

Background

- Educational opportunities in public school systems are inequitable, where youth of color attend schools with fewer resources (Donner, 2013; Valles & Villapando, 2013). Within a racialized system, teachers and students of color may feel that schools are not welcoming (Valenzuela, 2010). This inequity negatively affects educational attainment and life beyond the classroom for students of color (Donnor, 2013; Yosso, 2006).
- Explanations for educational disparities often rely on deficit perspectives of human development, while ignoring youth voices, and the systemic nature of educational inequity (Murphey et al., 2014; Woessman, 2015).
- Deficit perspectives** blame the students of color' cultural values, language, or social structures for poor educational outcomes (Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Yosso, 2006).
- In contrast, **critical race theory (CRT)** is a lens that highlights a system of institutionalized racism to analyze differential access to quality education and differential educational outcomes. It also centers lived experiences of people of color and celebrates the assets they bring to the classroom (Yosso, 2006).

Method

Counterstory methodology

- CRT addresses and contests dominant narratives about educational disparities that rely on deficit perspectives through counterstories (Yosso, 2006).
- Counterstorytelling** involves sharing the stories and experiences of marginalized people from their own perspectives, highlighting their lived experiences (Yosso, 2005).
- Counterstories** can document racism, as well as how young people actively contest racism (Greene, 2013; Harper & Davis, 2012; Yosso, 2006).
- In school settings counterstories can be used as a way to foster **relational pedagogy**, in order to facilitate student-teacher humanization and positive relational experiences in the classroom by centering the unique knowledge and experiences of students and teachers of color
- This can promote student-teacher relationships and an equitable, positive environment (Baxter Magolda, 1996; Brownlee, 2004).

Acknowledgements

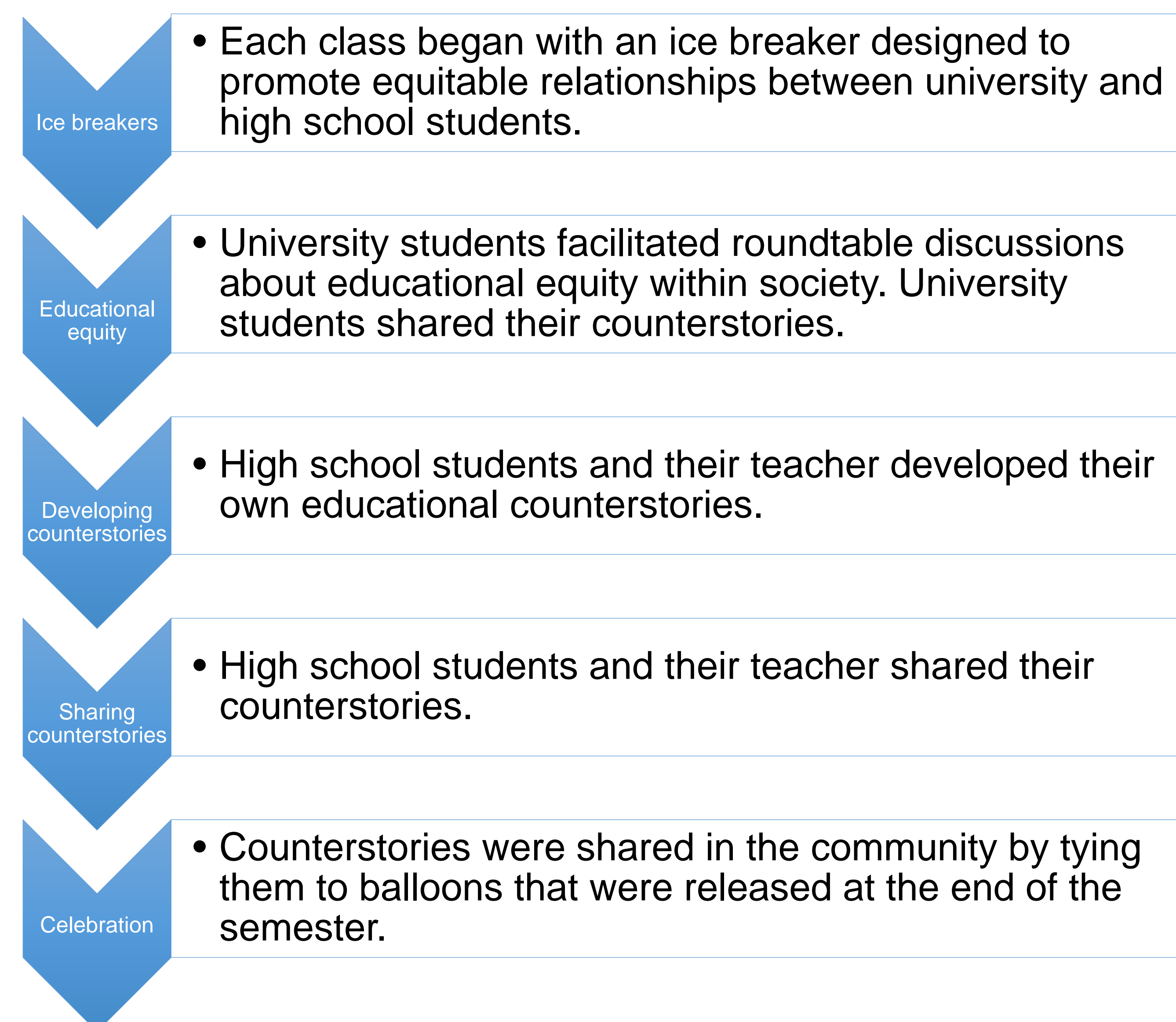
We would like to acknowledge the many undergraduate and high school student collaborators who made this work possible. We are deeply grateful to Pueblo High School students enrolled in Veronica Encinias's AVID classes in Fall 2015 for their willingness to engage with us in exploring educational equity in their lived experiences. In addition, we thank the undergraduate students enrolled in FSHD/MAS 280 in Fall 2015 at the University of Arizona were pivotal in facilitating counterstories with high school students. Thank you for your support and engagement in this project.

