

PARTICIPATORY ETHNOGRAPHY: DEVELOPING A HIGH SCHOOL WRITING CENTER IN PARTNERSHIP

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Abstract:

In this collaboratively written piece, a team of researchers and high school students reflect on their participatory ethnography work in a literacy-focused space within a Philadelphia public high school. The authors collectively explore the critical components of their still-unfolding research: participatory space-building, which entails creating safety in learning and writing-focused spaces and productively managing tensions that emerge, and participatory knowledge building, which involves expanding forms of knowing and expression while centering relationships. They discuss participatory ethnography as the practice of working together toward shared goals in reciprocal, mutual fashion.

In recent years, educational researchers have increasingly sought to transform traditional models of research that position university researchers as knowledge producers who then share knowledge unidirectionally with practitioners (see Fine, 2018; Penuel et al., 2018). Scholars interested in these transformations have often turned toward partnership models of research with an explicit equity focus, working to surface and mitigate longstanding power asymmetries between universities and the schools and communities with which they work (see Campano, Ghiso, & Welch, 2016; Campbell & Lassiter, 2010; Fine, 2018; Kinloch, Larson, Orellana, & Lewis, 2016). These approaches—which can include participatory action research (Fine, 2018), youth participatory action research (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015), practitioner inquiry (Lytle, 2008), and collaborative problem solving research (Penuel et al., 2018)—have sought to complicate or challenge such power asymmetries by reconfiguring research partnerships and theorizing knowledge production and research from various social locations. We explore one such paradigm for partnership work—participatory ethnography—and argue for the affordances of such an approach in restructuring research and knowledge production in educational partnership.

Participatory ethnography initially might seem like a redundancy—after all, ethnographic research is generally understood as already participatory, at least in the sense that researchers act as participant-observers through close study of people's everyday practices (Heath & Street, 2008). We use the term here to signal a co-constructed process of research-practice that emerges and evolves over a period of sustained co-inquiry, rather than inquiry driven by the researcher's interests. Informed by poststructural feminist methodology, Ntelioglou (2015) uses the term to signal a shift in paradigm that is more critical and democratic in nature. She describes how participatory ethnography "offers a chance to co-construct knowledge with the participants in order to interrupt master narratives" (p. 535). We recognize that such a critical and co-constructed vision of research has resonance with participatory action research, but we find that participatory ethnography anchors the shared activity less in the joint research being conducted—though that certainly remains important—and more in the lived practice of working together toward shared goals. Such an approach to doing, thinking, and studying together over sustained periods of time represents a deliberate way of structuring participant-research relationships around mutuality and reciprocity; one that recognizes critiques of normative ethnography.

We find particularly helpful Jackson's (2013) approach to ethnography through thin description, which recognizes the limitations of researchers in knowing (and representing) others in any thick (Geertz, 1971) or complete way. Such a stance toward ethnography recognizes the dangers of representation—particularly for communities of color whose voices, perspectives, and knowledge have regularly been co-opted by researchers. A commitment to thin description involves acknowledging that people

already engage in multiple methods to document and understand their lives, particularly in a digital age. Participatory ethnography begins with this recognition of people's auto-ethnographic practices, striving toward thin description by working together to co-create knowledge and mutually engage in collective representation. Such work requires surfacing and negotiating the power asymmetries embedded in research-practice partnerships, particularly between youth and adults who are invested with institutional power (Mirra, Garcia, & Morrell, 2015).

We locate our participatory ethnographic work in a five-year partnership between participants at the University of Pennsylvania and a local urban public high school. All of the authors of this paper are high school students and university researchers who have worked together over the last two years to build a space within the high school dedicated to writing and literacy. Defining what this space is—and what it represents—has been our central project together, and the activities that we co-designed over the two years emerged from our mutual interests in writing and the local demands of the school and its stakeholders. While this space, called the Literacy Lab, or Lit Lab for short, began in the early years of the partnership (see Stornaiuolo, Nichols, & Vasudevan, 2018), we focus here on the latter two years of our project (2017-2019) and our emerging methodologies for learning alongside one another. Throughout these two years, as researchers from Penn conducted interviews with students and documented activities in the Lit Lab, students also made videos about the space and interviewed the researchers and each other. These sometimes-simultaneous inquiry projects—motivated by individual goals, such as class assignments, conference presentations, or personal desires—merged and overlapped to create collaborative understandings of space- and knowledge-building within the Lit Lab. By authoring this paper as a team, we found that these ongoing issues of representation and collaborative sensemaking were foregrounded in new ways, operating as an additional layer of our participatory ethnography (Campbell & Lassiter, 2010).

