools and community.

Moreover, in August 2019, the state GOP introduced HB 370 to house leadership. This law mandated that sheriff deputies must report, and hand over people to ICE, as well as comply with any and all ICE requests. This bill was introduced after a number newly elected sheriffs in the state promised to end collaboration with ICE pertaining to raids and deportations (Comunidad Colectiva, 2019). Shortly after the bill was introduced, the state governor vetoed it (NCGA, 2019).

Urban Education in the United States

Urban schools in the United States continue to face issues that prevent adequate conditions for learning and academic success. Students in urban schools, who are

"historically disadvantaged by race, ethnicity, disability status, and language-minority status" (Losen, 2015, p. 1) experience higher dropout rates, and lower rates of college completion. Further, students in urban schools across the United States are "academically unprepared or underprepared" (Moore & Lewis, 2012, p. 3) due to conditions out of their control. Teacher instability, high dropout rates, disproportionate funding and access to resources, and 21st century resegregation are national issues affecting students in urban schools (Lewis, Chambers, & Butler, 2012).

Following the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the number of immigrants to the United States increased, paving the way for immigration policy and shifting demographics in our cities and classrooms (Banks, 2008; Kumi-Yeboah & Smith, 2016). As such, the make up of urban schools is majority students of color, low socioeconomic status, and immigrant students who face great difficulty moving through the American educational system as they "experience static schooling structures and authoritarian pedagogies that leave them grade levels behind" (Portes & Salas, 2015, p. 430).

Additionally, immigrant families tend to be clustered together in high poverty neighborhoods, thus attending low performing schools (Chiswick & Miller, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2006); these students take high stakes tests that are written for middle-upper class, white students, and are exposed only to a Eurocentric curriculum. They may not be given the opportunities to engage in the classroom or school setting (Daoud, 2003).

Due to the inequitable educational experiences that immigrant youth and youth of color are exposed to, society responds in three ways. The first solution is providing

funding, in such ways as Title 1 funds, or specialized funding through corporations. Another solution includes developing English tutoring programs or afterschool academic help, which ultimately enforce subtractive language practices[4] and assimilation, or reinforces the curriculum found in schools. The third and final solution is found in the way of CBYOs that engage immigrant youth in experiences that expose them to networks and resources in their communities (Kolano & Davila, 2019). Moreover, CBYOs that serve immigrant youth not only responde to educational inequities, they also mediate the anti-immigrant rhetoric and discriminatory policies that plague immigrant and marginalized communities of color (Kolano & Davila, 2019).

Southeast Asian Youth School Experiences

Since the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s, scholars have examined the model minority stereotype. The development of this stereotype was examined amongst the dissent of other minority groups, including African Americans and Latinx. The model minority stereotype posits that amongst all minority groups, Asian Americans have the abilities to succeed without any assistance; therefore they are the "model" for other minority groups to follow (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Osajima, 1987). This stereotype is harmful not only to African American and Latinx students, but also to Asian American students, as it first createa a homogenous group of learners who are perceived to be successful and without needs. Additionally, it perpetuates the racist ideology that minority groups are unsuccessful due to a lack of values, and not because of the "structures of discrimination" (Ngo & Lee, 2007, p. 415) pervasive in American society, and further, American schools.

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[4] Subtractive language practices divest English language learners of "important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 3).

Academic research surrounding Asian American students as the model minority often position a homogenous group of learners as high achievers, and diligent students (Lee, 1996; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). However, like the model minority stereotype, aggregating data on all Asian American students fails to account for the diversity of these youth. For example, according to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, 55.9 percent of all Asian Americans 25 years and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher. However, when the data was disaggregated, a different picture emerged. A smaller percentage of Southeast Asian Americans aged 25 and older held bachelor's degrees or higher: 19.5 percent of Vietnamese Americans; 9.1 percent of Cambodian Americans; 7.6 percent of Lao Americans; and 7.4 percent of Hmong Americans (U.S. Census, 2000). Following is an examination of literature illustrating the diversity of school experiences and educational attainment within Southeast Asian youth.

Just as Asian American students are juxtaposed beside Black or white students, so are Southeast Asian American students positioned next to Asian American students (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Research on Southeast Asian American students either highlight their educational experiences as successful, with the students viewed as hard workers and high achievers, or portrayed Southeast Asian American students as truant, gang members, or reliant upon government assistance (Ngo, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007). This duality, high achievers and hard workers versus dropouts and gang members, present Southeast Asian American students as those who do need support or do not deserve assistance, educational or otherwise (Um, 2003). It is critical to examine the experiences of Southeast Asian American students within their ethnic groups, as their cultures and

experiences inform their educational attainment, as well as their movement within the American society and educational system.

Struggles

Literature on the schooling experiences of Southeast Asian American students, within their ethnic groups, points to a variety factors that impact their struggles in the American school system. The factors that impact the schooling experiences of Southeast Asian American students include, but are not limited to, cultural and linguistic differences, racism and poverty, under-resourced schools, and intergenerational conflict.

Cultural and linguistic differences.

Researchers focused on cultural differences causing educational struggles for Southeast Asian American students. Hmong American students' struggles first point to cultural differences impacting academic achievement (Ngo & Lee, 2007). The Hmong value "kinship and cooperation over individualism" (Ngo & Lee, 2007, p. 428) which is not generally found in the American school culture. Hmong American students learn in context-specific and observational ways, while learning in American schools is much more independent (Timm, Chiang & Finn, 1998). Further, Buddhist ideologies present in Cambodian culture leads parents to assert that some students are capable and some are not, contrasting with American ideology that effort is a leading factor educational attainment or failure (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Smith-Hefner, 1990). Moreover, literature on Vietnamese American students focuses on their academic successes, yet there is research to indicate that these students also struggle within the American educational system. For example, higher rates of delinquency occur in second generation Vietnamese American

youth, compared to first generation (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). This study concluded that delinquent students have lost their culture (over-Americanization).

Racism and poverty.

Additionally, Conchas (2006) posited that the impact of poverty added to the educational struggles of Vietnamese American students. They needed to balance their educational responsibilities, along with responsibilities to their family (which may include earning income, taking care of siblings, paying bills, or translating). Further, Hmong American students faced racism and experienced poverty, which negatively impacted their outlook on their educational and economic futures (Lee, 2001, 2005). Moreover, researchers pointed to racism and poverty as a barrier to Cambodian American students' educational attainment as well. Cambodian American students found that they needed to leave school in order to help earn income for the family (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Um, 1999, 2003). Finally, Cambodian American students cited racial harassment as a factor impacting their educational achievement (Tang, 2006).

Under-resourced schools.

Schools also play a role in the success or struggles of Southeast Asian American students. Schools do not have the resources or funding to support Vietnamese American students, including a lack of bilingual staff and under-trained, monolingual teachers who do not address the variety of cultures in the classroom (Ima, 1995; Long, 1996; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Additionally, educational research on Cambodian American students focuses on their academic struggles due to language learning, despite most being born in the United States (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Wright, 1999). Additionally, Lao American students experience issues in school due to teachers who are not prepared to address students'

language and cultural needs (DeVoe, 1996; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Schools do not have proper resources to support Lao American students and families' needs, such as bilingual staff members or programs to adequately train teachers and staff on the language and cultural needs of Lao American students (Ima, 1995; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Further, Adler (2004) found that the "sociopolitical context of…. school was based on a European American curriculum, and the school was a place where Southeast Asians were considered a "foreign" group, with linguistic and cultural differences" (p. 71). Due to this perspective of Southeast Asian students in school, those attending public schools become disengaged in their academic work, falling behind their peers.

Intergenerational conflict.

Furthermore, intergenerational conflict impacts the educational success of Southeast Asian students. Second generation Hmong American students suffer from intergenerational conflict as a result of their different acculturation process (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Thao, 2003). Cambodian American students also cite intergenerational conflict as a factor impacting their educational achievement (Tang, 2006). As evidenced in studies among Hmong American and Cambodian American families, researchers found that Lao American families experience tensions due to reunions following resettlement, division of labor and responsibilities, and the responsibilities of youth (Fu, 1995).

Successes

Despite the documented struggles of Southeast Asian youth in American schools, many find success in their education. For example, Hmong American students are found to have higher GPAs than other students of similar SES, as well as earning good grades despite poor performances on standardized tests (Call & McNall, 1992; Hutchinson,

1997; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Rumbaut, 1995). Following, researchers focused on the factors that impact educational success and resilience of Southeast Asian American students, including cultural and family values and ethnic community resources.

Cultural and family values.

Vietnamese refugees succeed educationally, and as an immigrant group, are recognized for their academic success (Freeman, 1995; Robbins, 2004). Yet, their success is not due to adaptation of American culture and norms, rather adhering to traditional values and norms (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1991). Success is due to cultural values that emphasize education, work ethic, and achievement (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Educational success is not explained by "ethnicity, religion, gender, SES, or parental education" (Ngo & Lee, 2007, p. 423), rather the cultural norms instilled in the youth by their parents. Vietnamese families also view educational achievement as a "collective affair, due to family bonds and obligation" (Ngo & Lee, 2007, p. 424).

Further, in contrast to early research on Hmong culture causing a barrier for Hmong American students in American schools, researchers found that Hmong American students benefit from parental control and pressure, along with family and ethnic community support (Hutchinson, 1997; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Rumbaut, 1995). Moreover, Cambodian American students complete high school and matriculate on to higher education (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Researchers suggest that, in fact, Cambodian family values, and a culturally relevant school curriculum benefit these students (Chhuon, Hudley, & Macias, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007). Finally, the small body of research on Lao American education also pointed to cultural values as a determining factor of success (Ngo & Lee, 2007). The values of hard work and organization of family life are central to

Lao culture (Caplan et al., 1991). For example, schools support Lao American students and their families by offering interpreters rather than having students translate for their parents. This resource supports Lao American students and their families by maintaining respect for the parents, and not undermining their value to their children (Manke & Keller, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007).

Ethnic community resources.

The relationships that Vietnamese families and students have with their ethnic community supports their education as a form of social capital (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Involvement in an ethnic community allows immigrant families to maintain their culture and values (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Zhou & Kim, 2006), as well as allowing for immigrant youth to "overcome adjustment difficulties" (Ngo & Lee, 2007, p. 424). Further, Hmong American students benefit from ethnic community support (Hutchinson, 1997; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Rumbaut, 1995). Finally, researchers suggest that ethnic community based organizations benefit Cambodian American students (Chhuon, Hudley, & Macias, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007). This literature is critical in order to examine the positive factors impacted Southeast Asian American youth and families. Immigrant youth and youth of color are expected to work hard and succeed in school, then matriculating to college.

Yet, as noted in the literature above, failing schools do not offer the proper support and opportunities that enable these youth to move on to post-secondary education (Kirshner, 2015). Further, schools di not provide the necessary experiences for Southeast Asian American youth to examine the social and political issues impacting them and their community. Youth are developmentally able to participate and engage in opportunities to

examine the social and political issues (Kirshner, 2015). Therefore, their communities and youth organizations offer the spaces and resources for this population of students to thrive.

Youth Activism

As the need for systemic change begins to impact immigrant youth and youth from communities of color, the role of community and youth organizing becomes ever more critical. “Community organizing creates durable institutions and builds local leadership, giving otherwise fractured communities a unified voice and the collective power necessary to resist oppression” (Alinsky, 1972; Schutz & Sandy, 2011). It is through community organizing that marginalized communities seek to shift power relations between the oppressors and the oppressed (Schutz & Sandy, 2011).
More specifically, youth organizing is a form of civic engagement in which youth identify dissatisfaction within their community, “mobilize their peers, and work collectively to address...human rights issues within their schools and communities” (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012, p. 1).

Due to the changing economy and technological advances in the late 20th century, many cities have become further stratified with affluence buttressing against concentrated poverty (Kirshner, 2006). Therefore, youth activism allows youth of color to build “political power in a context of inequality and exclusion” (Kirshner, 2015, p. 3). Youth of color, including immigrant youth, who are empowered to create political change, may experience education inequality due to attendance at high poverty schools, and exclusion from policy decision-making (Kirshner, 2015). Historically, youth organizers have addressed a variety of issues, focusing on the root causes, including racial justice,

environmental justice, and juvenile justice. More recently, due to ongoing policy debates over immigration, more than ⅓ of organizations are working on immigration-related campaigns, and 48% of youth organizers are immigrant youth themselves (Torres-Fleming, Valdes, & Pillai, 2010). However, after school programs and youth organizations serving marginalized communities can not solely serve as sanctuaries from the issues impacting their community. The "youth must also have the opportunity to speak up and transform institutions shaping their lives" (Kirshner, 2006, p. 38). Further, these spaces are places where the youth are not assumed to be "deficient, invisible, or hypervisible or too young or inexperienced" (O'Donoghue, 2006, p. 229) to truly transform those institutions.

Further, youth organizers attend to the issues impacting their schools and communities, while confronting the fact that they are "politically disempowered" (James & McGillicuddy, 2001, p. 2). Moreover, the societal views of youth as recipients of various services within educational and community spheres further enforce the "social constructions of youth as immature and restricted them to limited forms of participation" (Kirshner, 2015, p. 4). As such, it is critical that youth organizers form relationships with adult allies and policymakers (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012). "Intergenerational, cross-age collaborations" (Kirshner, 2015, p. 131) can be powerful in developing youth organizers' agency. It is imperative that youth organizers are partners in the organizing, rather than recipients of the policies. Kirshner (2015) suggests that youth are empowered to do the organizing for change, yet they can not simply be handed the tools to do so. It is crucial that youth organizers "exercise agency; to take risks and try out new practices" (p. 107). Morrell (2006) argues that youth organizers are the most powerful tools for change.

Youth organizers are experiencing and resisting policies that impact their lives (Kirshner, 2015).

One term that is imperative to this review of literature and subsequent study is *activist.* Throughout the literature informing this study, terms such as youth activism, civic engagement, community organizing, and youth organizing are used often and interchangeably (Alinsky, 1972; Kirshner, 2015; Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; James & McGillicuddy, 2001; Schutz & Sandy, 2011; Torres-Fleming et al., 2010). However, for the purposes of this review, the term *activist* is defined as one who is interested in the means to an end of various causes (Strobel, Osberg, & McLaughlin, 2006). Further, "rather than attach himself to a particular issue, an activist seeks to take action as frequently as possible with the general goal of helping his school or community" (p. 203).

Social Justice

Student-led resistances have been critical to social justice movements throughout the history of the 20th century. Specifically, Chicana and Chicano students organized protests in California to call attention to inferior education at both the K – 12 and college levels during the 1980s and 1990s (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Additionally, it was the Soweto Uprising in 1976 led by between 10,000 - 20,000 learners in South Africa that were credited for the beginning of the struggle to end apartheid (Kirshner, 2015). Currently, following the school massacre in Parkland, Florida, students from Stoneman Douglas High School organized in order to call for gun reform legislation. With movements such as these, youth are exercising a form of resistance called transformational resistance. Transformational resistance "illustrates both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice" (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 319). The youth

are aware of their oppression and desire to exact change in order to critique their oppression, while being driven by a consciousness of social justice.

Further, youth development models led to a "higher quality of life through a more equitable world" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 93). Three levels of awareness were offered for youth through a critical consciousness: self, social, and world. At the self-awareness level, youth critiqued stereotypes and actively engaged in identity development; at the social-awareness level, youth organized within their community, partook in political education, and exercised power within community organizations. Finally, at the global-awareness level, youth made connections to others' struggles.

Southeast Asians and Critical Consciousness Development

The literature on the development of critical consciousness of Southeast Asians is thin, therefore illuminating the need for my research study. In the available literature, three themes emerge that impact the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian Americans: the process is transformative, social, and based in the community. Marginalized and racialized youth find ways to exercise agency and "transform oppressive elements at the individual, communal, and societal levels" (Carmen, Dominguez, Greene, Mendoza, Fine, Neville, & Gutierrez, 2015, p. 825). Through the process of critical consciousness development, Southeast Asian Americans identify significant change from earlier views of being Asian or racism against Asians. Further, their process also begins with a meaningful education of issues impacting Asian Americans (Osajima, 2007). This meaningful education includes courses, invitations to students groups, campus protests, and diversity training workshops. A meaningful education allows them to see themselves within a larger, social context, and not just as

individuals. Critical consciousness development allows the participants to name their world (Freire, 1970/2016).

The process of critical consciousness development is social, and based around the connections of those with shared experiences. Through peer dialogue and relevant topics, Southeast Asian Americans share their perspectives, shared wisdom, identify causes of marginalization, and begin the process of healing (Carmen, et al. 2015). Further connection and collaboration with peers allows for growth in consciousness. This also allows for Southeast Asian Americans to break free from their sense of isolation, which is closely tied to the American ideology of individualism (Osajima, 2007). By emerging from their isolation, consciousness is heightened to the issues that they experience, the same as other Southeast Asian Americans.

Finally, critical consciousness development in Southeast Asian Americans is based within their community. After-school programs within community-based organizations are sites of development for youth to deeply understand the social context of their community. They often offer opportunities that are unavailable within the schools and the family communities (Ngo, 2017; Quinn & Nguyen, 2017). The youth work within a co-ethnic space, and work together to name their stories of marginalization, and relate their stories to their peers and community (Ngo, 2017). Further, youth programs prepare youth by encouraging them to take collective responsibility for political and civic life of their community, develop their critical orientation, and to work cooperatively with other communities (Quinn & Nguyen, 2017).

Rationale for Using a Critical Consciousness Conceptual Framework

The concept of critical consciousness examines oppressive forces present in the world first through education, then reflection. Oppression is defined as the "unjust use of power by one socially salient group over another in a way that creates and sustains inequity in the distribution of coveted resources" (Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003, p. 186). As oppression is maintained through the continued withholding of resources, an asymmetrical state (Serrano-Garcia, 1984) occurrs and sociopolitical imbalance continues. Based on the works of Freire (1970/2016), liberation from oppressed conditions, or an asymmetrical state, begins with "true reflection" (p. 66). It is through true reflection that action with the oppressed occurs (Freire, 1970/2016). Diemer and Li (2011) theorize that critical consciousness is developed when marginalized groups are "provided support to reflect upon and challenge social inequity-engendering a motivation to change unjust social conditions" (p. 1816).

Further, critical consciousness involves an awareness of inequality and a desire to upset the systems that maintain inequality (Diemer & Hsieh, 2008). As this consciousness develops, a person becomes critical of the cultural hegemony impacting their community. Cultural hegemony is the generalization of the interest (social, cultural, etc.) of one social group over all other groups (Gramsci, 1936; Wagner, Dymes, & Wiggan, 2017). The awareness and critique of the hegemony and oppression is the critical consciousness development that Freire (1970/2016) described, and is the focus of this research study.

Christens, Winn, and Duke (2015) present a framework for the concept of critical consciousness that guided my inquiry. Within this framework there are three components of development that changes one's "knowledge and perspectives, as well as behaviors"

(p. 17). The first component of critical consciousness, as laid out by Christens, Winn, and Duke (2015), is critical reflection. Through critical reflection marginalized youth, in the case of my research study, begin the process of reflection and analysis of "inequities and injustices connected to one's social conditions" (p. 17). This component begins to expose the youth to *why* their community is experiencing these conditions.

The next component of critical consciousness is political efficacy, which is "the sense that the individual or a collective has the ability and capacity to change their political and social conditions" (p. 17). Political efficacy begins to expose the youth to *how* they can effect change on the conditions in their communities.

The third and final component of critical consciousness is critical action. It is through critical action that "individuals actively seek to change their unjust conditions through policy reform, practices, or programs" (p. 17). Critical action exposes the youth to what they *can do* to better the conditions in their communities.

Table 1

Core Components of Critical Consciousness

1. Critical Reflection: analysis of inequities and injustices connected to one's social conditions
2. Political Efficacy: the sense that one has the ability to change their political and social conditions
3. Critical Action: individuals actively change the unjust conditions

Watts, Diemer, and Voight (2011) note that of the three components of critical consciousness, critical reflection is found the least in research on youth civic engagement. In this dissertation study, I argue that YoSEA focuses equally on critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action during the Young Activist internship. When

beginning to design this dissertation research, a number of theories and concepts presented themselves as viable options for a framework to this work. After exploring current theories and concepts that are often used in studies of marginalized youth, students of color, or immigrant youth, I determined that critical consciousness is a relevant and appropriate framework for this study. First, critical consciousness is now recognized as an important piece to youth development and civic engagement (Gibson & Levine, 2003; Godfrey & Grayman, 2014; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Godfrey and Grayman (2014) note that the current work on youth civic engagement does not address the structural inequities present in the communities and which are the goal of the engagement. YoSEA addresses the inequities through dialogue, direct actions, and civic engagement.

Next, I chose this framework for my dissertation research because the process of developing critical consciousness linked "personal experience to political analysis" (Moane, 2010, p. 523) through education. During YoSEA's Tuesday night youth programs, the lessons and discussions are explicitly linked to the youth's lived experiences and their cultures. Finally, Larson and Angus (2011) note that high-quality youth programs instill agency in the participants by engaging them in projects, giving them control over those projects, and allowing them to work toward a difficult goal. During the YoSEA internship, the interns are required to complete a final research project, while also working together to participate in direct actions.

Summary

Southeast Asian youth are simultaneously working to combat the "model minority" stereotype and receive the support needed to succeed in the United States (Ngo

& Lee, 2007; Spring, 2013). As the number of deportations of Southeast Asian immigrants continue to increase (Dizon Mariategue, 2017), along with the resegregation of schools in high poverty communities (Lewis, Chambers, & Butler, 2012), communities of color turn to CBYOs to provide the resources and support needed for their youth (O'Donoghue, 2006). Yet, traditional CBYOs do not meet all of the needs of Southeast Asian American youth (O'Donoghue, 2006), thus social justice curriculums and a co-ethnic community foster the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian youth (Carmen et al., 2015; Ngo, 2017; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Quinn & Nguyen, 2017).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This qualitative dissertation study examined the shared experiences of eight Southeast Asian youth, as they engaged in an activism internship at a movement-based youth program. In chapter two, I reviewed literature that explores the schooling experiences of Southeast Asian students, analyzed social justice and afterschool programming for youth of color, and discussed the literature gap in the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian Americans. This chapter describes the design of the qualitative research study. In addition, it outline my access to the research site and participants, the data collection process, and subsequent data analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's ethical considerations and limitations. In alignment with the components of critical consciousness, I position the eight former and current Young Activist interns' experiences at the center of the study in order to analyze their movement on the spectrum of critical consciousness development. With the current rhetoric surrounding refugees' access to asylum in the United States, and the rising number of Southeast Asian deportations, there is a critical need for studies that explore young Southeast Asian's awareness of and ability to take action against the anti-immigration policies and practices impacting their communities.

This research study documented the shared experiences of eight Southeast Asian youth who engaged as Young Activist interns, as they researched anti-immigrant conditions in their community, and learned the skills to become activists. The interns' experiences were collected from six months of observations, transcribed interviews, and artifacts, then analyzed using a critical consciousness lens to address the following research questions:

1. How does engagement as a Young Activist intern at a movement-based youth program develop the critical consciousness of the Southeast Asian youth?
    a. How do the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns reveal their processes of critical consciousness development?
    b. How does engagement in the YoSEA youth program shape the Young Activist interns understanding of social justice?

