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Race-Neutral Policies as Racist Policies: Toward a Student-Centered Critical Race Policy Analysis
of the Anti-MAS Legislative Efforts

By

AMBAR HERNÁNDEZ NEGRETE
DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Despite hesitations to consider race in policy processes on the basis that acknowledging racial difference may inadvertently produce racial discrimination, glaring racial disparities remain that disproportionately harm Latinx, Black, and Indigenous students. These contradictions urge examination of how—in their evasion of race—race-neutral policy processes systemize, sustain, or extend racial injustice. Employing a qualitative critical race policy analysis, I conduct a textual analysis to deconstruct the policymaking process that facilitated the elimination of the Mexican American Studies program (MAS)—an initiative found to minimize the educational inequities in Arizona. As part of this critical race policy analysis, I also explore the methodological potential of leveraging students’ critical reflections on these policymaking processes to promote deeper understandings of these policy processes. The insights aim to inform justice-seeking policymaking processes that seek to support the liberation efforts of Latinx, Black, Indigenous students and their communities.

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Terminology

Race-Neutral: The term race-neutral although widely used in the field of education policy is a complex and multi-faceted term. For instance, in the policy realm, race-neutral often refers to the avoidance in using race to shape the distribution of opportunities and resources (Minow, 1985). Such orientation is often linked with efforts to minimize reverse-discrimination claims in which Whites claimed many intentional and purposeful considerations of race to increase communities of color access to many previously denied opportunities and resources, that are now perceived as being used to disadvantage Whites (Pincus, 2003). Based on these perceived disadvantages, a race-neutral approach explains “contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics” (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 2). Under this race-neutral ideology, the consistent lower standing of non-Whites across social, political, and economic lines is dismissed as a natural phenomenon produced by market dynamics and communities of color’ cultural deficiencies, rather than a result of the ongoing permeance of racism in our society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Within existing critical scholarship, these race-neutral ideologies promulgated in the policy realm are often explained as colorblindness. Unlike in the policy realm, colorblindness interrogates the persisting racial disparities and injustices that are produced despite efforts to avoid the use of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Gotanda, 1991). Emphasizing the racialized outcomes despite the evasion of race, colorblindness refers to the nonrecognition of race regardless of whether minority groups are thereby disadvantaged (Gotanda, 1991). Critical scholars like Gotanda (1991) critiqued notions of neutrality that justified the adoption of policies and laws that

created and extended the marginalization of Latinx¹, Indigenous, Black, and other multiply marginalized communities. He argued that the assumptions underlying colorblind orientations—which translate as race-neutral approaches in the policy realm—“legitimate, and thereby maintains, the social, economic, and political advantages that Whites hold over Americans” (Gotanda, 1991, p. 3).

Since the policy realm more often uses the term race-neutral when referring to the nonrecognition of race, rather than colorblindness, I employ the word race-neutral throughout this dissertation. However, I draw on the ideologies informing understandings of colorblindness throughout my paper to push critical discussions and considerations of the term race-neutral in the policy realm.

Race-Conscious: Similar to the term race-neutral, the word race-conscious is a complex term given its varied definitions and applications across fields. For example, in the policy realm the term race-conscious is often used to refer to policies that intentionally use race as a basis for discrimination (Diem, Welton, Frankenberg, & Jellison Holme, 2014a). That is, race-conscious in these instances is equated with racism or reverse discrimination.

On the other hand, critical uses of this term often operate from the position that many existing race-neutral policies already discriminate on the basis of race despite their alleged neutrality. For this reason, a critical use of race-consciousness highlights the inherent limitations of using race-evasive approaches or policy solutions to redress the racial disparities plaguing our society. This use of race-consciousness posits meaningful deep-rooted transformation requires acknowledging racism produces a series of social, political, and historical forces that have

¹ I use Latinx as a gender inclusive term that acknowledges the gender heterogeneity within this community that is not reflected in the terms Latino and Latina (Salinas Jr & Lozano, 2019).

“[denied] full autonomy to a host of marginalized groups, including, people of color” (Moses, 2002, p. 38). For the purpose of this paper, I employ the critical uses of race-consciousness throughout my research.

Racism: Throughout this paper I utilize Kendi’s (2019) definition of racism given his explanation encompasses additional terms often used interchangeably, such as institutional racism and systemic racism. Kendi (2019) defines racism as “a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities” (p. 35). Kendi’s (2019) definition is useful given that it considers both the human agents and institutional role that create and uphold a racially stratified society. Unlike other definitions of racism that contend only Whites possess institutional power to be engage in racist acts, Kendi’s (2019) definition allows for consideration of how people of color also support and uphold racist structures and systems.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Despite nationwide grassroots efforts by marginalized communities to systemize Ethnic Studies in the K-12 schooling in support of historically marginalized students of color, state-level policies have yet to reflect this community push for its adoption. In 1974, the federal ninth circuit court ruled the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) engaged in discriminatory practices and policies that negatively targeted the Latinx student population (Acosta, 2019; Fernández & Hammer, 2012). In addition to requesting TUSD redress the segregation practices taking place, the federal court required TUSD to also address the disparities in school discipline, technology, facilities, and transportation (Khmara, 2021). Largely informed by court-ruled instructions to remedy these discriminatory practices and adequately meet the needs of the underserved Mexican American student body, TUSD educators developed the Mexican American Ethnic Studies (MAS) program.

The inception of the Mexican American Ethnic Studies (MAS) program arose from a recognition that Ethnic Studies, as “social justice” laboratories, has served as sites for struggle, love, and joy, “where re-humanization is cultivated and where curriculum and pedagogy affirm, fully, who students [of color] are as human beings” (de los Ríos, 2013, p. 71). Educational leaders and community members leading the development of this program saw the value of fostering students’ critical abilities to challenge normative ideologies regarding race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship status (de los Ríos, 2020). These efforts reflect existing research documenting Ethnic Studies courses hold the potential of empowering students. Through these courses students are found to support them in reimagining their educational

identities and trajectories, while also cultivating students' sense of agency, self-love, and love of one's people (Buena Vista, 2016; Cammarota, 2007; Sleeter, 2011).

Despite the evidence pointing to the transformational potential of Ethnic Studies and the MAS program (Cabrera, Milem, & Marx, 2012; Cappellucci, Williams, Hernandez, Nelson, Casteel, Gilzean, & Faulkner, 2011), in 2010, Arizona passed the House Bill 2281² (HB 2281), which ultimately banned the robust program. Bill proponents neglected and ignored the local and nationwide grassroots efforts organized by MAS students, parents, and educators where students expressed that bill proponents' interpretation of the program did not reflect their experiences in the courses. Challenging proponents' claims that the courses "promoted the overthrow of the United States government," or "resentment toward a race or class of people," students fiercely identified these courses as indispensable to their academic success. Students expressed these courses were integral for their development of a positive academic identity, increasing their engagement with school curriculum, self-awareness, learning about their history, and supporting their academic excellence.

Regardless of the empirical evidence affirming students', parents', and educators' claims of the positive academic impact of the program on the historically underserved Latinx student population in Tucson, legislators eliminated the MAS program asserting their motivations for advancing the bill were race-neutral in nature. Bill proponents ignored students' vocalized needs and neglected the disproportionate impact the elimination of MAS (or similar programs) would bear on their Latinx student body. In fact, proponents of HB 2281 described it as a policy solution "in favor of the students to save them from a program that is itself dysfunctional and

² The House Bill 2281 was adopted in the law as § A.R.S. 15-111 & 112. Since I center the legislative process leading up to the adoption of the bill, rather than its implementation as § A.R.S. 15-111 & 112, I continuously reference the bill as the HB 2281 throughout this dissertation.

will make them dysfunctional” (Huicochea, 2011, p. 4). Bill author and superintendent at the time, Tom Horne, responded to critiques claiming bill proponents were motivated by anti-Latinx and anti-immigrant sentiments by refuting, “If I didn't care about the students, I wouldn't do this” (Huicochea, 2011, p. 4). As I will continue to unpack throughout this dissertation, these examples begin to foreshadow how legislators evaded characterizations of their bill as racist by framing their actions as merely reflecting their race-neutral attempts to protect and act in the best of interests of Arizona students and residents.

Seven years later, federal judge Atsushi Wallace Tashima invalidated bill proponents’ race-neutral assertions when ruling that they passed the HB 2281 as the Prohibited Courses Arizona Revised Statute (§A.R.S. 15-111 & 15-112), from a “racially discriminatory” and “politically partisan purpose” (*Gonzalez v. Douglas*, 2017). Even though the *Gonzalez v. Douglas* (2017) ruling deemed the HB 2281 unconstitutional, this verdict took place several years after its implementation, already having denied several generations of students access to the transformational potential of this robust MAS program. Disrupting this cyclical reproduction of inequity through policy, requires further investigation into how educational leaders and legislators deleteriously mask their racist intentions under the veil of racial neutrality in the policy realm prior to their implementations.

While a robust line of scholarship has examined the Ethnic Studies debate in Tucson, the field lacks an empirical account of the legislative discourses that facilitated the adoption of this policy. To this end—for the first phase of my research—I carry out a textually oriented policy analysis (Winkle-Wagner, Sulé, & Maramba, 2019b; Winkle-Wagner, Sulé, & Maramba, 2014) to answer the following research question and sub-question: 1) How were discourses leveraged in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? 1a) What was the role of race in the

legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? I explain this methodology and questions in detail in subsequent sections.

Aside from the lack of empirical examinations of the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program, students' perspectives and voices are largely absent from existing descriptive investigations of the HB 2281 policymaking process despite their active and passionate efforts to halt educational leaders' and legislator's policy actions impacting them. Based on this gap in the existing literature, I also leverage critical race methodologies (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that center student voices to unpack the intricacy of the legislative strategies employed to eliminate the MAS courses. To this end—for the second phase of my research—I seek to answer the following second research question: 2) *What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?* In answering these questions, the findings gathered through this study aim to disrupt policymaking processes that produce racist policies.

Problem Statement and Rationale for Study

Despite efforts to evade race-based policy solutions on the premise that considering race can incite discrimination (Minow, 1985), we continue to see racial disparities in educational outcomes. Mainstream assumptions contend race-neutral, or colorblind, policy solutions can help ensure a student's racial background does not determine their educational opportunities. Despite the numerous race-neutral policies advanced under these assumptions, students of color continue to be segregated in underfunded public schools (Rodriguez & Rolle, 2013), receive inadequate language support (Gandara & Contreras, 2009), access few college preparatory courses (Hurtado, Figueroa, & García, 1996), and encounter schooling systems that encourage teachers and

counselors to track them into vocational programs rather than college paths (Oakes, 1985; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005).

In contrast to the numerous race-neutral policy efforts, students, educators, and community members regarded Ethnic Studies as a race-conscious tool for dismantling the racial inequities repressing underserved Latinx youth in Arizona (Acosta, 2007; Cabrera, Meza, Romero, & Cintli Rodríguez, 2013; Cammarota, 2007, 2015). The positive perceptions community members held regarding Ethnic Studies courses are consistent with the existing literature documenting the positive impact of these courses on student outcomes. In studying a ninth-grade classroom, Bean, Valerio, Senior and White (1999) found that exposure to a curriculum that students could culturally connect with elicited their enthusiasm for course material, while also enabled improved critical interpretations of the content. Similarly, (Cammarota, 2007) found that students with a high risk of dropping out from high school excelled in Ethnic Studies advanced coursework, and contrary to initial predictions, successfully graduated. As de los Ríos (2020) explains, Ethnic Studies’ “explicit engagement with race,” power, and colonialism fosters spaces that reengage students of color by empowering them to critically unpack oppressive systems that constrain their abilities to reimagine their educational identities and trajectories (p. 5).

While a wave of research has affirmed the positive impact of Ethnic Studies curriculum (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014; Cabrera et al., 2012; de los Ríos, 2013; Dee & Penner, 2016; Sleeter, 2011), few studies empirically interrogate the anti-MAS policymaking processes that restricted students’ access to these transformational courses. Situating their arguments descriptively, rather than empirically, Fernández and Hammer (2012) posited that acknowledging the colorblind rhetoric used to justify the elimination of the MAS program can

shed insights helpful for protecting antiracist projects like this program. Similarly, challenging the acclaimed neutrality of the discourses employed by bill proponents, Wanberg (2013) pointed to the neoliberal racism undergirding the discursive strategies used to invalidate the successful MAS curriculum. Current neoliberal ideologies dismiss existing inequities as products of continued governmental and public intervention (Baltodano, 2012). Neoliberal racism, unlike racism, exposes how neoliberal reforms “do little to discourage racism or its institutional forms. Rather, it provides them with the cover of invisibility—or neutrality” (Wanberg, 2013, p. 27). Providing invaluable foundations for considering neoliberal racism as a key player in the elimination of the MAS program, I extend Wanberg’s (2013) and Fernández and Hammer’s (2012) connections to provide empirically based research that can shed greater understandings into the mechanics of policymaking processes that institutionalize injustice. As I detail in Chapter 3, I borrow the critical policy frames offered by Winkle-Wagner et al. (2019b) and Hyatt (2013) to answer my first research question and sub-question: 1) How were discourses leveraged in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? 1a) What was the role of race in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program?

Despite the arduous organizing by communities of color to incorporate and amplify the MAS courses and program, anti-MAS proponents’ dismissal of these efforts in the policymaking process reflects the consistent exclusion of communities of color from power-making processes. Critical race scholars explain this historical exclusion functions as a means through which the dominant group maintains dominance and subjugates the liberation of communities of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Meanwhile, a civic participation lens attributes the exclusion of students to paternalistic perspectives that deem students lack the skills, knowledge, and maturity to inform policymaking processes (Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005; Shah & Mediratta,

2008). Based on this exclusion, I also leverage critical race methodologies to center students' critical reflections and analyses of the anti-MAS legislative processes to answer the second research question guiding this study: 2) *What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?* Bridging youth-centered critical race methodologies with textually oriented policy analysis methods, I seek to provide a nuanced examination of anti-Ethnic Studies educational policies informed by the experiences and lived realities of the students they affect.

Research Questions

To conduct a qualitative critical race policy analysis that incorporates the critical reflections and voices of marginalized youth, I explore the methodological potential of blending critical race policy analyses (Alemán, 2006; Gillborn, 2005; Hyatt, 2013; Iverson, 2007; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019b) in conjunction with youth-centered critical race methodologies (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to answer the following research questions:

1. How were discourses leveraged in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program?
 - a. What was the role of race in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program?
2. What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?

To answer the first question and sub-question, I conduct a textually oriented critical race policy discourse analysis (Hyatt, 2013; Iverson, 2007; Poon & Segoshi, 2018) of the legal archives from the multiple legislative attempts to eliminate the MAS program: Senate Bill 1108 (SB 1108) in 2008; Senate Bill 1069 (SB 1069) in 2009; and House Bill 2281 (HB 2281) in 2010. In this first phase of my research, I borrow elements of Winkle-Wagner et al.'s (2019b)

and Hyatt's (2013) critical policy frames to conduct a textually oriented critical analysis of the process that facilitated the prohibition of MAS courses. I detail this methodology in Chapter 3.