We turn first to describe the project of building a writing-focused space in the school and the emergence of participatory ethnography as our method for working together. We then outline two central thrusts of our work together: the knowledge-building and space-building that defined our activity of creating the Lab. These sections weave together our different voices as we think about how we collaboratively constructed knowledge and space in work toward a shared goal. We conclude with implications for other partnership projects interested in doing the collaborative work of imagining the places they learn together, with researchers and students working alongside one another as thought and design partners.

The Context of Our Collaborative Inquiry

This partnership project began in 2014 with the intention of opening this making/design-oriented public school to all students in the district. Over the last five years, the partnership shifted toward supporting the vision that different stakeholders had for the space and studying how people's making and literacy practices intertwine across various spaces of the school. The Lit Lab became a space that students, teachers, and university researchers thought could serve multiple needs, becoming a youth-led space over time. Students who attended the "innovation" school came from across the city, drawn by the school's vision of trying to "do school differently" through competency-based learning, school makerspaces, culturally-relevant pedagogy, and youth-centered spaces.

As part of the partnership, we (Amy and Emily) worked with a group of 12 juniors in 2015 to create a peer tutoring program in the Lit Lab. These Writing Fellows were teacher-nominated upperclassmen selected to work one period a week in the Lit Lab as tutors. The Writing Fellows also took an informal class with the Penn team to prepare them to coach fellow writers. When the current group of "Lit Fellows" joined together in 2017, after the original Writing Fellows graduated, the project shifted to what we identified as participatory ethnography. The current group was not interested in tutoring, so we decided to work together to create a space around writing; a safe space where people could express themselves critically and visually. We began with a mural project that represented the ethos of the space and allowed the new group to make it their own. The group collaboratively designed a mural on one large wall, with each element representing an important tenet of the space: the world and an open book were in the center (representing diversity and expression), with rainbow colors (representing inclusivity) emanating to the edges of the wall (each representing a literary genre students liked to read and write). One student painted an Afro-centric mural in the closet, and others painted another wall sky blue to be adorned with affirmations and inspirational quotes.

During these two years, I (Bethany) also led students in the creation of a literary arts magazine, using the Lit Lab as a central hub for writing, designing, and publishing the magazine. We produced three issues together, with students taking the lead in determining the title, layout, and content of each issue. Magazines ranged in size, format, aesthetic design, and theme based on the students' negotiations. Content included illustrations, short stories, poetry, and photographs, some of which were produced by the Lit Fellows, and some of which were created by other students in the school. We celebrated the publication of each issue with a reading and magazine distribution party; students enjoyed snacks and music while taking turns at a microphone to share and discuss their work from the magazine publicly.

These and other literacy activities, including the book-to-screen discussion group that I (Emily) facilitated with interested Lit Fellows around the Netflix series *Thirteen Reasons Why* and its controversial uptake, constituted our central work together and

became the focus of our collaborative inquiry. Students knew the Penn team was in the middle of a long-term research project, and through multiple conversations, we decided we would study our work to create this space together. This is how we came to imagine the work as participatory ethnography.

Embedded in our ongoing conversations was recognition of how histories—of spaces, of students and groups of students who inhabit those spaces, and of schools writ large—play into the ways knowledge, practices, and spaces are built and shaped. It is well-established that schools have histories that impact how activities unfold within them (e.g., Stornaiuolo, Nichols, & Vasudevan, 2018). What our collaborative work has made clearer, however, is that these histories are also participants in literacy learning spaces. In the current iteration of the Lit Lab, we (the students) did not want to follow the lead of the group before us, particularly the more formal tutoring structures. Instead, we embarked together on a series of arts-based projects, focused on transforming the Lit Lab's physical space to reflect these expanded understandings of knowledge creation and demonstration through literacy. See Figure 1 below for a panoramic picture of the Lit Lab space.



Figure 1. The Lit Lab, with mural on the left wall.

In tandem with the physical transformation of the Lit Lab space was both an expanded understanding of literacy—beyond writing to communicate correctly or to demonstrate knowledge in relationship to classroom learning—and our growing sense of our group as a community of writers within a space that takes everyone seriously as such. In these ways, the concepts of collective decision-making, belonging, and participatory audience all emerge as critical within our participatory ethnography unfolding in the Lit Lab.

