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Developing Critical Collective Consciousness Through High School Ethnic Studies



**Author**
Sacramento, Jocyl Echaluce

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# Developing Critical Collective Consciousness Through High School Ethnic Studies

By

Jocyl Echaluce Sacramento

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Committee in charge:

Professor Zeus Leonardo, Chair
Professor Patricia Baquedano-López
Professor Michael Omi

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Abstract

Developing Critical Collective Consciousness Through High School Ethnic Studies

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This study examines the development and implementation of ninth grade Ethnic Studies curriculum in a California school district. Ethnic Studies offers curricula that reflect the epistemological diversity of the United States population. Despite movements promoting multicultural education, the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies is a contested arena at the K-12 level. The criminalization of Ethnic Studies in states like Arizona has led to movements to defend the discipline in universities, colleges, and school districts throughout the nation. The research on K-12 Ethnic Studies demonstrates that culturally relevant and community responsive curricula improve student academic achievement through innovative learning environments and effective critical pedagogies. Indeed, Ethnic Studies has been shown to improve educational experiences and outcomes for historically marginalized students, but what are the processes and challenges districts and teachers face when establishing these courses?

*Developing a Critical Collective Consciousness through High School Ethnic Studies* examines the emergence of high school Ethnic Studies curriculum in a large metropolitan area in California. Through a critical ethnographic approach, I conducted a four-year study of the curricular and political processes used to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in one school district. I analyzed qualitative data drawn from participant observation of teacher professional development, observations in six ninth grade Ethnic Studies classrooms, and interviews with teachers to illuminate the processes of developing and implementing a district-wide course. I document how teachers formed a critical teaching community, mobilized with students to expand Ethnic Studies throughout the district, and worked collaboratively to build Comparative Ethnic Studies curricula. I show that in response to variation in teachers' knowledge and backgrounds, teachers formed in a district-supported teaching community with the purpose of building Comparative Ethnic Studies curricula and providing praxis-oriented professional development. Ethnic Studies teachers also addressed the problems of differential knowledge and orientation of race, power, and teacher positionality in the context of Ethnic Studies classrooms. Out of these discussions emerged critical race dialogue that led to teachers developing racial literacy and a critical collective consciousness, which, in turn, resulted in a collective identity and shared views on key elements of Ethnic Studies perspectives and approaches.

This dissertation also captures processes of interrogating hegemonic knowledge and counterhegemonic knowledge production within the Ethnic Studies classroom. Teachers

rearticulated knowledge to help students understand how power relations operated within their lives and their communities. The opportunity to develop new curricula gave educators the space to grow as intellectuals in their teaching role. Throughout this process, they developed a collective ownership of the curricula and produced knowledge in accessible ways. Students also participated in producing knowledge. In the classroom, Ethnic Studies teachers engage students in the process of history-making, where students placed their familial and community's stories within a sociopolitical context of American history. This study holds implications for the fields of Education and Ethnic Studies. The findings from this dissertation contribute to the growing research on socially relevant education and innovative approaches to serving historically marginalized students as schools and school districts expand their offerings of K-12 Ethnic Studies.

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# CHAPTER ONE
## Introduction to the Research

In 2010, students, teachers, parents, and community workers filled the school board meeting room, most wearing red to indicate their solidarity with the campaign for Ethnic Studies in their community's schools. The crowd overflowed into an adjacent room, where more students and teachers watched a live stream of the meeting on a wall-mounted, flat screen TV. At half past six o'clock, the school board opened up the floor for public comment. Students, parents, teachers, and community members approached the podium to share their testimonies, opinions, and demands. The speaker line traced the perimeter of the boardroom. A teacher wearing a red and white patterned shirt stepped up to the mic:

> Good evening. Who am I? I am a parent of a second grader, the department chair of social science at Ascension[1] High School and founding member of the Center for Filipinx Issues. What do I want? I want what many of the young, exuberant, well-organized young people here want—and that is Ethnic Studies. When do we want it? We wanted it forty years ago but because we are reasonable people, we will take it this fall 2010. [laughter from crowd] Why? To quote Frederick Douglass…'knowledge makes a person unfit to be a slave.' And the present curriculum, it otherizes my son, it otherizes my students, and it attempts to marginalize the collective experience of our people. Now, I understand the current context. We're in crisis[2]. How are we going to do this? Well, where there is crisis, there is opportunity, and you all are the elected officials that we put there because of your politics. Come on…pop your progressive collars and let's make this happen!

After an evening of hearing testimony from students, teachers, parents, university faculty, and community members, the school board unanimously voted to pass the resolution to pilot an Ethnic Studies project which included ten sections in secondary schools throughout Esperanza Unified School District, located in urban California.

In the United States, 2010 marked a significant year for Ethnic Studies in secondary education. While the Esperanza students, teachers, and community members celebrated their campaign victory, which promised institutional funding and support for comparative Ethnic Studies for their students, Tucson Unified School District's Mexican American Studies programs faced challenges from political leaders. Governor Jan Brewer of Arizona signed into law House Bill 2281 on May 11, 2010, which prohibited public schools from providing classes designed for a particular ethnic group, and those that promote ethnic solidarity and teach resentment of other races or classes of people. As a result, Ethnic Studies programs, particularly Mexican American Studies in Tucson, were dismantled in 2012. While research shows that students taking Mexican American Studies courses in Tucson outperformed students who were not enrolled in Ethnic Studies from the same schools (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014) state officials were

[1] To respect the confidentiality of the research participants, pseudonyms are given to teachers, districts, schools, and community organizations.

[2] In 2010, the recession was hitting California very hard.

determined to shut down the program claiming that these courses fostered racism against whites and supported the overthrow of the government (Benson, 2013).

In August 2017, the United States District Court ruled that Arizona legislative actions to ban Ethnic Studies in 2010 violated students' first and fourteenth amendment rights (*González v. Douglas*, 2017). Judge A. Wallace Tashima decided that Arizona state officials were motivated by "racial animus" and "discriminatory assumption" towards Tucson's Mexican American Studies program. Arizona's criminalization of Ethnic Studies sparked a movement throughout the nation to defend and legitimize the discipline, culminating in educational policies to institutionalize K-12 Ethnic Studies courses and curricula (Buenavista, 2016).

In response to the ban on Ethnic Studies, communities, teachers, and students within California have strategically mobilized to advocate for the institutionalization of Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools. This movement for Ethnic Studies has garnered the attention of both district and statewide leaders. For instance, in 2016, California Governor Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill 2016, which charged the state with the task of developing a model Ethnic Studies curriculum. The bill articulated the hope that all high schools will eventually opt to offer Ethnic Studies curriculum as an elective. On May 23, 2019, the California Assembly passed AB 331[3], which was introduced by members Medina, Bloom, Bonta, Gonzalez, Ramos, and Weber. This bill would make Ethnic Studies a high school graduation requirement and is currently under committee process review in the California Senate. These new policies follow local victories in the last decade, where school districts throughout the state have passed resolutions to institute Ethnic Studies in their high schools.

While elected school board officials across California have expressed support for Ethnic Studies, Governor Gray Davis vetoed a statewide effort to establish Ethnic Studies in all public schools in 2002. At the time, there were approximately 113 California schools that offered at least one Ethnic Studies class, with a total of over six thousand students enrolled. Assembly Bill 2001 called upon the government to include Ethnic Studies in all California public schools but was vetoed once the bill arrived on Governor Davis' desk. These examples in Arizona and California reveal that despite the positive student outcomes of Ethnic Studies (Bean, Valerio, Senior, & White, 1999; Brozo, Valerio, & Salazar, 1996; Halagao, 2004, 2010; Lewis, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006; Sleeter, 2011; Vasquez, 2005), state governments hesitate to support efforts to strengthen and establish such programs.

Much of the research on the development of Ethnic Studies investigates the discipline at the university and college levels, with a focus on racially- or ethnically-specific curricula ( e.g., Mexican American Studies, African American Studies, Native American Studies, etc.), often overlooking comparative Ethnic Studies and Ethnic Studies in K-12 settings. However, as previously mentioned, Ethnic Studies has recently become a highly contested arena at the K-12 level in the United States, which has cast a spotlight on the emergence of Ethnic Studies in recent years. This dissertation presents an ethnographic case study of the development and implementation of Ethnic Studies in a California school district.

In the following section, I explain the purpose of my study, which is followed by a brief survey of the history of Ethnic Studies and the current literature on high school Ethnic Studies programs. Next, I discuss how classrooms have become products of internal colonialism and the

[3] Similar policies AB 2001 and AB 2772 were vetoed in the past. AB 331 was passed by the California Assembly in May 2019 and is currently being reviewed by the California Senate.

possibilities of Ethnic Studies as a decolonial project. Then, I introduce the theoretical frameworks that inform this study. Finally, I provide a chapter overview of the dissertation and describe the significance of this study.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine high school Ethnic Studies knowledge/action production in a California school district. I situate my research at the intersection of Education and Ethnic Studies, where I explore the relationship between Ethnic Studies curricula and critical consciousness development or conscientization (Freire, 1970), well-being, and agency of teachers and students within multiethnic and multiracial classrooms. The current movement for K-12 Ethnic Studies marks a turning point for how school districts and teachers respond to the achievement gap through culturally relevant and community responsive education. While Ethnic Studies knowledge and epistemologies have been criminalized and dismantled in states like Arizona and Texas, communities throughout the nation have used this opportunity to defend and institutionalize Ethnic Studies and legitimize the discipline at the high school level. While such an endeavor sounds promising, Ethnic Studies expansion policies are symbolic victories that do not necessarily equate to successful teaching and learning. As a critical ethnographic case study of an Ethnic Studies project across one urban school district, my research with the Ethnic Studies Collaborative provides an opportunity to examine how teachers respond to the obstacles that might arise when building K-12 Ethnic Studies courses. The questions guiding my research are:

1. How do teachers respond to the challenges of developing and implementing a district-wide Ethnic Studies curriculum?

2. How is knowledge understood within an Ethnic Studies curriculum?

## Historical and Current Context of Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies is an academic discipline that examines the social, cultural, political, and economic experiences and articulations of various racial and ethnic groups including African Americans, Latinx, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Historically, Ethnic Studies emerged in the late 1960s, from a movement of decolonization that called for the humanization of Third World peoples –particularly students, faculty, and communities of color, which can be linked to the African American intellectual traditions of W.E.B Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson. (Acuña, 1996; DuBois, 2007; Hu-Dehart, 2004; Moraga, 2000; Umemoto, 1989; Woo, 1989; Woodson, 1933). This movement inspired change in educational discourse, which critiqued the Eurocentric curriculum that dehumanized and objectified people and communities of color (J. A. Banks, 1993, 2005; Hu-Dehart, 2001; Nieto, 2003). For example, in Northern California, students with the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) at San Francisco State University, then known as San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley held strikes between 1968 and 1969 against the stagnant and Eurocentric curriculum within the university, the unfair treatment of faculty of color, and the decrease in admissions of students of color. As a result of the strikes, a College of Ethnic Studies was established at San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley instituted a Department of Ethnic Studies. Similar

movements began across the nation to demand curricular inclusion of the experiences of people of color ("Mandate for change," 2005; Matthiessen, 1992; Muñoz, 2007; Purnell, 2005). In line with the movements that pushed for a multicultural curricular reform, the fight for Ethnic Studies was guided by a strong sense of self-determination where students and community members demanded the inclusion of histories and paradigms surrounding issues of race, culture, and identity (Acuña, 1996; Umemoto, 1989).

Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary and comparative study that disrupts traditional knowledge systems. It recovers neglected cultures, counternarratives, perspectives, and epistemologies to highlight how communities of color shape U.S. society (Butler, 2001; Hu-Dehart, 1993; Yang, 2000). In addition, Ethnic Studies features the struggle and survival stories of underrepresented groups, specifically "to chronicle their protest and resistance and to establish alternative values, visions, cultures and institutions" (Hu-Dehart, 1993, p. 52). Focusing on the intersections between identity and oppression, "Ethnic Studies seeks to identify, assert, and study the cultural realities" of people of color as they relate to "racism and ethnocentrism intertwined with sexism, heterosexism, and classism, as well as religion, age, and physical ability discrimination" (Butler, 2001, p. xxi). Challenging the reproduction of social categories of race, class, and gender, Ethnic Studies interrogates structural forms of domination and subordination. In this project, I examine the extent to which the implementation of Ethnic Studies, within high schools in one district in California, coincides with the stated purpose. In addition, I document the contributions of communities of color in the project of establishing Ethnic Studies in these urban public schools.

While Ethnic Studies programs and departments exist at the university and college level throughout the nation, implementation and research at the K-12 level has been limited. My research addresses this gap and examines the emergence and implementation of Ethnic Studies within high school classrooms. Among the sources available, there is a limited research base on the impact of Ethnic Studies in general and Ethnic Studies taught within high school, in particular. I surveyed nine high school ethnic studies projects in the nation (S. Arce, 2009; Benson, 2013; Berkeley High, 2010; Chung & Hishinuma, 2007; Gotera, 2003; Kumagai, 1979; Makaiau, 2010; "Mandate for change," 2005; Nishioka, 1999; Noguera & Wing, 2008; Peng, 2005; Romero et al., 2008; Sanders, 2010; Sobredo, Kim-Ju, et al., 2008; Sobredo, Revilla, & Mark, 2008; A. Strong, personal communication, April 25, 2011; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2007; Tintiangco-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, & Daus-Magbual, 2010; Tintiangco-Cubales, Kiang, & Museus, 2010). These projects include school-based programs and district-wide efforts to institutionalize Ethnic Studies courses.

Among the school-based programs at Berkeley High (CA), American High (Fremont, CA), Logan High (Union City, CA), Hiram Johnson High (Sacramento, CA), and Kailua High (Kailua, HI), one school provided ethnic-specific courses, whereas the other four provided comparative Ethnic Studies, all of which were developed to address specific needs of the students at those particular sites. Structural changes took place in terms of creating Ethnic Studies/Multicultural Studies graduation requirements and departments that supported the maintenance of these programs. However, some of these programs encountered obstacles in implementation. For example, some Berkeley High "parents of high-achieving students frequently request[ed] waivers from classes such as ethnic studies and Social Living, which…[were] required for graduation" (Wing, 2008, p. 92). To make matters worse, Berkeley

High's African American Studies Department suffered from major cuts in funding and faculty support.

Among the district-wide efforts in San Francisco Unified, Oakland Unified, Tucson Unified, and the School District of Philadelphia, the school districts have established or are in the process of establishing a district-wide mandate for all students at the high school level to take courses in Ethnic Studies. San Francisco Unified and Oakland Unified projects include comparative Ethnic Studies, whereas Tucson Unified and the School District of Philadelphia provide ethnic-specific programs, Mexican American Studies and African American Studies respectively. As I mentioned before, these projects faced much resistance. For example, Tucson faced challenges with elected officials through House Bill 2281. In addition, Oakland Unified was successful in obtaining approval from the district but funding restrictions hindered implementation in earlier iterations of the course. However, with recent school board and district office support, Oakland Unified has expanded courses throughout the district (Choi, Humphries, & Villegas, 2016). Lastly, while the Philadelphia community was politically victorious in terms of including African American History in the district curriculum, the course was implemented poorly and would be difficult to regard as an educational victory (Sanders, 2010).

In more recent news, California schools have taken steps to support and institutionalize Ethnic Studies. On a statewide level, Assembly Member Luis Alejo played a key role in the statewide efforts to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in California schools. President Emeritus of the Latino Caucus, Alejo was born in Watsonville and grew up in Salinas, California. In the 1950s, his family was recruited through the bracero program to work in the Salinas, Pajaro, Santa Clara, and Central Valleys of California as migrant farmworkers (Avarquez-Delacruz, 2011; "Luis Alejo," n.d.). Alejo is also the grandson of advocates for Farmworkers rights. As an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, Alejo earned two bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Ethnic Studies. He was exposed to Filipino American history in his Ethnic Studies classes, where he learned about the roles that Larry Itliong, Philip Vera Cruz and other Filipino farmworkers played in the Delano Grape Strikes and the forming of the United Farmworkers union (Avarquez-Delacruz, 2011). Alejo was able to place his experience growing up with Filipino neighbors who also cared for him in a larger socio-historical context. He also learned about anti-Filipino sentiment in Watsonville and throughout the state of California, specifically anti-miscegenation laws and the murder of Fermin Tobera as a result of the Watsonville riots. In 2011, Assembly Member Alejo (2011) introduced Assembly Resolution 74 (A.C.R. 74), which read

> RESOLVED by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, that the Legislature, on behalf of the people of the state, apologizes to Filipino-Americans in California for the fundamental violations of basic constitutional and civil rights through de jure and de facto discrimination committed during the 1920s through the 1940 (C.A. Assembly, 2011)

Alejo recognized the Filipino Americans' rich contributions in shaping labor relations in the United States and wanted the state to apologize for institutionalized dehumanization during the

Manong[4] Generation. Along with A.C.R. 74, Alejo introduced two significant pieces of legislation to advance the development and practice of Ethnic Studies in the state of California.

In 2014, Alejo introduced Assembly Bill 1750, which would require the Department of Education to conduct a report that identifies model Ethnic Studies programs and curricula at the high school level. Two years later, Alejo introduced Assembly Bill 2016 (A.B. 2016), which would require the Instruction Quality Commission to develop a model Ethnic Studies curriculum for the state of California. Governor Jerry Brown signed Alejo's bill into law in September of 2016. While Alejo worked with California legislature, some districts were already making moves to institutionalize Ethnic Studies. For example, in 2014, both El Rancho Unified School District and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) passed resolutions to include Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement. El Rancho's requirement began for students graduating in 2016, whereas Ethnic Studies in LAUSD was a requirement for the graduating class of 2019. In 2014, San Francisco Unified School District's Board of Education unanimously passed a resolution to support the expansion of the comparative Ethnic Studies course, making it available to students at all the high schools in the district. This resolution stated that the San Francisco school board would seek to institutionalize an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement in three years. While the LA school districts passed resolutions to mandate Ethnic Studies in 2014, other public schools plan to offer Ethnic Studies in all high schools prior to mandating a requirement, which shows that there are various strategies to development and implementation.

I argue that the movement for institutionalizing high school Ethnic Studies courses responds to the status of urban schools as internal colonies, where Eurocentric colonial narratives create and maintain social injustice in the United States (Apple, 2004; Barrera, Muñoz, & Ornelas, 1972; Blauner, 2001; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Brayboy, Castagno, & Maughan, 2007; Muñoz, 2007; Tejeda, Espinoza, & Gutierrez, 2003). In the following section, I discuss how classrooms have become products of internal colonialism and the role of decolonization in K-12 Ethnic Studies movements.

**Classroom as a Product of Internal Colonialism**

In the opening vignette of this chapter, the teacher advocating for Ethnic Studies asserts that members of the community wanted Ethnic Studies classes in our schools "forty years ago." He refers to a desire for Ethnic Studies in public schools as part of the TWLF movement in 1968, drawing a connection between the decolonial projects of the late 1960s and present-day movements for decolonial curriculum in California public schools. Maldonaldo-Torres (2007) argues that "coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breath coloniality all the time and everyday" (p. 243). Consequently, students learn colonial ways of living and being, where they place value on Eurocentric narratives that humanize whites, while simultaneously othering and dehumanizing poor and working-class people, women, Indigenous peoples, and/or people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Leonardo, 2009; Rafael, 2000). To understand this further, I discuss the relationship between the colonial

[4] "Manong" and "Manang" are terms of endearment that are used to refer to older relatives. Some refer to Filipinx immigrants before 1965 as the "Man@ng Generation" (see Mabalon, 2013).

settler and the colonized, where desiring whiteness is central to a colonial being, often times leading the colonized person to a self-hating or a colonial mentality. I then discuss how schools are producers of internal colonialism, where the teaching and learning of white racial narratives are central to the reproduction of a way of life informed by colonialism.

**Coloniality of the heart and mind.** The relationship between a colonial settler and the colonized is based on lust, envy, and desire (Fanon, 1963; Rafael, 2000). The colonized adopts a colonial mind – a longing to mirror the settler in beliefs and behavior. According to Frantz Fanon, colonized individuals learn to envy the colonizer – to own what they[5] own, to love what they love – they dream of the day that they'll live in the settler's home. This type of love is tied to capitalist agendas that place "value" on material wealth. In addition, beauty, intellect, and humanity are conflated with images of the settler and inform colonial mentality, or the impact that colonialism has on the psyche of the colonized. During the process of colonization, the colonized learns self-hate, which fuels the lust and envy that they have for the settler's possessions. Value is placed on the colonizer's property and beliefs. The colonized renounces their old ways because they now believe that the settler's way of life is better, more superior than their own. The colonizer's being equates to human and those colonized have the goal to be seen as human in the eyes of the colonizer. While the colonized has the means to adopt colonial values and ways of being, they will ultimately inhabit a brown or black body, which betrays them in the end. People of color who internalize whiteness as an ideology are constituted as "colonized persons" living with a colonial mentality. In contrast, a white body that maintains and perpetuates an ideology of whiteness is deemed a "colonizer" whose humanity remains false. This "false humanity" is a product of oppression and continues to impose a relationship that is dehumanizing to both colonizer and colonized (Freire, 1970).

Within the colonial context, the white body enters with a "false humanity," which is based on an assertion of power that dehumanizes bodies of color and/or colonial subjects. Albert Memmi (1965) adds,

> The colonized does not seek merely to enrich himself with the colonizer's virtues. In the name of what he hopes to become, he sets his mind on impoverishing himself, tearing himself away from his true self. The crushing of the colonized is included among the colonizer's values. As soon as the colonized adopts those values, he similarly adopts his own condemnation. (p. 121)

Within this oppressive situation, Indigenous ways of knowing depreciate and the colonized internalize undervalued notions of self, being, and community while embracing the settler's way of life. The colonized inherits ideas about colonial living that are rooted in patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy (Fromm, 1956; hooks, 2003; Rafael, 2000; Tejeda et al., 2003).

**Learning colonial living through white racial narratives.** American schools maintain white racial domination and teach a colonial way of life. This domination is evident in the information taught to students as well as how students are expected to interact with classroom discourse. Brayboy et al. (2007) reveal the assimilationist policies within education that

[5] I use "they," "them," and "their" pronouns as a way to promote gender neutrality throughout the dissertation.

normalize whiteness and encourage students of color to act more like their white counterparts (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). More specifically, these policies "seek to make all the students abide by the same rules, protocols, standards…[policies] fail to recognize the unique abilities of all learners and they force some students to abandon aspects of their identity that are central to their being, survival, success" (Brayboy et al., 2007, p. 67). Students' identities are then closely related to their behaviors, which are linked to their academic achievement. For students of color, in particular, such policies force them to renounce parts of their identity. Valenzuela (1999) names this process "subtractive schooling," where institutions "strip away" students' identity to ensure their achievement in schools. Non-dominant culture is undervalued and is believed to hinder a students' academic achievement particularly because students are expected to assimilate to white standards. Schooling is thus a site that mimics colonial efforts to valorize whiteness, ultimately teaching a colonial way of life.

Within institutions of education, Eurocentric, colonial narratives inform the curriculum where the power of whiteness and white supremacy has remained implicit. Whiteness is normalized within American educational ideals and is not made explicit in the teaching and learning within U.S. schools (Leonardo, 2004). The narratives that are taught within American schools perpetuate a discourse that normalizes whiteness, humanizes whites, and teaches a colonial ideology. This humanization is evident within the curriculum that focuses on the stories and lived experiences of white heroes and omits the experiences and contributions of historically marginalized communities of color in the United States, where racism, white supremacy and colorblindness are preserved through a Eurocentric colonial narrative (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1988). This curriculum is also an apparatus where social inequality is created and reproduced. For instance, Bonilla-Silva (2006) discusses the significance of stories as tools that "help us make sense of the world but in a way that reinforce the status quo" (p. 75). Among the stories taught within schools, white racial domination is maintained at an institutional level, which in turn impacts interpersonal relationships. The hidden curriculum also has ideological impacts on students' engagement with school and how schools construct their identity.

Colonial ideologies inform the meanings, values, and behaviors of students and are socially and culturally reproduced within schools. As discussed, colonial processes teach the colonized to place value on the settler and everything they own as opposed to finding value in Indigenous ways of life. The colonized loves the settler, extending themselves to nurture the economic growth of the settler. At the same time, the settler loves the colonized, ensuring that they leave behind Indigenous knowledge and ways and that they grow in the image of the settler, for the settler. Colonization creates a hierarchy between the colonizer and colonized placing little to no value on black and brown lives, which justifies the means for oppression, dehumanization, and exploitation. Educational institutions rarely encourage students to acknowledge and critique oppression informed by white colonial domination (Leonardo, 2004; L. T. Smith, 1999; Tejeda et al., 2003). How can students gain tools to critique white supremacy and colorblindness both of which are essential parts of the colonial mindset? In this dissertation, I will show how some high school teachers in one school district worked to give their students these tools.

There is a need to explicitly analyze and discuss coloniality within educational sites in order to create a world that humanizes all students. In the late 1960s, students and community members urged universities and schools to address the colonial nature of schools through the TWLF. These student movements, inspired by Frantz Fanon's (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*, demand a decolonizing education that granted access to institutions of higher education to Third

World people, culturally relevant curriculum, and a bridge between universities and communities, which then birthed Ethnic Studies (Umemoto, 1989). The TWLF project was rooted in the global endeavor for decolonization.

## Decolonial Projects

Decolonization begins when the colonized realizes their humanity (Fanon, 1963, p. 43). Decolonization is not a destination but rather an individual and communal life-long process of healing, liberation, and humanization (Strobel, 2001, p. 81). In this process, the colonized "[learns] to love one's self again, of seeing one's self as important enough to think and write about, of learning to face the truth and learning to tell the truth" (p. 50). Here, decolonization is a product of decolonial love and justice (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 261). In the United States, projects of decolonization are a response to the neocolonial apparatus of whiteness, where people of color, women, and the poor are taught to assimilate to and adopt a white capitalist, heteropatriarchal way of life (A. P. Harris, 2011; A. Smith, 2006). In this section, I investigate the work of the Third World project to combat dehumanization, rooted in decolonial practice.

**Third World project.** In 1955, leaders from the "darker nations" or those nations that were not part of the First and Second Worlds initiated the Third World project at the Bandung Conference in Indonesia. This project, with the United Nations as the main vehicle, was fueled by the fight for liberation from colonialism and existed to establish political equality on the global level (Prashad, 2008, p. xvi). The Third World demanded:

1. the redistribution of the world's resources
2. a more dignified rate of return for the labor power of their people
3. a shared acknowledgement of the heritage of science, technology, and culture (p. xvii).

In addition to advocating against colonialism, the Third World unity also fought against racialism or racism and was determined "to preserve and stabilize peace in the world" (Prashad, 2008, p. 34). Prashad provides a detailed analysis of the actions by the United Nations and the Third World countries and concluded that "one of the principle failures of the Third World project [was] the lack of effective socialized democracy" (Prashad, 2008, p. 123). Analysis of Havana, Bandung, and Algiers demonstrated the strength of social movements for liberation; however, these movements were flawed because they were not successful in capturing the consent of civil society, and some attempts to liberation proved to actually be oppressive. We can learn a lot from the nations who met in Bandung as well as Fanon. When we look at the initial demands of the Third World project, we neglect to see how the Third World nations "shared acknowledgement of the heritage of science, technology, and culture" (p. xvii) of their partnering nations.

> "Imperial racism," they argued, "not only prevents cultural cooperation but also suppresses the national cultures of the people." Empires generally attempt to direct the cultural history of a people – to set one community against another (divide and rule), adopt one group as the leader above the rest, or else disdain the cultural traditions of a

> region and propose its substitution by the empire's own cultural traditions, at least for a select fed. *The Bandung twenty-nine demanded an end to this use of cultural richness for purposes of domination. But they went further, enjoining the world to learn about each other's cultures, to demand that the darker nations not only find out about European culture but that each of the twenty-nine and beyond learn about everyone's cultural history.* [emphasis added] The communiqué directed the countries toward "the acquisition of knowledge of each other's country, mutual cultural exchange, and exchange of information" (Prashad, 2008, p. 45).

With the lack of socialized democracy, actors in the Third World project were not holistic in their approach to seeking freedom. The twenty-nine nation-states in Bandung claimed that there was a need to learn about and place value on each other's cultures. What is the benefit of learning each other's culture and history? When one learns about another, they can find value and respect. By learning from one another, the Third World nations outline the first step towards mutual respect and love, which is tied to Fanon's idea of decolonization, in that, if nations no longer found European culture to be the most valuable, the nations could begin to find value in their own land and culture. How do we share our national cultures with one another?

Fanon claims, "to fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible" (Fanon, 1963, p. 233). National liberation needs national culture to thrive. He also asserts that governments have a responsibility in this regard and that there is a need to raise the consciousness of the young people in society (Fanon, 1963). The young people of a nation hold the key to maintaining a particular social order. How do we produce national consciousness for the youth that is also socially and politically informed? The answer is in the educational system.

Both Fanon and Prashad define a counterhegemonic Third World identity and ideology, which informs projects like those enacted in Third World nations, but their work can also inform the current state of education in the United States. I return to the question: What is the benefit of learning each other's culture and history? We can learn to place value on ourselves and those who may be culturally and racially different. Decolonization coupled with education can be the source of producing self-love and love for community, where all are perceived as human. The U.S. educational structure is a potential site of decolonizing pedagogical praxis. Members of the TWLF of the late 1960s were well aware of the need to decolonize schools. These decolonial roots, particularly processes of humanization, are evident within Ethnic Studies curricular interventions today, including in the district that is the focus of my research.

The participants at the 1955 Bandung conference urged nation-states to engage in a "mutual cultural exchange," to not only engage with European culture but to find value in the culture of Third World nations. Similarly, in the United States, Ethnic Studies projects in schools encourage students and teachers to interrogate the hegemonic, white curriculum and insert the counterstories of communities of color. The movement for comparative Ethnic Studies in the California public schools is a part of a decolonial legacy of the TWLF from the 60s and an extension of the project to decolonize the U.S. classroom. This dissertation provides an ethnographic case study of how one school district institutionalized curriculum that engaged students and teachers in examining the hegemonic roots of American history through Ethnic Studies. Their courses were also sites to include marginalized voices within California schools through counterhegemonic knowledge production.

## Theoretical Framework

While the 1960s movement for Ethnic Studies is informed by a larger global project of decolonization, this study takes a deeper look into high school Ethnic Studies praxis, specifically examining teacher preparation and classroom implementation. As I entered the field, I carried with me theories of decoloniality and internal colonialism. However, internal colonial models and decolonial theories are among the many frameworks that inform the movement and discipline of Ethnic Studies. My ethnographer toolkit also included an epistemology of differential consciousness, understanding that the words and language used to name oppression and resistance varies among different oppressed groups. I was interested in how the teachers and students within my study understood, interrogated, and named Ethnic Studies concepts and knowledge. Guided by data collected through participant observation in Ethnic Studies teacher professional development, interviews, and classroom observations in six ninth grade Ethnic Studies classrooms, I utilized a grounded theory approach to advance both (1) an epistemology of differential consciousness and (2) critical race dialogue.

