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Reading "Racial Grammar": Latinx Students' Racial Literacy Development in Ethnic Studies Classrooms to Name and Resist Racism

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Arturo Nevarez

June 2021

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Rita Kohli, Chairperson
Dr. Cati de los Ríos
Dr. Louie Rodriguez

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2021

The Dissertation of Arturo Nevarez is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Dedications

First of all, I dedicate this dissertation to the students and teachers of East Heights High School (pseudonym). Thank you for openly sharing with me your personal histories and your narratives of oppression and resistance. I am inspired by how you have reimagined what education in formal spaces can be and how you have enacted better worlds in your classrooms and beyond. I have been so honored to learn your truths and to share your experiences, wisdom and words throughout the pages of this dissertation.

I also dedicate this dissertation to all those who have paved the way for first-generation students of Color and Chicanxs/as/os like me. I have been very fortunate to be in community with scholars of Color who understand and live a critical, decolonial, anti-racist praxis and who have made it their life's work to disrupt and challenge the white supremacist, cis-heteropatriarchal, settler colonial logics and bad practices of universities and other formal education spaces. Thank you for showing me that authentic relationality can exist within the very institutions that try to stamp it out. Rita Kohli, Cati de los Ríos, Alma Itzé Flores, Luis Genaro Garcia, Ed Curammeng, Marcos Pizarro, Rebeca Burciaga, Luis Urrieta, Korina Jocson, Maria Fránquiz, Wintre Johnson, Nallely Arteaga, Joaquin Muñoz, Lamar Johnson, Tracy Lachica Buenavista, Leigh Patel, Valerie Kinloch, Steven Moreno-Terrill, thank you for embodying and living the radical humanizing pedagogies you write and teach about and for showing me how to walk with purpose—always with and for our communities.

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To my parents, my first teachers. I hope to honor your struggles as immigrants, the sacrifices you made to provide for my sisters and me, and the lessons about strength, perseverance, and community that you taught me. Bearing witness to your dedication to our family and community in the midst of struggle was the first and most important lesson about resilience that I ever learned.

I dedicate this dissertation to my partner, Dr. Diane Nevárez, who has been with me every step of the way, from applying to PhD programs to defending my dissertation all in the middle of raising a family and through a global pandemic. Thank you for being so incredibly supportive during some of the toughest moments of this dissertation process. I am forever inspired by how you create healing spaces of resistance and resilience for your students. I am so lucky and excited to continue our journeys together and to learn from your brilliance.

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Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to Margarita Vizcarra, a critical scholar, colleague and friend who during the short time that I knew her, left an indelible mark on me and my family. Margarita, continuaremos en la lucha siempre y en tu memoria.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Reading "Racial Grammar": Latinx Students' Racial Literacy Development in Ethnic Studies Classrooms to Name and Resist Racism

by

Arturo Nevarez

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Education
University of California, Riverside, June 2021
Dr. Rita Kohli, Chairperson

With the increasingly racialized schooling and social contexts of the ongoing anti-immigrant, anti-Latinx, and xenophobic national climate, there is an urgency to examine how K-12 Ethnic Studies (ES) classrooms can support Latinx students with navigating and confronting racialized oppression in their world(s). K-12 ES has much promise to develop, maintain or extend students' awareness of racial injustice, but it has been strongly contended in K-12 contexts and there is concern that it will lose its core critical analysis of racism and white supremacy as it is institutionalized.

Aligned with sociocultural conceptualizations of literacies that acknowledge their existence within inequitable power relations, this qualitative case study explored how students' racial literacies—the language and praxis to "read" the existence of institutional racism and to disrupt its effects (Guinier, 2004; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013; Skerrett, 2011) were developed, sustained or extended in two 9th grade ES classrooms. With special attention paid to teacher pedagogy, the racial literacy development of Latinx students in ES classrooms at one high school were explored via multiple data sources including, observations, student and teacher interviews, and review

and analysis of literacy artifacts. Building on the narratives and experiences of six 9th grade Latinx students and two ES teachers this dissertation study traces a four-stage process of racial literacy development (RLD) for students along with underscoring how racially literacy is embodied in teacher' pedagogies along four core racially literate stances. Given the significant role that teachers' racial literacies play in sustaining the revolutionary potential of high school ES, this study has implications for informing the large-scale institutionalization of ES across California high schools by significantly contributing to the ongoing conversation around what types of teachers and what type of pedagogies are needed to teach ES courses effectively. Furthermore, this study extends the concept of racial literacy to encompass the specific racialized socio-political experiences of Latinx students at this historical moment and within the immediate context of a working class predominantly Latinx and immigrant community.

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Chapter One: Overview of The Study

Introduction

In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Adam Toledo and the separation of migrant children from their parents at the border, it is clear that our education system has failed to provide U.S. society with the tools to acknowledge historical legacies of racial harm and understand their reverberating impact. Moreover, there has been a rise in overtly racist discourse and rhetoric in the months and years following the 2016 presidential election (Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016; Pérez Huber & Muñoz, 2020). Such discourse targeting People of Color[1] has also occurred in K-12 schools where Students of Color have faced increased harassment of a vitriolic nature[2]. Though not new, this increase of such overt racial intimidation has been encouraged by the country's thinly-veiled, racist and xenophobic political discourse and policies (Pérez Huber & Muñoz, 2020; Potock, 2017). A Muslim ban, anti-LGBTQ laws, ramped-up deportations of immigrants, and a push to dismantle public education are some of the previous administration's defining policies (Lenz & Gunter, 2017) whose detrimental impact has carried over into our present moment and exacerbated the overt racialization

[1] The term "of Color" refers to people who have been racialized as Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander and Indigenous within the US's white supremacist racial hierarchy (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

[2] A Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) report documented that in Wesley Chapel, Florida, Black students were reprimanded by a teacher who told them "Don't make me call Donald Trump to get you sent back to Africa"; in Coon Rapids, Minnesota, a middle-school student's hijab was violently pulled off of her head; and, Latinx students in Redding, California, received "deportation letters" from their classmates (Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016).

that Students of Color are facing in schools and beyond (Ladson-Billings &Tate, 1995; Potock, 2017).

For Latinx[3] students, specifically, the adverse impact of anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric has been particularly salient. Fear of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency's (ICE) cruel separation of families through increasing detentions and deportations has amplified the anxiety that many Latinx families and community members have experienced (Costello, 2016; Sanchez, 2017). In public schools, the impact of anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx rhetoric and policies has also been detrimental to Latinx youth. For example, on February, 16, 2017, five teachers and one guidance counselor at Rubidoux High School in Southern California's Jurupa Unified School District (JUSD) took to social media to publicly ridicule their Latinx students. Standing up for themselves and their families, or in solidarity with those in their community targeted by the previous administration's policies, the students had participated in a nationwide "A Day Without Immigrants" strike (Miller, 2017), but their teachers derided their civic engagement as an "excuse to be lazy and/or get drunk" commenting that not having the "failing students" present that day was the "best day ever" since it resulted in "a cafeteria that was cleaner, less traffic on the road and [it alleviated] discipline issues" (Sanchez, 2017).

[3] The term Latinx is a gender-neutral alternative to Latina/o or Latin@ created by the LGBTQIA community to challenge gender binary ideologies inherent in language and culture. In this dissertation I discuss the lives, experiences and racialization of students, teachers and community members of Latin American descent and use the term Latinx because it recognizes how they are shaped by the nuances of language, immigration status and ethnicity as they intersect with gender and sexuality. For the same reason, I also use the term Chicanx instead of Chicana/o or Chican@ throughout this dissertation.

While typically disconnected in discourse from a continuing legacy of systemic racialized oppression, these public assaults on Latinx students and their communities are daily manifestations of an unabating history of subordination of non-dominant groups in the US and of the persistence of racism in its institutions and broader society (Ee & Gandara, 2020; Ladson-Billings &Tate, 1995; Spring, 2004). For Latinxs in the US, they reflect a continuation of policies, practices, and legacies of historical exclusion and racism which include economic exploitation (Donato, 1997), political subordination (Gonzalez, 1990), segregation (Donato, 1997; Gonzalez, 1990), subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), and forced "Americanization" through Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy (Acuña, 1972; Gonzalez, 1990; Tyack 1974), which have and continue to severely limit their educational opportunities and life chances (Gandara & Contreras, 2009).

This persisting subordination and exclusion of Latinx students (Ee & Gandara, 2020; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) reminds us that daily dehumanizing manifestations of institutional racism (Sealey-Ruiz, 2013; Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015) are a prevalent and enduring part of their lived reality. Thus, now more than ever, there is an urgency for Latinx students to know how to critically navigate a world where racism, as it intersects with other forms of oppression, is a daily reality.

Critical students, educators, and scholars have reimagined traditional practices of schooling, creating alternative pedagogical and curricular approaches that support Latinx students' ability to unpack intersectional forms of oppression in their lives. With varying degrees of emphasis on building meaningful connections between home and school

(Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000), developing critical consciousness and community transformative orientations (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Tintiangco-Cubales, Kohli, Sacramento, Henning, Agarwal-Rangnath, & Sleeter, 2015), sustaining cultural and linguistic pluralism (Paris, 2012), and fostering academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2000), culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy, community responsive pedagogy, and culturally sustaining pedagogy are each approaches with the intention of "wrapping" curriculum and pedagogy around students' lives, communities, and lived experiences (Sealey-Ruiz, 2007) and of "developing [students'] critical perspectives that challenge inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.469).

K-12 Ethnic Studies (ES) has been one of these curricular responses to traditional schooling that provides relevance and responsiveness for students. By de-centering Eurocentric histories and perspectives and interrogating the roles of race and ethnicity in the inequitable distribution of power, K-12 ES is a powerful tool with transformative possibilities for an emancipatory education (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Borrowed from higher educational approaches to ES, K-12 ES has shown empirically-supported potential to positively impact students' academic outcomes (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette & Marx, 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Sleeter, 2011) and has demonstrated the potential to prepare youth to critically name, navigate, and transform the structures of domination for the betterment of their communities (Acosta, 2007; Cammarota, 2016; de los Ríos, López & Morell, 2015; Tintiangco-Cubales et al, 2015). With a direct analysis of racial oppression, K-12 ES has the potential to prepare K-12 students to critically navigate contemporary manifestations of systemic racialized oppression and the liberatory

potential to challenge the structures of domination embedded in their worlds (de los Ríos, López & Morell, 2015).

Given the documented social and academic benefits of K-12 ES (Sleeter, 2011), including its ability to help students navigate living in a world structured by racial oppression (Cammarota, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et.al, 2015), Youth of Color, their families, and K-12 and university educators have pushed for the institutionalization of ES in K-12 schools (Buenavista, 2016). Collectively, they have demanded an education that is responsive to their experiences in broader US society and its major institutions, such as K-12 schools, that are structured by persisting systemic and daily manifestations of racism and dehumanization (Tintiangco-Cubales et.al, 2015). As a result of their unified efforts, at least twelve school districts in California now offer a standards-based ES curriculum that requires their K-12 students to take ES courses in order to graduate, and the state of California may pass Assembly Bill 331 into law which will make available a standards-based model ES curriculum for schools in the entire state (Fensterwald, 2020). Yet, even amid these important efforts towards expanding access to K-12 ES, there remains an urgency to ensure that ES does not lose its revolutionary and life-affirming potential; it is relevant to note that most recently, the model ES curriculum released by the California Department of Education, did not address race and racism-one of the core tenets of ES. As the institutionalization of ES in K-12 schools gains momentum and becomes a reality in many more contexts, it is imperative to comprehend its impact and significance for students of Color –whom it is most directly intended to serve.

Purpose of the Study

While there are many insights from current research on K-12 ES and related fields—as I will outline in chapter 2—there are three areas that are less developed in the literature that this study addresses: (1) the role of racism in critical consciousness development in K-12 ES classrooms, (2) the role of race and racialization in K-12 ES pedagogy, and (3) the need to broaden/complicate frameworks on race & racialization that include manifestations relevant to Latinxs.

This study explored K-12 ES as a site for the preparation of Latinx students to navigate the daily and structural manifestations of the intersecting forms of institutional oppression they face. This study explored how at the classroom level, K-12 ES provides the potential to prepare Latinx youth to critically name, navigate, and transform the structures of domination for the betterment of their communities. In essence, the purpose of the study twofold: (a) to examine the role that K-12 ES courses have in developing Latinx student's fluency with understanding race and racism as an institutional phenomenon and in connecting that fluency to action towards the betterment of communities and, (b) to better understand the pedagogy and practice of effective K-12 ES teachers that facilitates racial literacy development for Latinx students.

With the growth of ES in classrooms across the state's K-12 public schools, the potential for an empowering and rigorous education for our most marginalized students in California has been set in motion. Continued research on K-12 ES pedagogy, practice, and critical consciousness development are needed now more than ever to ensure that the academic, social, and community-centered revolutionary potential of ES is not lost along

the route to full institutionalization. This research study adds to the needed empirical understanding of K-12 ES' impact and significance for students of Color. Furthermore, given the specific racialization practices towards Latinx and other immigrant communities, this research project can help unpack how race and racism are discussed and understood within K-12 ES. Especially under national climates replete with xenophobic, racist, misogynist, sexist, nativist, and Islamophobic discourse and rhetoric which has contributed to the already inequitable racialized experiences of students of Color in US schools, research on K-12 ES is vital to inform the practice that can most effectively serve the needs of our schools' most marginalized and vulnerable students.

In the following chapters of this dissertation I will outline the relevant literature and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that inform this research (Chapter 2) as well as the methods that outline my study (Chapter 3). Then, I share findings on the pedagogies and practices of ES teachers that supported their students' critical understandings of race and racism (Chapter 4) and the process through which students experienced this growth (Chapter 5). Finally, alongside noting the study's limitations, I highlight key implications as they relate to the areas of K-12 ES for practitioners and researchers (Chapter 6).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

To understand why a study on racial literacy development as a component of K-12 ES is vital, it is necessary to understand the history of educational inequity, its impact on Latinx students, and how that inequity manifests in the opportunity gaps Latinx students and students of Color endure. Accordingly, in this chapter I outline the literature related to (1) the history of educational inequity with a focus on curriculum and pedagogy, (2) educational inequity as it pertains to Latinx students, (3) a review of the relevant literature on K-12 ES (4) and the theoretical frameworks and concepts that will guide my study, including critical race theory, Latina/o critical race theory, and racial literacy.

History of Inequitable Schooling

ES in K-12 schools is a direct response to a historical legacy of disenfranchisement —a continual failure of traditional modes of schooling to serve the needs of Communities of Color (Cammarota, 2007; Fine, 1991; Urrieta & Machado-Casas, 2013). This institutional neglect is plainly visible in the enduring disparities in academic opportunities and outcomes faced by Youth of Color within U.S. schools (Fine, 1991; Orfield, Ee, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2016; Noguera, Pierce, & Ahram, 2016). For example, the so-called achievement gap persists along class (Berliner, 2013; Kozol, 1991; Reardon, 2011) and racial/ethnic lines (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Lee, 2002; Valencia, 2002). In 2019-2020, 87% of White high school students in California graduated within four years, while only 80% of Latinx students, 73% of Black students and 70% of Native American students graduated within the same time frame (California

Department of Education, 2020). These stark differences mirror larger social patterns of inequality and privilege (Ladson Billings, 2006; Noguera, Pierce, & Ahram, 2016) pointing to underlying opportunity gaps that low income Latinx students and Students of Color face.

Historically, schools have divided students and unequally distributed educational opportunities along the country's stratified economic system (Bernstein, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) and its entrenched racial hierarchy that disadvantages low income People of Color and benefits Whites (Dixson & Rouseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano 1998). This social reproduction of inequality continues through various institutional practices in U.S. schools, such as an excessive focus on standardized testing (Au, 2010, 2015), the re-segregation of schools and classrooms (Nieto, 2005; Orfield et al., 2016), over-disciplining and criminalization (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Wun, 2014), the division of students through tracking (Lucas, 1999; Oakes, 1985), and the implementation of racially-oppressive Eurocentric curricula and pedagogies (Anyon,1980; Darder, 2015). Research that directly addresses the impact of the above dehumanizing institutional arrangements is key to helping provide Youth of Color with a more equitable education. In line with this need, this proposed study specifically focuses on examining K-12 ES as a response to the dominance of Eurocentric curricula and pedagogy and its historical and continuing role in the subordination of communities and Youth of Color (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

Curriculum

From the inception of formal schooling in the U.S., curriculum has been implemented as a mechanism for the reproduction of social inequality (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Pinar, 2004). As Apple and Franklin (2004) point out in their analysis of early curriculum developers for U.S. schools—Franklin Bobbitt, W.W. Charters, Edward L. Thorndike, Ross L. Finney, Charles C. Peters, and David Snedden—social control and reproduction, respectively, marked the following two key goals for U.S. schooling that these education leaders held for schools: 1) cultural homogeneity or the "moral mission" to ensure that immigrant, Black, and Native American children acculturate to Protestant Anglo Saxon middle class culture and values, and, 2) supporting a hierarchically structured society that helped place people in their "proper place in an interdependent, industrialized society" in order to sustain a growing U.S economy and society (Apple & Franklin, 2004, p.72).

To the detriment of those students and families whose culture, religion, and racial/ethnic backgrounds did not align with the dominant one, the goal of cultural homogeneity was carried out by the institutionalization of acculturative schooling and curricula (Tyack, 1974; Fraser, 2014; Spring, 2004). Through boarding schools, "civilization programs," and later through curricula—in public and Indian day schools—that sought to strip Native Americans of their language and culture (Meriam, 1928; Fraser, 2014; Spring, 2004), schooling that perpetuated the economic and political subordination of African Americans throughout segregation and during Reconstruction through curricula for industrial education (Du Bois, 1935; Anderson, 1988),

Americanization schools and curricula that aimed to stamp out the cultural and linguistic practices of Chicanx and Latinx and to funnel them into vocational education (Acuña, 1972; Gonzalez, 1990), and through the establishment of segregated schools for Asian Americans (Spring, 2004), we see how the use of curricula and schooling to disadvantage and disenfranchise non-dominant youth, played a central part in the social reproduction of inequality. On the other hand, as Apple (2004) argues, this history of curriculum's use points to how schools were built to preserve the power and cultural capital of the communities and classes atop the social hierarchy (p.59). Essentially, U.S. education's purpose to perpetuate the "values and social relations that produce and legitimate a dominant worldview at the expense of vast number of its citizens" was and continues to be carried out through curriculum (Darder, 2015 p.19).

Overt curriculum. Overt curriculum continues to function as a mechanism of social control that perpetuates inequality for K-12 Students of Color by reproducing the class and racial status quo (Apple & King, 1977; Apple, 2004; Darder, 2015). The overt curriculum operates as a tool of inequality and social control through official school knowledge—the "facts, concepts and generalizations" that schools consider central to what students should learn (Apple, 2004; Banks, 1993), and which are typically found in textbooks, classroom artifacts, standards, and coursework (Darder, 2015). While research has shown that young people are more likely to succeed academically when schools provide curricular materials and textbooks that are relevant to their experiences and representative of their backgrounds and cultural knowledge (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Yosso, 2002), curricular materials and other artifacts of the classroom present

official school knowledge that often exclude, or marginalize the histories, knowledges, and experiences of non-dominant students (Apple, 1986; Anyon, 1979,1981; Banks, 2003; Harris, 1990; Harada, 2000; King, 1992; Loewen, 1995; Sleeter and Grant 1991b; Swartz, 1992; Yosso, 2002). Such studies illustrate this process of ideological control, or what Apple (2004) calls the "control of meaning" in the overt curriculum; what schools have traditionally constructed as "important" gives cultural legitimacy to the knowledge and histories of dominant groups (p.61) while delegitimizing the knowledge, experiences, and histories of subordinated groups such as working class communities and Communities of Color (Giroux, 1983). Thus, dominance, subordination, and reproduction of inequality along class, and racial lines that results in differential academic outcomes is perpetuated and reproduced in relation to what does and does not count as school knowledge in the overt curriculum of U.S. schools (Banks, 1993; Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2001).

Hidden curriculum. While the overt curriculum reproduces inequality through official school knowledge, the "hidden curriculum" unequally perpetuates inequity through institutional expectations, routines, and teacher's pedagogical practices. "Hidden" or implicit curriculum, a term coined by Jackson (1968) and defined by Apple (2004), is the "teaching of norms, values, and dispositions that goes on simply by [students] living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines of schools day in and day out for a number of years" (p. 13). In other words, the hidden curriculum is the process of socialization into the U.S.'s stratified economic, social, and racialized roles that students undergo through simply experiencing the rules and routines within

schools (Garcia & Lissovoy, 2013; Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Pointing to stark differences in the types of curriculum content, learning assignments, and the structuring of classroom activities (Acar, 2012; Anyon, 1980), the hidden curriculum sorts students by teaching working class, and minoritized students dispositions and skills such as "punctuality…respect for authority, [and] external control of behavior," while teaching students from middle and upper classes "intellectual open- mindedness, problem solving flexibility" that prepare them for more than futures in unskilled or semi-skilled labor (Apple, 1980; Darder, 2015; Mickelson, 1987; Wren, 1999). Aspects of the hidden curriculum such as overt teacher practices, pedagogic choices about how and what curriculum is taught, and teacher expectations about potential performance based on race and class markers like how students dress and talk (Anyon, 1980; Mickelson, 1987; Rist, 1973; Wilcox, 1982), also contribute to the sorting of students along the differential class and racial hierarchy by opening opportunities for learning and engagement for students from dominant groups/classes, and constraining the educational opportunities of working class students and Students of Color.

Given the prevalence of such disempowering forms of curricula, there is a need for empirical work that seeks to understand promising curricular and pedagogic models that counter the subordinating imperative of U.S. schooling and that serve the needs of Students of Color, such as K-12 ES (Acosta, 2007). This study thus aims to further investigate and identify the pedagogic and curricular components which make K-12 ES an effective response with the potential to confront both overt and "hidden" aspects of dominant curricula. As the proposed study centers the significance of K-12 ES for Latinx

students, I will now foreground the relevant historical and current educational context that have a key bearing on understanding the impact of K-12 ES for Latinx students.

An Inequitable Education: Latinx and Chicanx Students

The educational experience of Latinx and Chicanx students in the U.S. is one marked by a history of racial/ethnic subordination, forced "Americanization," and segregation (Acuña, 1972; Gonzalez, 1990). As historian Gilbert Gonzalez (1990) notes, following 1848, the segregation of Mexican children into separate schools was a result of the continuing pattern of domination of conquered and colonized groups by the United States. Based on ideologies of Anglo-Saxon superiority which labeled Mexicans culturally and biologically inferior and backed by IQ tests that did not account for language and cultural differences, a belief that Mexican Americans had an inferior language and culture which needed to be corrected or erased was used to legitimate their segregation into separate and inferior schools (Gonzalez, 1990; Menchaca & Valencia, 1990).

Additionally, because Mexican people were primarily seen as a cheap source of labor, a low-quality education through segregation was an effective way to preserve a subordinated work force (Gonzalez, 1990). Regardless of the schools' setting during and after the era of segregation, Mexican Americans were tracked in disproportionate numbers into classes or schools that "emphasized the manual arts or where low literacy skills were taught" (Donato, 1997, p. 33). Thus, from its beginning, formal schooling was not intended to foster Latinx students' holistic development and was therefore not

structured in a way that made learning responsive to the most urgent needs of their communities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Instead, for Latinx youth, schools have subtracted their abilities and knowledges through assimilative practices (Valenzuela, 1999) and through racially-oppressive, Eurocentric curricular and pedagogical models (Yosso, 2002).

Rooted in this inequitable history, formal schooling for Latinx students continues to be beset by a "multitude of inequities and biases that impinge on the lives, hopes, and dreams" of Latinx students (Acosta, 2007, p.36). Making up more than 20% of the U.S. public school population, Latinx students comprise the most rapidly-growing segment in public schools (NCES, 2020), yet, Latinx students are most likely to be enrolled in under-resourced and segregated schools and districts (NCES, 2020; Orfield et al., 2016), to experience push out in high school, and are least likely to earn a bachelor's degree (NCES, 2020). As Gandara and Contreras (2009) note, Latinx remain the "most [formally] undereducated major population in the country" (p.18). Under current models of schooling, the educational outlook for Latinx in public schools—the largest and fastest growing minoritized group in the United States—is bleak (Yosso & Solórzano's, 2006).

In response to this continuing institutional neglect, K-12 ES curricula has demonstrated powerful possibilities to help bridge the opportunity gaps Latinx students face (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Sleeter, 2011). Along with experiencing improved academic outcomes, however, there is an urgency for Latinx students to be able to name the root causes of the conditions they face so that they can be empowered to confront them (Cammarota, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et.al, 2015). Underlining this need,

this study seeks to explore and identify the pedagogy and processes in K-12 ES that provide possibilities to foster Latinx students' ability to name and respond to the institutional and daily forms of intersectional oppression in their lives.

Review of K-12 Ethnic Studies Literature

Goals/Purpose of Ethnic Studies

The current movement for the institutionalization of K-12 Ethnic Studies stems from the community-based grassroots movements for liberation, decolonization, and civil rights of the 1960's (Butler, 2001; Hu-DeHart, 1993; Prashad, 2006). These movements focused on challenging unequal power relations resulting from U.S. imperialism and colonialism seen in the broader racial and material inequities faced by Communities of Color (Butler, 2001; Hu-DeHart, 1993). In line with these movements Black, Latinx, Asian American, and Native American groups formed an academic discipline to build upon research centered on their communities' histories and realities that challenged the privileging of Eurocentric perspectives and Western knowledge in traditional mainstream curricula (Hu-DeHart, 1993; Rojas, 2010; Prashad, 2006). Along with drawing from work of scholars such as Fanon (1963) and Memmi (1974) on decolonization to counter Eurocentrism and neo-colonialism, ES as interdisciplinary scholarship also examines how race and ethnicity play a significant part in the "construction of American history, culture, and society" (Hu-DeHart, 1993 p.52). From these disciplinary roots, ES' educative purpose has always centered on three key goals: 1) access, 2) relevance, and 3) community (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Access to educational opportunities for

Students of Color, curriculum that is relevant to the lives and experiences of Students of Color, and "advocacy, organizing, and activism" directed towards the transformation and the betterment of those communities though "decolonization and the elimination of racism," have always been at the core of ES' purpose (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015, p.3).