Our Efforts toward Participatory Knowledge-Building

In thinking through what our collaborative work has meant to and for us as learners, writers, and individuals, we have had multiple conversations over two years about how we know about and practice writing—and what writing is. At the onset of our collaborative work in the Lit Lab space, we did not know what types of aims, learning, or relationships might emerge—and in many ways, we still do not know, as goals, connections, and contributions continue to iterate and grow. We have jointly come to understand writing as one form of the expressive and communicative arts, and our project has been to make the Lit Lab a welcoming place for all forms of expression.

We spent a lot of time thinking about what we would do in the space to support that vision about multiple forms of expression. We have come to think about our main activity as building knowledge together about what writing means to us as a community, both for the broader school community but also for the group of students who have come to call the Lit Lab a kind of home within the school. We call this participatory knowledge-building because we constructed these understandings about writing this together through shared activity. We explore the two areas we see as central to this knowledge-building: expanding our thinking about the expressive arts and nurturing our relationships with each other.

Knowing Through Art and Other Forms of Expression

We built knowledge together through our writing (especially poetry) and other forms of expression—music, drawing, painting. By understanding literacy to include all of these forms of expression, we opened up the space not only to people who thought of

themselves as writers, but to all as a space to help people express themselves. These understandings of literacy, selves, and space allowed all of us to express ourselves in multiple ways, individually and collectively. In fact, an important part for our collaborative knowledge-making was sharing what we were creating, which allowed us to learn from and with one another.

The Lit Lab is a place that students are able to go to in order to write, read, and work. That is not what it is all about, though: In the Lit Lab, writing is seen as a way to express how you feel in a more significant way than speaking. Not everyone is able to express themselves verbally with words. It may take time for people to express how they feel, and writing may help. Writing can help others relax and gain a sense that they have gotten something “off their chest.” I (Nakeya) was bullied until high school. A way that I could express my feelings was through writing. In the honesty of myself to share this, I would not be surprised if—without writing down my feelings—I had not made it out alive.

To me (Cierra), writing feels like a safe space because it makes you feel free to express your feelings without having to actually say them. Writing can be therapeutic. Sometimes I write because I am feeling something, but sometimes I write just because I feel like writing something. The Lit Lab is a space where I can read my writing without being judged. When I write something that I do not want to say out loud, I can ask someone in the Lit Lab to read it for me. (They are the only people I ask.) Outside of the Lit Lab, people would really judge; this is a writing space, so I feel like people inside of the Lit Lab are more understanding.

I (Karroline) never was a writer—I never wrote poetry or thought about being in a club about writing, like the Lit Lab. Once I came and saw that it was focused on poetry, I honestly wasn’t interested. Later down the line, when we started talking more about writing, when the last class of fellows graduated, and when we started writing poetry, I began to enjoy it more because I was able to write about what I enjoyed as a person, what hurt me, and what my emotions were at the time. I felt like the 12th graders, this was their space and we were the “freshies,” the youngest and newest members in the group—I didn’t know the 12th graders enough to talk about my problems. After they left, that is when this whole group came together. I knew this group—everybody in here—and I was comfortable and felt more open. I enjoy poetry so much. I love writing so much; maybe a piece of me was missing, and that filled me up.

When I started doing poetry, I saw myself differently than I did before: I now see things differently. When I started writing it, that is when I started reading poetry. I never read poetry before unless it was for a class assignment. I enjoy reading and hearing other people’s poems because they turn what is going on in their life into something—not better, because the situation does not go away—but they seem to put some hope inside of it and seem to make it a positive thing at the end. That is what I like a lot about reading other people’s poetry in here: It is a part that you do not see from them. I try to make my poems have hope. In the last literary magazine that we finished, I put in two poems. One was about my body, and I did put in a lot of hope because I felt like there never was hope and had a lot of negative thoughts about it. I made it into something positive about myself that should have been powerful from the beginning. The other one was about changes—about a relationship situation—and it ends with: “...until I decided not to keep dying over and over again.” I feel like that was a little piece of strength and hope. It was a metaphor. (You know how all the leaves fall and just die? I thought, “Maybe I could change that up and put in something about me.”) When I wrote that, I wasn’t hurt anymore.