An *epistemology of differential consciousness* allowed me to maneuver within, through, and among dominant and oppositional frameworks. Drawing from third world feminist theories, Chela Sandoval (2000), defines differential as

> a location wherein the aims of feminism, race, ethnicity, sex, and marginality studies, and historical, aesthetic, and global studies can crosscut and join together in new relations through the recognition of a shared theory and method of oppositional consciousness. The differential occurs when the affinities inside of difference attract, combine, and relate new constituencies into coalitions of resistance. (p. 63)

Differential consciousness allowed me to read power relations from a marginal, oppressed, and/or oppositional standpoint. In other words, as a researcher I questioned how multiple perspectives and lens informed the narratives, experiences, processes, and curriculum I observed. Similarly, as teachers grappled with various Ethnic Studies concepts, their analysis of power relations was informed by various systems of oppression and forms of resistance. An epistemology of differential consciousness allowed for generative analysis to highlight the perspectives centered within the ninth grade Ethnic Studies curriculum.

Omi and Winant (2014) argue "A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines" (p. 125). As an antiracist racial project, high school Ethnic Studies provides an interpretation of racial experiences from the perspective of people of color as an alternative to the white, colonial narratives that permeate American schools. This dissertation investigates two particular educational racial projects: Ethnic Studies teacher professional development and implementation of ninth grade Ethnic Studies curriculum. As a participant observer, the differential understandings of Ethnic Studies was a major obstacle during the teachers' professional development. As they responded to this challenge, I witnessed how teachers' employed what I call *critical race dialogue* (CRD) within the political education they infused in their meetings and retreats. Mr. Cruz and other core teachers within my study understood that Ethnic Studies challenges essentialized categories of race by deconstructing systematic forms of oppression. Drawing from critical race theory in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 1999;

Stovall, 2013; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004) and Freire's (1970) dialogue, I elaborate on the various mechanisms of critical race dialogue that Ethnic Studies teachers engaged in during their professional development. As one form of critical race praxis, CRD highlights experiential knowledge to define and examine various racial identities and meanings and their relationship to social structures.

I explicate both theoretical frameworks, epistemology of differential consciousness and critical race dialogue, further in chapters three and four in this dissertation. An epistemology of differential consciousness provided a lens to capture and investigate CRD and teachers' critical collective consciousness. This epistemology was also fundamental in interpreting how knowledge was interrogated and produced within high school Ethnic Studies classrooms. For participants in this study, CRD was a catalyst for individual and collective conscientization. High school Ethnic Studies teachers rearticulated historical events through the perspective of oppressed racial groups and redistributed educational resources to highlight the contributions of communities of color. CRD engaged teachers in intellectual work where they interrogated race, power, privilege, social location, and societal structures.

**Chapter Overview**

In chapter two, I review the literature on high school Ethnic Studies and K-12 Ethnic Studies more broadly. While K-12 Ethnic Studies has existed since the 1960s, the emergence of research on K-12 Ethnic Studies is fairly recent catalyzed by the Mexican American Studies ban in Tucson. My review begins with a discussion on the literature about Ethnic Studies professional development, particularly focusing on critical approaches to Ethnic Studies teacher preparation. Next, I highlight the knowledge systems that inform Ethnic Studies epistemologies. Lastly, I discuss the research on Ethnic Studies praxis, which focuses on how teachers and students engage in knowledge production and processes that lead to action research. In chapter three, I introduce the Ethnic Studies Collaborative as a strong case study for examining the challenges that arise and the knowledge produced when developing and implementing Ethnic Studies across a school district. I describe my data collection process, which utilized participant observations within the Ethnic Studies Collaborative, semi-structured interviews with Ethnic Studies teachers, and classroom observations in six ninth-grade Ethnic Studies classrooms. I also explicate the epistemology of differential consciousness I employed as an ethnographer.

Chapter four draws from participant observation of the Ethnic Studies Collaborative and semi-structured interviews with ninth grade Ethnic Studies teachers within the Collaborative to examine the processes that take place to develop and implement a district-wide Ethnic Studies curriculum. Specifically, I reveal how the Collaborative responded to the challenge of content knowledge variation among teachers and engaged in a praxis-oriented approach to their professional development which strengthened their critical race perspectives and their pedagogical approaches in the classroom. Bridging critical race theory frameworks and Freire's notion of dialogue, my analysis demonstrates that the Collaborative engaged in a process I call critical race dialogue to develop their critical collective consciousness, or shared understanding of Ethnic Studies curriculum and collaborative praxis. I define the various mechanisms of critical race dialogue, which included teachers situating themselves within systems of oppression and creating brave space to grow and learn as a collective. These mechanisms led teachers to develop a critical collective consciousness, which they then brought to their own classrooms.

In chapter five, I examine the ways Ethnic Studies teachers and students interrogated hegemonic knowledge in their classroom and within their professional development. One challenge that teachers encountered while developing the curriculum was creating a cohesive year-long framework and definitions of key concepts taught throughout the ninth-grade course. Drawing on data collected through observations in two classrooms, interviews with teachers, and participant observation in teacher professional development, I illuminate how teachers used an intersectional lens to teach and learn about power relations in the classroom. While Ethnic Studies curricula has a focus on race and ethnicity, my data showcases how teachers stressed the significance of race and ethnicity as they intersect with class, sexuality, and gender. I highlight how teachers coined the acronym "Straight, White, American[6], Rich, Men" or "SWARM" to identify who benefitted most from hegemonic structures and how their ideas dominate the fields of social relations and values like a swarm.

Chapter six presents data on the ways Ethnic Studies students and teachers produce counterhegemonic knowledge. I analyze data from teacher interviews and observations in three Ethnic Studies classrooms to explore the various sources used to introduce and generate counterhegemonic knowledge. Whose knowledge are considered valuable within the Ethnic Studies classroom? Drawing from Banks' (1991) multiethnic model of curricular inclusion, I expose how Ethnic Studies teachers utilize various epistemologies to understand social phenomena. In this chapter, I identify two sources that counter the master narratives in traditional social science discourses: (1) Familial/ancestral knowledge and (2) Community knowledge/action. Students and teachers center their own and their people's knowledge within a socio-historical context. The course also draws on the knowledge/action of community activists to showcase how various neighborhoods or coalitions addressed issues of racial, gender, and class inequity. Findings from chapter six demonstrate the significance of action and resistance among Ethnic Studies knowledge. Introducing narratives of revolution and resistance is just as significant as interrogating hegemonic knowledge and systems of oppression.

**Significance of the Study**

This study illuminates how an Ethnic Studies Collaborative responded to Eurocentric colonial narratives within social science courses by developing and implementing ninth grade comparative Ethnic Studies curricula. Ethnic Studies course offerings are rapidly increasing in states like California, however, teachers writing and teaching Ethnic Studies curricula encounter various challenges when implementing the discipline within K-12 schools. We know that K-12 Ethnic Studies curricula add academic and social value to students' lives (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2017; Sleeter, 2011). These courses also have the potential to improve the experiences of historically marginalized students through innovative curriculum and Indigenous knowledge (Acosta, 2007; J. A. Banks, 1991; de los Ríos, 2013; Serna, 2013). Previous research also found that well-designed and well-taught Ethnic Studies courses include the use of critical and culturally responsive pedagogies (Cammarota, 2016; de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015; Jocson, 2008; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). There is less research that highlights effective

[6] While teachers initially defined the "A" in SWARM as "American," some teachers will also include "able-bodied" in the SWARM acronym.

practices in preparing educators to teach Ethnic Studies in high school classrooms (Curammeng & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2017; Daus-Magbual, 2010; dos Passos Coggin, 2014).

As California makes moves to create Ethnic Studies curriculum and secure the course as a high school graduate requirement, how can we ensure we have enough teachers prepared to successfully implement Ethnic Studies curricula? Through a critical ethnographic approach, I investigate the praxis-oriented professional development of the Ethnic Studies Collaborative as they responded to the challenges that come with writing and teaching ninth-grade Ethnic Studies. This study provides insight into how teacher educators and districts can prepare teachers for Ethnic Studies, highlighting practices that can be used within teacher education, in-service professional development, and within teachers' praxis in the classroom. Specifically, my study illuminates the significance of examining the tensions that arise in Ethnic Studies teacher preparation, highlighting the strategies for creating critical dialogue around race and its intersections. Through an analysis of interview data and ethnographic fieldwork, I reveal how teachers draw upon their own experiences to engage in critical dialogue around race-based issues in their lives and in their classrooms. Teachers' critical race dialogue shifted their knowledge of power relations regarding race and led to a critical collective consciousness, or a shared understanding of Ethnic Studies content and approaches. Furthermore, this critical ethnography engages the researcher and participants in developing epistemologies of differential consciousness, which can be used as both a methodological frame for data collection and analysis and a pedagogical tool within the high school Ethnic Studies classroom. Through my observations, I uncover the various sources of knowledge that inform Ethnic Studies curricula and implementation.

# CHAPTER TWO
# Literature Review

Since the Ethnic Studies ban in Tucson in 2010, Ethnic Studies has gained national recognition among teachers and scholars. The growth of qualitative and quantitative research on high school Ethnic Studies programs demonstrates the academic and social value of Ethnic Studies curriculum and the impact it has had on improving student academic achievement when courses are well-taught and well-designed (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2017; Sleeter, 2011). Despite high school Ethnic Studies' courses success and promise in addressing academic disparities among marginalized communities, it is always susceptible to political opposition where "certain knowledge and perspectives are welcomed and deemed safe within schools, while other 'ethnic' knowledge are not welcomed and deemed dangerous" (San Pedro, 2015, p. 515) or criminal (Serna, 2013).

While the course is new to many teachers and students, the discipline of Ethnic Studies is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Two recent anthologies emerged to respond to detractors who question the discipline and offer best practices for developing and implementing Ethnic Studies curriculum for K-12 schooling. These two anthologies include *"White" Washing American Education: The New Culture Wars in Ethnic Studies* (D. M. Sandoval, Ratcliff, Buenavista, & Marín, 2016) and a Rethinking Schools publication entitled *Rethinking Ethnic* Studies (Cuauhtin, Zavala, Sleeter, & Au, 2018). These publications are timely considering that in the last decade, the movement for K-12 Ethnic Studies has pushed educational policy to increase course offerings, particularly at the high school level. Some school districts have also passed resolutions to make high school Ethnic Studies a graduate requirement.

In this review, I survey literature that investigates studies about the knowledge, epistemologies, and praxis that inform strong high school Ethnic Studies implementation, as well as literature that highlight the challenges that may arise for schools and districts employing Ethnic Studies educational policy. This review is divided into three sections (1) Ethnic Studies Professional Development, (2) Ethnic Studies Epistemologies, and (3) Ethnic Studies Praxis.

## Ethnic Studies Professional Development

With the increase of Ethnic Studies high school courses across the nation, will teachers be prepared to teach these classes? How might school districts include Ethnic Studies teacher preparation within their professional development offerings for teachers? What challenges do Ethnic Studies teachers face? What content is covered within Ethnic Studies curricula? In her review of research on Ethnic Studies curricula, Sleeter (2011) found that Ethnic Studies courses are interpreted in different ways. For instance, some iterations of Ethnic Studies curricula are designed to include multiple perspectives, literature, narratives, and voices of historically marginalized ethnic and racial groups. While the objective of some Ethnic Studies courses may center the analysis of institutional racism, with the goal to offer students tools to address racially hostile environments, other iterations of Ethnic Studies curricula are designed with the objective of sovereignty and decolonization (Hu-Dehart, 2004; King, 2005; Cook-Lynne, Holm, Red Horse, & Riding In, 2005; Sleeter, 2011). As Ethnic Studies curricula claim space within schools to showcase the experiences of communities of color, what are best practices for preparing Ethnic Studies teachers? For some curricula, teaching critical perspectives are central to Ethnic

Studies praxis (Acosta, 2007; Cammarota, 2016; de los Ríos, 2013; Tintiangco-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, et al., 2010). Thus, preparing teachers must also disrupt traditional approaches to professional development. Kohli, Picower, Martinez, and Ortiz (2015) define outsourced one-day or weeklong, content-based workshops as *antidialogical professional development*, where teachers are passive participants in their preparation for the classroom. Among the literature I surveyed, I found two studies that examined content-based professional development for teachers assigned to teach African American History (Baptiste, 2010; Sanders, 2010).

In her study of the development of the African American History policy mandate in Philadelphia, Sanders (2010) found that teachers assigned to teach the course in the district had limited content knowledge of the subject. As a response, district administrators instituted professional development for teachers assigned to teach the course. University professors and curriculum writers led weekly professional development seminars focused on Afrocentric content knowledge, which were held during the spring and summer before teachers taught the course in the fall. When teachers began teaching the course, they also attended Saturday morning seminars held twice a month at the district office. While teachers in the study appreciated increasing their knowledge of African American History, many "questioned the practicality of the information presented to them and they felt that they could have benefited from professional development that was also pedagogical" (Sanders, 2010, p. 150). The seminars were limited in providing teachers with tools for translating the content knowledge into lessons for their students.

Similarly, professional development for New Jersey teachers infusing African American History into social studies and history curriculum was also content based. In her study of three history teachers, Baptiste (2010) examined how teachers understood the policy mandate (in the form of the New Jersey Amistad Bill) and how they implemented African American History content in their respective classrooms. She found that each teacher had the opportunity to attend a one-week, state commissioned, summer institute to learn about the policy and African American perspectives and contributions to U.S. society. This professional development space provided teachers time to critically reflect and investigate their own perceptions about race and how to respond to their students' needs. While all teachers in her study developed a self-awareness of the significance of teaching about race relations and African American perspectives in school curriculum, two black teachers all the while had been incorporating black perspectives in their teaching prior to the state mandate. One teacher suggested that professional development should go beyond providing curriculum and content; rather, he believed the state should "provide the opportunity for teachers to shadow teachers that have the experience in teaching the infusion of black history" (Baptiste, 2010, p. 146). In essence, both Sanders and Baptiste conclude that developing teachers' content knowledge is not enough. While teachers increase their acquisition of Ethnic Studies knowledge, this approach minimizes teaching training to subject matter acquisition. Teachers did not gain the pedagogical tools to effectively translate their new knowledge for students. Thus, content-based professional development approaches fall short in effectively preparing Ethnic Studies teachers.

Since, Ethnic Studies pedagogy bridges critical perspectives with action-oriented approaches to addressing student and community issues, Ethnic Studies professional development must go beyond "banking" models of teacher preparation and consider how teachers' praxis can spark the transformative potential of education. (Cammarota, 2016; de los Ríos et al., 2015; Freire, 1970; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). How can Ethnic Studies

professional development advance teachers' Ethnic Studies knowledge *and* provide humanizing approaches to translate content for students? Responding to top-down professional development methods, equity- or social justice-oriented teacher educators have designed alternative approaches for supporting teachers in their endeavors to effectively link theory with practice (Taylor & Sobel, 2003). Praxis-oriented professional development includes critical inquiry groups, inquiry-based dialogue, school-university partnerships, and long-term racial consciousness development support (Kohli et al., 2015; Rodriguez, Mantle-Bromley, Bailey, & Paccione, 2003; Schniedewind, 2005; Taylor & Sobel, 2003). For example, Kohli and her colleagues (2015) offer *critical professional development*, a humanizing approach to improving teacher practice. In their study, they analyzed the dialogical action among teachers participating in critical professional development in three case studies in the United States – People's Education Movement, New York Collective of Radical Educators, and the Institute for Teachers of Color Committed to Racial Justice. The community-based, teacher-led approaches to teacher professional development focused on "cooperation and authentic dialogue, unity through an intentionality of community building, organization of shared power, and cultural synthesis where the needs and perspectives of students, communities, and teachers were centered over the interests of leaders" (Kohli et al., 2015, p. 14). In the three cases, teachers had the opportunity to engage in dialectical processes to harness their critical consciousness and hone their critical pedagogy for the broader goal of social justice.

Critical inquiry and dialogue have been staples within critical approaches to Ethnic Studies teacher professional development. In fact, Ethnic Studies teachers, community practitioners, and critical educational scholars collaborated in critical professional development in Tucson Unified School District's Institute for Transformative Education, which was hosted by the district's Raza Studies Department and served in-service teachers who were interested in teaching Raza Studies throughout the district. In her study of how the institute informed the practice of participants, dos Passos Coggins (2014) asserts that the institute urged teachers to view their role with a critical lens. Through four-days of seminars, workshops, and keynotes from critical race and multicultural education scholars, she found that the institute engaged practitioners in reconsidering their purpose in teaching as it related to place and social transformation. Unfortunately, the Ethnic Studies ban in 2010 ended Tucson's Institute for Transformative Education along with Mexican American Studies program.

Key players from the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson founded the Xicanx Institute for Teaching and Organizing (XITO). University faculty, community organizers, and teachers gather once a year for critical professional development that train participants in decolonial barrio pedagogies (Fernández, 2016). The institute is rooted in Indigenous knowledge informed by Nahui Ollin, which balances mind, body, and essence through four principles: Tezcatlipoca (memory, self-reflection), Quetzalcoatl (precious and beautiful knowledge), Huitzilopochtli (la voluntad-the will to act), and Xipe Totec (transformation) (Fernandez, 2016, pp. 241-242). XITO founders hope practitioners walk away with pedagogical tools that will help them facilitate processes of decolonization and re-humanization within their classrooms. Both the Institute for Transformative Education and XITO offer examples of Critical Ethnic Studies professional development. However, teachers "mourned the short duration of the conversation started by the institute and questioned whether transformative learning could continue outside the stimulating space provided" (dos Passos Coggins, 2014, pp. 151-152). Additionally, XITO participants have expressed, "Is there a way XITO can be longer?" (as cited in Fernandez, 2016,

p. 252). Opportunities to sustain meaningful relationships to extend dialogue among Ethnic Studies teachers engaged in professional development depends largely on resources, political support, and time.

Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP) offers another example of critical professional development to undergraduate and graduate students interested in learning Ethnic Studies pedagogies and teaching Filipina/o American content from kindergarten to community college levels. Their interdisciplinary, *barangay* (small community) approach includes partnerships with community and university faculty members in a weeklong *Tibak* (activist) training institute and summer retreat prior to the academic school year. PEP teachers engage in theoretical conversations around issues of their own schooling experience, foundations in critical pedagogy, and Filipina/o American history and culture through a decolonial lens (Curammeng & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2017). PEP's model includes dialogue that encourages "deep identity work," where teachers openly discuss and interrogate their identity and processes of conscientization, which informs what and how they teach (Daus-Magbual, 2010). Once they are in the classroom, PEP teachers engage in weekly meetings and write reflections after each class session to collaboratively develop curricula, practice lessons, and reflect on their teaching. PEP's community-based approach to Ethnic Studies professional development lays a theoretical foundation for the critical pedagogies teachers employ in their classrooms and the political impact education has on the students' lives. However, the program is reserved for PEP teacher apprentices. With the expansion of Ethnic Studies sections in high schools, teachers need professional development that includes theoretical, political, and pedagogical guidance.

Critical Ethnic Studies professional development provides teachers with transformative theoretical and pedagogical tools. However, the examples I provide are mostly offered at the grassroots level. Teachers who attend critical professional development to enhance social justice pedagogies often return to campus structures that preserve the inequity that critical teachers hope to address. How might we incorporate critical professional development within schools and districts? This dissertation offers a form of critical professional development that is offered for Ethnic Studies teachers within one school district. Ethnic Studies' teacher preparation includes bridging processes of conscietization with approaches to respond to injustice in schools and educational policy (Kohli et al., 2015).

**Ethnic Studies Epistemologies**

K-12 Ethnic Studies curriculum is an anti-racist and/or decolonial knowledge project that encourages students and teachers to critique and disrupt white, colonial perspectives that are ingrained within U.S. schools. Ethnic Studies praxis challenges traditional narratives informed by Western, Orientalist, Eurocentric-Heteropatriarchal viewpoints by recovering and legitimizing decolonial, Indigenous, antiracist, subaltern epistemologies and knowledge systems in schools (Leonardo & Sacramento, in press). This is not to say that every high school Ethnic Studies class is designed to be decolonial, nor am I arguing that all Ethnic Studies curricula teach students *how* to be antiracist. Rather, I acknowledge that the research on the discipline of Ethnic Studies within high schools showcases a multitude of epistemologies that are inclusive of a variety, sometimes opposing, viewpoints. As teachers across the nation, California in particular, find Ethnic Studies sections among their course assignments, defining Ethnic Studies curricula and what it may look like within K-12 schools may pose a challenge for some teachers, especially if

they begin their new course with limited content knowledge. What are Ethnic Studies epistemologies? In other words, how have researchers and educators defined and established alternative knowledge within their curriculum and pedagogies?

Ethnic Studies epistemologies explicitly interrogate power relations, specifically how an "American" narrative is normalized within U.S. schools and fosters competition, individualism, and internalized oppression (J. A. Banks, 2012; Yang, 2000). The perspective often found within Ethnic Studies courses counters subtractive schooling approaches that urge students to assimilate to Eurocentric, colonial agendas (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; San Pedro, 2015; Serna, 2013; Valenzuela, 1999). Rather, students are introduced to alternative points of view that are sometimes rooted in Indigenous epistemologies. For instance, teachers from the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson drew from Xicana/o Indigenous epistemologies particularly from the Nahua tradition (Acosta, 2007; M. S. Arce, 2016).

Teaching was a highly regarded profession among Nahua, who identified five teacher attributes that Arce (2016) argues are applicable in urban education contexts today, including the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies curricula. These five attributes are:

1. Teixcuitiani – "causing others to take a face"
2. Teixtlamachtiani – "one who gives knowledge to the faces of others"
3. Tetezcahuaiani – "one who places a mirror in front of others"
4. Netlacaneco – "one who has a humanizing love for the people"
5. Tlayopachitivia – "one in relation with things, whom makes the heart strong" (León-Portilla, as cited in Arce, 2016)

*Teixuitiani* means teachers can encourage students to "embrac[e] their fluid identities (i.e. gender, urban, cultural, sexual, and spiritual) and their forms of cultural wealth by being responsive through the direct teaching of their histories, culture, and lived social realities" (Arce, 2016, p. 26). Teachers also engage in *Teixtlamachitiani*, where they provide a learning environment that facilitates knowledge production with students, encouraging students' creativity and innovation.

The third Nahua attribute, *Tetezcahuaiani*, is rooted in critical self-reflection, where Ethnic Studies teachers and students reflect on their own development and their role in the world. *Netlacaneco* is a pedagogical tool where teachers engage students in processes to identify the structures and policies that perpetuate dehumanization, while simultaneously imagining and employing humanizing pedagogy in their classroom. Teachers who practice a humanizing pedagogy, nurture relationships with students based on "*respeto* (respect), *Confiancza* (mutual trust), *consejo*s (verbal teachings, and *buen ejemplos* (exemplary models)" (Franquiz & del Carmen Salazar, as cited in Arce, 2016, p. 28). The final Nahua attribute, *Tlayopachitivia*, depends largely on teachers' critical consciousness and they use their understanding of the physical, ecological, and social environment to inform their teaching. For the Nahua, the heart represents consciousness, therefore teachers are encouraged to engage students in processes of conscientization. Drawing from Indigenous and third world schools of thought, Ethnic Studies epistemologies generate knowledge "from," "with," and "alongside" racial and ethnic groups (Grosfoguel, 2012). Here, teachers of Tucson's Mexican American Studies program infused Indigenous knowledge within their learning environments, which humanized students' experiences and ways of knowing. Students counternarratives serve as a text that also contributes

to our growing understanding of Ethnic Studies epistemologies. Culturally responsive approaches values and honors students' experiences in the Ethnic Studies classroom and situates their lived experiences within a broader, transnational context (Gay, 2002; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

Ethnic Studies epistemologies and praxis found within some versions of curricula are grounded in collective work and social movements. Collaboration, thus, can be seen in curricula that engages Ethnic Studies teachers and students to work with elders, community organizations, student organizations, and school districts, ensuring students know that the work goes beyond the classroom (Acosta, 2007; Fernández, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Coalitions have advocated for the course as seen in both the Third World Liberation Front movements of the 1960s and within contemporary movements of K-12 Ethnic Studies today (Buenavista, 2016). Additionally, implementation of Ethnic Studies curricula is done in collaboration. For instance, Asian American students at a large public Northeastern high school organized a campaign for Asian American Studies courses and Asian faculty to reflect the needs and experiences of the students within the school (Cytrynbaum, 2010). The high school Asian American Studies course partnered with the local elementary and secondary schools and a local Asian American youth theater company to engage high school students in an Asian American teaching project for younger generations and an arts-based performance project to showcase Asian American counternarratives. The instructor of the course also reminded students throughout the year of their student power and potential to make change, emphasizing that the class was a result of students demanding Asian American Studies.

Critical Filipina/o American Studies teachers in San Francisco also infused collaboration in their curriculum and teacher development. In 2001, PEP responded to students' demands for a Filipina/o American Studies course and designed a teaching pipeline in order to recruit more K-12 Filipina/o American teachers and scholars. PEP courses are offered to students from kindergarten to college and teachers are trained in *barangay pedagogy* (Tintiangco-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, et al., 2010). Inspired by pre-colonial, egalitarian, and kinship-based *balangays* or sailboat communities, PEP *barangays*[7] embody the communal nature of decolonization in the form of small teaching and learning communities, where teachers and students work collectively to explicitly name schooling as a site of colonialism (both in the Philippines and in the United States) and imagine ways to address colonial mentality (Halagao, 2004; Strobel, 2001; Tintiangco-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, et al., 2010). In this process, PEP teachers and students simultaneously counter individualist and colonial values from Spanish and American colonization (Lawsin, 1998). PEP *barangays* struggle and grow together and are utilized to create teaching teams and learning communities within the classroom. Throughout the year, PEP teachers and students engage in intergenerational barangays at seven different school sites that come together at the end of the year for a critical performance showcasing the Filipina/o American counternarratives and collective knowledge students produce in their classrooms (Tintiangco-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, Desai, Sabac, & Torres, 2016).

Collaboration is a necessary component for successful high school Ethnic Studies implementation (Allender & Berta-Avila, 2016; Cytrynbaum, 2010; de los Ríos & Ochoa, 2012;

[7] While modern day *barangays* exist today in the Philippines, PEP *barangays* signal how they create small learning communities among teachers and students. All PEP teachers teach in teams (their teaching *barangay*) and PEP students are assigned to *barangays* for various projects.

Tintiangco-Cubales, Daus-Magbual, et al., 2010). While collective work with community and university partners was crucial, collaboration among teachers within the same district also strengthened district-wide approaches to implementing Ethnic Studies curriculum. For instance, in Oakland Unified School District, teachers engaged in professional development that brought community organizations to support teachers and students. One aspect of their work that truly made teaching Ethnic Studies curricula cohesive across the district was defining their version of the discipline through a reflective process. Within their professional development, they co-authored their understanding of the course:

> Ethnic Studies is a content and pedagogy that humanizes and empowers all people by honoring histories and cultures of historically marginalized groups, by employing multiple disciplines and perspectives to critically analyze systems of oppression, and by promoting action in solidarity with others to transform students' lives and communities. (Choi et al., 2016, p. 5).

A collective definition of Ethnic Studies for the district-wide program was key to helping teachers in Oakland stay accountable to each other through their praxis.

The epistemologies revealed within the literature feature how Ethnic Studies curricula alter how students view their role as producers of knowledge. Ethnic Studies courses have the potential for antiracist and anticolonial interventions, uncovering the coloniality of power within knowledge production in the educative process (Leonardo and Sacramento, in press). Tension and pain exist in processes of unlearning colonial narratives, therefore teachers are cognizant of the healing spaces that are necessary to engage in Ethnic Studies pedagogy. For instance, Duenas, Lopez, & Lopez (2016) discuss their experience infusing Critical Ethnic Studies frameworks in their curricula in Los Angeles and the role that Restorative Justice plays in their praxis. They collaborated with their Restorative Justice coordinator for facilitation training in Courageous Conversations (Singleton, 2014) to build community circles of empathy and healing with their students. They also introduce students to critical third spaces, community spaces and organizations, and assign students to attend at least two cultural/community events in the school year. Next, I review literature that showcases the process of combining Ethnic Studies knowledge with action.

**Ethnic Studies Praxis**

As Ethnic Studies students unlearn Western ways of knowing and adopt decolonial epistemologies, knowledge becomes relational and applicable to lived experiences. Ethnic Studies "knowledge…is a verb…[no longer] rooted in things on the pages of a book or possessions…Knowledge from an Indigenous perspective is active. For those who have knowledge, they must be vigorous in their acquisition and use of it" (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009, p. 11). Here, an underlying intent of Ethnic Studies knowledge is the notion of praxis, a synthesis of theory, action, and reflection, to address the oppression revealed within the Ethnic Studies curriculum (cf. Freire, 1970).

> Students...learn that the most powerful tool for generating change is knowledge...they realize that seeing oppression is not enough to access the agency needed for liberation.

> They must engage a process of praxis to address this oppression, which involves the acquisition of knowledge through reflection and its application to foster change. (Cammarota, 2016, p. 244)

Knowledge production in the Ethnic Studies classrooms thus engages students' minds, bodies, and spirits in practices that decolonize their ways of knowing, thinking, and being. Students become co-producers and co-constructors of Ethnic Studies knowledge to recover epistemologies that have been neglected in dominant narratives, sometimes lost and in need of recovery (Jocson, 2008). Unlike classes that regard students as merely vessels for depositing knowledge (Freire, 1970), Ethnic Studies courses place value on students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992), legitimizing student and familial wisdom. This practice requires students to take active roles in conducting research and producing new knowledge.