While borrowing from ES in higher education, ES in K-12 schools has its beginnings in "freedom schools of the 1960s, Black independent schools and Afrocentric public schools, tribal schools, language immersion schools" (Sleeter, 2011, p.5) and the collective student movements of the 1960's such as the student-led Walkouts of 1968 in East Los Angeles. Though not explicitly called "ethnic studies" these schools' responsive curricula and the student-led movements' demands for such relevant curricula, pedagogy, and access to educational opportunities in K-12 settings powerfully reiterated the concerns of the collective actions for ES in higher education (Acuña, 1984).

Relevant ES Literature

Currently there is limited research on K-12 ES. In my review of the literature, two main categories emerged: (1) literature on the positive academic impact of K-12 ES, and (2) literature on critical consciousness through K-12 ES' curriculum and pedagogy with three subcategories—(a) curriculum, (b) pedagogy, and (c) decolonizing pedagogy. There is a broader body of research on decolonizing pedagogy which embodies many of the same principles as ES (i.e., they are both rooted in transformational change for historically- subordinated people (Butler, 2011; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015))—but a review of even that body of literature reveals a need to understand how critical

consciousness that is connected to social action develops in a classroom setting and what pedagogy that promotes that critical consciousness looks like at the classroom level.

Access to educational opportunities. First, research that evaluates the academic impact of K-12 ES examines how ES provides access to educational opportunities for Students of Color through improved academic achievement and increased academic engagement. The literature highlights students' improved GPA's (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Sleeter, 2011), improved performance on standardized tests (Cabrera et al., 2014; Cammarota & Romero, 2009), their academic reengagement (Cammarota & Romero, 2009), and increased graduation rates (Cammarota, 2007; Cammarota & Romero, 2009) as some of the academic benefits of ES' culturally relevant curricula and pedagogy. For example, in the first large-scale quantitative analysis of Tucson Unified School District's Ethnic Studies/Raza Studies program centered on a social-justice oriented, culturally relevant social studies curriculum, Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, and Marx (2014) found a positive relationship between students' participation in the program and passing the AIMS (Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards) reading, writing, and math assessments. Additionally, these students—who were previously labeled "at risk" to not graduate (p.1107)—were 51% more likely to complete high school than students not in the Mexican American Studies course (Cabrera et al., 2014).

Given the persisting gaps in educational outcomes facing students of Color (Carter & Welner, 2013; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Lee, 2001) these studies collectively underscore how K-12 ES curricula and pedagogy provide students with access to academic opportunities through academically rigorous content in the context of

aiding the development of their social critique (Cabrera et al., 2014). While a focus on K-12 ES' impact on traditional measures of student success such as standardized test scores and GPA serves a significant purpose (e.g., to provide legitimacy for K-12 ES within conservative institutions of traditional schooling that have tried to end such programs for the past twenty years (Hu De-Hart, 1993), it is key that K-12 ES research avoid—perhaps unintentionally—relegating the community/liberatory objective of Ethnic Studies to a secondary position as the end goal is not just having ES, but that ES lead to the betterment of the communities of the most marginalized students in our schools. While recognizing the real importance of access to educational opportunities for Students of Color, this proposed study primarily aims to explore students' development of social critique that has the liberatory potential for social transformation.

Fostering critical consciousness—relevance and community. In addition to documenting the academic impact of K-12 Ethnic Studies on Students of Color, research on K-12 Ethnic Studies also highlights the second and third goals of ES—relevance, and community—through the central role it plays in developing students' critical consciousness (Acosta, 2007; Cammarota, 2016; de los Ríos, 2013, 2017; de los Ríos, López & Morrell, 2015; Jocson, 2008; Halagao, 2010; Romero, Arce & Cammarota, 2009; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Critical consciousness, as defined by Friere (1970), is an awareness of oppressive social, political, and economic conditions –the ability to name the oppressive conditions that subject subordinated people and then through a process of reflection and action, or praxis, to engage in the transformation of those conditions. As Cammarota (2016) notes, critical consciousness is a "necessary

precursor" to bettering the inequitable conditions facing marginalized communities (p.237). There are two main overlapping sites that research on K-12 ES highlights as central to the development of students' critical consciousness: 1) ES curriculum, and 2) ES pedagogy.

Critical consciousness through Ethnic Studies curriculum. Within racialized schooling contexts that privilege Eurocentric perspectives and exclude the knowledge, histories, and experiences of Communities of Color from the curricula taught in U.S. schools, (Urrieta & Machado-Casas, 2013; Prashad, 2006), research documents how K-12 ES fosters the critical consciousness of Students of Color through culturally relevant, community responsive and decolonizing curriculum (de los Ríos, 2013; Romero, Arce & Cammarota, 2009; Halagao, 2010; Sleeter, 2011). For example, de los Ríos' (2013) qualitative study with 11th and 12th grade Chicanx/Latinx students that explored Chicanx/Latinx culture along its intersections with "race, class, sexuality, borders, regional variation, and power" (p.63), documented students' critical consciousness development as seen in their growing facility with language to name and address oppression, and through their application of that awareness to better their communities: students partnered up with two community organizations and with day laborers based in Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties to create a community organizing project that "promote(d) awareness around current state and federal policies affecting immigrants, particularly immigrant youth" (p.64). Similarly in Halagao's (2010) study of a program with curriculum that delved into Filipinas/os colonial history including the effects of a "colonial mentality"—the internalization of subordination—found that the program

increased Filipina/o students' awareness of injustice in their communities and commitment to social change and leadership through a "rediscovery or recovery" (p.506) of their history and culture. This research shows that Ethnic Studies curriculum in K-12 schools has the potential to counter the prevalence of racially oppressive Eurocentric perspectives, and histories in the mainstream curricula of U.S. classrooms (Banks, 1993; Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2011).

Critical consciousness through ES pedagogy. While culturally relevant community responsive ES curricula are essential to the purpose of ES, a subset of conceptual research also notes that students' critical consciousness and the aforementioned "community" goals of decolonization and the elimination of racism are not achievable without pedagogy informed by a critical perspective on race, racism, colonialism, and other forms of oppression (de los Ríos, López & Morrell, 2014; Jocson, 2008; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Tejeda, Espinoza & Gutierrez, 2005; Villanueva, 2013). This literature seeks to answer the following important question— *given the goals of K-12 ES*, *what type of pedagogy is necessary to effectively teach K-12 Ethnic Studies*?

Through their analysis of existing studies on effective and ineffective ES teachers, Tintiangco-Cubales et al.'s (2015) conceptual piece theorizes that the pedagogy of effective ES teachers exhibits three patterns "embedded in [their] pedagogy" (p.8): it is 1) culturally responsive (e.g. it is attentive to students' experiences, perspective and cultures (Gay, 2010; Ladson Billings, 1990), 2) community responsive (e.g. it is responsive to the needs of students' communities (Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009), and 3) it is greatly informed by teacher's racial identity development—the continual work of

reflecting on their racial identities and their positionality in the existing racial hierarchy. Similarly, through three case studies illustrating the critical pedagogy of exemplary ES teachers, de los Ríos, López, and Morrell (2015) argue that effective Ethnic Studies pedagogy, a "critical pedagogy of race", is an approach to the teaching of race that combines Freirean critical pedagogy with ES' "explicit attention to race and racism" (p.3). Jocson's (2008) study also underscores ethnic studies pedagogy in a Filipino Heritage Studies/ES classroom as a pedagogical tool to facilitate students' social critique. Through the teacher's use of *kuwento* (story) as a sociolinguistic, cultural and pedagogical practice, Filipina/o high school students were able to explore their Filipino identity while disrupting the dominant discourse about their community and their community's history.

Finally, two studies (de los Ríos, 2017; Cammarota, 2016) pointed to Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as pedagogical processes that facilitate students' critical literacies and critical consciousness. Cammarota (2016) documents how students' in an ES course were both "researcher and researched" as they collected and analyzed data about themselves and the injustices they've experienced as racially and socially marginalized people; this participation in YPAR facilitated the praxis, the process of action and reflection, that led to students' critical consciousness and ultimately to the external activism they engaged in their school and at Arizona school board meetings.

Critical consciousness through decolonizing pedagogy. In addition to promoting anti-racism, ES also has roots in Indigenous and Third World movements for

decolonization that are central to the pedagogical practice and praxis of Ethnic Studies and necessarily linked to fostering critical consciousness (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Villanueva, 2013). Drawing from Fanon's (1963) notion of decolonization as both liberating a territory from the occupation of a colonizing force, and the psychological liberation of the internalization of a hierarchy of power experienced by colonized people, this work underscores the role of pedagogy in transforming inequitable colonial and neocolonial conditions beginning with promoting a critical awareness of those inequitable relations (De Lissovoy, 2010; Mohanty, 2003; Tejeda, Espinoza & Gutierrez, 2003; Strobel, 2001; Villanueva, 2013). For example, Strobel's (2001) research on Ethnic Studies for Filipina/o students noted that a pedagogy that centered critical awareness or consciousness of colonialism and neocolonialism allowed students to understand their own family's history, to name both the physical and internal manifestations of colonialism in their lives, and then to take action to resist these forces. Similarly, Tejeda, Espinoza & Gutierrez (2003) argue that through anticolonial and decolonizing pedagogy, schools can become sites where students can develop a "critical decolonizing consciousness" that counters the reproduction of colonialism and neocolonialism that occur in the curricula, teaching practices, and institutional mechanisms of sorting in U.S. schools (p.20-21).

Collectively these studies underscore how ES curriculum facilitates the goals of community betterment and access to academic opportunities for Students of Color *only* when paired with pedagogy that helps students critique racism, colonialism and other

forms of oppression through a racial and social justice framework centered on aiding the transformation of oppressive social conditions in students' world(s).

Gaps in the literature. The existing literature on K-12 ES documents its empowering role in providing Students of Color with access to educational opportunities and to foster students' critical awareness of their world(s), yet overall there is a dearth of literature on K-12 ES. Thus, there is a general need for more research that explores its impact on the schooling experiences of students along with its community impact. Based on my review of this scholarship, two key gaps emerged that this proposed study aims to address: 1) gaps related to critical consciousness development and 2) gaps in race and racialization in Ethnic Studies pedagogy.

Critical consciousness development. While many of the above studies on K-12 ES pedagogy and curriculum explicitly define and underscore critical consciousness as central to the K-12 ES contexts they examine, (Cammarota, 2009; Romero, Arce & Cammarota, 2009; Villanueva, 2013), there is still a need for (a) work that highlights the connection between students' critical consciousness and student participation in transformative change—as there is an overall dearth of research on ES, and (b) more work that tracks the connection between K-12 ES, student critical consciousness, and classroom-level student learning that exhibits this critical consciousness. In other words, related to this second area, a key question that my proposed study seeks to understand is, *what does a critical consciousness that is ultimately/intimately connected to social action look like in a classroom setting*? Studies such as those by de los Ríos (2017), de los Ríos, López & Morrell (2015), and Morrell, Dueñas, García, & López (2013) on critical race-

conscious literacies highlight the connection between teaching and learning in ES classrooms (and ultimately its connection to community change) by documenting students' literacies as social practice (i.e. literacies of racism, sexism, classism, and migratory status) and presenting the multimodal (e.g. written, visual, aural and other multimedia) texts that students create which are informed by an oppression-conscious awareness and that are utilized/directed toward social change. This work is one growing area of research that demonstrates what critical consciousness looks like in a classroom setting, and to which my proposed study aims to provide more scholarly attention.

Race and racialization in Ethnic Studies pedagogy. The above research highlighting ES pedagogy (de los Ríos, López & Morrell, 2014; Jocson, 2008; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Tejeda, Espinoza & Gutierrez, 2005; Villanueva, 2013) while significant to understanding effective implementation of K-12 ES, primarily provide a conceptual understanding of this pedagogy. Much like documenting students' critical consciousness development at the classroom level, there are few studies (Jocson, 2008; de los Ríos, 2013, 2017) that examine what effective ES pedagogy and practice looks like at the classroom level. While the institutionalization of ES bodes well for California's K-12 Latinx students (Sleeter, 2011), there is still a need for research that examines the impact of racial- justice oriented pedagogy in K-12 ES classrooms. Thus, the two areas where this is a need for additional scholarship and which this proposed study will pursue are, (a) research that documents effective teaching practices—informed by theories of ES pedagogy—that implement race and oppression-conscious curricula rooted in transformational change, and (b) research that sheds light on students' learning

experiences and outcomes related to the goals of ES within and outside schools and classrooms.

In relation to those two areas, almost all of the current research on K-12 ES (with the exception of a few studies reviewed by Sleeter (2011) and Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015) focus on exceptional cases of pedagogy and practice that successfully align with ES' purpose for access, relevance, and community betterment. As the institutionalization of ES grows, research is needed in school contexts where either pedagogy or practice grounded in critical perspectives on race, racism, and other forms of oppression is absent in order to document the impact of their absence on students' experiences. This proposed study, as Chapter 3 (Methods) will detail, aims to explore pedagogy through multiple sites to understand how potential differences in pedagogy impact students' experiences in an ES course.

Given the gaps in the review of the relevant literature and the urgency for Latinx students to know how to critically navigate and to be empowered to transform a world where racism as it intersects with other forms of oppression is a daily reality, continued research on K-12 ES pedagogy, practice, and curriculum are needed. This study will investigate the above three key gaps in the literature where further exploration can potentially help inform the needed practice so that the social and community-centered revolutionary potential of K-12 ES is not lost along the route to full institutionalization.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

In the following pages I describe the theories and conceptual frameworks that guide the research design and data analysis of this proposed study on pedagogy and

student critical consciousness development and pedagogy in K-12 ES classrooms. To begin, this study will be primarily grounded in critical theory, a framework developed by the Frankfurt School of critical theorists including Horkheimer & Adorno (1972) and Marx (1977) that takes an action-based approach in research; in short, from a critical theoretical standpoint, the liberation of people from the social conditions that oppress them is a key objective of knowledge production (Litchman, 2010). The application of critical theory, therefore, carries potential for transformative change in classrooms where student learning and development is linked to the social issues and context that impact their schooling experiences (Giroux, 1983). The branches of critical theory most pertinent to my study –critical race theory (CRT) and Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit)—are two of the three frameworks I will employ in this study. Specifically, the lens through which I seek to explore pedagogy and student development in K-12 ES classrooms is comprised of three theoretical strands: (a) critical race theory (CRT), (b) Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit), and, (c) racial literacy.

In this section I outline the three components of the theoretical lens that guides this proposed study. First, I describe CRT, a framework that interrogates the structural mechanisms that reify racism and its intersection with other forms of oppression (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1998). Second, I describe LatCrit, an offshoot of CRT that underscores concerns specific to Latinx-identifying people, such as language, immigration, and identity (Espinoza, 1990; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Valdes, 1996) and is therefore an apt theoretical component for a study centered on the racialized schooling experiences and development of K-12 Latinx students in ES classrooms. Third,

I highlight racial literacy, a concept pertinent to pedagogical contexts and closely aligned with CRT that provides a gauge or measure of how students navigate hegemonic discourses of racism and oppression (Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Skerrett, 2011).

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is the central guidepost for this study's proposed design and analysis. CRT emerged from critical legal studies (CLS) in the 1970's in response to the inability of prevailing legal argumentation, analyses, and reform to address racial injustice (Crenshaw, 1995; Tate, 1997). Noting the pertinence of race as a factor in inequality and its under-theorization in educational scholarship, education scholars in the 1990's applied CRT in their investigation of how race and racism shape students' schooling experiences (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1998). Such application has yielded important analyses for education scholars including the ability to critique racism as a system of disenfranchisement and to pinpoint its manifestations in schooling (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano 1998; Tate, 1997). Essentially a CRT lens makes visible institutional racism's embeddedness in schooling that structure the differential distribution of educational opportunity along a racial hierarchy benefitting Whites (Dixson & Rouseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano 1998). Thus, CRT provides a vital framework for research that engages with how racism and its intersections with other forms of oppression structures educational inequity in addition to its presence in the beliefs, attitudes, or actions of individual people; CRT carefully interrogates racism's historical, institutional, and systemic underpinnings (Crenshaw, 1995; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

As an intersectional theory, the function of a CRT framework is to address both racism and racialization while exposing and challenging class, gender, racial oppression and their intersections in all aspects of society (Matsuda, 1993). Racism, as defined by Lorde (1992) and Marable (1992), is the belief in the superiority of one racial group over all others and a system that grants that one racial group the power to enact superiority over other racial groups (as cited in Solórzano, 1998) and has historically and institutionally been present in U.S. society from its beginnings in institutions such as schooling (Spring, 1994). Additionally, the term "racialization" or the processes through which people are categorized and defined as members of a particular race (Yee, 2008) is important to consider given the way racism can manifest itself based on factors associated with race such as citizenship, language, culture, or religion (Kohli, 2009). Interdisciplinary at its core, CRT's approach to a critical analysis of race, racism, and racialization is possible through the use of various methods borrowed from diverse disciplines such as ethnic studies and sociology, to name a few (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Within the field of education, specifically, there are five key tenets, outlined by Solórzano & Bernal (2001), central to CRT research in education: (a) the centrality of race and racism, (b) challenging the dominant perspective, (c) a commitment to social justice, (d) valuing experiential knowledge, and (e) utilization of interdisciplinary approaches (described in detail below). These guiding tenets serve the intentional purpose of highlighting the experiences and voices of people of Color (Solórzano, 1998). In short, CRT is a powerful tool with which to critique the normativity of racism and White supremacy on multiple levels (i.e., individual, institutional, structural, and cultural),

center the experiential narratives of People of Color, and engage in counter hegemonic praxis through interdisciplinary and intersectional lenses (Yosso, 2005).

CRT has been utilized by many scholars in the field of education to examine a wide array of issues related to racism and educational inequity including but not limited to, pedagogy (Chapman, 2007; Lynn, 2004; Matias, 2013), school discipline (DeMatthews, 2016; Irizarry & Raible, 2014; Sullivan, Larke, & Webb-Hasan, 2010), tracking (Chapman, 2013; Teranishi, 2002), curriculum (Crowley, 2013; Yosso, 2002), ableism (Annamma, Connor & Ferri, 2013), policy and finance (Alemán, 2013; Parker, 2003; Tate, Ladson-Billings, & Grant, 1993), community engagement (Stovall, 2013), nativism (Pérez Huber, 2011) teaching and learning (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Vaught & Castano, 2008), campus racial climate (Kumasi, 2012; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009), and antiblackness (Dumas, 2016). Most pertinent to this proposed study in K-12 ES classrooms, CRT helps reframe individualized explanations about the role of race and racism in educational inequity in the key areas of pedagogy and curriculum. Specifically, CRT has been vital to shaping this proposed inquiry's research questions by helping to frame the study as an exploration of pedagogy and racial literacy in ES in direct response to the systemic embeddedness of racism and intersectional oppressions in the structures of schooling and in broader society. Furthermore, CRT guided the data analysis to understand pedagogy and critical consciousness development in K-12 Ethnic Studies classrooms in relation to how or if they help empower K-12 Latinx students to address the root causes of intersectional oppression by centering their voices and experiences. Thus, as a dynamic theoretical

framework, CRT provides this study the necessary lens to explore how critical consciousness and race conscious pedagogy unfolds in K-12 ES classrooms.

Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit).

While CRT provides a powerful framework for critiquing the normativity and permanence of racism and White supremacy, Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) emerged as an offshoot of CRT in order to better understand the nuances of race, racism, and racialization as experienced by Latinxs in the US. LatCrit is centered on Latinx pan-ethnicity as coalitional and non-essentialist (Valdes, 1996). A LatCrit lens is appropriate for research on Latinx K-12 students as it "provides theoretical space to analyze experiences of language and immigration among other lived experiences rooted in the resistance and oppression of Latinas/os" (Davila & Bradley, 2010, p.40) including factors such as ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality, in addition to language and immigration, that can often be overlooked by critical race theorists (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001a). LatCrit is a theory that helps understand the aforementioned factors most relevant to Latinx's multidimensional identities not as separate components but as intersectional and thus manifesting themselves across the interlocking matrices of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Furthermore, as a branch of CRT, LatCrit's clear compatibility with both racial literacy and CRT make it an apt theoretical component to guide this study. Such a theoretical focus was especially important for this study that aims to investigate the racial literacy development of Latinx K-12 students and their racialized

schooling and social contexts and thus provide insight on Latinx ES students' experiences with making meaning and cultivating tools to confront and resist racism.

As compatible frameworks, the following are five central tenets that Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) delineate as key to both CRT and LatCrit and which are relevant to this study,

1. *The centrality of race and racism and its intersectionality with other forms of subordination.* CRT and LatCrit are appropriate frameworks to guide a study that provides an analysis of race and racism in the schooling outcomes and contexts of K-12 students yet is attentive to intersecting factors relevant to Latinx educational experience in the U.S. including phenotype, immigration, culture and language.
2. *Challenging dominant ideologies.* A CRT and LatCrit framework supplies theoretical grounding to contest understandings of Latinx educational inequality rooted in ideologies intended to blame Latinx students, families and communities for the educational disparities they face. Compatible with CRT and LatCrit frameworks, this proposed study's intention to highlight K-12 Latinx and Student of Color agency within an Ethnic Studies setting, provides a counter narrative to the dominant deficit, colorblind, or meritocratic discourse about these students and their communities.
3. *A commitment to social justice.* CRT and LatCrit scholarship has a transformative and liberatory purpose, one that directly align with the purpose and goals of this study and with the stated goals of K-12 Ethnic Studies. A

primary objective for this work, then, is that the application of the knowledge produced from this research around Latinx-informed racial literacy inform our understanding of pedagogy and curriculum to better serve K-12 Latinx and Students of Color

4. *The centrality of experiential knowledge.* This study draws from and aims to center the experiential knowledge, or the lived experiences, of Latinx students and Students of Color, which CRT and LatCrit uphold as valuable sources of knowledge through which to understand inequitable student outcomes and disparities in educational opportunities.
5. *An emphasis on interdisciplinarity.* CRT and LatCrit underscore the importance of knowledge and research that is informed by drawing from various disciplinary perspectives. In line with this tenet's premise that scholarship is bolstered by building on the disciplinary strengths of fields outside education, the proposed study will draw from scholarship in the areas of ES, critical race studies, and literature on racial literacy.

Racial Literacy

In accordance with CRT's and LatCrit's reframing of the dominant discourse of racial inequity and oppression, racial literacy serves as an important pedagogical tool to develop students' critique and understanding of racism as a systemic force of disenfranchisement (Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013). In a world where Youth of Color face and must navigate the daily manifestations of institutional racism and oppression, racial literacy allows these youth to effectively confront, process, and

respond to these experiences in their schooling and social contexts (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011; 2013). Racial literacy is defined by education scholars as the "skill and practice in which individuals are able to probe the existence of racism and examine the effects of race and institutionalized systems on their experiences and representation in US society" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2013, p. 386). Thus, racial literacy provides a useful gauge or measure of how students navigate hegemonic discourses and experiences of racism and oppression (Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Skerrett, 2011) and therefore is a useful concept through which the proposed study can seeks to explore Latinx students' critical consciousness development.

The term racial literacy has its roots in the work of civil rights lawyer Lani Guinier (2004). Guinier (2004) argues that the ideology and social philosophy of racial liberalism, which views racism as predominantly interpersonal in nature, has permeated the legal and social framework of this country. Due to the inability of racial liberal projects to address the root causes of racial inequity, a paradigm shift from racial liberalism to racial literacy is needed (p.100). Pointing to white supremacy and racism as foundational to the creation of and current make-up of the United States (p.98), Guinier (2004) notes that racial liberal projects, such as the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* civil rights case, have not ameliorated the persistence of racial inequity since they simply treat the symptoms or effects of racism rather than its root causes (p.100).

Additionally, acknowledging the "ever-shifting yet ever-present" structure of racism, including the way that it is simultaneously sanctioned and invisibilized by the state, Guinier (2004) notes that racial literacy is needed in order to make legible these shifting

and masked structures and to recognize racism's existence on a historical, institutional, and economic level. Thus, Guinier (2004) defines racial literacy as "the capacity to decipher the durable racial grammar that structures racialized hierarchies and frames the narrative of our republic" (p.100). Acknowledging the persistence of unequal power relations along racial lines vis a vis schooling and the necessity of youth to critically navigate the hegemonic discourses that help produce those unequal power relations, scholars in the field of education have built on Guinier's (2004) work by applying the concept of racial literacy in relation to student (Rogers & Mosely, 2006; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013) and teacher education contexts (Rogers & Mosely, 2008; Skerrett, 2011; Sealey Ruiz, 2011).

In K-12 classrooms, a teacher's racial literacy—their adeptness with guiding students in the discussion of race and racism—was one of the key features in their ability to help students develop racial literacy (Rogers & Mosley, 2006). A key finding in Rogers and Mosley's (2006) study with 2nd graders was that teachers with a high level of racial literacy were able to guide students in understanding racism as institutional rather than solely individual in nature. Skerrett's (2011) study also underscored the importance of a teacher's racial literacy, finding that teachers with a strong anti-racist pedagogical stance helped students uncover and confront racism, while teachers with "ill informed" approaches to racial literacy ill-prepared students with problematic understandings and responses to racism. A pedagogical approach informed by a teacher's strong racial literacy thus prepared students to effectively respond to racist discourse and experiences with racism. Thus, racial literacy serves as an important tool for K-12 youth in

uncovering and pinpointing the structural and systemic nature of racism and intersecting forms of oppression. In addition to its use to understand students' development of social critique in this proposed study, it will also be utilized as a conceptual tool for understanding teacher's pedagogy in ES classrooms.