To me (Shannon), art is a way to distract me from certain things—emotional things. If I am upset or mad, I will draw something, and it helps me relax. (I will draw something that I mess up on, and if I have to go back and fix it, it relaxes me to go back and see how I can fix it.) Art connects to the Lit Lab because I can contribute to our mural and literary magazine. On the mural, I like my dragon—it was the first free-hand drawing that I did. When I show people in here my art, they can tell me what they like and do not like about it. It is a different audience. To me, it depends on where you are when you share stuff: If I share certain things, people get “concerned,” but in here, people understand and even help you. I draw more at home, but I share it here in the Lit Lab—not in my classes. (What am I going to share for in my classes?) It does not count as literacy in class. When people write something, they do it for a reason, and they think about it. So, when I am drawing something, I think about that: What can I draw that would inspire someone?

Coming to Know Together: The Importance of Relationships

In addition to writing as an important way of outwardly expressing our feelings, it also has roles in shifting self-knowledge and developing an aesthetic sense, or an appreciation of the self and others as artists. Although we write individually—to express our own feelings and to understand ourselves in new ways—there is also a strong sense that writing is a participatory activity in the space. Writing is understood as a group accomplishment in the Lit Lab; it bonds us together and contributes to collaborative knowledge- and relationship-building.

Multiple aspects of the Lit Lab create bonding. I (Destynn) and others bond by writing, communicating, and sharing responsibilities. When people in the Lit Lab write about a specific topic, it is often relatable to most of the group. For example, if someone writes something about relationships, everyone has been through some similar issues and relates when the person

shares the writing. Sometimes, we have small issues with organizing or getting frustrated, so meetings are times when we can communicate our feelings. Arguments occur in many good relationships, so we learn how to “power through” our differences, and that brings us closer. When we have something to get done, it may require more than one person to help. As long as someone asks for help, (most of the time) they will receive it. When we help each other, we are bonding. For example, there was a situation with the printer: We did not know how to hook up a printer, but we all worked together to solve this issue so that we could print for the last issue of our literary arts magazine. Bonding also helps to eliminate some of the risk of vulnerability.

I (Kris) think that the Lit Lab is filled with interesting people; a unique species of people. That is an advantage. The work we do in the Lit Lab makes you appreciate people because you get to know their creative ideals, and people get to show interests in a lot of things. Even if something does not directly involve them at first, they can become a part of it in the space. In here, people get to be involved in things they would not otherwise if they were not in the Lit Lab.

When I (Jamal) think about the Lit Lab and what I have learned from my participation, it is mostly about working together. Since I became a fellow, I started working more with other people. I used to work predominantly by myself, but now that I know the people in the Lit Lab, I feel more comfortable working with others. I feel more comfortable partly because there are more choices about how to work with people and what to work on. Even though I do not write as much as others do in the Lit Lab, I could if I wanted to—and I could share it. In my humanities class, we write about stories, but we do not really make stories. In class, you write stories about what you are learning; in here, you can make stories if you want to. There is a choice to write or not to write, and you do not really have that choice in classes because of classwork. But, I do think the work we do in the Lit Lab could count for credit in classes if we worked closer with teachers to bring them into the Lit Lab. I think there is potential to do that; to work with the teachers. My humanities teacher is really interested, and I would also be interested in bringing in more teachers more as partners.

The group got stronger—very close with one another—through our writing, which resulted in a better bond than we had before. That is something I (Karroline) do appreciate about the Lit Lab. We could be doing anything if we were not in here. You never know: What if I had never joined? What would I be doing? With whom? Would I be doing well? Poorly? If it were not for the Lit Lab, I probably would not be doing well right now. It is supportive, especially with Emily, Bethany, and Amy talking to everyone. I feel like it is a lot easier here than it is talking with other friends outside of the Lit Lab.

Our Efforts toward Participatory Space-Building

It is critical to recognize that structures and agreements have to be in place for this type of sharing and risk-taking to be possible. Inherent in these discussions of broadened understandings about writing, self, and others is the importance of the space in which our collaborative work has taken place. The Lit Lab has a particular history—of prior student participation and school-wide purposes—that our current group has both built upon and shifted away from. But, it is equally important to recognize that the Lit Lab and this group who works to continually (re)conceptualize and perpetuate its existence also have a future; one that is also continually emerging and iterating. A core value—and challenge—of this participatory ethnography work has been setting and maintaining a sense of shared purpose within and for the space in ways that allow for the Lab to be and remain youth-led. In commenting on the current organization of the Lit Lab, both physical and conceptual, we point toward these future orientations that continue to iterate on the past and move forward with productive, hopeful understandings of literacy learning.