Then, to answer the second question, I collected the perspectives of eleventh and twelfth grade high school students from Arizona's La Rosa Magnet High School to gather their insights into the legislative processes that facilitated the elimination of the MAS courses. I gathered students' perspectives using youth-centered critical race methodologies, involving classroom observations, survey, and semi-structured interview methods. I carried out the methods while participating via Zoom in students' American Government class for 10 weeks. Youth-centered critical race methodologies involve invoking a series of methods that allow a critical examination of race in the experiences of marginalized communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As Richard Delgado (1989) explains, a critical race methodology can be used:

As both a method of telling the story of those experiences that have not been told (i.e., those on the margins of society) and as a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse—the majoritarian story. (p. 155)

Bridging these methodological approaches allows me to attend to the differing, but complementary, focuses of the questions guiding my dissertation. Together, these two questions guide my overarching purpose of pushing the bounds of traditional policy analyses by centering the voices, insights, and critical interrogations of our brilliant students of color.

Ethnic Studies

Since its inception, Ethnic Studies has served as a vehicle for dismantling the racial disparities that repress the radical potential of historically marginalized students. This function of Ethnic Studies can be traced to its ontological and epistemological roots which are based on the work of Carter G. Woodson (1993), W.E.B. Du Bois (2007) and the 1960's Civil Rights Movements (Okiihiro, 2016). This work sought to disrupt the forms in which racism was

explicitly and implicitly ingrained in U.S. society. Building on these efforts, students denounced the purported race-neutral curriculum of the time for omitting the central roles that racism plays in the US and neglecting the contributions of historically oppressed groups (Hu-DeHart, 1993; Okihiro, 2016). Contrary to colorblind ideologies of the time that claimed eliminating the persisting racial disparities required a deemphasis of race, students argued this race-neutral approach to the curriculum instead served to uphold Western imperialism and Eurocentrism (Hu-DeHart, 1993). Thus, student activists demanded a curriculum that acknowledge the role of race in the US and centered the contributions of historically marginalized groups (Umemoto, 1989). In advancing a curriculum that would allow an explicit analysis of racism, as well as other systems of oppression, students sought to advance liberating educational processes for historically oppressed groups (Hu-DeHart, 1993).

Alongside the push for centering race in higher education curriculum, freedom schools and Black power movements created the foundation for the adoption of Ethnic Studies at the K-12 level (Buenavista, 2016). The tenacious organizing among students, community members, and educators committed to the principles of an antiracist and anti-colonial education spread the implementation of Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools. In prompting the “courageous studies of painful historical trends,” Ethnic Studies became a viable mechanism through which students could engage in the process of “naming, bringing into focus, and personalizing the historically unmet needs” of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other multiply marginalized communities (López, Dueñas, & López, 2021, p. 24). Ethnic Studies courses at the K-12 level centered around three major principles—Access, Relevance, Community—that sought to counter the alienation of historically marginalized students of color from the widespread race-neutral curriculum (Tintiangco-Cubales, Kohli, Sacramento, Henning, Agarwal-Rangnath, & Sleeter, 2014). With

an explicit focus on these three principles, Ethnic Studies sought to expand the educational opportunities available to historically marginalized youth and their communities (Acosta, 2007; de los Ríos, 2013).

Over the years, Ethnic Studies scholars documented the additional principals and elements essential to an Ethnic Studies pedagogy at the K-12 level. For example, Cati de los Ríos explained carrying out an Ethnic Studies curriculum involves interweaving a restorative justice pedagogy that cultivates students' "social responsibility to respond to the myriad forms of oppression extant in communities in ways that do not perpetuate further trauma, harm, or pain" (de los Ríos, 2020, p. 3). Meanwhile, López et al. (2021) outlined that centering resistance, resilience, and reimagination can reshape the relationships and learning that take place within Ethnic Studies classrooms. In implementing these three R's, a restorative justice inclination in Ethnic Studies classrooms holds the potential of empowering students "with a knowledge of self and an understanding resistance and resilience" they can leverage to imagine their collective freedoms into existence" (López et al., 2021, p. 24).

With the proliferation of Ethnic Studies in K-12, several empirical studies strove to examine the impact of this curriculum on students. The research finds that participation in this race-conscious curriculum led to higher levels of academic engagement, improved academic outcomes, and a higher sense of empowerment among students of color (Sleeter, 2011). In studying a high school classroom, de los Ríos (2013) found that Ethnic Studies—in challenging "normative ways of thinking about race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship status"—created spaces where eleventh and twelfth-grade students were empowered to reimagine their educational identities and trajectories (p. 62). In parallel, Cammarota (2007) finds that students labeled at risk for dropping out of high school excelled in Ethnic Studies advanced coursework,

and contrary to initial predictions, graduated from high school. Only one study did not find a positive relationship between Ethnic Studies curriculum and student outcomes (Ginwright, 2004). However, these findings are attributed to issues related to the development and implementation of the curriculum, rather than an indication that Ethnic Studies did not have a positive effect on student outcomes (Sleeter, 2011).

While most of the research on Ethnic Studies has been qualitative in nature, the few quantitative studies carried out affirm the positive impact of Ethnic Studies on student outcomes. For example, Cabrera et al. (2014) found that student participation in the MAS courses was associated with an increase in passing Arizona state standardized tests and high school graduation rates. Nonetheless, this study bore some limitations considering participation in the MAS courses were voluntary, given that the “regression-adjusted comparisons among those who did and did not enroll may [have suffered] from omitted variable biases of an uncertain direction” (Dee & Penner, 2016, p. 134). Dee & Penner's (2017) study addressed some of these limitations and confirmed the positive effects of an Ethnic Studies curriculum. They found that participation in an Ethnic Studies course increased attendance by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 percent, and high school credits earned by 23 points (Dee & Penner, 2017).

With the palpable positive effect of Ethnic Studies, Ethnic Studies began gaining traction and recognition from students, parents, educators, community members and school districts. Based on community efforts to incorporate Ethnic Studies into the schooling experiences, districts across the nation offered programs that provided students the opportunity to take courses in Black Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano/a Studies, Indigenous Studies, as well as others (Buenavista, 2016). The expansion of Ethnic Studies across districts reflected the value educators, parents, and students placed on an antiracist and anti-colonial curriculum that centered

race. That is, these grassroots efforts recognized the radical potential of a race-conscious curriculum in the schooling of historically marginalized students of color.

In the case of Arizona, the passage of HB 2281 disparaged and challenged the value of a race-conscious approach to the schooling of historically underserved students. The HB 2281 directly prohibited the existence of the MAS program in Tucson public high schools. Preexisting Ethnic Studies programs in Tucson, including the MAS program, were products of the *Fisher-Mendoza v. Tucson Unified School District* (1978) ruling that required TUSD to compensate students of color for a decade of discriminatory acts (Acosta, 2019; Kunnie, 2010). In 2010, after two unsuccessful attempts, Governor Jan Brewer signed HB 2281 into law as the § A.R.S. 15-111 & 15-112. This law, which garnered attention nationwide, eventually led to the elimination of the TUSD MAS program. This legislation prohibited any courses that were ostensibly found to violate the following: 1) promote the overthrow of the U.S. government; 2) promote resentment toward a race or class of people; 3) be designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group; and/or 4) advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals ("Prohibited Courses," 2010).

While the HB 2281 passed in 2010, it was not until the year 2012 that this proposition eliminated the MAS program in Tucson, Arizona (Wanberg, 2013). Notably, while there were multiple Ethnic Studies programs in Tucson, the HB 2281 specifically targeted and eliminated the MAS program. In 2017, several years after this proposition passed, federal judge Atsushi Wallace Tashima ruled this proposition as unconstitutional, given that the HB 2281 was motivated by racial animus (Depenbrock, 2017). The ruling demands a critical examination of policymaking processes that facilitate the adoption of policies that extend harm for youth of color and their families (Cabrera, Milem, & Marx, 2012). The passage of HB 2281 urges an

examination of policymaking processes restricting the availability of Ethnic Studies and broadly, the educational opportunities available to historically marginalized students of color.

Background Context and Existing Literature

Arizona's Restrictive Social and Legislative Climate

While legal analyses of the elimination of the MAS program are often dissociated with the sociopolitical climate of the time (Lundholm, 2011), historicizing the elimination of these courses reveals valuable insights. Hitherto Tom Horne's final and successful legislative attempt to eliminate the MAS program (i.e., HB 2281), Arizona experienced drastic demographic shifts in the racial composition of their residents. In 2000, the state's ethnic and racial composition consisted of a 72% White, 19% Latinx, 2% Asian American, 3% African American, and 2% multiracial population (U.S. Census, 1990). By 2015, Arizona's ethnic and racial composition was 55% White, 30% Latinx, 3% Asian American, 4% African American, 4% American Indian, and 5% multiracial (U.S. Census, 2015). These demographic changes created a wave of reactionary social, political, and economic responses that sought to curtail, limit, and control the rapidly increasing diverse racial population. As Martinez (2012) noted, this involved passing a "disturbing pattern of legislative activity hostile to ethnic minorities and immigrants" (p. 200). Some of these propositions included restricting bilingual programs (Proposition 203³) in year 2000, allowing police racial profiling (Senate Bill 1070⁴) in year 2010, and banning consideration of race in higher education practices (Proposition 107⁵) in year 2010 (Cammarota & Aguilera, 2012; Gillborn, 2014). Table 1 provides a brief description of each of these policies.

³ Proposition 203 limited access to bilingual programs across the state of Arizona in the year 2010 (Cabrera, Meza & Rodriguez, 2011).

⁴ Senate Bill 1070 granted police officers the authority to stop and question residents they perceived as undocumented in the year 2010 (Chin, Hessick, Massaro, & Miller, 2011).

⁵ Proposition 107 banned universities from considering race in admissions practices in the year 2010.

Table 1 Race-based Legislation in Arizona

<i>Legislation Information</i>	<i>Race-Neutral Framing</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Racial Group Disproportionately Affected</i>
1) Proposition 203 (2000)	English for the Children	Minimized the number of bilingual programs available in Arizona and separated EL students from mainstream curriculum for 4 hours a day.	Latinx youth comprise around (85%) of the EL student population (Arizona Department of Education, 2013-2014).
2) Senate Bill 1070 (2010)	Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Acts	Granted police officers the authority to stop individuals they ‘perceived’ to be undocumented, while simultaneously claiming “race, color, or national origin” could not be used.	It is estimated that Latinx individuals comprise over 75% of the undocumented immigrant population (Rex, 2011).
3) Proposition 107 (2010)	Civil Rights Initiative	Banned the consideration of race in higher education admissions practices initially implemented to increase admittance of students of color.	Research finds that students of color experienced fewer opportunities to enter highly selective universities and are instead channeled into less selective universities after banning the use of race in admission practices (Backes, 2012; Blume & Long, 2014; Contreras, 2005; Hinrichs, 2012).

Although most of these propositions did not explicitly reference race or ethnicity, legislation proponents used surrogates for race such as language and citizenship status to restrict services and opportunities for Latinx, Black, and Indigenous communities (Gutiérrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002). In using these surrogates—which on the surface appear to reflect race-neutral language—powerholders deceptively constructed categories of difference that “made it easier to identify and subsequently ‘normalize’ and ‘socialize’ the so-called deviant population,” without having to explicitly reveal their racialized motivations (Gutiérrez et al., 2002, p. 343). In the case of Proposition 203, anti-bilingual education proponents advanced their efforts to restrict bilingual programs to the overwhelming Latinx student population under a misleading and deceiving “English for the Children” campaign (Cabrera, Meza, & Rodriguez, 2011). This framing strategically diverted attention away from the research showing that students’ acquisition of English heavily relies on students’ development of their native language (Goldenberg, 1996; Greene, 1998; Krashen, 1999). Proposition 203 exemplifies how race-neutral

campaign discourses serve as a viable mechanism for maintaining and upholding a racial hierarchy in light of the anti-Latinx and anti-immigration climate in Arizona.

In a similar vein, the insidious race-neutral discourses leveraged to restrict bilingual programs also served useful for Republican legislators to pass the contentious Senate Bill 1070 (SB 1070), or the commonly known “racial profiling” bill (Wanberg, 2013). SB 1070 granted Arizona police the authority to stop and interrogate individuals they perceived as undocumented (Chin, Hessick, Massaro, & Miller, 2010). While the legislative text explicitly mentioned police officers may not use “race, color, or national origin” to stop an individual, it simultaneously created a loophole that granted police officers the power to profile individuals ‘suspected’ of being undocumented (Cammarota & Aguilera, 2012). As Chin, Hessick, Massaro, and Miller (2010) argue, the specific targeting of Latinx immigrants through SB 1070 is evident in that “the likelihood that any given person of Mexican ancestry is [undocumented] is high enough to make Mexican appearance a relevant factor” (as cited in Martinez, 2012, p. 183). Chin and colleague’s (2010) legal analysis of SB 1070 highlights the contradictions in the use of purportedly race-neutral language to target the Latinx undocumented population:

If the purpose of amending the original text of S.B. 1070 in HB 2162 was to prohibit the consideration of race as part of determinations whether to stop or inquire about nationality or immigration status, then the revised language should have eliminated the final clause, which suggests that race may be considered ‘to the extent permitted by the United States or Arizona Constitution.’ . . . There's the rub. According to the 1975 United States Supreme Court Decision *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce*, the United States Constitution allows race to be considered in immigration enforcement (as cited in Martinez, 2012, p. 183).

The unwillingness to consistently and proactively consider whether racism may be implicitly extended through this legislation made it possible for bill proponents to conceal their racial motivations and successfully pass the SB 1070 through the legislature. The US Supreme Court struck down many of the SB 1070 clauses, yet police officers continued to hold the power to stop

individuals they perceived or believed to be undocumented without evidence or reason (Campbell, 2011; Ewing, Martinez, & Rumbaut, 2015). The case of SB 1070 is another example of how the dominant group uses race-neutral language to “maintain privilege, access, and control of the sociopolitical and economic terrain” in response to the rapidly growing Latinx immigrant population (Gutiérrez et al., 2002, p. 333).

The passage of the Proposition 107, or Arizona’s affirmative action ban, is another case in point. The widespread negation of the persisting role of racism in US society similarly enabled restricting the consideration of race in higher education admission practices in Arizona despite the historical and ongoing exclusion and underrepresentation of marginalized communities from universities (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012; Perez Huber, Lopez, Malagon, Velez, & Solorzano, 2008; Solórzano et al., 2005). Pushing forward the anti-affirmative action campaign through misleading phrases such as the “Civil Rights Initiative,” were lucrative for the adoption of other less-effective surrogates for race such as class and income in higher education admission practices. Research that examines the impact of these surrogates for race overwhelmingly finds that students of color experienced fewer opportunities to enter highly selective universities and are instead channeled into less selective universities post-affirmative action bans (Backes, 2012; Blume & Long, 2014; Contreras, 2005; Hinrichs, 2012). Once again, it was students of color that were disadvantaged by these purportedly race-neutral policies.