Procedure

Participants. This university-high school collaboration included a team of undergraduates (N=29) enrolled in a service learning course, high school students (N=80) from 5 AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination, which is a college prep program) classes, one high school teacher, a university professor, and a graduate student.

- This project was conducted at a majority Latinx high school (90% Mexican-descent students) in a low-income community (69% of children living below poverty threshold).
- University students were trained in youth participatory action techniques (i.e., participatory dialogue based on problem posing, youth-led decision making and co-led research, reflection, action) and counterstory methodology (Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Yosso, 2006). University students visited high school classes weekly (on average 11 service learning hours per student).

YPAR Process



Data. Ethnographic observations were recorded by first, second, and fourth authors (undergraduate student, graduate student, and university professor, respectively). The fifth author (high school teacher) was interviewed. In addition, the first, second, fourth, and fifth authors developed and shared their own counterstories as part of the project. Themes were developed based on the authors' counterstories and ethnographic observations.

Results & Discussion

Theme 1: Counterstories humanize and equalize

- Counterstories humanized each of us in the collaboration, challenged our expectations about one another, and made us vulnerable while also creating bonds of trust and caring. These actions equalized power dynamics.

Theme 2: Counterstories transform teacher-student dynamics

- The teacher-student relationship was also transformed by the counterstory process, by disrupting the status quo of educational environments often characterized by adults maintaining power over students.

Theme 3: Counterstories as critical hope to address structural oppression

- Finally, the process allowed critical hope to emerge for both teacher and students, towards a reality that not only acknowledges structural oppression in educational spaces, but also creates positive change.



Conclusion

- Counterstorytelling** can be a **relational pedagogic tool** to transform educational environments to be rooted in authentic, caring, reciprocal relationships. (Baxter Magolda, 1996; Brownlee, 2004)
- Counterstories can **center youth of color voices** while examining educational equity (Greene, 2013; Harper & Davis, 2012).
- Finally, counterstories may promote **critical hope** among Latinx students and teachers to radically reimagine educational environments in order to transform and reclaim them (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