Collaboratively Creating Safety in Literacy Spaces

There are multiple aspects of the Lit Lab’s creation, history, and structure that have allowed it to emerge as a “safe space” within the school. The Lit Lab closet is one place we all started going to. It is a long, spacious walk-in-size coat closet that is empty of furniture. Sometimes people go in there when they are feeling really depressed and just do not want to talk to anyone; it is a kind of relief space. There is a mural in the closet that makes it look pleasing, and we always keep the lights off. We go in and out of the closet a lot; it is a place to walk through. When someone is feeling really down, and they go in there, we all know they are not in a really good mood. When you are in the closet, you forget why you started out in that mood. There are smaller closets within the closet with pillows, and you can just sit. The old Lit Lab and first group of fellows made their closet with tapestries and lights, cushions, and a long carpet; it was very pleasing. Sometimes people would skip classes to go in there and do work. The closet space is something that we inherited; we did not even have to think about it. It is homey. The closet is an emotional safe space.

The room of the Lit Lab itself—from the closet to the couches—is important in defining what can happen there and what makes it feel “safe.” For me (Darrick), the Lit Lab atmosphere, especially when the lights are off, is an easy space to soothe the mind. The people in the Lab are really kind, and we all get along really well. There is always too much light and loudness in classrooms. In here, it is the good kind of loud: We are all loud together—all a part of the conversation together.

The people in the Lit Lab—students and adults—can feel safe to talk about whatever they want. The feeling that you say something personal—and know the people that you are telling will not go behind your back and just spoil it—is nice. You just do not have to worry about that, and it is a good feeling. The Lit Lab is a place for trust. If somewhere is a safe space, it means you share trust with others who are also there. Most of the fellows are my friends: We hang out a lot and talk on social media. This friendship builds and builds, making a little family. The people in the Lit lab are more family than they are friends, and that is how I (Go-Gi-Sgk) feel about a lot of my friendships. But, I talk to the people that are a part of the Lit Lab the most, see them the most, contact them the most, think about them the most, pray (spiritually) for them the most—in my mind 24-7. I have that big hole that is there just for them; for the fellows, but also for Emily, Amy, and Bethany. When people write, or when we watch things we know can be triggering, we talk about it so that everyone feels comfortable. This helps make it possible for us to give feedback, too. We do not say, “Oh, we hate it;” instead, we suggest how to tweak it.

Through our collaborative work, the Literacy Lab has become—in different ways for different people—a cathartic, safe space. One large part of it, as Go-Gi-Sgk notes, is the supportive relationships we have with one another. Both seeing myself (Karroline) as a writer and reading other people’s writing has helped me appreciate myself and others more. My friend’s (another Lit Fellow) poems are really deep, and knowing her background made me appreciate hearing her writing more. You never know what somebody is going through, and I feel really good about being her friend. When I was looking at her and saw her crying, I thought: “What would she be doing right now if she were alone and feeling this way?” I appreciated her more. You need to be there for someone and appreciate them. I try my best to be there for everyone—so they do not feel alone.

The Lit Lab feels like a safe space, in part, because it is not a classroom. It is important to note that even though it is not an “official” classroom, it is also not “unofficial.” It is a school-supported space for reading, writing, and art, where school-like work, including writing and long-term collaborative projects like the mural, are done. It is especially a space to have a supportive audience for our work. I (Kris) find that I do not get feedback on writing in my classes like I do in the Lit Lab. My classes are not like this space—where people actually talk about creative writing. In my classes, people mostly talk without really paying attention to the writing or the writer, but it is different here. Recently, I asked for some feedback in the Lit Lab and was met with a lot of responses. It was interesting and gave me a broader scope. The feedback might be different than what you wanted, but it is still useful. The feedback also gave me good character ideas—like when I was asking about a type of person to put into a situation, the fellows responded with what they would do. The Lit Lab is built on the group’s choices, interests, and goals in ways that are both similar to and different from classrooms. As a result, it can simultaneously serve multiple purposes for multiple people in it and connected to it, including students and teachers.