Research Questions

In light of the aforementioned gaps in the literature on K-12 ES, in addition to the connection between racial literacy and critical consciousness that has been implicitly drawn by education scholars through their documentation of how racial literacy fosters students' critical consciousness through reading, writing, and discussing about the effects and nature of race and racism in students' lives (Rogers & Mosely, 2008; Skerrett, 2011; Sealey Ruiz, 2011), the purpose of this proposed study is twofold: (a) to better understand students' critical consciousness development at the classroom level through an application of the concept of racial literacy, and (b) to better understand the pedagogy and practice of effective ES teachers that facilitates the development of students' racial literacies. Generated from the above review of the literature (Lichtman, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Glesne, 2006) the research questions I will explore in my dissertation are, (1) *How does racial literacy exist within a secondary ES classroom?* Pertinent to this question, two relevant sub-questions I will explore are, (a) *How does racial literacy exist in secondary ES teachers' pedagogies and teaching stances?*, and (b) *what is the role of the teacher and their pedagogy in the developing, maintaining or extending the racial literacies of secondary Latinx ES students?* The second research question I will explore is, *(2) How do students experience the process of racial literacy development in an*

ES classroom? followed by the sub-question (a) *How does racial literacy development in ES classrooms support Latinx students' navigation of their world(s)?*

Chapter Three: Methods

In the previous chapters I have explained the purpose of conducting a study underscoring the racial literacy development of secondary students in ES classrooms. Additionally, I have described the relevant contributions that this study will have within the aforementioned bodies of literature. In the following pages I describe the design and methods for this research study. I start with explaining why a qualitative approach is appropriate for this project. Then, I outline the rationale for the design and data collection plan that most effectively answered my research questions (Bailey, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Finally, I describe the research setting, participants, and sampling procedures for this study followed by a detailed description of the main methods of data collection that I employed.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative methods were appropriate for a research study that explored the role of racial literacy for secondary students in ES classrooms. Qualitative research is suited for capturing the "rich descriptions" of the social contexts, settings, and meaning making central to a research problem or issue that requires exploration (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Unlike a quantitative approach where such context is often controlled for and where such descriptions are seen to interfere with the development of generalizations (Merriam, 2009), in a qualitative approach, social context in all its complexity is considered inextricably linked to understanding the particular phenomena, problem, or issue under examination (Creswell, 2007). Because this proposed study required rich descriptions of the complex interactions, processes, and contexts found in K-12 ES

classrooms in order to understand the role of racial literacy development in ES classrooms and how it unfolds, qualitative methods were ideal for this research project. Furthermore, the larger institutional, structural, and political contexts and climates in which ES classrooms are situated and that constitute students' worlds, directly impact how students' racial literacy takes shape and thus were important for its proper examination. Moreover, qualitative research is suited for a study that underlines the perspectives and experiences of people who have largely been excluded from social science research (Creswell, 2007) due to a history of racist exclusion; my aim is to center the voices and experiences of K-12 Latinx students and ES teachers in exploring their racial literacy development.

The appropriateness of qualitative methods for this study is also apparent in the study's alignment with the following key elements of qualitative research that Creswell (2007) outlines, (1) Natural setting—I collected data in K-12 ES classrooms, the "natural setting" or the site where students' literacy is developed; (2) Researcher as key instrument—as the researcher, I collected and interpreted the data myself ; (3) Multiple sources of data—rather than draw from a single source of data, I examined and organized patterns I found in the data from across multiple sources; (4) Participant's meaning—I centered the perspectives and voices of K-12 ES students and teachers to understand how they made meaning about purposes and goals of ES vis a vis racialized oppression in their world(s); (5) Theoretical lens—my interpretation of the data was informed by the three-part theoretical framework of racial literacy, critical race theory, and LatCrit theory; (6) Interpretive inquiry— my collection and interpretation of data was influenced and

informed by my own positionality including my background and history; and (7) Holistic account—I provided a complex examination of the processes surrounding students' racial literacy development that carefully considered the interactions of curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher-student relationships in connection to K-12 students' and ES teachers local and larger contexts (Creswell, 2007, p.38-39).

Research Design

Case Study

The research questions for this proposed study was explored through a case study approach. Case study is an appropriate methodology for a qualitative study focused on the racial literacy of Latinx students in high school ES courses. In case study research, a problem or issue of urgency (e.g., the need for Latinx students to know how to critically navigate intersecting forms of oppression in their world(s)) is examined "through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p.73). A "bounded system" is the primary phenomenon or factor of analysis in this methodology and is defined as a particular context or setting that is clearly demarcated by its specificity—a "case," (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). A case study approach was suited for my study as it allowed me to explore the urgency for literacy and pedagogy that helps K-12 students develop effective responses to the manifestations of intersectional oppression through the bounded case of my study—how implementation of a K-12 Ethnic Studies curriculum impacts the development of students' racial literacies. Furthermore, because my study was interested in understanding a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., Latinx students' racial literacy

development) from within its relevant context (e.g., the local context of a Latinx majority/Latinx serving high schools that offer ES courses and the larger context of the growing institutionalization of K-12 ES across California districts) case study was an apt methodology for my inquiry (Yin, 2009).

Case study design. My research questions necessitated a holistic multiple-case approach in which two separate cases constituted the study's design (Yin, 2009). The study's cases were explored in two secondary ES classrooms at one high school: (1) the first secondary ES classroom was led by an experienced/veteran ES teacher, and (2) the second ES classroom with a novice ES teacher. Exploring my research questions through an investigation of two ES classrooms led by two different teachers afforded multiple representations of the same phenomenon and provided the opportunity for a nuanced and/or comparative understanding of Latinx students' racial literacy development. In effect, a holistic multiple case-study approach (Yin, 2009) with a focus on two sites/units of analysis facilitated an exploration of similarities and differences in classroom processes and interactions related to the teachers' pedagogies and the curriculum in order to more fully understand how Latinx students' racial literacies were developed, sustained and expanded and what role teachers and their pedagogies play in this development. The proposed study's cases were selected through a theoretical replication rationale whereby looking at different types of cases—separate ES classrooms-- helped develop a more complex and nuanced understanding of students' racial literacy development and of teachers' racial literacies in their pedagogies.

Research Context

Site of Study

The study site was a large comprehensive public high school, that I gave the pseudonym of East Heights High School, that forms part of a large school district in the Southwest. The high school is located in the heart of a working class primarily immigrant and Latinx community. Over 97% of the school's student population is Latinx. The high school that has a well-established ES program in place, incorporated within the schools' core humanities courses (i.e. English, history, geography social science etc.). The program is considered a "model" K-12 ES program for its success in implementing ES at the high school level. The high school serves a majority Latinx student population and is located within a historically immigrant working class community that has persistently experienced the adverse impact of systemic economic and racialized disinvestment. The high school provided an ideal context for this proposed study for one key reason: given the current anti-immigrant national climate, the site provided an opportunity to explore racial literacy development as it directly impacts Latinx students who are experiencing the effects of anti-Latinx and anti-immigrant rhetoric, policies and sentiment in their immediate family and community contexts.

Participants

This dissertation study included two groups of participants selected through snowball and strategic sampling approaches (Mason, 2002): (a) high school ES teachers and (b) high school Latinx students. The two teacher participants—Jorge and Zareith—are 9th grade ES teachers at EHHS and were instrumental in providing the classroom context to

understand the role of pedagogy in shaping Latinx students' racial literacy development. I first recruited Jorge for the study after making initial contact with him at an annual professional development conference for Teachers of Color that highlights the work of ES teachers in the region. After Jorge agreed to be part of the study, he recommended I contact a few other ES teachers at EHHS, including Zareith, as the second ES teacher participant for the study. Through this snowball-sampling method I was able to recruit Zareith for the study. Based on my research questions I employed purposeful, criterion-based sampling (Creswell, 2007) to select a focal group of four students. Four student participants provided multiple perspectives (Stake, 1995) from which to draw rich insights on each of the cases. Two student participants were selected from each of the two ES classrooms/sites along the following criteria, (a) they identified as Latinx, (b) they lived in the community around which the school is situated, and (c) they had minimal or no previous exposure to ES curricula and pedagogy in their formal schooling before enrolling in their respective courses.

ES Classroom #1	**ES Classroom #2**
Teacher: Zareith (1st year teacher; ES embedded in English course)	**Teacher:** Jorge (12th year teacher; ES embedded in Social Studies course)
Students in classroom: 25 students	**Students in classroom:** 15 students
Focal Students: Junior & Daniel	**Focal Students:** Jasmin, Lizeth

Table 1. Participants in study

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

As case study inquiry relies on multiple data sources to describe a phenomenon in context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009), I applied multiple methods to collect data that helped me achieve "closeness" (Becker, 1990) to students' racial literacy development and teachers' racial literacies in their pedagogies, the phenomenon in question, including, classroom observations, individual interviews of students and teachers, and document collection and analysis.

To answer my research questions I collected data via the following main data sources: for the second research question, I explored the development of students' (critical consciousness as noted in their racial literacy development) through (1) individual interviews with Latinx students enrolled in an ES course, (2) classroom observations, and (3) document review of students' pertinent written work. For the first research question I explored the role of teachers' pedagogy in the development of students' critical consciousness vis a vis racial literacy in ES course through (1) classroom observations focused on individual cases (see below for a detailed description of data collection procedures) (2) individual interviews with ES teachers, and (3) document review of relevant course documents (e.g. syllabi, teaching philosophy etc.).

Direct Observations

Research question (1). To answer my first research question, I conducted observations focalized on the two ES teachers. I took a participant observer or "peripheral membership" role which allowed me to interact closely with the teachers without becoming a fully involved member of the classroom (Bailey, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell,

2015). As I observed teachers, I applied a mix of descriptive, focused, and selective observation (Merriam, 2009; Spradley, 1980) such that I was able to be attentive to the concrete elements of the classroom space such as the artifacts and tools used during the lessons, while shifting to a more selective observation when focusing in on the interactions and communication between teacher and students (Spradley, 1980) that did or did not demonstrate the facilitation of students' racial literacy development.

Special attention was payed to how the teachers' pedagogies did or did not that align with the aforementioned purpose and goals of K-12 ES (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). The observation protocol I utilized for teacher observations was based on Guinier's (2003) three guideposts or indicators of racial literacy (as cited in Rogers & Mosley, 2006), to systematically identify whether and how the ES teachers were engaging their students in racial literacy development. I adapted these for teacher observations in the following way, (a) facilitating fluency with using "race as a diagnostic device", (b) facilitating fluency with using "race as an analytic tool", and (c) facilitating fluency with using "race as an instrument of process" (Rogers & Mosley, 2006, p. 202).

Research question (2). My primary source of data collection consisted observations of each of the two ES classrooms to obtain a "firsthand" encounter (Merriam, 2009) with students' racial literacy development. Specifically, taking on a participant observer or "peripheral membership" role allowed me to interact closely enough with students and the teacher to observe key interactions and events indicative of racial literacy that the literature points to (e.g. speaking, writing, and discussing (Rogers & Mosley, 2008; Sealy Ruiz, 2013)) without becoming restricted to the responsibilities

that being a fully involved member of the classroom requires (Bailey, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For example, as participant observer I had the flexibility to interject questions or comments during small group classroom discussions while still maintaining the ability to move around the classroom; this approach granted me access to the range of interactions and conversations taking place in the classroom—interactions that I would likely not have had access to as a complete observer (Bailey, 2007; Merriam, 2009). The two primary focal points for observations of student racial literacy development were (a) teacher to student interactions, and (b) student to student interactions.

To effectively track the instances of racial literacy development I utilized an observation protocol designed with the guidance of Rogers and Mosely's (2006), and Sealy-Ruiz's (2013) empirical findings on racial literacy to cull a set of guide posts or indicators of racial literacy, in relation to the above key sets of interactions, so that I could systematically identify whether and how the members of the ES class were engaged in this literacy process (*for protocol see Appendix C*). Based on Roger's and Mosley's (2006) study that cites Guinier's (2003) conceptual understanding of racial literacy, three preliminary guideposts for racial literacy that used for my observation protocol were, (a) fluency with using "race as a diagnostic device" (i.e., being able to define and interpret racism as a structural, not an individual issue), (b) fluency with using "race as an analytic tool" (i.e., being able to point to how race & racism are masked and covertly deployed to reinforce a racial hierarchy of power), and (c) fluency with using "race as an instrument of process" (i.e., seeing racial literacy as necessary to inciting participatory social action to end racism) (p. 202).

As my research question were concerned with tracing the development of students' racial literacies, my observations underscored the chronological progress (if any) of that development. In addition to tracking those racial literacy guideposts, the open-ended observation protocol I designed allowed me to record: (a) descriptive field notes including concrete highly detailed descriptions that were free of evaluative or judgmental analysis (Bailey, 2007; Bogdan & Biklen, 1997); (b) analytic notes or initial interpretations of interactions, or inferences about the social meaning of observed behavior (Bailey, 2007); (c) reflective notes where I used to log a personal account of my own speculations and feelings during the observations (Bogdan & Biklen,1997); and (d) diagrams of the classroom layout (Glesne, 2006). Since I aimed to learn how the interactions, curriculum, and pedagogy and practices that occur in ES classrooms fostered racial literacy, I shifted from the "wide angle" of observing the entire class' response to key moments in the lesson, to a "narrow angle" lens when noting the interactions and words of individual students (Merriam, 2009).

After leaving the field, I organized my field notes based on key events related to racial literacy development in the classroom (Glesne, 2006), including categories such as lecture, small group discussion, whole group discussion, group work, individual work or individual presentation, for example. Finally, as the observations were ongoing throughout much of a study, I made comparative notes regarding the racial literacy of focal students and took special note of any changes or progress in students' racial literacy development as the school year progressed.

Document Review

Research question (1). In regard to teachers' pedagogies, the documents I collected lent important "contextual dimensions" (Glesne, 2006, p.68) to my observations and my interviews with them. Collecting teacher lesson plans, teaching philosophies, and the multicultural and anti-racist and anti-oppression texts including documentaries or video clips they used in class, allowed me to examine the intentional practices and pedagogical stances these teachers employed to aid students in the development of their critical understanding of their world(s). Collecting teacher's teaching philosophies, specifically, was an unobtrusive method to help me learn about their teaching values and beliefs early on (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Research question (2). In conjunction with observations, I collected documents to examine how students' racial literacy developed at the classroom level, since as Litchman (2006) notes documents also "capture thoughts, ideas, and meanings of participants" (p.173). The documents I examined helped me tap into students' engagement, struggles, and reflections around moving from an interpersonal understanding of intersectional oppression to one that is institutionally situated, thus allowing me to observe the "reflection" component of ES praxis and the process of racial literacy development. Documents that I collected related to students included, (a) in-class assignments, such as daily or weekly journals, (b) essays and autobiographical work related to key topics of their courses, and, (c) other classroom artifacts and products created by students such as, presentations, videos, drawings and photographs. Of these classroom documents I paid special attention to autobiographical work (Bogdan &

Biklen, 1997), such as reflective essays or assignments and journaling since, as Sealy-Ruiz (2013) noted in her study on racial literacy, students had "racial epiphanies" when they were able to "hold up their own experiences [related to race and racism] for confirmation and critique" (p.395). Acknowledging the multimodal ways in which students' make meaning of their worlds (New London Group, 1996), I examined the expression of and development of racial literacy in the non-written forms of classroom work noted above.

Interviews

Research sub question (1). To help answer the second research question of this study, I conducted interviews of the ES teachers leading the classes I observed. Supplementing my observations of their pedagogical approaches, the purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997) with teachers was to understand how they represented the purpose and motivation behind their pedagogy and practice so that I could acquire a fuller picture of their teaching with relation to aiding the development of students' racial literacies. To understand what these teachers believed is the role of their pedagogy in their students' racial literacy development, I applied a qualitative phenomenological approach to the interviews (Seidman, 2013) since it allowed me to access the teachers' meaning making around what they viewed as the key features of their pedagogy, why they viewed them as such, and how they arrived at an understanding of their centrality in their pedagogy. These interviews were conducted individually, composed of open-ended questions, and structured as extended

conversations (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Burgess, 2002), which allowed for open conversations about their pedagogy and the goals of their teaching.

For these interviews I maintained a topic list (Hermanowicz, 2002) and a list of questions, but allowed teacher interviewees to take the conversation in directions most meaningful to them (Burgess, 2002; Seidman, 2013), especially when I asked them to relate what they saw as the primary goals they had for their teaching and for their students as ES educators (*for protocol see Appendix B*). Additionally, to arrive at a better understanding of how these teachers understood their pedagogy, I asked "contrast questions" (Burgess, 2002) such as, "How does your pedagogy differ from the pedagogy of teachers at your school who do not teach with a framework like yours?" to help underscore the characteristics their pedagogy.

Research question (2). Along with observations and document review, I also conducted forty-minute to one hour long semi-structured interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) at three points throughout the study with the selected focal group of students chosen through purposeful, criterion-based sampling (Creswell, 2007). Since my goal was to understand how the racial literacy of students developed in an ES classroom, I interviewed students at the beginning of the course, at the mid-point of my study, and finally towards the end of my stay at the research site to provide another rich source of data—supplementing my observations and document review—that helped me map out the development and progress of students' racial literacy. Interviews were conducted individually and structured as extended conversations (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Burgess, 2002), which allowed for open conversations about the set of topics I

brought. The interviews were composed of open-ended questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Seidman, 2013) that asked about students' views on race, racial inequity, and racism in their lives, in their communities and in their schooling. Though I maintained a topic list (Hermanowicz, 2002) and a list of questions, I allowed student participants to take the conversation in directions most meaningful to them (Burgess, 2002; Seidman, 2013). Similar to my observation protocol, my interview protocol had a list of the same indicators culled from the research on racial literacy (Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013; Skerrett, 2011) but adapted to focus solely on racial literacy as demonstrated through students' speech.

All of the interviews conducted in this study were audio recorded to maintain their accuracy (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Hermanowicz, 2002), and each were transcribed verbatim (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). These transcriptions were then coded following Harding's (2013) suggested steps: first, identify initial categories based on a review of the transcripts; second, write codes along the transcript; third, review codes and revise the initial categories if needed; and finally, look for themes/findings in each of the categories (as cited in Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Legend of Data Sources and Notations in the Dissertation

Acronym	*Data Source*
FN	Field Notes
FG	Focus Group Interview
SJE	Student Journal Entry
ON	Class Observation Notes

SI	Student Interview
TI	Teacher Interview

Access

To gain access to the high school site where I conducted this study, I relied on the relationships with teachers that I had cultivated. As an organizer and volunteer for an annual professional development for racial justice for Teachers of Color, I maintained contact with several ES teachers who are social justice leaders at their respective schools. Also, past research I conducted with teachers in K-12 schools provided me with connections to social justice teacher educators, and teachers who would be willing to connect me with schools with K-12 ES programs.

Recruitment

To recruit teacher participants, I contacted the ES teachers in my network for permission to conduct my study in their classrooms. Once I had selected the teachers for the study, I needed to recruit students within their classes. To recruit student participants, once in the classrooms, I gave a short three minute presentation to their students briefly introducing myself and my research after which I handed out information sheets with space for interested parties to provide their name, their parent's or legal guardian's email address(es), and phone number(s). I then sent an email to or called potential participants' parents or legal guardians to ask if they were willing to have their student participate. I then provided parents or legal guardians with consent forms and provided students with assent forms.

Data Analysis

Through interviews and observations, I coded deductively using Roger's & Mosley's (2006) three indicators of racial literacy. I utilized a table which defines each indicator and provides examples from the literature on racial literacy adapted to a Latinx context to guide my coding. To familiarize myself with the data spent time with each case— I read through interviews and observations and wrote an overall summary of each case. During the cycle of coding I began to attach codes (i.e. indictors of students' racial literacy) to bits of data. After coding individual cases I wrote a description of each case (suspending cross-case comparisons) and then move into cross-case analysis (Yin, 2003) by creating a table to organize data, make comparisons and identify patterns across cases. Ultimately, these word tables helped me to produce an in-depth description or narrative of the cases with teacher pedagogy as the focal component. For the study's second research question, I began with Roger & Mosley's (2006) three guideposts for tracking racial literacy and, through interviews and observations, I coded deductively based on those indicators of racial literacy. I utilized a table which defines each indicator of racial literacy and provides examples of racial literacy adapted to a Latinx context of racism and racialization to guide my coding. For example, for the indicator (a) fluency with using "race as a diagnostic device" (i.e., being able to define and interpret racism as a structural, not an individual issue) an example I included was *understanding anti-immigrant rhetoric as not simply a matter of interpersonal prejudice, but symptomatic of an underlying structural and institutional factors.* I then read through the interviews and observations and wrote an overall summary of each case. During the cycle of coding I

begin to attach codes (i.e. indictors of students' racial literacy) to bits of data. After coding individual cases I wrote a description of each case (suspending cross-case comparisons). To produce an in-depth description of the cases then move into a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2003) by creating a word table to organize data, make comparisons, identify patterns, and draw conclusions across cases.

In qualitative research the study design is guided by the researcher's worldview, the chosen theoretical lens, the methodology, the approach to data collection and the interpretation (Creswell, 2007). To shed light on the various actors' perspectives and experiences, I "listen[ed] intently" to participants, observed with intentionality, collected relevant documents, and exercised discipline in data collection and organization while allowing room for flexibility (Stake, 1995, p.66). I aspired to produce a report that "includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem," (Creswell, 2007, p.37).

Lastly, Stake (1995) describes the multiple, and often simultaneous roles that the researcher must play. These roles include, teacher, advocate, evaluator, biographer, and interpreter, to name a few. Not only did I inhabit multiple roles, but as a Chicano, I bring a unique 'theoretical sensitivity' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which helped to strengthen my research. While some may disregard theoretical sensitivity as bias which clouds my analytical lens, Stake (1995) argues that, "research is not helped by making it appear value free. It is better to give the reader a good look at the researcher" (p.95). I therefore name my own positionality to challenge notions of "objectivity" and "neutrality" in research. As mentioned above, my motivations stem from the desire to develop

knowledge and understanding of how best to prepare Latinx students to navigate the intersecting forms of oppression in their lives and to help in understanding how best to empower them to engage in the transformation of their world(s) for the betterment of their communities. This study was explicitly motivated by my hope that it can directly inform K-12 ES practice as an important moment in California's public school's history with the potential to positively impact Latinx students and their communities in significant ways unfolds.

Chapter 4: Teaching for Racial Literacy

In this chapter, the ES teachers from this study demonstrate the central role that teachers and their pedagogy play in developing, maintaining or extending the racial literacies of secondary Latinx ES students. As the expansion of ES in K-12 schools and districts moves forward, less scholarly attention has been devoted to exploring a key component in the successful implementation of ES in K-12 contexts: ES teachers. Specifically, there is a dearth of literature that focuses on the pedagogies and praxis of ES teachers including the literacies, understandings and pedagogical commitments that undergird effective teaching in ES classrooms (Curammeng, Lopez & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2016; Curammeng & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2017; de los Ríos, López & Morrell, 2015; de los Ríos & Molina, 2020; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Tintiangco-Cubales et al, 2019). If ES is to be an "anti-racist project" as Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2015) have defined, then racial literacy needs to be embedded in ES pedagogy. From a CRT standpoint such an anti-racist ES pedagogy can support students' racial analyses of educational injustice along its institutional, individual, cultural and ideological levels (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1998; Solórzano, 1998). Studies on racial literacy in K-12 classrooms underscore how teachers' capacities to guide students with critical understandings of race and racism have a direct impact on students' abilities to engage in critical discourse on racism towards the transformation of racial oppression (Skerrett, 2011; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Epstein & Gist, 2015; Philip et al., 2016).

Building on this scholarship, this study explores racial literacy development in the context of ES teachers' pedagogies to answer the first research question*: How does racial literacy exist within a secondary ES classroom?* and accompanying sub-questions (a) *How does racial literacy exist in secondary ES teachers' pedagogies and teaching stances?* and (b) *What is the role of the teacher and their pedagogy in developing, maintaining or extending the racial literacies of secondary Latinx ES students?*

This chapter is divided into two sub-sections focused on the teacher participants in this study. In the first sub-section, *the making of racially-literate ES teachers*, I explore how they developed the racial literacy they need to teach students including, (a) what life experiences shaped their decisions to became ES teachers and their pedagogies and (b) what they want for their students. In the second sub-section, *how racial literacy lives in ES teachers' pedagogies*, I explore how they embodied racial literacy in their pedagogies. I highlight four attributes of their pedagogy that I call "*racially literate stances*" that emerged from my analysis using grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967): (1) naming oppression through a sustained, process-oriented approach, (2) rooting learning in place-based knowledge, (3) centering the experiences and experiential knowledge of communities of Color, and (4) connecting students' critical analyses towards social action.

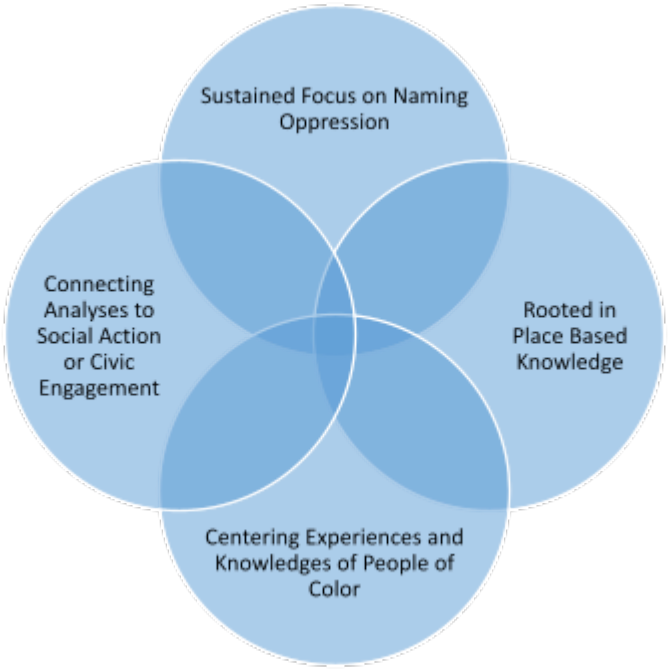


Figure 1. ES Teachers' Racially Literate Stances

The Making of Racially-Literate ES Teachers

Teachers need to have racial literacy to support their students' racial literacy (Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Skerrett, 2011) yet this critical ability to guide conversations about race and racism in classrooms is not typically supported or taught in teacher education credential programs or other school-based/district supported professional development (Kohli, et al., 2018; Kohli et al, 2021). So how do these teachers develop the praxis to teach for racial justice and/or where do they develop it? Additionally, how do they embody it and how has it shaped their interest in being ES teachers? In order to explore what racially-literate ES teachers do in their classrooms to support students with sustaining, extending or developing their racial literacies, it is important to begin with understanding what shaped their commitments and desires to become ES teachers. As I

will detail in this section, for Jorge and Zareith—the two teachers featured in this study—a significant part of what shaped their motivations and commitments to become racial justice/praxis oriented ES teachers includes their own histories of racialization and oppression (Daus-Magbual, 2010; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). It should be noted that while Jorge and Zareith, used the term "critical consciousness" as a blanket term to describe their broader social analyses of injustice including their analyses of race and racism, I refer to and highlight their "racial literacies" to specifically talk about their fluency and classroom praxis relevant to issues of race and racism (as defined in Chapter 2).