This legislative history of Arizona contextualizes the racialized nature of the Ethnic Studies debate despite efforts to evade race in the anti-MAS legislative process. While the legal and policymaking processes for these restrictive legislations did not explicitly state or acknowledge race, they created conditions that disproportionately harmed the Latinx community, along with other historically marginalized populations. As these propositions exemplify, it is

through these deceiving race-neutral discourses and claims that racists employ ostensibly equity-oriented language, or “the words of Dr. Martin Luther King as a tool of their oppressive projects” (Romero & Arce, 2009). Centering the sociopolitical climate of Arizona through the anti-MAS legislative process grants a more holistic and expanded purview to understand the policymaking process that facilitated the elimination of a program found to increase equity for Arizona’s underserved Latinx student population.

Tucson’s Mexican American Studies Program

Aiming to leverage the potential of a justice-seeking curriculum in empowering and re-engaging the Latinx student population as a means for combatting the history of discriminatory practices and high dropout rates in La Rosa High School, educators and community members organized to create the MAS program in Tucson schools (Romero & Arce, 2009). These justice-seeking educators and community advocates saw Ethnic Studies courses, through a Mexican American perspective, as a tool to combat and counter the history of racial discrimination, anti-immigrant environment students and their families experienced within and outside their schools in Tucson, Arizona. Situating the racial and ethnic background of students as an asset, MAS educators aimed to nourish students’ level of critical consciousness increase students’ engagement with educational knowledge they needed to fuel their academic success (Acosta, 2007).

The MAS curriculum reflected the principles of Ethnic Studies courses across the nation. Inspired by critical race theory and liberatory education paradigms, the MAS curriculum centered the epistemologies, scholarship, and knowledge of communities of color absent from mainstream courses (Acosta, 2007). Specifically, it exposed students to indigenous epistemologies and voices. The curriculum sought to counter hegemonic learning environments

that alienate and marginalized youth of color (Sleeter, 2011). More than a curriculum focused on equipping students with the methodological, analytical, and theoretical tools they needed to succeed academically, the MAS curriculum sought to support students' liberation efforts. Such efforts are grounded in the belief that developing marginalized students' academic identity was interconnected with developing students' critical consciousness and cultural identity (Acosta, 2017). Structured within the Xicano Paradigm, the curriculum examined Aztec indigenous heritage and fostered justice-oriented learning spaces. Through this curriculum the classroom transformed into a space where students could not only "critically analyze their world but also develop the skills to inspire change" that helped our society move towards a world that honored the dignity of all racial groups (Acosta, 2007, p. 38).

Similar to the research across the US demonstrating the powerful potential of Ethnic Studies curriculum in re-engaging previously alienated Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students in their learning (Dee & Penner, 2017; Sleeter, 2011), student's exposure to the MAS curriculum was found to drastically improve the educational outcomes of Latinx students in La Rosa High School. In conducting a quantitative analysis, TUSD stakeholders found that students that participated in the MAS program had higher attendance, grade point averages, standardized test scores, and high school graduation rates (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014; Cabrera, Milem, & Marx, 2012). Nonetheless, while the educational outcomes of Latinx students improved during the presence of the MAS program, the ongoing marginalization and discrimination towards them and their families continued to permeate the climate in Arizona.

Mexican American labor activist, Dolores Huerta, alluded to the anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx sociopolitical climate in her controversial assembly speech at La Rosa High Magnet School where she commented, "Republicans hate Latinos" (Cacho, 2010). In response to her

remark, Tom Horne, superintendent at the time, invited Latinx Republican Deputy Margaret Garcia to provide students a counter-perspective to Huerta's speech. During Deputy Garcia's presentation, a group of students responded by standing up, turning their backs, and silently raising their fists in the air. Although the course enrollment of the students was not verified, Tom Horne assumed these students were MAS participants and began his crusade to eliminate these courses arguing the curriculum and pedagogy employed in these courses were responsible for what he perceived as students' "rude" and "unacceptable" behavior (*HB 2281: Prohibited Courses*, 2010).

Banning the Mexican American Studies Program

Tom Horne's first legislative proposal to eliminate the MAS program started with the homeland security, Senate Bill 1108 (SB 1108) in 2008 (Romero, 2010; Romero & Arce, 2009). This first piece of legislation sought to withhold funding from schools offering courses featuring ideologies that overtly encouraged "dissent from the values of American democracy and western civilization, including democracy, capitalism, pluralism, and religious toleration" (S.B. 1108, 2008). This bill established that the "primary purpose of public education is to inculcate values of American citizenship" (S.B. 1108, 2008). Unlike the consequent legislative attempts, this bill also sought to prohibit Ethnic K-12 colleges and universities from including any instruction based "in whole or in part on race-based criteria" (S.B. 1108, 2008). Even though the bill received a do pass recommendation in the House Committee on Appropriations hearing, the "sweeping and ambiguous nature of this bill" impeded its movement through the rest of the state legislature (Cammara & Aguilera, 2012, p. 489). Legislators pointed out the bill would benefit from more concrete language because the vague words and phrases in the SB 1108 would obstruct Horne's efforts to specifically target and eliminate the MAS program (S.B. 1108, 2008).

Taking into consideration the shortcomings in the SB 1108, Tom Horne proposed a second piece of legislation in 2009, Senate Bill 1069 (SB 1069). He and other anti-MAS crusaders strategically modified the language to account for the limitations of the SB 1108. Rather than prohibiting courses believed to conflict with the “values of American citizenship,” the new bill sought to prohibit courses “designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group” or those that “advocated ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals” (S.B. 1069, 2009). The language utilized in SB 1069 proved more successful than the previous attempt and moved quickly through the legislature floor. Despite the substantial support this second version received, legislators retained the bill in Senate Committee of the Whole due to then Governor Janet Napolitano’s threat to veto the bill (Cammara & Aguilera, 2012).

The following legislation cycle brought changes that made it possible for Tom Horne to successfully eliminate the MAS program once and for all. In 2010, Jan Brewer replaced Janet Napolitano as Governor, and at the same time republicans won several seats in the Arizona legislature. In light of these opportune changes, Tom Horne proposed and successfully passed the House Bill 2281 (HB 2281) through the full legislature. The final bill included much of the language from the SB 1069 (i.e., prohibiting courses designed for a particular ethnic group or those that advocated ethnic solidarity). In addition to these two clauses, the HB 2281 also prohibited courses that “[promoted] the overthrow of the [US] government” or “[promoted] resentment toward a race or class or people” (*HB 2281: Prohibited Courses*, 2010).

Despite successfully passing the HB 2281 under claims that their motivations did not aim to discriminate against the Latinx student population, students and educators challenged the purported neutrality of bill proponents’ intentions in the *Gonzalez v. Douglas* (2017) court trial.

Echoing the numerous descriptive reports and scholarly contributions outlining the anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx climate (Cabrera, 2012; Cacho, 2010; Fernandez & Hammer, 2012; Romero, 2010; Wanberg, 2013), federal judge Atsushi Wallace Tashima, ruled bill proponents advanced the HB2281 based on “racial animus” (*Gonzalez v. Douglas*, 2017). Judge Tashima found TUSD guilty for violating the first and fourteenth amendment rights of students. He attributed his conclusion to legislature stakeholders’ deviation from traditional legislative procedures, lack of empirical evidence to substantiate their factual findings, and the disproportionate negative impact the HB 2281 produced for the Latinx student population at TUSD (*Gonzalez v. Douglas*, 2017).

Considering the numerous descriptive reports and scholarly contributions, as well as a legal precedent asserting HB 2281 proponents “enacted and enforced, not for a legitimate educational purpose, but for (i) an invidious discriminatory racial purpose, and (ii) a politically partisan purpose” (*Gonzalez v. Douglas*, 2017), the focus of this study is not to identify the motivations underlying the discourses leveraged in the policymaking process. Instead, this study builds on these existing conclusions to empirically examine the policymaking process that enabled the adoption of a policy that increased inequity among racial groups.

Beyond providing a theoretically grounded empirical examination of the legislative process that eliminated the MAS program, my dissertation seeks to push the field by exploring the methodological potential of incorporating students’ insights to extend, problematize, or augment conventional policy research processes. Considering educational leaders and legislators adopted this discriminatory legislation despite the advocacy efforts by students and their families to protect and keep the MAS program, the adoption of the HB 2281 points to the injustices that are produced when students are excluded, overlooked, or minimized from legislative processes

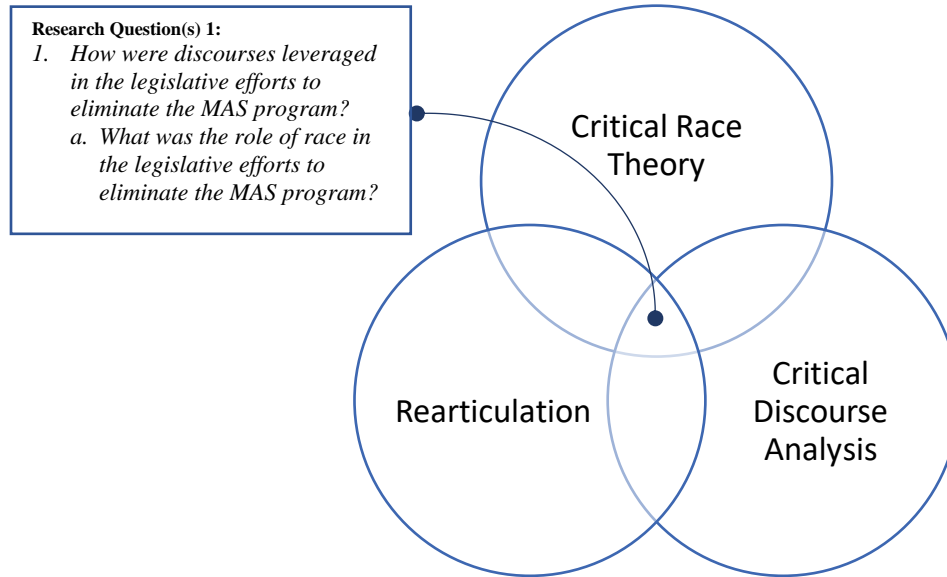
(Ginwright, Cammarota, & Noguera, 2005; Quijada Cerecer, Cahill, & Bradley, 2013). For this reason, critical race theory scholars remind us student voices and experiences are essential and indispensable for educational reform and transformation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Toward this end, I draw on my analysis of classroom observations, interviews, and survey responses I collected during the second phase of my research to encourage the field to incorporate students' critical reflections in our understandings of policymaking processes and policies. Together the more conventional textually oriented analysis and less conventional collection of student policy perspectives demonstrate the possibilities that exist when students perspectives are incorporated in policy research and solutions.

Chapter 2: Race and Language Matter in Policymaking

Research Question(s) 1 Framework:

Figure 1 Conceptual Frameworks for RQ(s) 1



Critical Race Theory

This study draws on critical race theory (CRT) to examine the ways in which race-neutral discourses are leveraged to justify the implementation of racist policies (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; López, 2003). Given the tendency to treat racism as a problem of the past solved by 1960 Civil Rights legislation, critical scholars from the legal field sought to highlight contemporary and more subtle forms of racial discrimination in US society (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). Pointing to the persistent racial inequities and limited opportunities for people of color, CRT scholars contend US society functions under illusions of racial neutrality (or colorblindness) that neglect the ongoing salience of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). A central aim of CRT is, thus, to expose how race-neutral claims based on principles of liberalism, neutrality, and democracy “are not just unattainable ideas,” but

also “harmful fictions that obscure the normative supremacy of Whiteness in American law and society” (Valdes, Culp, & Harris, 2002, p. 3).

Informed by these epistemological concerns, CRT scholars identified key pillars, or tenets that guide efforts to unveil contemporary racism through scholarship and research. While these key pillars have been adopted, modified, and extended across the field of education (see Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), most CRT scholars operate under the following inclinations (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998): 1) Racism is an inherent element to US society; 2) The social construct of race accrues material, economic, and social gains for Whites; 3) Unmasking contemporary forms of racism requires interrogating notions of meritocracy, neutrality, and objectivity; 4) Efforts to disrupt racism require incorporating and uplifting the voices and experiences of communities of color; and 5) Existing laws, policies, systems, and institutions require reinterpretation and analysis. These key tenets serve as a guiding force for racial justice advocates to challenge race-neutral claims characterizing mainstream understandings that negate the consideration of race and racism in our society.

The extension of these CRT pillars in education policy reveals powerholders are increasingly constructing illusions of racial neutrality to create, legitimize, and implement policies that systemize injustice (Alemán, 2006, 2016; Gillborn, 2005; Iverson, 2007; Morfin, Perez, Parker, Lynn, & Arrona, 2006; Parker, 2003). Under this mask of neutrality, legislators are adopting policies that protect the interests of the dominant group, sustain, or extend racial disparities across educational outcomes, and disproportionately limit educational opportunities for students of color (Gillborn, 2014; Kendi, 2019; López, 2003). Gillborn (2005) describes educational policy as a tool for upholding White Supremacy, where current policymaking “is a process that is

shaped by the interests of the dominant White population” (p. 28). Education policy that touts racial neutrality, while simultaneously extending and upholding the racial injustice are lethal contemporary mechanisms for maintaining a racially divided society. Unveiling and disrupting the forms in which race-neutral policy initiatives may be present-day manifestations of racism requires intentionally and purposefully centering race when analyzing policymaking processes and policies. Inspired by critical race policy scholars, I use CRT as an analytic framework to examine “how racial inequality may be reproduced through educational policies” (Iverson, 2007, p. 587).

Critical Discourse Analysis

While CRT allows me to examine the macro-level structures (i.e., considerations of race and racism), critical discourse analysis (CDA) allows me to focus on the micro-level structures (i.e., policy rhetoric) in the legislative processes that facilitated banning the MAS courses. CDA as a theory is a means of exploring the power dynamics embedded in our use of language and discourse to construct and interpret our world. A CDA lens in critical race policy analyses enables attention to the nuance and embedded meanings of discourses by recognizing the role that text plays in sustaining or changing ideologies that contribute to our understanding of the social world (Fairclough, 2003). In contributing to the construction of ideologies, CDA interrogates the ways in which texts (i.e., policy texts) can create "representations of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination, and exploitation" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9).

My focus on critical discourse analysis—as opposed to discourse analysis—stems from my interest in unpacking the power dynamics and ideologies that may be explicitly or implicitly embedded in the language surrounding the MAS debate. Discourse analysis contends that

discursive practices are based on the nature of people (Fairclough, 1989). In contrast, critical discourse analysis enables a more expansive investigation of how external forces (i.e., power dynamics) influence discursive practices. It considers the sources and causes of inequities, any resistance to oppression, and how power dynamics that reproduce inequities are interwoven in discourse (Van Dijk, 1997). As part of these critical orientations, CDA aims to explain how universally accepted and commonsensical discourses used by dominant groups are employed to sustain unequal power relations (Fairclough, 1989, 2013).