The act of writing and telling counternarratives propels students into roles where they are active participants in writing history, rather than passive subjects of Western knowledge, ultimately transforming one's relationship to the world. Ethnic Studies curricula equip students with skills to examine social problems and in some iterations students are offered space to imagine and practice ways to address issues in their own lives (for example see de los Rios, 2019 and Romero & Cammarota, 2019), which differs from other disciplinary approaches to social issues. Sanchez (2016) articulates how the discipline of Ethnic Studies might differ from other areas of study because of a unique response:

> Institutional racism remains pervasive…like a virus that hides in the body of the collective…The antidote to this begins with the knowledge that it exists…we must understand how the virus works. Sociology is one of those fields that studies the virus, if you will. It informs us how the virus works, how to look for it, and its effect on its victims. But Ethnic Studies goes further than that. Ethnic Studies is more than an interdisciplinary field of study, it is a mandate for informed social action. (Sanchez, 2016, p. 157)

Within Ethnic Studies courses, students investigate the issues that matter most to their current lived realities and design plans to address their community's needs. In some Ethnic Studies curricula, knowledge becomes actionable, where teachers and students emphasize the significance of bridging what they learn with work towards community and self-determination (Leonardo and Sacramento, in press). In successful Ethnic Studies classrooms, teachers work with focal ethnic communities to prepare students to address issues in their schools and communities (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

Effective Ethnic Studies teachers employ community responsive pedagogy, which enables students to engage in Ethnic Studies praxis. Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2015) remind us that developing critical consciousness and directly serving communities are essential for a community responsive Ethnic Studies pedagogy. For instance, some teachers use Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as a tool to in their Ethnic Studies classes. YPAR engages students in collective processes to investigate issues within their schools and communities, with the objective of taking action to make positive social change in their lives (Akom, 2011; Cammarota & Romero, 2011; Romero et al., 2008). In the introduction to the anthology *Revolutionizing Education*, Cammarota and Fine (2008) explain that in YPAR,

> young people learn through research about complex power relations, histories of struggle, and the consequences of oppression. They begin to re-vision and denaturalize the realities of their social worlds and then undertake forms of collective challenge based on the knowledge garnered through their critical inquiries…YPAR teaches young people that conditions of injustice are produced, not natural; are designed to privilege and oppress; but are ultimately challengable and thus changeable. (p. 2)

YPAR within the Ethnic Studies classroom equip students with tools to respond to the systems of oppression they learn in class. Duenas, Lopez, & Lopez (2016) include YPAR as a culminating project for their "Boyle Heights and Me" course in Los Angeles, where students are able to present their research at the Eastside Stories annual conference. As students become critical action researchers through YPAR, they also develop a positive identity and become critically conscious about their own lived experience and develop empathy for others who are struggling (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). The YPAR project gives students the opportunity to put their new Ethnic Studies epistemologies into practice, but also connect to the neighborhoods. Bautista, Martinez, and O'Brien (2016) found that "YPAR with an Ethnic Studies lens can be situated within the processes of (1) developing critical consciousness, (2) fostering agency, and (3) moving toward collective action" (p. 102). Through YPAR, students bring Ethnic Studies knowledge to their communities in the form of research and action.

In some cases, student action is in the form of performance. Bridging YPAR and Augusto Boal's (1979) *Theater of the Oppressed*, PEP students apply their research findings to an end of the year Community Show through critical performance pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016). The YPAR findings for the 2014-2015 school year included

1. How drugs affect students in school
2. Violence in the community
3. How school environment affects student engagement
4. Mental health among elementary school students (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016, p. 1321)

Students from kindergarten to college use the community show as a vehicle to collaborate with one another while "interpreting their research through poetry, song, dance, and script writing" (p. 1320). PEP researchers argue that through critical performance pedagogy students and teachers developed their critical consciousness by engaging in transformative agency and collective action as they prepared for their cultural production.

For some students, the critical analytic tools they learned through YPAR came in handy to advocate for their Ethnic Studies classes. For instance, in 2010, students and allies responded to the Arizona Ethnic Studies ban by organizing a group to advocate for Ethnic Studies at school board meetings and press conferences (Cammarota, 2016). In another example, the Ethnic Studies Now Sacramento coalition responded to student demands for Ethnic Studies courses by partnering with the Student Advisory Council to develop and advocate for Ethnic Studies policy within Sacramento City Unified School District in 2015. As a collective, they "draft[ed] a resolution explicitly naming The Sacramento State University Ethnic Studies Teacher Credential Consortium as the curriculum writer and sole provider of professional development for the

Ethnic Studies class" (Allender & Berta-Avila, 2016, p. 7). The Consortium evolved as a partnership between Sacramento State's Ethnic Studies and Teacher Credentialing departments, which came together as a systemwide vision across California State Universities. Collaboration was crucial for passing the resolution as well as for developing a curriculum. Members of the Consortium authored Sacramento City Unified's Ethnic Studies curriculum and provided professional development for teachers. Similar school-university partnerships have occurred throughout the state to support high school Ethnic Studies curriculum development. San Francisco State University's College of Ethnic Studies provides San Francisco Unified Ethnic Studies students with up to six units of college credit and have developed a post-baccalaureate certification program in Ethnic Studies content knowledge. California State University, Northridge offers "an Ethnic Studies waiver for the Social Science Subject Matter Competency requirement for a teaching credential" (Allender & Berta-Avila, 2016, p. 7).

## Implications for Research

Within this chapter, I showcase the literature on high school Ethnic Studies research, particularly discussing teacher preparation, Ethnic Studies epistemologies, and Ethnic Studies praxis. High school Ethnic Studies courses that have resulted in students' academic and social improvement include curricula that offer culturally relevant approaches. While not all courses offer students insight into critical or action-oriented perspectives, most provide students with counternarratives and viewpoints that differ from traditional ways of knowing. As a result, students have developed a better understanding of people and communities outside of their own ethnic and racial groups. Additionally, variations of high school Ethnic Studies courses highlight collective work and emphasize legacies of social movements. For many courses with an action agenda, students learn critical inquiry through YPAR.

As schools, districts, and states approve educational policy that support the institutionalization of Ethnic Studies curricula and programs, how might teacher professional development shift to prepare educators new to the discipline to ensure that core tenets of Ethnic Studies are incorporated in the content and pedagogy? What epistemologies will inform teachers and students Ethnic Studies praxis in these new courses? How might teachers engage students in responding to the issues they identify in their Ethnic Studies classrooms? More research is needed to examine the re-emergence of Ethnic Studies in the 21st century. The main question that drives the project at hand: How have teachers responded to the challenges of developing and implementing high school Ethnic Studies? In the next chapter, I present my methods for examining one case study of ninth grade Ethnic Studies development and implementation in one school district.

## CHAPTER THREE
## Methodology

Once all members of the Ethnic Studies Collaborative[8] arrived at the local university, Ms. Davis led her fellow teachers outside to begin the retreat with an energizer. She instructed us to stand in a line facing the same direction towards a shrub-lined fence and directed us in an activity called "Race to the Finish Line." I was familiar with this privilege walk having used this activity in my own classroom, although this was the first time I actually engaged in stepping forward and back alongside the participants. Ms. Davis prepared this activity to reflect key concepts from the assigned readings for the retreat, Peggy McIntosh's famed article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" and Andrea Smith's "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy." She read statements describing life experiences as they related to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability:

> *Step forward if your family vacationed in different parts of the world/country.*
> *Step backward if you often hear "cat calls" when walking down the street.*
> *Step forward if you can legally marry the person you love.*

The fence represented a "finish-line" for the high school Ethnic Studies teachers participating in the retreat. As the exercise progressed, I found myself stepping further and further back. I observed the positions of the other teachers and it was clear that relations of power were at play and informed our various lived realities. Those closest to the finish line were white, able-bodied men and I was furthest away. To my surprise, I did not realize that I would be so far behind.

As an educated, woman of color who grew up in a working class, immigrant family, my participation in this exercise revealed my epistemological stance to the participants, where researcher and participant reflexivity played a key role in the data collection process. Throughout my time in the field, I paid particular attention to my emotional responses to discern how my Pinayist[9] epistemology informed my perceptions and understandings of my observations. I also noted how participants reflected on their own roles as Ethnic Studies teachers and perceived me as a researcher of their work. In my dissertation project, I consider the "reflexive turn" that has taken place among critical ethnographic studies, where uncovering researcher epistemology is essential to establishing the legitimacy of an inquiry (Carspecken, 1996; Foley, 2002; Hartsock, 1983; Villenas, 1996). For this project, reflexivity was not only essential to revealing researcher standpoint but is also an integral part of the methods that I employed as a participant observer.

In this section, I discuss the ways that I used critical ethnography to reveal the emergence of a critical collective consciousness within Ethnic Studies participants in one school district. In the following, I will explain the rationale for choosing my focal site. Next, I introduce the participants in the study and discuss the process by which I decided on focal teachers. Then, I

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[8] To respect the confidentiality of the research participants, pseudonyms are given to all teachers, districts, and schools.

[9] "Pinay" (pronounced *pē-nahy* or *pee-nigh*) is a term that was first used to refer to Filipinas living or born in the United States in the 1920s (see Mabalon, 2013). "Pinayist" is a practitioner of Pinayism, a praxis connecting the global, local, and personal issues and narratives of Pinay struggle, service, and strength (see Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005; Tintiangco-Cubales & Sacramento, 2009)

discuss my methods of data collection and analysis. Critical ethnography sees researcher epistemological stance as a constitutive component of the research process (Carspecken, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). I conclude this chapter with my epistemology as ethnographer and describe my entrée to this research project, particularly how I operationalized my epistemology within this critical ethnographic study.

## Description of Focal Site: California Public Schools

While Ethnic Studies programs can be found nationwide, California is a unique site to study the emergence of Ethnic Studies high school programs because an historical and material legacy exists within the state that includes various college and community resources that resulted from the 1960s movements. These resources include Ethnic Studies programs and departments throughout the state's universities and community colleges, as well as organizations serving local communities of color, such as Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund in Los Angeles and Chinese for Affirmative Action in San Francisco. Additionally, high school Ethnic Studies courses have existed in the state for more than forty years (Ginwright, 2004). California is one of the leading states in the nation pushing for the institutionalization of Ethnic Studies curricula at the high school level, which makes it a prime location to examine the development of such a program (Buenavista, 2016). This ethnographic case study examines the emergence of comparative Ethnic Studies in one California school district, where approximately eighty-five percent of enrollment included students of color. In recent years, the district's Board of Education institutionally supported comparative Ethnic Studies, including the expansion of the program to all high schools. In this section, I describe the district further, highlight the history of Ethnic Studies, and describe the various school sites where my study takes place.

**Description of district.** Esperanza Unified School District serves over 40,000 students in any given year, and is governed by an elected Board of Education. There are over sixty elementary and K-8 schools, over ten middle schools, over ten senior high schools (including two continuation schools and an independent study school), over twenty-five state-funded preschool sites, and over five active charter schools authorized by the district. Thirty-six percent of students in the district are Asian, twenty-seven percent identified as Latino, ten percent identified as Black or African American, five percent identified as Filipino, less than two percent identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, less than one percent identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, three percent identified as mixed race and thirteen percent identified as white (see Table 1).

Table 1: Students by Race/Ethnicity, District

| Race/Ethnicity | District Enrollment | Percent of District Total |
|---|---|---|
| Asian | 20,874 | 36.2 |
| Latino | 15,663 | 27.2 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Black/African American | 5,585 | 9.7 |
| White | 7,431 | 12.9 |
| Filipino | 2,714 | 4.7 |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 896 | 1.6 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 269 | 0.5 |
| Two or More Races | 1,715 | 3.0 |
| None reported | 2,473 | 4.3 |

Source: Ed-Data, Education Data Partnership, Retrieved October 3, 2014

**Ethnic Studies in Esperanza Unified.** Ethnic Studies courses have existed within the district since the 1990s, however formal institutionalization of the course only occurred within the last twenty years. In 2007-2008, social science teachers within Esperanza Unified worked with faculty from the local university to develop a comparative Ethnic Studies framework. In the summer of 2008, this group worked with Ethnic Studies curriculum consultants to develop an 8-unit Ethnic Studies curriculum for high school students. Teachers from four schools, implemented the curriculum between 2008-2010, while community organizations developed a campaign to advocate for Ethnic Studies in Esperanza high schools.

In 2010, Esperanza Board of Education unanimously voted to pass a resolution to institutionalize Ethnic Studies. The district resolved that they would provide funds to pilot ten sections of the ninth-grade course at high schools throughout the district. In the 2010-2011 school year, five high schools each provided two sections of Ethnic Studies. In addition, the local university's Ethnic Studies faculty expressed commitment to a university-district partnership to support college access and give students who take Ethnic Studies in Esperanza Unified up to six units of college credit. Ethnic Studies faculty also committed to providing training and assistance to teachers at no cost to offset Esperanza Unified's spending on professional development for Ethnic Studies teachers.

**Focal school sites.** At the time of the study, thirteen high schools in the district offered an Ethnic Studies course option. I observed Ethnic Studies sections at six high schools during the 2015-2016 school year: Archville High School, Ascension High School, Bridgeway High School, Oceanview High School, Skyview High School, and Tribute High School (all pseudonyms). These school sites were the only schools offering a ninth grade Ethnic Studies option in the district.

Table 2: High Schools offering Ethnic Studies to ninth graders, Teachers, Course Description

| Focal School | Focal Teacher | ES courses |
|---|---|---|
| Archville | Ms. Martinez | Parkview High School was a pilot school and offered the courses after the 2010 resolution. Parkview provides Ethnic Studies courses at the ninth grade and twelfth grade level. They have multiple teachers teaching the course and have developed a "model" program within the district according to the Ethnic Studies Teacher on Special Assignment |
| Ascension | Mr. Wilson | Ascension High School was a pilot school and offered two sections after the 2010 resolution. Ascension provides a ninth grade Ethnic Studies course. While they are part of the initial pilot in 2010, the teacher teaching the course for the 2015-2016 school year is in his first year teaching the course. |
| Bridgeway | Mr. Lee | Bridgeway High School was a pilot school and offered two sections after the 2010 resolution. Bridgeway provides two ninth grade Ethnic Studies sections. |
| Oceanview | Mr. Thomas | 2015-2016 was the first school year that Oceanview High School offered an Ethnic Studies section. This is also Mr. Thomas' first year teacher at the school. He previously taught in other schools within the district. |
| Skyview | Mr. Rodriguez | Skyview High School offers Ethnic Studies to all ninth graders within the school. Mr. Rodriguez teachers three sections and was in his third year teaching the course. |
| Tribute | Ms. Kim | 2015-2016 was the first year that Tribute High School offered Ethnic Studies to ninth graders. Ms. Kim is a language teacher that was assigned to teach the course. |

At the district-wide level, approximately 85 percent of students are students of color. Table 2 shows the disaggregated data of students by race/ethnicity by school sites, which demonstrates the variance in student racial demographics. Over ninety percent of students are students of color at four of the six focal school sites. There is a total of 57,620 students in the district. 61.1 percent of students in the district, 74.3 percent of students at Archville High, 68.8 percent of students at

Ascension High, 59.8 percent at Bridgeway High, 57.3 percent at Skyview, 73.2 percent at Oceanview, and 43.1 percent at Tribute High qualify for free/reduced meal plans. 28.0 percent of students in the district, 1.7 percent at Tribute High, 9.7 percent of students at Skyview, 15.2 percent at Ascension High, 14.6 percent at Bridgeway High, 19.2 percent at Oceanview, and 37.8 percent at Archville High are English Learners (ELs). Compared to the entire district, the students at Archville, Ascension, and Oceanview have higher percentages of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch. Archville High has a higher percentage of students who are English learners, where English was not their first language.

Table 3: Students by Race/Ethnicity, School

| Race/Ethnicity | Ascension High % of Enrollment | Skyview High % of Enrollment | Bridgeway High % of Enrollment | Archville High % of Enrollment | Tribute High % of Enrollment | Oceanview High % of Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asian | 39.1 | 21.7 | 62.3 | 14.5 | 56.7 | 62.9 |
| Latino | 32.9 | 39 | 14.9 | 50.3 | 9.9 | 16.8 |
| Black/African American | 6.8 | 12.6 | 4.1 | 15.4 | 1.9 | 5 |
| White | 4.1 | 13.5 | 8.4 | 10.6 | 15.2 | 4.1 |
| Filipino | 10.6 | 6.3 | 4.4 | 3.4 | 7.9 | 4.9 |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 2.7 | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.7 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 0.3 | 0.9 | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Two or More Races | 2.8 | 2.8 | 1.2 | 1 | 2.1 | 0.7 |
| None reported | 2.5 | 2.5 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 5.1 | 2.9 |

Source: Ed-Data, Education Data Partnership, Retrieved February 9, 2018

**Ethnic Studies Collaborative.** The Ethnic Studies Collaborative (the Collaborative) is comprised of social science teachers in one school district who met weekly with community partners to engage in professional development focused on building the district's Ethnic Studies program. Located in a metropolitan area in California, the Collaborative came together in 2007 to define Ethnic Studies and contextualize the curriculum for a ninth-grade Ethnic Studies course situated within social sciences. Being one of the largest school districts in its state with a student

of color population over 80%, the school board began institutionalizing Ethnic Studies in 2007-2008[10]. The district sought consultation from Dr. Enriquez, an associate professor in Ethnic Studies. Dr. Enriquez facilitated the Collaborative's professional development during the initial stages of the project, which included processes to define the district's Ethnic Studies framework and build curriculum. She led teachers in studying the history of establishing Ethnic Studies as an academic discipline, which emerged in the 1960s from a movement towards curricular inclusion that called for the humanization of third world people, highlighting the experiences, counternarratives, knowledge, and contributions of communities of color (Acuña, 1996; Hu-Dehart, 2004; Moraga, 2000; Umemoto, 1989; Woo, 1989; Yang, 2000).

The Collaborative studied current Ethnic Studies frameworks drawing from various texts including the anthology, *Color-Line to Borderlands: The Matrix of American Ethnic Studies*, edited by Johnnella E. Butler (2001). They learned about the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), a coalition of student organizations at San Francisco State College and the University of California, Berkeley. The TWLF held strikes towards the end of the 1960s protesting the stagnant and Eurocentric curriculum within the university, the unfair treatment of faculty of color, and the decrease in student of color admissions. As a result of the strikes, a College of Ethnic Studies was established at San Francisco State College and a Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. The Collaborative recognized that Ethnic Studies, as an academic discipline that examined the social, cultural, political, and economic experiences and articulations of various racial and ethnic groups, also featured the struggle and survival stories of historically disenfranchised groups, specifically "to chronicle their protest and resistance and to establish alternative values, visions, cultures and institutions" (Hu-Dehart, 1993, p. 52). Teachers discussed the approaches and arguments within the field of Ethnic Studies and used these perspectives to inform their vision, mission, and learning goals as part of the district's Ethnic Studies framework. In their strategic plan, the Collaborative defined their vision for Ethnic Studies as a:

> Course aimed to educate students to be politically, socially, and economically conscious about their personal connections to local and global histories. By studying the histories of race, ethnicity, and culture students will cultivate respect and empathy for individuals and solidarity with groups of people locally, nationally, and globally so as to foster active participation, community building, and ultimately to participate and strengthen a democratic society. Honoring the historical legacy of social movements and mass struggles against injustice including the establishment of Ethnic Studies programs in public schools and university curricula, this course aims to provide an emancipatory education that will inspire students to critically engage in self-determination and seek social justice for all.

They also reviewed current high school Ethnic Studies curricula and assessed the needs of ninth graders within their district as they designed the program.

[10] Various Ethnic Studies courses have been offered in the district since the 1990s. In 2007, the school board initiated the development of an Ethnic Studies framework, which led to building a district-wide course.

The Collaborative chose to focus on a ninth grade course to address issues of personal identity and prevent school drop out as students transitioned into high school. At the time, high school students within the district were not required to take social science in their first year. Curriculum designers imagined that if students took Ethnic Studies in the ninth grade, the critical perspectives they acquired could carry over to other coursework. In the Summer of 2008, the Collaborative worked with curriculum consultants to design the course. I was one of the curriculum consultants hired to co-author lesson plans. The Collaborative met weekly during the next two years to implement the curriculum in at least one Ethnic Studies elective section at their high school sites. These teachers included Mr. Cruz, Mr. Lee, and Ms. Martinez, all of whom were members of the Collaborative at the time of this study. Mr. Jones, a credentialed social science teacher in the district who was part of the framework building process, was another member of the Collaborative who provided curricular and administrative support. The Collaborative evaluated and modified the curriculum throughout their weekly meetings during 2008-2010[11], incorporating feedback and reflections from students and teachers involved with the course.

Early in 2010, the school board unanimously voted to support the implementation of the Ethnic Studies curriculum more widely throughout the district. During 2010-2011, five high schools offered at least two sections of Ethnic Studies, housed in social science departments. The school district matched funding for one Ethnic Studies section as well as provided funding to support teachers' continued professional development. Participating in the Collaborative was voluntary, though participants who attended meetings received two paid hours weekly. Mr. Smith, Mr. Miller, Ms. Davis, and Mr. Estrada joined the Collaborative as part of the 2010 district policy implementation. Teachers in the Collaborative also received release time each semester to participate in a day-long retreat. While Dr. Enriquez continued working with teachers, facilitation of Collaborative meetings was a collaborative effort. Collaborative meetings and retreats provided a space for writing curriculum, strategic planning, community building, and reflecting on the development of the course.

While the Collaborative was institutionally supported during the 2010-2014 pilot, the 2014-2015 school year was the first in which funding was not allocated for professional development. The Collaborative campaigned for an expansion of Ethnic Studies in Fall 2014, where the school board unanimously voted to offer Ethnic Studies courses at every high school. I chose to include the Collaborative within my study to explicate the processes of curriculum building and teacher professional development within the district's Ethnic Studies project.

**Data Collection**

Data collected for this study took place from 2012 to 2016 and included classroom observations at six high schools in the district, participant observations within the Collaborative meetings, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and analysis of curriculum and teacher administered surveys. Curriculum is stored within a Google Drive, which was used to collect and share curricular materials among the Ethnic Studies Collaborative. All teachers have access to

[11] The 2008 curriculum was organized with ethnic-specific units that focused on African American Studies, Raza/Latinx Studies, Asian American Studies, Native American Studies, etc. After two years, the Collaborative shifted to a comparative Ethnic Studies approach.

the cloud-based curriculum making it easy to write and share lesson plans with one another. The teacher meetings, cloud-based curriculum, and classrooms were communal spaces for teaching and learning. As a participant observer of the Collaborative, I familiarized myself with the curriculum development process and professional development of teachers. Participants in the study included teachers, student teachers, and consultants who helped develop the conceptual framework and curriculum of the course. In the classroom, I examined how the teachers implemented the district-wide lesson plans and how students interact with content. I also paid attention to the variation of the curriculum among the different school sites. The students enrolled in the comparative Ethnic Studies courses were ninth graders, with the exception of one senior in the Tribute High Ethnic Studies class.

Data collection in the Collaborative began in January 2012 and continued to July 2016. I observed six schools simultaneously during the 2015-2016 school year. Data analysis included inductive coding to produce grounded theory (Charmaz, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Participant observation.** I attended the Collaborative's weekly professional development meetings and retreats, which included over 200 hours of data collection through participant observation. I observed interactions among Ethnic Studies teachers as they wrote curriculum and engaged in professional development meetings and retreats. Professional development meetings and retreats provided teachers with a space for curriculum building, strategic planning, and connecting with community partners. The space also allowed teachers the opportunity to engage in political education that enhanced their ideological understanding of the content they were teaching. Retreat workshops focused on topics such as restorative justice, white supremacy, hegemony, critical pedagogy, humanization, and philosophies on discipline.

My role in the Ethnic Studies Collaborative varied as I was "never simply a researcher" (Schram, 2006, p. 127). I could not simply sit and observe, I also engaged in the dialogue during Collaborative meetings. As a member of the Collaborative, I facilitated workshops on curricular content and political education, participated in check-ins at the beginning of the meetings, and co-authored several lessons focused on race, autoethnographies, and students' action research projects. For example, in a meeting focused on political education, I presented my research that places the district's comparative Ethnic Studies project in a broader context. In this political education, I asked teacher participants to share their own stories with Ethnic Studies as students and discussed the history of Ethnic Studies and its current context on statewide and national levels. Developing trusting relationships with teachers was key to this project. For instance, during fall semester 2014 I was invited as a guest speaker to share my Ethnic Studies experience and research with some of the classes at Archville High School as a way to get to know the new teachers and students. My participation as a Collaborative member and my contributions in the classroom are ways to demonstrate reciprocity at my research site (Kovach, 2010; L. T. Smith, 2012).

After each meeting and classroom observation, I highlighted the interactions between teachers, students, and the Ethnic Studies curriculum in my field notes, paying particular attention to the ways that race and whiteness were discussed as it relates to systems of oppression. This process has been defined as inscription, or the written recording of the social events that occur during ethnographic field visits (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Geertz, 1973). During inscription, I considered my former experience as a high school Ethnic Studies teacher and my content expertise in comparative Ethnic Studies. I viewed these observations as

significant contributions to the data I collect, as ethnographers are crucial elements of data and data collection (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000, p. 166). My epistemological framework of differential consciousness also informed the way I understand, analyze, and interpret the data; thus I take my experience as a former student and teacher of Ethnic Studies quite seriously because my experience informed the lens I utilized to examine the meetings and classroom interactions. By explicitly naming my bias, I increased the legitimacy of my research. For Pillow (2003), using reflexivity in ethnographic studies "involv[es] an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analysis of our research" (p. 178). For example, Ethnic Studies had a large impact on my own academic pursuits, my sense of agency, and my ability to see myself as human because I began to see my history and culture represented within the curriculum I learned. Ethnic studies also inspired my interest in telling the often neglected narratives of historically marginalized communities, which informed my work and research with community organizations and educational institutions. Therefore, I brought an assumption that Ethnic Studies can be a liberatory tool, which is not the same as an a priori guarantee. I was critical of this perspective and understand that this may not be particularly true for all people.

**Interviews.** Interview respondents are the experts and hold the information researchers need in order to answer our research question or address the problem we attempt to resolve (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). They encourage scholars to relinquish the skills of critical debate that we learn in the seminar space in order to provide a safe and humanizing space for respondents to feel comfortable in their sharing of their lived experiences. In my study, I sought expert perspectives on the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies through informal, semi-structured interviews from those who interact with the curriculum on a daily basis - Ethnic Studies teachers. My interview procedure included explaining to teachers that the research project was designed to learn more about the teachers' experience with comparative Ethnic Studies courses. Upon agreeing voluntarily to participate, each interviewee was informed that they would have the opportunity to ask questions about the research project and asked to give their consent orally. They were then asked questions regarding the learning and teaching of Ethnic Studies (See Appendix 1 for Interview Guide). Each interview lasted forty-five minutes to two hours and was conducted in a place of the participant's choosing, mostly teachers' classrooms or student centers at the various high school sites. All interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder and transcribed.

**Classroom observations.** In 2014, the school board passed a resolution to expand Ethnic Studies course offerings to all high schools within the district. The 2015-2016 school year was the first year of implementation of this resolution, where fourteen high schools offered at least one Ethnic Studies section. I met with district administration to determine their research needs. They wanted to understand the variation in implementation of Ethnic Studies across the school sites. They were particularly interested in the ninth grade Ethnic Studies course. In order for me to gain access to the classrooms, they requested that I observe implementation in all schools offering the ninth grade Ethnic Studies option. I eventually observed Ethnic Studies courses at six high school sites. As soon as my study was approved by the district, I contacted the principals at the six high schools to introduce my study and ask for permission to conduct observations on their school sites. I contacted ninth grade Ethnic Studies teachers to set up a day and time for an

interview with them and scheduled a day and time for me to introduce my study to students in their classroom. These teachers included Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Wilson, Ms. Kim, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Lee, and Mr. Thomas. Teachers played a crucial role in collecting parent consent and student assent forms for my study.

I began classroom observations in January 2016, where I observed each site once a week. My ethnographer toolkit included a livescribe smartpen and notebook, a digital audio pen and smart paper that allowed me to sync my field notes with audio recordings of the classroom sessions. For the classrooms that did not allow audio recording, I wrote jottings within my notebook, which were converted into descriptive field notes after each class meeting (Emerson et al., 1995). Throughout the semester, I made my way driving through the hills and valleys of the district, observing Ethnic Studies teachers and students every day. In total, I conducted 145 hours of classroom observation among the six high school sites.

**Ethnographer Positionality**

My experience as a former student and teacher of Ethnic Studies and curriculum consultant to Esperanza Unified informs my access into my field site. During my K-12 experience, I was not introduced to Ethnic Studies through schooling. A daughter of immigrants from the Philippines, I struggled to maintain my cultural and ethnic identity in U. S. schools. As a teenager, I found refuge in the Youth and Community Outreach Program (YCOP), based out of the University of California, Riverside's (UCR) Asian and Pacific Student Programs, where I developed my initial understanding and consciousness of power, race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and inequality as a community-based youth researcher. Recruiting Asian American youth, particularly from Vietnamese and Filipinx communities, YCOP gathered high school students on Saturday mornings to participate in Ethnic Studies infused discussions on how the intersections race, class, gender, sexuality, power, and oppression impact our communities. This program validated my experiences as a young Filipina growing up in the United States and enabled me to situate my experience in a broader social context.

As an undergraduate and master's student, I realized the significance of bridging the university with the community through Ethnic Studies. I was a YCOP volunteer and coordinator for four years as an undergraduate student and was responsible for recruiting and training student volunteers. Simultaneously, I enrolled in my first Ethnic Studies course. I saw a direct connection between what I learned in the Ethnic Studies college classroom and my community work serving Asian American youth. These experiences informed my decision to major in Ethnic Studies and later pursue a master's degree in Asian American Studies. My work in various youth programs informed my scholarly trajectory and my experience as an undergraduate student in Ethnic Studies led me to put my research into practice as a high school teacher in Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP), a service-learning program that offers K-college experience in building Filipinx American Studies curriculum and pedagogy. I later became a program and curriculum coordinator in PEP, where our praxis included conceptualizing and implementing transformative, decolonial pedagogy and curriculum. PEP provided a clear example of what K-12 Ethnic Studies in the Filipinx American context, which informed my positionality in the field.

My experience as a former Ethnic Studies student/teacher and PEP program coordinator positioned me as an expert within the Collaborative. In 2008, I was recruited as one of five Ethnic Studies curriculum consultants hired by the district to further develop the curriculum with

the social science teacher team. My main charge was to work with two teachers to co-author a unit on service learning that included a socially engaged neighborhood research project. These experiences led me to bring a participatory role to my position as a researcher. While my formal relationship as a consultant to the district culminated in 2008, I participated in various events like the mobilization to support an institutionalized Ethnic Studies pilot program in the district in 2010, as mentioned in chapter one. My involvement with the project has granted me insight into the purpose, goals, and trajectory of the ninth grade comparative Ethnic Studies intervention. Moreover, my initial exposure has allowed me to establish rapport with Ethnic Studies teachers, which granted me access to their classrooms for this study.

My continued investment in the Ethnic Studies intervention has led me to be a participant in this study. I recognize that I am not merely a "fly on the wall" but rather my presence impacts, influences, and disrupts the space (Emerson et al., 1995). As a first year Ph.D. student in education in 2010, I found that my research interests aligned with my former work in developing and teaching Ethnic Studies at the high school level. As I later collected data for this project, I was mindful that my contributions to the Ethnic Studies program also affected my research findings. For example, in the first year of my doctoral program, the ninth grade course was in its first year of its pilot. I wanted to increase my understanding of the development process so I attended curriculum building meetings with the Ethnic Studies teachers, many of whom I met in the summer of 2008. I expressed my interest in studying the ninth grade Ethnic Studies program and teachers welcomed my eagerness to assist in developing and writing curriculum, as part of reciprocity in research (Kovach, 2010; L. T. Smith, 2012). As a participant in the development of the curriculum I studied, I am aware of my dual role as an insider and outsider (Collins, 2000; Rios, 2011), what Villenas (1996) calls the colonizer/colonized ethnographer. This unique subjectivity recognizes that I am simultaneously colonized as a "native" within the community I am researching and the colonizer as my position within a research institution grants me certain privileges when my community becomes my object of study. I am an "insider" in that I participated in writing the Ethnic Studies curriculum. However, I am also an outsider because I am not teaching any sections and I am a researcher studying teacher and student participants' engagement with the curriculum.