Why They Became ES Teachers

Both Zareith and Jorge shared that their journeys to becoming ES teachers were inextricably linked to their own racial literacy development; that development—they noted—began long before they first set foot in a teacher education program. In fact, in their narratives they highlighted that their experiences with racism and oppression as youth –and in schools, specifically—marked the beginning of their journeys to becoming secondary ES teachers.

Jorge. Jorge, who identifies as Chicano, was in his 15th year of teaching at East Heights and in his 4th year of teaching ES (in the 9th-grade-wide program) at EHHS when I interviewed him for this study. The son of immigrant farmworkers from Mexico who labored in the fields of California's Imperial Valley, Jorge grew up in a farmworker camp and witnessed first-hand the racialized exploitation of those closest to him. Though he attended multi-racial elementary and middle schools, Jorge noted that all of his teachers were white and he remembered the schooling they imparted as "punitive" and

"traumatizing." In Kindergarten his teacher washed his mouth with soap and water and on another occasion swatted his hand. In 5th grade his teacher punished him by making him stand with his nose against the chalkboard while she carried on teaching. Another teacher would regularly ask him if his mom, "made burritos and if she would sell him some." The cumulative impact of these racialized punitive experiences by his white teachers made school a place where over time, Jorge, began to internalize shame of himself, his family and his culture, "The teachers weren't necessarily telling me I should be ashamed of my language, or that I should be ashamed of my family who are farmworkers, but because of these experiences, I started developing an inferiority complex to the white kids in school" (Jorge, TI, April, 25, 2018). Though he said that a fuller understanding of his dehumanization in school would not come until his own critical consciousness unfolded, Jorge shared that the covert and overt racism of his teachers and classmates fanned the flames of his political consciousness; reflecting on those experiences as he grew older, he said that they angered him and compelled him to become a teacher with the type of pedagogy that his elementary and middle school teachers lacked,

> It comes down to bringing a pedagogy of *cariño* (care)—a humanizing pedagogy for our young people. Of not automatically taking a punitive approach. Zero tolerance policies have disproportionately affected kids of color. I was a victim of that in my own schooling experience…it goes back to institutional racism…the way teachers treated me dehumanized me and made me hate who I was (Jorge, TI, April, 25, 2018).

Instead of a place where Jorge could feel cared for, or at the very least, treated with dignity, the punitive, dehumanizing pedagogies of his teachers—classroom-level manifestations of the violence of institutional racism—made school a place where he

developed a negative identity of himself. Jorge mentioned that he felt even more determined to teach to try to "undo some of the harm and damage other teachers have done…such as making [students] feel incompetent and squashing their dreams—something I find so common with students in East Heights" (Jorge, TI, April, 25, 2018). Part of the impetus for Jorge to become a teacher, then, was the knowledge that those young people of Color, who he sees himself in, continue to be similarly traumatized in school.

In college Jorge was exposed to the history, theory and language that helped him cultivate his critical consciousness to name the injustices his family lived and the racialized inequity in his own schooling. He began college as a psychology major, but as an undergrad, his outreach/activism with youth as the campus relations coordinator for MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) and through Upward Bound, changed his academic trajectory. Encouraged by a friend and fellow organizer, Jorge switched majors to social science with an emphasis on secondary education. In that program he said he was able to take ES courses in the Chicana/Chicano Studies and Africana Studies departments that were much more meaningful to him as they spoke to his lived reality—his racialized experiences as a first-generation Chicano—and more closely aligned with his commitment to transform inequity in the world. Jorge said that his political consciousness flourished in this empowering context,

> It was when I started taking Chicana/Chicano Studies courses in college that I became critically conscious and aware of the oppressive experience that my family was undergoing. I got to understand what oppression meant and I started applying it to my family experience as farmworkers. I was also able to make a historical leap and draw a connection between my family's experiences and those of other Latinos or Mexican Americans and Mexicanos...it gave me a historical

> understanding that provided me a perspective of the exploitation they were under...I was really angry at the system because I became aware of the level of oppression and exploitation of farmworkers so I joined MEChA and we started a United Farmworkers Support Committee…(Jorge, TI, June, 16, 2018).

As Jorge underscores here, ES in college was more than an interesting field of study, it was as he says, what "saved him." ES helped Jorge gain the critical language to unpack the manifestations of oppression in his life and across the shared experiences of Latinxs in the U.S.; second, it offered him a newfound purpose rooted in his commitment to his community and his/their struggles for justice. As he shared later, it allowed him to clearly see the powerful role that he could continue to play in the movements for justice in his community through classroom teaching. It was relevant to note that when he shared his philosophy of what teaching is, he explicitly described this activist orientation to his teaching,

> It's more than teaching, it's part of the movement: it's part of the fight to end the legacy of colonization and of oppression. We're fighting to live more dignified lives...We've been doing that since we were undergrads working with community, working with youth. It's stuff that is grounded in love and care and collectivity…(Jorge, TI, April, 25, 2018).

As he stresses here, teaching is not only an occupation for him: it is a revolutionary political act meant to advance the collective local and global struggles to end oppression, colonization and racism. Accordingly, and as I will describe in more detail later in this chapter, beyond simply teaching youth de-contextualized skills and content standards, for Jorge, critical praxis, "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (Freire, 1974), is at the core of his pedagogy and teaching practice.

What he wants for his students. By deliberately supporting their critical consciousness and racial literacy development, Jorge shared that he wants his ninth-grade ES students to, 1) experience personal transformation or empowerment and 2) to play a role in or towards social transformation.

When I talked to Jorge about what he would consider the central goal of ES for his students, the first thing that he stressed was that through ES he wants his students to experience the personal transformation and empowerment that ES provided him as his own critical consciousness developed. Jorge noted that this personal internal shift that he says he intentionally teaches towards involves supporting students in seeing themselves, their communities and the larger world through an ani-racist, anti-colonial lens. Jorge describes this personal transformation as,

> …that empowerment that comes with understanding yourself and your culture and of being connected across history to a group of people, to a movement. Having that critical consciousness—that sociopolitical lens—allows you to understand and appreciate the experiences and suffering of your parents and your family … and it serves as an engine, a catalyst that keeps pushing you forward …Traditional schooling brainwashes you into being individualistic and it makes you turn against your own family…so I think that personal transformation is key…for me it made me appreciate what my parents were doing as farmworkers and the level of exploitation [they endured] and it made me angry too but it also gave me purpose of where to channel that energy and I channeled into doing better academically and staying focused on my career goals so it was this motivator to make my family proud (Jorge, TI, April, 25, 2018).

Speaking of his students who are Latinx, working-class and from immigrant families, Jorge emphasizes that the personal transformation he hopes they experience involves empowerment that helps them challenge the racism they have internalized from normative white, Eurocentric schooling and society. Furthermore, as Jorge notes, the internal shift he wants his students to experience also involves challenging the ideologies

of individualism and meritocracy that seek to prevent minoritized youth from seeing themselves as "connected across history to a group of people." Additionally, Jorge shared that he hopes that they are able to challenge the individualism that schooling promulgates, so they see themselves as accountable to their community.

Entwined to this first goal, Jorge stated that the second goal he wants for his ES students is that they build the foundation for becoming involved or that they become involved in social activism to transform unjust conditions in their local and broader contexts. Alongside personal transformation he wants them to take part in social transformation,

> …so I think [ES] has a lot of potential to help students transform personally which is connected to social transformation because if our young people transform personally—grounded in these values of social justice— they're going to do well academically and they're going to take these values with them wherever they go to help transform the world...I've seen it with a lot of students who have started getting involved politically in high school and for others it might not click until down the line. I have former students who come back to visit me and say, "I started taking a Chicana/Chicano Studies or ES class in college and I started remembering the things we learned in your class" and the next thing you know they're getting involved politically. Or I have students who have pursued careers from a social justice approach in law or social work, for example, so for me, it's important to develop activist skills in our young people and to create the space for students to practice social activism (Jorge, TI, June, 15, 2018).

For Jorge, then, supporting his students in developing those agency skills to work collectively is fundamental because, as quoted earlier, he sees his ES classroom including his teaching, the relationships he builds with his students and how he supports their learning as all part of the work that is an extension and continuation of the anti-racist, anti-colonial and anti-oppressive movements for justice. In short, he wants his students to

come to a fuller understanding of what they have the agency to do in contribution to not only opposing but of transforming inequity.

Zareith. Zareith who identifies as Chicana, was beginning her first year of teaching at EHHS after completing her single-subject credential in English/Language Arts with an emphasis on K-12 ES. Zareith grew up in South Central, Los Angeles, a predominantly working class Latinx and Black community where she attended elementary and middle schools; she noted that like many of her own students, she had been completely unaware of the oppression and inequity she and her family were living until she happened to visit a better-resourced school and community across town as an adolescent. For Zareith, attending a high school outside South Central and in a more affluent part of the city threw the educational inequities and contradictions of these two places into sharp relief. From differences in the diversity of the student population, the treatment of students by staff, to the tangible and intangible resources at the schools, it was clear to Zareith that de facto residential and school segregation were alive and well. Zareith shared that her decision to become a teacher, then, was shaped by experiencing and witnessing those disparities in her elementary and middle schools in South Central which did not provide the same opportunities to youth as did the schools in the community where her high school was located. Notwithstanding the educational opportunities available to her in high school, another facet of inequity that Zareith said had a profound impact on her was the alienation she experienced as one of the only students at her school from South Central and one of a handful from an immigrant Latinx family of few economic means,

> I remember feeling like my whole high school years I was an outsider. Even though there were some Latino and Filipino students, I never felt like I belonged in that space. I was able to navigate that school mostly because I felt like I was smart and I could just get through it (Zareith, TI, April, 5, 2018).

While Zareith had been successful with navigating the academic side of school, schooling had also been a very marginalizing experience. The opportunity to become a teacher who could cultivate the sense of belonging of students in her community, along with being able to support their academic needs, motivated her to become a teacher. In fact, before she became a teacher, Zareith said she was drawn to teaching because she recognized that as a teacher of Color she would be uniquely positioned to challenge the alienation Latinx students and students of Color experience in classrooms and schools. She shared that her hope before entering the field of education was that her future students would, "see themselves in [her] and that [she] could be a reflection of their experiences and struggles as much as [she] saw [herself] in them" (Zareith, TI, April, 5, 2018).

Part of the racialized marginalization Zarieth encountered related specifically to the curricula and her teachers' pedagogies in her K-12 schools. She shared that both of these were so disconnected from her culture and experiences that a lesson she said she was implicitly taught, was that she had to leave her cultural identity and history behind in order to succeed. When speaking of the white, middle-class, standard knowledge that was so prevalent in her K-12 schooling and that she was taught to see as neutral and unbiased, she asserted, "I was so used to being a good student and a student that would do well that I never questioned it. I thought, 'This is the way to be successful…I'll buy into it.'" Zarieth noted that this hegemonic normative whiteness in the curricula and pedagogy permeated not only her K-12 schools but also her college experience. As an English

major at her university, Zarieth recalls the overwhelming whiteness and Eurocentrism of the literary canon she was exposed to. It wasn't until her last few years as an undergrad when she took Chicana/o Studies courses and courses with critical perspectives on education, that she gained an understanding of the politics of "official" school knowledge and she learned about the struggles and resistance of Chicanas/os and communities of Color in this country; this was the point where she began to gain her critical voice and when she said her critical consciousness really unfolded. It was at this time in her life that she said she most strongly felt a calling to teaching,

> I remember the first education course I took as being so powerful for me. It just made me think about oppression and white supremacy and I said to myself, "Wow, this is something totally new for me." Also [after] taking Chicana/o Studies courses in college it was amazing to finally have the opportunity to see myself in what I was learning…Along with what I was seeing at my workplace, this made feel like [teaching] was what I wanted to do—I wanted to change this [inequity]; this is how I wanted to contribute to my community and make a difference (Zareith, TI, April, 5, 2018).

Like many minoritized and first-generation college students who understand oppression as a lived experience, what made ES courses so incredibly empowering was that they gave her the language to name injustice in her own life. As Zareith reflected on this, her aspiration to become a teacher was driven by a desire to support students with an education that affirmed and sustained their cultural identities and histories along with fostering their social consciousness. For someone who had to wait until college to take an ES course, she lamented that the vast majority of K-12 students continue to have to wait until they enter an institution of higher education for such an educational opportunity, while many who don't continue on to postsecondary education and who might most benefit from ES, may never have the opportunity.

When Zareith graduated from college, she took time off from school and continued working as a teacher's assistant and as a teacher in two after-school programs across the city. Working in various communities, including close to home and at an after-school program in the whiter and wealthier side of the city, she witnessed once again the stark racialized inequity of resources and educational experiences that shape the life opportunities of youth who lived just miles apart. Zareith's desire to address this injustice and the transformative possibilities of an empowering and critical education that ES in college had opened her eyes to, solidified her decision to become an ES teacher; she returned to school to earn her teaching credential with a specialization in teaching K-12 ES. In short, what compelled Zareith to become an ES teacher who empowers her students was rooted in her own lived experiences and grounded in her ideological commitment to transform inequity in her own community.

What she wants from her students. As an ES teacher, Zareith shared that there are two goals that she hopes her students will be able to attain by taking ES with her in 9th grade. She hopes that they (1) are able to build the critical knowledge to uncover and confront internalized racism and (2) that they apply what they have learned in ES to dismantle oppression and injustice around them.

Referring to the first goal, Zareith said that she wants her ES students to be able to apply the concepts and terminology from ES to transform the oppression and racism that they have internalized:

> That's what I really see my role as, my job is to teach you this valuable knowledge because I want you to be able to read that text and feel empowered as you're reading it and to read it and apply it to all the things that you see in your life… If we're talking about internalized oppression well what are you doing to recognize the way

> you've internalized things and what actions are you taking to transform that? (Zareith, TI, April, 5, 2018).

Zareith acknowledged that this personal transformation is a process that for some of her students may not occur right away. Yet, in her classroom—and as reflected in the 9th grade ES curriculum she teaches—Zareith begins with supporting students' "knowledge of self," a critical understanding of themselves, their community and their culture in relation to power. Zareith emphasized that the transformation she hopes to inspire in her students is not only external (i.e., transformation of the oppressive/racist conditions around them) but internal as well.

Secondly, she aspires for her students to be able to apply the critical knowledge they learn to transform injustice and dismantle oppression in their own worlds:

> I guess one of the things that I think about a lot is that learning all of this is so powerful but then what are we doing with this knowledge? And I think that it can all be theory but there's no praxis to it and I think that that's where I would like my students to end. Social change is all about reflection, action and transformation…that's my ultimate goal for students to not just be able to recite really well the definition of an idea but to actually know how it applies to them and taking the next step of changing things (Zareith, TI, April, 5, 2018).

As Zarieth underscores, her ultimate goal is that her students connect the critical theory, concepts and language to the oppression and injustice around them in order to transform and build better worlds. For Zareith, teaching is not a decontextualized skill that begins and ends with transferring knowledge to her students, but it is part of the political struggle for liberation that begins with supporting students' critical consciousnesses and racial literacies. Because the curriculum she and the 9th grade ES team utilize was intentionally created to reflect the immediate community history of East Heights—the

history of the Chicano Movement and the Walkouts—and their lives, Zarieth shared that as part of fostering the historical and sociopolitical awareness involves supporting them in their abilities to "compare and contrast how things [e.g., inequities] have or haven't changed and what are we doing now to change those things that are still the same …"

As the narratives of Jorge and Zareith poignantly illustrate, an integral part of what shaped their desire and commitment to become ES teachers and their pedagogies was their personal experiences of racialized oppression. As the literature on social-justice oriented teachers of Color and ES teachers documents, these teachers' inequitable schooling experiences as youth deepened their awareness of injustice (Daus-Magbual, 2010; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). In their narratives, they highlighted that as young people, schools were sites of racial trauma or marginalization where teachers exacted punitive discipline and/or failed to foster a sense of belonging and authentic care at a crucial stage in their learning and development (Valenzuela, 1999). Both Jorge and Zareith expressed that they felt like they were the "lucky ones' in that many Latinx students and students of Color who experience these pedagogies of punishment and alienation are ultimately pushed out; their awareness of this reality later in their educational journeys motivated them to return to K-12 schools as educators committed to dismantling these oppressive teacher-student dynamics for future generations of students. Their motivations and pedagogies were thus rooted in their community orientations which they leveraged to work for justice from withing their classrooms (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016). Both Zareith and Jorge shared that they adopted their pedagogical approaches in their ES classrooms in

direct response to the knowledge that young people of Color continue to have similar alienating and traumatic schooling experiences (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012).

Furthermore, schools for them were places where they were explicitly and implicitly taught that their racial/ethnic and cultural identities had little worth and that schools and classrooms were not places where they could bring their full selves; they felt that in order to succeed, they needed to adopt and perform the monocultural white ideals to the point of leaving behind their cultural identities. This manifestation of white supremacy was a painful deficit education about themselves, their families and their communities that they said they later had to unpack and unlearn (Kohli, 2013; Valencia, 1997). Their desire to become ES teachers and their pedagogies, then, were rooted in their commitment to challenge white supremacist, assimilationist practices in schools by becoming the teachers they needed when they were younger—teachers that honored their lived realities, that equipped students to navigate racism and oppression and that wrapped their humanizing pedagogy and curricula around their complete selves.

Moreover, the transformative impact of taking Ethnic Studies, Chicana/o Studies courses in college on their decisions to become ES teachers and in the development of the racial literacies in their pedagogies cannot be understated. By offering them an empowering education where they were able to make sense of the injustice they experienced as youth in K-12 schools and in society these classes cultivated their political, racial and social consciousness and sharpened their racial and critical literacies (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Like other racial-justice oriented teachers of Color, for both Jorge and Zareith, taking ES courses in college helped them unpack the deficit ideas

about themselves and their communities that they had internalized; this self-work was crucial in their own development towards becoming the justice-oriented teachers that they are (Kohli, 2014). As both Jorge and Zarieth shared in their narratives, their pedagogies were explicitly shaped towards the goal of fostering these critical awakenings in their ES students modeled in part to encourage and support students through the same process of racial literacy development that they experienced in college and that was so empowering for them.

How Racial Literacy Lives in ES Teachers' Pedagogies

Existing scholarship underscores that ES curricula positively impacts the educational experiences of students of Color only when paired with pedagogy implemented by teachers who can support students' critical awareness of colonialism (Valdez, 2020), racial inequity (de los Rios, López, and Morrell, 2015) and intersecting forms of oppression. Moreover, given that one of ES's disciplinary goals is to "systematically examin[e] and dismantl[e] racism" (Hu-DeHart, 2004 as cited in Sleeter & Zavala, 2020), exploring how teachers facilitate such praxis in their classrooms is significant to understanding how ES courses can maintain the disciplinary, life-affirming legacies of ES amid its expansion in K-12 school districts. Studies on racial literacy in K-12 classrooms underscore how teachers' capacities to guide students with critical understandings of race and racism have a direct impact on students' abilities to engage in critical discourse on racism towards the transformation of racial oppression (Skerrett, 2011; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Epstein & Gist, 2015; Philip et al., 2016). Building on this scholarship, this study explores racial literacy development in the context of ES teachers'

pedagogies to answer the sub questions (*a) How does racial literacy exist in secondary ES teachers' pedagogies and teaching stances?* and (b) *What is the role of the teacher and their pedagogy in developing, maintaining or extending the racial literacies of secondary Latinx ES students?* In my analysis of the data, there were four pedagogical moves or, what I call, "*racially literate stan*ces" that Zareith and Jorge utilized in their classrooms to support their ES students' racial literacy development: (1) naming oppression through a sustained, process-oriented approach, (2) rooting learning in place-based knowledge, (3) centering the experiences and experiential knowledge of communities of Color, and (4) connecting students' critical analyses towards social action. These racially literate stances that emerged in my analysis were developed using grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

1. Naming Oppression Through a Sustained and Process-Oriented Approach

One key feature of Jorge and Zareith's pedagogies as secondary ES teachers was that they supported their students' racial literacies through a sustained, intentional and explicit scaffolding of terminology/concepts to cultivate students' structural analyses of racism and oppression. Understanding that their own critical consciousness and racial literacy development happened over time, Zareith and Jorge took a process-oriented approach to building their students' structural analyses of racism and oppression across the curriculum.

> I embed critical terminology to name oppression *throughout the year* [my emphasis] so students begin to have a clearer understanding of the institutional racism and the structural oppression they, their families, and their communities

have experienced. That is how their critical consciousness begins to unfold (Jorge, TI, April, 25, 2018).

As Jorge mentions here, his support of students' application of the ES critical frames and vocabulary to underscore how racism and oppression operate systemically was not restricted to a single lesson or bound within a single unit but present across the ES curriculum he taught. The two charts below (see tables 1&2) represent a selection of observations from my field notes that give a snapshot of the frequency that core critical concepts and vocabulary were used in whole group discussions. For example, it is pertinent to note that although introduced at the beginning of the second semester, Zarieth and Jorge frequently incorporated the four I's of oppression—one of the central critical concepts of the course—as they moved through all 6 months of that semester.

Critical Concept	**Date & Frequency**						
	2/7/18	*3/15/18*	*3/22/18*	*4/18/18*	*4/25/18*	*5/14/18*	*5/22/18*
Institutional, Ideological, Internal, or Interpersonal Racism & Oppression	1111	1111		111111 11	11111	111111 11 111111 1	111111 11 11
Hierarchy	11111 1						1
Power	11111					1	

Table 2. Frequency of core critical concepts in Jorge's classroom

Critical Concept	**Date & Frequency**						
	2/23/18	*3/15/18*	*3/22/18*	*4/5/18*	*4/18/18*	*5/14/18*	*5/22/18*
Institutional, Ideological, Internal or Interpersonal Racism & Oppression	11111111	11111	1111	11111 1111 11111 1111 1111	111111 111	1111111 1111	111111 1
Hierarchy						11	
Power							
Resistance/ taking action					111111 11 1	1111111	11111

Table 3. Frequency of core critical concepts in Zareith's classroom

Through initial front-loading of core vocabulary/concepts, written reflections, visual analysis exercises, facilitated dialogues—along with the opportunities to deeply and continually reflect on their experiences as marginalized people (see Chapter 5 for specific examples of students' assignments that illustrate students racial literacy development in action)—Jorge and Zareith supported students' capacities to read racialized injustice in the world. As Zareith noted, this sustained process-oriented approach bolstered students' fluency with articulating oppression in all its manifestations and across their lives,

> I would say that there was success around [students] being able to articulate the different forms of oppression and like I mentioned earlier a lot of them

> commented on oppression being the one thing that they really understood and the one thing they really see in their lives so I feel like they're able to really build on that and understanding their own personal experiences with that whether it's with family conflicts, in school with the types of oppression they face, or things they've seen in their communities (Zareith, TI, April, 5, 2018).

2. Learning Through Place-based Knowledge

The second racially literate stance in Zareith and Jorge's pedagogies was an intentional focus on racism and resistance through a place-based, community history perspective. In fact, the ES curriculum that Jorge and Zareith developed and taught, centered on building students' awareness of racism and oppression as experienced in East Heights and as a continuation of the larger historical legacies of racialized harm towards communities of Color and Latinx/Chicanx communities specifically.

> The framework we're using to help students think about oppression and racism historically is through the Chicano Movement and the Walkouts that happened here and students' comparing and contrasting how things have changed and how they haven't changed and what we can do to change the things that are still the same…it makes sense to me to teach Ethnic Studies by having students think about their community and families because I also think about my experience and living in South LA; I never learned about South LA's history… knowing why our communities are the way they are or what they were like before and how they have changed to think about what is my role in changing or improving it (Zareith, TI, April, 5, 2018).

Here Zareith shared that the curricular choices she makes when teaching 9th grade ES are firmly grounded in East Heights community histories—in a historical understanding of racial inequity and of the legacies of resistance in East Heights. Significantly, Zareith says she centers place-based community histories in her ES classes in response to the ahistorical education she received in her K-12 schooling that failed to teach her about South LA's history and to help her imagine her role in shaping it.

In her ES class students learned about and reflected on the Chicano Movement and the student-led Walkouts of 1968, two significant events in East Heights' own history. However, instead of teaching these events as disconnected from the present, Zareith's place-based pedagogical approach supported her students' racial literacy development by highlighting the connections between past and current manifestations of racialized educational inequity in East Heights. Focusing on Chicano students' demands from 1968, Zareith first asked students to "in their own words" paraphrase one of the 26 demands that they saw as most important. One group of students shared that they found "facilities demand #12" –the demand that schools and districts address the overcrowded conditions— as the most important because they said that overcrowding makes it hard for teachers to teach and for students to learn. After Zareith acknowledged that overcrowding creates unequitable learning conditions, she asked the group, "Do you think that the demand has been met in our school today? Is this a problem that still exists?" Guided by this provocative question, the group and the whole class went on to talk in length about how EHHS is still overcrowded 50 years later and that schools in whiter more affluent parts of the city continue to be less crowded and have better facilities overall (ON, April, 25, 2018). As this exchange illustrates, students' racial literacies were supported through opportunities to (1) read racial injustice and oppression historically and (2) to read the reverberating impact of these historical manifestations of injustice in the present—in their own schools and in their lives. Zareith's community history informed pedagogy, thus, utilized history as a tool to support students with understanding the wide arc of racism—not as a phenomenon relegated to the past but as an ongoing structure with historical

roots. As Guinier (2004) and Brown (2017) underscore, as a challenge to racial liberalism, racial literacy allows people to see the historical rootedness of racial oppression. In the same way that students' awareness of current manifestations of and persistence of racism as historically situated were cultivated, so too was their awareness of the legacies of resistance and refusal of racist conditions that their communities are a part of.