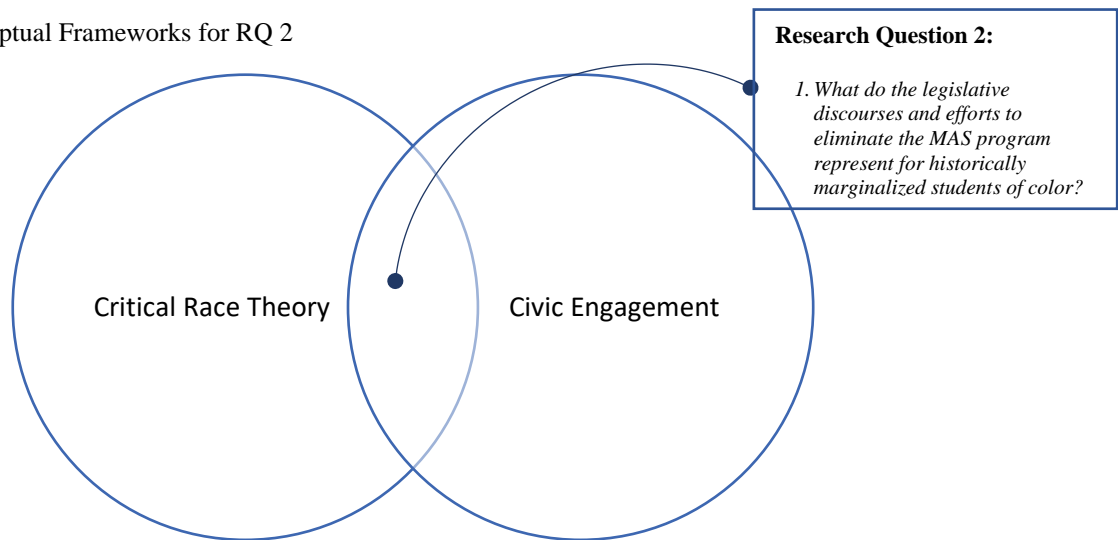
Articulation and Rearticulation

I draw on Stuart Hall's (1996) concepts of articulation and re-articulation to further unpack how bill proponents' discursive demonization of the MAS program gained traction. Similar to CDA, Hall's (1996) concept of articulation outlines we create and construct the frames through which we understand and interpret the world around us based on our articulation of our ideologies. As he argues, the ideologies that are overwhelmingly accepted by the masses become the "material force" that dominate our social thinking and the guiding lens through which we "make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible" the world around us (Hall, 2019, p. 26). Through an articulation perspective, groups maintain and create power by establishing a particular interpretation or understanding of the world based on a tactical articulation of their ideologies. As Hall (1996) posits, articulations hold the power of "[reconciling] and [accommodating] the mass of the people to their subordinate place in the social formation" (p. 26). Thus, maintaining the established dominance consists of neutralizing other groups' articulation. That is, it requires rearticulating other's understanding of the world in a way that differs from the established status quo ideology.

Applying the concepts of articulation and rearticulation to the MAS debate enables us to recognize that “political discourses are central to the engagement and contestation of all power relations because they provide coherent frameworks through which people view the world” (Ginwright et al., 2005, p. 5). Thus, I find leveraging Hall’s (1996) concepts of articulation and rearticulation in concert with CDA and CRT helpful to examine how bill proponents influenced and rearticulated understandings of the MAS program to precipitate its’ elimination despite the empirical evidence demonstrating the courses increased equity among racial lines.

Research Question 2 Framework:

Figure 2 Conceptual Frameworks for RQ 2



Critical Race Theory

While identifying and unveiling the forms in which racism may be present in the micro-level and macro-level in educational policy is critical, existing scholarship exploring the intersections of policy, race, and equity contends it is insufficient. Students of color are navigating an educational climate where they have been “the target[s] of conservative legislation that has whittled away educational equity, economic opportunities, and political power” (Ginwright et al., 2005, p. 31). The restriction of opportunities for students of color has been possible given that majority White voters and hierarchies govern overwhelming racially

marginalized student populations (Ginwright, Noguera, & Cammarota, 2006). Pointing to this contradiction, critical race scholarship critiques the exclusion of students of color from the policymaking processes that create tangible consequences in their educational journeys (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) urge us to remember that disrupting racism within our educational institutions heavily depends on centering the voices, experiences, and testimonies of students of color and their communities within research and power-making processes. As Solórzano and Yosso (2002) posit, the critical contributions of students of color within research, “can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform” (p. 32).

Civic Engagement

The field of civic engagement conceptualizes the exclusion of students of color from key power-making processes as limiting the forms in which they can be active participants in the creation and shaping of our democracy, society, and institutions. The field of civic engagement attributes this exclusion to paternalistic perspectives that deem students lack the skills, maturity, and capacity to inform and shape decision-making processes (Checkoway et al., 2005; Shah & Mediratta, 2008). Under these perspectives students are seen as “empty vessels” or passive receivers of knowledge and information (Ginwright et al., 2006, p. 303). In treating students of color as “empty vessels,” Noguera and colleagues (2006) contend “young people learn to be passive subjects who wait for others—particularly adults—to tell them what to do, how to think, and what to say” (p. 313). Based on these infantilizing interactions students are excluded from these processes and encouraged to serve as passive actors in their educational journeys.

Despite institutions and schools’ failure to incorporate students of color in decision-making process that shape their educational journeys, existing research within the field of civic

engagement documents the numerous forms students are resisting and challenging coercive policies that limit their educational opportunities and potential. Through their tenacious organizing, students have successfully replaced courses that prepared students for low-wage labor with college-preparatory courses and curriculum (Shah, 2011), advocated for increased transparency and accountability within schools (Shah & Mediratta, 2008), and mobilized to implement more equitable school discipline and policing policies (Dzurinko, McCants, & Stith, 2011). As well, youth have led numerous other institutional reforms that ensure they are granted the high-quality learning they and their communities deserve (Ginwright et al., 2005; Lee, White, & Dong, 2021).

The success of student organizing reveals the valuable insights youth possess for advancing equity-oriented educational reform and potential for informing policymaking processes. Students within our public schools possess local knowledge and first-hand experiences around how policies affect their everyday realities (Taines, 2012). With this knowledge, students can share valuable contributions to inform innovative policy solutions that disrupt institutional inequities and work to adequately meet the needs of historically marginalized youth (Checkoway et al., 2005; Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Further, students demonstrate a spirited commitment towards dismantling the constraints in their lives and those of their community, which underscores their contributions as critical for transforming our current educational system and leading the path towards a more just schooling experience (Cabrera et al., 2013).

Despite the numerous forms in which students are shaping the world in which they navigate, traditional understandings of civic engagement often fail to acknowledge, encourage, or uplift students' democratic actions. Critiquing the racial divides of who is traditionally

recognized for their democratic participation in civic engagement scholarship, Mirra and Garcia (2017) push the field to consider the ways in which youth of color engage in “civic interrogation” (p. 139). Interested in capturing the often overlooked political responses and actions of students of color, Mirra and Garcia (2017) argue students of color are using alternate spaces where they are “disrupting dominant ideas and exposing the bedrock inequities behind the assumptions of fairness and equality in American life” (p. 152).

Interconnected with the notion of civic interrogation, Lee et al. (2021) encourage us to consider further scaffolding student’s civic reasoning and discourse potential. Engaging in civic reasoning and discourse requires students to apply the knowledge they’ve accrued through their learning to analyze our society. As Stitzlein (2021) explains, the knowledge and skills that produce democratically healthy civic reasoning involve “inquiry, fact findings, logic, rationality, critical thinking, discussion, and deliberation” (p. 24). This line of the literature, stresses the importance of developing students’ ability to reach conclusions based on analysis of evidence, differing perspectives, and factual findings. A civic reasoning orientation also acknowledges the ethical values, virtues, and dispositions students must embrace to engage in a constructive and fruitful analysis, such as empathy, a collaborative spirit, and civility (Stitzlein, 2021). Engaging in civic reasoning and discourses also involves the ability to “engage in effective decision-making that focuses on finding consensus, compromise, or in some cases, confronting social injustices through dissent” (Lee et al., 2021, p. 399).

I draw on these growing understandings within this field to explore the forms in which students’ civic engagement (i.e., civic interrogation and reasoning) can augment, extend, or problematize traditional policy analyses. CRT, civic interrogation, and civic reasoning undergird

my epistemological understanding of students of color as possessing the intellectual rigor, brilliance, and capacity to critically unpack the legislative elimination of the MAS program.

Chapter 3: Toward a Student-Centered Policy Methodology

To analyze the legislative process that banned the MAS program, I carried out a qualitative critical policy analysis based on a blend of critical race policy discourse analytical frameworks (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Iverson, 2007; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2014) and youth-centered critical race theory methodologies (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). My methodology rests in accordance with critical race policy research tendencies that carry out projects using a host of designs and applications—mostly qualitative in nature (Diem, Young, Welton, Mansfield, & Lee, 2014b; Young, 1999). Common approaches include, but are not limited to, critical discourse analysis (Hyatt, 2013), case studies (Stein, 2004), critical ethnography (Lopez, Valenzuela, & García, 2011; Young, 1999), historical approaches (Brewer, 2008; Gale, 2001), and policy archeology (Scheurich, 1994). The distinguishing factor in critical policy research is, thus, a study’s commitment to providing “an empirical account of the contextual and contingent reproduction—through policy and practice—of social inequity” (Young, 1999, p. 689). Informed by these orientations, I carry out a critical race policy analysis to answer the research questions guiding my study. In this chapter, I unpack the methodological approach outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Research Questions, Data, & Analytical Approach

<i>Research Question(s)</i>	<i>Data Sources</i>	<i>Data Details</i>	<i>Analytical Approach</i>
Research Question and Sub-Question 1:			
1) How were discourses leveraged in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program?	a) Arizona legislature website; <i>Gonzalez v. Douglas (2017)</i> supporting legal documents.	a) Legislative hearing transcripts, hearing meeting summaries, fact sheets, agendas, proposed amendments, adopted amendments, and calendars.	1st Cycle: Drawing on Critical Discourse Policy Analysis frameworks (Hyatt, 2013), all documents collected were coded to identify any evidentiary, accountability, and political warrants.
1b) What was the role of race in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program?	b) Arizona legislature website, public online platforms, <i>Gonzalez v. Douglas (2017)</i> , online media outlets, online newspaper articles.	b) Newspaper articles, news videos, documentaries, <i>Gonzalez v. Douglas (2017)</i> hearing transcripts and trial evidence.	2nd Cycle: Based on the warrant codes identified in cycle one, I drew on Critical Race Theory policy analysis frameworks (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019b) to recode the documents for direct and/or indirect references to race and racism.
	c) Two policy specialist consultations.	c) (1) 90 minutes, (2) 80 minutes.	3rd Cycle: Based on the codes identified in cycles one and two, I created large schema webs that reflected emergent explanations of the links across the multiple sources of data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).
	d) Informal interview with previous MAS director.	d) 25 minutes.	
Research Question 2:			
2) What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?	a) Classroom observations.	a) Raw notes fleshed into field memos (Miles et al., 2014).	1st Cycle: In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013).
	b) Survey responses.	b) 63 survey responses responding to open and closed-ended questions.	2nd Cycle: Deductive and deductive coding (Miles et al., 2014).
	c) Interviews.	c) Eight semi-structured student interviews ranging from 60-90 minutes.	3rd Cycle: Based on cycle one and two codes, I created large schema webs that reflected emergent explanations of students' perspectives of the legislative discourses and process (Miles et al., 2014).

Research Design for Research Question and Sub-Question 1:

To answer the first question and sub-question guiding my study, I drew on elements of Hyatt’s (2013) and Winkle-Wagner, Sulé, and Maramba’s (2019) qualitative policy analysis frameworks to investigate the discourses employed to design, build support around, and eradicate the MAS program in Tucson, Arizona. Table 3 outlines the methodology I employed for my first question and sub-question. My methodological approach situates policymaking discourses and processes as part of larger sociopolitical contexts. Qualitative policy discourse analysis challenges constructions of “policies as laden-free, objective, and apolitical statements” (Allan, 2003, p. 49). Consistent with the focus of critical policy discourse methodology on written documents (Allan, 2003; Poon & Segoshi, 2018), the main sources of data I drew on to answer my inquiries consists of legislative records, publicly available documents, and transcripts from informal interviews (Patton, 2002).

Research Question and Sub-Question 1 Methodology

Table 3 Research Question and Sub-Question 1 Methodology

<i>Research Question(s) 1</i>	<i>Data Sources</i>	<i>Data Details</i>	<i>Analytical Approach</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How were discourses leveraged in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What was the role of race in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? 	a) Arizona legislature website; <i>Gonzalez v. Douglas (2017)</i> supporting legal documents. b) Arizona legislature website, public online platforms, <i>Gonzalez v. Douglas (2017)</i> , online media outlets, online newspaper articles.	Legislative hearing transcripts, hearing meeting summaries, fact sheets, agendas, proposed amendments, adopted amendments, and calendars. Newspaper articles, news videos, documentaries, <i>Gonzalez v. Douglas (2017)</i> hearing transcripts and trial evidence.	1st Cycle: Drawing on Critical Discourse Policy Analysis frameworks (Hyatt, 2013), all documents collected were coded to identify any evidentiary, accountability, and political warrants. 2nd Cycle: Based on the warrant codes identified in cycle one, I drew on Critical Race Theory policy analysis frameworks (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019b) to recode the documents for direct and/or indirect references to race and racism.

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|--|
| c) | Two policy specialist consultations. | (1) 90 minutes,
(2) 80 minutes.

25 minutes. | 3rd Cycle: Based on cycle one and two codes, I created large schema webs that reflected emergent explanations of students' perspectives of the legislative discourses and process (Miles et al., 2014). |
| d) | Informal interview with previous MAS director. | | |

I carried out this analysis of the legislative records and publicly available documents under the premise that the “construction, critique, debate, and contestation of policy are actions accomplished largely through language” (Hyatt, 2013, p. 839). Operating under this premise, analyzing discourses can shed insight into how policy stakeholders construct what is taken as ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ versus ‘deviant’ or ‘marginal’ (Hyatt, 2013, p. 837).

Research Question and Sub-Question 1 Data Collection

To answer the first research question and sub-question, I collected a series of legislative records and publicly available documents. The legislative records consisted of gathering the legislative hearing transcripts, multiple bill versions proposed, bill summaries, fact sheets, meeting agendas, vote counts, and meeting calendars that tracked each of the legal attempts to eliminate the MAS program—the SB 1108 (2008), SB 1069 (2009), and the HB 2281 (2010). Publicly available documents involved newspaper articles, documentaries, opinion pieces, and online transcripts providing insight into the sociopolitical context influencing the discourses used to eliminate the MAS program. I also carried out three informal interviews that helped me clarify the tensions that emerged from analyzing the documents. Together, these data sources provided invaluable information into the language used, framed, and reshaped throughout the legislative process that played a key role in successfully eliminating the MAS program. More specifically, these sources revealed the discursive strategies that anti-MAS proponents used to leverage the courts as a vehicle to prohibit a program that increased equity among racial lines.

Recognizing CRT encourages analyses situated in the historical and contextual nature of the phenomena of interest (Ladson-Billings, 1998), I also collected the multiple publicly available documents that shed key insights into the socio-political climate informing the MAS program ban. These publicly available documents consisted of the following: multiple documentaries (e.g., *Precious Knowledge*; Tucson's Mexican American Studies Ban on PBS); numerous online news articles reporting on the multiple legislations proposed; and opinion pieces from students, teachers, superintendents, or community members advocating in support or against the bill. Given that my line of inquiry particularly sought to understand how anti-MAS proponents passed this legislation, rather than its' implementation, I purposefully drew from documents related to the policymaking process. The few documents I reviewed after its' adoption included the statements released by HB 2281 proponents deeming the MAS program in violation of the adopted bill, the research reports published by third-party auditors, and the court hearing transcripts from the *Gonzalez v. Douglas (2017)* case deeming the HB 2281 unconstitutional. When accounting for both the legislative and publicly available documents I collected, I reviewed over 163 documents, which together consisted of over 2,574 pages.