My Pinay identity, former experience as a high school Filipinx American Studies teacher, and my participation in writing the curriculum for the Esperanza Unified in 2008 provided some authority in my role as a participant observer within the Collaborative, especially when new teachers joined the Collaborative. I was often asked to lead professional development workshops or provide resources for a particular topic. In some cases, I was invisible. I was furthest behind in the activity described at the beginning of this chapter. From my positionality, I was able to see every teacher's move as they stepped forward or back. However, my steps backward may have gone unnoticed. At times, I was perceived as a high school student at various school sites, therefore my role as a researcher may not have always been obvious. Additionally, as a Pinay within the Collaborative, I demonstrated evidence of Filipinx and Asian American participation within the movement for K-12 Ethnic Studies and social justice issues more generally. In his interview, Mr. Thomas shared,

> Filipino folks are down with history as strong as anybody…like wow, you're really engaged in real social change here…There are some other groups that are just as down and deep in this work, right? I used to think it was just Black folks. I didn't have that idea

> that there are other folks that are just as deep and strong and real…trying to shape the world. I taught for thirteen years…I did not see that…I kid you not.

Mr. Thomas referred to the strong presence of Filipinx Americans within the Ethnic Studies project in the district. His experience teaching a new class and working with Ethnic Studies teachers across Esperanza Unified shifted his view of who worked toward social change. As a researcher, I was curious to learn who was teaching Ethnic Studies and who was engaged in bridging their classrooms with work for social change. I also wanted to know about the perspectives and knowledge valued within the district's Ethnic Studies classroom, which informed my epistemology as a researcher.

**Epistemology of Differential Consciousness**

In this study, I employed an epistemology of differential consciousness, or a performative, tactical subjectivity of maneuvering within, through, beyond, between, and among dominant and oppositional ideologies. Third world feminist theorist, Chela Sandoval (2000), builds upon Althusser's theory of the exploited subject within ideological state apparatuses to define differential consciousness as a way of reading power relations from an oppositional standpoint, or a stance against oppression (Althusser, 1971; C. Sandoval, 2000). A differential consciousness is situational, such that the way it is employed depends upon the relations of power at play. It is differential because it draws from a repertoire of oppositional consciousness, or varying ways of understanding oppression, to respond to a particular form of oppression.

I chose an epistemological framework of differential consciousness to align various theoretical understandings of resistance within a cross-disciplinary lexicon. In other words, I recognized that oppressed groups use different words to name their oppression. This process of naming oppression in multiple forms prohibits intellectual and political coalition (Freire, 1970; C. Sandoval, 2000). An epistemology of differential consciousness within critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996) relies on the researcher's ability to assess the relations of power and choose or adopt the ideological stand that will be best suited to recognize and investigate the oppressive situation. Such an epistemology offered unique insight to capture and examine critical race dialogue and the development of a critical collective consciousness as students and teachers engaged with Ethnic Studies curricula. In the context of a high school project, an epistemology of differential consciousness was fundamental to examining, understanding, and implementing a process of critical race dialogue as participants entered the space with varying experiences with oppression. Situating an epistemology of differential consciousness within a critical ethnographic approach considered the multiple ways participants engage with oppression within a research design that is intended to engage the marginalized in social change (Carspecken, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002).

# CHAPTER FOUR
## Critical Race Dialogue and Ethnic Studies Teachers: Toward Teachers' Critical Collective Consciousness

> Folks are coming from completely different places, one. Two, the development of the [teachers'] critical consciousness is totally uneven. And it's based on where people are coming from…we need to get a thousand miles in a short period of time. And we're here, dealing with some really basic things, which can be frustrating, but in the end we're not going to be able to get to where we want to go unless we deal with these basic things. (Mr. Cruz, 9th grade Ethnic Studies teacher, Ascension High School)

When asked about the challenges of collectively developing a district-wide Ethnic Studies curriculum in California, Mr. Cruz, a Filipino American teacher in his early forties who was in his fourth year of teaching Ethnic Studies at Ascension High, described two distinct obstacles: first, teachers with different understandings of Ethnic Studies were assigned to teach the course; and second, teachers' critical consciousness varied. In an effort to address these obstacles, as well as to provide additional support to one another as they implemented a new Ethnic Studies curriculum across the school district, Mr. Cruz and seven other teachers participated in weekly professional development sessions, which they later claimed as the "Ethnic Studies Collaborative" space.

In this chapter, I draw from participant observation of Ethnic Studies Collaborative (the Collaborative) sessions and semi-structured interviews with seven ninth grade Ethnic Studies teachers to investigate how teachers developed a critical race perspective and the impact of this on their understanding of course content and the pedagogy they employed in their classrooms. I show that as Ethnic Studies teachers became critical of who they are, what they are teaching, whom they are teaching, and how they are teaching, they also became more effective and intentional in their educational role. The collective space was essential in each teacher's process of becoming an Ethnic Studies teacher in the district.

My observations of the Collective sessions in the Spring of 2012 reveal teachers engaged in what I call *critical race dialogue* (CRD). In this chapter, I argue that CRD informed the professional development of Ethnic Studies teachers and played a crucial role in shaping teachers' critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and the pedagogy they employed. Developing a critical race consciousness through the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies changed the way teachers viewed not only Ethnic Studies but education as a whole, as teachers came to see their role and the curriculum as political.

Critical race dialogue builds upon existing critical race theory (CRT) literature in education, which focuses on how to identify and implement strategies to address race and eliminate racism (Castagno, 2012; Knaus, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Martin, 2014; Matias, 2013; Patton & Bondi, 2015). Much of this research concerns social change at the individual level (i.e. ally work or encouraging student voice) or is isolated at the classroom/school-site level, rather than making significant change at institutional and structural levels. This chapter demonstrates the teachers' process to make institutional change through engaging in dialogue that enhanced the development of a counterhegemonic curriculum and led to a reimagining of teacher professional development.

The chapter is organized into three sections. In the first section, I conceptualize *critical race dialogue* by bridging CRT with Freire's notion of dialogue. In the second section, I discuss the origins of the Collaborative, the study participants, and the methods I used to collect data. Lastly, I examine the Collaborative's various processes and teachers' reflections, illuminating the role that critical race dialogue played in shaping teachers' Ethnic Studies professional development. Critical race dialogue laid the groundwork for developing the district's comparative Ethnic Studies curriculum, the teachers' Ethnic Studies pedagogy, and a critical collective consciousness.

**Theorizing Critical Race Dialogue**

Since its debut within educational research over twenty years ago, critical race theory (CRT) has utilized interdisciplinary perspectives and highlighted people of color's counterstories and experiential knowledge to expose the permanence of race and racism in schools (Bell, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT has also helped scholars develop anti-racist perspectives that allow for an examination of how race, racism, and whiteness inform root causes of educational inequity at the institutional level (Gillborn, 2006). Other research illuminates the counterstories of students of color, teachers of color, and faculty of color, which help to reveal the oppressive lived realities and racialized experiences in educational contexts, specifically related to internalized racism, racial profiling, racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue (Franklin, Smith, & Hung, 2014; Orelus, 2013; W. A. Smith, Hung, & Franklin, 2011; Solórzano, 1998; Sue et al., 2007; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

While scholars have successfully adapted CRT frameworks to understand how race and racism function within schools (Yull, Blitz, Thompson, & Murray, 2014), counselor education (Haskins & Singh, 2015), educational leadership (Agosto, Karanxha, & Bellara, 2015; Capper, 2015), and teacher education (Castagno, 2012; Seriki, Brown, & Fasching-Varner, 2015), there is limited literature that discusses the implementation of strategies that aim to eliminate racial inequity and racism in education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Scholars who have outlined various ways critical race praxis and pedagogy can be operationalized recognize that "there is more work to do in order to develop [critical race pedagogy] for educators inside and outside the academy" (Lynn, Jennings, & Hughes, 2013, p. 605). The theoretical task at hand includes articulating approaches that make CRT more accessible to communities outside the privileged academy.

The practice of CRT in education, or critical race praxis, has translated theory into action and reflection, highlighting the liberatory possibilities within schools (Freire, 1970; Lawrence, 1992; Stovall, 2013; Yosso et al., 2004). Specifically, scholars have bridged the tenets of CRT with Paulo Freire's theories of action and reflection (Kohli, 2012; Leonardo, 2005; Lynn, 1999; Parker & Stovall, 2004; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). For instance, Lynn (1999) provided direction for educators working on addressing racism in schools by introducing critical race pedagogy, a concept drawn from the experiences of African American educators who were concerned with "the endemic nature of racism in the United States; the importance of cultural identity; the necessary interaction of race, class, and gender; and the practice of a liberatory pedagogy" (Lynn, 1999, p. 615). Lynn bridged critical race perspective with Freire's notion of critical pedagogy, highlighting the intersections of race, class, and gender, rather than prioritizing one form of oppression over

another. Pedagogy, in this case, is one form of praxis. Among the literature, "dialogue" has been underused and under theorized. One could equally argue that Lynn brought a Freirean perspective into CRT.

Freire (1970) maintains that dialogue is essential to developing one's critical consciousness for the purpose of social change. Engaging in critical dialogue requires a commitment to and encouragement of processes of humanization, which rely heavily on love, faith, trust, humility, and hope (Darder, 2002; Freire, 1970). Critical dialogue engages participants in sharing their lived experiences, reflecting on socio-political conditions that preserve inequity, and developing strategies that combat oppression (Laman, Jewett, Jennings, Wilson, & Souto-Manning, 2012; Salazar, 2013; Souto-Manning, 2006). A critical race approach with dialogue sheds light on the reflective processes necessary to develop a critical race consciousness.

Previous scholarship on race dialogue discusses safety and transformative possibilities when engaging in critical conversations on race. For example, in a study examining the critical interracial dialogue among twelve women of color educators, Kohli (2012) found that race dialogue among women of color improved teachers' understanding and articulations about racial inequality in cross-cultural settings. These conversations served as a catalyst to develop their critical consciousness, which informed their pedagogical praxis. While race dialogue among people of color can be a site of transformation, such an exchange is not absent of structural violence (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Utilizing Fanonian analytics, Leonardo and Porter (2010) argue that although a space of color is a different and sometimes productive condition, they avoid romanticizing race dialogue among people of color, which is symptomatic of de facto segregation. In other words, despite finding a sense of "belonging" within people of color spaces, such spaces are an effect of de facto segregation, just as an all colonized people space is an effect of colonization. Leonardo and Porter (2010) assert that safety is compromised in all race dialogue, and especially within mixed-race settings. Indeed, the mere presence of white bodies can alter the direction of race dialogue, in that discussions in mixed-race settings are inherently violent which comprises safety or notions of "safe space" because race dialogue exposes whites investment in and endorsement of whiteness (Leonardo & Porter, 2010, p. 150). This is not to say, however, that race dialogue within mixed-race settings cannot be productive. All participants should not assume that "safe space" exists when discussing systems of oppression, rather they should be cognizant of the potential risk that exists when engaging in race dialogue.

In the case of the Ethnic Studies teachers in this study, dialogue was centered on intersectional understandings of race within mixed-race settings, and participants discussed the ways that racism impacted the lived outcomes of students, teachers, and their communities. Within their professional development meetings, Ethnic Studies teachers arrived at shared foundational understandings of systems of oppression, privilege, and power through transformative discussions I call *critical race dialogue*. I use the term CRD to bridge Freire's (1970) notion of dialogue with scholarship on race dialogue (Kohli, 2012; Leonardo & Porter, 2010) and critical race theory in education and to elucidate the processes of developing curriculum during the Ethnic Studies professional development.

I define CRD as a process that utilizes experiential knowledge to examine the intersections of race, power, and privilege, ultimately working towards social justice – or the elimination of oppression. Three key elements make up CRD: (1) recognizing that all participants have been socialized in a Eurocentric, heteropatriarchal society and come from

varying epistemological standpoints; (2) sharing lived experiences to understand the complexities of race and its intersections as it relates to socio-political conditions; and (3) committing to social and racial equity and the elimination of oppression, particularly racism. By combining these three elements CRD serves as a catalyst for conscientization, or the process of developing a critical race consciousness where one becomes cognizant of her/his social location and the social location of others. In addition, CRD also helps to bridge one's understanding of socio-political inequities with her/his action, in this case – pedagogy used in the classroom.

For the teachers in this study, CRD was a vehicle that informed the development and implementation of a comparative Ethnic Studies program in an urban public school district and led teachers to deeper individual and shared understandings of their positions as teachers, notions of privilege, and forms of oppression. In turn, their shared understandings of their experiences, position, and oppression provided them with a shared foundation for teaching Ethnic Studies to secondary school students. These processes informed the curriculum the teachers built as well as the pedagogies they employed in their classrooms. The CRD process also guided teachers in articulating race, teaching race, and engaging students to become agents not only in their own lives but also in their community.

CRD also played a central role in preparing Ethnic Studies teachers and developing teachers' critical race consciousness, which led to a collective identity and shared perspectives and approach to Ethnic Studies curricula. CRD within the Ethnic Studies professional development space exposed teacher epistemology and addressed the role of teacher as intellectual. It also enabled teachers to not only understand the root causes of the oppression they teach but also provided an avenue to locate themselves in and be critical of power structures in schooling. As I will show below, teachers engaged in CRD about their various social locations to examine oppression, privilege, and power. They began an internal dialogue that served as a catalyst for their own processes of conscientization (Freire, 1970) and contributed to developing a cohesive Ethnic Studies curriculum and critical collective consciousness.

**Origins of the Collaborative, Study Participants and Data Collection**

The Ethnic Studies Collaborative is a district-supported group of teachers and local partners that came together in 2007 to create an Ethnic Studies framework for Esperanza Unified School District. Being one of the largest school districts in the state with an over 80% student of color population, the school board began institutionalizing Ethnic Studies during the 2007-2008 school year.[12] The district brought together social science high school teachers and a university partner to contextualize Ethnic Studies for the district. In the Summer of 2008, some of the teachers worked with five curriculum consultants to design an eight-unit course for ninth graders.[13] Ethnic Studies was added to the ninth-grade social science course offerings. At the time, students were not required to take social science in their first year of high school. Curriculum designers imagined that if students took Ethnic Studies during their ninth grade year, the critical perspectives they acquired could carry over to other social science courses and their

[12] Various Ethnic Studies courses have been offered in the district since the early 2000s. In 2007, the school board initiated the development of a district-wide course.

[13] I was one of the five curriculum consultants hired in Summer 2008, which marks my entry into the Ethnic Studies project.

high school coursework, more generally.

During the 2008-2009 school year, four of the teachers involved in the curriculum development process began teaching the course at their high schools. These courses were internally funded with local high school budgets. In 2010, the school board unanimously voted to pilot a district-funded Ethnic Studies course implementation program more widely. During the Ethnic Studies pilot, the teachers continued their professional development, which was funded by the school district. Participating in the Collaborative was voluntary, though participants who attended the meeting received two hours of paid after-school professional development weekly. They also received release time each semester to participate in a day-long retreat. Meetings and retreats provide teachers with a space for writing curriculum, strategic planning, community building, and reflecting on the development of the course. I immersed myself in the field as a participant observer during the second year of the pilot in Spring 2012. I attended two professional development retreats and sixteen Collaborative meetings, which was a majority of the trainings that semester. Each meeting lasted approximately two hours and rotated locations among the different school sites. In addition to observing interactions among Ethnic Studies teachers, I was very much a participant in the Collaborative. My role varied as I was "never simply a researcher" (Schram, 2006, p. 127). I facilitated and participated in workshops on curricular content, participated in check-ins at the beginning of the meetings, and co-authored several lessons focused on race, autoethnographies, and students' action research projects as forms of reciprocity in research (Kovach, 2010; L. T. Smith, 1999).

When I began data collection, there were ten members of the Collaborative: teachers who taught Ethnic Studies at various high school sites, district supported partners, and myself. Six participants were credentialed social science teachers in the district who taught at least one pilot Ethnic Studies course during the duration of the study.[14] One was a student teacher who was in the process of attaining his social science teaching credential. Another student teacher attended only one retreat. One member of the Collaborative was a credentialed social science teacher who provided administrative and curricular support. Ethnic Studies teachers partnered with a local public university and worked directly with a consultant, Dr. Enriquez, who was an associate professor of Ethnic Studies and education. Dr. Enriquez served the Collaborative as a facilitator of the curriculum development process. I was also a member of the Collaborative. Among the six who taught the pilot course, half were people of color, two were women, and one identified as queer. Six members of the Collective have been involved since 2008 (see Table 4).

[14] Only four of the five pilot high schools were represented in the Collaborative due to schedule conflicts. The district's sole qualification for teaching Ethnic Studies was a social science credential.

Table 4. Collaborative Participants by Role, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender

| # | Name | Role | Race/Ethnicity | Gender |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mr. Cruz* | ES Teacher** | Filipino American | Male |
| 2 | Mr. Smith* | ES Teacher | white | Male |
| 3 | Mr. Miller* | ES Teacher | white | Male |
| 4 | Ms. Martinez* | ES Teacher** | Latino | Female |
| 5 | Ms. Davis* | ES Teacher | white | Female |
| 6 | Mr. Lee* | ES Teacher** | Chinese American | Male |
| 7 | Mr. Estrada* | ES Student Teacher | Filipino American | Male |
| 8 | Mr. Mendoza† | ES Student Teacher | Filipino American | Male |
| 9 | Mr. Jones | Administrative/Curricular Support** | Black | Male |
| 10 | Dr. Enriquez | University Faculty Support** | Filipino American | Female |
| 11 | Jocyl | Graduate Student Researcher** | Filipino American | Female |

Race/ethnicity and gender were self-identified in interviews with participants.
*Teachers interviewed by the researcher.
**Core member of the group who met separately every other week to develop the Ethnic Studies framework for the school district beginning in 2008.
†Mr. Mendoza was not a regular member of the Collaborative, however he attended a retreat.

### Critical Race Dialogue and the Development of a Critical Collective Consciousness

In the Collaborative, critical race dialogue focused on complicating relations of power and oppression; teachers reported that this improved their teaching in that they were taught to apply their critical knowledge and skills to real-world contexts of their students' lives. As the sections below demonstrate, Collaborative meetings provided a mixed-race setting that was not immune to racial and patriarchal power dynamics. Consequently, various mechanisms of CRD emerged where teachers situated themselves within a broader socio-political context; created brave spaces to share lived experiences, which further complicate collective understandings of oppression; and developed a critical collective consciousness. Teachers also developed a collective ownership of the Ethnic Studies curriculum and perspectives for ways of

communicating about key ideas with students as they learn to share their ideas with other teachers.

**Racial and Patriarchal Power Dynamics within the Collaborative**

The Collaborative had mixed-race settings when it met as a whole; however, teachers' racial positionality did not emerge as a primary axis of concern within the dialogue during these meetings. Instead, some teachers reflected on the meeting dynamics in their interviews. For instance, Ms. Martinez, a Latina teacher at Parkview High mentioned that she felt undermined when she had "to teach white people about the experiences of people of color." Similarly, Ms. Davis, a white Ethnic Studies teacher who also taught at Parkview High, shared,

> I was so disappointed; it was right before Thanksgiving. It was a particularly bad meeting. There was just so much blatant, only white dudes talking, and taking up so much space and feeling entitled to that space. It was just so inappropriate.

Ms. Davis reflected on the racial and patriarchal power dynamics that compromised participants' safety during professional development meetings earlier in the school year. She acknowledged that the behavior of the white men during the meeting was out of place, while Ms. Martinez discussed the vulnerability she felt when teaching her colleagues curricular content. Later, I will discuss similar dynamics the Ethnic Studies teachers described in their classrooms.

Additionally, Ms. Martinez confessed in her interview that she is frustrated with "having to deal with teachers who aren't on board theoretically with me. So in other words, these aren't completely self-selected teachers…it's been really frustrating working with teams where you're not always like-minded with other people." Since Ethnic Studies focuses on teaching the socio-political experiences of various ethnic and racial groups, Ms. Martinez saw some teachers' lack of content knowledge and political commitment as a hindrance in professional development meetings that were initially meant for building curriculum and enhancing teachers' pedagogies. As a result, most professional development sessions catered to the needs of white teachers who had limited content knowledge.

Like Ms. Martinez and Ms. Davis, Mr. Cruz saw the varying levels of teachers' critical consciousness as an obstacle in developing the Ethnic Studies pilot. In an interview he stated,

> What the district is providing is not enough. Like, I look at, if I were to come in and be an Ethnic Studies teacher just based on what we're getting from our collective study and what the district is providing, I don't see myself being very effective and the thing is that's what a number of our teachers are equipped with but, you know, that's a pilot program. Ideally, we don't bring those teachers in. Ideally, you as a teacher come with a background experience that is rooted in Ethnic Studies or in communities of color. That's the ideal but that's not the reality of it. We as a Collaborative, we have to speed up or accelerate their own critical development; their ideological or political development and they're supported for the most part. The Collaborative, they're open and they're working.

Here, Mr. Cruz critiques the district's poor or lack of recruitment strategies in terms of who is chosen to teach Ethnic Studies. Some Ethnic Studies teachers in the district have no previous knowledge of Ethnic Studies or experience in communities of color. For instance, in their interviews, Mr. Miller and Mr. Smith, the two white men in the Collaborative, both admitted that their first exposure to Ethnic Studies was when they were assigned to teach the course. Mr. Cruz discusses how the Collaborative took on the responsibility to assist white teachers in their critical, ideological, and political development during professional development meetings.

The teachers who had been a part of the project since its inception, all of whom were people of color, created a core committee who oversaw professional development by designing Collaborative meetings to help maintain the district's vision of the Ethnic Studies program by nurturing the intellectual growth of teachers and guiding their curriculum building and assessment process. The core committee also developed and maintained district and community partnerships. Critical race dialogue was a key element in shaping these Collaborative meetings, though, as I will show, participants' safety was often compromised during dialogue in the Collaborative meeting space. Despite these setbacks, Ethnic Studies teachers engaged in a dialogic process that complicated all teachers' critical race consciousness, led to a collective identity, and helped teachers improve their pedagogy.

**Situating Self within Systems of Oppression through Critical Dialogue**

After a morning dialogue on Peggy McIntosh's (1989) famed article *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* and Andrea Smith's (2006) *Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy*, Ms. Davis led her fellow members of the Collaborative outside the Ethnic Studies building at the local public university. She instructed us to stand in a line facing the same direction towards a shrub-lined fence and directed us in an activity that she called, "Race to the Finish Line." I was familiar with this privilege walk having used this activity in my own classroom, though this was the first time I actually participated in stepping forward and back alongside the participants in the activity. Nine members of the Collaborative had gathered together to participate in a retreat focused on white supremacy and privilege. Mr. Mendoza, another student teacher who was not a regular member of the Collaborative, was present. The retreat was organized by the core members of the Collaborative. Ms. Davis read statements describing life experiences as they related to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Participants were asked to step forward or backward if the statement related to their personal experiences:

> "Step forward if your family vacationed in different parts of the world/country."
>
> "Step backward if you often hear 'cat calls' when walking down the street."
>
> *Dr. Enriquez and I, the only women participating in the activity stepped back. I realized that we were the only women of color in the group as well. Ms. Martinez was unable to attend the retreat. As the exercise progressed we continued to step further and further back. I noticed everyone's position ahead of me. I wondered if those in front thought about the people behind them.*

"Step forward if you can legally marry the person you love."

*It was 2012 in the state of California; we all stepped forward. This was my first opportunity to step towards the shrub-lined fence. I thought of our assigned readings for this retreat -- Peggy McIntosh's famed article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" and Andrea Smith's "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy." Stepping forward was an acknowledgement that I benefited from an often times overlooked and invisible privilege.*

"Step backward if your ancestors were forced to come to the United States."

*Dr. Enriquez, Mr. Cruz, Mr. Jones, Mr. Estrada, and I stepped back; we were all behind our initial positions. Ms. Davis explained that our final positions were our new starting points in the "Race to the Finish Line." The fence represented a "finish-line," a metaphor for success and achievement and it was clear that relations of power were at play and informed our various lived realities. Those closest to the finish line were white, able-bodied men and Dr. Enriquez, Mr. Cruz, and I were furthest away. I never imagined that we'd be so far behind.*

This professional development exercise revealed the Collaborative participants' various standpoints as they relate to power and privilege, where reflexivity was key to engaging participants being trained to teach comparative Ethnic Studies in high school classrooms. Within the Ethnic Studies professional development sessions, situating self within systems of oppression, particularly race, white supremacy, and its intersections, was a key component to the trainings. Following the privilege walk, teachers reflected on the exercise through a dialogue facilitated by Dr. Enriquez, a Filipina American Ethnic Studies professor who served as a consultant to the school district:

**Mr. Estrada**: In order for us to begin to problematize these readings, what actually exists? We need to understand the status quo. We come to an understanding of what systems of oppression are and how they currently exist in our lives and so understanding the power dynamic of the oppressors and the oppressed, we have to recognize that there's oppression, but because there's oppression that engenders a relationship of oppressor and oppressed and you start breaking that down depending on what's going on in our lives.
**Dr. Enriquez**: How can we tell by our activity that a system was in place? That a system was working?
**Mr. Jones**: Well, there wasn't a lot of individual choice involved in how it played out. There wasn't a lot of – you actively went out and sought to do these things. It's like these things were offered to you or done to you and that it didn't really matter what you necessarily wanted.
**Dr. Enriquez**: So you just kind of had to answer with whatever you understood as your experience?
**Mr. Jones**: Yea and your experience is set in a lot of ways - like forces that you can't control.

> **Mr. Cruz**: I don't think it's obvious and that's the internalization of it all, even though you know…(long pause)
> **Dr. Enriquez**: It's heavy.

In this critical dialogue, Mr. Estrada, Dr. Enriquez, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Cruz discussed the nature of oppression and how it impacts everyday lived realities. Mr. Estrada, a Filipino American student teacher at Parkview High, interrogated the status quo and its relationship to the maintenance of oppression. He highlighted that the oppression that informs our lives exists with an on-going relationship between an oppressor and the oppressed. Mr. Jones, a Black teacher who provides curricular support in the Collaborative, called attention to the lack of agency and choice individuals have in controlling their lives. He emphasized that "it's set" and named that there are "forces you can't control"; there is a system that determines how the world works. Mr. Cruz added that the system is not obvious, it is invisible, and he discussed how we internalize lived oppressions, even if one may be conscious of the existing oppression. Mr. Cruz's statement was followed by a long pause.

At that moment, members of the Collaborative did not respond immediately and took pause as they realized the complexity of how oppression functions. Here, we see teachers unpacking the complex and often unconscious nature of oppression, which is a crucial component to critical race dialogue. At the same time, this process opened the door for developing a self and collective consciousness of power relations, including the teachers' relationships to the structure and power of their particular school, community members and organizations, and to other teachers. The teachers I observed were in the process of developing a deepened social awareness of their reality, or what Freire (1970) called conscientization[15], or the process of developing a critical consciousness. This process also includes naming the world, which allows individuals to engage in a dialogue that reveals root causes of social problems and invites teachers to interrogate how such problems manifest within their schools.

The teachers who participated in the exercise were physically placed within a hierarchical structure based on their lived experiences with and/or without oppression, highlighting their various relationships to power and privilege. They began to analyze their individual relationships to oppression. For example, later in the discussion, Mr. Smith, a white teacher at Summit High shared,

> To make that system more humanizing is different depending on where you are in that system. I think that's where you have that connection between individual and a system. Unless you recognize, as an individual, where you are in a system, or I mean just to use the oversimplified oppressor/oppressed. If you are in the oppressor group, your actions towards eliminating that system are going to be different from the oppressed group.

Mr. Smith explores the idea that one's social position determines his or her action towards combating social injustice. He recognizes that an individual who is part of the oppressor group in

[15] According to Freire, conscientization is the process through which individuals become cognizant of oppressive power relations and their own social location within these structures. Conscientization occurs as a result of critical dialogue.

relations of power and who holds this privilege would need a different approach in addressing oppression than one who is oppressed. Mr. Smith's contribution to the discussion showcases how teachers situate themselves within relations of power, and begins to imagine how responding to oppression looks different depending on one's positionality, which is another key element to CRD. Once teachers understand that the complex system of oppression operates with various relationships between the oppressor and the oppressed, they begin to think about anti-oppressive possibilities based on one's social position.

In a dialogue following Mr. Smith's statement, Dr. Enriquez, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Cruz discuss an individual's social location further:

> **Mr. Cruz**: I think the nuance between privilege and oppression is…like your privilege will perpetuate the oppression but you aren't necessarily the oppressor…to me, it's that once there is education then people need to make a decision. And then it's at that moment after that conscious decision is made that I would say you're an oppressor, otherwise before I was conscious of my male privilege and I acted out my male socialization, there's a big part of me that can't take responsibility for my actions given the system. That's normal.
> **Mr. Jones**: So my thing though is that, let's say, ok. People make the decision not the way we want it to be made.
> **Mr. Cruz**: Then that's a clear line.
> **Mr. Jones**: But I think it becomes less clear once those people distance themselves…I feel like there's a certain level of altruism that has to be expected in the people who have benefitted from privilege and oppression. It's complicity oppression because you may say, yea, you're generalizing, yea the whole United States is complicit. Through our consumerism we are complicit in the oppression of hundreds of millions of people. So, like we can be aware of that and at the same time it's still nearly impossible for us to completely unplug from it. The system constantly re-incentivizes us plugging back in… That's another part of the way the system maintains itself. Like white supremacy is masterful at creating a mass propaganda system that constantly reinforces people to plug back into it.
> **Dr. Enriquez**: I'm really interested in how you all are kind of unraveling it. I think sometimes we get to the point where we have these ideas that because people don't know, they don't have responsibility to this system. And I think that's kind of that description. I'm just leaning on Peggy McIntosh's article that even if you don't know, even if you do not know that you're part of a system, even if you do not know that you are oppressing people, even if you do not know that you have these privileges and advantages, you know, that you still are in some ways oppressing people. Even if you don't know.

In their conversation, Mr. Cruz, Mr. Jones, and Dr. Enriquez disagreed with one another's understandings of the role of the oppressor. Mr. Cruz, discussing his male privilege as an example, stressed that despite being socialized within a particular system, like male supremacy, he was not actually an oppressor until he becomes educated and conscious of the system. He claimed that the unconscious acts are "normal." In response, Mr. Jones described how the system creates incentives for individuals to "plug-in" and maintain forms of privilege and oppression.