Jorge also centered place-based knowledge in his teaching of the unit on the Chicano Movement. It so happened that the year this study took place was the 50th anniversary of the Walkouts, a significant historical moment in East Heights history. To support his 9th grade ES students' learning about the Walkouts, Jorge invited two of the student leaders from the Walkouts—Bobby Verdugo and Yoli Rios—to speak to his class; they powerfully shared their counter stories of education in East Heights and how they organized to confront the educational injustice they lived in the 60's. By bringing these speakers to EHHS' campus, Jorge intentionally privileged place-based knowledge in his teaching to (1) ground students' learning of history within the legacies of their own community and (2) specifically center the experiences and agency of East Heights community members in the recounting of that history. One memorable exchange between one of Jorge's students and the speakers highlighted the potential of place-based knowledge to help students bridge past legacies with current experiences of oppression (ON, February 22, 2018). During the Q&A portion of the talk, a student asked, "What can be done right now with Trump as president and everything that is happening to not address the inequality that exists in our schools right now?" Bobby Verdugo responded,

"This isn't new. We've been through presidents like Nixon and Reagan who we thought were just going to completely beat us down, but [our community] has always fought and bounced back" (ON, February 22, 2018). Grounded in the place-based knowledge of East Heights, Bobby Verdugo, referenced the legacies of Chicanx resistance that the East Heights community had been at the center of; the place-based knowledge that community members in East Heights before them had faced similar existential threats that their community—and students like them-- had resisted, was a source of critical hope for students. Thus, as a teacher, Jorge's facilitation of this intentional bridging of historical legacies of racism and resistance with current socio-political experiences by centering place-based knowledge was also key to developing students' racial literacies.

3. Centering the Lived Experiences and Experiential Knowledge of People of Color

A second racially literate stance that Zareith and Jorge utilized in their pedagogies was their centering of the lived experiences and experiential knowledge of people of Color (Ladson-Billings 1998, Solórzano, 1998). Drawing from their own expertise as people of Color, they openly shared their experiences of racialization with their students: As first- generation Latinxs from immigrant families and for whom racism and oppression are lived realities, not abstract concepts (Delgado, 2001), Zareith and Jorge frequently wove their own counter stories of oppression into their dialogues to (1) highlight the manifestations of racialized oppression that they were supporting their students with making visible and (2) to model the practice of continual self-reflection

needed to read their world in the service of transforming it (Freire, 1976; Souto-Manning, 2010).

Jorge illustrated how sharing his and his community's racialized experiences formed a core part of his pedagogy. During one class meeting, students were asked to visually analyze a political cartoon created in the 1900's that calls attention to the exploitative and abusive child labor practices in the US at the turn of the century. In the cartoon, a child is caught in a spider's web surrounded by the words, *poverty*, *greed* and *ignorance*. Above the child is a spider with the phrase "*child labor*" written on its body. Students were asked to critically analyze the cartoon in small groups and then to share out with the whole class (ON, February 7, 2018). Below is an excerpt from the whole class dialogue,

> **Teacher:** What did you write in your journal and share with your groups?
>
> **Student 1:** To me, the spider represents the managers or the government and the children are the ones that are trapped in poverty…they are forced to work.
>
> **Teacher:** Okay! Is this still how it is now? How about the parents of the children…They're always working y *no se salen de la pobreza.*
>
> **Teacher:** How many of you have jobs right now? Do any of you have jobs right now?
>
> **Student 2:** I work from 4-8 pm helping my mom loading and carrying boxes for her job.
>
> **Student 3:** I work with my dad and brother for a moving company on the weekends.
>
> **Student 4:** I work with my mom. I wake up at 3 am and sometimes work until 10 pm. We have to [make] bags of oranges. It's tiring.

> **Student 5:** I work construction. Sometimes we have to change and put tile from 6 am to 9 pm.
>
> **Teacher:** My first job was in the summer of 9th grade. I worked as a custodian at my elementary school. My parents were farmworkers in King City and they made between $30-$40 a day for picking crops in the hot sun, and I worked alongside them in the summers. It was hard work and it was also what encouraged me to study hard so that I'd have more options, so I wouldn't have to do that type of back breaking work. My parents would tell me *"Si no estudias esto es lo que vas a hacer...trabajar en los fields…te vas a chingar"* (ON, February 7, 2018).

From this excerpt we can see a few things relevant to the second racially literate stance in Jorge's pedagogy that supports his ES students' development of their critical race consciousness. First, through a generative dialogue that intentionally wraps the content of the lesson/curriculum around his students' experiences, Jorge provides opportunities for his students to visibilize the racialized oppression and exploitation in their lives. Second, this example illustrates the reciprocal, humanizing, shared vulnerability that breaks down the teacher/student dichotomy that often pervades teaching (Souto-Manning, 2010). Jorge doesn't just ask his students to share their experiences, he also holds up his own lived experiences with racism or oppression for "confirmation or critique" (Sealey Ruiz, 2013). Finally, Jorge utilizes the translanguaging practices (or the fluid blending and meshing of languages and language practices; García, 2009) that form a central part of his and his students' communicative repertoires including the phrases like, "te vas a chingar," "no se salen de la pobreza" and "tabajar en los fields." This approach cultivates students' racial literacies by encouraging them to make connections to their experiences of oppression through the critical lenses and language of their ES class.

Zarieth also centered her own and her community's racialized experiences in her pedagogy. This approach was most salient when she introduced the four I's of oppression to her ES students. For example, when teaching students about ideological oppression, Zareith spoke of her experience as a young girl of Color who grew up watching Disney "princess" movies and who later became aware of the patriarchal, heteronormative ideologies of gender that intersect with race which permeate these films. Zareith shared with her students that without a critical lens, these movies serve as vehicles to maintain ideological oppression as they push the ideas that (1) women—no matter how central a role they play in a storyline—must capitulate to men in the end and that (2) the lack of meaningful representation of women of Color is absolutely okay. Zareith's centering of her own and the lived experiences of women of Color in this lesson on ideological oppression, is just one example of the ways she wove her own counter stories of oppression into her teaching to (1) highlight the manifestations of racialized oppression at the intersection of gender that she was supporting her students with making visible and (2) to model the practice of continual self-reflection needed to read their world in the service of transforming it (ON, March, 15, 2018).

4. Connecting Students' Analyses to Social Action

A fourth racially literate stance that Zareith and Jorge utilized in their pedagogies was their community activist orientations that directly connected students' critical analyses of race and oppression towards civic engagement and social action—an important component of racial literacy (Guinier, 2004; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013). This praxis orientation took two different forms in their classrooms: (1) at the classroom- discourse

level it included opportunities for pushing students' analyses beyond knowing about racism and oppression to thinking about and imagining action and transformation of injustice and (2) at the school- wide level it involved creating spaces on campus for students to imagine and build the skills to be activists.

In their narratives, both Jorge and Zarieth expressed how crucial centering praxis in their pedagogies was in supporting students' racial literacy development.

> "I guess one of the things that I think about a lot is that learning all of this is so powerful but then what are we doing with this knowledge? And I think that it can all be theory but there's no praxis to it and I think that that's where I would like my students to end. Social change is all about reflection, action and transformation…that's my ultimate goal for students to not just be able to recite really well the definition of an idea but to actually know how it applies to them and taking the next step of changing things" (Zareith, TI, April, 5, 2018).

Citing Feire's (1974) notion of praxis, Zareith here talks about how the knowledge, language and capacity to "read" racism and oppression in the world that she is supporting her ES students with developing is not simply for the purpose of allowing students to pass a test, but ideally to support them in transforming the injustice around them. Similarly, Jorge sees his role as a teacher as inextricably connected to the movements for liberation and justice;

> "I teach [Ethnic Studies] because I see the bigger picture. To me I'm connected to this bigger movement that began with indigenous people resisting colonization to people of Color resisting segregation in society and schools and pushing for racial and economic justice… to me, schools for our communities should be schools for liberation where we are building leaders, agents of change, where we're creating young people who are critically conscious who are gonna transform society into one that is much more equitable" (Jorge, TI, June, 15, 2018).

Jorge sees his work with students as guided by his aspiration to develop future leaders who are prepared to continue the movement for racial and social justice through their

contributions to transform the material conditions in their communities. Towards the goal of praxis, Jorge supports students' racial literacy development at the classroom and school-wide levels.

First, in his teaching, Jorge cultivates students' racial literacy development by pushing students' analyses with questions like, *What can you do to change this?* or *What can we do to get free?* For example, in one lesson students watched a film clip that depicts the exploitation of indigenous migrant laborers in Mexico called *Fruits of Cheap Labor.* The film documents how these laborers make an average of $7 a day for picking crops while enduring unsafe/unhealthy conditions. After watching the clip, Jorge engages students in a dialogue through problem posing,

> **Teacher:** How is this an example of modern-day exploitation?
>
> **Student 2:** Kids and their parents are forced to work those jobs because they're poor. They can't get out of those jobs because there isn't any other work for them.
>
> **Teacher:** Who is doing the exploitation?
>
> **Student 1:** U.S. companies.
>
> **Student 3:** The people who own the land.
>
> **Teacher:** How are people exploited?
>
> **Student 2:** The government exploits them through the racial hierarchies that exist. They have to work hard and they don't get paid enough. Kids have to leave school to work and don't have other opportunities.
>
> **Teacher:** How does the government benefit from people not going to school? Does it benefit them to have people work there who don't have an education?
>
> **Student 2:** The government can keep making money.
>
> **Teacher:** *What can people do to get free?*

Student 3: Stop buying the products. Organize and protest to change this.

Teacher: Yes, by collectively working together (FN, February 7, 2018).

At the classroom discourse level, Jorge encourages his students to consider what forms of collective resistance and action can challenge oppression. Similarly, Zareith's pedagogy also included encouraging students to think beyond naming oppression. For example during one class conversation, Zareith noted that some students were confused about what "neutral" means in relation to unjust or unneutral situations and conditions. Zarieth gave the following example, "If I say something oppressive about Lucia and Rosario doesn't interrupt it, then is Rosario also contributing to Lucia's oppression?" (ON, March, 18, 2018). Zarieth's students engaged in a lively discussion/debate that highlighted their differing viewpoints of this hypothetical situation. Zarieth then connected this conversation to the Walkouts highlighting the East Heights students who decided to join the organizers and walk out to resist the unjust schooling conditions in East Heights (Zareith's ES class had just watched clip from the documentary *Pride and Prejudice: Latinos in America*, that focused on the context, conditions and organizing that led to the Walkouts). Taking a non-neutral and justice-centered approach in her summary of students' discussion, Zareith concluded with the following statement and a final question, "We need to take action not just when we see oppression in our lives but when we see oppression in the lives of others…In what ways can people resist the oppression we and others face so it leads to radical transformation?" (ON, March,18, 2018). It is significant to note that while many teachers might shy away from conversations in their classrooms that directly ask students to reflect on racism let alone

what social action they might take to address it, through her pedagogy, Zareith helped connect students' critical analyses of race and oppression towards civic engagement and social action—a significant component of racial literacy.

To support the praxis component of students' racial literacies beyond the classroom discourse level, Jorge connected the concepts/terminology from the course to the community activist work of cultural workers in East Heights who he often invited as guests to his classroom. Jorge talked about his activism and community organizing as a college student and how his participation in that work and the organizing skills he developed helped him connect what students learn in his ES classroom to the larger movements for racial and social justice.

> So, for me, it's important to develop those activist skills in our young people and that why since when I started teaching in our first year or second here I connected with the teacher here who was sponsoring MEChA and we both became co-sponsors. So, it's really important to create that space for students to develop those skills in social activism. Cause in class they're learning about the history they're learning about that young people did before them, as students are learning the stuff they need a space for them to apply it if they want to apply it and I think it's important for us to create those spaces so students can begin to…and I think about the zone of proximal development that Vygotsky talks about, right, it's kinda like you're scaffolding young people into self- identify as activists as agents of change, so it's like we're creating those spaces which is part of the scaffolding to developing those skills. So, I've sponsored many different school clubs and I also connected with folks in the neighborhood and the community as well and constantly bridging the neighborhood to the school and the school to the neighborhood to make those connections more authentic and to build students' social capital as well (Jorge, TI, June 15, 2018).

In his 12 years of teaching, Jorge shared that he encourages students to join one of the social justice activist clubs he sponsors, called "Taking Action." Jorge shares that once a week one of the community organizers that spearheads this club—who is part of a broader activist organization in the city—visits the group and helps run the dialogues and engagements with students. He says that the idea behind the club/class is for students to develop a relationship with a community organizer, to hear her voice and perspective as a community organizer and to ultimately facilitate bridging the classroom to the community. Jorge shares that this has helped facilitate a bridge between the classroom and the community by fostering students' interest in community organizing and providing them with the skills and the tools to organize for justice (Jorge, TI, June 15, 2018).

The ES teachers from this study demonstrate the central role that teachers and their pedagogy play in developing, maintaining or extending the racial literacies of secondary Latinx ES students. As this chapter illustrates, racial literacy was always at the center of what these teachers did in their ES classrooms and existed in four key attributes of their pedagogy/racially literate stances that supported their ES students' racial literacy development: (1) naming oppression through a sustained, process-oriented approach, (2) rooting learning in place-based knowledge, (3) centering the experiences and experiential knowledge of communities of Color, and (4) connecting students' critical analyses towards social action. These teachers' own racialized experiences as youth and in schools, specifically, and the growth of their own critical awareness of racism and

oppression shaped their racial literacy development and guided them to support their students along similar critical educational paths.

Chapter 5: Students' Racial Literacy Development (RLD) Process

The previous chapter delved into the implications of teaching as an anti-racist, humanizing political project. This chapter illuminates the impact of such teaching on high school Latinx students—minoritized youth whose lives remain imperiled by the neglect of the very institutions (i.e., U.S. schools) that fail to provide them with the tools to navigate racialized inequity. As extant research and chapter 4 document, the potential of ES to positively shape students' lives is by no means a forgone conclusion when ES curricula are available in their K-12 schools. Complementing the previous chapter's examination of the role of racial literacy in ES teachers' pedagogy, this chapter focuses on the students in those ES classrooms to answer the research question, (2) *How do students experience the process of racial literacy development in an ES classroom?* Additionally, by exploring four Latinx focal students' experiences across their racial literacy development, this chapter also answers sub-question, (a) *How does racial literacy development in ES classrooms support Latinx students' navigation of their world(s) given their specific experiences of racialization?*

Through an analysis of key patterns in the data, the following four-stage process of racial literacy development (RLD) for students emerged, (1) making meaning of critical frames and their application of those frames in classroom contexts, (2) bridging of critical frames and vocabulary to outside experiences, (3) applying and extending the use of these critical frames to outside spaces and experiences and (4) imagining and enacting resistance/towards social action. It's important to note that while students' understandings of oppression did shift over time—from acknowledging racism and

oppression at the interpersonal, individual, belief- system level to understanding its institutional and ideological structures—this RLD process, as figure 1. illustrates, was not always linear. For instance, the process of moving away from understandings shaped by dominant ideologies of racism and oppression included occurrences where students rearticulated dominant perspectives; These instances, then, nuance our understanding of how critical analyses are actually developed and learned by youth and complicate the typical binaries (e.g., woke/unwoke, critical/uncritical) used to frame such analyses. As this study demonstrates, racial literacy is a process of *becoming* that is iterative and never fixed or fully accomplished. Additionally, in highlighting students' voices along their racial literacy development process, the point is not to "police" their engagement in the process or, alternatively, to disregard problematic positions, but to highlight their meaning-making.

Overall these findings underscore how centering a process of RLD in ES classrooms—as the institutionalization of ES across K-12 schools grows—can be one avenue for holding K-12 ES accountable to its original purpose and goal: first and foremost to serve disenfranchised communities and provide students from those communities with a liberatory education that equips them with tools to survive and transform the oppression and racialized inequity in their world(s).

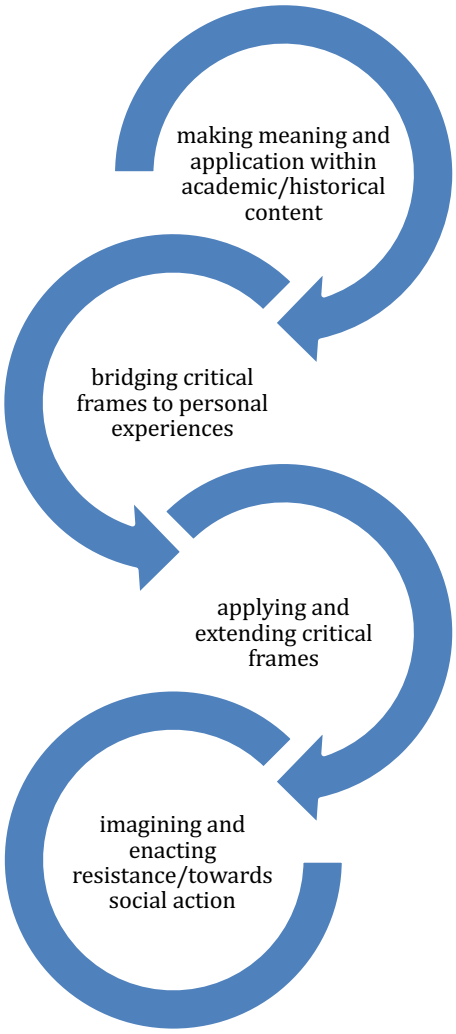


Figure 2. Students' Racial Literacy Development (RLD) Process

Beginning with the first stage of the RLD process (i.e., making meaning and application to classroom contexts), I trace each of the four aforementioned stages by highlighting the voices and experiences of four focal ninth-grade students across two ES classrooms. I illustrate how students' racial literacies unfolded as they applied the critical vocabulary they gained or extended to three types of multimodal "texts" used in their classrooms: 1) formal classroom texts, 2) community histories and 3) current events.

RLD Stage 1: Students' Making Meaning and Application Within Academic/Historical Content

For the focal students in this study, the first stage of their RLD process encompassed their initial meaning-making and classroom-context application of the critical frames they were introduced to in ES. While the concept, "meaning-making" has varied use in social science research, in this study my use of "meaning-making" refers to learning as a socially-mediated process whereby individuals make sense of "frames, objects, relationships--[by] drawing on their cultural resources and history of experiences" (Zittoun & Brinkmann, 2012, p. 1809).

Junior

Junior was one of the first students I met when I stepped into Zareith's brightly lit second period ES/ English classroom. Amid the rustling of notebook papers, the pulling back of chairs and the opening and closing of backpacks, it buzzed with conversations that spilled over from the hallways as first- period ended and second- period began. Junior pulled on the hood of his blue sweater and found his seat near the back of the classroom by one of the windows where the sun's rays hit the strongest. When Zareith asked if students had completed their ten-minute warm-up activity, Junior leaned over to one of his tablemates, pointed at his neighbor's blank notebook page and teasingly said, "Yeah. Look Miss, he finished. It looks great." During the last half of class, Junior put his head down on the table bringing it up a few times to acknowledge his teacher's questions. Junior's embodied resistance to ES was on full display that day (ON, October 10, 2017).

Junior, who self-identifies as Mexican American, grew up in East Heights. His parents emigrated from Michoacan, Mexico with the hopes of securing some economic stability and of building a better future for their children. When Junior was in middle school, his father unexpectedly passed away. When we spoke, Junior shared that he admires and worries about his mother who is undocumented and who has been raising his sister and him on her own. When I asked him what he appreciates about her, he stated simply, "She works day and night so that I can have supplies for school" (Junior, SI, November 20, 2017).

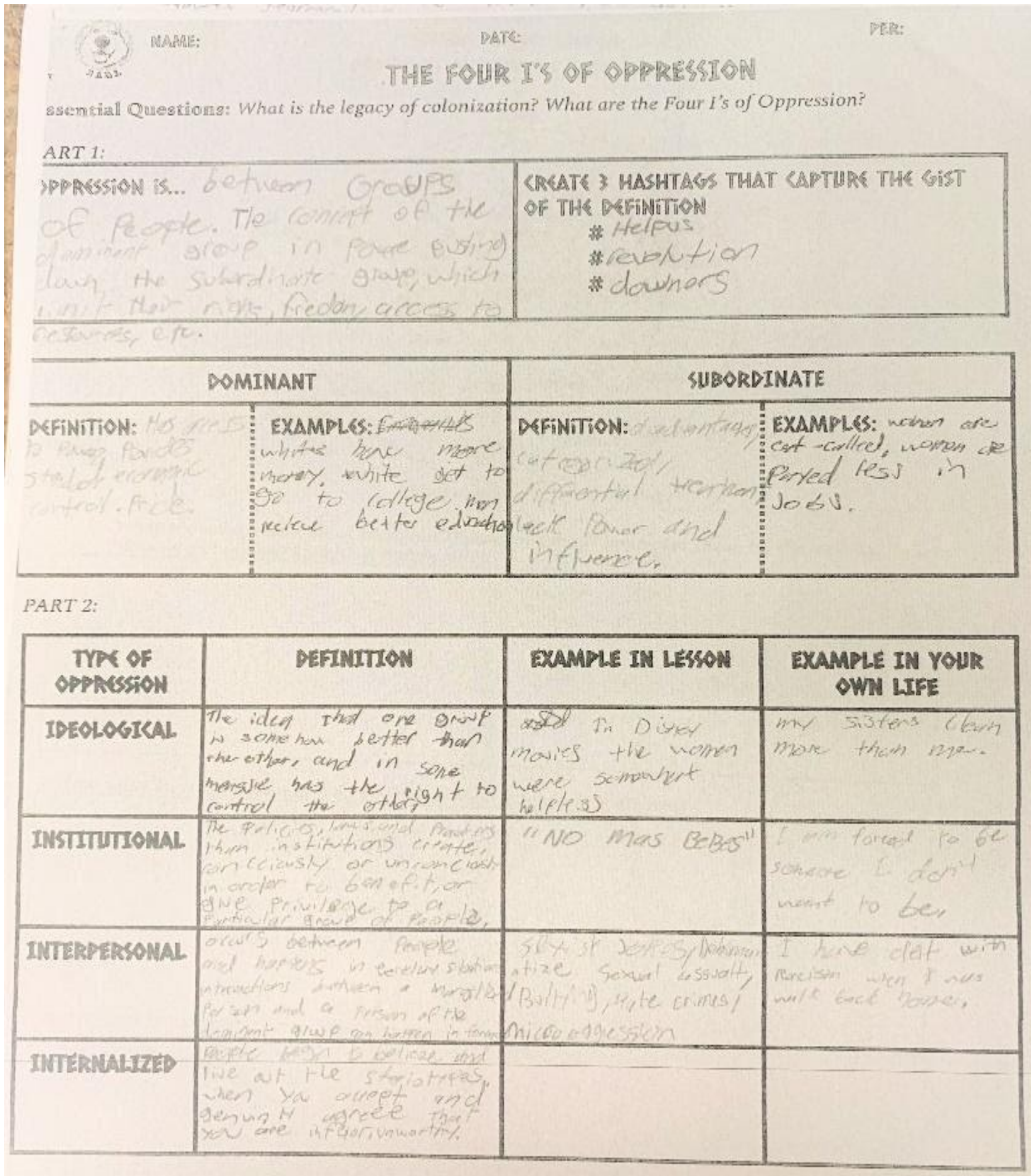
While Junior and his family had experienced racism firsthand, he had received few opportunities in elementary and middle school to, 1) develop his critical consciousness and challenge the dominant ideologies that shaped his ideas about that inequity and 2) to challenge the internalized racism that made him feel shame for himself and his community. Tellingly, in the first weeks of the fall semester, Junior expressed resistance to expanding his knowledge of history beyond the white-centric perspectives of his previous schools' California history curricula. Although he shared that history was his favorite subject, Junior indicated that learning history from his community's point of view was not necessary. In short, he didn't view Chicanx history as legitimate because he had internalized ideas about the inferiority of his community through years of whitewashed curricula. In a warm-up activity in September (see Table 4 for a timeline and list of in-class assignments) students were asked to write if they agreed with Assata Shakur's words--"Everyone needs to identify with their own history. If they don't know their history, they cannot construct their own future"—Junior dissented, writing, "I don't

agree. You don't need to know your history to move on to the future…you don't need to know about your past to move to tomorrow" (Junior, SI, September 20, 2017). Here Junior expressed discomfort with learning about the historical legacies of racialized oppression that Chicanx/Latinx faced in this country because, in his view, it was an uncomfortable reminder that he belonged to a conquered, subordinated people on the wrong side of history. Additionally, at the beginning of the year Junior understood the enactment of racism as primarily overt and interpersonal saying that it is when "people talk smack about the way people look or the way they act" (Junior, SI, September 20, 2017). Junior's previous schooling experience had succeeded in socializing him to dominant ideologies that limited his knowledge about how racism impacted him, blunted his ability to confront it, and precipitated a resistance to identifying with his own history.

Date	**Assignment**	**Junior**	**Daniel**	**Jasmin**	**Lizeth**
9/ 7/17	Assata Shakur "History" Quote Analysis	x		x	x
2/10/18	"Segregate" Word Map			x	
2/22/18	"Taking Back the Schools" Clip			x	
3/21/18	Four "I's" of Oppression Graphic Organizer	x			
4/5/18	Assata Shakur "Normalized Oppression" Quote Analysis		x	x	
4/11/18	Visual Analysis of Chicano Movement Photographs	x			
4/21/18	Critical Response to "Walkout" film	x	x		
4/26/18	Reading/analysis of the film, "Walkout"		x		x

Table 4. List of In-class Assignments

As Junior was introduced to the critical ES frames and vocabulary, however, his interest in learning about his community's history was slowly awakened and glimpses of his racial literacy shone through. For instance, based on a shared definition of "oppression" ("The concept of the dominant group in power pushing down the subordinate group which limit their rights, freedom, access to resources, etc."), Junior and his classmates were asked to create original hashtags that represented the concept of oppression. Junior created three hashtags: *#helpus*, *#revolution* and *#downers* (see figure 3). This assignment provided a window to Junior's racial literacy meaning making at the first stage of the RLD process. Taking a CRT analysis of Junior's hashtags, we see that they simultaneously rearticulate and challenge dominant ideologies of oppression: while the phrases *help us* and *downers* capture the unequal power dynamic between the oppressed and the oppressor, neither acknowledge the agency of the oppressed nor their right to self-determine the transformation of their conditions; Instead, they convey that the oppressed are helpless and/or require saving. On the other hand, Junior's hashtag, *revolution*, speaks to the collective, emancipatory potential and agency of those who experience oppression. More than an indication of how well he knew the concept of oppression at this point, the contradictions in Junior's hashtags illustrate his racial literacy meaning making as he is "playing with" or "trying on" the concepts in the process of sharpening his ability to name oppression.