In addition to these documents, I also carried out three informal interviews with two stakeholders. Table 4 outlines these three informal interviews. When analyzing the legislative and publicly available documents, inquiries emerged that I could not answer based on these documents. Some of these questions included inquiries around why previous legislative bills (i.e., SB 1108, SB 1069) were not adopted into law if they received the majority votes in the hearings they were presented. To answer these additional questions that emerged, I consulted a government specialist, Yesenia Sotomayor⁶, with expertise in the policymaking process to help

⁶ This name is a pseudonym to protect the individual's identity.

me understand the nuances in the policymaking process not reflected in the legislative and publicly available documents. I carried out a total of two consultations with this government specialist that lasted 90 minutes and 80 minutes respectively on March 4th, 2020, and March 4th, 2021. While the conversation with the government specialist provided invaluable insight into understanding the legislative processes, there were questions that remained that could only be answered by someone that witnessed the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program.

The documents did not explain why there were very few people opposing the elimination of the MAS program sharing their testimony during the legislative process. After consulting with the policy specialist, who shared this was unusual in the policymaking process, I reached out to Dr. Herrera to probe further. I chose to reach out to Dr. Filiberto Herrera because he was one of the few stakeholders that shared a testimony opposing the elimination of the MAS program throughout the legislative process. Our conversation was helpful to answer questions unanswerable through an analysis of the legislative and publicly available documents. This meeting lasted 30 minutes. I recorded each of the above conversations and utilized REV services to transcribe these discussions.

Table 4 Informal Interviews Participants

Stakeholder	Conversation Rationale	Duration
Sonia Sotomayor	Government specialist with expertise and knowledge of the legislative and bill drafting process.	Two semi-structured informal interviews: (1) 90 minutes (2) 80 minutes
Dr. Filiberto Herrera	Attended and participated in anti-MAS legislative hearings. Had insider knowledge of how public input was managed by the legislative board.	One semi-structured informal interview: (1) 30 minutes

Research Question and Sub-Question 1 Data Analysis

I followed a three-cycle coding scheme to provide a systemic analysis of the legislative texts and supporting documents (Fairclough, 2013; Luttrell, 2000). Aware that many documents “usually contain much dross—material unrelated to the research questions,” I purposefully focused on coding the sections that revealed the warrants established to justify a political course of action, statement, or belief (Miles et al., 2014, p. 90). Applying this approach to my analysis involved, coding and analyzing the data to identify the “justification, authority, or reasonable grounds” for eliminating the MAS program (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, p. 4).

For example, this involved purposefully mining the legislative documents for the political, evidentiary, and accountability warrants used in the legislative process to campaign, garner support, and successfully ban the MAS program. Table 5 outlines examples of each of these initial codes. As Table 5 shows, in coding for the political warrant, I labeled the rhetoric across the legislative archives used to frame the elimination of the MAS program as a “public/national interest” that was framed as necessary for the “construction of [a] good society” (Hyatt, 2013, p. 839). Simultaneously, I coded the evidence bill proponents used to establish their position as the evidentiary warrants (Hyatt, 2013, p. 839). Finally, I coded sections of the data where anti-MAS stakeholders established their “grounds for action based on results or

outcomes” (Hyatt, 2013, p. 839). These coding cycles are summarized in Table 5. After identifying these warrants, I conducted a thematic analysis that centers on outlining themes that are implicitly or explicitly connected to existing theoretical contributions around race and racism (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019b).

Table 5 Cycle One Code Examples

Code	Definition	Example
Political Warrant	The way in which bill proponents justified the elimination of the MAS program “in terms of the public/national interest, the public good or the construction of the ‘good society’” (Hyatt, 2013, p. 839).	Senator John Huppenthal: “Our suspicion is that inside these classes, students are being indoctrinated by people who are in power to have a certain mindset of us versus them. [...] People in power are doing something distasteful, that they're not giving these children the skills that they need to go on to be nurses and doctors, and architects, and lawyers in power, but rather they're wasting time with this divisive rhetoric that is not going to move these children forward to be in positions of power and have influence” (SB 1069: Judiciary Committee, 2009).
Evidentiary Warrant	The way in which bill proponents established their position based on the evidence they provided (Hyatt, 2013).	Tom Horne: “You asked, Representative Waters, for evidence. Hector Ayala is a teacher in Tucson. He is, himself, an immigrant, but he doesn't approve of what goes on the La Raza studies. He told me the kids told him, among other things, and I give you more detail, but I'm going to try to be concise, that the kids told him that they're taught not to fall for the White man's traps” (HB 2281: House Education Committee, 2010).
Accountability Warrant	The way in which bill proponents established the “grounds for actions based on results or outcomes” (Hyatt, 2013, p. 839).	Tom Horne: “What I'm objecting to as racism is dividing kids by their race and then teaching each group just about their own culture and not about other cultures. That's what I'm objecting to. We want to teach all students about all cultures. But when you say we're going to put the African American studies kids here, and we're going to teach them only about African American issues; we're going to put the Raza kids here, and we're going to teach them only about Raza issues; we're going to put the Asian Americans here and teach them only Asian issues and put the Native American kids and teach them only Native American. It echoes the Old South, and it is racism in my opinion. That's what this bill is designed to put a stop to” (HB 2281: House Education Committee, 2010)

In the second cycle of my coding scheme, I linked each of the warrants to themes related to race identified by critical race scholars. Coding for race within the political, evidentiary, and

accountability warrants involved “[grappling] with the way that the debate connected with the ideology of race, the implications for points in the discourses where race was avoided” or the taken for granted “normative aspects” of race in the MAS debate (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2014, p. 522). When coding for explicit references of race, I labeled the words and phrases directly associated with race. Meanwhile, uncovering the implicit references of race in the data consisted of identifying the words or phrases often used as proxies that evade direct mention or acknowledgment of race. Adhering to CRT analytical approaches in this cycle of coding involved “[identifying] the primary CRT tenets, if any, that apply to that data” (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019b, p. 198) As Winkle-Wagner and colleagues (2019b) remind us “it might be the case with some data that not all tenets are immediately accessible in the data” (p. 198).

For the final cycle of my coding scheme, I created large schema webs based on cycle one and two codes. Table 6 showcases examples of these cycle three codes. This cycle revealed the pattern codes “that [identified] an emergent configuration, or explanation” for the links across the different types of data (Miles et al., 2014, p. 90). These schemas were also useful in recognizing and interrogating the inconsistencies or tensions that emerged from the data. Analyzing these inconsistencies were helpful for cross-checking or triangulating my findings from the multiple sources of data I collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009).

Table 6 Cycle Three Code Examples

Code	Definition	Example
Reararticulating the MAS Program as a Threat	Rhetoric used to construct/describe the MAS program, students, educators, and curriculum as a threat to the well-being of TUSD students and residents.	Chairman Russel K. Pearce: “This, to me, this is a very, very important bill. When we talk about American values, about organizations that spew anti-American or race-based [...] they have no place. We ought to be celebrating unity as Americans and not allow these, with taxpayer dollars, these organization that spew anti-American rhetoric, that taxpayer dollars as inappropriate.” (SB 1108: House Appropriations, 2009).

Reararticulating the Counternarratives of MAS Advocates	Rhetoric used to reframe the testimony and experiences of marginalized communities affected by the possible elimination of the MAS program.	Senator John Huppenthal: “Rather than being powerless and the oppressed, as a matter of fact, they are doing quite well in our society. [Ms. Harvey] needs to bear in mind that nobody here in America is powerless. The whole story of America is about people climbing to the top, and everybody, regardless of their resources, being able to do it” (SB 1069: Judiciary Committee, 2009).
Reararticulating Racial Equity Discourses	Equity-oriented rhetoric used to mask the discriminatory intentions of bill proponents.	Representative Steve Montenegro: “Tax dollars should be used for the education that is correct for our children. And when I see this, I have to stand up, whether it’s the politically correct thing to do or not, it is the right thing to do. And so, I humbly stand before you in support of this bill, because it is not aimed at a racial agenda. This is not about, we hate Hispanics. This is not about, well, we hate Latinos and we hate Mexico, and we hate Central America and South America. This is about, let’s treat everybody equally. Let’s not start separating with regards to the race or with regards to their ethnic origin” (SB 1069: Senate Judiciary Committee, 2009).

Research Design for Research Question 2:

Table 7 Research Question 2 Methodology

<i>Research Question 2</i>	<i>Data Sources</i>	<i>Data Details</i>	<i>Analytical Approach</i>
2) What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?	a) Classroom observations.	a) Raw notes fleshed into field memos (Miles et al., 2014).	1st Cycle: In Vivo coding (Saldaña, 2013).
	b) Survey responses.	b) 63 survey responses responding to open and closed-ended questions.	2nd Cycle: Deductive and deductive coding (Miles et al., 2014).
	c) Interviews.	c) Eight semi-structured student interviews ranging from 60-90 minutes.	3rd Cycle: Based on cycle one and two codes, I created large schema webs that reflected emergent explanations of students' perspectives of the legislative discourses and process (Miles et al., 2014).

Research Question 2 Methodology

To answer the second research question, my methodology extends beyond conventional textual analyses of legislative records to include student perceptions in the analysis of the anti-MAS legislative process. To this end, I build on and expand the existing repertoire of critical race policy analysis orientations and methodologies (Alemán, 2006; Gillborn, 2005; Iverson, 2007; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019b) to explore the potential of uplifting student voices to augment, extend, and problematize the findings from the analysis of the legislative records. In particular, I draw on youth-centered critical race methodologies that forefront the voices and lived experiences of students of color (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) outline the key elements comprising a critical race methodology that centers the voices of students of color:

We define critical race methodology as a theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. (...) (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses

on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color. Furthermore, it views these experiences as sources of strength and (e) uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of Ethnic Studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color (p. 24).

Centering student insights in my critical race methodology proves useful considering students of color have long been excluded or silenced in policymaking processes as a result of paternalistic perspectives that deem they lack the experience, competence, and maturity necessary to be involved in high stakes bureaucratic procedures (Checkoway et al., 2005; Shah & Mediratta, 2008). Challenging these perspectives, Delgado-Bernal (2002) posits students of color possess valuable and unique understandings of the world that hold the "potential to transform schools into places where the experiences of all individuals are acknowledged, and cherished" (p. 121). Beyond providing fruitful insights that complicate dominant narratives around youths' participation in policymaking processes, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) remind us that uplifting the voices of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students directly affected by these policies can "[strengthen] traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" within these marginalized communities (p. 32). Embracing Delgado-Bernal's (2002) and Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) contributions, I place students' critical reflections in dialogue with the legislative analysis to counter their separation or exclusion from policymaking processes and research.

Research Question 2 Setting

This second phase of my study took place in La Rosa High Magnet School (La Rosa) in Tucson, Arizona. La Rosa serves an increasingly diverse student population. The school racial composition at La Rosas consists of 69% Hispanic, 16% White, 6% Black, 4% Native American, 3% Two or more races, and 2% Asian or Pacific Islander (*Tucson Magnet High School Summary Ratings*, 2019). In terms of income, 47% of La Rosa High students were eligible for free or

reduced-price lunch (*Tucson Magnet High School Summary Ratings*, 2019). In terms of college preparation, La Rosa has a 91% high school graduation rate. Notably, this high graduation rate does not mean much “if students are graduating without the coursework they need to succeed” in college (*Tucson Magnet High School Summary Ratings*, 2019, p. 1). When delving into the college preparatory participation only 14% of students are participating in AP courses and only 6% participate in dual enrollment. According to equity overview data, La Rosa received a 3 out of 10 in terms of how well it serves marginalized students, compared to other schools in the state (*Tucson Magnet High School Summary Ratings*, 2019). This rating indicates marginalized students at La Rosa school may be falling behind other students in the state.

I carried out this study in two American Government classes taught by Mr. Joaquin Lopez⁷ during Fall 2020. While I initially planned to participate in the classes in person, given the COVID limitations, I adapted my original plans and instead participated in the courses virtually through Zoom. Despite the COVID constraints, Mr. Lopez and I sought out opportunities for me to actively participate in the course and engage students for over 10-weeks. As I will detail in the subsequent sections, during my time participating in the courses I often shared my insights and contributions around certain class topics, lead community building circles, conducted classroom observations, wrote field memos after reflecting on classroom observations, shared a brief presentation on the background of Ethnic Studies related policies, distributed a survey, and conducted semi-structured student interviews.

While TUSD was forced to eliminate their robust MAS program, they re-incorporated culturally relevant courses in the school district (Joaquin, PC, November 25, 2019). During this time, many MAS teachers and leaders were fired for their involvement for MAS. Those who

⁷ Mr. Joaquin Lopez is a pseudonym used to protect the teacher’s identity.

weren't fired, were pushed out given the increasingly hostile climate they experienced, in which they faced harsh critiques and scrutiny for their work at the school, district, and state level given the adoption of the HB 2281 (Joaquin, PC, November 25, 2019). Mr. Joaquin Lopez, a previous MAS teacher was the only teacher that remained during the time of my study who was not fired or pushed through this climate out after the elimination of the MAS program. According to Mr. Lopez, the culturally relevant courses offered differed substantially by the teacher. He also shared that most culturally relevant teachers during the time of the study often did not incorporate the elements or principles previously employed by the MAS program. Unlike the other culturally relevant courses, his pedagogy aligned closer to some of the principles from the courses he employed during the MAS program. Nonetheless, he mentioned the courses were not replicates of MAS courses given the constraints in the type of material and class topics educators could engage given their fear of being targeted or fired (Joaquin, PC, November 25, 2019).

Ultimately, students in Mr. Lopez's courses were reaping some, but not all, of the benefits of previous MAS courses. However, the benefits they did experience was a result of a teacher's efforts to support students, rather than an institutional commitment to the pedagogical practices and tools that promoted student engagement, achievement, and learning in the previous MAS program. Further, space is now extremely limited in the few culturally relevant courses offered and not all students that opt to participate in Mr. Lopez's culturally relevant American Government courses are able to take his course. Also, the numbers of courses students could take through a culturally relevant significantly decreased after the adoption of HB 2281. Therefore, while Mr. Lopez's students did receive a curriculum inspired by elements of MAS courses, the adoption of the HB 2281 limited their access to the robust MAS curriculum and multiple course offerings available before its elimination. Nonetheless, it is important to note that students I

observed, surveyed, and interviewed from Mr. Lopez' courses received a learning experience more similar to those previously offered by the MAS program than their peers in other culturally relevant courses.