This qualitative dissertation is positioned within a critical consciousness conceptual framework and seeks to describe the shared experiences of eight Young Activist interns as they moved through the process of critical consciousness development and realization of becoming activists whom agitate the oppressive conditions impacting their communities. My theoretical and methodological research approaches are informed by my sustained engagement as a mentor and an ally for this population of students, as well as the body of literature surrounding the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian youth, social justice, and youth activism. Due to the nature of my case study research design situated in a critical consciousness conceptual framework, I chose semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and artifact analysis as my primary data collection. In this way, I was able to examine the shared experiences of my participants as they moved through the process of critical consciousness development. Through the data analysis and thick description of the participants experiences, I demonstrate that the young activists each gained an awareness of some of the oppressive issues impacting their communities, along with opportunities to take action against those oppressive issues. First, I begin with assumptions that are grounded in my research, along

with my positionality, due to my role as an educator in the community where my research took place, along with my role as a mentor and ally at YoSEA. Next, I reveal my in-depth process of gaining access to the research site and my participants, during my time as a mentor and ally. Finally, I detail my methods of data collection, coding, and analysis, along with ethical considerations, and limitations to this study.

Assumptions

In conducting this research, I operated under certain assumptions grounded in my experiences as an educator of immigrants and English learners, as well as a student of urban education. First, I assumed that Southeast Asian Americans occupy a unique position within American society thus offering a distinct perspective on the "social, political, and cultural contexts of their lives" (Turner-Essel, 2013, p. 39). Southeast Asians have historically experienced social, political, and cultural discrimination in the United States, but have been able to organize and thrive in their communities.

Second, I assumed that these teenage youth also occupy a distinct position within the world of advocacy and activism, therefore offering another perspective on the work of the YoSEA. For years, teenage youth were discounted as agents of change within the greater world of advocacy and activism, but have consistently succeeded in creating movements within their communities.

Third, I assumed that the development of critical consciousness was an ongoing process with no certain state of finality. Additionally, I assumed that critical consciousness development was a positive goal for Southeast Asian American youth and communities of color, and it was a process which facilitates the freedom of oppressed communities from their oppressors.

Finally, I assumed that the youth participants in my study would be able to reflect and speak on the process of critical consciousness development. The youth that engaged as YA interns had each participated in YoSEA's Tuesday night youth program for some time before becoming interns. Through the youth program's curriculum, the youth were exposed to topics briefly, which were then explored more deeply in the internship. Due this initial exposure to relevant topics, discussions, and direct actions, the youth had a foundation of critical consciousness as they began the internship.

Researcher Positionality

I am a white cis-gender female pursuing a doctoral degree in urban education at a large university in the Southeastern United States. The differences in my experiences compared to those of my participants, especially concerning our race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, are significant. However, I identify as a social justice advocate and ally for this community that I became a part of. Additionally, I would be remiss not to mention the development of my own awareness to my privilege and position within American society, and how it impacted my positionality. Social justice and advocacy have played an important role throughout my life, but it was only through my graduate studies, work with YoSEA, and as an educator that I truly became aware of my privilege, the oppression of communities of color in American society, and the work that I, along with those who experience the same privileges as me, must do in order for oppressed communities to experience the same opportunities that I am afforded to due my race, socioeconomic status, and citizenship status.

Due to our differences in experiences, I did frequent checks with my participants (during the data analysis) in order to clarify their intended meanings if I was unclear. It

was my intention that my participants' experiences and possible processes of critical consciousness development were depicted accurately.

Furthermore, I was an English as a second language (ESL) teacher in a large urban school district that served a majority population of immigrant students and students of color. In my day-to-day routine, I worked with English learners (ELs) from a variety of countries, as well as mainstream classroom teachers who struggled to meet the needs of their diverse learners. Often, the students became lost or invisible within the classroom dynamics. However, when my students were pulled into the ESL classroom, they were talkative, inquisitive, and eager to learn. Furthermore, because I co-taught with classroom teachers, I worked with all learners and recognized the needs of students of all ethnicities, races, socioeconomic statuses, intellectual abilities, and genders.

I came to be interested in the topic of how a movement-based youth program developed the critical consciousness of Southeast Asian youth through my experiences mentoring and tutoring at YoSEA's youth program on Tuesday nights, referred to as Turn up Tuesday (TUT) by the staff and youth. In my time with YoSEA, I have seen the successes, learning opportunities, and growing self-awareness of many of the YoSEA youth, and I began to wonder what the impact was that YoSEA had on these youth. Further, I wanted to know what opportunities the youth were experiencing through YoSEA that they were not being offered at their schools or in their neighborhoods. Often times ELs become lost in the classroom (Daoud, 2003), but the students at YoSEA are leading community panels, organizing fundraisers and protests, and planning retreats.

Gaining Access

I became involved with the YoSEA youth program in its earliest days. In the fall of 2013, I had just completed my master's degree in Teaching English to speakers of other Languages (TESOL), and was in my first year of teaching ESL at a local elementary school when my mentor, a former professor, asked if I had time in my schedule to help tutor at YoSEA, a coalition with a budding youth program. The director of YoSEA had students, each with a variety of needs, coming to the center from surrounding neighborhoods. Some of the youth needed legal guidance, others needed mentoring, and almost all of them needed help with their homework. The program was short on resources and funding, but had a profound vision and needed tutors and mentors to help see that vision through.

The youth came on Tuesday nights for 1.5 – 2 hours, and most were picked up by the director, a local immigration lawyer mentor, and another administrator at the time, often being picked up and dropped off in waves, as the cars were unable to hold all of the youth. I was asked to come help tutor the youth, but also to bring games, textbooks, and other classroom resources that I had access to, because I was still in the classroom. A number of other volunteers came on Tuesdays to help with homework or to mentor certain youth, including other teachers, undergraduate and graduate students from the local university, and the spouses and friends of the volunteers.

At the beginning of the youth program, as I noted previously, the director had a vision, but needed help to implement certain aspects of it. Many youth came without homework, so the volunteers worked together to find activities that engaged them during their time at the youth program. Many of the volunteers, including myself, brought board

and card games, or hands-on activities that tapped into the students' cultural identities and self-awareness.

I attended the program most Tuesday nights throughout the first and second year, watching as the program changed and the number of youth grew. In that time, the first youth began to bring friends, family members, and neighbors; all while the programming changed to fit the various needs of the newest youth members. Each week, there was time dedicated to homework, projects around the center for those without homework, and then time set aside for an activity tapping into each other's culture or for self-reflection. For example, one week, my mentor and I led an activity where the students cut out pictures from magazines and created collages that represent who they were and what they wanted for their future. Another session included screening a movie produced by a Cambodian artist who had been deported back to his birth country after living most of his life in the United States. This evening was one of the first sessions that focused on the deportation of Southeast Asians in the United States.

Over the last three years, the coalition was displaced from their physical site twice, once within the same building, and then to another location completely, across the city. During this time of physical transition, the executive director began looking for funding in order to open a space of their own. It was also during this transitional time that the programming was redesigned, redeveloped, and eventually changed to reflect the needs of the youth and their community. A pivotal turning point in the programming of the youth program was prompted by the murder of a Black man by local police, and the subsequent protests around the city. At this time, the programming shifted to an advocacy and activism curriculum.

The redesigned curriculum also allowed the youth to take on more leadership roles within the program, and the directors cultivated a social justice and activism curriculum that was now implemented each week. I continued to attend Tuesday nights, albeit less frequently than in the beginning, but was still kept aware of happenings with the youth and mentors through a Facebook messenger mentor group chat.

As a mentor and tutor for 6 years, I earned the trust of the youth and the YoSEA leadership team through my "established participatory advocacy" (Gutierrez, 2015, p. 17) and long-term commitment to the youth, the programming, and the vision of YoSEA. Gutierrez (2015) called herself a "researcher-advocate" (p. 2), and this exemplified the role that I took before and during my dissertation research. By establishing myself as a tutor and mentor for the five years leading up to my research, I was able to show the leadership staff, youth, and other mentors that my core values aligned with their mission and vision for YoSEA, thus allowing me to serve as an advocate within the organization and larger community context. It was critical that I, a white person of intersecting privileges, build relationships with the leadership staff and youth of YoSEA prior to conducting any research. My desire to use YoSEA as my research site developed organically, as I did not start working with the program with the end goal of using them for research. I began my work with YoSEA as a mentor and advocate for a growing program and an underserved population with various needs, and developed into a researcher-advocate.

During my time with YoSEA, students have shared personal stories with me concerning struggles at school; youth interns have invited me to their annual ROOTS retreat each year. I was awarded a "Special Villager" award at the annual 2017

fundraiser, and the leadership team continued to keep me informed of events at the center, as well as personal events such as high school graduations. Moreover, I continued to strengthen my relationships with those at YoSEA by engaging in direct actions with the leadership staff and youth.

I was able to gain and maintain access to the youth and the YoSEA staff by attending TUT sessions for six consecutive years. I also stayed connected to former youth, mentors, and staff on social media. The main source of communication for YoSEA staff, mentors, and youth is via Facebook messenger, and over the six years of my involvement in YoSEA, youth, mentors, and staff have requested to follow me on social media. This facilitated my sustained involvement during times that I was unable to attend TUT sessions. Likewise, my mentor and Lucy each kept me aware of happenings within the organization when I could not attend TUT. I also participated as a research assistant on a project conducted at YoSEA and was able to conduct interviews with the YoSEA staff for a course project during my doctoral studies.

Due to my involvement for six years, I was invited to participate in the YA internship as a mentor, in addition to my role as a researcher-advocate. My research project was introduced to the group on the first night of the internship, and neither the internship leader nor myself, mentioned it again in the whole group setting. I often conducted my interviews on Tuesday nights or by phone, allowing our Thursday night meetings to focus solely on the curriculum and internship. In the following section, I present the research approach and design that was used for this research study.

Ethical Considerations

I followed a specific protocol in order to ensure my research was carried out ethically. First, I submitted my research proposal to the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) in July 2018, and after a number of rounds of review and feedback, I received IRB approval in September 2018. I conducted no formal research prior to IRB approval, or during the six year period of gaining access. Even though I collected many years of informal field notes and data, formal data collection began in October 2018 and continued for seven months into April 2019. During the period of gaining access, I worked as an advocate, a mentor, and a student of the program's curriculum and the issues that were directly impacting and oppressing the young activists. While I conducted my research, I took the role of researcher-advocate, and was also invited to serve as a mentorvisor for the Young Activist internship.

The nature of my research includes immigrant minors, and I am a white researcher associated with a local university. Therefore, a potential power dynamic might have arisen during my research recruitment and study. In order to mediate this, I gave each participant the parental consent and informed assent forms, but the forms were collected over the course of three weeks by the internship leader.

I was aware of and sensitive to the potential ethical or political implications for this study, due to the current rhetoric surrounding immigration, educational funding, and after school program funding being incredibly divisive. Further, I was aware of the potential risks to the participants, as reflecting on the development of critical consciousness can spark emotional reactions. In order to dissipate these potential risks, I informed the participants that they were free to refuse to answer any questions that

caused discomfort or concern during the interviews, as well as cease to participate at any time during the study.

Further, I asked each participant to choose their own pseudonym for my data analysis and discussion, allowing them to take ownership of their interpretation of the internship and experience. I used pseudonyms to allow for the privacy of my participants, along with removing any identifiers from their descriptions, and interview transcripts. I ensured anonymity of the participants, as four of the Young Activist interns are under the age of 18.

Participants

The participants recruited for this study included only the Southeast Asian youth who were selected as Young Activist interns. My research study focused on the former and current Young Activist interns at YoSEA. Thus, I had a heterogeneous sampling of participants including 8 nonrandom volunteers who were purposefully selected, as they were the YoSEA Young Activist interns from 2016 through 2019.

The current Young Activist interns are high school aged youth that attend the YoSEA youth program on Tuesday nights or other events hosted by YoSEA. YoSEA leadership staff recruited for applicants during events in July and August, as well as over social media. In order to apply for the internship, there were no criteria for the amount of time that the youth had been involved in YoSEA, only a desire and willingness to learn more about social justice and civic engagement. During their time as interns, the former and current Young Activists were in high school, identified as all genders, and were of a variety of races and ethnicities. All former and current interns were students of color. My participants, former and current Young Activist interns, are in high school, college, or

working, identify as all genders, are multilingual, are of a variety of Southeast Asian ethnicities (Hmong, Lao, Burmese, and Vietnamese), and are attending or graduated from a US high school.

For this study, I chose to focus on the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian youth who are actively resisting oppressive conditions within their community through a social justice internship and culminating project, and who aim to educate their peers. Therefore, I only recruited interns who were Southeast Asian youth, as my research study focuses on the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian youth. In the future, I plan to extend my research to include interns of all races and ethnicities.

Recruitment

To recruit all of my participants, I first contacted the YoSEA leadership team in order to identify the Southeast Asian youth who had been selected as Young Activist interns in 2016 through 2018 (cohorts 1.0 – 4.0). Following, I contacted the interns in two different ways. I first reached out to the former interns who do not attend TUT regularly via Facebook messaging, as that was the means of communication for the youth program. I am also "friends" on Facebook with all four former YA interns who participated in the study. I began by messaging all of the former youth in a group message, explaining my study, and asking for participants. This led to me being able to recruit four former YA interns.

In order to recruit the current Young Activist interns, I was first invited to sit in on three of the intern interviews, after everyone who was interested turned in an application and resume. Once the six interns were chosen, the internship leader gave me

time during the first session of the internship in order to explain my research study, and ask for participation. Parental consent forms and child assent forms were given to all six interns at the following session, and collected over the course of three weeks following. Marie, the internship leader, sent reminders each week via Facebook messaging to the interns to bring the signed forms back. This process eliminated the potential for coercion and influence on my part as the researcher. I made it clear to the interns and their parents that if they chose not to participate, there were no consequences. Of the six YA interns, four of them identified as Southeast Asian, and three of them chose to participate. Both of the current Student Organizers (who were former YA interns) identify as Southeast Asian, and one chose to participate in my study.

Once I made initial contact with the interns, I described the purpose of study to them, informed each of them of their right to decline participation at any time, provided them with the interview protocol, and asked each if they believed they were able to reflect on the process of critical consciousness development. This process was similar to the recruitment strategy used by Osajima (2007) and Turner-Essel (2013) who both examined the critical consciousness development of Asian American activists and Black women, respectively. Below, I include the demographics of the eight former and current interns who chose to participate in this research study in Table 2. I offered every participant the option to choose their pseudonym, and asked for their preferred gender pronouns. The participants' grades, times in US schools, country of birth, and ethnicity were received during their interviews, and Marie gave me the cohort that each intern participated in.

Table 2

Demographics of the participants

Pseudonym	Preferred Pronouns	Grade	Birth country	Ethnicity	Young Activist Cohort
Kim	she/her/hers	Freshman in high school	Thailand	Hmong	2018-2019
Charlotte Soyer	they/them	Junior in high school	Thailand	Hmong	2018-2019
Prince	he/him/his	Sophomore in high school	Thailand	Hmong	2018-2019
MN	she/her/hers	First year of college	Vietnam	Vietnamese	2018
Senri Wayne	they/them	Senior in high school	United States	Lao	2018
May	she/her/hers	Second year of college	United States	Lao	2016
Harley	she/her/hers	Second year of college	United States	Lao	2016
Victoria	she/her/hers or they/them	Graduated high school	Burma	Burmese	2016 & 2017

When designing the study, I was unaware of the number of interns to be chosen for the internship, as well as their races and ethnicities. The number of youth chosen for the internship relied on the number of applicants, and for this cohort six youth applied. Four of the youth were Southeast Asian, one was Latinx, and another Black. Due to the focus of my study being on the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian youth, I was only able to recruit four of the six youth, and only three agreed to participate. This led me to recruit former YA interns from Cohorts 1.0 through 4.0. This gave me a pool of 20 potential participants, with 12 being Southeast Asian. I was able to recruit five former YA interns from the eligible participants. Where I lacked in the number of participants, I was able to make up for in the depth of the study. By

approaching this dissertation as a case study of interns, I was able to deeply examine each of my participants experiences as Young Activist interns.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

I chose a qualitative research approach for this study in order to deeply explore the research setting, and to "obtain in-depth understandings about the way things are, why they were that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012, p. 12). Additionally, a qualitative approach allowed me to take part in person-to-person interactions, focus on understandings, and find patterns or relations in the data (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Further, I chose to use a case study approach in order to deeply examine the process of critical consciousness development in my participants, during their Young Activist internship. By enacting a case study approach, rooted in a critical consciousness conceptual framework, I contextualized and operationalized my participants' process of critical consciousness development. My data offered these deep understandings of critical consciousness development, through the analytical process of a discussion of critical consciousness development (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Groenewald, 2004; Kensit, 2000), phenomenological *epoche* (Husserl & Gibson, 1931; Moustakas, 1994), and "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), that could not be captured through a quantitative approach.

Through this qualitative study, I examined the shared experiences of eight Southeast Asian youth, as they engaged in an activism internship at a movement-based youth program. Therefore, it was critical to approach this study with a social justice inquiry, as well as sensitivity to the potential power dynamics between myself as the researcher, and my participants. Lincoln and Cannella (2009) put forth questions for this

work, in order to examine the analyses and challenges of critical research. These questions included “who/what is helped/privileged/legitimated? Who/what is harmed/oppressed/disqualified?” (p. 54). With these questions in mind, I approached my study and my participants with an awareness of the power dynamics and worked to mediate any issues that arose. Further, the experiences of my participants are unique from my own, both in regards to critical consciousness development and engagement in the internship. Therefore, it was critical to employ a case study research approach within a critical consciousness conceptual framework, in order to let the experiences of my participants emerge through the data.

In alignment with a critical consciousness concept, I documented and observed the participants’ moments of critical reflection and awareness. I captured their awareness before, during, and after their engagement as Young Activist interns through the observations and interviews; as the researcher, I described the experiences as related to me through their own words. Christens, Winn, and Duke (2015) explain that as one moves toward critical consciousness development, they are able to change their knowledge, perspectives, and behaviors. In this way, my participants who engaged in the Young Activist internship found themselves at one point in critical reflection at the beginning of the internship, and further along in their development and critical consciousness at the end. In Table 3, following in the analytical style of Gutierrez (2015), I present a crosswalk between the guiding research questions and the critical consciousness conceptual framework of the study. Examining the research questions through the lens of the critical consciousness framework allowed me to demonstrate how my participants moved toward a critical consciousness.

Table 3

Research Questions & critical consciousness conceptual framework crosswalk

Research Questions	How does a critical consciousness conceptual framework address the research questions guiding the study?
Overarching Research Question How does engagement as a Young Activist intern at a movement-based youth program develop the critical consciousness of the Southeast Asian youth?	The participants' interviews and my field observations demonstrate that engagement as Young Activist interns, as well as participating in YoSEA's youth program, exposed them to the oppressive conditions (critical reflection) impacting their communities, while also fostering the skills to take action against those conditions (political efficacy).
Auxiliary Question 1 How do the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns reveal their processes of critical consciousness development?	Critical consciousness development is a cyclical and ongoing process, therefore the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns revealed that as they continued to engage in the internship they moved through the stages of critical action, political efficacy, and critical action.
Auxiliary Question 2 How does engagement in the YoSEA youth program shape the Young Activist interns understanding of social justice?	Using a critical consciousness lens to examine the interns' understanding of social justice, I found that each participant had little to no school curriculum addressing social justice issues, nor furthered their development of critical consciousness. Rather, they found this understanding at home or by participating in YoSEA's youth program (critical reflection).

Case Study Research Approach

I used a case study research approach as case studies describe "investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). I chose a case study design in order to research the shared experience, critical consciousness development, of a specific community, former and current Young Activist interns at

YoSEA. Case study research aims to answer the "how" and "why" of an experience shared by the participants, rather than to explain it. Additionally, case study research is commonly used to study a process, such as describing the process and how it had a particular effect on the participants (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Case studies are also defined by bounded systems, whether that be the number of participants that can be recruited or a finite amount of time for the study. In this case, only there is a limit on both the number of potential participants (selected Young Activist interns) and on time (the six month internship).

Further, case studies do not lend themselves to making generalizations, therefore interpretation is key, and the "aim is to thoroughly understand" (Stake, 1995, p. 9) the case. Multiple-case study designs have a distinct advantage over single-case studies. The data collected from multiple cases presents a more convincing qualitative study due to the amount of evidence from the cases (Yin, 1994). However, despite case study research approaches being used extensively in education and social science research, there continues to be a lack of resources available for case study researchers (Merriam, 1998).

Case Study Research Model

For this research study, the cases to be investigated were the interns who participated in the Young Activist internship. The process examined specifically is the critical consciousness development of Southeast Asian youth who engaged as Young Activist interns within a movement-based youth program. Critical consciousness development refers to "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970/2016, p. 35). During the internship at YoSEA, Southeast Asian youth are engaged in social justice

projects in which they are made aware of or further explored the "social, political, and economic contradictions" (Freire, 1970/2016, p. 35) that are impacting their community. Further, the interns also take action against some of those oppressive elements through the attendance of conferences, protests, door canvassing, and city council meetings.

The critical consciousness development of oppressive elements is considered a process for two reasons. First, it is a shared experience that each intern is experiencing due to the programming of the movement-based youth program in which they attended. Further, as I discussed in the review of literature, Asian American students are often positioned as the model minority, seen as a homogenous group of learners who are high achievers, and diligent students (Lee, 1996, Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). However, like the model minority stereotype, aggregating data on all Asian American students fails to account for the diversity of these youth, and the oppressive forces affecting the Southeast Asian immigrant community locally and across the United States. The process of critical consciousness development impacts Southeast Asian youth who are being affected, directly or indirectly, by oppressive elements.

Moreover, a case study design is used to gain a deeper understanding of a specific situation and those involved. Further, the researcher is interested in the process rather than the outcomes (Merriam, 1998). During the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to reflect on the value of the internship to them as immigrant youth. In this way, the participants were able to richly describe how they understand the value of the experience of the internship, and then also the experience of critical consciousness development. Following the interviews, field observations, and archived data collection, I crafted a short vignette of each participant using the method of thick description of the

phenomenon under study. This process is incorporated into descriptive case studies and is a term that means complete and literal description of the case being studied (Merriam, 1998). After the thick description of the data into vignettes, I established patterns between the cases, looking for relationships between the instances (Creswell, 2013).

I presented the methodology and subsequent rationale for using case study as the guiding method for this research study. Following, I described in detail the components of the study including participant selection, data collection, analysis, trustworthiness and reflexivity, potential limitations to the study, and ethical considerations.

Rationale for Choice of Methods

Creswell (2013) noted that new methods of qualitative data collection continually emerge through the literature, yet it can be organized into four broad types: observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials. Each of these data types are further organized into more specific data types, and Creswell's list is continually evolving. For this research study, three methods of data collection were imperative to fully capturing my participants' critical consciousness development. Due to the potential for a "hierarchical and asymmetrical relationship" (Glesne, 2011, p. 106; Rapley, 2007) between the researcher and the interviewees, I chose to participate in the Young Activist internship as a mentorvisor, allowing me to collaborate with my participants, and take part in the dialogues driving the internships. This process allowed me to mitigate the potential for an asymmetrical relationship between my participants and I. Following is my rationale in utilizing interviews, observations, and artifact analysis as my choice of data collection methods.