He defined this form of oppression as "complicity oppression," in that complicity protects one's privilege within relations of power, where privilege includes having a job in the district where one must get along with administrators and other teachers in order to keep one's job. In contrast to Mr. Cruz, Dr. Enriquez referred back to the assigned reading by McIntosh and stressed that one can oppress, "even if they don't know." Here Mr. Cruz, Mr. Jones, and Dr. Enriquez examined the complex relationship between an individual and an oppressive system. Through their dialogue, they continue to complicate their understandings of oppression, particularly the relationships between an individual and a system, as well as an oppressor to the oppressed. More specifically, they discuss and acknowledge the privileges that benefit the oppressor at the expense of the oppressed, which is another key element of CRD. In CRD, teachers begin to understand how oppression operates within their own lived experience; for example, Mr. Cruz discusses male privilege and Mr. Jones admits that individuals become complicit with a system, which further maintains it.

The dialogue between Mr. Cruz, Mr. Jones, and Dr. Enriquez continued as they further analyzed relations of power. Mr. Cruz discussed how he teaches systems in the classroom:

> **Mr. Cruz**: We define the system, the resulting set of values, the –ism, and then the actual division of society based on those beliefs and systems. So first, it's male supremacy…a system where men gain privilege and power at the expense of women. So this system is in play and because of this system it creates these beliefs that men are superior to women. And then the belief leads to action and we organize society based on this belief system where there's a sexual division of labor. I go through different professions, like "when you think doctor, do you think man or woman? When you think nurse, what do you think? When you think professor? When you think K-6 teacher? When you think chef? When you think cook? When you think attorney? When you think paralegal or secretary?" It's completely divided. And then what really brings the point home, "Well, who makes doctors and nurses? Attorneys or paralegals? Chefs or cooks?" …so then it sets the theoretical framing of the discussion that follows when we look at different parts of society. So to me it's really important - systems, defining it. The values that it holds and most importantly how it's actualized.
> **Mr. Jones**: So would you say that male supremacy is the system rather than the belief?
> **Mr. Cruz**: Yes.
> **Mr. Jones**: And sexism is not the system?
> **Mr. Cruz**: Root to fruit. The system creates the belief, the ideas.
> **Mr. Jones**: The idea does not create the system?
> **Mr. Cruz**: Correct. I'm coming from a materialist Marxist analysis. Systems create beliefs. Beliefs then reinforce systems. So much so that it's that chicken and egg thing, that it becomes almost indistinguishable…first it's system, then it's belief.
> **Dr. Enriquez**: What's interesting to me in the triangle is in our discussion earlier there would've been an assumption that if someone is not knowing that they're being sexist, that they're not being sexist.
> **Mr. Cruz**: Thank you.

The dialogue came full circle as Dr. Enriquez and Mr. Cruz resolved their earlier dispute. While Mr. Cruz described his understanding of the relationship between a system and a belief, Dr. Enriquez used the opportunity to address their contrasting viewpoints, at which point Mr. Cruz demonstrated gratitude as clarity came to fruition. Despite having entered the dialogue with different viewpoints on consciousness and oppression, Mr. Cruz and Dr. Enriquez were able to come to a shared understanding of how relations of power impact an individual's beliefs and actions. This is one example of reaching a shared understanding through CRD.

The discussion between Mr. Cruz, Dr. Enriquez, and Mr. Jones demonstrates a process of recognizing the ways oppression functions in our world, where teachers developed a critical consciousness of oppression and its various relationships. This deepened understanding of oppression or their ability to name oppression allowed teachers to become aware of how oppression is operationalized. It also created some shared content of understanding how oppression was operating and one's role within a system of oppression. These CRD processes served as a foundation to further examine specific types of oppression, particularly white supremacy and how it may intersect with other systems like patriarchy and capitalism.

**Brave Space: Sharing Lived Experiences**

> If we are truly interested in racial pedagogy, then we must become comfortable with the idea that for marginalized and oppressed minorities, *there is no safe space.* (Leonardo & Porter, 2010, p. 149)

Another component to CRD is allowing a space for participants to share their experiences in order to understand the nuances of race as it relates to socio-political conditions in society, and schooling in particular. However, Leonardo & Porter (2010) contend that safe-space dialogue is a myth for marginalized groups when discussing issues of race because educational spaces are "already hostile and unsafe for many students of color whose perspectives and experiences are consistently minimized" (p. 149). In other words, there is a danger when discussing issues of race and oppression, in that such dialogue has the potential to cause harm. While Ethnic Studies learning spaces strive to bridge communities and build solidarity, the explicit insertion of race and racial oppression foster the potential for an unsafe educational site where teachers and students engage in difficult dialogues. This risk was evident for the teachers in the Collaborative, as it made teachers vulnerable in the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies.

Comfort and safety were on-going themes among the teachers throughout the school year. During professional development training in the spring semester, teachers reflected on their experiences teaching and learning Ethnic Studies. Mr. Smith, a white teacher at Summit High, mentioned his discomfort three times during the same meeting:

1. My first feelings were nervous…because I hadn't realized that I was actually way less prepared than I thought, there's a lot that I didn't understand about [Ethnic Studies]…It's been a growing process for me.

2. I'm constantly outside of my zone where I feel comfortable.

3. I'm totally uncomfortable but that's when you're actually learning.

Here, Mr. Smith saw his discomfort as an indication that learning and growth were taking place. For Mr. Smith and the other teachers in this study, courage was necessary to engage in CRD because they experience a level of vulnerability when drawing upon their lived experiences to understand or make sense of Ethnic Studies concepts. Vulnerability and courage (Singleton, 2014) are key to developing a brave space within critical race dialogue.

Ms. Martinez also felt vulnerable when collaborating with teachers who often doubted her ability to develop curriculum. In an interview towards the end of the spring semester, she shared:

> So you have these weird dynamics that come out…like these male, heteronormative dynamics. They're frustrating. We backpedal in collaboration…it's been really hard for me to motivate within the last year, feeling like I, as a woman, am not being heard…feel like I have to justify lessons that I'm creating that I know that I've done before and that they're successful and I don't want to have to justify them to people who I feel shouldn't be questioning me in the first place.

Ms. Martinez declares her frustration in working in an environment that is male- and hetero-dominated. Many feminists of color have discussed similar feelings when working with white or male counterparts (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2002; Roth, 2004). Recognizing these tensions of interaction is a critical component to CRD. As I discussed in the previous section, the teachers enter the space with various epistemological standpoints. Having the courage to challenge and complicate teachers' privileged positions is part of the process that makes race dialogue critical. The Ethnic Studies teachers found courage to challenge the norms that have been a part of their socialization.

In another dialogue during a retreat, teachers were asked to provide examples of the advantages and disadvantages caused by whiteness:

> **Mr. Miller**: … I move around from space to space in the city and there are spaces where it's like a lot of white people or almost all white people. Or 80% white people, right? And then that sort of creates a feeling like this is the norm, this is the cultural norm.
> **Dr. Enriquez**: The feeling like we're all normal.
> **Mr. Miller**: Right.
> **Dr. Enriquez**: My identity is what my culture is, in some ways, is normal.
> **Mr. Mendoza**: Comfort. Like if I enter a room and when there's white people or a white person enters a room, I will…like, the catering…Does that make sense?
> **Dr. Enriquez**: I can get it. Does everyone understand what Mr. Mendoza is talking about?
> **Mr. Smith**: Not entirely.
> **Mr. Mendoza**: My experience happened a couple days ago. We had three white students and then I just mentioned white supremacy and then a white student asked me a question and I felt like my whole being, like I had to cater the whole lesson of that day to make him comfortable and not feel it's us versus you. Adjusting your whole attitude to make that one person comfortable in that space. That whole tension.

> **Mr. Jones**: But the converse is rarely true, right? If there's a lecture and there's one person of color in that lecture, the professor is not necessarily going to feel the pressure to…
> **Dr. Enriquez**: Accommodate.
> **Mr. Jones**: …to say let's make this person feel comfortable and welcome. It's that they're invisible.

In this dialogue, the Collaborative explored the relationship between whiteness and comfort. Mr. Miller, a white teacher at Summit High, mentioned "white space" or spaces that consist of mostly or all white people. Such spaces have the potential to normalize whiteness and white bodies. The dialogue reveals the ways the participants draw upon their positionality to offer concrete narratives that help to elucidate understandings of power and privilege within race relations. In other words, given their differential positions and understandings, the teachers offered various observations of race, space, and privilege, which showcased the normalizing nature of relations of privilege and power.

The topic of space, and white space in particular, led Mr. Mendoza, a Filipino American student teacher at Ascension High, to bring up comfort. He explained that in teaching about white supremacy, he accommodated his entire lesson plan to the white students in the classroom. Yet, Mr. Jones made it clear that an opposite situation does not usually lead to accommodations to students of color. Mr. Mendoza reflected, "I felt like my whole being…" suggesting that he experienced a visceral reaction that led him to tailor his white supremacy lesson to satisfy the needs of white students. While Mr. Mendoza mentioned the word "comfort," it was clear that he felt everything but comfort or safety. He admitted that there is a tension when tailoring lessons to white students, which is also another example of how white privilege plays out in educational settings, and in this case, race dialogue. Teachers make themselves susceptible to risk when they open up about the difficulty with teaching.

Additionally, Ms. Martinez found a similar challenge in teaching white students. In an interview she admitted that teaching white students Ethnic Studies was a challenge:

> This year, I've taught more white students than I've ever had…I feel like the white students that I'm teaching, I have a good handle on them now. So in other words, I know how to teach them within my classroom. Last year, I was really struggling in terms of what do I do with these kids and what do I do with the community where they're in. I have six white students in one of my classes and I feel like that's like the most white students I've ever taught in one grade level. So, that's a big challenge. Not necessarily like how do I make them feel good. But like how do I teach them? And how do I establish a community where they're not dominating because it's interesting to watch and see how the culture of the class can easily shift if they were allowed to dominate, which they, especially these particular kids, have been trained to do. They're smart girls, they're liberal, and one boy, and they should be able to speak their minds, and they do, when they say things they say great things, but there are other kids within the class that need to be heard. It's my job to give them that space and actually, in fact, downplay the contribution of the [white] kids but not alienate them.

Ms. Martinez discussed the challenges of negotiating power and privilege among students of color and white students. Here, Ms. Martinez discusses how she is intentional about the safety she nurtures in her classroom, showing how the CRD from the professional development space can translate into teachers' pedagogy. She is cognizant of the fact that the white students can dominate in the conversation if she allows it to occur and asserts, "it's my job" to ensure that such domination and alienation is avoided.

The professional development space introduced some teachers to new material, where they had to acknowledge their positions within structures of power and the privileges that benefit them, which at times made them vulnerable as demonstrated in Mr. Mendoza and Mr. Smith's experiences. The teachers used this new knowledge to imagine ways to combat power in their classrooms, as illustrated by Ms. Martinez's experience.

**Toward a Critical Collective Consciousness**

The Collaborative was a site where teachers developed a critical collective consciousness: teachers saw their work as political and understood their work had to be done in collaboration. As teachers developed a cohesive framework for the district-wide Ethnic Studies course through CRD in their meetings, their views of education transformed and the ways they navigated the schooling environment changed. By situating themselves within various systems of oppression and creating brave spaces to dialogue, the teachers saw the Collaborative meetings as a site that challenged their ideas about the role of teachers; they also found that the Collaborative sustained them in their work. For instance, in an interview Mr. Smith reflected, "I never knew that education was political." Teaching and learning Ethnic Studies and being part of a collective of teachers changed the way he viewed his role as a teacher. Viewing teaching as political was evident within the Collaborative when they discussed the context of Ethnic Studies beyond the district. The professional development meetings served as a catalyst for teachers to become cognizant of their position in establishing a program within the larger national context, where Ethnic Studies was being challenged in states like Arizona and Texas.

By situating their work on statewide, national, and global levels, teachers found significance in their teaching and in maintaining a critical collective consciousness. In an interview, Ms. Martinez described her work as part of "a movement to get Ethnic Studies into high schools as a form of education reform," which she revealed sustained her in her work. Ms. Martinez shared that knowing she is a part of a larger movement to institutionalize Ethnic Studies beyond the classroom, beyond the school, and beyond the state "is very empowering as a teacher. To know that I'm not alone, to actually believe that and to actually be doing the work" makes her practice of teaching more meaningful and reinforces her commitment to the project.

National movements for Ethnic Studies informed the teachers' critical collective consciousness. The community created among teachers in the Collaborative sustained some of the individuals in this project and enabled the development of the comparative Ethnic Studies program. Mr. Cruz concurs,

> You can't do this alone. You can't, this work cannot be done by solo practitioners. We are individual teachers but it needs to be done in concert with others, otherwise you will die in isolation…and even if you don't, even if you flourish in your own classroom, if your goal is that of community development, of mobilizing people to

> change their conditions, like you by, by virtue of you being the solo practitioner and your isolated condition, [you] contradict those goals. Like the change that Ethnic Studies was birthed to try to achieve cannot be done by individual teachers. It needs to be done in collaboration. And so these weekly meetings, you know, we're all tired. It's April. I was struggling back in November going to additional meetings, taking tasks to develop more curriculum but in the end, doing this together places us in a better position to expand the program, to improve, to expand and then defend the program. That "defend" part, that's coming. And that can't be done if we're just working by ourselves. And so, the organization, the weekly meetings, that's the minimum that we have to do to sustain and expand this program.

The teachers in the Collaborative fostered a critical hope that countered the disillusionment that teachers experienced due to frustration with the district, exhaustion from the amount of work required to teach the course effectively, or challenges they encountered with one another. While they see themselves as a collective, they still remain, as Mr. Cruz reminds us, "individual teachers." Despite this institutional arrangement, the Ethnic Studies teachers have struggled to create and maintain a critical collective consciousness that informs their pedagogy.

The teachers' Ethnic Studies praxis (Cammarota, 2016; Freire, 1970) of reflecting on Ethnic Studies conceptual frameworks and thinking about how white supremacy, privilege, and power informs their pedagogy can only be effective when teachers make the commitment to continue the work. Praxis within the Ethnic Studies project varied among the participants. For example, participation in the Collaborative reaffirmed Ms. Martinez's, Mr. Cruz's, Mr. Lee's, and Mr. Jones's commitment to the Ethnic Studies project; however, Mr. Miller and Mr. Smith stopped teaching the course after one and three years, respectively.

The teachers' critical collective consciousness informed their practice within the professional development meetings, which became a collaborative effort. The Collaborative work involved in developing the Ethnic Studies pilot was designed to ensure that (1) each section of Ethnic Studies provided students with district-wide content, (2) the collaboration with other teachers encouraged a community of sharing and accountability, and (3) the courses could be monitored and supported through the Collaborative. The teachers worked collectively on lesson plans and divided the workload among each other. This collective thinking was also evident within the decision-making processes of the collaboration meetings. The following excerpt describes a portion of a collaboration meeting:

> After discussing the Ethnic Studies organization flow chart, Mr. Smith states, "So is this going up for a vote?" The facilitator, Mr. Cruz, says, "Our goal here is to reach consensus. So if you agree with this organizational framework, can you show me a thumbs up and if you're not a thumbs up, please suggest what will make it a thumbs up for you." I raise my thumb and as I look around the room, everyone has their thumb up as well. Dr. Enriquez says, "someone write this down as an historical moment, we reached one hundred percent consensus!" (Fieldnote)

There are several aspects of this excerpt that are significant and illustrate collective thinking. First, Mr. Smith clarifies whether or not the group would vote on a particular decision. Voting suggests that some teachers will agree and some teachers will disagree. Making a decision with a vote leaves the majority of the participants content, while some may have conflicting views and are not entirely on board moving forward. In contrast, obtaining consensus ensures that everyone is satisfied with the decision being made. Here, Mr. Cruz not only clarifies that the group wants to reach consensus but also provides a constructive alternative when he says, "if you're not a thumbs up, please suggest what will make it a thumbs up for you." Mr. Cruz opens up the dialogue to include any ideas, additions, and corrections that would make each individual in the group pleased with the decision. This particular type of decision-making encourages collective thinking among group members. Lastly, Dr. Enriquez suggests that the decision and the consensus was a first for the group. Typically, consensus within group decision-making processes is rarely met right away. The collaborative process is unlike most decision-making in the district.

The collaborative efforts among the teachers provided a model for professional development that sustained teachers and held them accountable on a district-wide level. Unlike professional development that is isolated to one event or a weeklong retreat, the teachers in the Collaborative created a critical teaching community, which was maintained over the course of a school year.[16] Critical race dialogue was at the center of establishing a critical collective consciousness, which informed their practice within their Collaborative, their classrooms, and local community.

## Conclusion

The Ethnic Studies Collaborative was a site where CRD was essential to teachers' professional growth. Although Ethnic Studies has historically been used to serve the needs of people of color, this study suggests that professional development aimed at preparing teachers of Ethnic Studies, can promote CRD and provide a forum for people of color and whites not only to recover and reconstruct the histories and narratives of communities of color but also to articulate the role race, power, and privilege play in their lived experiences. CRD encourages Ethnic Studies teachers to develop a critical collective consciousness where they find the courage to interrogate their social locations as they relate to the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies. The collective processes of curriculum development and individual processes of professional and personal growth confirmed that this comparative Ethnic Studies project challenged the ways whiteness functions within schooling environments. Ethnic Studies teachers situated themselves within a broader socio-political construct, which informed various facets of their identities and worldviews. Teacher perspectives also illuminate ways to strengthen such a program.

As we saw in the among the Ethnic Studies teachers in this study, a collaborative approach to teacher professional development has the potential to help teachers develop as intellectuals and experts within their subject area and create critical teaching communities that sustain teachers over a long duration of time. This professional development model differs from

[16] While the observations for this paper took place over one school year, the Collaborative continued their work as a critical teaching community to present day.

the common approach of having an outside expert train teachers. When we value teachers as intellectuals, teachers can grow personally and professionally in such a way that furthers their growth and complicates their understanding of a particular subject area or various pedagogical approaches, which can potentially benefit students in their classrooms. In addition, many teachers discussed that being a part of the Collaborative was something that made their work meaningful and gave purpose to their role as teacher. This suggests that professional development projects that aim to create critical teaching communities can help sustain teachers long-term.

The mechanisms of CRD – situating oneself within a broader socio-political context, creating brave spaces, developing a critical collective consciousness – allowed teachers to make meaning of race and power within their own lives and informed their practice. The Collaborative deliberately brought up issues of power, privilege, race, and heteropatriarchy within their professional development meetings to complicate teachers' understanding of teaching and education. CRD was a vehicle that engaged Ethnic Studies teachers in developing a critical collective consciousness. Incorporating CRD within teacher education and professional development makes power dynamics explicit and can help address issues of race and power within schooling structures. It can also help teachers develop culturally relevant, community responsive, and antiracist approaches to their practice in the classroom.

As I have shown in this chapter, Ethnic Studies teachers participating in a collaborative, ongoing professional development actively engaged in a process of critical race dialogue. Ethnic Studies teachers developed complex understandings of oppression, engaged in courageous dialogues to critically examine power and privilege through their lived experiences, and nurtured a critical collective consciousness, which are key components to CRD. The district's Ethnic Studies professional development enabled teachers to form a critical teaching community that provides professional, intellectual, and personal growth and can serve as a model for developing Ethnic Studies programs in other districts.

## CHAPTER FIVE:
## Interrogating Hegemonic Knowledge in the Ethnic Studies Classroom

> The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change it.*
>
> Karl Marx (1994), *Theses on Feuerbach*

In the Ethnic Studies classroom, history is living, breathing, and changing as students and teachers are guided by a curriculum encouraging them to reclaim stories neglected in the mainstream and realizing their role in history and history making. Students produce knowledge by documenting their community's narratives, giving voice to people whose perspectives have historically been undervalued and unappreciated. Teachers and students engage in developing a critical lens to read the world and interpret the ways power relations inform their lived experiences. They also develop tools to recognize their dynamic role in interpreting and changing their view of the world.

In this chapter, I draw from observations from ninth grade Ethnic Studies classrooms, semi-structured interviews with Ethnic Studies teachers, and participant observation notes in Ethnic Studies Collaborative sessions to examine the processes of knowledge production that occurred as teachers institutionalize Ethnic Studies curricula in the district. Teachers and students within the Ethnic Studies project actively participated in learning and writing stories about power and resistance that reiterated the curriculum's core values of love, respect, hope, community, solidarity, unity, self-determination, and critical consciousness.

Knowledge production is an essential component of teacher and student experiences within the ninth grade Ethnic Studies curriculum. This process is guided by the value of humanization in the classroom, where Ethnic Studies is a site for teachers and students to interrogate the history of dehumanization in their communities and create moments for students to assert their and their families' humanity. In this process, students and teachers develop an intersectional (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989) understanding of power relations as it relates to knowledge production and action. Their framework examined how the intersection of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality informed articulations of power and privilege in society.

### Establishing an Ethnic Studies Framework

The development of a district-wide Ethnic Studies Framework began in 2007 with a team of social science teachers led by Dr. Enriquez, a university Ethnic Studies professor and consultant. During the 2007-2008 school year, the Ethnic Studies curriculum team studied current Ethnic Studies frameworks drawing from the anthology, *Color-line to Borderlands: The Matrix of American Ethnic Studies*, edited by Johnnella E. Butler (2001). Teachers studied approaches and arguments within the field of Ethnic Studies and used these perspectives to inform the district's Ethnic Studies framework and curriculum, which was initially developed between 2007-2008. At the time, the district did not have a required social science course for ninth graders. The curriculum team imagined that introducing students to Ethnic Studies in the ninth grade would provide an opportunity for students to develop a critical lens to apply to other social science courses during their 10th-12th grade years.

In the summer of 2008, the curriculum team worked with five Ethnic Studies curriculum consultants to develop an eight-unit, year-long curriculum. This curriculum focused on ethnic-specific experiences for each unit. For instance, the ethnic-specific units focused on the African American Studies, Raza/Latinx Studies, Asian American Studies, Native American Studies, etc. Some teachers on the team began teaching the curriculum in Fall 2008. Since then, the curriculum has transformed from an eight unit ethnic-specific curriculum to a concept-based, six-unit course with a comparative Ethnic Studies approach. In essence, the Ethnic Studies teachers involved in the 2007 reform produced a curriculum that could be tailored to the students in each classroom across the school district. The framework of the curriculum is informed by twelve key concepts dispersed throughout six units. The concepts include identity & narrative, power & systems, hegemony & counterhegemony, humanization & dehumanization, causality & agency, and transformation & change.

Table 5. Ethnic Studies Curriculum Key Concepts

| UNIT | KEY CONCEPTS | DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Identity & Narrative | Identity<br>Identity formation is a process by which we, as well as others, define our sense of membership and belonging. Identity consists of the chosen and assigned names we give ourselves and/are given. Identity is connected to our history/histories.<br><br>• is varied, multifaceted and dynamic<br>• includes belonging and membership in community<br>• it is relational, intersectional and socially constructed<br><br>Narrative<br>A spoken or written account of connected events; a story from a particular point of view<br>• vary based on both teller and audience<br>• serve a function<br>• are experience based<br>• are dynamic<br>• communicate values<br>• have power<br><br>Master narrative<br>“History is written by the victors” - Walter Benjamin<br><br>The account of events as told by those who are in power. The “official” history. It is shaped by the ruling classes identities and interests (i.e., class, race, gender, religious, et al) and marginalizes and/or silences points of view not in line with its own.<br><br>Counter narrative<br>Telling(s) of history from multiple points of view that expose and challenge the bias inherent in the master narrative, thereby enhancing our understanding of history. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Systems & Power | System<br>An organized way of doing something.<br><br>In society, there are three types of systems that work together to cohere large numbers of people into a unified whole.<br>• Economic<br>• Political<br>• Social-Cultural<br><br>These systems channel power and can be oppressive or non-oppressive.<br><br>Power<br>“The ability to define phenomenon and then in turn, make it act in a desired manner.” - Huey P. Newton<br><br>The capacity to control circumstances. Put into economic, political, and/or social-cultural context, those who are in power, determine much of how society is organized, and as a result, what those in society, experience. |
| 3 | Hegemony & Counterhegemony | Hegemony<br>Dominance of one group over another, supported by legitimating norms, ideas and expectations within the existing system(s) in power.<br><br>When oppressed people submit to these norms, ideas, and expectations, they perceive the condition of their lives as an unchanging/unchangeable reality, ultimately benefiting those in power.<br><br>Counterhegemony<br>Challenges values, norms, systems and conditions that have been legitimized and promoted as natural and unchanging/unchangeable by the dominant class in society. |
| 4 | Humanization & Dehumanization | Humanization<br>When power is used to uphold and/or restore dignity and self-worth.<br><br>When power is used to help people attain their self-determining, potential.<br><br>Dehumanization<br>When power is used to distort one’s humanity through any degree of violence, theft, appropriation and/or humiliation.<br><br>When people/their bodies are treated like objects rather than human beings. |
| 5 | Causality & Agency | Causality<br>The relationship between cause and effect. The principle that there is a reason(s) for why phenomena occur<br><br>Agency<br>One’s ability to determine the outcome of their life. Self Determination. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | Transformation & Change | Transformation<br>The liberatory process, through critical consciousness and agency, of uncovering, reclaiming, revaluing, and maximizing the potential of one's humanity in opposition to oppression and dehumanization.<br><br>Change<br>The act or instance of making or becoming different. |

Note: Adapted from District's Course Overview (2015)

Creating this curriculum came with many challenges. As members of an Ethnic Studies Collaborative, teachers participated in district supported professional development sessions to create the curriculum and fine-tune the concepts. This process included teachers producing knowledge that would be accessible for students at the ninth-grade level. In this chapter, I focus primarily on the concepts from Units 2 and 3. I will discuss Units 4-6 in the following chapter.

**From WASP to SWARM: Redefining Relations of Power for the 21st Century**

During the summer retreat in 2012, the Core Team of the Ethnic Studies Collaborative gathers together in Dr. Enriquez's home to reflect on the existing ninth grade curriculum and progress of the district's Ethnic Studies project. Dr. Enriquez, Ms. Martinez, Mr. Cruz, Mr. Jones, Mr. Lee, and I sit upon the hunter green sectional, laptops opened to the shared wikispace, in order to clarify definitions for various concepts used in the curriculum. While Mr. Cruz, Mr. Lee, and Mr. Jones debate about their understanding of power and privilege, Ms. Martinez interjects,

> The debates are good but...when we go back through all these worksheets, we have so many definitions of race and we have so many definitions of power and privilege...We just have to remember that because we're writing this as we're going and we're writing this about how we understand these definitions...I don't want to forget that we're teaching this to students.

Ms. Martinez points out that one challenge to writing Ethnic Studies curricula for the ninth grade is the varying definitions and understandings of race, power, and privilege in the current teaching materials. How were they going to define race, power, and privilege for high school students? How would they make these complex concepts accessible to ninth graders? In this section, I discuss how members of the Ethnic Studies Collaborative articulated concepts and knowledge in accessible ways to help students understand how power and privilege were operationalized within their lived experiences and community life.

The Collaborative's core members discussed the need for a unifying definition of privilege and power. Mr. Cruz indicates that the course needed to explicitly name the subject positions within their definition and discusses the history of how the Collaborative conceptualized these subject positions:

> So it started off as RAWASPFA and then it got developed into many more. But I think if we can come up with an acronym that identifies race, class, gender,

> sexuality, that's cool…although, the WASP part, I think was beneficial for my kids to understand that.

Here, Mr. Cruz shares that various terms used to name the beneficiaries of power and privilege. While WASP, or white, Anglo, Saxon, Protestant, has been helpful for students to understand the formation of a privileged subjectivity, there were limitations to the acronym because it did not include class, gender, and sexuality. In an interview earlier that year regarding the development of the Ethnic Studies curriculum, Mr. Cruz shares,

> Even though the emphasis should be on race and nationality, what we do is we are developing a framework that emphasizes intersectionality. That the different parts of our identity, depending upon the situation, put you in a position of power or puts you in a double or triple-position of oppression. And so when we teach race, we connect it to class, we connect it to gender, and then we connect it to sexuality. And then we connect it to the conquest of nations - imperialism…Ninety-nine percent of the students in the class are the descendants of conquered nations whether it be through enslavement, through Indigenous people's displacement and genocide, or in my case, my ancestors were first conquered by the Spanish and then the Americans…And so we teach race, class, and gender…always going back to the point, these things can't be separated.

In his reflection on the Ethnic Studies framework as it relates to identity and power, Mr. Cruz stresses the importance of understanding how intersectionality informed one's position within power relations. Intersectionality is an analytical framework that was "coined" by Crenshaw (1989), but can be traced to the late 1960s and 1970s (Collins & Bilge, 2016; A. Harris & Leonardo, 2018; Hull, Bell Scott, & Smith, 1982). Mr. Cruz draws the connection between systematic forms of oppression (imperialism, enslavement, displacement, genocide, etc.) and the intersections of race, class, and gender, suggesting that race does not operate alone, but rather is intertwined with class, gender, and empire. While Mr. Cruz uses the term "intersectionality," others have also referred to the idea of how systems intersect as the matrix of domination or the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000). The Ethnic Studies teachers in the study agree to teach about both domination and subordination through an intersectional lens.

Mr. Cruz's knowledge about intersectionality and power relations are evident in his contributions to the Collaborative's process. Later in the Collaborative's discussion, Mr. Cruz, Ms. Martinez, and Mr. Lee discuss the significance of intersectionality as part of understanding identity and multiple systems of oppression:

> **Mr. Cruz:** We're going to teach intersectionality.
> **Ms. Martinez:** So we teach that there are other systems of oppression [besides racism] and identify those?
> **Mr. Cruz:** Ok.
> **Ms. Martinez:** You want an acronym for those?
> **Mr. Cruz:** Those identities.
> **Ms. Martinez:** Ideally?

**Mr. Lee:** So if I can jump in. If we have race, class, gender, sexuality and I'm throwing nationality in there just so we can have a vowel, we have "white," "American," "rich," "male," "straight," which depending on how we order it is either WARMS or SWARM.
**Mr. Cruz:** SWARM!
**Mr. Lee:** So it's S.W.A.R.M: straight, white, American, rich, men.
**Jocyl:** SWARM!

As the core members exclaim and agree on the acronym SWARM, Mr. Cruz eagerly types the term on the shared lesson plan on his laptop. The term SWARM coincides with the teachers' aim to teach the concepts of power and privilege through an intersectional lens. While intersectionality was initially used to understand the unique positionality of subjects who experienced multiple forms of subordination (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989), the Ethnic Studies Collaborative turned intersectionality on its head to examine positions of power and privilege. SWARM was a term to identify those who benefited from the articulation of societal structures. The Collaborative continued to discuss the metaphor for SWARM:

**Mr. Lee:** The only drawback to it is that the whole idea is that this is a very, very small part of the population and the word SWARM has the idea that it's [like] locusts.
**Dr. Enriquez:** Their hegemony swarms.
**Ms. Martinez:** Yeah, oh for the idea.
**Mr. Lee:** Even though they're a small number, their ideas swarm.
**Ms. Martinez:** Yes. Their ideas.
**Mr. Lee:** Their ideas, their values, their way of life swarms.
**Ms. Martinez:** Yes.
**Mr. Lee:** Ok. Excellent. And interestingly, we have hammerwasp, the wasp carrying a hammer.
**Mr. Cruz:** That's funny.
**Mr. Lee:** We still have a swarm.
(Laughter)
**Mr. Cruz:** So straightness, whiteness, Americanness
**Ms. Martinez:** Is the norm.
**Mr. Cruz:** This construct, this hegemonic construct. Richness
**Ms. Martinez:** Those are the norms, yeah.