Research Question 2 Data Collection

The data I gathered to answer my second research question consists of field notes, observation memos, 63 survey responses, and eight semi-structured interviews⁸ from 11th and 12th grade high school students taking Mr. Joaquin Lopez's American Government courses. In collecting this data, I entered two American Government classes through a Mexican American perspective taught by Mr. Joaquin Lopez in Fall 2020. There was a total of 75 students from both classes. I interviewed students from this high school and classrooms because the political testimonios gathered would reflect the perspectives of students' whose educational experience were affected by the HB 2281—given that these students were no longer able to participate in the robust MAS program that existed in Tucson schools prior to the adoption of the bill.

Classroom Observations and Participation. As part of my methodology for my second research question, the purpose of the classroom observations and participation were not to triangulate the results but rather served the following two primary purposes. The first purpose was to help me carry out my critical race policy analysis through a humanizing approach. To this end, I carefully considered the forms in which I would engage students throughout my data collection process. I intentionally sought to participate in students' class to counter historical practices where researchers enter communities of color to extract knowledge for their personal gain and

⁸ Mr. Lopez shared that under the pandemic, there was a 20% submission rate for his class, which was unusual. For this reason, Mr. Lopez mentioned the low interest in serving as an interview participant in my study could be connected to the drastically low submission rate (around 20%) during the COVID pandemic. As a result, contrary to my initial assumptions, utilizing a survey to gather student perspectives became a more viable venue for gathering a greater number of student perceptions than the interviews.

immediately exit without consideration of the communities they enter (Paris & Winn, 2012). Mindful of these harmful research practices, I participated in students' classes for 10 weeks seeking to build a "dialogic" relationship that acknowledged students' humanity (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2012). Although, I originally intended to participate in these classes in person, COVID forced La Rosa to transfer their courses to an online format. For this reason, I carried out my participation in these classes virtually through Zoom. I attended the classes daily for 10 weeks out of the 12 weeks in the semester. As I outline in the Research Reflexivity During COVID section, my participation in students' course, as well as the classroom observations I conducted helped me understand the challenges students were grappling with during the global pandemic leading to their minimal participation and interest in participating in my study.

The second purpose of the classroom observations was to gather insights into the classroom environment, dynamics, and context students were navigating that might allow me to understand students and their responses more profoundly before I interviewed them. To this end, I recurrently jotted raw notes and wrote memos that helped me understand students' perspectives on the anti-MAS legislative process. Based on these classrooms observations I learned students were accessing a curriculum not often available in mainstream courses. Students' responses throughout the interviews demonstrated an impressive level of critical consciousness and ability to deconstruct the arguments Arizona educational leaders presented during the legislative hearings. My classroom observations revealed students were developing these skills through classroom activities, such as critically analyzing political cartoons from a local newspaper. Through this class activity, students were given the space to interrogate US systems and structures, in relation to current sociopolitical issues connected to students' lives. Students' engagement with activities like this one helped

explain the college-level analysis and contributions many students offered in their interview responses.

Classroom Policy Activity. After spending over 8 weeks participating in the virtual classes acquiring this deeper understanding of students' classroom environment and building community with them, I carried out a classroom presentation to provide the background information they needed to answer questions related to my study. Appendix B outlines the classroom policy activity overview protocol I followed for this classroom presentation. In this 45-minute presentation, I defined Ethnic Studies, I shared a brief summary of the history of Ethnic Studies, shared short video clips showing the MAS debate, presented the main findings from Ethnic Studies research, provided a timeline that showed the policymaking process for each of the legislative bills proposed (SB 1108, SB 1069, HB 2281), and read with students the legislative text for the HB 2281. Through this presentation, I sought to ensure students would have sufficient legislative background necessary to share their critical reflections on the legislative process. Students had received contextual information on the MAS program and the Ethnic Studies debate from Mr. Lopez in earlier class. While Mr. Lopez had already provided a brief introduction, I provided additional legislative and MAS information to ensure students understood the language or legislation I inquired about in the interview questions and survey.

Survey. Beyond collecting classroom observations and providing the classroom policy overview, I disseminated a survey that sought to gather students' perspectives on the anti-MAS legislative process. For the purpose of this dissertation, I only use and present the open-ended responses gathered through this survey to show moments where other students' survey responses echoed or deviated from the responses I gathered from the interviews. I will conduct an in-depth analysis of these survey responses as part of a future article.

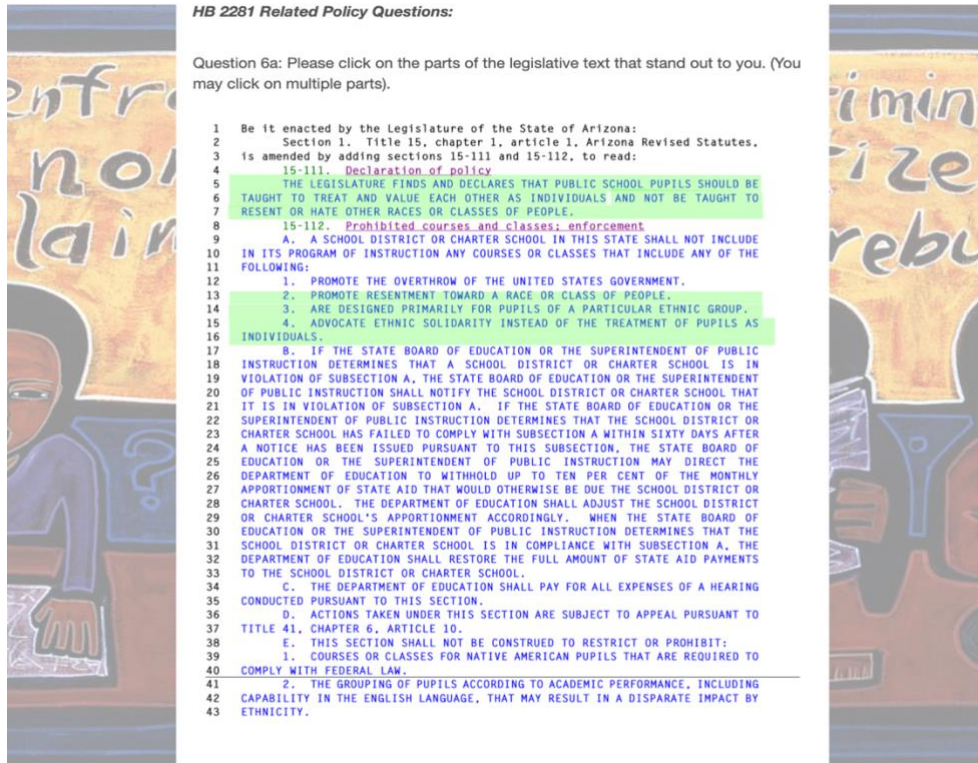
Overall, I received 63 survey responses out of 75 requested. Based on this number, the response rate was 84%. Of the students that participated in the survey 78.65% identified as Chicana/Latina, 8.99% as Indigenous, 4.49% White, 4.49% East Asian, 1.12% Black, 1.12% Native Hawaiian, and 1.12% Other. The majority, 75.34%, of students that filled out the survey would be first in their families to attend college. Females comprised 71.23% of survey respondents, while males comprised 28.77% of survey respondents.

Considering fewer students opted to participate in an interview than what I originally imagined was possible before COVID, the survey responses shed valuable insight into how other students' perspectives might have been similar or different from their peers if they had been interviewed. Based on this specific use of the survey, I offer a brief description of the survey I disseminated. The survey consisted of a series of open-ended, close-ended, multiple choice, and matrix table questions. After receiving the presentation, all students were given the rest of the class time to fill out the survey. Mr. Lopez encouraged students to participate in the survey by replacing it with homework assignment given its' connection to class material and discussions on American government legislative processes. I developed and distributed the survey using the Qualtrics survey software.

The survey included questions on the following: 1) Students' perceived importance of the availability of Ethnic Studies courses; 2) Students' reaction to the language and legislative text of the HB 2281; 3) Students' perceptions on legislators' motivations for eliminating the MAS program; and 4) Students' policy solutions or ideas regarding Ethnic Studies. To keep students engaged throughout the survey, I also utilized the hot spot and graphic slider functions on Qualtrics to ask some of the questions. These additional functions made it possible for students to engage

and interact more directly with the HB 2281 legislative text. Figure 3 illustrates the hot spot question where I asked student to click the parts of the legislative text that stood out to them.

Figure 3 Qualtrics Survey Hot Spot Question Example



Note: The figure shows the hot spot survey question, displaying the top 5 areas students selected that stood out to them.

Interviews. While all students were required to participate in the survey, only students that volunteered and submitted their parent consent form (refer to Appendix A) participated in the semi-structured interviews. The interviews took place outside class, during a time that best worked for students. Originally, I planned to interview students whose survey responses were helpful for answering my research questions. However, I decided to change my approach given that my Arizona contacts often cautioned TUSD educators and students may be hesitant to participate in my study given the waves of researchers that entered the district following the adoption of the HB 2281. Many shared I might find it difficult to find an educator and students willing to participate given the harmful practices many researchers carried out when entering

TUSD. Beyond the historical harm students and educators in TUSD experienced, they were also navigating additional challenges due to COVID. Throughout my classroom observations and participation, I noticed many students were struggling to keep up with their homework assignments, balance their multiple familial and financial responsibilities, and remain engaged and connected in their virtual courses. Hoping to not overwhelm students and further conduct harm, I intentionally decided to only interview students that volunteered to participate.

Around once a week, Mr. Lopez would give me five minutes at the beginning of class to talk about my study and provide a space for students to note their interest in participating in the research. During this time, I shared my contact information and encouraged students to reach out to me if they were interested in being interviewed. Throughout the 10 weeks, Mr. Lopez also continuously encouraged students to participate in my study, stressing the importance of supporting a “Latina completing her doctoral degree.” Our efforts resulted in eight students volunteering to participate in a semi-structured interview. All the students that participated in an interview first filled out the survey. Table 8 details the demographics of students that opted to participate in an interview. Interview participants predominantly identified as Latinx⁹, first-generation students.

Table 8 Student Interview Portraits

Student	Portrait	Opportunity Status	Racial/Ethnic Identity
Aitana Aguilar	A resilient guerrera (warrior) striving to open paths for herself and her family.	First-generation Student	Latinx
Aurora Ayala	A deep, intellectual guerrera with a humble and community-oriented spirit.	Second-generation Student	Latinx
Elizabeth Garayzar	An intellectual warrior passionate about advocating for her peers and community.	Second-generation Student	Latinx

⁹ Students from this class identified as Latinx. Latinx is a term that evades the gender binary that Latino/a imposes.

Luis Ortega	A silently powerful and curious guerrero that critically consumed the world around him.	First-generation Student	Latinx
Liliana Figueroa	A fiery and colorful change agent and advocate.	First-generation Student	Latinx
Lucia Baresi	A dedicated and hard-working guerrera committed to her educational journey and uplifting her family.	First-generation Student	Latinx
Maria Suarez Campos	An inspiring and admirable guerrera with a soul and strength beyond her years.	First-generation Student	Latinx
Teresa Robinson	A confident and community-driven guerrera interested in creating bridges of opportunities for her community and peers.	First-generation Student	Latinx/White

Note: *The asterisk indicates this student opted to use their real name in the study. Those without the asterisk reflect pseudonyms used to protect students' identities.

In these 60 to 90-minute semi-structured interviews, I asked students questions that sought to gather their insights, reactions, and feelings around the political discourses and legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS courses. Hoping to humanize our interactions, before delving into the questions that would help me answer the inquiries guiding my research, I gave students space to ask any questions they had for me. I sought to reciprocate what I was asking students to do by giving them the experience of being on the other side asking questions (Paris & Winn, 2012). Most students embraced this option and asked questions on my own educational journey (“what are you studying?”), on the research I was conducting (what is the study for?), on details about the legislative bills, or on their college going inquiries.

In the interviews, I showed students clips from two legislative hearings. The first was the SB 1069 House of Education Committee hearing in 2009 from the second legislative attempt to eliminate the MAS program. The second was the HB 2281 Senate of the Whole Committee hearing in 2010 from the final and successful attempt to eradicate the MAS program. Before showing students these clips, I explained that bills must be approved by multiple committees before they are adopted into law. I mentioned they would be watching clips from the committee meetings

where bill proponents presented the main arguments they leveraged to justify the elimination of the MAS courses.

While each of these committee meetings were over 50 minutes each, I purposefully selected the portions of the clips I would show students. I intentionally selected portions where bill author, Tom Horne, voiced his main arguments and evidence explaining his rationale for prohibiting the MAS program. The final clips ranged from 5-7 minutes. However, I would stop every few seconds or minutes to give students an opportunity to absorb the information. After allowing students to absorb each of the legislative clips, I asked “What are some thoughts, reflections, or feelings that emerged for you as you watched the clip?” Showing students these clips was useful for directly gathering their perspectives on the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program. I recorded each of the interviews through the Zoom recording feature and then transcribed each transcript verbatim using REV services. I uploaded each of these transcripts to the qualitative software MAXQDA to prepare my data for analysis.

Hoping to counter harmful research processes that extract knowledge from marginalized communities without reciprocating the acts (Paris & Winn, 2012), I compensated students that participated in an interview for their time with a \$25 gift card and offered my support to students in their educational journey. Three students I interviewed took me up on the offer to provide additional support. One student asked for additional resources or information that would help them pursue a research career. Per the request of the second student, I supported the student with his FAFSA application process. The third student showed interest in my research and inquired about opportunities to support me with the work. Thus, I worked to hire her to help me carry out some of the research.

Research Question 2 Data Analysis

Classroom Observations. As part of my analysis, I fleshed out the raw notes I created during the 10 weeks I participated in students' classroom. I reviewed and examined my classroom observations and wrote memos that highlighted any reflections or comments that would shed insight around students' participation in my study. In particular, the memos were helpful for identifying the contextual information shaping students' participations and reflections (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). That is, based on class observations I witnessed Mr. Lopez' concern and despair around students' low levels of engagement and assignment completion during COVID. I also noted the two or three student faces among the sea of black screens often displayed in my Zoom platform throughout my time in the class. I also identified moments where Mr. Lopez covered material pertaining to the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program. This was helpful to account for the information that students were receiving around the MAS program that could also shape their survey and interview responses.

Survey. In total, I collected 63 surveys consisting of close-ended and open-ended questions from students. A full analysis of the 63 responses will be analyzed in future work. For this dissertation, I only drew on the open-ended responses gathered through this survey to identify moments of agreement or difference between what students noted in the survey and what they said to me in an interview. This provided an opportunity to highlight the nuances in students' perceptions of the anti-MAS legislative processes that may have not been visible in the eight interviews I was able to collect during the global pandemic. I outline the ways in which students' open-ended survey responses reflected, augmented, or problematized students' interview responses in Chapter 5.

Interviews. I followed a three-level coding scheme to analyze the transcripts I gathered from carrying out the student interviews. The first coding cycle involved identifying In Vivo codes, or codes that closely reflected the language used by the students in my study (Saldaña, 2013). In Vivo coding is particularly useful for analyzing students' critical reflections, since the codes are participant's actual words, they "[enhance] and [deepen] an adult's understanding of their cultures and worldviews" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91).