Semi-structured interviews were the basis of data collection in this research study, due to the interpretivist nature of the case study research approach (Yin, 1994; Glesne, 2011). This research study, which relied on descriptions of the participants' lived and shared experiences, called for interviews in order to capture the participants' words and multiple perspectives. Further, the use of interviews allowed for the researcher to develop a sense of "how processes of understanding develop" (Flick, 2002, p. 12).

Observations were the secondary set of data collection methods used for this study. By employing a second set of collection methods, concerns of validity are replaced with member checking and bracketing (Cho & Trent, 2006). According to Creswell (2013), observations are a critical tool in qualitative research. It allows the researcher to observe the very same experiences of the participants, while simultaneously recording them for later analysis (Angrosino, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011). Creswell (2013) offers four types of observations for qualitative research: complete participant, participant as observer, nonparticipant/observer as participant, and complete observer. Due to my intersecting privileges (discussed above) and the potential for a hierarchical and asymmetrical relationship, I chose to observe as a complete participant. In this way, I established a greater rapport with my participants (Angrosino, 2007; Creswell, 2013).

Artifact analysis was my final step in triangulation of data in this research study. Each of the Young Activist interns is asked to choose a topic of interest, spend time during the internship and with their mentorvisors researching the topic, and then presented their findings to the YoSEA youth program.

Research Site

The Youth Organization for Southeast Asians is a non-profit organization in a large, urban city in the Southeast that grew from the need for support for the region's growing Southeast Asian immigrant population. The mission of YoSEA grew, developed, and changed over their last eight years, but at its core, YoSEA is devoted to community education, youth leadership, and civic engagement services (Southeast Asian Coalition, n.d.). YoSEA is a community that is open to all races, ethnicities, genders, and socioeconomic statuses. The only parameter to engaging in the program is a shared mentality for the mission and vision of YoSEA. The youth program focuses on educating the youth on topics and issues that directly or indirectly impact their lives as youth of color in the community.

Lucy, the executive director, was recruited to this city from California for a grant-funded director position in 2011. In the earliest years of YoSEA, Lucy was the only staff member, organizing and coordinating citizenship fairs, helping local immigrant families with the naturalization process, legal services, and translation services. They began to grow their network, and acquire more funding, eventually being able to hire another staff member, Tina. In 2011, Lucy and Tina realized that the children of the families they were helping needed a place to get help with their homework. Additionally, a group of boys at a local middle school were in need of legal assistance, and James, a local immigration lawyer began mentoring this group of youth. Lucy, James, and Tina began to pool their time and resources, and started a youth program that met on Tuesday nights. With help from one of the board members, they were able to recruit volunteers and mentors from

the university Asian student associations, as well as teachers from the local school districts.

Each week, on Tuesday nights, youth and mentors from neighborhoods all around the county came to YoSEA's offices for homework help from 5:00 – 7:00 pm. Space was tight due the fact that YoSEA shared office space with the Coalition for Latin Americans, but the youth were able to receive help from volunteers with their homework and school projects. Often, youth did not bring homework to do, therefore, the volunteers who were teachers brought games and supplies from their classrooms for the youth to create art projects. The youth also played soccer outside or helped Lucy and Tina with tasks around the office.

As the Tuesday night program continued, Lucy realized the youth wanted and needed more from this time. They began to structure the night as one hour of homework (or more if the youth needed help still), and one hour of a lesson or activity on topics such as learning about each other's cultures, movie screenings followed by a discussion, or a project like creating a collage of their future aspirations. Lucy, Tina, or one of the mentors led the lessons. Further, the youth program began to transition from one night of homework help and mentoring during the week, to cultural education presentations, help with college applications, leadership opportunities through the planning of an annual retreat, youth presentations at school board meetings, and various internships within the coalition.

At this time, the organization applied to obtain additional funding through several different grants and sources, which allowed them to hire more support staff to help with all aspects of YoSEA, including the Tuesday night youth program. As the organization

grew, so did their funding. Because they were able to hire more staff, the staff began to transition the youth program from an evening of homework help and an educational lesson to movement-based programming. Lucy's vision of the youth program was always movement-based, focusing on social justice issues impacting the immigrant community, and now they were able to begin to execute the vision, due to a change in funding and an increase in staff members. The lessons began to center around social, racial, and gender justice issues impacting the immigrant community in this city and the greater Southeastern United States. Lucy and the leadership staff led lessons on deportation, police brutality, and LGBTQ+ rights. They began to involve the youth in peaceful sit-ins, as well as protests around the city and state, more recently.

The youth program is open to all middle school, high school, and early college-aged youth in the community. At first, recruitment efforts included Lucy attending middle school graduations, church functions, citizenship fairs, and Southeast Asian cultural celebrations, talking to the youth and passing out business cards. They were growing the program, one youth at a time. As the program grew, and Lucy was able to hire staff, they created a school liaison position. The former YoSEA school liaisons traveled to middle and high schools in the area that served high populations of Southeast Asian youth in order to recruit more youth to the program, and to build partnerships with the schools that serve this population of youth. Throughout the years, the program has grown due to youth recruiting friends and family members to join them, along with mentors, tutors, and leadership staff bringing youth, friends, and family.

Moreover, as a movement-based program, the needs of the community are often met quickly, with action. For example, a Latinx member of the community was facing

deportation for driving without a license, and rather than working on homework and the lesson that night, the youth made signs and posters to hold during a press conference being held during the Tuesday night youth program that same evening. More recently, YoSEA staff were made aware of buses stopping at the Greyhound station in downtown that were transporting immigrant families who had been detained at the border. YoSEA, in collaboration with two other local non-profit organizations, began collecting money and donations for the families, and set up tables in the bus station so the families could take clean clothing, toiletries, food, and money. In lieu of youth programming or a Young Activist session that week, YoSEA staff, mentors, and youth carpooled to the Greyhound station and passed out donations, spoke with the families, and assisted them as they transferred buses.

As the programming transitioned, so did the structure of the youth program. Tuesday night sessions became known as Turn Up Tuesday and each Tuesday night, various staff and mentors picked up youth from surrounding communities to bring them to the YoSEA center at 5:00 pm. For the first hour and 15 minutes, the youth and mentors work on homework, play card games or billiards, spend time creating art with resources provided by YoSEA, or just “chillax”. Next, everyone helps to clean up the space, and circles up to participate in a youth-led round of introductions. Each person introduces themselves by name, preferred gender pronouns, and answers a question posed by the youth leader. Following the introductions, everyone takes a seat and the youth leader asks for youth or mentor news, announces upcoming events that YoSEA is hosting or attending, and then introduces the topic of discussion for the rest of the evening. The introductions and announcements are scheduled for no more than 30 minutes, allowing at

least one hour for the discussion of the topic of the night. Topics in the past have included deportations, police brutality, educational inequities in our city, and gender equality. They also bring in Southeast Asian organizations, authors, and filmmakers to speak about the work they are doing in the community.

YoSEA Leadership Staff

As YoSEA grew, and the vision and mission of the organization transitioned, so did the need for more leadership staff members. The change in the funding model also allowed for Lucy to hire more staff, and most recently, be able to offer benefits for the full-time staff members. Over the last eight years, the following positions have been added to YoSEA, in addition to Lucy's position as executive director: Turn Up Tuesday Coordinator, State Wide Base Builder, Human Resources, Immigration Coordinator, Youth Organizer, Community Engagement and Power Building Consultant, Door Canvassers, and Youth Shuttle Driver. Additionally, short-term fellowships have been added, including: three Movement Family Fellowships (Court Support, Direct Action, Rapid Response) and four Village Fellowships (Youth Fellow, Anti-Deportation Fellow, Community Engagement and Power Building Fellow). Table 4 describes the roles of the YoSEA leadership staff.

Table 4

Roles of the YoSEA Leadership Staff

YoSEA Job Title	Description of duties
Executive Director	• Oversees the administration, programming, and strategic planning of the organization • Fundraising • Marketing • Recruitment • Community outreach

Turn Up Tuesday Coordinator	• Oversees the programming for weekly TUT sessions • Plans lessons and organizes activities • Coordinates rides for the youth and mentors • Monitors youth and mentor chat groups • Coordinates speakers for TUT sessions
State Wide Base Builder	• Oversees the programming concerned with civic engagement • Plans and coordinates citizenship fairs and door canvassing events • Coordinates with other grassroots organizations that serve the Southeast Asian population
Human Resources	• Oversees the recruitment, screening, and interviewing of employees • Handles payroll, benefits, and training
Immigration Coordinator	• Oversees any processing of citizenship paperwork • Coordinates legal guidance related to immigration • Oversees and coordinates local and regional citizenship fairs
Youth Organizer	• Works with the Turn Up Tuesday Coordinator to plan lessons for the YA internship • Plans lessons and organizes activities • Coordinates speakers for YA meetings • Oversees the application process, interviews, and selection of YA interns

Community Engagement and Power Building Consultant	• Oversees the programming concerned with civic engagement • Plans and coordinates citizenship fairs and door canvassing events • Coordinates events with other local grassroots organizations • Acts as a liaison between YoSEA and the greater community
Door Canvassers	• Work with the State Wide Base Builder and the Community Engagement & Power Building Consultant • Help to register voters and implement petitioning campaigns
Youth Shuttle Driver	• Picks up and drops youth off for TUT sessions and direct actions

Young Activist Internship

In 2016, the YoSEA leadership team wanted to address financial literacy with the youth, but during the planning for that session they realized that the youth did not have money. Therefore, a session on financial literacy, with no tangible money, would not be beneficial to the youth. The leadership team decided to organize internships for the youth, in order for them to earn money, and as a way to address financial literacy. The youth have to apply for the internships, including a resume and sitting for an interview with a YoSEA staff member, mimicking the process of applying for a real job or internship outside of YoSEA. This began the two social justice internships, now known as the Young Activist internship and the Student Organizer internship - an extension of the YA internship. Both internships also offer a small stipend, paid to the interns monthly, after they fill out a timesheet provided by YoSEA.

The Young Activist internship handbook offers the goals of the internship, as well as expected outcomes at the conclusion of the internship. The handbook also provides an outline of the sessions that Marie planned for the YA interns. However, the programming of both the YA internship, as well as the TUT youth program are fluid, as the organization's ultimate goal is to meet the needs of the community. Therefore, when a situation or need arises, the leadership staff at YoSEA adjust their plans accordingly. The goals and outcomes of the internship are highlighted in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Goals and Expected Outcomes of the YA Internship

Goals	Expected Outcomes
1. To provide in-depth social justice education and mentoring to a targeted group of youth 2. To give youth the opportunity to research and become experts in a social justice topic they are passionate about 3. To provide youth with financial literacy education, ranging from employment to banking 4. to increase civic engagement through Young Activist involvement 5. To deepen relationships with new youth, existing youth, and YA coordinator(s)	1. Deepen youth's social consciousness and political awareness 2. Youth gain experience in doing research projects and direct action 3. Youth increase understanding of civic engagement 4. Youth develop healthy habits around money 5. Youth learn how to apply for internship/employment opportunities, and learn how to "work" in a professional setting 6. Youth gain self-empowerment and self-determination by making decisions on their own projects 7. YoSEA leadership develop deepened relationships with youth 8. Youth build deeper relationships with each other

The Young Activist internship is a six month commitment for the youth interns, and a time for them to identify a social justice issue to research and create a culminating project around. Every Thursday, from 5:00 – 8:00 pm, the interns met at YoSEA with

their mentors, Marie, the internship leader, and myself. The cohort examined for this study was the second round of interns that Marie supervised. Previously, Maggie supervised the interns, but she left YoSEA officially in early 2017. The mentors also had to apply for their position, and each mentor "mentorvised[5]" two interns during this session. For the October 2018 – March 2019 internship, six youth were chosen and three mentors supervised them.

During the six month internship, the youth and mentors met as a whole group every Tuesday and Thursday, along with monthly field trips, or direct actions, that Marie planned with other YoSEA leadership staff. During the Thursday night sessions, Marie, other YoSEA leadership staff members, or one of the Student Organizer interns led a lesson on a topic that had been planned out, and then the interns and mentors were given time to discuss the topic or work on their individual research projects. This research study focused on participants who applied and were accepted as Young Activist interns from Spring 2016 through Fall 2018. It documented the process of critical consciousness development of social and political issues affecting their communities.

Data Collection

I employed three data collection methods to ensure a rich data set: observations with field notes, semi-structured interviews, and artifact collection. Over the course of this research project, I spent 10 hours interviewing the participants, 80 hours of formal observations, and 1.5 hours viewing final research project presentations. Additionally, I analyzed 150 pages of field notes.

[5] During the internship, the mentorvisors acted as mentors and supervisors for two interns each. These duties included leading small group discussions with their interns, helping to guide the interns in their research project, and answering any questions they had during the internship.

Marie began planning for the fall internship in September 2018. I attended the Tuesday night program, along with two of her planning sessions prior to the Thursday night sessions. During this time, I acted as a participant observer. The interns were chosen at the end of September and began their internships in October 2018. I was able to sit in on three of the interviews that the YoSEA staff held prior to selecting the interns. Then, I attended the youth program two nights a week, from October through April in order to observe the interns and collect field notes. On Tuesday nights, the students had time to do homework, relax, and then engage in advocacy or social justice-based programming planned by a YoSEA leadership staff member or a youth. Thursday evenings were planned as time for the Young Activist interns to gather and work on their projects with their mentors. During 10 of the Young Activist sessions, a YoSEA leadership staff member or Student Organizer intern also lead a presentation on a topic that was relevant to the curriculum and programming. The internship ended after six months, and five of the six the interns presented their culminating projects to their peers and community at a Turn Up Tuesday session. Table 6 outlines the data collection methods and details.

Table 6

Data Collection Methods and Details

Method	Details	People and Context	Amount/Time
Recorded Individual Interviews	One-on-one interviews with eight participants. I used open-ended questions and two interview protocols (see Appendices A and C).	I interviewed Charlotte Soyer, Kim, and Prince at the YoSEA offices. They were the three current YA interns. I interviewed Senri	Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. (Approximately 3 hours total) This interview

		Wayne at the YoSEA offices because they were a SO intern. I conducted phone interviews with Harley and May, both former YA and SO interns who attend college in another city. I met MN, a former YA intern, on her university campus for the interview. I picked up Victoria, a former YA and SO intern, from her home and we went to lunch, and conducted the interview while we ate.	lasted approximately 1.5 hours. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour. (Approximately 2 hours total) This interview lasted approximately 1.5 hours. This interview lasted approximately 1.5 hours.
Reflective Interviews	One-on-one interview with one current YO intern. We discussed their time as a YA intern, and their plan for the SO internship.	I met with Charlotte Soyer at the YoSEA offices.	This interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Field Observations	I attended all TUT and YA meetings from October 2018 - March 2019, excluding one YA meeting in January.	I participated as a mentor and researcher-advocate, taking quick notes throughout the evenings, and recorded my observations and reflections on my way home. I then transcribed my recordings, in order to analyze them.	Each TUT session lasted 3 hours, and YA sessions were 2 hours, weekly. The internship met 16 times. (Approximately 80 hours total)
Culminating Projects	I attended the culminating project presentations for four YA interns.	Senri Wayne and MN presented their projects in August 2018, at the end of Cohort 4.0. Prince and Kim presented their projects in March 2019, at the end of Cohort 5.0.	Each presentation lasted approximately 20 minutes. (Approximately 1.5 hours total)

Interview Protocols

I conducted at least one semi-structured interview that lasted 45-60 minutes with each of the Young Activist interns who consented to participation and met two criteria: they identify as a Southeast Asian or Southeast Asian American youth and were chosen to be a Young Activist intern. I developed three protocols (see appendices A, B, and C) to use as a framework for my interviews but my questions were open-ended and adaptable. My proposed plan for interviewing included three interviews (pre-internship, mid-internship, and post-internship), however due to a number of limitations, including last minute schedule changes, difficulty in obtaining consent forms at the beginning of the internship, youth attendance, and a lack of quiet, private space for conducting the interviews, I was unable to interview the current YA interns three times.

The initial interviews were conducted in person in October at YoSEA. The final round of interviews was conducted following the culmination of the internship, and presentations of the projects in March. I conducted two initial interviews, with Kim and Charlotte Soyer. At the culmination of the internship, I conducted a final interview with Charlotte Soyer and an interview with Prince.

Additionally, because I had only three youth consent to participate from the current cohort of interns (Charlotte Soyer, Prince, Kim), I recruited three former youth who participated in past cohorts as YA interns (MN, May, Harley) and, two who continued on as Student Organizer interns (Senri Wayne, Victoria). I conducted MN, Senri Wayne, and Victoria's interviews in person, as they all live in the city. Harley and May's interviews were conducted over the phone, because they both attend a university in another city. Because the MN, May, Harley, Senri Wayne, and Victoria already completed the internship and final project, I conducted only one interview with each of them, using a third interview protocol (see Appendix C).

First Interview Protocol

Before beginning any of the interviews, I ensured that the youth (and a parent/guardian if under the age of 18) had signed consent forms that were approved by the IRB committee at the University of the Southeast. Once I had secured consent forms from each of my participants, I scheduled a time to interview them, outside of the YA meeting on Thursdays. I secured a time to interview Kim and Charlotte Soyer, and proceeded with the first interview protocol. I used this interview protocol with them because I was able to interview at the beginning of the internship to get a foundational understanding of their position in the critical consciousness development. I began by

explaining to them that I would use pseudonyms to ensure their privacy and indicated that they were free to pass on any questions that made them uncomfortable. The interview questions focused on the participants' awareness of issues affecting their lives in school and their community, along with questions about how the social justice internship impacted their critical consciousness development (see Appendix A). More specifically, I began with questions about their home country and their family, in order to begin to build context for their case studies. Next, I asked them about their experiences in American schools, with their teachers, and the differences between what they learn in school and at YoSEA. Moving on, I then asked about their time and experiences at YoSEA's TUT, along with what issues they see in the community. I also asked when they first became aware of these issues. This question was critical to the research study, as it allowed me to pinpoint when their critical reflection process began. Next, I asked them about the YA internship, definitions of social justice and civic engagement, and if they consider themselves to be activists.

Second Interview Protocol

I used a follow up interview protocol with Charlotte Soyer (see Appendix B), as they were the only current intern that I was able to schedule for a pre- and post-internship interview. In this second interview protocol, I asked Charlotte Soyer again what issues they saw in their community, and then followed up with the guiding questions from Watts, Griffith, and Abdul-Adil (1999) that they used to measure critical consciousness development:

- What did you *see*? perception based on the stimulus;
- What does it *mean*? interpretation and meaning;

- Why do you *think* that? defense of interpretations;
- How do you *feel* about it? emotional and intuitive responses to the stimulus; and
- What can you *do* about it? action strategies - what constructive actions could be taken to improve the situation (p. 264).

I then asked Charlotte Soyer about their final research project, and their rationale behind choosing that topic. It was at this time I learned they did not intend to present a project, rather, they would apply to be a Student Organizer intern and develop an outreach project on 287(g) to present in their community.

Third Interview Protocol

I used the third interview protocol (see Appendix C) with the five former YA interns, as well as with Prince, because this protocol combined the questions from the first and second protocols, which allowed me to explore the participants' backgrounds, schooling experiences, time at YoSEA, and their time during and after the YA internship.

Culminating Project Analysis

I analyzed two of the culminating social justice projects from the current cohort (Kim and Prince's). This process was critical, as I was unable to conduct a post-interview with Kim, and an initial interview with Prince. Both interns presented PowerPoint slides to a whole group at one TUT session. Charlotte Soyer did not complete a final research project, with special permission from Lucy and Marie. They intended to extend their research of 287(g) and plan community outreach in a community north of the city. I also analyzed MN and Senri Wayne's culminating projects from the Cohort 4.0 presentations, because I attended the TUT session where they presented. In the past, the format of the final projects has varied, depending upon the students, but included videos, PowerPoint

presentations, and tri-fold poster boards. During my interviews with each of the former YA interns, I asked about their research topics, and final presentations. Harley noted that instead of presenting a final project on police brutality, she planned a protest in a park downtown with two other YA interns, to bring awareness to the murders of two Black men at the hands of the metropolitan police officers. I did not have access to Victoria or May's final projects to analyze, because they created posters and those were no longer available to view.

Transcription Process

Following each of the recorded interviews, I manually transcribed each interview, after listening to the recording several times. The transcription process occurred over the entire course of the six month internship, as I transcribed each interview immediately following. I employed the use of the *ExpressScribe* transcription software for this process. Further, immediately following each TUT or YA session, I recorded my observations and reflections from each of the sessions. I also transcribed these recordings over the course of the internship and used *ExpressScribe* transcription software. I used the transcribed interviews, field notes taken during the sessions, my transcribed observations, and the notes from the final project presentations to compile the eight case studies presented in chapter four and then analyzed for themes in chapter five.

Data Analysis

Following the interviews, participant observations, and collection of final project presentations, I analyzed the data. In this study, data analysis included a thick description of the phenomenon being examined. First, I wrote a textural description of the participants, external experiences, and reflections of each participant based on interview

data, observations, and field notes, in what Stake (1995) describes as vignettes. These were presented in chapter four as individual case studies of participants. The task required that I "look and describe; look again and describe; look again and describe; always with references to textural qualities...descriptions that present varying intensities...where everything and anything was available as given in experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90). This reflective process offered clarity to the consciousness and added perspective to the process. This reflective process became more precise allowing for patterns to emerge from the data. Following the reduction of the data into patterns, the next step in the case study research model was to identify patterns across the vignettes, therefore providing a synthesis of the process of critical consciousness development. The patterns that emerged between and across the vignettes led me to the development of themes in the data. This synthesis allowed me to provide a summary of the study and subsequent findings.

ATLAS.ti was used for data analysis, which was conducted through a process of thematic analysis, as all of the data was collected prior to the analysis (Ezzy, 2002). First, the criteria presented in Table 7 were used to operationalize the process of critical consciousness development. Next, a systematic approach to the analysis process was used, looking for narrow units of analysis, such as significant statements from the interviews and projects. Next, broader units of analysis, such as meaning units, were used to connect themes between participants. Finally, detailed descriptions of *what* the participants had experienced and *how* they experienced it during their time as Young Activist interns was written (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In order to ensure trustworthiness of the data, each of the participants was invited to read and edit the

textural and structural descriptions written by the researcher, before the findings were interpreted for analysis and discussion.

Table 7

Criteria to Measure Critical Consciousness Development

1. What did you *see*? perception based on the stimulus;
2. What does it *mean*? interpretation and meaning;
3. Why do you *think* that? defense of interpretations;
4. How do you *feel* about it? emotional and intuitive responses to the stimulus; and
5. What can you *do* about it? action strategies - what constructive actions could be taken to improve the situation.