NAME: DATE: PER:

THE FOUR I'S OF OPPRESSION

ssential Questions: *What is the legacy of colonization? What are the Four I's of Oppression?*

ART 1:

)PPRESSION IS... between Groups of People. The conflict of the dominant group in power pushing down the subordinate group, which limit their rights, freedom, access to resources, etc.	CREATE 3 HASHTAGS THAT CAPTURE THE GIST OF THE DEFINITION #Helpus #revolution #downers

DOMINANT		SUBORDINATE	
DEFINITION: Has access to things, bonds, status, economic control, etc.	EXAMPLES: whites have more money, white get to go to college, and recieve better education	DEFINITION: disadvantaged, categorized, differential treatment, lack power and influence.	EXAMPLES: women are cat-called, women are payed less in Jobs.

PART 2:

TYPE OF OPPRESSION	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE IN LESSON	EXAMPLE IN YOUR OWN LIFE
IDEOLOGICAL	The idea that one group is somehow better than the other, and in some measure has the right to control the other.	In Disney movies the women were somewhat helpless	my sisters clean more than me.
INSTITUTIONAL	The policies, laws, and practices that institutions create, consciously or unconsciously in order to benefit or give privilege to a particular group of people.	"NO mas Bebes"	I am forced to be someone I don't want to be.
INTERPERSONAL	occurs between people and happens in everyday situations interactions between a marginalized person and a person of the dominant group can happen in form	sexist jokes, dehumanize, sexual assault, bullying, hate crimes, microaggression	I have delt with racism when I was with black people.
INTERNALIZED	People begin to believe and live out the stereotypes, when you accept and genuinely agree that you are inferior, unworthy.		

Figure 3. Junior's 4 I's of Oppression Graphic Organizer

As Junior advanced in the development of his racial literacy and critical consciousness, he began to apply the critical terminology he learned in ES to read oppression in the broader world. For instance, in his written work Junior applied the meanings of the terms "dominant" and "subordinate," to illustrate how dominant groups

hold power: “Whites have more money, whites get to go to college and receive a better education.” For examples that depict how minoritized groups experience subordination Junior wrote, “Women are cat-called, women are paid less in jobs” (Junior, SJE, March12, 2018). Here Junior demonstrates his growing ability to identify how subordinated groups experience oppression and how dominant groups wield their power to oppress in the world. This provides a glimpse of his racial literacy at the first stage of RLD since his application of that ES terminology extended to the outside world but did not yet explicitly bridge to his own personal experiences with racism and oppression.

About three weeks after the introductory dialogue on oppression, Junior’s racial literacy development progressed further as he moved from reading oppression in the broader world to reading oppression in the history of his own community (e.g., the history of East Heights and history of Chicanx in the U.S.). A focal part of the unit on his community’s history was centered on the monumental 1968 student-led Walkouts—an event with special significance for East Heights High School since the year of the study marked the 50th anniversary that former students and community members participated in the Walkouts. Students were given the opportunity to analyze primary historical texts from the 1960’s including photographs of marching East Heights and East Los Angeles residents. In those photographs East Heights community members bore protest signs that denounced the injustices of Chicanos fighting in the Vietnam War and of their overrepresentation in the carceral system while facing pushout and inequitable conditions in U.S. schools (see figure 4). Junior’s utilization of the ES “four I’s of oppression” critical frame to deconstruct the images attest to his strengthening racial literacy: Junior

wrote, “Based on the visual text, it’s evident that [what] Chicanos faced was *institutional* and *interpersonal* oppression. For instance, in the 1st image it shows that 18% of Chicanos were sent into the Vietnam war. This means that they were sent to their grave” (Junior, SJE, April 11, 2018). Junior here underscores how the government’s role in drafting and sending Chicanos to fight and die constitutes two distinct forms of oppression.

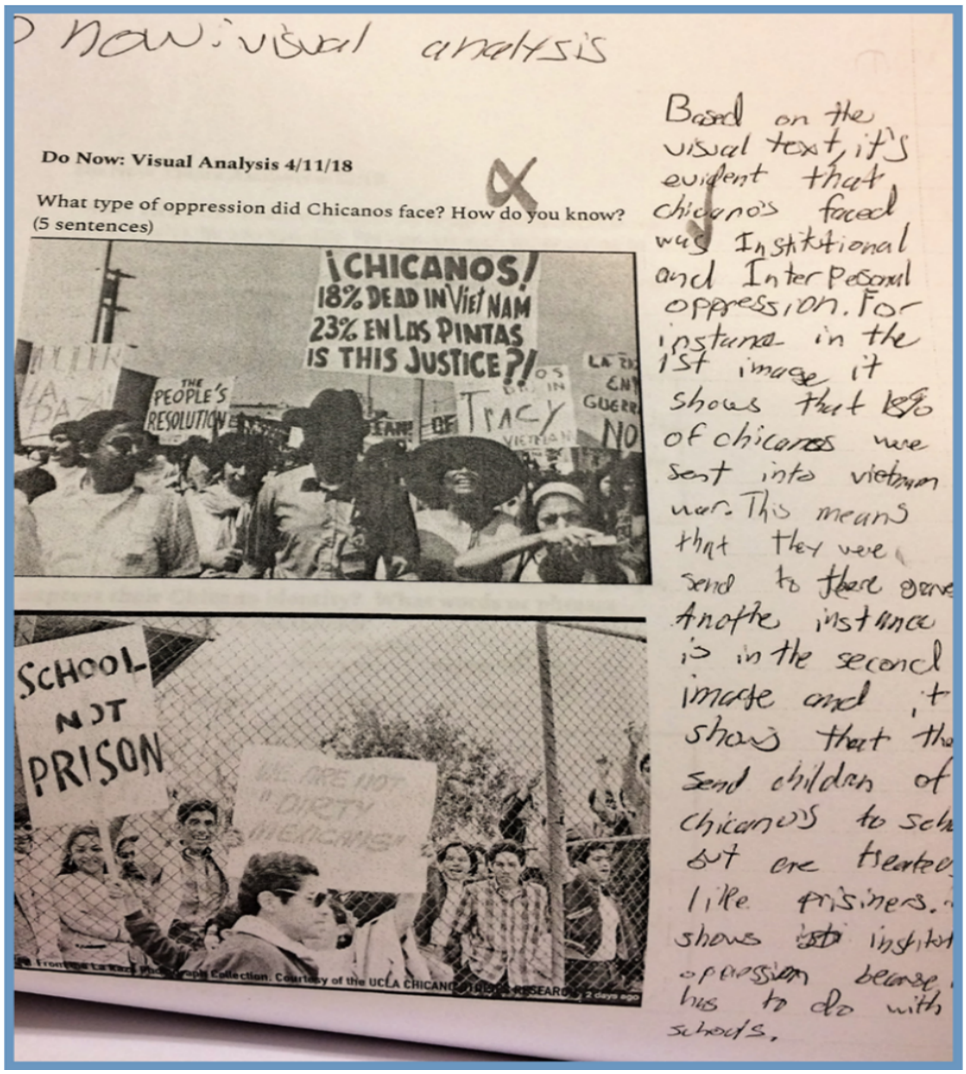


Figure 4. Junior’s Do Now Visual Analysis

Although Junior's analysis does not elaborate on how the visual texts explicitly depict either interpersonal or institutional oppression, his writing demonstrates that he is putting these new critical frames to use and developing the facility to employ this critical language to name historical injustice in his community. In his visual analysis of the second photograph with a Chicanx protestor holding a sign that reads "School not Prison" he writes, "… in the second image it shows that they send children of chicanos to school but are treated like prisoners. It shows *institutional oppression* because it has to do with schools." Drawing from the terminology he learned in ES, Junior notes that the oppression protestors are denouncing is institutional because, "it has to do with schools." Junior also extends the literal meaning of the "School not Prison" sign in his analysis of the institutional oppression Chicano youth faced by calling attention to their prison-like treatment within East Heights schools. As a student at EHHS, one of the schools at the center of the Walkouts, it was very powerful to see the impact that Junior's growing awareness of both the oppression and resistance of students who once walked the same halls and sat in the same classrooms as he, had on him. Not only did it awaken his interest in learning about his community's history for the first time, but it began to instill in him a growing pride and a newly empowered identity. As exemplified here, three weeks into the unit on oppression, Junior had moved forward in his racial literacy development and had 1) cultivated a more complex understanding of racism and oppression beyond the overt or interpersonal manifestations he had originally been limited to and 2) developed a sharper critique of his community's historical experiences through a stronger understanding of legacies of oppression and resistance that continue to shape his

community. Junior's racial literacy development at this point landed on the first stage of the RLD process as his application of these critical concepts extended to historical examples in his world, as noted here, but had yet to bridge to his own experiences.

Junior's own awareness of the growth of his critical consciousness spoke to the impact that taking ES had on strengthening his racial literacy. In mid-May—a month after the unit on oppression began and nearly 7 months after his initial analysis of the first Assata Shakur quote—Junior noted that before taking ES, he had been unaware of the complex way power manifests itself in our world and that the critical vocabulary he began to pick up gave him a new lens to name the inequity around him: "I used to think there was only one type of oppression but now I know there's institutional, ideological, interpersonal and another one…and it has to deal with not only yourself but what other things are bringing that oppression to you" (Junior, SI, May 17 , 2018). Specifically Junior noted that the concept of "institutional oppression" was eye-opening to him as it allowed him to see its invisibilized manifestations more clearly: "I thought oppression was only brought by people [interpersonal] but also the government brings a type of oppression because they are making these laws based on judging you on your background, not judging you on your actions. It's not like a person coming up to you and insulting you for your language and your culture, it's also the way the government is run and what opportunities are given" (Junior, SI, May 17, 2018). As Junior conveyed here, one of the lasting impacts of taking ES with Zareith was gaining the critical vocabulary that led to a shift in his analysis of oppression and racism from a strictly interpersonal understanding to a structural one (i.e., not only "brought by people' but embedded in

unjust laws) alongside knowledge of the other interlocking forms of oppression. His growing ability to distinguish between the interpersonal and structural dynamics of oppression and his sharpened awareness of the role that institutions, like the government, play in structuring opportunity is one of the fundamental characteristics that Guinier (2004) argues is needed to combat racial liberalism (see Chapter 2). As Junior became familiarized with the concept of oppression in this first stage of his RLD process, he began to challenge and unlearn dominant hegemonic perspectives that prevented him from understanding the role of oppression in his own life.

Daniel

Daniel, who sat at the same table with Junior during the first semester of ES, was a student who regularly and confidently interjected when Zareith asked the class to volunteer an answer. Aptly describing himself as an outspoken person, Daniel moved from the San Diego area to East Heights when he was five years old. Self-identifying as Mexican American, he shared that he grew up in "both Mexican and American cultures" through his mom who was born in Mexico and his dad who is 2nd generation Mexican American. Daniel attended a parochial middle school in the San Gabriel Valley and began 9th grade at EHHS where he says he felt much more comfortable than at his previous school. When I asked him what distinguished ES from other classes he had taken, he noted that he had not even heard of anything like ES in any school he attended and that it was more interesting to him because it covered topics that were closer to his community (Daniel, SI, September 20, 2017).

Like Junior, Daniel expressed that he had been offered few opportunities in elementary or middle school to develop his critical consciousness, leaving him unaware of the less visible and normalized manifestations of racism that he and his family had experienced. In the first semester of the school year and prior to learning about systems of oppression, Daniel's understanding of racism was shaped by the dominant hegemonic discourse on racism and oppression: he shared that in his view, racism is "always easy to see" and he defined it in strictly individual terms saying it was when "people put one race below another. When people discriminate" (Daniel, SI, September 20, 2018). Additionally, Daniel shared that while his mom and dad had spoken to him about racism, he admitted that his approach to dealing with it was to not let it "bother him." In fact, when our conversation turned to his mom's immigration to the U.S., to the upcoming expiration of her work visa and to the Trump administration's anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies—though expressing concern about the impact that it might have on his mom—Daniel shared that he didn't follow politics, admitting that while his mom doesn't like Trump "because of how he is sometimes disrespectful to her culture," in his view he didn't have an issue with him or with the decisions and policies of his administration (Daniel, SI, September 20, 2018). It is relevant to note that at this point, Daniel referred to Mexican American culture as his mom's or "*her* culture" instead of calling it his own by naming it "*my*" or "*our culture*." While subtle, this difference illustrated the wedge that years of Eurocentric curricula and dominant socialization had driven between Daniel and his cultural identity, a wedge that Daniel would eliminate along the process of developing his racial literacy via 9th grade ES.

As Daniel was introduced to the critical vocabulary and frames in ES and as he was given opportunities to practice locating the manifestations of oppression in the world and in his lived experience, Daniel's racial literacy expanded; specifically, Daniel practiced making oppression and racism legible in ES through activities that fostered his sharpened awareness of their normalization—one of the key tools by which it persists (Guinier, 2004). Through the use of critical ES content, the building of this aspect of Daniel's racial literacy grew alongside the building of his academic literacies. For instance, to hone his close reading of texts and his racial literacy, Daniel worked on quote analyses in his "Do Now" notebook. In one quote analysis assignment, Daniel practiced his critical analysis of excerpts from Assata Shakur's autobiography by identifying the texts' central idea along with determining the author's tone –in other words, he employed his knowledge of figurative language to deconstruct the following texts' meaning, "Everyday out on the street now, I remind myself that Black people in amerika are oppressed. It is necessary that I do that. People get used to anything. The less you think about your oppression the more your tolerance for it grows. After a while, people just think oppression is the normal state of things. But to be free you have to be acutely aware of being a slave" (Daniel, SJE, April 5, 2018).

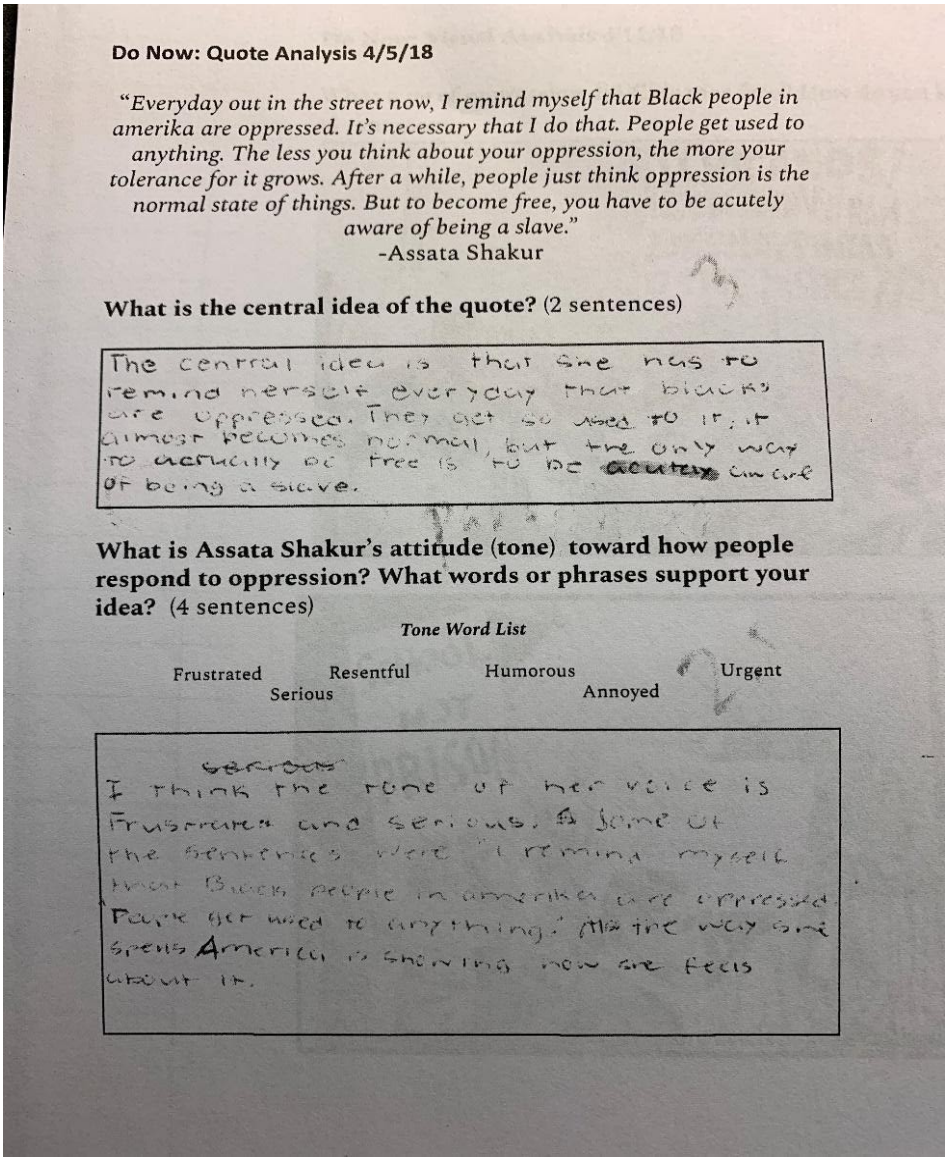
Daniel worked on the quote analysis on his own first, then he shared his entry with his table group, and finally, he participated in a whole class discussion with his teacher. Illustrating his growing fluency with "reading" oppression—including his understanding that the normalization and subsequent invisibility of oppression serves to maintain inequity in the world—at two months into the second semester, his analysis of

Assata Shakur's quote (see figure 5), highlights how his thinking had shifted away from his initial view that racism and oppression always function in plain sight. When Zareith asked for students to volunteer their responses, a few students including Daniel and Junior shared what they believed was the quote's central idea:

> **Student A:** People with less power have been oppressed like Black people and Latinos.
>
> **Zareith:** Okay, yes. Anyone else want to add to that?
>
> **Daniel:** The central idea of the quote is that oppression is in your everyday life so people just think it's normal.
>
> **Zareith:** Yes, people of Color experience oppression and we need to be conscious of our oppression. If we're not aware of it we will continue to be oppressed. We need to be conscious of our oppression in order to change it.
>
> **Junior:** Also, she [Assata Shakur] writes 'amerika' with a lower-case to show how America doesn't stand for the values supposedly important in America like liberty and freedom (ON, April 5, 2018).

As Daniel's reading of Assata Shakur's quote highlights and as Zareith reiterates, the maintenance of the racial status quo and oppression is contingent on the continued normalization of racial inequity. Daniel tapped into this central idea by employing figurative language and word-level close-reading to access a deeper reading of the text; Daniel writes (see figure 5) that Assata Shakur's tone is "frustrated" and "serious" in communicating her point, and Junior (in the classroom dialogue) and Daniel (in his written response) are attentive to Shakur's use of capitalization in their interpretation of how she uses language to convey the contradiction of a country's stated values versus its actual treatment of those who it oppresses. Although Daniel was not applying the concepts of invisibility and normalization to an actual analysis of oppression yet, his

ability to name invisibility and normalization as the tools of oppression and racism revealed his growing racial literacy that would equip him to later unmask the oppression and racism he had encountered. In other words, Daniel's progression through the first phase of the RLD process (i.e., learning and applying the ES concepts in the classroom) would set the stage for his progression through the second and third stages of his RLD (i.e., bridging the ES concepts he practiced in the classroom to his lived experiences in addition to internalizing and extending those critical frames).



Do Now: Quote Analysis 4/5/18

"Everyday out in the street now, I remind myself that Black people in amerika are oppressed. It's necessary that I do that. People get used to anything. The less you think about your oppression, the more your tolerance for it grows. After a while, people just think oppression is the normal state of things. But to become free, you have to be acutely aware of being a slave."
-Assata Shakur

What is the central idea of the quote? (2 sentences)

The central idea is that she has to remind herself everyday that blacks are oppressed. They get so used to it, it almost becomes normal, but the only way to actually be free is to be acutely aware of being a slave.

What is Assata Shakur's attitude (tone) toward how people respond to oppression? What words or phrases support your idea? (4 sentences)

Tone Word List

Frustrated Resentful Humorous Urgent
Serious Annoyed

~~serious~~
I think the tone of her voice is Frustrated and serious. Some of the sentences were 'I remind myself that Black people in amerika are oppressed' 'People get used to anything.' All the way she spells America is showing how she feels about it.

Figure 5. Daniel's Quote Analysis

About three weeks later, the growth of Daniel's racial literacy was evident in the developing complexity of his analyses of oppression; applying his knowledge of interpersonal, institutional, ideological and internalized oppression, Daniel's analyses began to shift away from the dominant perspectives that individualizes oppression. After

learning about the four interlocking "I's of Oppression" with his class Daniel's class watched a few clips of the film, *Pride & Prejudice: Latinos in America* that provides documentary footage of Chicanx students organizing and taking part in the Walkouts to demand equitable schooling and the feature film, *Walkout* (2006), a dramatization of those historical events. Students took notes and answered the following prompts while they watched the clips and the film, *What type of oppression did Chicanos face? How did they resist oppression?* Then, students shared in small groups and finally as a whole class. The following exchange illustrates Daniel's increased fluency with naming manifestations of oppression:

> **Zareith**: We watched those film clips and now we're going to review your notes…What was one example of the type of oppression Chicanos faced that the films captured?
>
> **Junior:** Institutional oppression-- because they [Chicanos] weren't getting the same opportunities in schools.
>
> **Zareith:** Yes! It was a low-quality education that they were getting. How else was their education low quality?
>
> **Student A:** Counselors pushed them towards working with their hands, pushing them to vocational courses and not preparing them for college.
>
> **Student B:** Teachers discriminated against students.
>
> **Student C:** Internalized oppression cause… (trails off)
>
> **Daniel:** Interpersonal oppression. They also faced interpersonal oppression because the teachers were discriminating against the students based on stereotypes of Mexican Americans (ON, April 21, 2018).

Through this classroom dialogue with their teacher, students were making visible the complex multi-faceted way that racism and oppression historically functioned to subordinate their community. Daniel's growing facility with employing this analysis of the films' depictions stems from the opportunities he was given to apply this critical language to the power dynamics in his world. Daniel and his peers were able to cultivate their racial literacies, by applying this critical vocabulary and analysis to various texts, including film, historical images, political cartoons, music lyrics and their own lives. For Daniel, being able to distinguish between the different interrelated forms of oppression (i.e., his naming and analysis of interpersonal oppression as distinct from institutional oppression) marked an important step in the first stage of his RLD process.

Reflecting on the growth of his critical consciousness, Daniel, like Junior, also mentioned that the new language he acquired in ES extended his critical awareness of inequity. As previously noted, Daniel shared that in the first semester of ES he felt he had a limited understanding of oppression and how it "worked": "I just didn't understand oppression and the four "I's of Oppression" and how they work and the different ways people can be oppressed (Daniel, SI, May 17, 2018). I only thought that oppression could come from people not accepting others or putting them below them but it's more than that." Here Daniel underscores how his understanding of oppression broadened, as his racial literacy grew, to include more than just its overt interpersonal manifestations and to challenge prevailing liberal solutions of the "if- everyone- would- simply- accept- each-others- differences- racism -and- oppression- would- no- longer- be- a- problem" variety. Additionally, Daniel's engagement in the ES work that supported his racial literacy

development along the first stage of his RLD process (i.e., his initial meaning making and application of critical concepts within the classroom context) ushered a paradigm shift that helped him decipher oppression beyond its "easy to see"/overt manifestations in his own life.

Jasmin

In Mr. López' 4th period ES/Social Studies Class, another group of ninth graders made their way into a classroom space that was covered from wall to ceiling with posters and bright artwork depicting leaders of the Chicano, Ethnic Studies, Indigenous and other global movements for liberation and social justice. Jasmin, sat near the front of the classroom underneath a poster-sized portrait of Emiliano Zapata and a print of a DACA activist rendered in blue tones, with the words "I'm a Dreamer" in bold typeface. An aspiring animator and song writer who described herself as an "introvert," Jasmin shared that she feels happiest when she is drawing or listening to music and that her teachers have typically thought of her as a "good" student because she keeps to herself, but admits that she sometimes struggles in school. Jasmin's family who is from the state of Puebla, Mexico, emigrated to the U.S. to "start a better life"; she shared that her parents push her to do her best in school because they were not able to obtain a formal education in Mexico and they want her to "do better in life than them"; she shared that seeing her dad arrive to their one-bedroom apartment exhausted from his night shifts of packing and unpacking produce motivates her to work hard in school. Additionally, Jasmin said that she carries the worry that she will be separated from her parents due to the constant and

increasingly ramped-up threat of deportation hanging over undocumented people and their families (Jasmin, SI, September 20, 2018).

Save for the piecemeal lessons on the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr. that she remembered, Jasmin like Junior and Daniel also expressed that she received almost no opportunities in her schooling to learn about racism and oppression which left her feeling unprepared to have conversations about racism and oppression with others. Reflecting on her critical consciousness before taking 9th grade ES, Jasmin talked about having always "been aware of inequality" and proud of her cultural heritage but of feeling like there were many gaps in her knowledge. Responding to the Assata Shakur quote at the beginning of the year ("Everyone needs to identify with their own history. If they don't know their history, they cannot construct their own future") Jasmin concurred, "I agree with this quote because everyone needs to reflect on the past in order to construct the future" (Jasmin, SJE, September 7, 2017). Yet, like Junior and Daniel and illustrating how her analyses had been shaped by majoritarian narratives about racism, in one of my first conversations with Jasmin she characterized racism as strictly interpersonal, saying that it was, "When people don't give equality to people of darker skin colors or from different countries." And when I asked if she or any of her family members ever experienced racism, she responded with a definitive, "No, we haven't. It's not like it was in the past" (Jasmin, SI, September 20, 2017).