The second level coding cycle involved mining the data using deductive coding approaches (Miles et al., 2014). Miles et al. (2014) describe a deductive analytical approach as applying a list of provisional codes to the data based on the theoretical frameworks informing this study. In this case, I derived my provisional codes based on theories of civic engagement (Lee et al., 2021; Mirra & Garcia, 2017) and critical race theory (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Deductive coding often follows initial coding approaches like In Vivo coding to "[test] and [affirm] the authenticity and appropriateness" of the first round of codes (Patton, 2002, p. 237). Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify interpretation as a key distinguishing feature of deductive approaches, explaining "anytime that a researcher derives hypothesis from data, because it involves interpretation, we consider that to be a deductive process" (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 454).

For the final coding cycle, I followed a similar process for my analysis of the legislative documents. This involved creating large schema webs that reflected an "emergent configuration, or explanation" of the links across the codes that emerged from the first and second coding cycles (Miles et al., 2014, p. 90). It is through these emergent configurations that I began to translate the data into themes that shed insight into students' perceptions around the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS courses. These schemas also allowed me to explore any tensions or

conflicting findings that emerged from the first and second level codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009).

Research Reflexivity During COVID:

A Double Dutch Methodology is concerned with privileging the everyday interactions, voices, and experiences of the participants. This kind of approach to research invites reflexivity, relevance, and reciprocity, which is transferable to researchers in other disciplines, in particular scholars of color who are struggling with the notion of needing to be “distant” and “neutral” observers in spaces or research contexts that include participants from oppressed or marginalized communities (Green, 2012, p. 149).

Green’s (2012) concept of “Double Dutch Methodology” served as my lifeline, or research guide on how to avoid carrying out virtual research in a “distant” and “neutral” manner that would reproduce the exploitation of marginalized youth of color. I entered this journey yearning the opportunity to re-connect with my community—particularly Latinx, Black, and Indigenous students. While my pre-COVID methodological approach facilitated my re-immersion into my community, I consistently grappled with the tensions of carrying out research in a humanizing manner during a time of virtual schooling (Paris & Winn, 2012). I entered students’ space during a unique time and through an unusual terrain; I was unfamiliar with the protocol on how to foster and cultivate “dialogic relationships,” that honored the students I engaged, through a virtual platform (Paris, 2011).

When originally designing my study and approach, I had imagined building connections with students within and outside the classroom (i.e., during group discussion, before and after class, or during their breaks). However, the COVID pandemic restricted these alternate spaces to talk or build community with students. In participating for 10 weeks in their classes through Zoom, there were limited opportunities for me to engage the students one-on-one during class or outside class. If I intervened or spoke during the virtual courses, this meant the instructor had less time to cover material. While Mr. Lopez encouraged me to participate and often turned the conversation

over to me, I was attentive to the time I used given that under the context of COVID he was covering material that used to be taught in two-hours in 50 minutes.

In light of these challenges, I heavily embraced “reflexivity, relevance, and contextually driven reciprocity” in navigating these unexpected challenges in order to conduct my research in a manner that attempted to recognize and honor students’ humanity (Greene, 2012, p.149). My attempts to carry out my research in a humanizing manner during this virtual transition manifested in the following ways through my study. First, I attempted to carry out research in a manner that attended to Paris and Winn’s (2012) call for honesty between the researcher and participants. I continuously shared with students’ my personal battle to embrace an academic identity given the stereotyped messages and racist discourses I had internalized that almost extinguished my academic potential. I was honest about how during my time in US public schools I had begun to believe that as a Latina, I couldn’t be intelligent or perform well academically. I opened up about the multiple B’s, C’s, and even D’s I got in high school, despite now being in a doctoral program. I also shared about how reconnecting with my cultural, linguistic, and familial roots in my hometown (i.e., Oaxaca) served as the force for countering these harmful messages I received navigating US public schools. I further explained that based on this reconnection, I finished my last two years of high school with straight A’s. In being candid about my tumultuous personal relationship with schooling, I sought to unconditionally offer vulnerability, transparency, and honesty in my interactions with students.

Second, in operationalizing notions of reciprocity, I entered the classroom offering my support to students in multiple ways—explaining class concepts, sharing college preparatory courses, giving feedback on college applications, and compensating students for being involved in the research process. Few students reached out for the support, let alone showed interest in

participating in my study. Instead, students during this context of COVID schooling were primarily interested in reaching out to me for clarification around class topics or concepts through the Zoom chat box, support with FAFSA applications, information that students could no longer access through their school, sharing information with Mr. Lopez when they could not reach him, and inquired about opportunities to support me in conducting research.

While students volunteered to participate even without the compensation, many shared during the interviews the additional stress they experienced from balancing work, school, and sociopolitical context. Aware of the salience of monetary support given my experience navigating schools as a low-income student, I compensated each student that participated in an interview with a \$25 gift card and raffled off three \$50 gift cards for students that participated in the survey. I attempted to improvise, adapt, and modify how I interacted with participants by offering and facilitating community building circles when Mr. Lopez was unable to teach or as students grappled with the ongoing losses, crises, and pain of living a global pandemic, as well as the ongoing high-visibility police brutality on black and brown bodies during the time of the research.

Despite my ongoing reflexivity and attempts to foster bonds based on honesty, dignity, and reciprocity with students, I continue to be critical of the extent to which I authentically countered colonial and exploitative research methodologies during the virtual schooling context. Experiencing internal conflicts of my involvement during this time, I continuously reconsidered the misleading metanarratives I internalized claiming “that research is useful (even if only vaguely useful) and that it can compel needed change” (Paris & Winn, 2012, p. 226). Although Mr. Lopez continuously advocated and encouraged students to participate in my study, only eight, of over 70, students volunteered to partake in an interview. Mr. Lopez often linked students’ minimal interest in being interviewed to the drastically low assignment submissions, class-participation, and

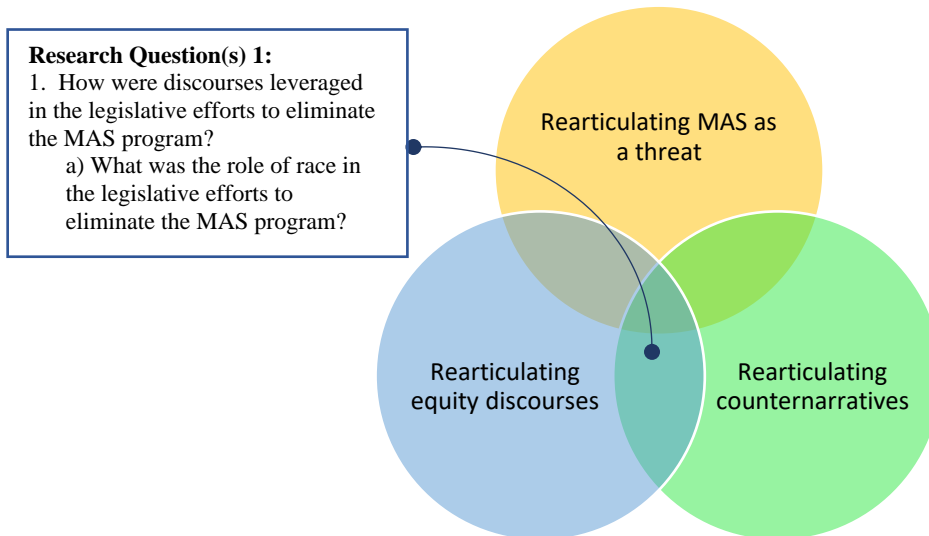
attendance rates unique to the COVID virtual schooling context. One student, Veronica Montoya, explained her and her peers' limited participation in class and low assignment submissions when she shared, "I have not submitted the assignment yet, because I've been submitting make up work for all my other classes. Teachers are also having this conversation with students in my other classes, and it seems students are not motivated because it is very different on Zoom" (Field Memos, November 2020).

To this end, I questioned my decision to ask students to participate in my interviews and survey while they were surrounded by sickness, death, and injustices that affected their ability to learn and show up to class. I fought feelings of helplessness as I desired to support students in more direct, timely, and meaningful ways than what my dissertation research could offer. Interviewing and surveying students about previously passed educational policies seemed insignificant and irrelevant when students were slipping through the cracks of the educational pipeline as they yearned for the previous physical connections and learning they experienced prior to the pandemic. Thus, rather than positioning my virtual qualitative methodological approaches as viable strategies, the tensions I navigated urge additional consideration around how to adapt, mold, and re-imagine humanizing qualitative methodologies to the everyday realities youth of color are forced to navigate. In this case, it involves imagining and developing a virtual qualitative humanizing methodology.

Chapter 4: Institutionalizing Injustice through Rearticulation

In the following chapter, I unpack the main findings pertaining to the first research question and sub-question guiding this study: *1) How were discourses leveraged in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? 1a) What was the role of race in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program?* Based on the textual oriented analysis I carried out, the following three main themes emerged from the data: 1) Rearticulation of the MAS program as a threat; 2) Rearticulation of the counternarratives advanced by MAS advocates; 3) Rearticulation of equity-oriented discourses. Figure 4 illustrates these three main findings I flesh out for this chapter. I detailed the main sources of data (i.e., 164 documents or 2,577 pages, informal interview transcripts) that revealed the three themes I unpack in this chapter.

Figure 4 *Research Question 1 Findings*



As I detailed in Chapter 2, I draw on a blend of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1992, 2003, 2013), Hall's (1996) concept of articulation and rearticulation, and critical race theory (CRT) (Winkle-Wagner, Lee-Johnson, & Gaskew, 2019a; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019b) orientations to unpack these three findings. CDA is useful for unpacking these three findings given that this line of theory focuses attention on how language plays an active role in our sense-making of the world around us (Fairclough, 2003, 2013). For example, CDA's orientations that discourses are not neutral but rather reflect value and belief systems enabled me to critically interrogate how bill proponents successfully justified eliminating the MAS program. Meanwhile, Hall's (1996) concept of articulation and rearticulation is useful for unpacking how bill proponents projected the ideologies that constructed, defined, and bounded understandings of the MAS program.

To answer the sub-question, I drew on CRT orientations to unpack the racial undertones implicit in bill proponents' discursive distortions of the MAS program (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Stefancic & Delgado, 2000; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019a). Applying these three orientations to make sense of these findings, I argue the discursive representations leveraged in the anti-MAS legislative processes (re)institutionalize the racism perpetuating the subjugation of people of color. Such subjugation is made possible through a political exploitation of ostensibly race-neutral discourses permissible under our current colorblind society.

Theme 1: Rearticulating the MAS Program as a Threat

In this section, I present the first of three main themes that emerged from my analysis. This first theme revealed bill proponents leveraged discourses to rearticulate the MAS program as a threat. In establishing what Hyatt (2013) refers to as the warrant, or justification for a particular educational policy, bill proponents framed the MAS program as a threat to Arizona students and citizens in order to justify its elimination. Throughout the legislative processes, bill proponents rearticulated the MAS programs as a threat in the following ways: 1) Establishing Eurocentric values and beliefs as the norm; 2) Leveraging fear-inducing cues to demonize the MAS program and affiliates.

Subtheme 1: Privileging Eurocentric Norms

The first subtheme revealed bill proponents rearticulated the MAS program as a threat by establishing Eurocentric (or Western) values and ideologies as the only acceptable way of thinking. Advancing their personal Eurocentric norm systems, bill proponents delineated what should be considered as acceptable or unacceptable in students' learning experiences. In this case, bill proponents portrayed the MAS program as promoting impermissible curriculum and learning. Bill proponents' establishment of these bounds is visible in the legislative text of the first bill (i.e., Senate Bill 1069) initially proposed to eliminate the MAS program. Figure 5 illustrates the main language advance through the SB 1108 in 2008.

Figure 5 SB 1108 House Appropriations Hearing Bill Version

Forty-eighth Legislature
Second Regular Session

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AMENDMENTS TO S.B. 1108
(Reference to Senate engrossed bill)

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert:
2 "Section 1. Title 15, chapter 1, article 1, Arizona Revised Statutes,
3 is amended by adding sections 15-107 and 15-108, to read:
4 15-107. Declaration of policy
5 THE LEGISLATURE FINDS AND DECLARES THAT:
6 1. A PRIMARY PURPOSE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IS TO INCULCATE VALUES OF
7 AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP.
8 2. PUBLIC TAX DOLLARS USED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOULD NOT BE USED TO
9 DENIGRATE AMERICAN VALUES AND THE TEACHINGS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.
10 3. PUBLIC TAX DOLLARS SHOULD NOT BE USED TO PROMOTE POLITICAL,
11 RELIGIOUS, IDEOLOGICAL OR CULTURAL BELIEFS OR VALUES AS TRUTH WHEN SUCH
12 VALUES ARE IN CONFLICT WITH THE VALUES OF AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP AND THE
13 TEACHINGS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

As part of the policy declaration, lines 6-7 outline the primary purpose of schooling is to inculcate “values of American citizenship.” Through these lines, bill proponents translated their ideologies and beliefs which privileged Eurocentric orientations through the language they advanced in the bill. Here, bill proponents’ vision of the “purpose” of public schooling rigidly restricted the learning students could engage solely around those that upheld the “values of American citizenship.”

A similar approach is used in lines 8-9 of the SB 1108. These lines state “public tax dollars used in public schools should not be used to denigrate American values and the teachings of Western civilization.” Through this language, bill proponents positioned the MAS program as unacceptable given their claims that the courses “denigrat[ed] American values and the teachings of Western civilization.” Through this framing, the MAS curriculum which centered nondominant cultural perspectives and values was deemed to deviate from the acceptable “American values and norms.”

In lines 10-11, the legislative text further positions Eurocentric American values as the only acceptable “truth” that can be promulgated in classrooms. That is, these lines state, “public tax dollars should not be used to promote political, religious, ideological or cultural beliefs or values as truth.” Through this language bill proponents imply MAS educators are propagandizing nondominant perspectives that students should uncritically accept and absorb as indisputable “truths.” This framing contributed to the construction of the MAS program as a threat, given that bill proponents framed the pedagogy MAS educators used as jeopardizing the training of well-ordered and controlled citizens that blindly embraced Eurocentric American values. In other words, MAS educators’ attempts to expose students to nondominant perspectives were portrayed as “indoctrinating” students with “truths” in conflict with the “values of American citizenship and teachings of Western civilization.”

Chairman Russel K. Pearce’s reflection on the salience of eliminating the MAS program during the SB 1108 House Appropriations hearing on April 16, 2008, is another case in point showing how bill proponents advanced Eurocentric ideologies as the norm. Figure 6 shows an excerpt of Pearce’s testimony.

Figure 6 *Chairman Russel K. Pearce’s Testimony (April 16, 2008)*

1 This, to me, this is a very, very important bill.
2 When we talk about American values,
3 About organizations that spew anti-American
4 Or race-based...
5 They have no place.
6 We ought to be celebrating unity as Americans
7 and not allow these,
8 with taxpayer dollars,
9 these organization that spew anti-American rhetoric,
10 that [use] taxpayer dollars in inappropriate.

In lines 1-2, Chairman Russel K. Pearce's affirms and further propagates the focus on Eurocentric "American values" within the SB 1108 text (Testimony, April 16, 2008). In line 3, he goes on to refer to the MAS program as an organization that spews "anti-American" ideas and beliefs (Testimony, April 16, 2008). Through these discursive framings of the MAS program, Pearce implied that the MAS program's centering of Mexican perspectives, literature, and history, should be interpreted as "Anti-American" rhetoric with no place in public schools and students' learning (Testimony, April 16, 2008). As line 6 shows, Pearce goes on to further suggest deviations from the dominant American values as rapturing "unity" among Americans (Testimony, April 16, 2008).