Theme Development

The eight vignettes in this case study research inquiry were compiled from the individual interviews, informal and formal field observations, and culminating project analysis, and analyzed within a *critical consciousness* conceptual framework. This methodological and analytical approach focused on the participants' shared experiences as they began to question and disrupt oppressive systems in their communities. By utilizing a critical consciousness analytical lens, the participant's case studies reveal how their engagement as Young Activist interns, as well as their time participating in YoSEA's youth program prior to their internship, exposed them to issues impacting their community, the history and context of the systems they live in, and the skills needed to enact change on these issues. Following the analytical process of Gutierrez (2015), I used a theme development and analysis matrix (Table 8) to guide the data analysis. This research inquiry challenged the idea of traditional youth programs that serve immigrant youth, as it showcased the shared experiences of the youth as they move through the process of critical consciousness through engagement as a Young Activist intern.

Table 8

Theme Development and Analysis Matrix

What do I want to know from the participants' experiences?	What concept am I addressing?	How will I analyze the data?	What tools will I use?
How much awareness do the participants have entering the youth program?	1 - Critical consciousness	I read and reread the participant interviews and field notes.	Transcription of participant interviews.
How much awareness do the participants have entering the YA internship?	1 - Critical consciousness	I read and reread the participant interviews and field notes.	Transcription of participant interviews.
How do the participants' shared experiences as interns develop their critical consciousness?	1 - Case studies 2 - Critical consciousness development [critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action (Christens, Winn & Duke, 2016)	I first coded the interviews, field notes, and case studies for themes to emerge. I then compressed the emergent themes into larger overarching themes.	Transcription of participant interviews, field notes and observations, coding of case studies.

The four overarching themes of *exposure to critical issues, knowledge building through sustained involvement, intergroup collaboration,* and *social justice actions* merged from the participants' compiled case studies (including transcribed interviews, field observations, and culminating project analysis). The theme development process was three-fold. First, following the transcription of each of the interviews, I actively read, and reread the interviews, coding for words and phrases that attended to my research questions. I then took those codes and created a table, highlighting the words and phrases of each participant, and combined them into suggested themes. Next, I actively read my

transcribed observations, and noted codes that also attended to the research questions. Third, I watched the video recordings of the culminating projects, and noted recurring words and phrases that applied to the research questions. Finally, I compiled all of my interview data, informal and formal field observations, and culminating project analyses and composed the eight participant case studies.

The second step in the theme development process involved reading and rereading the composed vignettes, and employing the use of pattern coding, as pattern codes were inferential and identified emergent themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I looked for repeating and recurring words and phrases, as well as shared experiences and began to develop the overarching themes. It was at this level that 14 sub-themes emerged, including schooling experiences, awareness of issues impacting the community, belonging at YoSEA, experiences of racism or stereotyping, experience as a YA intern, a definition of social justice, and skills needed to become an activist.

The third and final step in the data analysis was most time consuming as I struggled to narrow and identify the overarching themes that occurred within a critical consciousness conceptual framework and also answered my research questions. I initially narrowed down the data from the interviews, field observations, and the culmination projects into 14 themes, and then dove back into the participant case studies, for another round of themes, hoping to further narrow them down. Using my research questions, and a critical consciousness conceptual framework, I was able to derive the four overarching themes from the initial 14:

1. Exposure to critical issues
2. Knowledge building through sustained involvement

3. Intergroup collaboration

4. Social justice actions

After I developed the four overarching themes, I assigned words and phrases from the interviews and field observations to the corresponding themes. This process ensured that the themes did in fact answer my research questions, and adequately described my participants' shared experiences as Young Activist interns. Inherent in the emergent themes was the role of YoSEA and how it responded to the needs of the youth.

Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

The data collection and analysis procedures ensured research trustworthiness, reflexivity, and representation. Due to the paradigms within which this study is anchored, the research may be difficult to replicate. Thus, trustworthiness is established through the research and analysis process. Trustworthiness is the extent to which my findings were an "authentic reflection" (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, p. 3) of the experiences shared by the participants. This is established with a prolonged engagement in the data, triangulation, peer debriefing, reflection of researcher bias, member checking, "thick" descriptions of the interviews, and ongoing discussions with my chair (Glesne, 2011).

Reflexivity in qualitative research examined the role of the researcher in relation to the knowledge constructed by the research. Further, reflexivity is self-awareness of the researcher within a situation, and of the role of the researcher in "constructing that situation" (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Glesne, 2011, p. 150). In order to maintain reflexivity throughout the research process, regular reflection occurred on how researcher interests, assumptions, and biases shaped the research.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study that were mediated over the course of the data collection and analysis. The first limitation to occur in the study concerns a potential language barrier between the participants and myself. All eight of my participants are multilingual, with English being their second or third language. During the interviews, I asked the participants what languages are spoken at home with family and with friends. All of the participants speak English with their friends and at YoSEA, while two participants, MN and Victoria, do not speak English at home. In order to mediate a potential language barrier during the interviews, I consistently checked for understanding when asking my participants the interview questions, and repeated back their answers to questions that concerned the internship, as well as pertinent background information. Further, the nature of data collection relied on openness and self-reflection on the part of the participants. This presented complexities in the participants reporting of thoughts, and feelings.

Another potential limitation in this study is the age and maturity of the participants, and how that impacts their ability to be able to fully reflect on their experiences during the internship. All of my participants are aged 15 to 19 and have been involved with YoSEA prior to participating in the internship. A growing body of research points to the ability of adolescents to engage in critical reflection. Through sustained field observations and archival analysis, in addition to the semi-structured interviews, I mediated the potential for my participants' age to interfere in their critical reflection process. Carefully worded and selected interview questions allowed my participants to be able to reflect on the impact that the internship has had on their critical consciousness, as

well as my understanding that YoSEA was guiding the youth through critical reflection and political efficacy, toward critical action in their lessons and direct actions. Finally, before each interview, I talked briefly with the participant about my study, how I wanted to examine their awareness of the issues in their community and what role YoSEA had in building that awareness.

The most prevalent limitations to the study were the inconsistency in the internship schedule and finding a private space in order to conduct the interviews. First, because YoSEA is a movement-based organization, when a need in the community is expressed, the organization addresses it immediately. Due to this, at least two sessions of the YA internship that were scheduled for lessons or presentations instead became direct actions, held at locations other than the YoSEA headquarters. The last minute direct actions delayed my interview schedule, but I was able to sit with my participants on TUT instead. I also found that it was more appropriate to interview the youth on Tuesday sessions, as there was more free time, compared to their YA sessions on Thursdays. However, each week on Tuesday nights, there are often between 20 to 30 people, including YoSEA staff, youth, mentors, and community members coming to participate in TUT, receive services, or meet with YoSEA staff. The YoSEA headquarters is divided into three areas - the main meeting room, the homework room that also doubles as office space for the paid YoSEA interns and fellows, and a small office for the Executive Director (ED). All areas are open and available for use, with the exception of the ED's office. Due to the open floor plan and busy sessions, it was difficult to find a quiet, private space in order to interview my participants. In order to mediate this, so as not to impact the outcome of the study, I was given permission to use the ED's office to

conduct interviews when it was available. Further, YoSEA's headquarters is located in a large indoor strip mall, so I was also able to find a quiet, private corner to use for interviews when the office was unavailable.

A limitation of this study concerned the delay in the final project presentations, as well as one participant not completing a final project. Beginning in January 2019, YA sessions were designed as research nights for the interns, as well as time to meet with their mentorvisors to discuss topics of interest. The original schedule for the internship had the YAs presenting their projects in mid to late February, however they were rescheduled for the first and second weeks of March, because the YAs were not ready to present in February. This delayed the scheduled end of the study, however, it allowed me three additional weeks to collect data through field observations. Moreover, Charlotte Soyer did not complete nor present a final project, with special permission from Lucy and Marie. They were permitted to continue researching on the 287(g) policy, with the intention to extend their learning into an outreach effort in a community north of the city.

Another significant limitation of this study was the youth attendance and how it impacted my field observations, interview schedule, and interview process. One condition for participating in the internship was that youth had to find their own transportation. This differs from TUT, where there were drivers and cars available through YoSEA to pick up and drop off youth. My proposed plan for this study included three rounds of interviews with each participant. However, the three YAs who agreed to participate in the study had inconsistent attendance, therefore making it difficult to interview each at the beginning, middle, and end of the internship. In order to mediate this limitation and its impact on the study, I attended every YA and TUT session (with

the exception of one YA meeting in January), collected extensive field notes, and analyzed Senri Wayne, MN, Prince and Kim's final projects. Moreover, Charlotte Soyer did not present a final project because they planned to carry their topic of interest into an outreach project during their Student Organizer internship. In lieu of analyzing their final project, I chose to conduct a post-YA interview.

Another limitation is due to the participants selected for the study. I chose to only recruit Southeast Asian youth for this dissertation, as the literature on their critical consciousness development is thin, and the current anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies are directly impacting their communities. However, this limited my ability to deeply examine the extent of peer influence and relational roles of the youth. Senri Wayne had a profound influence on the current cohort of interns, yet two ineligible participants played a similar role in the process of my participants' critical consciousness development. Because I was unable to include all Young Activist interns in this study, I chose to focus on the relational role between Senri Wayne, Charlotte Soyer, Kim, and Prince. While there is much more to be analyzed concerning this limitation, their interactions and peer influences still led to a rich data set for analysis and discussion.

Further, a limitation of this study concerns the potential power imbalance between the participants, youth of color, and me, a white adult researcher from a university. Due to my intersecting privileges, as well as my position in society as a white researcher from a university, the five year period of gaining access was critical in order to mediate this potential imbalance. However, even as I spent time at YoSEA creating relationships and participating in lessons, activities, and direct actions, my race and position as a researcher still may have caused barriers between the participants and myself during the interview

process, as well as my observations during internship sessions. Moreover, my positionality as a white researcher may have impacted the participants' responses to me during the interviews and when I attended the YA internship meetings. I believe that my sustained involvement in the organization and proven identity as an ally and an advocate could have mediated this limitation, however there are updates to the methodology that can further mediate this. For example, I could have organized a focus group of the YA interns, led by a YoSEA staff member, rather than conducting interviews myself. This could have removed a barrier to full participation from my participants.

A final limitation of this study was that the findings might suggest that the shared experiences of the participants developed or cultivated their critical consciousness, yet the small sample size, limited interview data, follow through, and design of the study did not guarantee that certain processes or experiences determine critical consciousness development.

Summary

Chapter three described the methodology used to conduct this dissertation research project. First, I presented the assumptions I operated under while conducting this research project, including those influenced by my time as an educator, the age and maturity of my participants, and the process of critical consciousness development. Second, I provided my researcher positionality, along with the period of gaining access to the research site and participants. Next, I included information about my participants, followed by my rationale was using a qualitative case study research approach. I also presented information on the research site, in order to provide context for this study.

Finally, I provided an in-depth overview of my data collection methods and details. I ended this chapter with the limitations of this study.

Chapter 4: Youth Profiles

An introduction to each of the youth participants is critical in order to build the context of this study. While my participants shared the unique experience of engaging as a Young Activist intern at YoSEA, they came to YoSEA's youth program with varying degrees of awareness to the critical issues impacting their communities, along with a realization that they can, in fact, be agents of change within the greater systems of oppression. In the following chapter, I present a short case study of each of the participants.

In each of the case studies below, I begin with an introduction of the participants, including their preferred gender pronouns. This is a critical piece of their identity, and a part of the critical consciousness development process. Starting in late 2016/early 2017, the YoSEA leadership staff began to introduce LGBTQ+ rights and gender justice into the curriculum, including the importance of identifying preferred gender pronouns. This concept is introduced to the youth program at TUT during "Circle Up", and introductions. People are asked to introduce themselves, including their preferred pronouns. Thus, I asked my participants to choose their pseudonyms, and what their preferred pronouns were.

Charlotte Soyer

Charlotte Soyer's preferred gender pronouns are they/them. Over the course of the internship, Charlotte Soyer expressed the use of different gender pronouns. At the beginning of the internship, Charlotte Soyer took she/her/hers pronouns, and about halfway through they expressed the use of she/they pronouns. It was in March that Charlotte began to take only they/them (gender neutral) pronouns.

Charlotte Soyer is the second oldest of eight siblings born to Hmong immigrant parents. Their parents left their home country because of the Communist government and lived in a concentration camp in Thailand until Charlotte Soyer was three or fours years old. Half of their siblings were born in the refugee camp, and the rest were born after the family moved to the United States. They noted that the family's first option to leave the refugee camp was by moving to France, but they did not have family there, and chose to move to the United States with their grandparents instead. Throughout the course of the internship, I learned that Charlotte Soyer's youngest sibling is just over a year old, and their oldest sibling is in college. They also have a brother who has down syndrome, and another who has glaucoma and lives in Raleigh, at a home and school for the blind. Charlotte Soyer's older sister, Maya, served as a mentorvisor for the first half of the internship, and one of their younger brothers, Prince, is a Young Activist intern in the same cohort. Charlotte Soyer and Maya worked together at a mall food court restaurant, but about halfway through the internship, Charlotte Soyer quit that job and began working in a new Vietnamese restaurant that opened in the mall, where YoSEA is located.

Charlotte Soyer is an 11th grader at Central High School (CHS). They attended Northern High School for 9th and 10th grade, and then was accepted to CHS; CHS is an honors program for 11th-13th graders to simultaneously earn college credit while finishing their high school degree. At the end of Charlotte Soyer's high school career they have the option to continue for a 13th year and complete an associate's degree, or graduate after 12th grade with college credits.

When I asked Charlotte Soyer about their time in school, and whether they liked it or not, they noted that they do not really enjoy school because of the teachers, and the lack of relationships they can have with the teachers at CHS. Charlotte Soyer recounted a situation where a teacher assumed that they were Chinese, and asked them to represent China in an international interest project. This also led into Charlotte Soyer recounting multiple times in elementary school when peers assumed that they were Chinese. They also told me about two instances when they went to a doctor's appointment with their mother and brother, and the white, male doctor, and white, female nurse both assumed that they were Chinese. Finally, these discussions about when they have experienced racism or stereotyping led Charlotte Soyer to explaining to me that at their first high school, the majority of the students are either white or Black, and they gravitated toward friendships with the Black students, or the few Asians at school. One of their closest friends from middle school introduced them to YoSEA, saying she thought Charlotte Soyer would be interested in the topics that were discussed on Tuesday nights.

Charlotte Soyer began attending YoSEA's TUT in May of 2017, at the end of their sophomore year of high school. They expressed that the topics being discussed at YoSEA were issues that they had been aware of or experiencing, but did not have the words for or depth of knowledge to name them. They first began by telling me that they were aware of the issues of deportation occurring around the country, and in their city, but was really only aware of it affecting the Latinx population. It was through sessions at YoSEA where they began to learn about the impact of deportation on the Southeast Asian immigrant population. During their early days of attending YoSEA, Charlotte Soyer began to learn about the 287(g) policy how it is impacting the immigrant community in

their city. I asked Charlotte Soyer about how YoSEA has helped them with school, and they noted that talking about the issues during TUT sessions gave them ideas for their writing assignments in English classes.

Another notable moment in Charlotte Soyer's story, which aligns closely with their family context, had to do with how they experienced the "Toxic Masculinity" presentation at the University of the Southeast hosted by the Hmong Student Association, along with the debriefing in following YA sessions. During the "Toxic Masculinity" presentation, Charlotte Soyer listened attentively, and participated actively in the discussion, often applying what was presented in the presentation to situations at home with their siblings, and in family gatherings. They were realizing and talking through the expectations of the females in the Hmong culture versus the expectations for the men. In their realizations, they noted how unfair it was that the women in their family were expected to cook and clean up after the men, and the men sit around and socialize.

One condition of the internship, and thus payment of the stipend, was that each intern presents a final project covering a topic that they researched during the internship. Beginning in January, Marie and the mentorvisors started to work closely with each of the interns to help identify topics that interested them. By late January, each of the interns had chosen a topic to research, and present on.

Charlotte Soyer came into the internship with desire to research and present on 287(g), a piece of legislature in North Carolina that allows for collaboration between local police, sheriffs' departments, and ICE agencies. As noted above, this was a topic that Charlotte Soyer spoke of often, and had chosen to write and present on for various

school projects, including a final paper for their English class, and their graduation project.

During the research nights of the internship, however, Charlotte Soyer was not focusing their research on 287(g), and did not present a final project. In their post-internship interview, Charlotte Soyer spoke of more topics that they became aware of during the internship, including toxic masculinity, ICE raids, and deportations, in addition to 287(g). When questioned about their final project, Charlotte Soyer noted that they decided, and got permission from Marie and Lucy, not to do a final project because they desired to take their learning further into a Student Organizer role and design an outreach project for their community north of the city. Their time as an intern inspired them to take what they learned and take it to another part of their community that was not having its needs met.

Prince

Prince is the third oldest of eight siblings born to Hmong immigrant parents. Prince's preferred gender pronouns are he/him/his. His parents left their country because of the Communist government and lived in a concentration camp in Thailand until 2004, when he was about two years old. Half of his siblings were born in the Thai camp, and the rest were born after the family moved to the United States. Throughout the course of the internship and after interviewing his older sister, Charlotte Soyer, I learned that Prince's youngest sibling is just over a year old, and his oldest sibling is in college.

Prince is a 10th grader at Northern High School, where his sister went until their sophomore year, and where his cousin, Kim, also attends. When we talked about school, Prince informed me that he was a part of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in

his high school. He noted that the work he did for his IB classes often did not challenge him. During our interview and at the YA sessions, I heard Prince talk about his government teacher and the topics discussed in his classes. I also asked Prince about his friends and friend groups, and he told me about his friends around the world, which led to a discussion about the friends he has through online video gaming.

Prince became involved with YoSEA during the summer of 2018, almost a full year after his sisters started attending TUT. I sat in on Prince's interview with Liz for the YA internship, and he had just started attending TUT a few weeks before he decided to apply to the internship. Prince had very little words to express a definition of social justice or civic engagement in his YA internship interview with Liz. During my observations of Prince as he engaged in and participated in the YA internship, I noticed that he was very quiet, engaged, and deliberate in his choice of words when he spoke up. He rarely joined in with group conversations, choosing instead to listen and process information on his own, and asking questions later. Even though he often sat quietly, Prince was eager to join into conversations and ask questions when it was topic that he was interested in or felt a connection to. I observed this when the YA interns were debriefing after the trip to USE for a presentation on "Toxic Masculinity". As a young, Hmong male there were topics relating to his family members and their culture that resonated with Prince during the presentation and debriefing session. Charlotte Soyer and Kim, two Hmong females and his relatives, were sharing instances of family gatherings where toxic masculinity was evident, and it was clear that Prince was processing their perspective, while also trying to make sense of his role in the situation.

During the work sessions for the final presentations, Prince was often working on his own, with headphones in, off in a corner of the room. It was not surprising that his final project presentation was a topic that he chose in collaboration with his government teacher. His topic was "De facto segregation vs. segregation by choice". This presentation sparked the most conversation out of all the final projects, because the YoSEA leadership staff wanted to make sure the youth understood that any form of segregation was a product of colonialism, white supremacy, and an imbalance in power dynamics. In Prince's follow-up interview, he was very proud of the fact that his presentation prompted so much discussion.

Kim

Kim is the third oldest of eight siblings born to Hmong immigrant parents. Kim's preferred gender pronouns are she/her/hers. She was born in Thailand, and believed her father was also born in Thailand. Her family moved to the United States because of a war in their home country, but Kim was not able to tell many more details about why or when they moved to the United States. Kim had three cousins who attended YoSEA, Maya, Charlotte Soyer, and Prince. Maya served as a mentorvisor during this cohort of the YA internship, while Charlotte Soyer and Prince were also YA interns during this cohort with her.

Kim is a 9th grader at Northern High School, where her cousin Prince also attends. When asked if she likes school, Kim likened it to a second home because at home she was "not really doing anything" (Kim, personal communication, December 11, 2018), and at school she has friends who are there for her, listen to her, and care about her. Kim did not talk much about her teachers or the actual work at school, but more

about her groups of friends. She considers herself a “tomboy”, and has more male friends than female. I observed this during the TUT sessions, as Kim was often talking with the male youth, or playing soccer or volleyball with some male youth during the free time. In our initial interview, Kim talked about the pressure she feels from her parents, teachers, and peers to get good grades; she attributes the pressure to being Asian. She continued to tell me that it was all right that she does not get all A’s and that it was something she can work towards. Furthermore, during a TUT session on toxic masculinity and gender equality, she spoke passionately about the expectations on her from her family, because she was a young Hmong female.

Kim began attending TUT at YoSEA in late August or early September 2018. She became involved because her cousins attend YoSEA. Her cousins also participated in the YA internship. She was the youngest YA intern, a freshman in high school, and often one of the youngest youth to attend TUT.

I sat in on Kim’s interview with Liz for the YA internship, and she had just started attending TUT a few weeks before she decided to apply to the internship. During Kim’s YA intern interview, and our initial interview, she was not clearly able to articulate a definition for social justice or civic engagement. When Liz asked her to provide a definition of “social justice” and “civic engagement”, Kim said she did not know, and was unable to give a definition. Moreover, I asked Kim about the issues impacting her community during our interview. She spoke to me about sexual harassment, and how there were people at school and who hug and touch her, and it makes her uncomfortable. At the time of our interview, the topic of sexual harassment had not been presented nor

discussed at YoSEA, so this was a critical issue that she was aware of before attending YoSEA or engaging as a YA intern.

Yet, over the course of the internship, I observed Kim taking interest into topics such as “toxic masculinity”, “gender equality”, “racism” and “deportation of Southeast Asians”. On two occasions, I observed Kim in conversation with Michelle, a black, trans femme staff member at YoSEA, discussing topics such as dating and gender equality. Kim worked closely with Michelle on her final project, choosing the topic of toxic masculinity to explore. During her presentation, Kim became visibly upset while presenting her slide on Hmong family expectations. Her eyes began to tear up, and her voice was trembling as she held back her tears. Michelle was advancing her slides and stood up to give Kim a hug and encourage her to take a moment before moving on.

Further, Kim stated that she considers herself an activist, not necessarily in action but in mindset, and recalled the “Kneel for Justice” direct action being a particularly powerful event for her. She added that her awareness of the issues mentioned above was stimulated during her time at YoSEA. Kim also noted that she recognizes her role in explaining social justice to others and correcting them if they were saying something rude or incorrect.

Senri Wayne

Senri Wayne is the younger of two children born to Laotian immigrant parents. Senri Wayne’s preferred gender pronouns are they/them. Their parents were born in Laos, and their father came to the United States in the 1970s, while their mother came in the 1980s. Both of Senri Wayne’s parents escaped Laos due to the Communist government, and political unrest in their towns. After moving to the United States, their

parents met in this city, and started their family. Their parents own an Asian fusion restaurant in an affluent suburb of the city, and Senri Wayne and their older sibling both work at the family restaurant.