Mr. Lee points out the term SWARM introduces the visual of a great number of locusts and Dr. Enriquez links the idea of "swarm" to hegemony wherein the ideas of those in power move through society like a swarm. Ms. Martinez and Mr. Lee discuss that despite the small number of those who are part of the SWARM population, their ideas have a tendency to "swarm" or dominate the field of social ideas, values, and ways of life. The representation of SWARM and the positionality of those who are straight, white, American, rich men are normalized within the ideological hegemony of our society, something the Collaborative interrogates.

For the teachers within the district, participating in the Ethnic Studies project allowed them the opportunity to produce knowledge in complex but accessible ways. Intersectionality was a major theme that emerged during the collective dialogue on how power and privilege should be taught within the Ethnic Studies high school classroom. The concept SWARM laid the

groundwork for understanding power and hegemony throughout the curriculum. It provides teachers with a cohesive way to teach about power relations across the district.

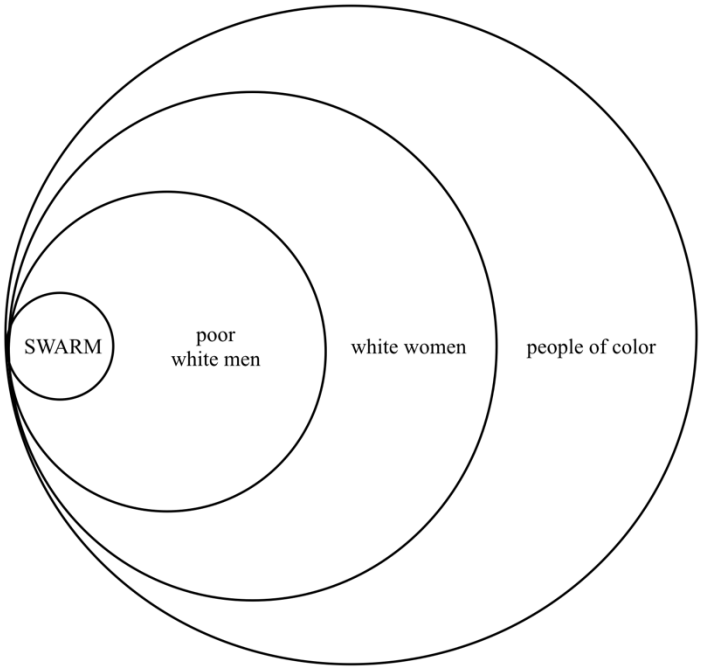
**SWARM in the Curriculum & Classroom.** The concept SWARM is introduced during the second unit of the ninth grade Ethnic Studies curriculum. This unit focuses on the key concepts of Power and Systems. While this unit is typically taught within the fall semester and follows a unit that focused on community building and identity, Mr. Wilson introduces the unit during the Spring 2016 semester. He begins the lesson by reading the statement, "The 'playing field' in our society is level and everyone has equal opportunities." Mr. Wilson instructs students, "If you disagree, raise your hand." As I scan the room, I notice every student raise their hand. Mr. Wilson encourages students to support their claim through examples.

> **Henry:** They don't follow white people in stores.
> **Jimmy:** Gender matters in this world.
> **Mr. Wilson:** Which gender?
> **Jimmy:** Men.
> **Mr. Wilson**: What four factors largely affect the amount of privilege a person is or isn't born with? Sexual identity, gender, economic, or race? What's your opinion regarding the issues of unearned privilege?
> **Jimmy:** If you're furthest away, without privilege, doesn't mean we can't…
> **Mike:** You have to work harder.

Mr. Wilson's discussion on equality leads students to share their thoughts on privilege. Students articulate that being white or a man in society provides certain privileges, whereas people of color and/or women often have obstacles to overcome. Mr. Wilson transitions into a formal lesson on the roots of privilege, introducing students to the concept of a system, particularly highlighting social systems. Drawing the connections between power relations and privilege, Mr. Wilson introduces the term SWARM. He projects a figure with concentric circles on the projector screen.

In my classroom observation of Mr. Wilson's class, students learn the concept "SWARM" as a heuristic to analyze norms in society. The figure (see Figure 1) that he projected onto the screen showcased a small circle labeled "SWARM" and concentric circles that follow with each slide that were labeled "poor white men," "white women," and "people of color." The size of the "SWARM" circle visually portrays that SWARM actually represents a small percentage of the population. Mr. Wilson connects SWARM to the idea of "we the people" from the preamble of the constitution, suggesting that historically, "we the people" initially meant those who were straight, white, American, propertied men. As time passes and politics change, the concentric circles indicate how the idea of "we the people" in the United States changed to include poor white men, then white women, and finally people of color. While the meaning of "we the people" became more inclusive, Mr. Wilson argues that SWARM is "what normal is based on." He stresses that SWARM is a position of privilege in the United States, and while citizenship has expanded to include communities beyond those originally identified as SWARM, much of the governmental structure of our society has been tailored to normalize and humanize SWARM. Despite the expansion of "we the people," U.S. citizenship has not expanded to include everyone outside of SWARM.

Figure 1: “We the people”




Mr. Wilson’s interrogation of the roots of the United States constitution does not stop with analyzing how straight, white, American, rich men wrote the constitution with their own lives as the reference. He also discusses with his students the impact of SWARM on the lives of people who were enslaved and affected by various slave codes. For instance, in another lesson, Mr. Wilson instructs students to create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting indentured servitude and chattel slavery. He wants students to find at least two ways they were similar with one another and two ways they were different from each other. After providing students time to brainstorm on their own, they discuss how indentured servitude includes both poor Europeans and Africans. One characteristic of this service was that it was not a life-long classification. Rather, indentured servants were under contract to work for a certain number of years. In addition, students learned that the status of indentured servitude was not passed down to one’s children. In contrast, chattel slavery only included people of African descent and conditions were life-long. The status of bondage was inherited by children of slaves.

While there were clear differences between the conditions of indentured servants and slaves, Mr. Wilson highlights the fact that both were “cheap to nothing labor,” which kept the price of producing goods low and profits high. Another key distinction between indentured servitude and chattel slavery was the ability for indentured servants to transition from “wage labor” to “free labor” (Roediger, 2007), which was a factor in creating a wedge between black slaves and white indentured servants. To showcase this point, Mr. Wilson facilitates a discussion about the similarities and differences:

> **Mr. Wilson:** Why invent a new form of slavery?
> **Mike:** Money.
> **Mr. Wilson:** Bacon’s Rebellion. In order to keep control, power, wealth, they had to rewrite the script — come up with indentured servitude.

**Jeremy:** Get land.
**Dante:** Keep whites together.
**Mr. Wilson:** Plantation owners were like 'we need to find a way to separate poor whites and Blacks.'
**Mike:** After seven to fourteen years…[indentured servants]…were free to go?
**Mr. Wilson:** It's kinda like a prison-term.

Students clearly see a connection between the creation of a new form of slavery and capital. Whereas slaves were denied freedom, indentured servants worked a contracted amount of time.

Mr. Wilson signals Bacon's Rebellion as a key event that led to the construction of the indentured servitude system and ultimately to the racial construction of whiteness. In the early colonial period, before racial categories were established, English and African workers built an alliance to rebel against "both the English elites and the indigenous people, with the goals of securing democratic reform, and more land" (powell, 2012, p. 151). Bacon's Rebellion was a "wake-up call" to elites, because they saw the necessity to create a wedge between these two groups because their union threatened the power relations between the elite and working class. Mr. Wilson shares with students that the wealthy, English ruling class were fearful of English and African solidarity and instituted indentured servitude, providing poor whites the opportunity for freedom — a privilege reserved for them but not blacks – thus creating "whiteness" as a racial category which "yielded important property and membership rights to the group that affiliated by color with the ruling elite" (pp. 151-152).

The retelling of the Bacon's Rebellion narrative – "a story of armed rebellion against English Christians by African slaves, not as a rebellion of workers against the elite" (powell, 2012, p. 152) – further upholds the construction and permanence of whiteness. Later in the lesson, Mr. Wilson discusses how the creation of indentured servitude was connected to the construction of race and the racial divide.

**Mr. Wilson:** Why did they create [race and racial difference]? To separate slaves and indentured servants. Separate the poor. In colonial society, were most people poor? A small percent owned slaves, had wealth. The elite could keep power if they steal/took power. Race was used to divide people to keep them weak, so the top could keep their wealth.
**Jeremy:** Break up solidarity, right?

Mr. Wilson links the construction of race in the United States to power relations. He asserts that those who were part of the wealthy elite, or SWARM, wanted to maintain their wealth and status. Any forms of uprising or threats to the hierarchy, such as Bacon's Rebellion, would need to be minimized or squelched. Jeremy identifies this approach as a way to "break up solidarity" among poor or working English and African laborers. The guarantee of freedom after years of servitude provided English (soon-to-be white) workers a privilege that helped to maintain the status of the wealthy elite and disrupt the union between the laborers. Poor white laborers, enticed by the opportunities for citizenship and privilege, chose the side of whiteness and subsequently became enforcers of future slave codes within the colonies (powell, 2012; Roediger, 2007). The racial formation of whiteness "required white workers to distance themselves from Blacks," which denied Blacks liberty and "the freedoms necessary for

defending their rights" (Roediger, 2007, pp. 65–66). Comparisons between white workers and slaves reassured poor white workers that their status in society differed from Black slaves, rather than bondage white workers owned their own labor with the potential for social mobility.

Much like the foundation of the United States government, American curriculum has historically normalized and humanized SWARM experiences. Here, Mr. Wilson's Ethnic Studies class interrogates the roots of the U.S. constitution, highlighting how the constitution privileged straight, white, American, rich men at its inception. He also discusses how the creation of various labor systems, like indentured servitude and chattel slavery, further constructed ideas about race and racial difference in the United States. The lessons on power relations and systems in the second unit prepares students for the rest of the curriculum, insofar as they begin to recognize that SWARM informs the current hegemony in society.

**Framing Hegemony**

The ninth grade Ethnic Studies curriculum introduces the concepts of Hegemony and Counterhegemony during the third unit, specifically how SWARM values and beliefs were normalized in U.S. society. Like the unit on systems and power, this unit is also typically taught in the fall semester. However, like Mr. Wilson, Mr. Rodriguez introduces students to these complex concepts during the Spring 2016 semester.

Later in the semester, Mr. Wilson utilizes the film *The Matrix*, a dystopian narrative where human beings' perceived reality is merely a simulation created and controlled by highly advanced machines (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999), to establish a connection between SWARM, systems of oppression, and processes of liberation. Scholars have written about the ways *The Matrix* is an allegory to understand the relationship between hegemony and education (Allen, 2002; Cammarota & Fine, 2008). For instance, Allen (2002) argues that *The Matrix* presents "false images of reality [that] help to construct modes of thought and behavior that maintain the status quo" (p. 107). In other words, these manufactured illusions rely on the compliance of society's members to (re)produce power relations, however the mechanisms through which these images are viewed are not always obvious. For high school Ethnic Studies teachers, *The Matrix* is also a metaphor for students to recognize the mechanisms that protect the current hegemony. In March 2016, Mr. Wilson engages students in a discussion about the symbolism within the film.

> **Mr. Wilson:** Thank you all for who came yesterday, that was beautiful. What film are we watching?
> **Jeremy:** *The Matrix*!
> **Dante:** Blue pill, red pill
> **Mr. Wilson:** As a piece of allegory…who can tell us, what's an allegory again?
> **Mateo:** Makes a story out of the characters, like Morpheus.
> **Mr. Wilson:** All the characters, Morpheus, Neo, "the matrix" itself, it's all, what's the word? It represents…
> **Mateo:** Systems?
> **Mr. Wilson:** Close, they represent something else.
> **Mateo:** Symbols!

**Mr. Wilson:** Symbols, they're all symbols. Allegory is a story that uses symbols to have a deeper meaning. Everything in *The Matrix* - it's symbolic of, keeping with this course, oppression, resistance, and tools of control, which we call hegemony. We're using this film to understand systems of oppression, hegemony, resistance. I think you saw this scene on Tuesday, this scene of the red pill, blue pill. Someone read this quote.
**Jeremy:** "The Matrix" is everywhere…you can see when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth…that you are a slave like everyone else…born into a prison for your mind. All I offer you is the truth.

After watching *The Matrix* earlier in the week, Mr. Wilson reviews key parts that engaged students in reiterating the ways *The Matrix* was used as an allegory. He first guides students through a definition of allegory, which the students suggest was a symbol; subsequently, he urges students to think about *The Matrix* as a symbol of "oppression, resistance, and tools of control." Specifically, Mr. Wilson asks Jeremy to read off the projector screen to share an excerpt from Morpheus' scene with Neo. Mr. Wilson refers to the well-known "red pill, blue pill" scene which provides Neo with a choice. If he took the red pill, Neo would have an opportunity to deepen his understanding of "the matrix". If he preferred to return to living his life, he could take the blue pill and wake up the next morning, with no recollection of his encounter with Morpheus.

In this lesson, Mr. Wilson defines hegemony as "tools of control." He refers to "systems of oppression", which he taught earlier in the semester. These systems include the five dimensions that relate to SWARM: heterosexism/gender binary, white supremacy, imperialism, capitalism, and male supremacy. Mr. Wilson wants students to think about how "the matrix" was a tool of control for participants in the film and more specifically how hegemony was a tool within society to maintain the status quo. After Jeremy read the quotation, Mr. Wilson asks students to consider how the quote connects to what they have been learning thus far. He and his students elaborate further Morpheus' words and its meaning.

**Mr. Wilson:** What kind of prison is he talking about?
**Dante:** Mental.
**Mr. Wilson:** Prison of our mind, right? What creates this prison of our mind?
**Dante:** Society.
**Mr. Wilson:** Society. Specifically, those systems of…
**Mateo:** Oppression.
**Mr. Wilson:** Oppression. So is he saying that we always are thinking for ourselves?
**Students:** No
**Mr. Wilson:** There's things that…we're not totally in control or thinking for ourselves. So there's things that…
**Mateo:** Bring us down.
**Mr. Wilson:** Bring us down, maybe influence our thoughts, our actions. What's our simple definition of hegemony?
**Jeremy:** Tools of control and…
**Mr. Wilson:** Tools of control, yeah. We're talking about hegemony - "Take [the] mind…control bodies." That's the prison of the mind he's talking about here that comes

out of systems of oppression and forms of hegemony. Any other connections to what we've been talking about?
**Miguel:** Well, they're also being controlled by society to make us think we can't change our fate, that society controls us.
**Dante:** Woo, that was deep.
**Mr. Wilson:** Miguel's talking about how we're not really in control of our own fate or destiny.
**Miguel:** Unless we know the truth, we're not really in control.
**Mr. Wilson:** But are we powerless to that?
**Dante:** No, we are not.
**Mr. Wilson:** So that's what Morpheus is offering here. The symbolic, this metaphor of the red or blue pill.
**Mateo:** The hard way or easy way.
**Mr. Wilson:** Oooh and the hard way is the…
**Dante:** The truth.
**Mr. Wilson:** The truth, right? Which might be harder, but it's that way, knowing the truth that gives you back control.

In their discussion, students examine how the truth, or knowledge of "the matrix" and in their own reality knowledge of hegemony, is the key to realizing how society operates. Mr. Wilson expands on the simplified definition of hegemony as "tools of control" and suggests hegemony was the process of "take mind, control body." In other words, if one's consciousness is controlled by the hegemonic strategy or "the matrix," one does not have control over their bodies or minds. The ideas maintained within the hegemonic order causes people to believe, as Miguel explains, that "we can't change our fate, that society controls us" and "unless we know the truth, we're not really in control." When one becomes knowledgeable of the systems of oppression or "the matrix" there is opportunity to disrupt power relations, which, as Mateo considers, is not always the easiest route to take.

The lessons in Mr. Wilson's class deepens students' knowledge of hegemony through the analysis of systems, power, and forms of social control. Mr. Wilson guides students through various examples of how systems of oppression were socially constructed around social, cultural, political, and economic values and systems. For instance, in his lesson on chattel slavery and indentured servitude, Mr. Wilson and students discuss the relationship between institutionalized forms of labor and race, which informs social and economic power relations. Additionally, using *The Matrix*, Mr. Wilson ties systems to hegemony, which Gramsci (1971) defines as an articulation of a political project that fulfills the interest of a particular social group, in this case SWARM. In other words, hegemony is a strategy to appeal to people's interests so they align with SWARM values and behaviors.

A SWARM hegemony does not correspond to the interests of humanity as a whole, but uses domination through "coercion" and "consent" to sustain a heteropatriarchal, white, capitalist formation, which benefits and privileges straight, white, able-bodied, propertied men while relying on civil society's compliance. Williams (1973) asserts that "an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as 'the traditional,' the significant past…certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded" (p. 9). Within a SWARM hegemony, inequities are established for queer, disabled,

and poor people of color and women. Such a hegemony is operationalized through the intellectuals within society (Gramsci, 1971). Apple (2004) articulates hegemonic practices in two parts:

> It is not merely that our economic order 'creates' categories and structures of feeling which saturate our everyday lives. Added to this must be a group of 'intellectuals' who employ and give legitimacy to the categories, who make the ideological forms seem neutral. (p. 9)

In the Ethnic Studies class, teachers engage students in breaking down who 'creates' categories in society through an intersectional analysis of power relations throughout history. While hegemonic practices have shifted throughout the years to become more inclusive, (e.g. extending the meaning of "we the people") their still remains deeply embedded values rooted in SWARM. *The Matrix* allows Ethnic Studies teachers to help students begin their interrogation of hegemonic knowledge.

In an interview, Mr. Wilson shares how he wants Ethnic Studies students to walk away with the message:

> Wake up…That's the message…it started with me seeing this connection between forces and systems to my very own personal lived experience in profound ways and realizing lives are completely altered, personal lives and experiences and opportunities are completely altered by these forces. And if you don't want to not have any control over your own life and just leave it with fate and destiny, continue to sleep. But if you want some control over your own life…[and] what you learn, love for your community…then waking up to the fact of that.

Mr. Wilson is inspired by his own experience of acquiring a language to make the connection between systems in society and how they impact his own experience. He translates this through his lessons and plays the role of teacher as intellectual. McLaren (1988) argues,

> Teachers ultimately must make knowledge and experience emancipatory by enabling students to develop a social imagination and civic courage capable of helping them to intervene in their own self-formation, in the formation of others, and in the socially reproductive cycle of life in general. (p. xvii)

With teachers in the Ethnic Studies Collaborative, Mr. Wilson provides lessons they hope will be a catalyst for interrogating hegemonic knowledge and imagining new ways of thinking and living. He wants students to find relevance in the course and finds ways to apply their Ethnic Studies knowledge to their own lives. His message is directly connected to the development of the Ethnic Studies curriculum. He states that curriculum development should be about

> [a]llowing all teachers the time to really sit and think through this and use the starting point of what is it our students really need? To be more of this — not just culturally responsive but this framework that's trying to really develop critical awareness and self-awareness and helping students, inoculate our students against the toxins in our society

> that's thrown at our kids all day, in my opinion, in my assessment is what really leads to school failure for many of them…So trying to develop a curriculum that really addresses and targets those issues and isn't just this cultural appreciation - which is important itself, it's a component but…really trying to give students that understanding of how to avoid the pitfalls, the traps, the hegemony that I think trips a lot of us up.

Mr. Wilson sees his Ethnic Studies classroom as a space that was more than just being culturally responsive or encouraging cultural appreciation. He believes his classroom could be a site to transform how students engaged society or social processes. Mr. Wilson wants to prepare his students for how society is constructed so that they could "avoid the pitfalls" and build a love for their community. Similarly, Ms. Davis wants students to carry what they learned in Ethnic Studies to their lives beyond the classroom. When asked what she hopes students would gain, Ms. Davis shares,

> I would love for them to walk away with some kind of critical framework for thinking about the next three years of history [courses] that they're going to take. And having started with a foundation of what's important when we build and think about history as Ethnic Studies as the foundation. And my hope is that the rest of their history they view through Ethnic Studies as opposed to the other way, as opposed to taking all this history and then at the end being like, 'Oh, yes. P.S. There's this other experience or there's this other way of looking at things or there's this.' So my hope is we've given them a set of glasses that they're going to critically view the rest of history with and ask questions and then constantly be relating back to these foundational ideas.

Ms. Davis stresses that the Ethnic Studies class would be an opportunity for students to foster a critical lens. She wants students to understand that history traditionally offered a single narrative informed by a SWARM perspective and that Ethnic Studies challenges the meta-narrative of history by teaching multiple perspectives, especially focusing on points of view that have historically been neglected or marginalized. The unit on power and systems sets the theoretical foundation for developing the critical framework Ms. Davis hopes students would use in their subsequent classes. Rather than viewing history through a SWARM perspective, the second and third units were meant to identify SWARM's role in writing history and constructing society.

In my observations of Mr. Rodriguez's class, students help create their own lens for analyzing society by fashioning their own personal "freedom frames." This lesson takes place after watching *The Matrix*. Mr. Rodriguez's "freedom frames" activity engages students in broadening their knowledge of hegemony. This is an excerpt from my field notes:

> With half an hour left of the class period, Mr. Rodriguez notices Xochitl chatting with the student beside her, "Xochitl!" he calls out to her. "Maestro!" she responds redirecting her attention back to class. "Pass this out." Mr. Rodriguez hands Xochitl a stack of papers. She takes a look at what's on the page and reacts, "What the hell?" Mr. Rodriguez laughs and encourages her, "pass one out to everybody." As she navigates from group to group, Xochitl hands a piece of paper to each student. Mr. Rodriguez addresses the rest of the class, "How much time we got? We have time. You have 10 minutes, Xochitl is giving you a piece of paper. You are going to grab – but you need to clean up…So, before I

> show you this video, you are going to get a pair of sunglasses. There are some scissors and some glue sticks on this table. Send one person from your table to grab the materials. You have about 8-10 minutes to make your pair of glasses." (Fieldnote, 01/13/2016)

Student representatives from each table collect supplies for their groups in the back of the classroom. It is my second visit to Mr. Rodriguez's class and as students cut out pieces of paper to construct their new frames, I notice "Justice for Our Lives" portraits of victims who lost their lives to police brutality hang along the perimeter of the dry erase board: Eric Garner, Alex Neito, Sandra Bland. Unlike the other classrooms I observe, Mr. Rodriguez's students are seated in groups of four to six students.

Once they construct their glasses and clean up their work areas, Mr. Rodriguez asks students to put on their glasses. Some students hesitate at first and Myesha complains that the glasses are going to make her break out. Adam says, "Everyone looks so funny." Mr. Rodriguez shushes students and instructs them to look up to the front of the room. He proclaims, "These are your glasses, they serve a purpose. These are going to be your critical lens to help you see. They are going to help you see systems of oppression." Adam responds, "so we have magic glasses, right?" Mr. Rodriguez affirms, "you have magic glasses on right now. But do you know where the magic really is?" Several students excitedly respond in unison, "Your mind!" "It's in your mind," Mr. Rodriguez agrees with students. Mr. Rodriguez continues,

> Yes, these are your lenses. You're going to use them for what we are going to watch afterwards. Just understand, the more you learn, the more you read, the more you take notes, the more you discuss, the more you offer your answers and are willing to be vulnerable, even if you're wrong, but offer your opinion, the better you will be at resisting systems of oppression, right. Because you are going to better prepare yourself, as you get older, and many of us, even at your age have to suffer through negative consequences of these systems.

By now, most students have on their glasses and some are still hesitant to wear paper glasses.

This creative activity of constructing glasses serves as an introduction to the proverbial critical lens students will gain as a result of taking the Ethnic Studies course. Mr. Rodriguez believes that students will leave the class with a new way of viewing the world. He switches to the next slide on the projector and asks students to read the "Freedom Frames Oath" aloud:

> Freedom Frames give me great power
> Freedom Frames help me see
> But with great power comes great responsibilities
> So I'll use my power to get free

After the students read the oath, Xochitl asks for clarification on what they should be doing, "Are we supposed to write this down?" Mr. Rodriguez concurs, "Yes, write this down," He explains further,

> These are your freedom frames. Right now, you physically have them on, but when you leave here, you will start seeing things differently, that's why some of you are already

> saying, “damn Mr. R, I hate you because I can’t watch TV anymore, when I watch TV I just think of your class and I get mad and I don’t know what the hell to watch on TV anymore.”

Xochitl continues sharing, “I’m going to keep them on forever so I can always have your class.” Myesha isn’t as excited, “These are not cool.” Adam responds to Mr. Rodriguez’s last comment, “So basically, people hate you because you make them take the red pill.” Adam recalls the previous week when they watched *The Matrix*. He compares Mr. Rodriguez’s class’ reaction to the “Freedom Frames” activity with the idea of taking the “red pill” and realizes a matrix exists within the real world.

Students begin to connect the metaphors of the matrix and freedom frames understanding that the world is rooted in systems of oppression. Charlene agrees with Adam, “he made us take the red pill.” Mr. Rodriguez chuckles,

> Outside of the context of this class, please don’t tell people I give you pills. Those are your freedom frames. Essentially, you are going to write: ‘What is going on in the film clip? What are some of the messages that he could read with the glasses?’…in schooling, whatever you learn, can’t be taken from you and so you walk with this knowledge already. I want you to take note of this as you watch this clip.

The film *They Live* is a 1988 science fiction film that showcases a character (Roddy Piper), who stumbles upon a pair of sunglasses (Carpenter, 1988). Once he puts on the glasses, hidden messages on advertisements appear, “obey,” “marry and reproduce,” “no independent thought,” “consume,” “work 8 hours,” “conform,” “buy,” and “submit.” In a manner of speaking, Mr. Rodriguez offers students “freedom frames” or a new lens to see the world to reveal the hidden messages that are transmitted through media and advertising. He warns students that once they leave the class, they will begin to see the world differently. Adam and Charlene reference *The Matrix*, claiming that Mr. Rodriguez “made us take the red pill,” that they are beginning to understand how systems and power work behind the scenes. Specifically, Mr. Rodriguez lends his Freedom Frames to students so that they are able to identify hegemony in society.

Mr. Rodriguez utilizes multiple metaphors to introduce the concept of hegemony. The metaphor of the “freedom frames” acts as a lens for identifying hidden, hegemonic messages. The frames encourage students to create their own lens. Initially disengaged, Xochitl shows her commitment to participating in class activities by the lesson’s end. Throughout the lesson, she asks Mr. Rodriguez for direction on what they should be doing and even declares that she wanted to keep her “freedom frames” forever. Charlene and Adam brought *The Matrix*-inspired metaphor of “taking the red pill” to the table during this lesson. The metaphor of “the matrix” suggests that there is an underlying mechanism or system that informs, reproduces, and maintains society’s structure. The “freedom frames” constructed in Mr. Rodriguez’s class gives students a new lens to view the content of their Ethnic Studies class. Mr. Rodriguez encourages students to use their new critical frame of hegemonic knowledge to SWARM.

**From Common Sense to Good Sense**

The ninth grade Ethnic Studies teachers establish a framework for students to develop a critical lens to interrogate hegemonic knowledge in their classrooms. During the curriculum development process, core teachers of the Collaborative create the acronym SWARM to signal the identities of those who design and benefit from social-cultural, political, and economic systems. The term is used in classrooms to teach about the construction and maintenance of social norms and other mechanisms that circumscribe power relations based on sexual orientation, race, citizenship, socio-economic status, and gender. For teachers and students, SWARM perspectives inform how society would function and whose experiences are normalized for which the film, *The Matrix*, serves as a keen allegory to help the students reflect on their relationship with the reality in which they exist. SWARM, or what we might interpret as our own contemporary "matrix," also determines what we currently know as "common sense" or what Gramsci would describe as beliefs, values, and systems that are normalized in society. In the Ethnic Studies classroom, SWARM is a tool utilized to name the hegemony that the course aims to disrupt. Through the examination of power, privilege, and systems of oppression, students and teachers become critical of hegemonic knowledge and mechanisms while also becoming cognizant of their roles in rewriting history. Students acquire a critical lens or "freedom frames" to view the world through an Ethnic Studies perspective. In this process, students begin to promote a "good sense" informed by a counterhegemonic critique of social, political, and economic systems.

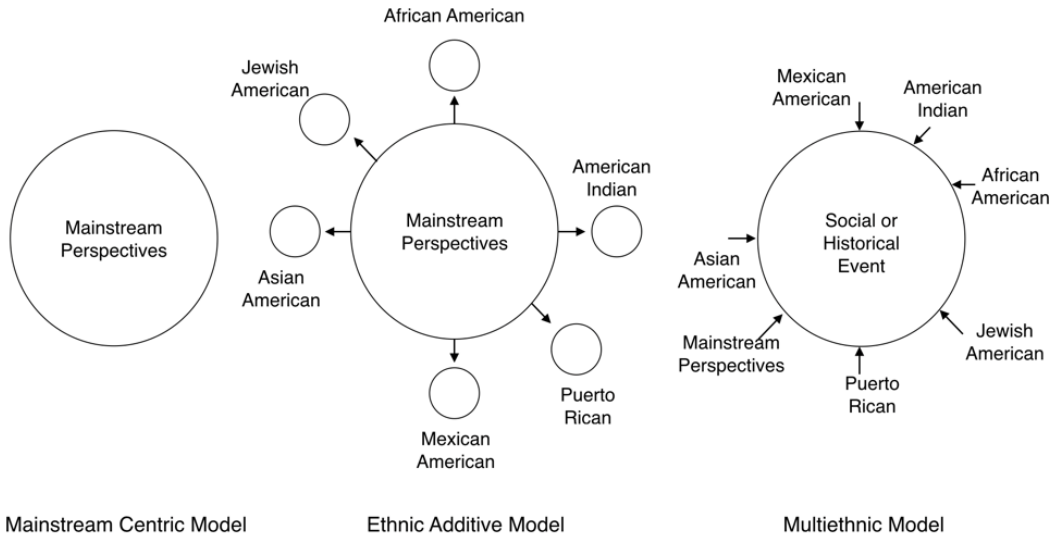
## CHAPTER SIX:
## Producing Counterhegemonic Knowledge with Ethnic Studies Students and Teachers

> One of the first kinds of knowledge indispensable to the person who arrives in a ghetto or in a place marked by the betrayal of our right "to be" is the kind of knowledge that becomes solidarity, becomes a "being with." In that context, the future is seen not as inexorable but as something that is constructed by people engaged together in life, in history. It's the knowledge that sees history as possibility and not as already determined. The world is not finished. It is always in the process of becoming.
> -Paulo Freire (1998), *Pedagogy of Freedom*

The ninth grade Ethnic Studies course can be a catalyst for teachers and students to realize their agency and role in contributing to the history-making process. While the curriculum is designed to build a critical lens among teachers and students, critical action is another key component infused within the lessons, engaging students in participating in the telling, writing, and changing of history. The classrooms I observed engage students in Knowledge/Action, the process through which students studied and produced counterhegemonic perspectives and knowledge to reveal historical, familial, community, and personal counternarratives. In this chapter, I feature my analysis of the rewriting and retelling of history and teachers' attempts to encourage students' counterhegemonic knowledge/action. I specifically draw from the fourth, fifth, and sixth units of the curriculum to showcase how the curriculum and pedagogy are informed by developing ways to identify instances of humanization and dehumanization, where students consider making internalized, interpersonal, and institutional change.

