

Youth
Co-research
TOOLKIT 

CASE STUDY 

Dan's story



CRIS
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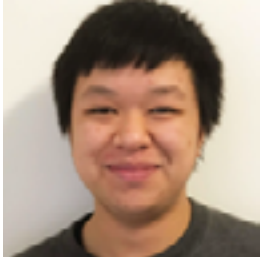
**YOUNG &
RESILIENT
RESEARCH
CENTRE**

cmj
Centre for
Multicultural Youth



**WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY**


Hear from a young researcher: Dan's story



Dan volunteers at the Centre for Multicultural Youth in the Explore program. He is in his second last year of university and considering a career in research or teaching. He is passionate about empowering young people in engaging with social issues. Dan's research interests relate to geography, health and education, particularly in the context of migrant and refugee communities.

Why did Dan want to be a co-researcher?

Dan was interested in the human aspects of research as well as the scientific elements of it.

“Initially when I got into youth research, I thought it would be based around the science aspects of research, but then I realised there are strong human aspects to it. That's why I sort of got into human research at Deakin, because I realised that it can build on my professional skills in terms of doing things like literature reviews. It can also build on my personal skills, like talking to people in the community.

He also talked a bit about his motives for joining Explore, a program that allows for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to have direct input into research that impacts their lives.

“In the Explore program, I got to meet other young people and network with researchers. I felt more inclined to join the

program because there were a lot of multicultural young people. As a young person of colour, your voices are not often heard. Explore gives you the ability to speak out.”

What has Dan's experience been like?

Some of the research projects Dan has worked on included the **Objects for Everyday Resilience** project, through CRIS.

“In that project, you talk about the importance of objects in building mental health and resilience for everyday life, especially during lockdown. We have started planning the exhibition and creating flyers. I've also been involved in a project relating to technology and how young people of colour navigate it for their daily lives. I've done a couple of interviews for this project so it's just getting started. The researchers are pretty flexible since I'm still pretty new to research.

Dan has found meeting researchers early on in the

research process helpful.

“The good thing is that we've met the researchers pretty early on in the year. I've felt like there is already some sort of rapport and we understand the dynamics, the roles of youth researchers. However, being a young co-researcher can also have its challenges. Sometimes I have questions like: Am I doing enough for this project? How much time should I commit to this project?

Were there any challenges?

Dan spoke about the impacts of lockdown, time commitments, and being unsure about the possible challenges in research.

“I think not being able to meet the researchers in person and just doing things online due to the impacts of lockdown. Also just figuring out what I want. I was doing 4 research projects at one point. It's just about managing your time regardless of the opportunities out there.

Dan thought that having more professional development opportunities, a clearer timeline, and possibilities for peer-to-peer mentoring would have helped him in his journey.

What about the benefits and opportunities?

Dan appreciated how he was able to gain many soft skills as well as technical skills during the research process.

“Being involved in research does not only build your skills in science, but there are also social components that come with it. In Explore, we’ve been able to facilitate workshops, talk to people and communities while building our leadership capacities. A highlight for me was the youth summit. I felt like I was able to make a difference just interacting with the communities, getting feedback from them, and influencing the research directions.

He discussed the importance of gaining communication skills from research and how it has helped him in getting other work opportunities.

“These experiences look really good in your resume because it is so unique - doing research, facilitating workshops, working with multicultural communities. It’s also the reason why I got two of my jobs. A lot of unexpected opportunities came even with no work experience.

“I think one of the biggest positives of being a youth co-researcher is just being able to get your foot in the door. A lot of the time, we have to network a lot to get into research. If you think about the structural barriers for young people of colour, it’s especially

difficult for them to get into research because it is not dominated by people of colour. If you are young and you get into research early, that just gives you a good start for your later professional experiences.

What is Dan’s advice for other young people?

Dan’s advice for young people who are interested in becoming co-researcher’s is knowing how to balance their commitments and opportunities effectively.

“Consider your time and opportunities at the same time. Possibly write down what you want to gain from research and why you want to engage in it. Consider your options, but don’t be afraid to say no.

What is Dan’s advice for senior researchers wanting to engage young co-researchers?

“Just listen and communicate. Many young people come into research projects without having much ideas. Let the youth researchers know they’re still very important to the projects, including their views and opinions. Actively give out opportunities for youth researchers to upskill.

Dan discussed some of the insights he took away from both the researchers and young people.

“Researchers know how to talk to people and understand some of the most complex social issues. If you’re going to help young people into research, you should get them into human research first because that’s where the skills lie. Young people’s lived experiences are so important to research projects, regardless of whether

they have a PhD or not.

Finally, Dan emphasised that researchers should engage with co-researchers to develop young people’s skills and improve connections between researchers and communities.

“Young people have many community networks that may be useful for research. By talking to someone who is both a researcher and a young person of colour, the young person can act as a bridge between the research and the communities. It is also a good way to train young people professionally. Instead of creating more time burdens to find researchers or PhD students to hire, you already have this group of young people who are trained and competent for research.