Over the course of Senri Wayne's schooling experience, they attended schools in both high and low income neighborhoods. They began by telling me about the Title 1 school they attended for sixth grade, where they excelled in classes and received straight As in all of their subjects. However, during that school year, their parents opened the restaurant in the high income suburb and Senri Wayne moved schools. At their new school, Senri Wayne was one of the only Southeast Asian students, in classes with majority white and East Asian peers. It was at this school when Senri Wayne began to notice the educational inequalities in their school district, with more rigorous work at the new school, and different teaching styles. Senri Wayne then advanced to the high school zoned for that Southern neighborhood, and while this school was far more diverse, they noted that the AP and Honors classes were majority white students, and they had trouble fitting in and keeping up. Senri Wayne recounts how the atmosphere at this affluent high school negatively impacted their mental health, because they felt pressure to fit in and focus more on superficial things, such as their clothing. Senri Wayne decided to move to the high school that was zoned for their home address, which was located in a lower income neighborhood, majority Black, Latinx, and Southeast Asian students.

After attending schools in two vastly different parts of the city, Senri Wayne was able to articulate the inequalities they saw within the district. In their current Title 1 school, Senri Wayne noted a general lack of resources, such as an emergency water spout in their chemistry classroom, yet the school spent money on a new football field and

laptops for all students. They also discussed a situation with their Spanish teacher being unwilling to teach the gender neutral pronouns in class, and they challenged it knowing that was incorrect.

During the internship, Senri Wayne served as a Student Organizer (SO), having completed the YA internship in Cohort 4.0, in the spring of 2018. Over the course of this YA internship, Senri Wayne worked and learned alongside the YAs, but also presented at the second meeting of the internship. I interviewed Senri Wayne during one evening at TUT and learned more about their experiences in school and at YoSEA. Senri Wayne has had a schooling experience unlike most of the youth participants. Due to their journey through the local school districts, having lived in both high and low income parts of the county, and attending schools in both areas, they recounted situations of racism, stereotyping, and educational inequity experienced in middle and high school.

When I asked Senri Wayne about their time at YoSEA, they noted that they have grown a lot with YoSEA, in knowledge, mentally, and emotionally. It was at YoSEA where Senri Wayne began to identify as non-binary, finally being able to put words to their feelings. They also attribute their time at YoSEA with finding themselves and being able to uplift other people. Further, YoSEA has helped Senri Wayne identify plans for their future and see that they can do activist work and get paid for it. When I asked Senri Wayne about the issues they see in their community, they see the punitive system as being oppressive, issues with SEA deportation, toxic masculinity, and access to mental health resources.

I watched Senri Wayne present their YA final project at TUT in the spring, and then observed them during their time as a SO intern during the fall 2018 cohort. Senri

Wayne's final project covered the topic of gender equality, which then led them to an opportunity to present about transgender issues on a panel discussion with other YoSEA leadership staff. They were a leader amongst the youth that attend YoSEA in a variety of ways. As a YoSEA youth, they presented on topics during TUT and YA sessions, as well as working closely with YoSEA leadership staff and mentors to plan conferences and workshops. Senri Wayne was also one of the first youth to being using the gender neutral pronouns of they/them within the YoSEA space. It was evident that this influenced other youth, including Charlotte Soyer, to explore using gender neutral pronouns over the course of the Cohort 5.0 YA internship. Further, Senri Wayne often provides transportation for other youth, and brings food to share with everyone.

Victoria

Victoria is one of four siblings born in Burma, to Burmese parents. Victoria's preferred gender pronouns are she/her/hers. She is affectionately known as "Peach" at YoSEA, and is rarely called by her given name. At the time of our interview, she had graduated from high school the year before, and was working full time in a medical facility with her mother and father. Due to her demanding work schedule and a lack of transportation, she does not regularly attend TUT since graduating high school. Victoria is shy and quiet when meeting new people, but a very open and warm person once she knows you and feels comfortable with you. Her younger sibling, Elizabeth, also attends YoSEA, and they both participated in past cohorts of the YA internship.

Victoria and her family immigrated to the United States when she was 11 or 12 years old. Her father moved to Malaysia from Burma first because of political unrest, and then called for her mother and the four children to come after. Victoria recounted that

they had to sneak out of Burma, avoiding the police, and they left during the night in order to safely arrive in Malaysia. The family lived in Malaysia for three years while working to gather the necessary documents to move to the United States. Victoria discussed how life in Malaysia was still uncertain, because they were immigrants, and could be put in jail if they were stopped by the police and could not show their passport. She also did not attend school regularly before moving to Malaysia, because her grandmother was sick, and she helped take care of her for almost two years. She noted that it was at this time she lost most of the English she had learned in school in Burma.

Victoria and her family arrived in the United States when she was entering middle school, but she wanted to be put into elementary school, in order to improve her English. She was enrolled in the neighborhood middle school, and then matriculated to high school. We discussed her time in school in the United States, and she spoke highly of her science teachers in high school, but also noted that there were times when she felt annoyed at little situations. She reiterated that she was quiet in school, and rarely asked teachers or peers for help or raised her hand in class because she was shy. Victoria said that she does not have a lot of friends, with the exception of her cousin, Khloe, and recalling how the first time she ever saw a Black person was at school when she first arrived in the United States. She said that there was a mix of races at her school, but not very many Asian students like herself.

When Victoria was a freshman in high school, her family moved to a neighborhood close to her cousin's family, and it was that year when Khloe brought Victoria to YoSEA for the first time. I was mentoring at YoSEA on Victoria's first night, and she was very shy, only talking with Khloe and Lucy. Victoria recalled being very

nervous and scared that night, but Lucy asked her to introduce herself to the group. Victoria and Khloe began to attend TUT regularly, and it was during this time that YoSEA was transitioning their TUT nights into advocacy focused sessions. She said that she was excited to learn about art and other Asian cultures (Hmong, Vietnamese, Burmese, etc.), as well as the opportunity to get help with her homework from the mentors that volunteered. Further, Victoria is a very curious person, and Lucy noticed that she was always asking questions, but never wanted to speak in front of people. This curiosity combined with Victoria beginning to notice that social justice issues were not being addressed in school, led her to participate in two YA internship cohorts, as well as the SO internship. Victoria recounted a moment in her American history class, while sitting next to Black, Latinx, and Asian peers, when her white teacher was only teaching from the white perspective; she was able to recognize this dissonance because of her time at YoSEA. She also noted that in the back of her history textbook, there was just a small picture and short biography of the leader of her country.

Victoria engaged as a YA intern during Cohort 1.0 from June – December 2016 and Cohort 2.0 from January – June 2017. Following her second time as a YA intern, Victoria was nominated to serve as a SO intern. She first became interested in serving as a YA intern because the topic of Southeast Asian deportation was discussed during TUT one evening, but she did not know what that meant or how it impacted her community. She told Lucy that she was still very curious about deportations and had many questions still. At that time, Lucy and Maggie were developing the first cohort of the YA internship and recommended that Victoria apply for it. During the first cohort, Victoria chose to research the topic of deportations, while the other interns chose topics such as gender

equality or police brutality. She decided to deepen her knowledge on deportations during her second YA internship, while also using that topic for her senior graduation project at school.

During Victoria's time as a YoSEA youth, YA intern, and then a SO intern, she went to Atlanta in order to take part in a regional conference for Southeast Asian nonprofit organizations, took part in direct actions such as a protest in downtown, to bring awareness to the killing of Jon Ferrell by a local police officer, and helped to plan both the annual fundraiser (Southeast Asian Street Food festival) and the annual YoSEA retreat (ROOTS Camp). Further, Victoria does not consider herself an activist because she sees activists as those who speak in front of crowds, and she worries about telling incorrect information. She did explain that if she had the correct information, she would share her knowledge with others. After serving as a YA intern, she felt that she could help those in her community who experienced the same things as her.

MN

MN is one of two siblings born in Vietnam, to Vietnamese parents. Her preferred gender pronouns are she/her/hers. At the time of our interview, MN was in the middle of her freshman year at a small, private university in the city. She commuted to school everyday and lived at home with her mother, father, and brother. All of MN's paternal relatives live in Vietnam, while her mother's family also lives in this city. MN and her family immigrated to the United States when she was 16 after her father retired as a driver for the Vietnamese government. After 15 years of service, he was eligible to retire and move his family to the United States. Another deciding factor leading the family to

move was that college in Vietnam was very expensive, and MN was nearing the end of high school.

After moving to this city, MN's uncle helped to enroll her in school, and she was placed in the 10th grade at her neighborhood high school. She recounted that at some point in the year, the school realized that she was placed incorrectly, so the following school year, she was promoted to 12th grade, and worked very closely with a school counselor and mentor at YoSEA to start the college application process. One of MN's first experiences at school involved a fight breaking out in her math class, and she recounted that there were fights almost every day her first year at school. Despite this, she spoke positively about school, and recently met up with two of her former teachers for dinner. She also mentioned that she did not see much in the way of educational inequity while in high school due to the fact that everyone at her school came from working families. Likewise, she did not recall experiencing racism or stereotyping while in school with the exception of one instance by another Vietnamese student in her class commenting on her English skills; she said the comment encouraged her to learn English faster.

As I noted above, MN was placed into 12th grade without being notified formally by her school, so when she realized this, her school counselor recommended she become involved in extracurricular activities for her college applications. At school, she knew someone who had been attending YoSEA, and was told that the director was Vietnamese. She volunteered to work at a citizenship fair shortly after talking with the YoSEA youth from her school, and started helping Lucy as a translator. MN eventually realized that translating was difficult, but wanted to continue to stay involved, and Lucy invited her to

come to TUT instead. At TUT, MN was able to get help with her homework, and improve her English skills. Further, the mentors at YoSEA helped MN with her college applications and filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), as well as applying for scholarships and grants. By attending TUT, and participating as a YA intern, MN also learned about the many social issues impacting her Vietnamese community in the United States. She noted that her perception of the United States was that it was a safe place to live, but that changed since living in this city, and attending TUT.

MN took part in Cohort 4.0 as a YA intern from February – August 2018. Maggie, the former youth coordinator, encouraged her to apply for the YA internship in order to improve her English and learn about issues that were not being addressed in school. MN noted that issues such as the school-to-prison pipeline, deportation, school disparity, and racism were all topics being discussed at TUT, but were explored more deeply in their YA sessions. For MN's final project, she chose to research the United States' role in the Vietnam War, along with the two flags of Vietnam. Despite having been born and raised until the age of 16 in Vietnam, MN says she was unaware of the conflict between North and South Vietnam and the two flags until Lucy sat down and explained it to her. During her freshman year of college, MN was integral in forming an Asian student association on campus, along with another former YoSEA youth. In December, Cohort 5.0 and the other YoSEA youth went to Crown University for a presentation on Southeast Asian deportation, hosted by Maya, MN, and the Asian student association, in collaboration with YoSEA.

Harley

Harley is the youngest of four siblings, born in this city to Vietnamese immigrant parents. Harley's preferred gender pronouns are she/her/hers. Harley's grandfather fought for the United States in the Vietnam War, and her parents fled Vietnam before she was born due to a conflict with a neighbor. They feared that the neighbors would tell the Vietnamese government about her grandfather's service to the United States, so they escaped by boat to a refugee camp in Hong Kong. Her parents lived in the camp in Hong Kong for seven years, where they had Harley's three older siblings. Harley was the only one of her siblings that was born in the United States.

At the time of our interview, Harley was in her sophomore year at Central State University (CSU) where she is studying global studies with a concentration in Latin America. When I asked her why she chose to concentrate in Latin American studies, Harley noted that she had the Spanish credits already, but that she also saw the correlations between issues occurring in Southeast Asia and Latin America. She said that much of what they talk about in YoSEA intersects with what she was learning in her coursework now.

Harley attended Western High School, a Title 1 school in a low income neighborhood, and was enrolled in the IB program, allowing her to get the Spanish credits for college. Because she was in the IB program throughout her four years of high school, Harley had the same friends throughout. She also noted that the work for her IB program was difficult, but she did not feel that it prepared her for the rigor of college. Harley also talked about how the funding given to Western High School often went to

improving the sports program, such as building a new football field, rather than academic resources needed, like new laptops.

She talked about how she was struggling in college too, noting that there is a lack of diversity at her university, and does not feel supported by her advisors. At the time of our interview, she was just coming off of an academic warning and probation because she failed one course and was also not fulfilling credit hours that semester. Harley noted that she was unaware of the policy for credit hours and did not know she was put on academic probation.

Lucy approached Harley and some of her friends and invited them to come to TUT at their 8th grade graduation in 2013. Lucy and their partner, James, had been involved with other youth at Harley's school previously, helping them and their families with legal guidance and citizenship paperwork. Harley recalled that at her first TUT session, the presentation for the night was on deportation. The group was making signs to hold during a press conference, outside of YoSEA's former headquarters. The press conference was being held in order to bring awareness to the deportation of a local Latinx father, because he was driving without a license. Over the next three years, Harley was deeply involved in YoSEA and TUT, coming for help with homework and to participate in the lessons following the homework and free time. During her time as a YoSEA youth, the youth program began to transition, and the structure of the evenings changed. It was at this time that the hour of free time was followed by circling up and introducing yourself to the group, often answering a question of the night. The circle up was then followed by a lesson for the youth.

Like many of the YA interns interviewed, Harley decided to apply for the YA internship because she had a desire to learn more about the topics being presented on Tuesdays. She was a part of Cohort 1.0 from June – December 2016. During her internship, the other YAs researched police brutality, LGBTQ+ rights, and deportations. Harley also chose to research police brutality because it was an issue that she saw was prevalent in their communities. For her final project, rather than presenting on her topic, Harley and two other YA interns planned and held a protest in downtown for the shooting of Keith Lamont Scott and Jonathan Ferrell. They realized that it was an issue the youth in their community needed to be aware of, and they needed to raise their voices about it; she estimates that 300 people came to that protest.

Now, Harley is the social chair for the Southeast Asian Student Association (SEASA) at her university, an association that she and another former YoSEA youth brought to campus last year. They saw a need for a Southeast Asian student association on campus and petitioned to start it themselves. Likewise, Harley would like to work for a nonprofit like YoSEA when she finishes college, before starting graduate school. She also comes home often and was very involved in YoSEA, taking part in summer fellowships offered to former YoSEA youth and YA interns.

May

May is the younger of two siblings, born to Lao immigrant parents. May's preferred gender pronouns are she/her/hers. Both May and her sister were born in this city. May's father came to the United States as a refugee, via Thailand, with his father, in order to escape the Lao communist government, while her mother immigrated with May's youngest uncle to join their older siblings in Seattle.

At the time of our interview, May was in her sophomore year at Central State University (CSU) where she is double majoring in global studies and sociology, with a minor in health. When I asked her what she would like to do after college with her degree, she explained that she was interested in outreach to or research within the Southeast Asian community, as a way to analyze health patterns in their community. May's older sister, Maggie, also attended CSU and was a leadership staff member at YoSEA for over two years.

May did not attend the neighborhood middle school that she was zoned for; rather she attended a magnet school and was enrolled in the IB program in both middle and high school. The high school that she was zoned for was a partial magnet school, with an IB program, so she attended that school. She noted that the IB program at her middle school was far more rigorous than the one at her high school, and her middle school had more extracurricular offerings than her high school. Her high school also did not offer as many IB courses as were offered at the middle school. May spoke extensively on the inequities she experienced with her education, that were only noticed once she went to college. At college, she had friends who attended school dances, football games, international immersion trips, and some who talked about how competitive their schools were. Further, May talked about how the greatest issue she saw in her community was a general neglect for the area, noting that when she was in elementary school, the local library was shut down, and at that age she began to notice the disregard for her community.

May became aware of YoSEA through their first fundraising event, the Southeast Asian Street Food festival. She was unable to attend that year but was working with one of her teachers at school to get an Asian Culture club started at school, and invited Lucy

to come speak to their club members one afternoon. At the club meeting, Lucy invited May to come to the youth program on Tuesday nights. When May attended TUT, the evenings were structured with one hour of homework time, followed by an hour of a lesson. She started attending at the same time as Harley and Victoria, before the structure and the program in general began to transition to an advocacy curriculum. In January – April 2016, she took part in an AmeriCorps internship focused on the naturalization process, and the paperwork involved in helping immigrants apply for citizenship. Following, May took part in Cohort 1.0 from June – December 2016. For her research topic, May chose to explore gender justice because she believed it was an important topic that no one talked about at that time.

Chapter 5: Results

This qualitative case study dissertation, positioned within a critical consciousness conceptual framework examined the shared experiences of eight Southeast Asian youth, as they engaged in an activism internship at a movement-based youth program. Chapter three detailed the design and methodology of this qualitative research study, while chapter four presented the reader with eight participant case studies compiled from the findings of the semi-structured interviews, observations, field notes, and artifacts obtained during the six month Young Activist internship at YoSEA.

Four themes were identified based on the participants' experiences in school, the community, sustained engagement in the YoSEA youth program, and the Young Activist internship. Once I identified the themes, I related them to the study's research questions: *exposure to critical issues, knowledge building through sustained involvement, intergroup collaboration* and *social justice actions*. Following Table 9, which provides a brief outline of the clusters, themes, and sub-themes derived from the data, I present an analysis of the participants' phrases that support the themes. Additionally, I include a description of the Young Activist internship sessions and direct actions (see Appendix D) from my field observations in the thematic analysis of the data.

Table 9

Research Questions and Related Themes

Research Questions	Related Themes
<u>Overarching Research Question</u> How does engagement as a Young Activist intern at a movement-based youth program develop the critical consciousness of the Southeast Asian youth?	• Exposure to critical issues • Knowledge building through sustained involvement • Social justice actions

Auxiliary Question 1 How do the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns reveal their processes of critical consciousness development?	• Intergroup collaboration • Social justice actions
Auxiliary Question 2 How does engagement in the YoSEA youth program shape the Young Activist interns understanding of social justice?	• Knowledge building through sustained involvement • Social justice actions

Exposure to Critical Issues

During the interviews, I asked each participant about the issues that they were aware of in their community, and when that awareness was first realized. I did not ask the participants what their definition of social justice was during the interviews, but the current YA interns were asked for a definition during their YA internship interview, and it was discussed again during the first meeting of the YA internship in October.

Further, during the interview process, I discovered that the youth each approached their time at YoSEA or the YA internship with a desire for more knowledge on issues they may have seen but did not have the words to describe. Yet, MN and Victoria both noted that they had no idea of what kind of issues were impacting their community when they began to attend YoSEA's youth program. Victoria noted that there was "so much stuff that I didn't even know about. But I learned from coming to SEAC" (Victoria, personal communication, February 27, 2019). Further, MN spoke about issues in her community that she never experienced in Vietnam, such as school shootings. She said, "I didn't experience it, I heard in the news and I see it at [YoSEA]. I couldn't believe my eyes. I learned about them, and I started realizing when I go to [YoSEA]" (MN, personal communication, February 1, 2019).

This introduction to the critical issues process is in line with the first component

of the critical consciousness concept, critical reflection. According to Christens, Winn, and Duke (2015), critical reflection begins with the process of reflecting on and analyzing "inequities and injustices connected to one's social conditions" (p. 17). This introduction is also the entry point for YoSEA to become a catalyst for the youth's critical reflection.

Prince cited his growing awareness of critical issues from YoSEA. He said, "obviously I got aware from [YoSEA]...I might be worldly a bit more, get to know a bit more, learn a bit more" (Prince, personal communication, April 9, 2019). Likewise, Charlotte Soyer noted that they had some awareness of critical issues, such as racism, but through their time at YoSEA, became more aware of other critical issues:

> I was really aware last year on this you know. And but before the YA, before it was only like racism but to be honest I just felt like oh yeah it is issue but I don't really consider this a big issue...But you decide to turn a blind eye and focus on like or in like everything in clear means when there's a stuff happening in like the U.S. gun violence and deportation you don't want to talk about it you just want to like families being separated the border, you just want to like keep it quiet and then just I feel like a big issue. (C. Soyer, personal communication, December 18, 2018)

When MN was describing her final project on the two flags of Vietnam, her home country, she noted that she had never known why Vietnam had two flags, and the history behind them, until Lucy taught her about the history of Vietnam, the war, and the United States' role in the war.

> My final project is about Vietnam where I show the two flags of Vietnam, two Vietnamese flags, and I really don't understand because in Vietnam the current

> flag right now, the current legal flag is the red flag that background with a yellow star in between and communist flag. Yeah. And it's back to history a little like before the war, before 1975. There's two reasons. The North and the South, and that the South is socialist or like freedom and democracy thing. And their flag is like the yellow background with three stripes, three red stripe in the middle. And when there was war, the U.S. open so a lot of refugee and people came to U.S. and they brought that flag with them. So right now when you see Vietnamese flag, usually that yellow flag with the three stripes in between. Yeah. And the people in here hate the red flag over there. So, I didn't know that and didn't know the story behind it until [Lucy] told me at a dinner I had with her. So I presented that during my presentation. (MN, personal communication, February 1, 2019)

Likewise, Harley said, "I think I became more aware of issues regarding racism like racism towards Asians by going to YoSEA" (Harley, personal communication, February 5, 2019). Victoria also attributed YoSEA for her awareness on issues of social justice, especially deportation,

> First in TUT we don't really focus more on social justice but when I was a Young Activist it was social justice...The first time I go, when I learned about deportation. I got there and I was saying, what is deportation means? ...I was like, oh you can learn more about deportation you can learn more, learn more about another topic. Oh that's cool. I like you very interesting. (Victoria, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

Finally, May was the only participant who noted that her awareness of issues surrounding inequity and social justice started at home and not at YoSEA,

> Well like growing up I guess I would say like I look like one of the lucky people. But like like my family even my extended family my grandparents were they really encouraged like fluidity that I don't have to like really fit in a box for anything and it's OK if you like if you like the same sex as you or you or your opposite sex or if you don't you've been like I identify as one or the other. And that's absolutely OK. And it just became kind of normal to me like that that they work. Men can kiss men you know. And then when I got to [YoSEA] I was like hold up other Southeast Asia kids did not grow up like me. Yeah. And I was like wait why are we really saying these things like Oh there you go. And what did you just say they're going in my head and was already so normal or me to be so accepting of it especially when I feel like in a lot of I mean in most of the like the other like Lao families that I grew up with it was like pretty normal. And then like I got to see act and it like wasn't normal at all and I was like. (May, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

For May, her entry into YoSEA truly began with critical reflection, and not an instance of pre-critical reflection. When she began attending TUT, she was already aware of the inequities connected to her community's conditions and was on her way to analyzing the conditions during the internship.

Likewise, Kim and Prince may have been aware of some issues due to their relatives attending YoSEA prior to their engagement in the youth program, but neither was able to express an understanding during their YA internship interview. I sat in during their internship interviews with one of the YoSEA leadership staff, and in that interview they were asked to define social justice. Neither Prince nor Kim were able to come up

with a definition at that time. When they were asked to give definitions of "social justice" and "civic engagement", Kim answered that she did not know what either of those phrases were. Prince also said he did not know exactly how to define the phrases but guessed that "civic engagement" had to do with voting because he might have heard that in a history class (K. Wagner, personal communication, August 2018).

During the first session of the Young Activist internship, Marie planned various activities to get the new interns thinking about social justice, racial justice, and gender justice. I worked with Prince and another intern to come up with a definition of social justice. Prince and his partner came up with a definition, while I was the scribe. Their idea of social justice included the phrases: people, open-minded, racial equality, change, equity, gender equality, awareness, no limit, and educational equality (see Appendix E).