The knowledge produced within the Ethnic Studies classroom space was informed by multiple perspectives, rather than one universal interpretation of history and the social world.

Figure 2: Ethnic Studies as a Process of Curriculum Reform (J. A. Banks, 1991)



Ethnic Studies challenges the Eurocentric, colonial narratives that often inform the curriculum taught within K-12 education in the United States. James Banks (1991) describes Ethnic Studies curricular reform as typically moving from a curriculum informed by mainstream perspectives to an additive approach, where mainstream perspectives are centralized and dictated the experiences of different cultural and ethnic groups. Banks uses the term *multiethnic model* of Ethnic Studies for a curriculum or classroom that examines a social or historical event from multiple cultural and ethnic perspectives (See Figure 2). For instance, if we are to examine immigration using the multiethnic model, we would investigate how Indigenous peoples view immigration and compare their perspective with Asian American and Puerto Rican views. Mainstream perspectives are included within this analysis, although Banks maintains that they "are only one group of several and are in no way superior or inferior to other perspectives" (Banks, 1991, p. 18). This model of curriculum allows students to learn about socio-historical events through a multitude of experiences, suggesting that various groups respond to social phenomenon in different and multiple ways.

In the Ethnic Studies classrooms I observed, the curriculum leans towards the multiethnic model that Banks (1991) presents and builds upon the perspectives by highlighting ancestral and community knowledge. The curriculum the teachers developed and used explicitly names mainstream perspectives through their acronym "S.W.A.R.M.," suggesting that the perspectives of straight, white, American, rich men are normalized and valorized within society. The SWARM perspective also informs traditional narratives taught within history and other social science courses. Teachers challenge SWARM perspectives by naming these perspectives as hegemonic and introduced multiple perspectives, or counterhegemonic knowledge, throughout the curriculum. While teachers include perspectives from multiple cultural and ethnic groups, they also rely on their own, their students, and their communities' perspectives to inform the curriculum. This approach equips students with a pluriversal (see Grosfoguel, 2012; Zembylas, 2017) understanding of historical and current social issues.

## Counterhegemonic Knowledge Production

While observing the ninth grade Ethnic Studies classrooms, I witnessed teachers introduce multiple perspectives to their students, challenging the SWARM lens found in traditional curriculum. Specifically, teachers refer to these perspectives as the lens that informs the "master narrative" and helps students recognize the perspectives neglected within the SWARM frame. For instance, Mr. Rodriguez shared the documentary, *No Más Bebés,* with his students. This documentary showcases the experiences of Mexican immigrant women who were sterilized soon after giving birth in Los Angeles during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Tajima-Peña, 2015). When they finished the film, Mr. Rodriguez introduced the terms "narrative," "master narrative," and "counternarrative" to the students. He instructed students to write down the definitions of the terms that were projected on the screen as he drew the connections between narratives and larger concepts they discussed thus far in the school year. Mr. Rodriguez professed,

> You need to write this down. A lot of these things will be narrative - "spoken or written account of connected events; a story." Ideally, you will be able to connect all these things that happen in class, in these stories and you will see how they are related or influenced

> by the things we've talking about — oppression, hegemony — the point is to use everything…and be able to identify these things…There are two narratives that I want you to focus on. We talked about one early on. The first one is the "master narrative"…just a refresher…"a story told from the perspective of the wealthy and ruling class." And then there is the "counternarrative" — "a story told from the perspective of historically marginalized peoples, i.e. occupied nations, the poor, people of color, women…LGBTQQI."

As students scribbled down the definitions in their notes, Mr. Rodriguez focused on the binary of master narratives and counternarratives. Earlier in the year, they had previously discussed master narratives, which students recognize as Mr. Rodriguez reminds them of the definition.

Mr. Rodriguez offers the idea of counternarratives as a counterhegemonic perspective through which to view stories. He specifically highlights communities that brought a different perspective to the SWARM lens that students critiqued in previous lessons. Mr. Rodriguez connected these terms to *No Más Bebés,*

> **Mr. Rodriguez:** These are the counternarratives, these stories. The documentary we just saw, master narrative or counternarrative?
> **Most students:** counternarratives
> **Adam:** Well, a little bit of both
> **Mr. Rodriguez:** A little bit of both? Tell me why.
> **Adam:** because they talked to the doctors so that's more like the master narrative.
> **Mr. Rodriguez:** That's the master narrative. They interviewed the head, "to think we were a part of this state-sanctioned process to limit the population of the Mexican community in Los Angeles, I'm a little offended." Those were his words, right? Master narrative as opposed to [Mexican mothers who were victims of sterilization], counternarrative.

When Mr. Rodriguez commenced discussion, Adam made the connection that some master narrative perspectives were included in the film when they presented the experiences of the doctors involved in the state-sanctioned procedures to sterilize immigrant mothers.

Mr. Rodriguez agreed with Adam, and then he went on to bring it back to the outcomes of the court case, when Mexican mothers took action and sued the hospital for mass sterilization.

> Now a couple things came out when they took this to court, these papers are now presented in multiple languages, so the women that the papers are given to sign, they are now in a language they can understand. If you are twenty-one years or younger, there is a seventy-two hour wait period before they actually…let you sign the paper saying that you want to have your tubes tied. If you're twenty-one and under…there's an extra period of time where you can go home and think about it before they allow you to sign the papers.

Mr. Rodriguez featured the changes that took place after the court ruling, which includes consent forms in multiple languages and waiting periods for mothers who are twenty-one years old and younger. Along with a counterhegemonic perspective, he also emphasized that Mexican

immigrant women took action and changed the future trajectory for women in their community who may encounter similar issues.

The perspectives presented in the Ethnic Studies classroom not only provide students with an oppositional view to SWARM ways of knowing, seeing, and being, but also demonstrated how historically marginalized communities responded to unjust social issues. The Ethnic Studies teachers in my study articulate a desire for students to develop a critical perspective to "read the world" (Freire & Macedo, 1987) and hope that students would realize they were part of a larger contingent with the agency to shape their world and lived experiences. As I discussed in the previous chapter, teachers guide students in developing a lens to interrogate normalization in society. For teachers, the purpose of the course did not stop at critique, rather teachers explicitly engage students in an apprenticeship of action-oriented critical inquiry that arms students with tools to address the social issues they study.

When I interviewed teachers about their experiences teaching the ninth-grade course, they were eager to engage their students in processes of critique and posing solutions. Teachers want students to realize their agency in their own lives and in their communities. They also want the counterhegemonic perspectives they present to inspire students to bring this knowledge to other classrooms and life experiences. They expressed that multiple perspectives were an essential component of the Ethnic Studies curriculum. For example, Mr. Thomas shared in an interview,

> I want them to be able to go into their general ed class and ask critical questions, right. I think that is the goal. I want to really press upon them that their history class, their general history class is one interpretation and they should ask for multiple interpretations, right. Multiple ways of seeing things…So I've always worked with the Howard Zinn reading. I felt like that was basically my textbook. [It] gave me an opportunity to provide me an alternative view, so I've always used Howard Zinn over, maybe the last five years. I kind of tried to teach from that perspective but I think that Ethnic Studies is a step beyond that, a little bit because it gives you the tools to critically engage students, whereas, again—*A People's History* [by Howard Zinn] is a narrative history, it's storytelling and it provides you with an alternative interpretation, which is great but if you still don't have the tools to have kids deconstruct what's going on and then try to see it in the present tense or see what the outcome has been with these particular policies for systems of oppression that have been woven into the fabric of society, then the kids just get another story, but I think now, with Ethnic Studies, the skills and the tools that I'm getting is to allow kids to use those same tools and be critical about history and hopefully that will bring them agency, like a sense of confidence that they can speak up more about who they are within the general ed class. That's what I'm hoping will occur.

For Mr. Thomas, the Ethnic Studies class is more than a narrative of what has happened, but also a site where students find agency within themselves to question and be critical of hegemonic ways history has been told. He shares that before he taught Ethnic Studies, he used Howard Zinn (2007) as a reference to present alternative perspectives in his history classes. He suggests that Ethnic Studies takes it further, where students learn tools to take action. Similarly, Ms. Martinez shares that she wants students to walk away with knowing

> that they have agency in their life, agency within their community, agency within school, and to be critical of the world around them. To be critical of me. To be critical of their other teachers. To be critical of the media…to have some skills and have an idea that they can create a plan to actually do something with that critique. So that they don't just have to sit with things that they feel are unfair, that are happening to them and their peers and to their parents and like to their communities and to the world, right? That there's a history of struggle and that they're a part of that struggle and that there are allies out there to help them organize around things that they want to see changed.

Ms. Martinez expresses enthusiasm for providing students with tools to create plans of action to address the social issues students investigate in the course. Students are exposed to instances of inequality and oppression where their racial and ethnic groups have historically been treated unfairly and dehumanized. Ms. Martinez's goal in teaching the course includes a social change component, where students understand they are part of a larger contingent willing to struggle to transform their lives and their communities.

Mr. Cruz also emphasized the idea of being part of a collective. In his interview he expressed that he wanted his students to

> become critical in how they see the world, that they are able to see what their role is in not only shaping themselves but shaping the world. That they're connected to other people, and that they are hopeful about what it is they do…in the end I want my students to take away…one - they have a responsibility, two - that they have the ability, and three - they need to do it in concert, in community. And the only way that I can move them to get to that place, I lead by example, that I do what it is that I'm asking them to do. So that reflects my pedagogical style then maybe I can characterize it as action-oriented, critical, and connected.

Mr. Cruz goals for his students include having them realize their responsibility in "shaping the world" with the knowledge that they are part of a larger collective. Ms. Martinez, Mr. Cruz, and Mr. Thomas highlight that the Ethnic Studies class goes beyond learning history from multiple perspectives and actually involves students in the process of producing knowledge and taking action to make change in their lives. Thus, counterhegemonic knowledge production in the Ethnic Studies classroom bridges knowledge with action. In the curriculum, this bridging is attempted through the Oral History and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects. In the Oral History project, students take an active role in writing and revealing the histories and perspectives of their families and neighborhoods. Students also become researchers as they explore student and social issues through their YPAR projects. Through these guided assignments, students engage in knowledge/action as they exposed familial/ancestral knowledge and community knowledge, which were crucial components of the counterhegemonic knowledge produced in the Ethnic Studies classroom.

**Familial/ancestral Knowledge**

The Ethnic Studies classes I observed encourage students to value familial and ancestral knowledge by engaging them in an Oral History project. During the fourth unit of the

curriculum, teachers use the project as a vehicle to teach students the key concepts of humanization and dehumanization. As main concepts within the curriculum, teachers were thorough in their preparation for understanding the meaning of humanization and were concerned about finding the right time in the year to introduce students to the concepts. In the 2011-2012 school year, (de)humanization was taught in the first unit during the fall semester. As time progressed, teachers decided that they would introduce the concepts in the fourth unit of the curriculum, which was introduced in the spring semester. By this time in the school year, teachers already covered concepts, such as: identity, narrative, systems, power, hegemony, and counterhegemony. Therefore, students learned about humanization and dehumanization with a complex understanding of power relations and who controls various messages that are dominant in society.

Ethnic Studies teachers define humanization as processes that "uphold and/or restore dignity and self-worth" and "when power is used to help people attain their self-determining, potential." In contrast, dehumanization is defined as processes that "distort one's humanity through any degree of violence, theft, appropriation, and/or humiliation" and "when people/their bodies are treated like objects rather than human beings." The teachers involved in the curriculum writing process wrote these definitions and included them within the district's Ethnic Studies framework. These concepts were introduced in the curriculum before students began their Oral History projects.

In his introduction to the Oral History project, Mr. Rodriguez began the lesson by asking students, "Why is it important to tell our people's stories?" The question was projected on the screen in the front of the room and Mr. Rodriguez instructed students to take out a piece of paper to answer the question of the day. He offers students time to write about and reflect on the significance of telling "our people's stories." After students scribbled thoughts onto the page, Mr. Rodriguez opened the floor for discussion. Myesha responded,

> I think it's important to tell my people's stories because if I don't, other people will take credit for it. Like they say Kim Kardashian created 'boxer braids.' Mind you, they're not called 'boxer braids.' They're called cornrows and my people made them.

Myesha raised the problem of cultural appropriation and how claiming "our people's stories" and experiences can prevent others from taking credit for community contributions. Mark also responded to Mr. Rodriguez's question, "We need to offer another perspective," to which Alicia added, "We need to keep history alive, if you stop telling your story, no one will know. Stories give voice." At this point in the lesson, Mr. Rodriguez affirmed students' responses and clarified, "Different perspectives give voice. Would you agree this is a summary of what you all said?" He referred to the projector screen, which read, "Because if you don't, someone else will tell it for you." Xochitl exclaimed, "Yes!" She agreed with Mr. Rodriguez and her peers that telling "our people's stories" allows for recognition and voice, which also avoids the possibility of others telling or co-opting the stories from their own perspectives.

Mr. Rodriguez and his students discuss the need to learn multiple sides to a story. For instance, Andrea considers the idea that history is "alive," and without her voice or the processes of re/telling stories and transmitting knowledge, there is potential for stories and ideas to die. In this short discussion, Mr. Rodriguez and his students demonstrate an urgency for telling their communities' stories. This process gave students an active role in the process of reclaiming

familial knowledge. They recognized the significance of the perspectives that originated in their own homes and neighborhoods, especially with Myesha's claim about cornrows. Cultural appropriation without giving credit is one way to dehumanize a community's contributions to culture and society. Myesha expresses pride in knowing that cornrows, a trendy phenomenon, originated with her people. Thus, acknowledging that cornrows or "boxer braids" are rooted in Black experiences provides a humanizing perspective for such phenomena.

As students and teachers reveal their ancestral knowledge, they acknowledge the affinity groups they belonged to while also placing their experiences within a socio-historical context. Students draw upon their experiences to contextualize the ideas discussed in the course. Teachers also bring in their own experiences as content for the curriculum. Mr. Lee, a Chinese American veteran teacher, offered his own familial history as content within the course. During one particular lesson, Mr. Lee began the class by describing a trip that he made to the National Archives to look for his grandfather's records. He shared that his grandfather passed through Angel Island when immigrating to the United States and claimed that "all the information on immigration on the West Coast" is located at the archives. He asks the students if they had ever been to Angel Island, not a park. Two students raise their hands. One student asked, "Isn't that the island where they store all the people before they come over?" Mr. Lee replied, "One of them, yes…raise your hand if you went to the immigration part of Angel Island." No one raised their hand. Mr. Lee continued,

> I'm sorry you didn't learn about immigration while you were there. I'm hoping we can make up for that now. My grandfather passed through Angel Island and all of his records were stored at the National Archives. These papers are all here and you all will be looking at photocopies of the actual documents that I found in the National Archive. Two things to mention before I do anything else. One, some of them have handwriting that you might have a hard time getting through but I'm here to help. Second, some of the photocopies are blurry, this is exactly the photocopy that the National Archives gave to me. This is the best copy they could have. These documents are like 60 years old so things get blurry over time. I am not going to tell you all the people and all the things, that's partially what I would like all of you to discover. One thing that I will tell you is that my grandfather. His name in all these documents [is] Zhang Wang Wei (pseudonym). So if you see this name on the documents, that's a reference to my grandfather.

Mr. Lee described how the documents that he recovered from the archives included various names along with his grandfather, suggesting that there were multiple people involved during his immigration process. He said, "You're going to have to play detective…this is the actual practice that historians have to do because when historians want to study something they don't just open up a textbook they have to find actual things from the time and read it to understand what it means." Mr. Lee informed the students that they would be working in pairs to examine ten documents regarding his grandfather's immigration history. There were enough students in the class to form nine pairs, therefore there was always one document floating around the room. He instructed students to number their papers one through ten and to leave enough space so that they could to take notes on the various pieces of his grandfather's immigration story puzzle. As students found their pairs, he explained that on their notes, they should have two sections titled

"summary" and "analysis." Under "summary", Mr. Lee instructed students to explain what they find. Their "analysis" is what they think the document means.

Instead of lecturing or presenting the various archival materials, Mr. Lee provides space for students to handle documents, including maps, apartment layouts, application denials, and interpret them on their own. Each document is a puzzle piece, telling one part of Mr. Lee's immigration story. Mr. Lee shares his own research process on his grandfather to teach students about immigration. By centering his own experience, Mr. Lee draws on ancestral knowledge to understand his own family's experiences with regard to immigration.

One of the archival materials is a letter written by Mr. Lee's grandfather from 1949. The grandfather asks for an I.D. card for his wife. I have chills when I read the letter. Their first place of residence was in a nearby Chinatown. I know exactly where this apartment is located because I was just in the neighborhood the previous week. This lesson is so close to home.

In pairs, students worked together to analyze documents. As students read and analyze each document, one by one they figure out the larger story. Jennifer completed her analysis first. Jennifer approached Mr. Lee and asks him if his grandfather's father already lived in the United States. I suspect that she asked this question because many of the documents claim that Zhang Wang Wei is a song of a native. Jennifer also asked Mr. Lee about paper sons and daughters. Mr. Lee replied, "You already know about that? Don't tell anybody yet." Mr. Lee did not want Jennifer to spoil the story for the other students just yet. She had previous knowledge of Chinese paper sons or Chinese immigrants who were "sons" or "daughters" on paper but not by blood.

In his lesson plan, Mr. Lee shares his relative's narrative and places his ancestor's experiences within a socio-historical context. He later revealed to students that in 1906, many Asian immigration files were destroyed in a fire due to an earthquake in San Francisco. This tragedy occurred more than a decade after the first immigration act that targeted a specific ethnic group was passed, which barred Chinese immigration in 1882. As a response to the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the opportunity that the earthquake provided, Chinese immigrants already in the United States began petitioning for their "sons" to join them in their new homes. Mr. Lee's grandfather was among the thousands of Chinese immigrants who were part of this "paper son" phenomenon. Mr. Lee's lesson for the day humanized the "paper son" experience, showcasing how events and policies from the past have impacted Chinese descendants within the present.

Drawing from familial and ancestral knowledge, both Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Lee stress the significance of centering counternarratives within their Ethnic Studies classroom. At the root of these examples exists the need to counter mainstream narratives that overlook the experiences of marginalized communities. Based on my observations, I found that teachers and students produce community-based counterhegemonic knowledge within their classrooms. To Ethnic Studies teachers and students, "community" had multiple meanings and took on various forms. How do we build solidarity in the classroom? To which affinity groups do we belong? What and whose community knowledge do we value and center within the curriculum? What responsibilities do we have to our people and neighborhoods? How do Ethnic Studies classes encourage and complicate community formation processes? Teachers and students expand and enhance the counterhegemonic knowledge that they produce within the classroom.

While my observations include various interpretations of how the Oral History Project played out (i.e. some school sites produced a collection of the oral histories and distributed copies of the narratives to members of the school and students' families, others produced lyrical life stories, where students shared their experiences through poetic verse), students begin to

acknowledge the obstacles and accomplishments of people near and dear to their hearts. Once students complete their investigation of their familial histories through the Oral History projects, teachers then engage students in a unit focusing on social movements, where they specifically draw from community knowledge/action of the past to showcase how oppressed people engaged in social change work.

**Community Knowledge/Action**

The ninth grade Ethnic Studies class encourages and complicates community formation. Since it is designed for students' first year in high school and the course exposes students to Ethnic Studies, usually for the first time, teachers spend a large portion of the fall semester course encouraging teamwork within the classroom. This sense of solidarity work and building community-based relationships counters what teachers have traditionally taught within general education courses. For instance, in an interview, Mr. Thomas discussed the difference between teaching Ethnic Studies and U.S. History,

> In general history, we teach that everyone's an individual, it's kind of this rugged individualism, like you're on your own, manifest destiny…we don't really teach a sense of community…not until civil rights…[community] is the beginning in Ethnic Studies. Community-based relationships…by us working together, we can move ourselves…forward. Whereas in general ed…each student is really about themselves, right?…The sense of trust is not there.

Mr. Thomas asserts that relationship and community building is an essential part of the Ethnic Studies class that he teaches. Similarly, Ms. Kim shared that her students developed trust early on. In her interview, she stated, "In the beginning when we did the Road of Life [activity] they were very open. I was really surprised to see that…they really…built a strong community and they get along pretty well." For Ms. Kim and Mr. Thomas, developing connections within the classroom prepared Ethnic Studies students for challenging content and discussions as the course progressed. Ms. Kim[17] confessed, "I sometimes feel like…the topics that we're talking about are all about oppression, dehumanization…we're talking about very sad stuff all the time…I have to learn how to talk about celebration too so that it's not emotionally draining all the time." For some teachers, ideas about community ended within the classroom.

While setting a strong communal foundation among students for the course was important, some teachers expanded on this and felt strongly about extending their definition of community beyond the classroom. Mr. Rodriguez felt it was important to tie students' academic identities to their personal lives. He shared,

> I think that it is crucial to set up these spaces…they understand that it doesn't stop when they leave class. They have a responsibility to the community that goes beyond the class and it transcends time. And they may not be here but they have to leave something back for the next person to kind of take over and then create a movement in that sense. So in terms of my Ethnic Studies class because that is very much what happened with a lot of

[17] Ms. Kim was in her first year teaching Ethnic Studies. She did not have any prior knowledge of the discipline when she was assigned to teach the course so she was simultaneously learning and teaching the content.

> social movements and groups, it didn't just stop. It wasn't just this group of folks…it's still an extension of what other folks have done and they understand that. It's embedded in the curriculum, through the oral history project…they can actually take it back home…[their family knows] what it's like to live in this country and experience an immigrant life or being a person of color. So that establishes an opportunity to have conversations ongoing beyond the classroom and ultimately to provide for the younger folks.

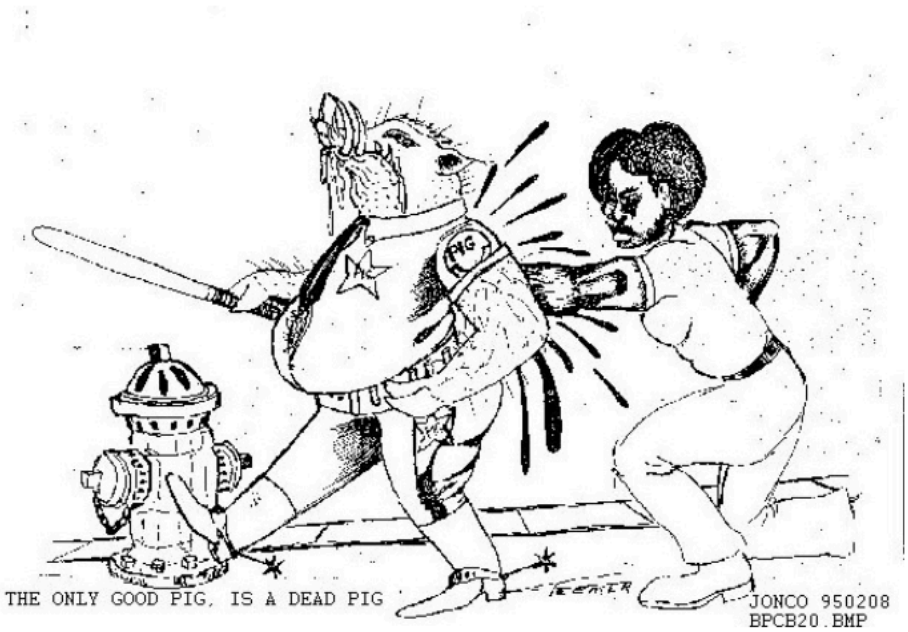
Here, Mr. Rodriguez discusses how the curriculum is written in such a way for students to connect what they learn in the Ethnic Studies class to their neighborhoods and their families. He also signals that he hopes students recognize the responsibility and duty they have toward the people in their lives. Mr. Cruz shared that by the end of the year, he wanted students to walk away with "one…responsibility, two…that they have the ability, and three…they need to do it in concert, in community." Mr. Cruz saw that this would only be possible if he "led by example."

> I do what it is that I'm asking them to do…I can characterize it as action-oriented, critical, and connected. I love theory. I'm a nerd. I love reading abstract text and talking about it. But I know that's completely useless unless it's related to the material conditions of the children that I teach. And so then, I guess in terms of [my pedagogical] style, it's practical and it's relevant.

Community was defined and practiced in a variety of ways within the different classrooms. In other words, how teachers taught mutual support and communal practices varied among the different Ethnic Studies classrooms that I observed. For some, building meaningful relationships among students was the central aspect of community knowledge production. However, for some teachers tying the content of the course to student and local, city, and state experiences was key to advancing community knowledge/action. For instance, Ms. Martinez was explicit about the local perspectives that she brought into the content of the curriculum.

Out of the six classrooms I observed, only three included a unit on social movements. Ms. Martinez wanted to showcase the actions that took place within multiple social reform efforts. During one particular lesson, Ms. Martinez began the class by sharing a cartoon image with her students. She asked students to take out their notebooks and "describe what you see in one or two sentences. If you do not know about the Black Panther Party, what would you think about them if you saw this picture?" Students analyzed the cartoon from the "Black Panther Party Coloring Book." The cartoon depicts a young woman stabbing a pig, dressed in a police

Figure 3: “The Only Good Pig, Is A Dead Pig”




uniform, in the back. Once students had a chance to jot down some thoughts, Ms. Martinez engaged students in a discussion:

**Ms. Martinez:** What do you see in this picture?
**Paul:** Pig in a cop uniform
**Rick:** A woman stabbing a pig
**Ms. Martinez:** You see a woman stabbing a pig. And what about the words?
**Allan:** “The only good pig, is a dead pig”
**Ms. Martinez:** What would you think, if you were to know that this is coming from a book called *The Black Panther Party Coloring Book,* what would you think about the Black Panthers if you didn’t know anything about them?
**Cynthia:** They like to put police uniforms on pigs
**Charlene:** I would assume they are violent
**Ms. Martinez:** Why would you think they are violent?
**Charlene:** Because they are depicting one of their members stabbing a cop. And also the bottom where it says, “The only good pig is a dead pig”
**Ms. Martinez:** So based off of the writing and based off the picture, you would say they were violent. Ok, can you turn over to the back? I’m just gonna read this to you all, really quick. Next week, we’re going to learn a little bit about this program called COINTELPRO. It was an FBI counterintelligence program. So in other words intelligence means information. The COINTELPRO got the FBI information…the bureau’s goals included infiltrating. What does infiltrating mean?
**Cynthia:** going inside

> **Ms. Martinez:** Right. Going inside and disrupting legitimate organizations engaged in legal activity but which the bureau objected to…COINTELPRO…their whole point was to get inside of organizations that they didn't agree with like the Black Panthers. In 1968, the FBI anonymously printed and distributed one thousand copies of the Black Panther Party Coloring Book. This is an example of one of the pictures that they drew.

During her lesson, Ms. Martinez asked students to analyze a cartoon that they argued depicted the Black Panther Party (BPP) as violent. She later revealed that the coloring book was distributed by the FBI to the BPP Free Breakfast for Children Program contributors such as Safeway and Mayflower restaurants. The breakfast program was one of the many social services the BPP offered to families in various cities. The program began in Oakland in January of 1969 and in the next two years they offered thirty-six free breakfast programs in twenty-three cities in the United States (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013). Party members arrived at program sites early in the morning to prepare and serve breakfast before students went to school. While students ate, "members taught liberation lessons consisting of party messages and Black history" (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 184). In some chapters, the program also served breakfast to adult community members. Local businesses became involved with BPP efforts by donating food and supplies for the breakfast program.

Ms. Martinez began her lesson with an image from the coloring book to showcase how the FBI depicted the BPP. She shared Bobby Seale's comments on the coloring book where he states,

> That coloring book was drawn by a cat in Sacramento. An artist who has Black racist ideas. I told him, the coloring book you drew, it's got too many racist overtones. Another thing, you show a Panther shooting a cop. What you're showing is something about the political context. The reason why the Panther would shoot the cop.

Ms. Martinez clarified, "This coloring book was one way the FBI tried to make the Black Panthers look bad and make people go against them." In this lesson, Ms. Martinez exposes the hegemonic narrative that the FBI constructed with regards to the Black Panther Party. She presents an example of the defamation campaigns the FBI initiated; however, she also brings in the perspective of BPP members. In addition to quoting Bobby Seale, one of the co-founders of the BPP, she also had students read the testimony to Congress by *Black Panther Newspaper* editor, Frank Benson Jones, made where he explains the cartoon further.

> You have to define what is meant by "pig." If pig is intended to be or if you believe that a pig is a policeman who conducts himself improperly and in a criminal manner in a black community or in any community, then I would like for you to tell me how you could ever call this person, if he is alive, indeed a good policeman, you see. A pig would be the pig who was most criminal, you see what I mean? Either the pig who is going to come in and brutalize people…It really depends on your starting point. If you start with the assumption that the Black Panthers advocate killing policemen, then you would probably draw from that cartoon, you would think the cartoon implies the Black Panthers are advocating the killing of policemen. If you start with the assumption or the belief that the Black Panther Party is in favor of removing policemen from the community who do not

> conduct themselves properly, then you might see this is a cartoon depicting the removal of a policeman who does not conduct himself in a proper manner…Now if you start with the assumption that there must be something wrong to make people visualize the police this way, as an enemy, then you see what actually motivates a person to draw that type of picture and why it would be accepted by anyone.

In this excerpt, students read Mr. Jones' testimony where he explains the pig in the cartoon refers to a "policeman who conducts himself improperly and in a criminal manner in a black community or in any community." Mr. Jones critiques the interpretation of the prosecutor that deems the Black Panther Party wants police dead. He distinguishes that there is an assumption that policemen are involved in criminal activity in Black communities.

Ms. Martinez engages students in an analysis of the cartoon and testimony. Once students read the testimony and discussed the implications within small groups, Ms. Martinez brought the class together in a larger conversation.