By taking ES, Jasmin's critical analyses of racism and oppression sharpened; Five months after beginning ES, Jasmin began applying the critical vocabulary and frames from ES in class, illustrating an enhanced awareness of the historical legacies of racism

and oppression in the world and their repercussions on her schooling experiences. After learning about the colonization of the Americas as an ongoing structure supported by the creation of racialized hierarchies, Jasmin and her peers learned about Jim Crow laws and school segregation as examples of unjust policies impacting Black people in the U.S. Focusing on the concept of "segregation" Jasmin created a word map with her definition of the term, "separate by color; racism," in the upper left corner and with examples of the concept below: "segregated schools, whites couldn't go to school with people of color" (Jasmin, SJE, February 10, 2018). This assignment provided a window into Jasmin's racial literacy meaning-making as her use of the terminology here illustrates how she is "trying on" these concepts in this first stage of her RLD process: while she names segregation as an example of racism, she writes that the point of concern wasn't that Black youth were segregated and not given an equitable education, but that white people were denied their ability to go to school with people of Color. By focusing on Jasmin's racial literacy as a process of development, however, we see that, although one might characterize her understanding of segregation as problematic at this point, she is nonetheless wrestling with and actively making meaning of the critical concepts and vocabulary introduced to her in ES.

About two weeks after learning about segregation and the legacies of racism impacting Black people in America, Jasmin's ES class watched a video clip of "Taking Back the Schools" an episode from the series "Chicano! History of the Mexican-American Civil Rights Movement" that relates the history of segregation as it intersected with the Chicanx/Latinx experience in the U.S. Underscoring how segregation is not a

thing of the past, Jasmin wrote that in her own school and community, "...segregation is going back as it was in the 1960's" (Jasmin, SJE, February 22, 2018). As noted here, part of the first stage of Jasmin's racial literacy development was a growing sociohistorical awareness of the continuing legacies of racism and oppression (Brown, 2017). Learning that the demographics of her school (over 95% Latinx and free and reduced lunch eligible) mirrored the demographics of other underserved school communities that presently face de facto segregation, deepened her understanding of oppression and helped her challenge the dominant narrative of post-racialism that she had begun to internalize (see page 19) and that prevented her to see the racism that she and her family had experienced.

Reflecting on her critical consciousness before taking ES, like Junior and Daniel, Jasmin also mentioned that the new language she acquired in Mr. López' ES class extended her critical awareness of inequity to include a more complex and nuanced awareness of oppression and racism. When I asked Jasmin about her previous understandings of oppression, she also specifically highlighted the impact that learning about the "Four I's of Oppression" had on her, noting that she was not aware of the distinctions between the types of oppression let alone that there existed more than one, saying "I didn't really know about them [the forms of oppression]. I just saw them all as the same thing" (Jasmin, May 17, 2018). As Jasmin was introduced to the concepts and vocabulary from ES that cultivated her racial literacy, she began to become aware of and uncover the covert manifestations of racism and oppression that she had not been previously prepared to read and resist.

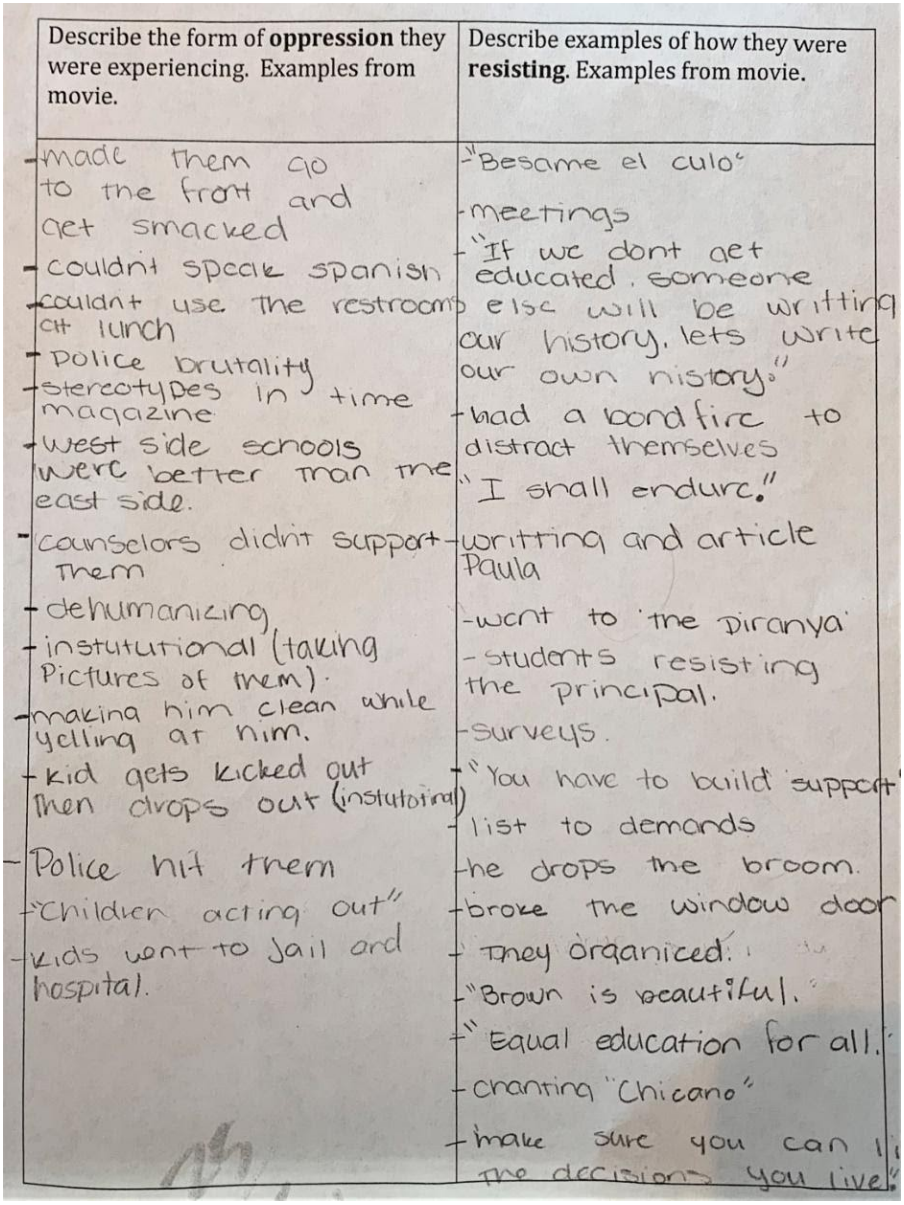
Lizeth

Lizeth, who was also part of Mr. López' ES class, described herself as both serious and outgoing and as someone who loves creating art and living in East Heights. Lizeth, who self-identifies as either Latina or Chicana, was born in the state of Colima, Mexico and emigrated with her family when she was 6 years old. She shared that she learned to be resilient and independent early on because her family wasn't able to support her "in ways that other families are able to." Lizeth shared that she has also had to take a central role in raising her siblings and navigating the foster care system because her mom has struggled with drug abuse and depression. Lizeth, who was currently living with her grandmother, shared that she hopes that fifteen years from now she will be able to help her mom "pay all her bills." Lizeth also expressed concern about her own citizenship status and upcoming court order in addition to worrying about her siblings and what will happen to them since they are also in the foster care system (Lizeth, SI, September 20, 2017).

Like her peers, Lizeth had never taken a class like ES and had not been given the opportunity to cultivate her racial literacy even though she came to school carrying the impact of covert and overt racism and oppression. Due to this lack of support with cultivating her racial analysis, Lizeth, like many of her peers, subscribed to the dominant narrative about racism: when I asked Lizeth about racism she exclusively referred to overt interpersonal manifestations of racism describing that it is "when they [people] say "go back to your country." When I asked her if she or anyone in her family had experienced racism she initially said that she and her family hadn't because they have

always lived in majority-Latinx cities, but then added, “But sometimes even they [Latinxs] will make dumb comments like, ‘Oh, illegal immigrant’ and stuff like that” (Jasmin, SI, September 20, 2017). In response to the Assata Shakur quote about the importance of knowing your history, in the beginning of the school year, Lizeth wrote, “I agree with Assata because if people don’t know their history, they will keep making the same mistakes that were made back then” (Lizeth, SJE, September 7, 2017).

Though Lizeth expressed that she had been aware of the interpersonal and internalized racism around her (without using those terms), it was not until she arrived in 9th grade ES that she was supported in her ability to name the oppression and racism she had been aware of, witnessed and experienced. About four months after our initial conversation, Lizeth’s racial literacy expanded beyond her ability to name interpersonal experiences of oppression. During the unit on the Chicano Movement and the struggle for equity in East Heights schools, in April, Lizeth and her peers watched the film, “Walkout,” a dramatization of the Blowouts of ’68 and worked on an analysis of the depiction of oppression in the film (see figure 6).



Describe the form of **oppression** they were experiencing. Examples from movie.	Describe examples of how they were **resisting**. Examples from movie.
-made them go to the front and get smacked -couldnt speak spanish -couldnt use the restroom at lunch -police brutality -stereotypes in time magazine -west side schools were better than the east side. -counselors didnt support them -dehumanizing -institutional (taking pictures of them). -making him clean while yelling at him. -kid gets kicked out then drops out (institutional) -Police hit them -"children acting out" -kids went to jail and hospital.	-"Besame el culo" -meetings -"If we dont get educated, someone else will be writting our history, lets write our own history." -had a bonfire to distract themselves "I shall endure." -writting and article Paula -went to the Diranya -students resisting the principal. -surveys. -"You have to build support" -list to demands -he drops the broom. -broke the window door -They organiced. -"Brown is beautiful." -"Equal education for all." -chanting "Chicano" -make sure you can l the decisions you live"

Figure 6. Lizeth's Walkout Graphic Organizer

In addition to the various examples of interpersonal oppression that the film depicts, Lizeth pinpoints two clear examples of institutional oppression that the film covers: 1) she identifies that when the police and investigators are taking pictures of the activist students that that is an example of institutional oppression because it highlights the

institutional practice of state-sanctioned surveillance and 2) she also identifies youth getting pushed out of school as a form of institutional oppression that through the institution of schooling has historically limited the opportunities and life chances of youth along race and class lines. Lizeth's facility with applying critical vocabulary to name oppression in the classroom context in this exercise—which lands along the first stage of the RLD process-- demonstrates the growing complexity of her critical analysis to capture the multiple facets of oppression and racism.

Reflecting on what her critical consciousness was like before taking Mr. López's ES course, Lizeth talked about racist comments she often hears and expressed that had she not learned the critical concepts she was engaging with in ES she would not have been as aware of their ubiquity: "Like I think it would have just thought they were normal cause you hear it all the time. Yeah, but Mr. López and ES opened my eyes" (Lizeth, SI, May 17, 2018).

This section highlights students' first stage of their RLD process. Here we see 9th grade ES students' meaning- making relevant to the reading of race and racism as a "diagnostic device," their fluency with being able to define and interpret racism as a structural, not only an individual phenomenon (Rogers & Mosley, 2006) (or in other words how they are locating structures) through the tools of discourse within the classroom through their learning of critical vocabulary. Given the permanence and shifting nature of racism, CRT scholars underscore the importance of pinpointing the structural roots of inequity and to unmask its overt and covert manifestations to arrive at the root causes of racialized oppression (Crenshaw, 1995; Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings

& Tate, 1995). As demonstrated in this section, ES curricula and pedagogy with an emphasis on racial literacy can support students' abilities to do just that. Interestingly one similarity in the experiences of focal students as they entered the first stage of their RLD process as they began 9th grade ES is that all four focal students had had little to no opportunities to learn about racism and oppression in their schooling prior to that. Even with the increased national discourse on racism and inequality at an all-time high, given the social-political realities of the Trump administration, they shared that there was very little in the way of school curricula or pedagogy that addressed the experiences of inequity that they witnessed or experienced, or that provided them with a sociohistorical base to allow them to understand legacies of oppression in their own communities. Essentially students shared that they had been left to navigate, process and confront something as significant and urgent as racism and oppression on their own. Additionally, exacerbating their difficulty to read, process or confront racism and intersecting forms of oppression on their own, prior to taking ES they all demonstrated how entrenched the dominant hegemonic narratives of racism and oppression in their own thinking: All four focal students characterized racism as solely interpersonal, signifying that their abilities to read covert racism and intersecting forms of oppression in schooling, health care, the criminal justice system etc.,--the most prevalent and insidious manifestations—had not been cultivated in schools.

While the four focal students shared the above similarities including taking ES at the same time and being exposed to very similar curricula and pedagogical approaches, they each had different experiences that complicate our understanding of how students

can experience the first stage of the RLD process. First of all, while all four showed overall growth in this first stage, each student had different entry points into the development of their racial literacies and they each did not follow the same timeline as they expressed and demonstrated varying levels of resistance. Junior, due to internalized racism, was the most resistant early in the first stage of RLD yet he ended up showing the most growth as this chapter will later outline. Jasmin was less resistant in the beginning but had more instances of reifying dominant ideologies later in her RLD process. Lizeth was the least resistant of all four and had the strongest sociohistorical awareness of oppression coming into 9th grade ES. Overall, Junior and Daniel who both identified as males, had a more difficult time including gender oppression along its intersection with racism than Jasmin and Lizeth who both identified as female.

Overall for Junior, Daniel Jasmin and Lizeth, being able to distinguish between the different interrelated forms of oppression (i.e., their naming and analysis of interpersonal oppression as distinct from institutional oppression) marked a key step in the first stage of their RLD process given that "a critical awareness of inequity is a "necessary precursor" to bettering the inequitable conditions facing marginalized communities (Cammarota, 2016, p.237).

RLD Stage 2: Bridging of Critical Frames and Vocabulary to Personal Experiences

As Junior, Daniel, Jasmin and Lizeth built on the critical terminology of their ES courses, they began to bridge the critical frames they learned to their own lived experiences in powerful and meaningful ways; This pattern of racial literacy engagement

that emerged from the data, marked the second stage of their RLD processes. For example, in one lesson Mr. Lopez presented students with a visual analysis activity where students were asked to name the forms and manifestations of oppression that an image depicted. The image consisted of a political cartoon with, what appeared to be, a young child, caught in the center of a spider web. Around the spider web were the following words: greed, avarice and labor laws (ON, February 7, 2018). When Mr. Lopez asked the class what they thought the image represented, Lizeth volunteered, "It's about how they [big businesses] use child labor to become rich. Another student then said, "It's a picture about institutional oppression because the child is caught in the web by those institutions" (ON, February 7, 2018). As the conversation continued, students began to make moving personal connections to their own and their family members' experiences of exploitation and racialized oppression. Jasmin raised her hand and also shared that she believed the image represented institutional oppression because "there are companies and businesses that exploit their workers." Openly sharing her connection to this exploitation, she mentioned that on some weekends she helps her dad pack produce to help her family make money and how the supplier they work for doesn't pay them well and often does not give them enough time to rest during their few breaks. Jasmin noted that the daily exploitation that her dad experiences at work and that she has also been subjected to is rooted in laws and policies that shape the business practices that exploit Latinx immigrant labor, especially for workers, like her dad, who are undocumented. Jasmin's analysis of her family's oppression--of the structural inequity that working class, undocumented, Latinx families endure--sharped her critical awareness of oppression in the world and

compelled her to feel even more connected to the anti-racist struggles to end oppression (ON, February 7, 2018). For Jasmin, the development of her racial literacy—as this example poignantly illustrates—of being able to put a name to the inequity in her own life, allowed her to powerfully and meaningfully make sense of this injustice for herself.

In his "School Experience Reflection," Junior also made powerful bridges between the concept of institutional oppression and his own schooling experience in this second stage of his RLD process. Junior wrote, "I have also experienced institutional oppression in school. I feel that my school experience hasn't honored my culture. The only time I learned about my culture was when it had something to do with America, like when America fought with Mexico for pieces of land" (SJE, March 30, 2018). The bridge that Junior formed between the critical frames from ES and his own experience of cultural exclusion from most of the curricula in his schooling allowed him to critically re-assess why—as he expressed at the beginning of the year—he had shared that he did not value learning about the history of his community while loving the subject of history. As a result, it motivated him to continue to build his knowledge of history from the Latinx/Chicanx perspective that he had not seen as legitimate. Furthermore, for Junior, being able to pinpoint institutional oppression-- via whitestream school curricula-- as the source of his internalized racism, later relieved him of the guilt he felt and the blame he placed on himself for having been ashamed of his community.

Similarly, exemplifying her racial literacy at the second stage of her RLD process, Jasmin began to put a name to the inequity she experienced in school by bridging the critical terminology she learned in ES to the history she had been taught before taking

ES, “In school I experienced institutional oppression through the history books [in my classes] which don’t show the point of view of Native Americans and Indigenous people and are mainly about white Americans” (Jasmin, SI, March 25, 2018). Jasmin’s ability to read institutional oppression in the Eurocentric history curricula of her elementary and middle schools was especially transformational for her as it inspired her desire to continue to learn and unearth her family’s history; Jasmin expressed that with this knowledge she felt a desire to learn about and claim her decolonized identity by connecting to her Indigenous roots and her family’s history in Puebla (Jasmin, SI, March 25, 2018). For Jasmin and Junior, bridging ES concepts and vocabulary to their own lived experiences helped them unmask the racism embedded in the institutions of schooling in standardized curricula, challenge the erasure of their communities histories and counter their internalized racism by cultivating a deeper connection to their racial/ethnic, cultural roots.

Learning the critical vocabulary from his ES class also supported Daniel’s racial literacy along the second stage of his RLD as he made powerful bridges between the racism his family experienced and concepts of institutional racism. One afternoon at the dinner table, Daniel’s mom shared with his family that when she was driving home, a white man swerved in front of her on the freeway, almost crashing his car into her. When she pulled over on the side of the road, rattled by the encounter, the man parked beside her and hurled racist insults at her that demeaned “Mexicans” and yelled out that he was “gonna call Trump on you [her]!” Daniel shared that it made him angry to know that his mom had been targeted in that way but that taking ES had provided him with a

perspective that helped him connect what his mom had experienced to the larger socio-historical realities of racism towards Latinx people and to be able to talk to his family about it, "[In ES] I learned about the history of putting Mexican people down and just about how racist people can be and it's not the first time—there's always going to be someone that is racist but it's not going to be the first or last time that it happens" (Daniel, SI, March 30, 2018). He expressed that this knowledge and perspective helped him and his family cope with the stress and anxiety that the incident had caused them because, "for me it wasn't just about one person calling another person racist names any more" so, "...we felt connected to all the other people who have faced interpersonal and institutional racism in the history of this country and in a weird way it made us feel like we weren't alone in this" (Daniel, SI, March 30, 2018). In his second stage of his RLD process, Daniel's ability to bridge his family's personal experience with critical concepts from ES helped him and his family make sense of the experience; because Daniel's racial analysis had shifted from an individual to institutional explanation of racism, it blunted the force of the racist encounter on him and his family. In short, Daniel utilized his racial literacy as a tool for survival as it protected him from the emotional and psychological stress that experiencing blatant everyday forms of racism can have on people of Color.

Learning the critical vocabulary from his ES class also supported Lizeth's racial literacy along the second stage of her RLD as she bridged the racism she experienced to the concept of ideological racism. Lizeth shared that on the days she would stay late at school to finish her final projects, she would often face harassment and profiling by the cops who would patrol the area between EHHS and her house on her walk home, "There

would be times when I would just be walking, minding my business and then some cops would pass by me driving real slowly and then they would pull up next to me and they wouldn't say anything but they would just keep staring at me, looking at me like I was doing something wrong by just walking home" (Lizeth, SI, March 18, 2018). When I asked if she had shared these experiences in her ES class or if she had learned anything in ES that had been useful to her when thinking about them, she said that learning about ideological oppression really helped her make sense of these unnerving experiences, "I think I faced ideological oppression because the cops have these ideas about me--because I'm Latina--that we're all criminals or gang bangers or whatever...with Trump being president and since he's saying all these bad things about Mexicans, they [the cops] believe him and that's also why they profile us" (Lizeth, SI, March 18, 2018). Like Daniel, in the second stage of her RLD process, Lizeth utilized her racial literacy as a tool for survival as it protected her from internalizing both the anti-Latinx discourse of the president and his administration and the racial profiling of the cops; because her racial literacy allowed her to make sense of this experience, she did not locate the root of the problem within herself by thinking, "there must be something wrong with me, that's why the police are suspicious of me"--the destructive self-blame that youth of Color who have not had an opportunity to develop their critical consciousness can harbor; instead she squarely finds the root of the issue in the racist ideologies that manifest themselves in racist police practices and discourse of 45 that criminalize Latinx youth and youth of Color.

In all of the students experiences it's important to note that it wasn't until they arrived in 9th grade ES that they were able to begin to put a name to this racist encounters and experiences they faced. While schools are supposed to be places where youth are able to learn the skills and abilities to navigate the world, it was clear that the schools the focal students in this study had attended had not given them the proper tools to process the racist experiences they had let alone to prepare them to navigate a fundamentally unequal world.

RLD Stage 3: Applying and Extending Critical Frames

Beyond applications to formal texts and as a sign of their racial literacy development or extension, for focal students this critical language became ingrained in their thinking. In effect, they internalized the critical frames that they learned and applied this critical language to the experiences in their own lives. It was powerful to see how they were using this language outside of the direct context of their ES classroom to help them navigate living in an unjust racialized world. In this section I will show how the application of this critical vocabulary was an instrumental and meaningful part of their lives; students learned/developed this fluency with applying this critical language in class, but it was really powerful to see this racial literacy come to life in the ways they extended and applied the critical frames to their lives (to make meaning) outside of the classroom.

For Junior, being able to apply this newly-learned critical language to locate the institutional roots and embeddedness of racism that his community has historically struggled against also played a critical role in helping him confront his own internalized

oppression/racism—the form of racism that he shared has most negatively impacted him and his family, "The type of oppression that not only me and my family have been affected by is internalized because internalized is when people are telling you names and being racist and you start believing those things and then you start feeling like you're useless" (Junior, SI, May 7, 2018). For Junior, the encounters he had with everyday racism and the lack of racial literacy development in his previous schooling and in his social world resulted in his internalizing narratives of his and his community's inferiority.

> **Junior:** …and I didn't really care about Mexicans or like the fact that they moved here, but when I heard that Latinos or the Mexican kids who grew up here and how they were pushed down and taught that they're nothing more than second class citizens and they didn't matter in this country.
>
> **Arturo:** How did learning this change the way that you thought about Mexican and Mexican-descent people?
>
> **Junior:** Umm, it changed 'cause I learned how they struggled and how they actually wanted to stay in this country, especially the students in this school. They did the 1968 Walkouts, they actually wanted the education. Because people were telling them, 'you don't care about education' or 'just become a mechanic or something else' and that they actually wanted to learn to prove them wrong.
>
> **Arturo:** And how does that make you feel about your community-- about East Heights students, about Latinos or Mexican people?
>
> **Junior:** It makes me feel strong because I know that my community is striving to become better than what people tell them they are…[Before] I just thought of myself as just another Latino who has a Mexican mom who was gonna barely pass high school. Once I entered this classroom [9th grade ES] I learned that I could do many things in this world (Junior, SI, May 7, 2018).

For Junior learning about how his community confronted institutional racism and oppression provided him with a counternarrative to the deficit, stereotypic depictions of his community that paint Latinx as broken, culturally deprived and not valuing education (Valencia & Black, 2002) that initially made him feel like "Just another Latino…who was gonna barely pass high school" (Junior, SI, May 7, 2018). In other words, Junior's racial literacy development in his ES course, was personally transformative as it allowed him to begin to, 1) name the institutional racism/oppression his community resisted and 2) through this newfound knowledge, confront his own internalized racism/oppression that was negatively shaping his self -concept as a student. In effect, building his racial literacy allowed Junior to begin the self-work and "healing" to confront internalized racism—the insidious maintenance of the racial status quo whereby minoritized people themselves, help to maintain the status quo by internalizing the racial hierarchies created to subordinate them (Pérez Huber et al., 2006). When I asked Junior specifically if he found value in connecting his own lived experiences with the critical vocabulary and frameworks he was learning he responded, "Yeah, 'cause it makes the class more interesting and makes me know how I could heal or how I could've healed" (Junior, SI, May 7, 2018). As racial literacy scholars in education have underscored, centering racial literacy in secondary humanities classrooms allows educators to move beyond "one-dimensional approaches" of cultural relevance that simply attend to the racial and cultural identities of students (Epstein & Gist, 2013). For Latinx students and students of Color who face negative stereotypes, low expectations and ongoing discrimination (Gandara & Contreras, 2009), racial literacy development cultivates their critical consciousness of

racism and oppression and—as exemplified in Junior's experience— is a catalyst for the self-work needed to confront and heal from internalized oppression. It's important to note that in the first stage of his RLD process Junior had left the "examples from life" box of the internalized oppression section of his Four I's of Oppression chart blank when he turned it in March. In our conversation in May, however, now he easily provided an example of internalized oppression in his own life, demonstrating his RLD growth because of his ES course.

Junior's growing racial literacy also provided him with the ability to unmask the daily covert racialized experiences he encountered amid a heightened xenophobic, anti-Latinx socio-political climate. Of this climate Junior shared, "Ever since Trump became president, I've been hearing more racial slurs about Mexicans and the fact that he said they [Mexican immigrants] are just criminals coming from another country" (Junior, SI, May 7, 2018). Junior's assessment of the increased racial hostility he has heard and witnessed matches what students of Color across the country have experienced following the 2016 presidential election (Rogers et al., 2017). When I asked Junior if he had personally been the target of these racial slurs, he shared an experience of everyday racism on his walk home from school,

> **Junior:** … I was coming from my program and I was walking down the street and this white guy comes up to me and tells me "Do you know how to speak Spanish?" and cause I don't speak good Spanish I was like, "No, I don't speak Spanish" and then he told me, "Oh, really cause you look like the type of person who would" and then he said "Goodbye, *amigo*" mocking me, like he was trying to say, "You're just a Mexican."
>
> **Arturo**: How did that make you feel?

Junior: It made me feel a little bit sad and I actually felt like what people actually feel like around this country.

Arturo: Like how?

Junior: They feel like white people are bringing them down and white people are telling them "you don't belong in this country…"

Arturo: Has anything you learned from Zareith's class helped you understand that experience that you had with that person who came up to you and made that comment?