Further, I asked each of the current and former interns what issues they saw that were impacting their community, whether community was their neighborhood, city, or the Southeast Asian community. I have organized their responses in Table 10 below. Following the table, I provided a brief definition of each of the critical issues presented by the interns, in order to contextualize their critical consciousness development. It is important to note that YoSEA was instrumental in giving the youth interns the language to begin to discuss the issues impacting their community. In chapter 6, I discuss how YoSEA empowers the youth through language.

Table 10

Young Activists and the Issues they see in the Community

Intern	Issues
Prince (Interview 1)	De facto segregation/segregation by choice

Charlotte Soyer (Interview 1)	Poverty Deportation Gun violence Gender binary The flawed judicial system
Charlotte Soyer (Interview 2)	287(g) policy ICE raids Patriarchy
Kim (Interview 1)	Sexual harassment Gender pay gap Gender inequality Inequalities for gay/trans rights
Senri Wayne (Interview 1)	Punitive System Southeast Asian deportation Mental health in the Southeast Asian community Toxic masculinity
MN (Interview 1)	Deportation Racism Differences and inequalities in schools 287(g) policy Police brutality School shootings
Harley (Interview 1)	Educational inequities Racism toward Asians Deportation Police Brutality
May (Interview 1)	Neglect in lower income neighborhoods Resource gap Food deserts
Victoria (Interview 1)	Language barriers Deportation

Definition of Critical Issues

De facto segregation is racial, ethnic or other segregation that results from societal differences between groups without legislation intended to segregate (Houghton Mifflin, 2005). According to Prince's final research project, *segregation by choice* is when racial or ethnic groups choose to segregate themselves from other groups. For example, segregation by choice can be seen when all of the Southeast Asian students sit

together at lunch.

Racism is "a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities, and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., p. 1). Harley noted that YoSEA made her aware of *racism toward Asians*, which is specific racial prejudice or discrimination against Asians (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Deportation is "the removal from a country of an alien whose presence is unlawful or prejudicial" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., p. 1). Senri Wayne credited YoSEA for making them aware of *Southeast Asian deportation*, which the removal of undocumented Southeast Asian immigrants from the United States.

The 287(g) policy is a federal policy that allows a state or local law enforcement entity to enter into a partnership with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in order to receive delegated authority for immigration enforcement within their jurisdictions (Immigration Enforcement, n.d.). *ICE raids* are a tactic used by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security and local law enforcement, to identify, and target undocumented immigrants. Raids often lead to the detention and deportation of these immigrants without due process (Anwar, 2019).

Gun violence is violence committed with the use of a gun, while *school shootings* are acts of gun violence that occur at schools.

Patriarchy has a number of definitions; however, in the context of this study and YoSEA, it is a society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it (Oxford, 2019). Further, *toxic masculinity* is "a cultural concept

of manliness that glorifies stoicism, strength, virility, and dominance, and that is socially maladaptive or harmful to mental health" (Random House, 2019, p. 1). Likewise, *sexual harassment* is "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" (The Regents of the University of Michigan, 2019, p. 1).

The *gender binary* is a system that pairs one's sex, which is based on reproductive anatomy, and gender, the "socially constructed ideas and expectations that a culture has for a certain sex" (UCSB, 2019, p. 1). More specifically, the gender binary classifies males as men, and females as women. Further, the *gender pay gap* is the difference in salary or income for working men and women. On average, women are paid less than men in the same position or industry. The pay gap becomes ever more problematic when controlled for race or ethnicity. Moving on, *gender inequality* recognizes that socially, men and women are not treated equally, and there are consequences to people's lived experiences. Finally, *gay and trans rights* are equal civil and social rights for people who identify as gay or transgender as compared to those who identify as heterosexual (Oxford, 2019).

When Charlotte Soyer spoke about *the flawed judicial system,* they were referring to instances in the judicial system that oppress people of color. Further, Senri Wayne mentioned in their interview how the *punitive system* categorizes "people as good or bad" (S. Wayne, personal communication, January 24, 2019).

Senri Wayne also noted that there are few resources for *mental health in the Southeast Asian community*. In their community, they note that "people just breakdown and don't get any help for it" (S. Wayne, personal communication, January 24, 2019).

The term *educational inequities* refers to the inequitable distribution of academic resources such as funding, highly qualified teachers, and technology. Further, a r*esource gap* is the difference in how resources are allocated across communities or schools, for example. Likewise, May noted that an issue in her community was a general *neglect in lower income neighborhoods.* For instance, she recognized that lower income neighborhoods lack basic resources such as libraries or grocery stores. Moreover, communities that suffer from *poverty*, the state of being extremely poor, may suffer from *food deserts.* Food deserts are urban areas with difficult or no access to affordable, high-quality food (Oxford, 2019).

According to US Legal (2017), *police brutality* "is a civil rights violation that occurs when a police officer acts with excessive force by using an amount of force with regards to a civilian that is more than necessary" (p.1).

Finally, Victoria noted that *language barriers* are a critical issue in her community. A high percentage of immigrant adults in her community, along with their children do not speak English, and struggle to find resources or translation services in their native language.

Exposure to Critical Issues through YA Internship Sessions

The sessions planned for the YA internship were a critical piece of critical consciousness development for the interns. It was during the sessions that I was able to watch as the current YA interns developed their critical consciousness and moved along the spectrum in the process.

The intern's first true experience of exposure to critical issues impacting their community took place on November 8, 2018 when we took a field trip to the University

of the Southeast (USE) for a presentation on “Toxic Masculinity”, presented by the Hmong Student Association (HSA). Three different members of the HSA took turns speaking to the audience, which consisted of USE students, members of the community, and those of us from YoSEA. The presentation was informal, and the presenter was posing questions to the audience throughout. A lot of the information covered in the presentation was covered in TUT sessions in the past, so Senri Wayne, Alex, and another YA intern who has participated in YoSEA for a longer period of time were answering the questions. Following the HSA presentation, the YoSEA group moved into an adjacent classroom and Alex led the debriefing session.

During the debriefing session, Charlotte Soyer was the only YA intern who spoke about the topics discussed in the presentation, expressing their frustration with the Hmong men in their family, along with the expectations of Hmong women in their family to take care of everything in the house, raising the children, and cleaning duties. Charlotte Soyer became visibly upset while talking, beginning to cry while they spoke. Kim, Charlotte Soyer’s cousin, echoed the sentiments, but stayed quiet most of the time. Prince, Charlotte Soyer’s brother, stayed quiet during the entire presentation and subsequent debriefing session (K. Wagner, personal communication, November 8, 2018).

Following the YA session on “Toxic Masculinity” at the university, Sara led the interns in a short presentation on Southeast Asian deportations before we moved into one of the direct actions. After each of the YAs arrived, Sara led the lesson while donations and supplies were loaded into cars, and the logistics of the evening were planned. Unfortunately, only Senri Wayne was present for this session, but they engaged in Sara’s lesson by asking questions before we left for the Migrant Assistance direct action at the

Greyhound bus station. This session deepened Senri Wayne's critical reflection on the topic of Southeast Asian deportations, as it was a topic that was often mentioned at TUT meetings, but not explicitly presented on. A second session on Southeast Asian deportations was presented in January, thus relating to the theme of knowledge building through sustained involvement (K. Wagner, personal communication, November 15, 2018).

The next session that exposed the YA interns to a critical issue came on November 29, 2018, when the Turn Up Tuesday coordinator, Michelle, led the session. Michelle is a Black, transgender femme who takes she/her/hers/they/them pronouns. This meeting of the YA internship began with an ice breaker led by Senri Wayne and Michelle. During the activity, we answered the question "what is the binary?" Senri Wayne said, "colonized"; Kim said, "two"; Prince said, "expectations"; Charlotte Soyer said, "two boxes" (K. Wagner, personal communication, November 29, 2018). We then moved into Michelle's presentation on "Gender Justice". Michelle began the presentation by leading us through an activity that explained the differences between gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation. Senri Wayne was a co-presenter this evening as gender justice was a topic that was important to them, and the topic of their final YA project during their cohort presentations.

It is critical to note that at this point in the internship, Senri Wayne and two other YA interns (who were ineligible to participate in this research project) led a majority of the discussions at YA sessions, with the exception of Charlotte Soyer who took the lead during the session on toxic masculinity (K. Wagner, personal communication, November 29, 2018).

At the eighth meeting of the YA internship on December 6, 2018, we began with an ice breaker led by Senri Wayne and Annie, the other SO intern. During the evening's meeting, Sara led a presentation on the controversial citizenship question proposed to be added to the 2020 Census.

They began with a discussion of a representative democracy, followed by the difference between race, ethnicity, and nationality. Sara posed the question, "How do we define race?" One of the interns started the conversation by saying, "we can't truly say race. Race is made up of physical characteristics. It's different from nationality" Senri Wayne followed with, "their [race and nationality] not interchangeable"; Charlotte Soyer then noted that they were "Asian, but I'm Thai and Hmong, so it's complicated" (K. Wagner, personal communication, December 6, 2018).

Then we discussed how and why the proposed citizenship question is problematic for immigrants in this country. Charlotte Soyer suggested that if "you're an immigrant, check all these boxes" (K. Wagner, personal communication, December 6, 2018). Finally, Sara asked why the proposed new citizenship question invokes fear in the immigrant community. Charlotte Soyer began, "it gets awkward, and I'm not feeling it. Will it [the census] be in another language?"; while Senri Wayne wondered about how to count their family if they "go on vacation?"; and Prince, for the first time in a YA session, asked if people could "purposefully skip it [the census]?" (K. Wagner, personal communication, December 6, 2018)

Exposure to Critical Issues through YA Research Projects

Prince chose to research and present his YA final project on the topic of de facto segregation versus segregation by choice. During the structured research sessions in

January and February, he worked silently, with earbuds in, by himself. Prince did not alert any of the mentors as to what he may choose for his topic, only telling us that he was working with his white, male, government teacher on the research. He chose to use a Prezi to present his topic. He began by introducing the definition of de facto segregation, and when one could see this type of segregation occurring. He also presented the pros and cons of de facto segregation, and then asked the group to talk about what you see. His sibling, Charlotte Soyer immediately spoke up about how they choose to segregate themselves with their friends. However, Senri Wayne and another YA intern spoke about their experiences with segregation, both by choice and coincidentally. Finally, Michelle, a YoSEA mentor, pointed out that even segregation by choice was a type of "segregation that has been learned" as a way to oppress communities of color (K. Wagner, personal communication, March 12, 2019). Because this was a topic that was not covered during the internship, and segregation was not explicitly presented in the youth programming, Prince was exposed to a critical issue through his research, as well as exposing the other interns to the topic.

Further, MN presented a PowerPoint slide show on the two flags of Vietnam. She began the presentation by introducing the audience to the history of Vietnam, pre- and post-Vietnam War. Then she showed photos of both flags, and explained the significances behind the colors, and why Northern and Southern Vietnam had different flags. She explained the one flag represents the communist government in the north, while the other represents the socialist government in the south. Like Prince, MN herself was exposed to this conflict in her home country through Lucy and her time attending

YoSEA. She then exposed the youth attending YoSEA to the two flags of Vietnam (K. Wagner, personal communication, July 2018).

Finally, May chose to research and present a project on gender justice, because at that time, she felt that it was not receiving adequate attention. She realized that while she had time to critically reflect on gender justice, she needed to expose other to this critical issue. She noted,

> It was something that I feel like no one ever talked about at that time. Now they're different but like half the time nobody I see actually ever talked about it and there were times where like, yeah, I just was like this this needs to be talked about. It's like if we're going to be talking about Black Lives Matter and police brutality and we're going to have to build some sort of sensitivity toward gender and sexuality. So that's why I chose it. (May, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Knowledge Building through Sustained Involvement

During the interviews, the participants described the role that YoSEA had in their awareness of issues impacting their community, as well as what they learned during the internship and what that means to them as activists. They also spoke about why they chose to participate in the internship, after attending TUT sessions at YoSEA.

I noted previously that YoSEA is integral in giving the youth the words to be able to describe the unjust conditions they were witnessing and experiencing in their communities. Engagement as a YA intern also led the participants from critical reflection toward political efficacy. Through an examination of the critical consciousness concept, I found that sustained involvement as YA intern led the youth first to critical reflection, which led toward political efficacy. Political efficacy exposed the youth to how they can

effect change in their communities.

Prince cited YoSEA for his growing awareness of issues in the community; specifically, he had never heard of the Black Lives Matter movement until attending YoSea. He said, “you learn more here as, we learn more about the stuff that we learn, sometimes in school. And here we go with topics that we don't go into in class” (Prince, personal communication, April 9, 2019). Senri Wayne attributed so much of their knowledge and growth to YoSEA,

> In school for more like defending myself and knowing like true knowledge and things like that I think that's what's really helped me. And it's kind of gotten me in some mental pathway like what I want to do and things like that aren't necessarily...In a lot of ways, I feel like I've grown a lot with [YoSEA]. Knowledge wise mentally emotionally. Things like that. I just got to discover more like my gender identity as well and that played a big role into like my life changes and things like that. But it was really here, I got to just know like terms and self and feel comfortable in myself in. (S. Wayne, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Harley said, “I think I became more aware of issues regarding racism towards Asians, by going to [YoSEA]” (Harley, personal communication, February 5, 2019). Kim noted that YoSEA was a place to “kind of belong somewhere” (Kim, personal communication, December 11, 2018), while Senri Wayne cited YoSEA in helping them build better relationships, and offered them new opportunities,

> I mean it's also helped me build better relationships and I have gotten, and also the internship. It's just like allowing me to see that I can do like activism work and

> get paid for it and things like that and I got more connections in like the queer community because I met Alex, Michelle, Allison, and Jordan, and Karen and things like that. I got to meet more people and it just extends my links and I've got to travel and things like that. And go places. It was just really nice to be able to do that and see the world and see that wow I can do activism and be with people that believe in liberation and solidarity with me. And just like during this administration and stuff like crazy. And I'm going to be doing an extension like outside of [YoSEA], I get to do like a trans workshop with Alex and I get to get paid for it. (Senri Wayne, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

When interviewing the participants about the internship, along with my observations during their time at TUT and Thursday night sessions, a shift in mindset and awareness began to occur. The former interns I interviewed were able to discuss this transformation as well.

Each participant had different reasons for applying to be a Young Activist intern (from the stipend they received to a desire to go more in-depth), but they were able to explain what the internship meant to them once it had concluded. Prince talked about how he did not have any specific topics in mind to examine when applying for the internship and that he “didn’t know much” (Prince, personal communication, April 9, 2019) going in, but he late said,

> The world is not what it seems. The longer you stay and fight, the more that you don’t know grows, like 287(g). That was something I did when we were at Crown University. Maya did that lecture on that topic that that part of what it is. Those who came to America, I think got sent back or something like that, and I was like

> they really did that? Like I didn't know about that. (Prince, personal communication, April 9, 2019)

Likewise, Charlotte Soyer noted that they "really liked the young activist because just like it makes me aware of like other things and then makes me like be able to reflect on life situations and I try to be like open minded" (C. Soyer, personal communication, December 18, 2018). MN and Harley both discuss how the internship allowed them to dive more deeply into topics that were presented either very briefly at school, or at TUT. MN said, "during TUT, for youth in general, they do mention school to prisons pipeline, but during the Young Activist we go deeply in that issues and deportation and school disparities and racism" (MN, personal communication, February 1, 2019). While Harley had similar sentiments,

> Yeah I wanted to get a more in-depth learning about social justice and just the issues surrounding that. And I know that we cover on Tuesday but when I was in the Young Activist program we went more in depth we got the history, just when we went more in depth with it. We learned more organizing skills to direct and action. (Harley, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Finally, Victoria was not interested in taking part in the Young Activist internship at first, but then her mindset shifted when she began to learn more and see those around her having similar experiences,

> The Young Activist was like more than just Turn up Tuesday. So when I learned, I have at first, I was not interested at all. And I was like I don't care what the war is, the law is the law, I don't want to know. Then I have people around me. You have suffered the same thing as we did and sometimes I worry about them.

(Victoria, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

Knowledge Building through Sustained Involvement at YA Sessions

The third meeting of the YA internship on October 25, 2018 served different purposes for each of the YA interns. At this session, door canvassing (an extension of civic engagement) was introduced to Prince, Kim, Charlotte Soyer, and another YA intern. However, Senri Wayne and the two other YA interns had all participated in a door canvassing event previously, therefore this was a continuation of their knowledge building of civic engagement through sustained involvement.

First, we did not open with an icebreaker right away. Instead, the YA interns were making posters for the first direct action that following Sunday, *Kneel for Justice*, and the SO interns were preparing for the Precinct Party following that event. After the posters were completed, Marie and Senri Wayne went over the agenda for the evening and some housekeeping items. Liz and Sara, two of the YoSEA leadership staff members led the group in a "Door Canvassing" training. First, they led a short lesson on the 287(g) policy that allowed local police departments to collaborate with ICE agencies in order to detain and deport undocumented immigrants in North Carolina. When Sara asked the group what 287(g) was, Senri Wayne provided an answer, but another intern also knew about the policy. Charlotte Soyer, Kim, and Prince did not answer (K Wagner, personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Next, they had youth who participated in door canvassing share their experiences with the group. Then, Liz and Sara explained why they were going to be door canvassing on the following Monday evening. The newly elected sheriff ran on the promise to end 287(g) in Mecklenburg County, and YoSEA was canvassing in order to petition the

sheriff and hold him accountable for that promise. When Sara asked the group what else we could do after a door canvassing event, Senri Wayne responded, “we can be challenging people that we love, and we could change perspectives. This could cause controversy, but it’ll be impactful” (K. Wagner, personal communication, October 25, 2018). Finally, Sara led all of us through the app we would be using in order to track and document the houses we would visit during the canvassing event.

On January 17, 2019, Marie planned an entire session focused on Southeast Asian deportations as the YAs and SOs worked to prepare for YoSEA’s National Week of Action to end Southeast Asian Deportations. In preparation for this week, the YAs first engaged in a discussion about the Model Minority Myth, generational family separation, trauma, and genocide. Charlotte Soyer and Kim both joined in the discussion led by another YA and Senri Wayne, highlighting the complexities of growing up in the Hmong culture.

Senri Wayne began by saying that “Asian Americans are represented [in the Model Minority Myth], but Southeast Asian families take that to heart, and it’s a system that’s messed up” (K. Wagner, personal communication, January 17, 2019). Charlotte Soyer followed up by noting that East Asian and Southeast Asian immigrants were pitted against each other.

As the discussion led into generational family separation, Charlotte Soyer spoke at length on the topic, saying, “we survived only now to face another generation of family separation (talking about grandparents and ancestors who died escaping through jungles and oceans, in order to come to the United States as refugees)…the US fought on our parents’ soil with boots and bombs. But we will not be forgotten. Growing up the Hmong

were lost due to the Indochina war and were forced to migrate south" (K. Wagner, personal communication, January 17, 2019). Kim joined in the conversation at this point noting that we should honor Martin Luther King Jr., and she felt that we should highlight the intersection of Blacks and Asians. Again, it was critical to note that at this point in the internship Charlotte Soyer and Kim were speaking up and leading discussions, as opposed to the early sessions when they simply listened as Senri Wayne and other interns spoke.

Knowledge Building through Sustained Involvement in the YA Research Projects

Two of the YA interns chose to continue their knowledge building through their YA research projects. First, Kim chose to research and present on toxic masculinity, with guidance from Michelle. She began by offering definitions of toxic masculinity, gender binary, and gender roles. Next, she presented on the MeToo Movement, explaining that it was a movement that brought attention to the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment faced by women around the world. Next, she played a short video of Terry Crews', a Black, male celebrity, testimony before Congress about how he was sexually assaulted in the workplace. Finally, she spoke about toxic masculinity that plagues the Hmong culture. It was during this part of the presentation that Kim became visibly upset, fighting back tears, as she spoke about the expectations of Hmong girls and women to take care of their families, homes, and spouses (K. Wagner, personal communication, March 12, 2019).

Further, Senri Wayne presented a final project on gender justice and transgender rights. During their presentation, they introduced the topic with definitions of gender justice and gender binary; they then spoke passionately about transgender peoples' rights.

This was a topic that was presented during their YA internship, as well as during TUT youth programming (K. Wagner, personal communication, July 2018). Gender justice was also a topic that was relevant to Senri Wayne on a personal level. They said, through their engagement as a YA intern,

> I just got to discover more like my gender identity as well, and that played a big role into like my life changes and things like that. But it was really here that I got to just know like terms and self and feel comfortable in myself. I was always trying to figure out like, "why do I feel like I don't fit in here and I don't fit in here?" But like when I heard more of these terms, it's like okay this sounds like me. (S. Wayne, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Social Justice Actions

Within a critical consciousness conceptual framework, critical action exposes one to what they can actually do to better the conditions in their communities through policy reform or programs. I posited earlier that critical consciousness is an ongoing, cyclical process; however, at YoSEA the desire and ability to better the community was the goal for the youth program.

I also asked the participants if they considered themselves to be activists, and to explain why or why not. Their answers varied which led to my follow up question about the skills needed to be an activist. For Prince, his activism evolved, "No. Not at that time at the time. Like as time from time I should say I became active" (Prince, personal communication, April 9, 2019). Kim believed that she was an activist in mindset, but not in action: "Because I don't really do much action...except my mindset" (Kim, personal communication, December 11, 2018).

While Charlotte Soyer does consider herself an activist in certain ways,

> Oh yeah. Because I do stuff with YoSEA but at the same time I feel like I'm not a activist because I see like the freedom fighters that go out on the line and was like wow they're really great to do that. But that what's so amazing that they're capable to do that. (C. Soyer, personal communication, December 18, 2018)

Likewise, Harley and May both consider themselves activists on a certain level, but that it has faded since going to college,

> Yes in some way. Yeah. But ever since I've been like I've came to college I feel like I'm not as active as I was in YoSEA. For me being activist is pretty much speaking up on things. Speaking up on the inequalities that are happening in my community and taking action against them. (Harley, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

> I would say yeah I would say so. I think if we're using like more broad definition, I'm an activist. If we're including like probably like small scale like education and then things like that small scale organizing I think would be considered an activist (May, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Throughout the internship, the Young Activists were invited to a number of direct actions organized by YoSEA. These included door canvassing, a peaceful protest, and a donations drop for recently reunited immigrant families. During the interviews, the idea of being an activist was discussed, but the interns each had varying definitions of how they take action. I asked each of them how they were taking action in response to the issues they noticed in their community and their responses were following.

Charlotte Soyer spoke the most about speaking up and taking action in various

ways, but more specifically through social media. They struggled to identify their activism through social media as impactful, saying,

> No I was upset with myself really because it was like, 'Oh yeah, I'm just like reposting it and bringing it to your attention.' At the same time, I'm not really helping the families or like the individuals who are really being affected...you brought it to attention. But then at the same time once it's like once, like that week is over, it's like gone. You don't hear of it ever again. Yeah. And it made me pissed. Because you're only, it's kind of like oh, you brought it to attention. Yes. But do you care enough about it to make it relevant?" (C. Soyer, personal communication, December 18, 2018)

Prince also spoke about the role of social media on activism and educating the public on relevant critical issues,

> I guess if there is more them [the public], due to technology growing over time people are known for being around it, and with the use of social media, those who are like big in that certain social media they can spread it around. They want to make it a big thing....if it becomes popular by social media, then people are gonna talk about it. (Prince, personal communication, April 9, 2019)

Senri Wayne spoke about how during their time as a YA intern, then as a SO intern, they learned to speak up for themselves and not allow their peers to make jokes that were offensive.