> **Ms. Martinez**: What is Mr. Jones saying about the police? Earl, what did you write? I overheard you say something really great.
> **Earl**: He likes the cop that's doing his job but he doesn't like the cop that abuses their power.
> **Ms. Martinez:** Great. So who is he saying are the pigs?
> **Sam:** Racist cops.
> **Ms. Martinez:** Racist cops would be one, who else? Earl what did you say?
> **Earl:** The ones who abuse their power.
> **Ms. Martinez:** The ones that abuse their power, right? Those that abuse their power, those that involve themselves in criminal activity and the, is he advocating that all police officers should die?
> **Cherry:** No.
> **Ms. Martinez**: No, he made that very clear in his article. He's saying that the ones that abuse their power, the ones that are racist, the ones that act in criminal activity should be…what should happen to them?
> **Tricia:** Removed.
> **Ms. Martinez:** Yea, exactly. They should be removed, right?!

In this lesson, students examine multiple perspectives to interpret how a coloring book was used to disseminate a particular perspective about the Black Panther Party. Through their analysis, they figure out that the BPP did not advocate for killing policemen. Rather, they were upset by the criminal activity that policemen practice in Black communities.

Ms. Martinez, along with other Ethnic Studies teachers, wants students to learn about the injustices of disenfranchised peoples through a community knowledge lens. Here, she presents the perspectives of BPP members as well as the perspectives of the FBI to reveal how the counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) repressed BPP growth and development. During the lesson, she quoted the FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who called the Black Panthers "the greatest threat to the internal security of the United States," suggesting that the FBI felt threatened by the work of the Black Panther Party. Indeed, in March 1968, Hoover articulated long-term goals for COINTELPRO, which included, "A final goal should be to prevent the long-

range growth of militant black nationalist organizations, especially among youth. Specific tactics to prevent these groups from converting young people must be developed" (Bloom & Martin, Jr., 2013, p. 202). The distribution of BPP Coloring Book to local supermarkets was one tactic the FBI COINTELPRO used to dismantle the Free Breakfast for Children Program, hoping to cease contributions. This lesson showcases how repression of Black liberation movements in the United States and how members of these communities fought back. Ms. Martinez ended the lesson by showing a video of Bobby Seale describing the BPP ten-point platform and encouraged students to think about their own five-point plans.

## Conclusion: Ethnic Studies Knowledge/Action

Ethnic Studies teachers stress the significance of community —solidarity in the classroom, the need to bridge students' experiences with the local neighborhoods, and the community knowledge that were valued and informed the course content. The Ethnic Studies program includes the voices of the students and also encourages them to place value on the ancestral knowledge within their families. Thus, the knowledge that is produced for and within the Ethnic Studies classroom countered the dominant ideals and narratives that have historically informed U.S. educational narratives of colonial rule and individualism.

Banks' (1991) multiethnic model is helpful to think about whose perspectives are included within school curricula. Through my observations, Ethnic Studies teachers centered Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian perspectives to produce narratives that enable students to place themselves and their kin within a socio-historical timeline. One key project that facilitates this process is the Oral History project, where students document the counternarratives of a family or community member. Revealing counternarratives also allowed teachers and students the opportunity to situate their personal stories within a political context as we saw with Mr. Lee's lesson. Teachers in this study typically drew from student, teacher, ancestral, and community knowledge and focused on teaching social phenomena through one racial/ethnic group at a time. However, there is also potential to use Banks' model to engage students in exploring how racial groups are differentially positioned or what some refer to as comparative racialization (Almaguer, 1994; de Genova, 2006; Hong & Ferguson, 2011; Jun, 2011; Pulido, 2006). How are racial groups differentially positioned or racialized in various sociohistorical contexts? For instance, in chapter five, I described Mr. Wilson's lesson on solidarity between white servants and black slaves during Bacon's Rebellion. There is an opportunity within this particular lesson to transcend the Black-white binary by articulating how the social phenomena of building Black-white solidarity simultaneously relied on the erasure and extermination of Indigenous villages/peoples (de Genova, 2006; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). In this example, the insertion of an Indigenous perspective demonstrates how tension might arise between racial groups when we examine how they are racially positioned within a particular time and space. While comparative racialization can certainly reveal conflict among different racial groups, this approach can also illuminate how groups of color build solidarity and community.

Through these projects, Ethnic Studies teachers and students also expand their understanding of who is part of their community and establishes counterhegemonic experiences and knowledge as central to developing a movement towards a just world. Through the units on social movements, some students learn about how liberation organizations before their time worked towards racial and gender equity. Students are also given the time to investigate and

imagine what change could look like in their own lives through a Youth Participatory Action Research unit, however, only three of the six classrooms I observed engaged students in YPAR. Consistency among classes was a challenge within the school district. From my observations, students demonstrate frustration with Ethnic Studies classes always focusing on oppression. For instance, one student expressed, “Isn’t it too early to talk about this?” when Ms. Kim started her lesson plan one morning. For high school Ethnic Studies courses, there is a need to also bring up stories of resistance, healing, and victory. Too often, Ethnic Studies students can leave the classroom not knowing what to do with the counternarratives and injustice they learn about. Future Ethnic Studies teachers should also consider ways to draw upon familial and community knowledge to teach about resistance and how people have taken action, as demonstrated in Ms. Martinez’s class.

## CHAPTER SEVEN
## Conclusion

Mr. Cruz slapped his hands together slowly, mimicking a heartbeat. Ethnic Studies teachers and students joined in. The clap gained momentum, growing faster and louder, the room swells with a thundering roar. Mr. Cruz called out, "*i---saaang bagsak*!" Everyone clapped once in unison. Mr. Cruz called out again "*Dalawang bagsak*!" Everyone clapped twice. "*Tatlong bagsak*!" Mr. Cruz completed the call out, and everyone engaged in the unity clap brought their hands together three times in unison. The unity clap comes from the solidarity movements developed between Mexican and Filipino farmworkers of the United Farm Workers union. Mr. Cruz adds "*Isang bagsak*" or "one down/fall" to bring everyone together at the end of the clap to represent that they are all down for one another, if one falls, they all fall. *Isang Bagsak* originates from the People Power Movement in the Philippines of the 1980s.

The Ethnic Studies Collaborative often combined the unity clap with *isang bagsak*[18] to showcase their multiracial solidarity with one another in class and various events, like at the Ethnic Studies Student Symposium[19] I described above. The symposium was an end of the year exchange between students, teachers, and community members from various school sites in the district. After conducting oral history, children's book[20], and youth participatory action research projects, students were given the opportunity to share their projects and research findings with their peers across the city.

Ethnic Studies teachers and students often escaped the confines of their classrooms to continue the work necessary to practice the curriculum they teach and learn. The student symposium offered a space for teachers and students to come together as a district-wide Ethnic Studies body, to showcase student-driven work on community history and issues. It was also a site to continue conversations that happened in the classroom, to recognize that the work goes beyond the schools that students attend, and to further build solidarity with students learning and writing Ethnic Studies counternarratives. Ultimately, the symposium was an event to signal that they were not alone, that they were part of a larger contingent advocating for social justice education that centered the experiences of historically oppressed peoples.

I conclude this dissertation by introducing the symposium in order to highlight how teachers expand their critical collective consciousness by including students and community members. The Collaborative wanted to ensure that students across the district came together to illuminate that they were part of a larger company of young Ethnic Studies scholars doing similar work. The symposium was a result of a curriculum that guided students in developing a critical lens to interrogate hegemonic forms of knowledge through an analysis of power, privilege, and systems of oppression. As I discussed in chapter five, students examine hegemony and the ways societal structures create and reproduce "common sense." The critical frameworks

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[18] Sometimes, teachers will add *dalawang bagsak* (two falls) and *tatlong bagsak* (three falls) to represent the past (*isang bagsak)*, the present, and the future.

[19] The first Ethnic Studies Student Symposium was held in 2017, one year after I concluded data collection.

[20] Some 11th and 12th grade Ethnic Studies sections across the district engaged students in a children's book project, where students wrote Ethnic Studies-informed books to share with elementary school students in their neighborhoods.

they learn then inform counterhegemonic knowledge they learn and produce in other units of the curriculum, as we see in chapter six. Students and teachers draw from ancestral and community knowledge to disrupt traditional ways of knowing and to understand ways oppressed peoples have resisted their oppression.

Responding to teachers' critical, albeit uneven, consciousness, the Collaborative addressed this challenge by infusing political education into teachers' professional development, leading to the formation of their critical collective consciousness. Political education continued within teachers' individual classroom sites as students engaged in learning about identity, systems of oppression, and hegemony. As teachers and students developed this critical collective consciousness, they saw education and their role as Ethnic Studies learners and educators as a political activity. In this conclusion, I summarize the findings and discuss the theoretical contributions of this study. Next, I present implications for policy and curriculum writers, teacher educators, teachers, and school districts interested in institutionalizing K-12 Ethnic Studies. Finally, I close a brief overview of the current state of Ethnic Studies in the district I studied and throughout the state of California.

## Theoretical Contributions

This study reveals significant theoretical contributions to educational scholarship. My examination of the Collaborative's praxis reveals that critical professional development can be infused within support offered to teachers, as seen in the Ethnic Studies program at Esperanza Unified. The Ethnic Studies teachers who were part of the Collaborative I observed engaged in a process I call critical race dialogue. I bridge critical race theory in education and Paulo Freire's (1970) notion of dialogue to further theorize and build upon theories of critical race praxis and critical race pedagogy (Lawrence, 1992; Leonardo, 2005; Lynn et al., 2013; Stovall, 2013; Yosso et al., 2004). I identify two specific mechanisms of critical race dialogue that the Collaborative engaged in throughout their professional development: (1) situating self within systems of oppression and (2) nurturing brave space. These processes coupled with the infusion of political education in the Collaborative's meetings and retreats led Ethnic Studies teachers to develop a critical collective consciousness.

The Ethnic Studies teachers in this study realized that their work was political and through continuous shared reflection and collective action they understood that their work in developing and implementing Ethnic Studies curriculum required collaboration. Their weekly professional development meetings led to a critical collective consciousness as they situated their lives within the content of the curriculum and within a larger movement for high school Ethnic Studies. Engaging in critical race dialogue provided teachers with a space to interrogate their own lives and their positions as teachers. High school Ethnic Studies can be a site to bridge critical race praxis with dialogue, where teachers and students explicitly examine race relations within the curriculum.

Education scholars have revealed that high school Ethnic Studies courses have positive academic and social impact on students, my research extends the research by illuminating how teachers went about developing and implementing Ethnic Studies curricula (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2017; Sleeter, 2011). From my observations in Ethnic Studies classrooms, I examined how teachers guided students in interrogating hegemonic perspectives and knowledge. While much of the research on high school Ethnic Studies focuses on the centrality of race

within the discipline, my findings illuminate how Ethnic Studies professional development and curricula can engage students and teachers in developing an intersectional framework to analyze knowledge and systems. Here, teachers and students begin to develop epistemologies of differential consciousness, where they learn that different oppressed groups have a variety of ways to describe and name their oppression and resistance. The high school Ethnic Studies teachers developed the SWARM framework to teach students about the intersections of heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, ableism, colonialism, and capitalism. Through this framework, teachers and students understand that certain groups (e.g. straight, white, American or able-bodied, rich, men) benefit from these systems of power. An epistemology of differential consciousness can also be employed as a researcher's tool for data collection and analysis. As an ethnographer, I was cognizant of the various ways oppression and resistance was discussed and practiced while in the field. I also paid attention to whose knowledge was valued within the classroom and curriculum.

Additionally, my research theorizes what knowledge teachers draw from when implementing Ethnic Studies curriculum at Esperanza Unified. Student, teacher, familial, and community knowledge were given value and used as text to bring life to the counternarratives taught and produced within high school Ethnic Studies classes. Key to this process is that students see themselves as agents in writing history and producing knowledge, thus engaging in Knowledge/Action. Based on the Ethnic Studies classes that I observed, I presented empirical evidence in chapter six that reveals the Knowledge/Action process of drawing from ancestral and community knowledge to inform the histories students produced and the resistance knowledge on which they drew.

**Implications for Teaching Ethnic Studies**

For educators and teacher educators, my research demonstrates the tensions that might arise in teacher preparation and within the classroom while teaching and learning Ethnic Studies. For instance, teachers within the Collaborative had varying ideas of what Ethnic Studies was or should be in their classrooms. Through a praxis-oriented approach, they responded to the issue of teacher content knowledge variation by infusing political education and critical race dialogue within their professional development. This study also highlights how teachers produced counterhegemonic knowledge and designed curricula to address issues that came up while writing and practicing a district-wide Ethnic Studies curriculum. What are we to do about the systems of oppression that we study? How do we address community issues? Central to the Collaborative's teaching was an intersectional examination of hegemonic knowledge, rooted in teaching about systems, power relations, hegemony, and counterhegemony, as described in more detail in chapter five. Ethnic Studies teachers also engaged students in producing counterhegemonic knowledge that reconsidered the perspectives deemed valuable within course narratives and the agency students have in being co-author of history/knowledge. Teachers engaged students in processes that encouraged Knowledge/Action production, where students realized their knowledge as actionable. Here, I offer three recommendations for Ethnic Studies teachers and teacher educators committed to praxis-oriented teacher preparation and classrooms.

### 1. Engage teachers in praxis-oriented professional development

The Collaborative's praxis was situated within a narrative of student resistance where they recognized that teaching high school Ethnic Studies was part of a larger struggle to challenge Western knowledge (see Leonardo & Sacramento, in press). Teachers can strengthen their work by situating their narratives within systems of oppression and creating brave spaces to engage in the difficult dialogues necessary to interrogate their own processes of developing a critical consciousness. Ethnic Studies teachers can strengthen their familiarity with the multiple genealogies and histories of Ethnic Studies, which can improve their facility and defense of the discipline (see Elia et al., 2016). Without a praxis-oriented approach to their professional development, teachers who vary in their Ethnic Studies content knowledge can limit students' experiences within their classes. As critical race dialogue exposes teachers' subjectivities, tensions might arise, especially for teachers grappling with the privilege and fragility that comes with specific social locations. New Ethnic Studies teachers must consider that critical pedagogy might not always feel liberating, especially for those coming to know their own privilege as they examine power relations (DiAngelo, 2011; Ellsworth, 1989). In processes that disrupt the status quo, where teachers and students situate themselves within systems of oppression, nurturing brave space is necessary to address the discomfort and vulnerability that will arise when growth and social change occurs, as described in chapter four. These brave spaces are necessary for teachers to advance their Ethnic Studies content knowledge as demonstrated by the teachers in this study as they developed a critical collective consciousness.

### 2. Include intersectional analysis of power relations responsive to student needs

I found that the Collaborative established an intersectional Ethnic Studies framework and approach specific to the needs of the students within their classrooms. For instance, teachers coined the term SWARM to use as an analysis tool to study power relations, where SWARM was an acronym that stood for Straight, white, American, rich, men. This tool highlighted how the intersections of race, class, gender, nationality, and sexual orientation can be a framework to examine traditional knowledge, social structures, and policies. Specifically, students learned how SWARM both defined positionalities of privilege, specifically naming those who benefitted from articulations of social structures. SWARM also provided the groundwork for students to understand power relations and hegemony throughout the Ethnic Studies curriculum.

For current and aspiring Ethnic Studies educators, infusing critical dialogues within their professional development can enhance a collective approach within a district and help them develop intersectional analyses that are responsive to student needs. They can first identify intersectional key issues that are happening within the specific context of the students in their communities and among the teachers within the district. Next, they can read theoretical texts to advance an intersectional analysis Ethnic Studies knowledge paying particular attention to how theories inform their (1) teaching, learning, and organizing; (2) practice in the classroom; (3) practice in the community; and (4) practice in the Collaborative.

### 3. Provide students with tools to address the oppression they study

As teachers within the Collaborative described, constantly learning about power relations and specifically oppression can take a toll on students if they are not provided tools to respond to the injustices about which they learn. For example, Ms. Martinez highlighted the resistance and revolution stories of marginalized people within her class. She wanted to empower students to recognize that they can do something about the problems they studied. As the Collaborative designed a student-centered curriculum, they also incorporated ways for students to take roles in co-writing counternarratives through their oral history projects, thereby writing themselves into history.

Teachers also provided a space for students to investigate issues that impacted their schools, communities, and neighborhoods through Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). Both projects gave students the opportunity to resist the maintenance of master narratives and provided students with tools to engage in the cyclical process of critical praxis, where they identified an issue, analyzed the issue, created a plan of action, implemented the plan of action, and reflected on the process. While all teachers I observed included content that taught students about social oppression, only three of the six teachers taught the unit on Causality & Agency. Additionally, only three classrooms engaged in youth participatory action research projects. For those classes that did not have enough time to teach about Causality & Agency or engage students in YPAR, students indicated that they wanted to learn more about how to contribute to making change. Other students wanted more power in deciding the content of the curriculum. When designing Ethnic Studies classes, curriculum writers and teachers need to consider including both an examination of oppression and resistance stories or how marginalized peoples have responded to oppression. This included providing space for students to imagine the possibilities of what change may look like in their own lives

## Implications for Institutionalizing Ethnic Studies

The Ethnic Studies Collaborative's praxis was informed by bridging critical pedagogy with content knowledge that interrogated systems of oppression, challenging colonial, Eurocentric narratives that have been deeply embedded within our educational structures. For school administrators, educational policy writers, and curriculum developers interested in institutionalizing Ethnic Studies, this research demonstrates the challenges that come with developing Ethnic Studies programs and some ways teachers have responded to the obstacles they encountered. Given the findings from this study, uneven critical consciousness regarding Ethnic Studies content knowledge can pose a problem when increasing Ethnic Studies courses across the nation.

Careful attention to educator expertise is needed when assigning teachers Ethnic Studies sections. Varied content knowledge can impact how Ethnic Studies is understood, conceived, and taught as a curricular intervention. For those unfamiliar with the discipline, misunderstandings of the course may lead to hostility towards curricula meant to serve historically marginalized students as seen in the case in Arizona. For curriculum developers, policy writers, and school administration, this study provides practical insight for those committed to collaborative approaches to serving historically disenfranchised students. I offer

three recommendations for those writing Ethnic Studies curriculum and policies and hiring teachers to lead students in Ethnic Studies praxis.

### 1. Consider whose knowledge need be honored in our classrooms

Effective Ethnic Studies courses have improved student academic performance by engaging students in embracing their ethnic identity while simultaneously including counternarratives and perspectives of historically marginalized communities, systematic analysis of racism, tools to address racially hostile environments, and university preparation (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2017; Sleeter, 2011). The Collaborative's understanding of Ethnic Studies explicitly interrogates hegemonic knowledge and names the intersections of oppressive systems necessary for critical examination in the Ethnic Studies classroom. They regard grappling with white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, homophobia, classism, and imperialism as central to the political education necessary within Ethnic Studies professional development and curricular implementation. Highlighting subaltern, third world, and Indigenous perspectives was necessary for the Collaborative to engage in processes of conscientization. Drawing from the knowledge systems students brought to their classrooms, Ethnic Studies teachers within this study designed a curriculum to highlight student and family experiences as they related to a larger socio-historical context. Curriculum writers need to consider teacher and student subject positions as they develop high school Ethnic Studies coursework. This curriculum should include projects that encourage students to place value on the narratives of their ancestors and members of their communities. The course should also honor students' abilities to be co-producers of knowledge in the classroom.

### 2. Collaborate with community, university, and school stakeholders

Collaboration is necessary in processes that advocate for and write Ethnic Studies courses. Allender & Berta-Avila (2016) argue that collaboration is a necessary component to Ethnic Studies curriculum development, especially when building partnerships between school districts, community stakeholders, and local universities. They caution that teachers and community members already invested in the work should not be sidelined. In their report they assert that in

> [Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)] and San Juan Unified School District, consultants from outside the community have been brought in to provide professional development in Ethnic Studies curriculum and instruction without consulting the original curriculum writers and community members in the district. As a result, teachers in LAUSD have had to create a committee on Ethnic Studies integrity to try and ensure that certain principles of indigeneity, decolonization, and social transformation are maintained in their Ethnic Studies classes. (Allender & Berta-Avila, 2016, p. 6)

Collaboration was a central feature I also observed. The teachers within the Collaborative valued the knowledge of all community stakeholders, including the teachers who were already teaching Ethnic Studies in the district. For instance, Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Thomas, and Ms. Kim relied on core veteran teachers for guidance when they began teaching Ethnic Studies within the district.

While school-university partnerships were necessary when initially developing the curriculum, their partnerships enabled teachers to develop their skills to become a teacher-led unit advocating for more Ethnic Studies sections in all high schools and expanding these courses to middle schools in the district. Collaboration with community organizations also enhanced the implementation of the curriculum through partnerships with particular projects. For example, teachers and students invited organizational staff and volunteers to provide workshops or share social movement narratives with students. Ms. Martinez partnered with one organization throughout the duration of the Oral History Project to provide writing tutors for students as they drafted their project narratives.

### 3. Prepare teachers in Ethnic Studies content knowledge and critical pedagogy

Teachers and curriculum writers should design curricula that bridge Ethnic Studies content with critical pedagogy. Based on this study's findings, content knowledge is not enough. Ms. Davis admitted that her education and experience in community-based consciousness-raising activities helped her praxis:

> It's definitely helped me…I'll be able to teach a class proficiently…I understand [Ethnic Studies concepts] on an intellectual level and in a college way but I don't necessarily know each of them well enough to really break them down…to then make it bite-size for kids.

Ms. Davis admitted that having an understanding of Ethnic Studies content did not necessarily translate to teachable concepts for ninth graders. She relied on the Collaborative for pedagogical strategies. As we saw in chapter five, teachers produced conceptual frames (such as SWARM) to make intersectional analysis of power relations accessible for students in their classroom. Dialogue was crucial for both teacher professional development and classroom engagement; therefore, Ethnic Studies curriculum writers must consider how to infuse opportunities for critical race dialogue and political education in high school Ethnic Studies courses. Additionally, school administrators assigning Ethnic Studies sections should consider teachers' expertise in both Ethnic Studies content and critical pedagogy in order to ensure these courses are effective for students. Educational coursework and experiences working with communities of color are both valid resources that enhance teachers' Ethnic Studies content knowledge and pedagogical repertoire.

## The Future of K-12 Ethnic Studies

The Ethnic Studies project within Esperanza Unified held their third annual student symposium while I was writing up this dissertation. I was able to witness their growth and their continued collaborations with community organizations, university partners, and students across the district. Additionally, three Collaborative members now have leadership positions within the district office, where they are infusing Ethnic Studies frameworks in their administrative roles. These roles include coordinating district-wide professional development spaces for Ethnic Studies teachers and social science teachers more broadly. While the Collaborative has expanded to serve over ten high schools, they are also bringing Ethnic Studies to middle schools

throughout the district. My study focused on the ninth-grade implementation of the course, however Esperanza Unified also offers the course in various forms to tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders. Despite the increase of course offerings within the last decade, there is more work to be done to ensure all students have access to effective Ethnic Studies courses. I have continued communication with key members of the Collaborative to report my preliminary findings from my study, once in 2018 as a formal report back presentation during the Collaborative's professional development and again in 2019 through email. Despite feeling vulnerable when reporting my findings, I learned that sharing my research enabled Collaborative members to reflect on their work and think about how they can move forward to advance Ethnic Studies teachers' praxis. I anticipate that my partnership with Collaborative members will continue as the work to establish K-12 Ethnic Studies throughout the state builds momentum.

In the last few years, California state officials have advocated for further institutionalization of Ethnic Studies curricula and policy. In 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law Luis Alejo's bill to develop a statewide Ethnic Studies model curriculum. The curriculum was completed and approved by an advising committee this year. In January 2019, California Assembly members Medina, Bloom, Bonta, Gonzalez, Ramos, and Weber introduced Assembly Bill 331, which would make Ethnic Studies a high school graduation requirement by the 2024-2025 school year. The California Assembly passed AB 331 on May 23, 2019, which also passed in the Senate Committee on Education on June 6, 2019. As the bill approaches Governor Gavin Newsom's desk, Esperanza Unified is still in the early stages of Ethnic Studies implementation at some high schools. While some schools offer Ethnic Studies to all ninth graders, which was the case for Mr. Rodriguez's school, there are some high schools within Esperanza Unified that only offer one section of Ethnic Studies. Some campuses have yet to include Ethnic Studies course offerings within their class schedules. With the potential graduation requirement, how will California schools develop and implement Ethnic Studies? What role do teacher educators and universities play in preparing teachers to teach Ethnic Studies?

In 2014, California State University Chancellor Timothy P. White formed a 23-member systemwide committee called the "CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies." Since the CSU Task Force's 2016 recommendations, CSU campuses have responded by increasing course offerings which in turn, increased the number of undergraduate students enrolling and majoring in Ethnic Studies. Additionally, four CSU campuses created a new master's program, minor, or certificate program in Ethnic Studies. While changes have been made at the CSU to increase Ethnic Studies visibility to college students, there is still work to be done to bridge college Ethnic Studies with teacher education programs.

The CSU Task Force's report included recommendation 3.2: "Support the establishment of Ethnic Studies teacher institutes to meet needs of public school teachers who are beginning to teach Ethnic Studies mandated by an increasing number of boards of education" (CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies, 2016, p. 39). While some CSU's have created formal partnerships with California public schools (Allender & Berta-Avila, 2016), a statewide movement to increase Ethnic Studies teacher institutes can further support the increase of high school Ethnic Studies course offerings. This would require collaboration between Ethnic Studies departments/programs and Schools of Education. The Collaborative within this study offers one example of how schools can partner with local universities. The Collaborative's work also

showcases how teachers can take it upon themselves to take on leadership roles to advance Ethnic Studies within their schools and districts.

The very existence of high quality K-12 Ethnic Studies courses is likely to naturally lead to more Ethnic Studies teachers, but such an organic "supply" will not be enough. As the movement for K-12 Ethnic Studies grows, there will be a need for more teachers with Ethnic Studies content knowledge and expertise in critical pedagogy. Clear pathways from Ethnic Studies programs to teacher credential programs need to be created so that teacher education programs produce teachers equipped to teach these courses. This means that the state of California will need more Ethnic Studies majors and minors to consider careers in education. Additionally, teacher educators will need to include Ethnic Studies content into their credential program coursework. For in-service teachers assigned to teach Ethnic Studies, professional development to nurture their critical consciousness is necessary to ensure that the courses they teach reflect the goals of Ethnic Studies.

As course offerings for high school Ethnic Studies increase, it is essential that courses are well-designed and teachers are equipped with the conceptual and pedagogical tools necessary to make these courses effective and in line with the purpose of Ethnic Studies. I hope this work will inspire teachers and students to continue the deep identity work and critical reflection necessary to engage in Ethnic Studies praxis. Throughout my four years following the Collaborative within their professional development and observing Ethnic Studies classrooms, I met critical teachers and students committed to challenging the Eurocentric curriculum within their schools and who were relentless in their pursuit to advocate for the growth of the Ethnic Studies program in Esperanza Unified. Despite their dedication, the district-wide program met structural challenges that they were forced to address. A critical approach to professional development was necessary to develop a growing critical collective consciousness among teachers and students to guarantee teachers provided students with Ethnic Studies curriculum that was meaningful and responsive to their needs. This consciousness was grounded in a shared purpose to institutionalize Ethnic Studies. When I asked Mr. Cruz what sustained him in this work, he shared that his purpose is:

> still the same as when I was an organizer…to be a servant of the people. Though it's taken a different form, the purpose is the same…that purpose sustains me and I'm a father, you know. That…keeps me accountable. Well, it's really close to home, what kind of society and world and school community do I want my son to grow up in? And then also the success, that's what sustains me 'cause in organizing…the victories in organizing are few and far between…sometimes it's really hard to see them for what they are but in the classroom, you have victories everyday…the "ah-ha's"…just the energy that [students] bring…That they'd confide in you, that they're going through this…that human relationship I'm accountable to, sustains me.

Mr. Cruz remains accountable in his praxis which is rooted in service to the people and human relationships. As teachers, school administrators, teacher educators, and policy writers commit to institutionalizing Ethnic Studies, my hope is that they honor the origins of Ethnic Studies as a means to "serve the people" who have been historically neglected and undervalued within structures of schooling. I hope that Ethnic Studies students are able to engage in a space of critical thinking and self-determination, where they come to see themselves and their families as valuable and part of a legacy of resistance. I hope educators equip Ethnic Studies students with

the intersectional lens necessary to examine systems of oppression and arm them with the skills to be co-producers of counterhegemonic knowledge and to address issues that ultimately lead to change in their lives.

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## Appendix 1: Interview Guide

University of California, Berkeley
*Ethnic Studies in the High School Classroom*
Researcher's Name: Jocyl Sacramento
Graduate School of Education

**Oral Consent Script (for those who agree to have their interviews audio recorded):**
"Hello. My name is Jocyl Sacramento and I am a doctoral student at UC Berkeley. As I have mentioned before, this project is designed to learn more about the teachers' experience with Comparative Ethnic Studies courses. I am interested in learning more about the design, implementation, and outcomes of Ethnic Studies courses taught at the high school level. This project is important to me because Ethnic Studies had an impact on my own life and has informed my community work and research endeavors. This course is also something I wish I had when I was in high school so I am very excited to learn about the important work that you are doing and your experience teaching and learning Ethnic Studies. I would like to get your oral consent before we begin the interview. Your name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and your participation is entirely voluntary. If there are any questions you do not want to answer, please let me know. Also, you can stop the interview at any time without any consequences. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview so that I can refer back to the recordings to ensure accuracy as I am writing about them. If you agree to audio recording, you may ask me to stop the recording at any time. The interview will take about one to two hours. Do you have any questions about the project?

Do these conditions work for you? May I audio record the interview?"

**Interview Questions:**

My interview questions will include, but are not limited to:

1. Can you tell me a bit about your background? (Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Where did you go to school?)

2. Why did you choose to pursue a career in teaching?

3. How long have you been a teacher?

4. What classes and grades do you teach? How many sections of Ethnic Studies and what grade levels?

5. How did you get involved with the Ethnic Studies Project in the district?

6. What type of preparation have you received to teach the Ethnic Studies course? Do you think this preparation helped you?

7. What other types of preparation would you want included in your training to be an Ethnic Studies teacher?

8. How is preparation for teaching Ethnic Studies classes different from or similar to preparing to teach other courses?

9. How does teaching Ethnic Studies classes differ from teaching other subject areas?

10. What do you want students to walk away with after taking the Ethnic Studies class?

11. How do you define student success?

12. How does your identity impact what and how you teach?

13. What strategies do you use to create a safe space to teach sensitive topics?

14. What are some of the challenges you've encountered while teaching Ethnic Studies?

15. What do you enjoy the most about teaching Ethnic Studies classes?

16. How has teaching this course influenced your own development as a person/teacher?

17. What are the benefits of having weekly collaboration meeting with other Ethnic Studies teachers in the district?

18. What are the challenges you've encountered in these meetings?

19. How would you describe your pedagogical style?

20. What do you think the ideal high school Ethnic Studies class looks like?

21. What sustains you in the work that you do?