Junior: Yeah cause before this class, like if that happened in 8th grade I wouldn't of second guessed it. But now I know and understand how people can actually hide racist comments in the tiniest of ways.

Arturo: So what do you mean by that?

Junior: So when he said "*amigo*" he could be saying that, he could mean it as a mean comment but I would have just taken it as oh [inaudible]. I mean like the tiniest of words I mean like he could hide it because we could think of it as not a mean comment but he's thinking of it as a mean comment the way he means it.

Arturo: So it sounds like it's a friendly comment but you know that it was meant to be negative?

Junior: Yeah

Arturo: Okay. What do you think are the reasons why people experience racism? The experiences you and your family and your friends have had?

Junior: They experience this because other people like to feel like they're the strongest they like putting us down so they know where they belong in this world…it's kinda like a new form of hierarchy where if you're an immigrant you're like the poor but if you're born in this country you're the richest

Arturo: So, do you see racism as something that is always easy to see?

Junior: Umm not really because we're not taught about racism until like—depending on the school— 8th or 9th grade. And then when we look back at it we actually remember people actually making fun of us and we only took it as a joke but for them they were actually making fun of us and putting us down (Junior, SI, May 7, 2018).

Junior recounts an experience of interpersonal or everyday racism that was specifically attempting to, as he said, maintain the hierarchy of power based on race and who is

perceived to be native to the U.S. As this exchange illustrates, Junior's racial literacy development has empowered him to unmask the covertness of the subtle everyday forms of racism that he encountered in his daily experience. For Latinx youth, being able to navigate these racist nativist microaggressions--the "systemic, everyday forms of racist nativism that are subtle, layered, and cumulative verbal and non-verbal assaults" (Pérez Huber, 2011, p.388) is important because they have always been a part of their lived realities. Given this truth, it's upsetting to know that students like Junior are not provided the tools to empower them to fully understand and navigate their worlds earlier; Stressing the significance of his racial literacy development for helping him understand his world, it's relevant to underscore that Junior laments that it wasn't until 8th or 9th grade that he was "taught about racism" in school, while learning how to name and navigate racism and oppression are tools needed from the earliest years of schooling onward. This failure by schools to provide students with these important tools is essentially another aspect of the institutional neglect that Latinx students and students of Color face in the U.S. schooling system. For Junior, however, his ability to pinpoint how this experience was a covert manifestation of racism--a subtle racialized affront masked in the form of a friendly comment or joke (Kohli et al., 2018)—has empowered him to unmask and navigate racism thanks to the learning in his ES course. Junior's extension and application of the critical vocabulary, as this example illustrates, marked the third stage of his RLD process.

As Jasmin advanced in the extension of her racial literacy, she too was able to utilize ES critical language/concepts outside of the direct context of the classroom to help

her “read” and navigate the racialized inequity in her life. At the beginning of her 10th grade year at EHHS, I caught up with Jasmin and I asked her if the vocabulary and concepts from her 9th grade ES course had served her in any way after finishing her 9th grade year. Jasmin shared that at the end of the year she applied for and was accepted to attend an animation camp over the summer. Because of Jasmin’s promise and interest in animation, EHHS paid for her to attend the camp. When she arrived at the camp she immediately noticed that of the twelve students who had been accepted to attend, there were only four students of Color and that of those four she and another student were the only Latinas at the camp. Jasmin expressed that had she not learned about the concept of institutional racism in 9th grade ES, she wouldn’t have “thought twice” about the inequity she was witnessing: “It might not seem like anything to others, but to me it was an example of institutional racism because they didn’t select a diverse group of participants...and that’s probably what it’s like in other animation camps too, so it’s a larger problem” (Jasmin, SI, September 23, 2018). In effect, Jasmin’s extension and application of the critical frames she learned in ES, allowed her to carry it into the following year saying that she was left wondering how the camp went about choosing participants and that the institutional practices of the company needed to change so that more kids of Color could participate and ultimately have the opportunities to explore animation as a future career. This conversation with Jasmin illustrated how her embodiment/internalization of the concepts and vocabulary of her 9th grade ES course supported her ability to “read” the racialized inequity that “might not seem like anything to others” that she was witnessing and to deftly arrive at the root of the problem--the

institutional practices that perpetuated the disparities in opportunities given to youth of Color.

While California common-core state-standards emphasize the importance of preparing students with "21st Century Skills" such as "critical thinking and problem solving," the standardized Eurocentric curricula and pedagogy that are a dominant part of US schooling fail to provide students with the critical thinking and problem solving to confront what is most urgent in their lives--the manifestations of structural racism and oppression in their daily experiences that have a deep impact on their opportunities and life chances. Through ES curricula and pedagogy that centered developing students' racial literacy, Jasmin's critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, as seen in her fluency with reading of institutional oppression in her summer camp illustrates, arguably surpassed even those envisioned by the common core "21st Century Skills." In effect, Jasmin's "reading" of institutional racism outside of the context of her ES course, exemplified her racial literacy at the third stage of her RLD process.

Lizeth was also able to utilize the ES critical language/concepts she learned outside of the direct context of her ES classroom as she "read" and navigated the racialized inequity in her community. Like Jasmin, Lizeth was also no longer taking ES when I caught up with her in 10th grade, yet the embodied/internalized critical language she carried with her into the 10th grade provided her with the lens to powerfully build on the content she was learning in a new class to continue to "read" racism and oppression in her community. Lizeth shared that in 10th grade she had joined the "Medical Pathway" at her school, a program for students interested in the field of medicine and that she had

started a project on the impact of diabetes on the East Heights Latinx community. Though the class did not specifically deal with racism and oppression, Jasmin's racial literacy and the background she gained in 9th grade inspired her to work on a project that examined the role of racism in the relationship between the availability of healthy foods and the health outcomes of her community, "Mr. Lopez' ES class helped me alot because I learned about different forms of oppression and racism that a community can experience. For example, our community doesn't have much access to healthy places to eat and when you go into a liquor store the first thing you see is junk food and the healthy food is all the way in the back...We're treated differently. I see that white people in rich neighborhoods have more access to healthy foods while in my community we live in a food desert--I only see McDonalds, fast food places and liquor stores in every corner" (Lizeth, SI, September 23, 2018). Because Lizeth had applied and extended the critical vocabulary and concepts from her 9th grade ES course, she carried that racial literacy with her and Jasmine shared that she felt confident in her ability to "read" racism and oppression in the unavailability of healthy foods and the lack of programs to promote the health of her community. Lizeth shared that as part of the project to expose this structural form of racism, she was compelled to write a letter to councilmember Jose Huizar advocating for the increase of funds to open stores with healthier food options and to create health and well-being programs for East Heights and surrounding communities. Lizeth's embodiment/internalization of the concepts she carried over from her 9th grade ES empowered her to "read" the structural racism at play in the food options in her neighborhood and to advocate for her community to address this issue. In short, Lizeth's

ability to continue to “read” structural racism beyond 9th grade and outside of the context of her ES course, exemplified how her racial literacy development process had progressed to the third stage of her RLD.

RLD Stage 4: Imagining and Enacting Resistance/Towards Social Action

One of the themes that emerged from the conversions I had with focal students of this study was their conviction that it was not enough to learn about racism and oppression; they expressed that the fluency with naming racism and oppression that they newly gained or extended through 9th grade ES should lead to some form of immediate impact-- to help them navigate racism and oppression and/or to create transformational change for their local and larger communities. In Lani Guinier’s (2004) conceptualization, racial literacy extends beyond the realm of discourse, underscoring how challenging racial liberalism requires a commitment to praxis, or the reflection and action needed to confront and interrupt racism; As Guinier (2004) asserts, racial literacy “depends on the engagement between action and thought; between experimentation and feedback..." (p. 114-115). Coincidentally, this conceptualization of racial literacy also aligns with the goal and purpose of critical ES in K-12 schools: to not merely address the academic opportunity gaps students of color face in K-12 schools, but to empower students to utilize the tools at their disposal to transform the daily lived realities and material conditions that negatively impact them and their communities (see chapter 1). This section highlights how students’ racial literacies (1) increased their sense of agency

and (2) how they applied or how they imagined they could apply their racial literacies to confront racism and oppression.

Increased sense of agency. In our conversations, three of the four focal students (Jasmin, Daniel and Junior), each brought up that over the last year they had felt an increased sense of anxiety that their undocumented parents, siblings or family members would face deportation due to the xenophobic climate and anti-Latinx immigration policies targeting them. Junior shared, "It makes me feel scared because my mom doesn't have papers and any minute or any day she could be forced to be taken back and I've read stories about how children felt when their parents had to go back to Mexico…" (Junior, SI, May 17, 2018). Junior's fear was similar to Daniel's concern about his mom and Jasmin's anxiety about her parents. For these students, however, ES's support of their racial literacies--of their abilities to name and confront the racialized experiences that many Latinxs encounter-- increased their sense of agency amid what can be a debilitatingly hostile climate for them. For instance, Jasmin shared that her and her parents' anxieties about deportation were lessened thanks to her growing fluency with naming anti-Latinx racism and knowledge about how to confront it, "Yes, my parents and I are afraid that they're going to get deported because they don't have papers, but since we're learning what our rights are [in ES], if the *migra* comes to our house we can ask if they have a warrant or not to answer the door. I always talk about ES [with my family] and how they teach us our rights and what to do if anything like that happens" (Jasmin, May 17, 2018). The racial literacy that Jasmin cultivated in her 9th grade ES class thus served as a tool to help her and her family navigate the fundamentally racist and nativist

national immigration policies by empowering her with the tools to know how to respond if Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) were to knock on her door; the accompanying increased sense of agency that Jasmin felt as a result of her racial literacy development also ameliorated her and her family's anxiety about being targeted. As Junior echoed, the racial literacy that focal students developed or extended fostered their agency to step up and talk back to the oppressive racialized discourse of the current Trump presidency and its administration: "In ES I learned that we're resilient that our culture is resilient and it makes me feel stronger and not believe what other people say about us…like they say we're are all 'rapists'… and I'll say like, 'no!' We need to stand up, not stay quiet" (Jasmin, May 17, 2018).

Towards social action. Jasmin, Lizeth, Daniel and Junior all noted that they had learned so much about challenging racism in ES from learning how Chicana/o youth, fifty years prior, had organized and resisted educational oppression in their own community of East Heights. Junior shared, "...to make things better in our community we talked about the Walkouts—[the Chicano students] doing that changed a lot of things, they were able to get more Latino teachers, their graduation rates went up and they changed a lot of things that helped people in the community" (Junior, May 17, 2018). Inspired by the youth activism and organizing of the Walkouts of '68, focal students shared how they imagined they might utilize the knowledge they gained about racism and oppression to transform their world(s). For example, Jasmin noted, "We talked about how we should take it to the school board and try to do what we learned from the Walkouts in '68…we also learned about different ways to inform others, like create and have people

sign petitions." Jasmin also shared that she had recently wanted to organize a protest to bring awareness to the overly expensive rent in East Heights. Junior in a separate conversation reiterated a similar point, "We talked about how people resisted the laws that didn't protect their rights and how the Chicano youth walked out of this school here ... and they didn't let anyone stop them from having the [demands] they needed like more Latino teachers and the education they deserved because they weren't getting treated the same as white people...and we talked about how we should take it to the school board and to inform others by making petitions -to show how it's not just me but others are backing me up to help the situation" (Jasmin, May 17, 2018). As such, this section illustrates 9th grade ES students meaning making relevant to the reading of racism and oppression as an "instrument of process," the fluency with seeing racial literacy as necessary to inciting participatory social action to end racism (Rogers & Mosley, 2006).

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Implications

I began this dissertation by situating the overt, anti-Latinx, anti-immigrant rhetoric, and national level policies (Pérez Huber & Muñoz, 2020; Rogers et al., 2017) within a larger history of Latinx and Chicanx racial subordination in the US (Acuña, 1972; Donato, 1997; Gonzalez, 1990; Spring, 1994; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). With the potential of ES as a site of race-consciousness building (de los Ríos, López & Morell, 2015) amidst legacies of racial harm, I sought to understand the processes and pedagogies by which secondary Latinx students are supported in their capacities to name and confront racial oppression. In Chapter 1, I underscore the urgency for and responsibility of K-12 schools to equip minoritized students with tools to navigate a fundamentally racially unjust world (Sealey-Ruiz, 2013). Moreover, I highlight K-12 ES as a curricular and pedagogical response to traditional Eurocentric schooling with much promise to help students unpack intersectional forms of oppression in their lives (Sleeter, 2011; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

In Chapter 2, I build on the work of racial literacy scholars (Guinier, 2004; Brown, 2017; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013; Skerrett, 2011) to argue that as concern grows that ES will lose its core critical analysis of racism and white supremacy as its expansion in K-12 schools continues, racial literacy can be a vital component of effective, praxis-centered ES. Furthermore, I underscore the value of privileging students' racial literacy development in ES classrooms, as opposed to (un)intentionally centering traditional but oft-narrow measures of educational success (i.e., GPA and standardized test scores); I argue that this is a needed shift to counter hegemonic, high-stakes schooling practices that

disproportionately disempower Latinx and minoritized students in US schools and classrooms (Au, 2013; Au, 2016). Rooted in the reality that racial injustice is endemic to and persists within US institutions (Bell, 1992), this dissertation is guided by critical race theory (CRT) to make visible how institutional racism and its day-to-day manifestations (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1998) impact the lives of working-class Latinx students and their communities, Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) to be attentive to the nuanced experiences of racism along factors such as language, immigration, and identity for Latinx youth (Espinoza, 1990; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Valdes, 1996) and racial literacy to provide a gauge for how students navigate hegemonic discourses of racism and oppression (Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Skerrett, 2011). In Chapter 3, I outline the qualitative data collection methods utilized to obtain data for this study including, observations, individual interviews, focus group interviews, and document review.

The findings for this dissertation study are reported in Chapters 4 and 5. The focus of Chapter 4 is on the racially literate pedagogies and practices of ES teachers that supported their students' racial literacy development. In order to understand what they do in their classrooms, I explored what shaped these ES teachers' motivations and commitments. I found that their personal experiences of racialized oppression and their activist/community orientations shaped three aspects of their teaching practice: their decisions to become ES teachers, their ongoing commitments to challenge white supremacist, assimilationist schooling practices and social dynamics and their racially literate pedagogical approaches. In their classrooms, they supported students' racial literacy development by cultivating responses and tools that their students could draw

from to speak back to and navigate racial oppression (Sealey-Ruiz, 2013). ES teachers helped students cultivate these tools through four pedagogical moves or *racially-literate stan*ces embedded in their teaching: (1) naming oppression through a sustained, process-oriented approach, (2) rooting learning in place-based knowledge, (3) centering the experiences and experiential knowledge of communities of Color, and (4) connecting students' critical analyses towards social action.

Chapter 5 builds on Chapter 4 by focusing on how students experienced racial literacy growth. Beginning with students' initial understandings about racism and oppression, I systematically traced the shifts in their racial discourse, analyses and social action orientations throughout the school year in their ES classrooms. In my analysis, students' racial literacy development (RLD) progressed along a four-stage iterative process that included, (1) making meaning and application within academic/historical content, (2) bridging critical frames to personal experiences, (3) applying and extending critical frames and (4) imagining and enacting resistance/towards social action. For these students, racial literacy development helped them challenge the post-racial, race-evasive dominant discourses and ideologies they had internalized along with affording them the ability to powerfully and meaningfully make sense of and navigate anti-Latinx racism and injustice in broader US society and in their lives. These findings speak to the utility of centering a process of RLD in ES classrooms to sustain ES' original disciplinary legacy and life-affirming potential (Hu-DeHart, 2004) in K-12 classrooms. In this last chapter, I highlight key implications as they relate to the areas of K-12 ES and racial

literacies in education, I note the study's limitations and I provide recommendations for policy, practice and research.

Implications for K-12 ES Practice

With the significant role that racial literacies can play in sustaining the revolutionary potential of K-12 ES, this study has implications for informing the expansion of ES in California K-12 schools across practice with specific implications for teacher education, teacher and student development.

Schools and Districts

As school districts recruit ES teachers in response to the expansion of K-12 ES and the urgency to address racial harm, it is important to consider who will be teaching these courses and to complicate what it is required to teach ES effectively. A central question that schools and districts should ask as they are hiring ES teachers is if the pedagogies the teachers they are hiring align with ES's original goal and purpose—decolonization and the elimination of racism (Hu-DeHart, 2004; Tintiangco-Cubales et al, 2015). In other words, are the teachers they are hiring committed and capable of creating transformative racial justice and decolonial educational spaces? While effective teachers of ES need not necessarily be teachers of Color (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015), there is a process in the making of an ES teacher—in the development of that teacher's racial literacy—that is inextricably linked to their lived experiences. As this study demonstrates, the development of teachers' racial literacies did not begin in a professional capacity, but as young people who confronted oppression or exploitation in their worlds. These teachers became effective teachers of ES because they engaged in the

deep, ongoing racial identity and racial literacy development work that allowed them to leverage their racialized experiences to support students with "critique[ing] structures of racism and [their] impact" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2020, p. 21) towards personal and social transformation. If schools and districts want students and the communities they serve to reap the community-transformative benefits of ES, they need to prioritize recruiting racially literate teachers to teach those courses. The ideal ES teacher is one with not only the necessary ES content knowledge but one whose racially-literate pedagogical preparation and deep commitment to collective community transformation allows them to engage in racial justice praxis in their classrooms, schools and communities.

Teacher Education

Moreover, given the growing need to train teachers with the pedagogical skills to effectively teach ES courses, teacher education and teacher training programs need to provide the support and training for prospective ES teachers to maintain or develop such critical, race-based pedagogies (de los Ríos, López & Morell, 2015). Because teachers' own racial literacies were central to developing students' structural analyses of racism, the training that teacher education programs provide ES teacher candidates should center racial literacy development across all curricula and as an institutional practice (Kohli et al., 2021). For example, this means that racial literacy needs to be embedded in the pedagogies of teacher educators in those programs, as well, so that their future ES teachers are receiving the training to engage in racial justice praxis in their ES classrooms

and can move beyond the dominant idea that ES in K-12 classroom is simply, “teaching untold or undertold histories” (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2020, p.21).

Because this critical, racial literacy pedagogical training is not the standard training that teacher education programs provide (Sleeter, 2001), key sources to understand effective K-12 ES racial literacy pedagogy are ES teachers, themselves. Teacher education programs need to foster equitable relationships with ES teachers who have track records of effective praxis-centered racially literate ES teaching so that they can provide teacher candidates with models of what a racially-literate ES pedagogy can look like and who can offer recommendations to teacher education programs about how to support their ES teacher candidates in their development. Teacher education programs can also prioritize the field placement of ES teacher candidates in the classrooms of those teachers and in classrooms with well-developed ES programs. In addition to cultivating these partnerships with schools that have well-established ES programs, teacher education programs can create racial-justice oriented ES teacher “pipelines” that recruit students into their programs who took ES in middle and high school and then majored in ES in college. Recruiting teacher candidates who had continuity in their ES development and who understand the stakes of anti-racist and decolonial praxis, would ensure that the teachers going into their programs and then teaching ES in K-12 schools will not be implementing “watered down” ES in their classrooms.

Along with providing opportunities for effective ES teachers to highlight their own work, teacher education programs can also build ES teacher training and teacher

preparation curricula around research findings that explicitly focus on the specific qualities of the racially literate and race-conscious pedagogies of those teachers in ES classrooms. In this dissertation study I highlight four key attributes or "*racially literate stan*ces" that supported their ES students' racial literacy development: (1) naming oppression through a sustained, process-oriented approach, (2) rooting learning in place-based knowledge, (3) centering the experiences and experiential knowledge of communities of Color, and (4) connecting students' critical analyses towards social action. Each of these attributes, can serve as non-prescriptive focal points across the curricula for the preparation of ES teacher candidates. For instance, framing teacher education curricula around these four stances as guideposts for how racial literacy lives in the pedagogies of effective racially literate ES teachers can serve as a clear path forward to move curricula beyond surface-level multicultural, diversity and equity topics and conversations. Building a program's curricula around "naming oppression through a sustained process-oriented approach" for example, can compel teacher educators to provide teacher candidates with the critical theory and language needed to tackle—head on—how power, racism, white supremacy and intersecting forms of oppression are (re)created in classroom spaces and how they can incorporate that theory and language through a process-oriented approach in their own classrooms. Or "rooting learning in placed based knowledge" would encourage programs to center the histories and legacies of oppression and resistance of the communities the program serves in the curricula; teacher candidates would then have experienced a model of critical community relevant and responsive learning that they can draw from when creating their own ES curricula.

Relatedly, the teachers in this study, their racial literacies were reflected in their deep connections and commitments to their communities through their own community activism and sustained partnerships with cultural workers engaged in racial justice work. Teacher education programs need to develop partnerships with community, with cultural workers engaged in social justice/racial justice work to build bridges between colleges and universities and facilitate the connections that teacher candidates should draw from in the enactment of their racial literacy informed praxis. For example, as described in Chapter 4, Jorge's community building with cultural workers in East Heights to create the Taking Action, club on his campus illustrates the possibilities of building such bridges for students. The club provided a space where students could build their organizing skills, utilize their agency, and specifically, utilize their racial literacies by taking action to disrupt racial injustice in their community. The intentional creation of these connections between community and teacher education programs are needed so the teaching practice of ES teacher candidates is rooted in the social and community-centered revolutionary potential of ES. As I underscore earlier, knowledge of ES course content, while important, is not enough to promote the type of learning in ES classrooms that has been shown to fulfill the goal/ARC of ES (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Attention to the type of pedagogy ES and potential ES teachers bring to their classrooms is key to ensuring that the revolutionary potential of K-12 ES is not lost.

ES Teachers

As a young person, Jorge shared that ES "saved him" as it engendered a personal transformation that allowed him to come to a fuller understanding of what he had agency to do as a student, activist and organizer for his community. For Jorge and Zareith, this personal empowerment for students in connection to community transformation at the center of their philosophies for teaching. Notedly, this student development goal that they work toward moves beyond simply racial and cultural inclusivity and relevance in the classroom (Epstein & Gist, 2015), because as both of these teachers know, the stakes of not supporting students' racial literacy development through ES are high. If ES is to be a tool to combat racism and colonialism and facilitate US society's reckoning with the legacies of racial harm, ES teachers' intentional focus on students' RLD in classrooms is key. As this dissertation highlights, centering a process of RLD as a student development goal in ES classrooms can empower students to navigate the manifestations of institutional racism. For focal students such as Jasmin and Junior, this meant that they were able to challenge the internalized racism that they carried with them. For all focal students in this study, it allowed them to read the normalized covert racism embedded in society and in the schooling system. Amid calls for anti-racist schools and classrooms, RLD is one concrete tool to combat the pervasive race-evasiveness in schools. Starting with providing students with the language to understand and name racism, the RLD model is a tool that teachers can use to scaffold learning about race, racism and intersecting forms of oppression in the following ways, (1) allow students to make meaning of and play with this language in an academic setting, (2) support students with

building bridges between core critical concepts and their own lives and (3) give space/create spaces where students can live and enact resistance to racism in their lives. While cultivating this RLD process in students does not absolve institutional accountability and responsibility for addressing structural racism and the conditions it causes, it is one step towards equipping young people with the tools confront it and to exercise their agency in collective transformation. Fostering students' RDL should not happen exclusively in ES classrooms. If fostered across the curriculum, the type of personal and social transformation towards racial justice that schools and districts say they need—alongside institutional action—can be possible.

Future Research

There are some limitations to the study that shaped the need for future research. One major limitation of this study was that it took place within the bounds of one academic school year. A better understanding of the challenges and affordances of racial literacy development in ES classrooms would have been possible had the study extended across each focal students' 9th through 12th grade years. Because racial literacy is an ongoing iterative process, attention to what factors helped students maintain or even lose the racial literacy progress they made in their 9th grade year of their subsequent high school years would have proved insightful. Furthermore, for all the focal students in this study, it was their first time taking an ES course and engaging in critical conversations about racism and oppression in a classroom. Because of this, there were more opportunities to see how students experienced the first two stages of the RLD process ((1) making meaning and application within academic/historical content and (2) bridging critical frames to personal

experiences) as they grew in the development of their critical language and racial analyses and less opportunities to see how they experienced the 3rd and 4th stages of RLD ((3) applying and extending critical frames and (4) imagining and enacting resistance/towards social action).

Another minor limitation was that this study took place in a "model" ES program with teachers who are leaders in the creation and application of ES curriculum in the Southwest and are highly respected within the K-12 ES community. While its status as a model ES program is not an officially designated one, the recognition of the program and its impact on the development of ES curricula and of the quality of its ES teachers—which made it an ideal site for this study—might not be representative of the ES programs that are developing or are currently in place. Future research should also look at the role of racial literacy development in ES classrooms in newer, less established programs. Finally, this dissertation study only explored the racial literacy development processes of six Latinx students. These students' experiences are not representative of the racial, gendered, classed and linguistic identities and experiences of a broader group of Students of Color. A CRT-guided study that explores how racial literacy development unfolds for other minoritized students also impacted by every day and structural manifestations of racism, might yield important insights into how the implementation of ES curricula with a focus on racial literacy development might differ for students who are not Latinx.

ES is a discipline with much promise to develop mass awareness of racial injustice, but it has been strongly contended in K-12 schools. While California just passed ES as a graduation requirement in the CSU system and is on path to become a high school graduation requirement, there is concern that it will lose its core critical analysis of racism and white supremacy as it is institutionalized. This dissertation study directly takes up this concern. By exploring the role of racial literacies in ES classrooms, it offers scholars and practitioners tools for student development and teacher pedagogy that can re-center how ES can equip youth to name, navigate and confront racism. Indeed, findings from this dissertation highlight the unequivocal value of racial literacy in ES classrooms for working-class Latinx students who were supported with, 1) processing and navigating anti-Latinx racism and heightened anti-immigrant climates and 2) connecting their racial analyses towards civic engagement and social action. As our current moment teaches us and as this dissertation illustrates, there is an urgent need for schools to prepare youth to understand racism's roots and continuing impact if we are to work towards creating a more racially just society. If aligned with the anti-racist and decolonial struggles out of which ES arose in 1968, a transformative K-12 ES education can indeed afford us a collective vision and path towards racial justice and liberation.

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