> I just hope that people will learn and the more that I speak up [about it] because like that people will catch on...And then I've stood up for myself... when I started coming back to YoSEA more and I was really just like I'm not going to sit here

> and just like take people's jokes anymore. And just like whatever or laugh at any kind of just like stereotypical joke it's just not funny. And it was like well I don't care about it or like I don't get affected by it and it's like it's because you're letting people and this is just one of those key things that...And that's how it continues and that just plays a key role in like white supremacy and things like that. (S. Wayne, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Senri Wayne, Harley, and May each discussed the role that social justice and activism have in their futures. While YoSEA acted as a catalyst for critical reflection and political efficacy in the youth participants, it was important to note the role it played in not only sparking critical action in some of the participants, but also a viable future for them. YoSEA fostered a sustained involvement in grassroots organizing for these three youth. Senri Wayne said their "plan is to go to college for like a business management degree because knowing the business aspect of Nonprofit work is really important and I think a lot of organizers don't really know" (S. Wayne, personal communication, January 24, 2019). Likewise, Harley "pretty much wants to work for a non-profit. Whether that be [YoSEA] or any other where [she] can find" (Harley, personal communication, February 5, 2019). Further, May had very specific plans post-college, "what I would like to do is like kind of do outreach or like research in like the Southeast Asian American community; kind of a way to like analyze health patterns in our community and things like that something along those lines" (May, personal communication, February 5, 2019).

Social Justice Actions during YA Sessions

On October 28, 2018, the YA interns were invited to engage in their first direct action during the internship. A community member and friend of YoSEA, organized the

event; it entailed the group of people taking a knee outside of the city's professional football stadium during the National Anthem to protest the systemic oppression, social injustice and the killing of people of color by law enforcement. The YAs created posters and signs at the YA meeting the week before, and then carpooled with YoSEA staff and mentors to the stadium, to silently protest at the start of the game. There was a short debriefing session before the YAs arrived at the Precinct Party, another event that YoSEA was hosting.

Charlotte Soyer, Kim, and Prince attended the event with Maya, their family member and mentorvisor. At the following TUT session that week, the YoSEA leadership staff and youth in attendance discussed a fatal school shooting that occurred in their district the day before. Senri Wayne encouraged the YA interns to focus on the events from the weekend, including the "Kneel for Justice" direct action and Precinct Party, as a way to process the tragic events (K. Wagner, personal communication, October 30, 2018).

A door canvassing event was the second direct action that the YAs were asked to participate in. Everyone who was going to participate in door canvassing met at YoSEA, and we were given our territories to canvas, scripts to follow when people answered their doors, postcards to get people to sign for the petition, and voter registration forms. This was an extremely heavy day at YoSEA, as there was a fatal school shooting at a local high school earlier in the day. We took a silent moment together to gather our thoughts, and then Sara and Liz put us into groups of two or three. We went to our territories west and northwest of the city. The territories we were targeting this evening were majority Southeast Asian, Latinx, and Black households. I was paired with one YA intern who

was ineligible to participate in my study, but who had been a part of a door canvassing event in the past. Charlotte Soyer, Prince, and Kim were unable to participate in this event, but Senri Wayne participated (K. Wagner, personal communication, October 29, 2018).

We were asked to canvass our territory for two hours, and then all of us would meet back at YoSEA for a short debriefing session. Emma and I knocked on a lot of doors in our territory but were not very successful in registering people to vote, or getting signatures on the postcards. At the debriefing session, we discussed what worked and what needed to be changed for the next canvassing event to be more successful.

The third and final direct action of the internship took place on November 15, 2018. The evening began with a lesson at the YA meeting, and moved into one of the direct actions. After each of the YAs arrived, Sara led a short lesson on Southeast Asian deportations while donations and supplies were loaded into cars. Once the cars were loaded up, all of the YAs, mentorvisors, and other leadership staff carpooled to the Greyhound bus station in downtown, to meet recently released immigrant families coming from the border of Mexico and Texas.

YoSEA, in collaboration with two other non-profit organizations, organized a Migrant Assistance effort by collecting donations of clothing, food, toiletries, and money. The three organizations then created a schedule of volunteers to set up tables at the Greyhound station in order to pass out donations to the migrant families arriving in the city or changing buses before continuing on their journeys. This direct action was an example of YoSEA's advocacy and response to an immediate need in the community. For over three weeks following this evening, YoSEA staff, youth, mentors, and

community volunteers continued to receive and sort donations in YoSEA's offices, as well as meeting families at the Greyhound station.

Social Justice Actions through YA Research Projects

Harley was the only YA intern that chose to plan a direct action for her final research project. Throughout the internship, she was interested in the topic of police brutality, and she, along with two other interns, planned a protest in downtown to bring attention to the death of a local Black man who had been killed by a police officer earlier that year. She said,

> We did a protest for the shooting of Keith Lamont Scott, and I feel like a lot of people, especially youth came out, around like 300 people came out to that. Yeah, we raised awareness about an issue in our community. And we use our voices. We did it at Marion Park and we marched the streets to the Omni Hotel. (Harley, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Intergroup Collaboration

The final theme that emerged from my field observations is intergroup collaboration. My interview questions did not specifically ask my participants about the collaboration that occurred during their time at the youth program and while engaging as interns, yet my weeks of observations and the informal observations I conducted in the past, prior to this research, informed this emergent theme. The first instance of collaboration took place on the first night of the internship, "following, Marie gave a brief presentation on what social justice and civic engagement are, and then we broke into our small groups again and worked together to come up with more understandings of the terms" (K. Wagner, personal correspondence, October 4, 2019). In the following

weeks, the YA interns participated in two direct actions, “Kneel for Justice” and “Door Canvassing”. “The YAs created posters and signs at the YA meeting the week before, and then carpooled with YoSEA staff and mentors to the [football] stadium, to silently protest at the start of the game” (K. Wagner, personal correspondence, October 30, 2019).

When I interviewed Harley, she spoke about her culminating project, and how she collaborated with two other YA interns to plan a direct action,

> For my YA project me Vanessa and Tara, we did a protest for the shooting of Keith Lamont Scott, and I feel like a lot of people, especially youth came out, around like 300 people came out to that. Yeah, we raised awareness about an issue in our community. And we use our voices. We did it at Marshall Park and we marched the streets to the Omni Hotel. (Harley, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

Further, for the presentation at Crown University, all of the Cohort 5.0 interns were asked to research and speak during the presentation on Southeast Asian deportations. In the two weeks leading up to the presentation, the interns worked in pairs to research their topic and organize their short presentation.

Intergroup Collaboration through YA Internship Activities

At the first meeting of the Young Activist internship, all six YA interns, two of the three mentorvisors, two Student Organizer interns, and the internship leader were in attendance. Marie began by inviting all of us to take part in an ice breaker activity called “I Love my Neighbors too”. Following the ice breaker, Marie put the YAs into three groups with their mentorvisors, and we were given small posters to write poems using adjectives to describe ourselves. Kim chose the adjectives “kind”, “active”, and

"optimistic"; Prince chose the phrases "positive", "everyone's bud", "total Anime fan", "care free", and "helpful"; Charlotte Soyer chose "positive" and "affectionate" to describe themselves (K. Wagner, personal communication, October 4, 2018). Since one of the mentorvisors was not there, I took their group. I worked with Prince and Emma, an intern who was not eligible to participate in this research project. We worked together, and then as everyone finished up, each person presented their poems, and explained why they chose the words.

Next, the group worked together to come up with a community agreement and norms for the YA meetings. At the end, we all signed the poster and displayed it on one of the walls. Senri Wayne was the SO intern who led this portion. Then, Marie led a presentation of the overview of the internship, shared a calendar with everyone, explained the roles and responsibilities of the YAs, mentorvisors, and herself. I was then given a few minutes to explain my research study to them, and my role as a researcher-advocate-mentor through the course of the internship.

Following, Marie gave a brief presentation on what social justice and civic engagement are, and then we broke into our small groups again and worked together to come up with more understandings of the terms. In the small groups, we worked together to define "social justice", "gender justice", and "racial justice", which were the guiding values of YoSEA. Table 11 below illustrates the words and phrases that were decided on collaboratively for the guiding values of social, gender, and racial justice. I have also included photographs of the three posters in Appendix E.

Table 11

Phrases collaboratively used to define YoSEA's guiding values

Social Justice	Gender Justice	Racial Justice
• people • open-minded • racial equality • change • equity • gender equality • awareness • no limit • educational equality	• Equal rights for people who don't identify as heterosexual. • Recognizing women's rights! • Being accepting of the LGBTQ+ community. • asexual • gender variant • queer • ally • pansexual • lesbian • gay	• equality for everyone • discrimination • equal job opportunities • accepting one another • BLM, Charlotte Uprising, YoSEA

At the end of the meeting, the mentorvisors, Senri Wayne, and Marie helped the YAs create timesheets that they would use to keep track of their internship hours. To wrap up the first evening, we circled up and each of us shared our favorite part of the evening.

Summary

In chapter five, I presented the four overarching themes that emerged from the transcribed interviews, field observations, and culminating project analysis. Moreover, I presented how the themes of *exposure to critical issues, knowledge building through sustained involvement, intergroup collaboration* and *social justice actions* related to the study's three research questions. Further, I explained how YoSEA played a role in the critical consciousness development of the YA interns by leading them through the

process of critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. In the following chapter, I summarize my research inquiry, present the implications for my research, and suggest future research based on the findings of this study. I finalize this dissertation study with a look into how YoSEA impacted each of the interns' critical consciousness development, as well as the long-term impact of YoSEA on each of the Young Activists.

Chapter 6: Summary, Implications, and Direction for Future Research

This chapter presents a summary of my research inquiry, the implications for my research, and suggested future research based on the findings of this study. This qualitative case study dissertation, positioned within a critical consciousness conceptual framework examined the shared experiences of eight Southeast Asian youth, as they engaged in an activism internship at a movement-based youth program. It documents the internship, within the context of the youth program, where I served as a mentor and advocate for six years. This dissertation study follows the interns as they engaged in lessons and direct actions focused on social, racial, and gender justice. Further, it explores how engagement as an intern shaped the immigrant youth experiences and developed their critical consciousness in the face of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies, and systemic discrimination.

Data were collected, first informally for five years preceding this study, in the form of field observations as I engaged as a mentor and advocate with the youth program. During the course of the activism internship, data were collected through individual interviews, field observations, and archived data analysis. I examined each participant's experiences and themes emerged through the development of a short case study using their interviews, observations, and data collected through the examination of their final projects. The youth participants' shared experiences along with an analysis through a critical consciousness lens reveal that engagement in an activism internship developed their critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action.

In this chapter, I first address YoSEA's role in the critical consciousness development of the YA interns, thematically. I organize each of the intern's development along the critical consciousness spectrum, beginning with critical reflection, moving through political efficacy, and finally approaching critical action. By exploring each interns' critical consciousness development along a spectrum, I illustrate that the shared experience of engaging as a Young Activist intern developed each of my participant's critical consciousness.

Following this thematic analysis, I focus on my three research questions through the use of the findings that were discovered during the critical consciousness analysis (Christens, Winn, & Duke, 2015) of the overarching themes that emerged from the youth case studies in chapters four and five. Moreover, the themes of *exposure to critical issues, knowledge building through sustained involvement, intergroup collaboration* and *social justice actions* are used to discuss how the shared experiences of the participants, including engagement as an activism intern, allowed for the development of their critical consciousness. While this process is ongoing, and each participant approached their time as an intern at different points in the development process, the activism internship exposes the participants to issues impacting the Southeast Asian community.

Engagement as an intern also allows the participants to examine the systems within which they live and learn how to take action against those systems. Further, this study exposes how community-based organizations allow immigrant youth the space and experiences to deeply examined anti-immigrant systems and policies. Findings of this study add to *critical consciousness theory* scholarship, which empowers oppressed peoples to take action against oppressive forces. It informs future research by exposing

the need for community-based organizations to incorporate activism and advocacy programming.

Critical Consciousness Development in Marginalized Youth

The concept of critical consciousness allows marginalized populations to critically examined the systems that have oppressed their communities. Further, the development of critical consciousness enables these oppressed communities to develop the tools with which to enact change upon their conditions (Christens, Winn, & Duke, 2015; Freire 1970/2016). The concept of critical consciousness is critical for marginalized youth in a number of ways. First, youth exist in communities and are inherently social beings; therefore the development of critical consciousness allows youth to achieve a higher quality of life through a more equitable world (Kirshner, 2015).

Further, Wray-Lake and Syversten (2011) found that prosocial action nurtured socially responsible youth. Moreover, critical consciousness is associated with mental health, and assists marginalized youth in overcoming "structural constraints on human agency" (Diemer & Li, 2011). Therefore, the development of critical consciousness in youth, and more specifically marginalized youth, leads to activism and the changing of systemic and structural oppression. YoSEA became a space for marginalized, Southeast Asian youth in the Southeastern United States to work through the process of critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action.

YoSEA and the Process for Critical Consciousness Development

YoSEA was deliberate in their planning of the Young Activist internship lessons, direct actions, and activities. Moreover, as Freire (1974/2017) posited, the process for critical consciousness development first begins with an education on the oppressive

conditions impacting one's self and community, collaboration for imparting change on those conditions, and then liberation from the oppression through action. In this way, YoSEA has developed a youth program and two internships in the style of Freire and the colonized people of Brazil.

First, the leadership staff are measured and systematic in their choices of topics for the internship and TUT sessions. By hiring both a Youth Coordinator and an Internship leader, the curriculum for Tuesday nights and the biannual internships are planned thoughtfully and in response to the needs of the youth and their communities. The topics chosen for each week of TUT and the internships address ongoing issues in the community (police brutality or deportations, for example), or expose the youth to other grassroots organizations in the region that YoSEA is partnered with. This process emulates Freire's model of beginning with educating the oppressed. Next, the Youth Coordinator and Internship leader facilitate meetings, discussion, and collaboration for the youth and the interns, allowing them to experience acts of resistance and action in a safe environment. This collaboration also exposed the youth to their shared experiences. Finally, the leadership staff provide opportunities for action to the youth, as well as sharing their knowledge as first responders to the needs of the movement. In this way, the youth can see their active role in liberation from oppressive conditions.

Moreover, this process is explicit, and therefore can be replicated in other youth programs serving marginalized youth. For example, each youth interested in engaging as an intern is first asked to create a resume and fill out an application with the help of a mentor, and then sits for an interview with a member of the leadership staff. After the

application and interview process, the selected interns are paid a small grant-funded stipend after filling out a timesheet each month.

Finally, the topics planned for the internship sessions were chosen specifically in order to connect more deeply with sessions presented previously at YoSEA's TUT sessions. Using the model of critical consciousness as laid out by Freire (1974/2017), YoSEA's leadership staff use a critical education, via a social justice curriculum, to lead the students into deep thinking and reflection on the critical issues presented. YoSEA's deliberate planning and connections between TUT's sessions and the topics presented during the internship for deeper exploration speak to the process of critical consciousness development.

YoSEA's Role in Critical Consciousness Development

When a youth recognizes there is a gap in their understanding of conditions in their community, or they have a desire to learn more about the critical issues impacting their community, YoSEA is a safe space to explore the issues. YoSEA serves as a catalyst for critical reflection by exposing the youth to the inequities that are connected to their social and political conditions. Once the youth begin to critically reflect on these conditions, YoSEA leads them toward political efficacy, demonstrating that they have the agency to effect change. Finally, YoSEA allows the youth to safely examine their political efficacy, which ultimately sparks critical action. This is not where critical consciousness ends, as their awareness of world issues leads to the youth beginning to examine even more issues.

During the course of the internship, Kim moved along the critical consciousness scale, starting before critical reflection and moving toward political efficacy, based on

observations, field notes, and their interviews. As I noted previously, both Kim and Prince had little knowledge of social justice issues or the vocabulary to describe civic engagement prior to participating in the youth program or as a YA intern. During her interview with Liz, she responded with, “I don’t know” when asked what social justice and civic engagement were. However, as Kim became more aware of the critical issues impacting her and her community, she began to discover her own role and agency in enacting change. When I asked her how her work as a Young Activist makes a difference, she said,

> It definitely makes a difference because it changes me personally. Like my mindset and like how I think one thing is…Oh let's say like being called Chinese or being called gay or whatever. I think I didn't really think much of it but like once I started learning more about it I was like, I don’t just let people talk now. So it's definitely changed my life. It definitely changed the way that I look, I think in a good way. (Kim, personal communication, December 11, 2018)

Moving on, Prince moved along the critical consciousness scale, starting before critical reflection and moving toward political efficacy, based on my observations, field notes, and our interview. In his interview, Prince noted, “from the beginning [of the internship] I didn't know anybody to now I realize that I'm informed on the topics. But I can't really do much about it” (Prince, personal communication, April 9, 2019).

As I noted previously, Prince had little knowledge of social justice issues or the vocabulary to describe civic engagement prior to participating in the youth program or as a YA intern. During his interview with Liz prior to starting the YA internship, he responded with, “I don’t know”, when asked to define social justice. He then guessed that

civic engagement was something “that had to do with voting”. As was evidenced by his engagement in discussions toward the end of the internship, often reflecting to the group, Prince engaged in the youth program and the internship fully. Finally, when I asked Prince about how his time as a Young Activist has made a difference, he brought up his final project topic. He said, “That final project. I really, I guess we took the time to acknowledge some stuff that I wanted to talk about. That stirred up a really good conversation. Very important conversation I think” (Prince, personal communication, April 9, 2019).

It is critical to note that Prince’s final project topic choice was influence by his white government teacher, and Prince did not seek any guidance or assistance during the research sessions from the YA mentorvisors. When he presented his topic of segregation, one that was not covered during the internship or TUT sessions, his content was heavily influenced by his teacher’s white perspective, and the context for people of color and immigrants was missing. Following his presentation, two mentors spoke up about how any type of segregation is harmful and fueled by white supremacy and colonization. Prince’s topic sparked a level of discussion that was necessary, yet unknown until he presented his project. It illustrated the need for leadership staff to circle back to previous topics such as white supremacy and colonization that had been covered in past TUT sessions.

During the course of her involvement at YoSEA and engagement in three internships, Victoria moved along the critical consciousness scale, starting before critical reflection and moving toward political efficacy, based on observations, field notes, and her interview. Victoria had little knowledge of social justice issues or the vocabulary to

describe what was occurring in their community prior to participating in the youth program or as a YA intern. As was evidenced by her engagement in conferences and direct actions before and during her time as an intern, Victoria engaged in the youth program and the internship fully, moving toward political efficacy. For example, Victoria recounted a moment in her American history class, after she had spent time at YoSEA and one session as a YA intern. She said,

> Plus when I was in American history my junior year, I have to take one and two. So when I am in this class, she is a white teacher and she was only talk about the white perspective. And there's a lot of black youth student there, and then they disagree. And she was trying to go over there. So I was like let me not talk about it. Because when I get into it, I think we were going to have a fight. I'm really frustrated. (Victoria, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

She continued to stay involved with YoSEA as a mentors and attends workshops and conferences in the city when YoSEA offers them to her.

Like Victoria, MN moved along the critical consciousness scale, starting before critical reflection and moving toward political efficacy, during the course of her involvement at YoSEA and engagement in the YA internship. MN had little knowledge of social justice issues prior to participating in the youth program or as a YA intern. She also discussed that, as an immigrant to the United States from Vietnam, was completely unaware of any issues plaguing the city, or the United States as a whole. “I didn’t experience it, I heard in the news and I see it at YoSEA. I couldn’t believe my eyes. I learned as then I started realizing when it whereas I go to YoSEA” (MN, personal communication, February 1, 2019). As was evidenced by her engagement in the YoSEA

youth program before and during her time as an intern, MN moved toward political efficacy during the YA internship. As a freshman in college at Crown University, she was a part of the leadership team on the Asian Student Association, a group that was formed by another YoSEA mentor, Maya. They played an integral role in planning a presentation on Southeast Asian deportations for YoSEA and Crown University students, at the university in December.

During the course of the internship, Charlotte Soyer moved along the critical consciousness scale, starting before critical reflection and moving toward critical action, based on observations, field notes, and our interviews. Of the three current interns who agreed to participate in the research study, Charlotte Soyer was most openly aware of their learning and development of awareness, often moving the conversation forward, and applying what was happening in their own life to the topics being discussed in the internship. For example, after the toxic masculinity presentation at USE in December, they openly digested what they learned in the session; then they lead a conversation on Hmong cultural expectations during TUT in February (K. Wagner, personal communication, February 24, 2019).

In Charlotte Soyer's initial interview, at the beginning of the internship, they spoke of poverty, violence, deportation, gender inequality, gun control, and flaws in the judicial system as issues that they were aware of in the community. They also noted that they had no words to be able to acknowledge the issues impacting their community. Often, one could find Charlotte Soyer in a conversation with a YoSEA staff member, talking about the topic of the day, or relating an experience they had at school to a topic that had been discussed at YoSEA's youth program or the Young Activist internship.

During the course of her involvement in the YoSEA youth program and internships, Harley moved along the critical consciousness scale, starting before critical reflection and moving toward critical action based on our interview in February. Both Harley and May were openly aware of their learning through YoSEA and development of awareness, often moving the conversation forward, and applying what was happening in their own life to the topics being discussed in the youth program. This was evidenced in my informal field observations of Harley. She comes back from school on her breaks and reengages with YoSEA as a youth mentor and fellow each summer and has taken the idea of critical action to her college campus through the development of a Southeast Asian student association with May. When I asked Harley why she does the work of an activist, she said,

> I just like being informed of the things that are affecting my communities and how I can make change happen. I know there are a lot of untold stories or a lot of voices that aren't being heard right now because they're in fear. So I feel like I'm always kind of is not my duty to do my duty but I feel like it kind of is OK. Especially considering that my parents are refugees and they have came they came to the states for a better life. So I feel like it's only right. I use my voice to do something else something that is good in the world. I feel like it's important to me because just coming from my background and just realizing what my parents have gone through just made me realize it just made me realize the sacrifices that they made in life and how I have to be as strong as them. Yeah. And just put my voice to use wherever. I can be and just help out, wherever help is needed. (Harley, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

During the course of their internships, Senri Wayne moved along the critical consciousness scale, starting at critical reflection and moving toward critical action. They were influential during the YA internship, while acting as a Student Organizer intern, and helping to plan and lead lessons. For example, Senri Wayne was the only youth to take only the gender neutral pronouns of they/them; over the course of the internship, I documented three other interns move from using she/her/hers pronouns, to she/they pronouns, and finally, at the end of the internship, they were all using they/them pronouns exclusively. Charlotte Soyer was one of the interns that moved from femme to gender neutral pronouns throughout the internship. It is important to note Senri Wayne's influence on the YA interns, as they were moving through the process of critical consciousness too. I asked them how engagement with YoSEA impacted their life and Senri Wayne said,

> I've stood up for myself. It was always a little weird, an on and off thing, whatever kind of phase I was going through. It wasn't really until like my junior year, when I really started coming back to YoSEA more and when I was really just like I'm not going to sit here and just like take people's jokes anymore. And just like whatever or laugh at any kind of just like stereotypical joke. It's just not funny. And it was like well I don't care about it or like I don't get affected by it, and it's like it's because you're letting people and this is just one of those key things that. And that's how it [oppression] continues, and that just plays a key role in like white supremacy and things like that even if it's like a person of color, that's still like a machine of white supremacy. (S. Wayne, personal communication, January 24, 2019)

Senri Wayne's experiences prior to attending YoSEA are unique in that they attended schools and lived in drastically different socioeconomic areas of the city. Yet, as they began to attend YoSEA, a realization and desire for more knowledge occurred. Through sustained involvement at YoSEA, and participation in two internships, they attended conferences, spoke on transgender rights panels in the region with YoSEA leadership staff and mentors, and planned direct actions, such as the Precinct Party. As Senri Wayne became more aware of the critical issues impacting them and their community, they began to discover their own role and agency in enacting change.