Collaboratively Managing Tensions that Emerge in the Space

Despite these varying senses of “safety,” it is still necessary to acknowledge that there are tensions in the space that are ongoing and that include and extend beyond our group. While Nakeya expressed earlier that the writing and reading that takes place in the Lit Lab has been a refuge from bullying outside of its walls, this does not mean interactions within the space are without challenges. Some difficulties are simpler to resolve, such as the printer setup Destynn mentioned earlier, while others are more complex and rooted in the interpersonal. Sometimes members leave the group—for a short time or longer—and other times we tolerate individual behavior(s) we might not otherwise for the sake of group harmony. We do not always get along; a reality we recognize as inescapable in our academic, professional, and personal lives. Learning when and how to address—or to not address—differences does impact the collaborative, participatory work that happens in the Lab. We have, over the course of our years working together, learned to more proactively address arguments. For example, rather than letting tensions linger around interpersonal issues, a student-led effort to seek out the help of school counselors was initiated, and a mediator facilitated a structured group conversation with the goal of creating more open dialogue in the future.

There are also tensions between student and adult visions for the space and how it is used. Sometimes these tension present themselves when teachers push back on students using the room when they do not have permission or when teachers come by and see students not doing schoolwork. To me (Amy), this tension has played out in how much direction I should offer in shaping the work we do. I know I am vested with more power in the world and in the space—not just because of my position as a university researcher, but also my identities as a cis-gendered, middle-class, white woman working in a school comprised primarily of youth of color. One of the ways we have addressed this tension together is to name and discuss it. Only by surfacing those tensions and our power asymmetries can we all negotiate the use of the space—and any competing visions for it—in a generative way. We regularly talk about the adults’ role(s) in the space, and particularly the Penn team’s role as tangential members of the school community who do not work there every day. (To this point, we recently had a clarifying conversation with the principal, teachers, Penn team, and Lit Fellows to imagine the future once the Penn team is no longer on site many days of the week.) If this space is to be primarily student-run, what role(s) should adults play? Similar to Amy, I (Emily) found myself regularly grappling with the ways in which my own aims and histories intersect with those of the fellows and of the Lit Lab space and school as a whole—particularly as my own experiences as a high-school teacher were in more “traditional” school contexts where such participatory and student-led work was not equally possible. A key individual and collective tension in this type of work is jointly (re)imagining what various participants’ goals and roles are or might be. This conversation and continual negotiation seem to be at the heart of the partnership, and our awareness of this makes this work participatory.

Conclusions: Participatory Ethnography as Collaborative Inquiry

We described the work in our long-term partnership project to highlight how participatory ethnography might offer one framework for university-community collaborations. We discussed how our efforts to create a high school writing center were negotiated over time through collaborative knowledge-building and space-building. In building knowledge together, we defined writing as one form of the expressive arts. In building the Lit Lab together, we found that writing and other forms of expression characterized the space and guided us on how it should be used. For us, this knowledge- and space-building was undergirded by the relationships we built with each other over time. As a participatory ethnography, our work together involved co-constructing these relationships, even (and maybe especially) amid the tensions that emerged. Our goal was to create a space together and to collaboratively research how we did so.

For others interested in engaging in participatory ethnography, we highlight a few things we have learned. First, the co-constructed nature of shared inquiry means that partners should be open to the uncertainty and emergence of mutual goals. We were often unsure of what we were working towards, so much of our energy was directed toward naming, discussing, and thinking through what our shared vision could be. Our commitment was to doing this work together—wherever that took us. Second, work to co-construct a shared purpose was full of tension, which seems part and parcel of collaborative work, but also involves awareness on the part of everyone about the ways power works to shape the process. We found that transparency was key to surfacing and working through these tensions, as people forged new relationships based in mutuality and reciprocity. In the Lit Lab space, those newly-configured relationships opened up generative conversations about writing and expanded our thinking about literacy as including all kinds of expressive arts. Finally, we found that participatory ethnography helped us recognize and honor each other's ways of knowing, whether that was through art, writing, singing, music, film, or other expressive arts. We listened to one another and respected people's lived experiences. For us (Emily, Amy, and Bethany) as researchers, this involved recognizing youth as autonomous experts who can document their own experiences and histories. Overall, we all continue to learn that openly expressing ourselves and truly working toward collaborative knowledge- and space-building are inherently challenging and vulnerable goals that are not "achieved" so much as ongoingly iterated on and reached for together.

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