Finally, after interviewing each of the current and former YA interns, it was evident that May approached her time at YoSEA and as a YA intern with an awareness cultivated in her early childhood by her family. She spoke about how her parents and other relatives encouraged gender fluidity, as well as spoke often about issues impacting their community, like inequitable funding, and racism.

> Well like growing up I guess I would say like I look like one of the lucky people. But like my family, even my extended family, my grandparents, they really encouraged like fluidity that I don't have to like really fit in a box for anything and it's OK if you like, if you like the same sex as you or you or your opposite sex or if you don't, identify as one or the other. And that's absolutely OK. And it just became kind of normal to me like that. Men can kiss men you know. And then when I got to YoSEA I was like hold up other Southeast Asian kids did not grow up like me. (May, personal communication, February 5, 2019)

However, during the course of her involvement in the YoSEA youth program and internships May moved along the critical consciousness scale, starting at critical

reflection and moving toward critical action, based on observations, field notes, and her interview. Both Harley and May were openly aware of their learning through YoSEA and development of awareness, often moving the conversation forward, and applying what was happening in their own life to the topics being discussed in the youth program. Like Harley, she came back from school on her breaks, and reengaged with YoSEA as a youth mentor each summer and has taken the idea of critical action to her college campus through the development of a Southeast Asian student association with Harley.

Overall, there were differences among the youth participants in terms of their critical consciousness development, based on the number of years that they participated as s YoSEA youth prior to engaging in the Young Activist internship. Harley, May, Senri Wayne, Charlotte Soyer, and MN had each participated in YoSEA's TUT sessions for at least one school semester or more (3+ months) before engaging as Young Activist interns. With a sustained involvement in the youth programming prior to engaging as an intern, these five youth demonstrated an awareness of critical issues impacting their community that was beyond their peers' awareness. Each of them had already participated in direct actions such as peaceful sit-ins, protests in downtown, and press conferences, as well as hosting panels addressing education and elections at the YoSEA space.

Moreover, Prince, Kim, and Victoria had each participated in YoSEA's TUT sessions for less than 3 months when they engaged as Young Activist interns. Since they had just begun to participate in TUT sessions, they were less aware of the critical issues impacting their communities. While all three were exposed to critical issues in their short

time attending TUT, through presentations and direct actions, they did not have sustained involvement in the youth program yet.

Further, due to each youth having participated in YoSEA's youth program for differing amounts of time, there were often intersections in their understanding of the critical issues discussed during the internship. Senri Wayne and two (ineligible) interns often drove the discussions forward during the YA sessions, thus contributing to everyone else's understanding of the topics. In my field notes, I noted that it was not until YA sessions in December and January that Charlotte Soyer or Kim made meaningful contributions to the YA internship discussions. Until that time, it was Senri Wayne or the other two interns participating in discussions while Charlotte Soyer, Prince, and Kim listened. Senri Wayne and the other interns participation in discussions not only moved the conversations forward, but contributed to the other's understandings of the topics. This is critical, as their experiences mirror Charlotte Soyer's, Prince's, and Kim's experiences, and the internship fostered a safe space to explore the issues impacting their shared communities.

Finally, the Young Activist handbook lays out the expected goals and outcomes of participating in the internship. The expected outcomes of the internship are to: deepen youth's social consciousness and political awareness; gain experience in doing research projects and direct action; increase understanding of civic engagement; develop healthy habits around money; learn how to apply for employment opportunities; gain self-empowerment and self-determination by making decisions on their own projects; develop deepened relationships with YoSEA leadership; and build deeper relationships with each

other. Similarly, the end goal of critical consciousness development is liberation through critical action (Christens, Winn, & Duke, 2015; Freire, 1974/2017).

My research contributes to this end goal by highlighting how YoSEA exposes students to critical issues through educational sessions during TUT and the YA internship, and then gives them opportunities for taking action. A goal of YoSEA in general and not the internship specifically is to have the youth become empowered activists. The participants in the study each stated that they did not feel like they were activists because they are not planning and executing direct actions, speaking at conferences, nor putting themselves on the front lines.

Addressing the Research Questions

In this section, I discuss the findings of my dissertation study that address the research questions by relating the three themes that emerged from the participant case studies. Table 12 illustrates how the emergent themes were used to address each of the research questions that guided my inquiry.

Table 12

Research Question, Related Themes, Findings Crosswalk

Research Questions	Related Themes	Findings that address the RQs
Overarching Research Question How does engagement as a Young Activist intern at a movement-based youth program develop the critical consciousness of the Southeast Asian youth?	• Exposure to critical issues • Knowledge building through sustained involvement • Social justice actions	The findings of this study revealed that the YA interns are introduced to critical issues first through TUT meetings, and then at a deeper level of understanding through the YA internship. The internship led all eight participants to political efficacy, and four of the youth toward critical

		action. Further, TUT and YA offer opportunities for critical action through participation in regional and national conferences, and direct actions.
Auxiliary Question 1 How do the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns reveal their processes of critical consciousness development?	• Intergroup collaboration • Social justice actions	Throughout the YA internship, the interns took part in multiple opportunities that allowed them to collaborate for the purposes of learning together and from each other. Moreover, they were given the opportunities to plan direct actions together.
Auxiliary Question 2 How does engagement in the YoSEA youth program shape the Young Activist interns understanding of social justice?	• Knowledge building through sustained involvement • Social justice actions	Based on my observations and through the interviews, the participants revealed that social, racial, and gender justice issues are not discussed at home nor at school. Therefore, critical issues that are relevant to their lives and communities were discussed at YoSEA TUT and the YA internship.

Overarching Research Question

How does engagement as a Young Activist intern at a movement-based youth program develop the critical consciousness of the Southeast Asian youth?

In alignment with the critical consciousness conceptual framework guiding this inquiry, the findings of the study reveal that the YA interns were introduced to critical issues first through TUT meetings, and then at a deeper level of understanding through

the YA internship. The internship led all eight participants to political efficacy, and four of the youth toward critical action. Further, participation in YoSEA's TUT and YA internship offer opportunities for critical action through attendance at regional and national conferences, and through the planning of and participation in direct actions.

Exposure to Critical Issues

During the interviews and participant observations, the interns were asked about what issues they saw in their community, along with when they first became aware of those issues. The eight participants noted that some or all of their awareness of the issues impacting their community (this city, Southeast Asians, their neighborhoods), came during their time participating in YoSEA's youth program and the Young Activist internship. Prince, Kim, Charlotte Soyer, Senri, Harley, and Victoria all noted that their awareness of Southeast Asian deportations, police brutality, and gender equality came during their time at YoSEA. Kim, Senri, Harley, and Victoria also chose one of these topics as their internship final project presentation. May noted that her final project, on the two flags of Vietnam, was influenced by a conversation about it that she had with Lucy, the executive director of YoSEA.

Social Justice Actions

The development of a critical consciousness allows for oppressed peoples to identify, examine, and the power to enact change upon their oppressive conditions. Throughout their time as Young Activist interns, the participants were exposed to oppressive conditions impacting their community. They were also asked to examine one

condition more deeply, through research supported by the leadership staff at YoSEA, and present their new understandings of it. When asked if they considered themselves activists, only one of the participants said yes, however, each of them participated in direct actions throughout the internship, which illustrated otherwise.

Auxiliary Question 1

How do the shared experiences of the Young Activist interns reveal their processes of critical consciousness development?

Throughout the YA internship, the interns took part in multiple opportunities that allowed them to collaborate for the purposes of learning together and from each other. Moreover, they were given the opportunities to plan for direct actions and presentations together.

Intergroup collaboration

During the first three meetings of the YA internship, we ended the session by answering the question, “What was your favorite part of tonight?”. Every week multiple interns and mentors responded that they most enjoyed being able to learn together in a smaller, more intimate setting. This finding was critical to the research study because, while CBYOs that serve immigrant youth offer the participants a safe space to learn about critical issues, often they do not provide the opportunities to go deeper in the newly found knowledge, and then the ability for action. The YA internship was directly addressing this need in the immigrant youth community.

Auxiliary Question 2

How does engagement in the YoSEA youth program shape the Young Activist interns understanding of social justice?

Based on my observations and through the interviews, the participants revealed that social, racial, and gender justice issues were not discussed at home nor at school. Therefore, critical issues that were relevant to their lives and communities were discussed at YoSEA TUT and the YA internship.

Knowledge Building through Sustained Involvement

The participants described the role that YoSEA had in their awareness of issues impacting their community, as well as what they learned during the internship and what that means to them as activists. I noted previously that YoSEA was integral in giving the youth the words to be able to describe the unjust conditions they were witnessing and experiencing in their communities. Engagement as a YA intern also led the participants from critical reflection toward political efficacy. Through an examination of the critical consciousness concept, I found that sustained involvement as YA intern led the youth first to critical reflection, which led toward political efficacy. Political efficacy exposed the youth to how they can effect change in their communities.

Implications

During this research study, I discovered a number of implications for the findings of this research. First, more CBYOs and after-school programs that serve immigrant youth and youth of color offer academic help, but rarely give youth the space to fully explore the social and political conditions impacting their communities. Therefore, it would be beneficial for community stakeholders and non-profit organizations to develop programming and curriculum for the specific needs of immigrant youth, especially

programs that encourage the development of the youths' critical consciousness.

Further, youth program coordinators can develop internships that allow youth to actively engage in their communities. Critical consciousness in marginalized youth has a number of benefits. Critical consciousness development in marginalized youth was associated with career development, school, extracurricular, and postsecondary engagement, as well as academic achievement (Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, Rapa, 2015; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2016; O'Connor, 1997; Luginbuhl, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2016; De Genova & Ramos-Zayas, 2003).

Finally, youth programs offer safe spaces for immigrant youth to explore topics impacting their community, especially those that were not taught in school. Classroom educators and school administrators can use the findings from the study to develop curriculum, which allowed students to be critical of the systems, which impact them closely. Spaces like YoSEA offer an alternative curriculum, one that was relevant to the youth. Radd and Macey (2013) posit that critical consciousness development was a tool for stakeholders "to identify how and why underlying personal and institutional beliefs, assumptions, norms, and practices contribute to inequality" (p. 2).

Future Research

During the data collection and analysis processes, I discovered directions for future research, stemming from this dissertation research. First, I noted previously that YoSEA was open to all who share in the vision and mission of the organization. This implies that youth and mentors of all races and ethnicities take part in the weekly TUT sessions, internships, and fellowships. In a future iteration of this research study, I would examine the critical consciousness development of all YA interns, regardless of race, or

ethnicity. While I did not include my observations of the other YA interns for this research project, they played an integral role in the critical consciousness development of my Southeast Asian participants.

Likewise, I believe an examination of the critical consciousness development of the mentors and leadership staff would be a critical piece to this research, as the process was cyclical and ongoing, therefore, I assume they were each participating in their own process of development. Further, I would like to explore how their shared experiences impact how they guided the YA interns through the process of critical consciousness.

Finally, a critical piece of systemic transformation lies in the hands of white educators, since over 70% of educators continue to be white females. Because I identify as a white female educator, engagement as a researcher-advocate was paramount to my own critical consciousness development. My sustained involvement in YoSEA since 2013 has impacted my beliefs immensely and allowed me to share with my colleagues. Radd and Macey (2013) developed guidelines for using critical consciousness development as a tool for professional learning. Through the use of reflection journals and communities of practice, educators can begin to transform oppressive systems.

YoSEA's Long-term Impact: Where are they now?

After completing the Young Activist internship in March 2019, Charlotte Soyer applied for a Student Organizer internship. They were chosen for the spring internship and helped plan YoSEA's annual ROOTS retreat in July. Charlotte Soyer did not finish the community outreach project they planned to complete in lieu of their YA internship research project, but that had no bearing on their completion of the SO internship. They continue to stay engaged with the youth program during TUT and have started the

process for applying to college.

Neither Kim nor Prince applied for a second YA internship at the conclusion of their internship, but the both continue to stay engaged with YoSEA through the TUT programming on Tuesday nights. They also both attended the annual ROOTS retreat in July.

Senri Wayne graduated from high school shortly after they completed their SO internship. They continue to stay engaged with YoSEA on Tuesday nights at the youth program, as well as planning and attending direct actions across the country, volunteering at local and regional citizenship fairs, and attending conferences sponsored by YoSEA. Most recently, YoSEA sent Senri Wayne to the Moving Mountains equity summit in Sacramento, sponsored by the Southeast Asian Resource Action Center. While in Sacramento for the summit, they took part in a protest against the ICE raids targeting Cambodian immigrants.

Victoria continues to stay engaged with YoSEA as a mentor for the youth program. She attends TUT sessions when her work schedule allows, and also participates in direct actions, and volunteers at citizenship fairs.

MN, Harley, and May are enrolled in college full time and reengage with YoSEA during their school breaks, if time allows. When they return to YoSEA, they participate as youth mentors, and attend direct actions, or volunteer at tabling events or citizenship fairs. MN continues to stay engaged with the Asian Student Association at Crown University, serving as their secretary. Harley and May continue to grow the Southeast Asian Student Association at Central State University, serving as social chair and president, respectively.

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Appendix A. Young Activist Cohort 5.0 interview protocol

YoSEA Young Activist Cohort 5.0 Interview Protocol

Background/School experiences

1. Tell me your name, school you attend, and what grade you are in.
2. Where were you born? Where were your parents born?
3. Tell me about your family.
4. What language(s) do you speak at home? At school? At YoSEA?
5. Do you know why your parents came to the U.S.? Why did they leave their home country? Do you remember the trip here?
6. Tell me about any time you have experienced racism.
7. Tell me about a time when you have felt that you were a victim of stereotyping.
8. How long have you attended school in the United States?
9. Tell me about your experience with or awareness of educational inequities at in your school district.
10. Tell me about the classes you are taking this year.
11. Tell me about your favorite teacher. Why are they your favorite?
12. Tell me about your least favorite teacher. Why are they your least favorite?
13. What kind of student are you?
14. How much do you like school?
15. Tell me about your friend groups?
16. What do your friends call you (names)?
17. What do you like to do after school?
18. Tell me about your time at YoSEA.
19. How has YoSEA helped you in school?
20. How has YoSEA helped your family?
21. How has YoSEA helped you?
22. What is the difference between what you do in school and what you do at YoSEA? (activities, teachers, friends)

Community experiences

1. What can your school or the district do better? What suggestions do you have?
2. Tell me what you know about our government (local, state, and federal).
3. How have you learned about this?
4. What issues do you see in your community?
5. How long have you been aware of these issues? How did you learn about the issues?
6. How are these issues being addressed? Do you think this is effective?
7. What role do you play in helping your community with the issues?
8. What organizations or individuals do you interact with in the school or community?

9. How do you educate the public about the issues that you see?
10. What are ways that young people can take effective action for change in the community?
11. What role do you think students can play in the type of work that YoSEA does?

YoSEA/Young Activist experiences

1. Do you consider yourself an activist? Why or why not?
2. How long (or how many times) have you been a young activist at YoSEA?
3. Why did you choose to apply for the position?
4. What does social justice mean to you?
5. What does civic engagement mean to you?
6. What do you want to learn about during this internship?
7. Tell me about being a young activist.
8. What does it mean to you to be a young activist?
9. What have you learned by being a young activist?
10. What special skills, if any, do you need to be an activist?
11. What do you like best about this work? Least?
12. What does your family think of your work as a young activist?
13. How has your work made a difference?
14. How long do you think you will keep doing this (being an activist)?
15. Why is this important to you?

Appendix B. Young Activist post-internship interview protocol

YoSEA Young Activist Interview Protocol
Post-YA internship

Community experiences

1. What issues do you see in your community? (perception based on the stimulus)
    a. What does it *mean*? interpretation and meaning;
    b. Why do you *think* that? defense of interpretations;
    c. How do you *feel* about it? emotional and intuitive responses to the stimulus; and
    d. What can you *do* about it? action strategies - what constructive actions could be taken to improve the situation
2. How are these issues being addressed? Do you think this is effective?
3. What role do you play in helping your community with the issues?
4. What organizations or individuals do you interact with in the school or community?
5. How do you educate the public about the issues that you see?
6. What are ways that young people can take effective action for change in the community?
7. What role do you think students can play in the type of work that YoSEA does?

YoSEA/Young Activist experiences

1. What did you want to learn about during this internship?
2. What topic did you choose to examine for your final project?
3. Tell me about being a young activist.
4. What does it mean to you to be a young activist?
5. What do you like best about this work? Least?
6. How has your work made a difference?
7. How long do you think you will keep doing this (being an activist)?
8. Why is this important to you?

Appendix C. Former Young Activist interview protocol

Former Young Activist Interview Protocol

Background

1. Tell me your name, school you attend, and what grade you are in.
2. Where were you born? Where were your parents born?
3. Tell me about your family.
4. What language(s) do you speak at home? At school? At YoSEA?
5. Do you know why your parents came to the U.S.?
6. Why did they leave their home country?
7. Do you remember the trip here?
8. Tell me about any time you have experienced racism.
9. Tell me about a time when you have felt that you were a victim of stereotyping.

School experiences

1. How long have you attended school in the United States?
2. Tell me about your experience with or awareness of educational inequities at in your school district.
3. Tell me about the classes you are taking this year.
4. Tell me about your favorite teacher. Why are they your favorite?
5. Tell me about your least favorite teacher. Why are they your least favorite?
6. What kind of student are you?
7. How much do you like school?
8. Tell me about your friend groups?
9. What do your friends call you (names)?
10. What do you like to do after school?

YoSEA Experiences

1. Tell me about your time at YoSEA.
2. How has YoSEA helped you in school?
3. How has YoSEA helped your family?
4. How has YoSEA helped you?
5. What is the difference between what you do in school and what you do at YoSEA? (activities, teachers, friends)

Community experiences

1. What can your school or the district do better? What suggestions do you have?
2. Tell me what you know about our government (local, state, and federal).
    a. How have you learned about this?
3. What issues do you see in your community? (perception based on the stimulus)
    a. What does it *mean*? interpretation and meaning;

   b. Why do you *think* that? defense of interpretations;
   c. How do you *feel* about it? emotional and intuitive responses to the stimulus; and
   d. What can you *do* about it? action strategies - what constructive actions could be taken to improve the situation
4. How are these issues being addressed? Do you think this is effective?
5. What role do you play in helping your community with the issues?
6. What organizations or individuals do you interact with in the school or community?
7. How do you educate the public about the issues that you see?
8. What are ways that young people can take effective action for change in the community?
9. What role do you think students can play in the type of work that YoSEA does?

<u>YoSEA/Young Activist experiences</u>

1. Do you consider yourself an activist? Why or why not?
2. How long (or how many times) have you been a young activist at YoSEA?
3. Why did you choose to apply for the position?
4. What does social justice mean to you?
5. What does civic engagement mean to you?
6. Tell me about being a young activist.
7. What does it mean to you to be a young activist?
8. What have you learned by being a young activist?
9. What special skills, if any, do you need to be an activist?
10. What do you like best about this work? Least?
11. What does your family think of your work as a young activist?
12. How has your work made a difference?
13. How long do you think you will keep doing this (being an activist)?
14. Why is this important to you?
15. What did you want to learn about during this internship?
16. What topic did you choose to examine for your final project?

Appendix D. Details of the Young Activist Internship

Date of YA Session	Topic	Details	YAs in attendance	Related Themes
October 4, 2018	Onboarding and Welcome to YA Internship	Session led by Marie, the program coordinator, and Senri Wayne, a SO intern	YA: Prince and Charlotte Soyer SO: Senri Wayne	Intergroup collaboration
October 18, 2018	Journaling and Zine Making	Session on journaling and zine making led by Marie, the program coordinator, and Senri Wayne, a SO intern	YA: Kim, Prince and Charlotte Soyer SO: Senri Wayne	Intergroup collaboration
October 25, 2018	Door Canvassing Workshop	Marie and Senri Wayne led the ice breaker activity Session on door canvassing led by two YoSEA leadership staff, Liz and Sara	YA: Prince and Charlotte Soyer SO: Senri Wayne	Knowledge building through sustained involvement
October 28, 2018	Kneel for Justice direct action	The human resources manager led and coordinated this direct action	YA: Kim, Prince and Charlotte Soyer	Social justice actions
October 29, 2018	Door Canvassing direct action	Liz and Sara led and coordinated this direct action	SO: Senri Wayne	Social justice actions
November 8, 2018	Toxic Masculinity	The group traveled to USE for a presentation by the Hmong Student Association Alex, a YoSEA mentor, led the debriefing	YA: Kim, Prince and Charlotte Soyer SO: Senri Wayne	Exposure to critical issues

		session		
November 15, 2018	Southeast Asian Deportations	Short presentation on Southeast Asian deportations led by Sara	SO: Senri Wayne	Exposure to critical issues
November 15, 2018	Migrant Assistance direct action	The group traveled to the bus station in downtown to lead a Migrant Assistance direct action	SO: Senri Wayne	Social justice actions
November 29, 2018	Gender Justice	Session on gender justice led by Michelle and Senri Wayne	YA: Kim, Prince and Charlotte Soyer SO: Senri Wayne	Exposure to critical issues
December 6, 2018	2020 Census	Session on the 2020 Census led by Sara	YA: Kim, Prince and Charlotte Soyer SO: Senri Wayne	Exposure to critical issues
January 17, 2019	Southeast Asian Deportations	Session on Southeast Asian deportations led by Marie and Lucy The interns prepared for the National Week of Action to end Southeast Asian Deportations	YA: Kim and Charlotte Soyer SO: Senri Wayne	Knowledge building through sustained involvement
January 31, February 7, February 21, 2019	Final project research	There were no formal discussions or presentations during these three meetings. The YA interns met with their mentorvisors or	YA: Kim, Prince and Charlotte Soyer SO: Senri Wayne	Knowledge building through sustained involvement

		YoSEA leaders to work on their research projects		

Appendix E. Collaborative Posters from YA Session on October 4, 2018