In addition to the legislative and testimony data excerpts presented above, bill proponents recurringly used words and phrases that established anything at odds with Eurocentric ideologies as a threat. That is, these bounds were established through words consistently used through all three legislative processes (i.e., SB 1108, SB 1069, HB 2881) that construed the MAS program as encouraging dissent towards dominating Eurocentric norms. Specifically, the words anti-western (4 times), anti-American (12 times), division (17 times), biased (2 times), chauvinism (3 time) were used multiple times throughout the three legislative attempts to eliminate the MAS program. These frequencies affirm the examples covered illustrating this subtheme are not anomalies, but rather a normative and viable strategy legislators employed to garner support for the eradication of the MAS program.

As visible in the discourses advanced in the SB 1108 legislative text, the testimony of Chairman Pearce, and the recurring words used throughout the legislative processes, were useful for establishing anything that failed to adhere to Eurocentric orientations, as a threat. In this case, bill proponents' continuous construction of the MAS program as deviating or in conflict with

Eurocentric ideologies made it more feasible for them to bring into question the legitimacy of the program and push for its elimination. They masked the bounds they placed around the ideologies and perspectives students could access in their learning as a neutral and normal policy solution. Applying a CDA lens reveals that the discourses used in these examples were not neutral, but rather “reflect[ed] systems of values beliefs, and social practices” (Allan, 2003, p. 47). In this case, bill proponents’ construction of Eurocentric ideologies and values as the only acceptable lens that could be promulgated in schools, affirms the harmful ways political rhetoric enforces power dynamics in policymaking processes (Diem et al., 2014b). Through their political discourses, bill proponents constructed a deceiving reality that bounded the perspective and ideologies students could engage in their learning processes.

On the other hand, a CRT lens exposes the racialized undertones present in these discourses despite bill proponents’ depictions of these discourses as normal and neutral. Delgado-Bernal (2002) explains Eurocentric perspectives are often founded on “covert and overt assumptions regarding White superiority, territorial expansion, and “democratic ideals” (p. 111). These assumptions allowed bill proponents to minimize and attack a curriculum that deviated from traditional Eurocentric perspectives and values. That is, bill proponents associated students’ exposure to Mexican American literature and scholarship that centered non-Eurocentric ideologies as threatening the American way of life. This framing is consistent with mainstream narratives that position Latino communities as an invading force unwilling to integrate into the national narrative and community (Chavez, 2013). Advancing these misconceptions, bill proponents established that only curriculum upholding White superiority and democratic ideals was permissible in students’ learning experiences.

Subtheme 2: Demonizing the MAS Program

The second subtheme revealed bill proponents rearticulated the MAS program as a threat by using fear-inducing cues that demonized the program and its' affiliates. Bill proponents distorted public understandings or interpretations of the MAS program through their discourses. Even though MAS students, educators, and advocates continuously underscored the positive intentions of the MAS program, given its ability to increase equity for the historically underserved Latinx student population, these comments were dismissed and overshadowed by bill proponents' distorted descriptions of the MAS program and its affiliates.

Bill proponents' use of John Ward's opinion piece throughout the legislature debate is one example of how they constructed the meta-representation of this threat. In every legislative attempt to eliminate the program, bill proponents drew on John Ward's opinion piece published in the Tucson Arizona Republic as evidence to establish their rationale for the urgent need to eliminate the MAS program. Figure 7 shows the excerpt Tom Horne, Russel K. Pearce, John Huppenthal and Steve Montenegro leveraged a total of eight times throughout the legislative process.

Figure 7 Excerpt from John Ward's Open Piece

- 1 But the whole inference and tone was anger.
- 2 (They taught students) that the United States was and still is
- 3 a fundamentally racist country to those of Mexican-American kids.
- 4 Individuals in this (Ethnic Studies) department are vehemently anti-Western
- 5 culture. They are vehemently opposed to the United States and its power.
- 6 They are telling students they are victims
- 7 and that they should be angry and rise up.

In lines 1-2, John Ward describes the MAS program as prompting a hostile environment fused with "anger." In lines 2-3, he problematizes students' awareness of the ongoing racial oppression that continues to permeate our society. He presents the MAS program as fostering a

space where educators indoctrinate students with anger that uncritically blames White “racists” for the ongoing oppression and marginalization of students’ communities. This distortion of the MAS program is further expanded in lines 4-5, where he attributes a critical engagement of systems of oppressions as producing students that are against the US and its power. John Ward intensifies the demonization of the MAS program in lines 6-7 when he argues that any critique of Eurocentric ideologies and beliefs will incite MAS students to lead a revolution.

This demonization of the MAS program is also seen in Chairman Russel K. Pearce’s testimony during the HB 2281 Senate Committee of the Whole #1 hearing on April 28, 2010. Figure 8 shows an excerpt of Pearce’s testimony where he explained what the bill sought to prevent and advocated for the programs’ elimination.

Figure 8 Russel K. Pearce HB 2281 Testimony (April 28, 2010)

- 1 Somebody ought to read the materials
- 2 Where they talk about hating the Anglos
- 3 Killing the Whites, running them off,
- 4 By what leaders of RAZA helped develop RAZA [...]
- 5 This is about terrible things being taught to our students.
- 6 Our schools are not propaganda tool.
- 7 History is one thing.
- 8 Misinformation, hate speech, and sedition
- 9 Is not appropriate with my tax dollars in any school.

In line 1, Chairman Russel K. Pearce references the excerpts of the books ostensibly used by MAS educators that bill proponents shared with the legislative board. In line 2, he claims the main textbooks used in the MAS program center “talk about hating the Anglos” (Testimony, April 16, 2008). Here, Pearce begins to demonize the MAS program as promoting “hate” towards Whites or “Anglos” (Testimony, April 28, 2008). In line 3, he accentuates this demonization by claiming the books not only promote talk that fosters hate, but also encourages “killing the Whites” (Testimony, April 28, 2008). In lines 4-5, Pearce further incited fear by

arguing MAS educators promulgated texts that normalize and position killing Whites as necessary to stop the oppression of marginalized communities. Then in lines 6-7, he further frames the MAS program as functioning as “propaganda tools” that teach students these “terrible things” (Testimony, April 28, 2008). By “terrible things” he refers to the “killing” and “running” of Whites” (Testimony, April 28, 2008). These materials were recurrently referenced by multiple bill proponents as evidence that the program “promoted hate” and the “overthrow” of US government” (Testimony, April 28, 2008). However, Lundholm’s (2011) legislative note on the evidence bill proponents presented showed bill proponents used portions of the textbook out of context. This information further affirms that bill proponents used these demonizing discourses to distort understandings of the MAS program.

By stating “history is one thing” in line 8, Pearce references the critiques bill proponents received around restricting students’ access to history that centered Mexican American cultural practices and experiences (Testimony, April 16, 2008). He goes on to separate Mexican American experiences from history and instead reframes it as “misinformation, hate speech, and sedition” in line 9 (Testimony, April 16, 2008). He concludes by urging the board to consider the MAS program as an inappropriate use of “tax dollars in any school” (Testimony, April 16, 2008). Through this rhetoric, Chairman Pearce created the illusion that failure to support the bill would result in tangible consequences, such as producing students inclined to kill and run of Whites.

This demonization and distortion of the MAS program was consistent throughout the legislative processes. This is seen in the use of words similar to those used by John Ward and Russel K. Pearce. For example, bill proponents consistently described the MAS program as seditious (12 times), hostile (1 times), racist (9 times), and evil (4 times) throughout the

legislative process. Aside from these descriptions, bill proponents consistently used words such as overthrow (55 times), overtake (1 times), overturn (1 times), take-back (1 times), reclaim (1 times), and riot (1 times) to create the illusion that MAS educators and students were engaging in a hostile and dangerous plot to invade the US.

Analyzing these discursive framings through a CRT lens, exposes that the discursive demonization of the MAS program functions to “normalize dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27) . Therefore, educational leaders and legislators’ descriptions of the MAS program are consistent with the stereotypical, historical construction of Latinx communities as a threat to US society. For example, Chairman Pearce’s construction of the MAS program as advancing curriculum that promotes “talk about hating the Anglos” and “killing the Whites,” positioned these courses as endangering the safety of Arizona students and residents (Testimony, April 16, 2008). In characterizing the MAS program in these ways, Chairman Pearce attributed negative connotations to the MAS program that have been found to arouse emotional responses (Hart, 2010). Emotive words are often used and found to signal a perceived threat that is believed to endanger those around the individual eliciting this danger (Hart, 2010). While Chairman Pearce or the other bill proponents did not share any images, statistics or empirical evidence showing “angry” students plotting the “overthrow of the United States government” using these emotive discursive cues, they were able to create meta-representations of this threat. Ultimately, these emotive discursive cues were sufficient to justify the elimination of the MAS program.

These discursive framings made it possible for bill proponents to pass a policy that would disproportionately extend injustice for the Latinx student population in Tucson, Arizona. Thus, more than superficial, harmless, discourses, the demonization of the MAS program created

tangible and palpable consequences. As evident in the programs' elimination, these rhetorical strategies functioned to "normalize, rationalize, and justify governmental practices and policies" that ultimately stigmatized and punished the Latinx population in Tucson, Arizona (Chavez, 2013, p. 46). In this case, this demonization of the MAS program strategically shifted the focus away from the drastically improved GPAs, state standardized exam scores, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment experienced by Latinx students that participated in the MAS program.

Theme 2: Rearticulating MAS counternarratives

In this section, I present the second theme from the three main themes that emerged from my analysis. The second theme revealed bill proponents relied on the rearticulation of the counternarratives offered by MAS advocates as a rhetorical tool to advance their own arguments and efforts to eliminate the program. MAS students, educators, and leaders continuously attempted to share how their experiences deviated significantly from bill proponents' representations of MAS courses. However, MAS testimonies were largely excluded, silenced, and reframed throughout the legislative processes (Filiberto, PC, April 28, 2021). The rearticulations of the testimonies of MAS student, Mariah Harvey, and founder, Dr. Filiberto Herrera, illustrate how bill proponents imposed their own interpretations of the MAS program.

Subtheme 1: Rearticulating MAS Student Experiences

Bill proponents' ongoing appropriation of MAS student's, Mariah Harvey, testimony throughout the legislative processes illustrates this theme. Figure 9 shows Mariah Harvey's testimony during the SB 1069 Senate Judiciary hearing on June 15, 2009.

Figure 9 Mariah Harvey SB 1069 Testimony (June 15, 2009)

1 Before I took this class, I didn't even know what oppression is
2 and oppressed was.
3 For me, to come to this class and to teach me something so new
4 and so universal,
5 because oppression is very universal.
6 Everyone knows about it,
7 but no one does anything about it. (...)
8 In the past, they'd spend probably one or two chapters learning about slavery
9 and move on like it didn't happen.
10 In these classes they teach us,
11 it doesn't sugarcoat it
12 in the sense that we will spend weeks and weeks talking about slavery
13 to finally understand and grasp that it's a really big deal and that it happened
14 I believe that these classes are necessary to learn something
15 like that because it's specifically towards the youth and a certain race"

In lines 1-2, Mariah explains she learned about oppression as a MAS student. Ms. Harvey's statement aligns with well documented sanitized nature of US mainstream curriculum that fails to promote a critical study of systems of oppression (Sleeter, 2011). Stating she didn't know what "oppression is and oppressed was" in lines 1-2, Mariah used future and past tense verbs to describe her new understanding of the historical and contemporary systems of oppression present in US society (Testimony, June 15, 2009). As she points to in lines 3-4, Mariah describes her exposure to critical theories and scholarship as "universal" (Testimony, June 15, 2009) given that structures of inequity are deeply entrenched in US society and thus, harm and ultimately implicate everyone.

In lines 5-6, Mariah states "everyone knows about" systems of oppression, but "no one does anything about it" (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Through this statement, Mariah problematizes the ways in which our society continues to limit the ways in which we name, acknowledge, and disrupt systems of oppression. Further, through these lines she implies the importance of MAS programs in creating spaces where "unpacking, investigating, and problematizing intersectional forms of power and oppression" is encouraged (de los Ríos, 2020,

p. 1). Then, in lines 8-11, Mariah describes how her mainstream courses failed to provide a space where she could deconstruct the ongoing racial subjugation of communities of color across social, political, and economical lines. In lines 12-13, Mariah affirms the ways in which learning about oppression is a prerequisite for creating changes in the material conditions of oppressed people of color. Finally, in lines 14-15, she highlights this analysis is particularly applicable to students and necessary to empower them.

Mariah's claim aligns with existing literature documenting that "nam[ing] the social conditions of their communities" empower students to "socially transform them" (Kwon & de los Ríos, 2019, p. 161). Further, her comments are consistent with Ethnic Studies efforts to eliminate the internalized oppression that limits the potential of students of color (Acosta, 2014; de los Ríos, 2013). Despite the alignment of Ms. Harvey's counternarrative to the existing literature outlining the oppression Latinx, Black, and Indigenous students experience in the US (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano et al., 2005) and the existing research showing the positive impact of Ethnic Studies on students' educational outcomes (Sleeter, 2011), bill proponents continuously rearticulated Ms. Harvey's testimony as evidence of the urgent need to prohibit the MAS program.

Representative Steve Montenegro's testimony during the HB 2281 Senate Education Accountability hearing is an example of how legislators rearticulated Ms. Harvey's testimony. Figure 10 shows an excerpt of Steve Montenegro's testimony on April 7th, 2010.

Figure 10 Steve Montenegro's HB 2281 Testimony (April 7, 2010)

- 1 There's another young lady who went through the course.
- 2 She testified herself,
- 3 She didn't know she was oppressed until she took the course.
- 4 It is actually happening.
- 5 The evidence is overwhelming,
- 6 And now since the school board has done nothing about it,
- 7 Along with taxpayers' money going to teach the separatist agenda,
- 8 It's wrong, and we wouldn't allow it for any race,
- 9 For any ethnic group that takes it to this extreme.
- 10 We're trying to prevent that at the state level from happening.

In line 1, Representative Montenegro introduces Ms. Mariah Harvey’s testimony as insight from a student that “went through” the MAS program (Testimony, April 7, 2008). Then in line 2, Representative Montenegro states Ms. Harvey “testified herself” which allowed him to create the illusion that he was simply accurately restating her perspectives and ideas in his statements, thereby granting him greater credibility (Testimony, April 7, 2008). After establishing this false credibility, in line 3, he twists Ms. Harvey’s statement when reducing her testimony with the words, “she didn’t know she was oppressed until she took the course” (Testimony, April 7, 2008). Representative Montenegro altered the meaning of the testimony Ms. Harvey shared and in lines 4-7 argues this comment served as “evidence” that MAS students were learning a “separatist agenda” (Testimony, April 7, 2008). Finally, in lines 8-11, he establishes Ms. Harvey’s understanding of oppression as “wrong” and urged legislators to act to “prevent that at the state level from happening” (Testimony, April 7, 2008). That is, in rearticulating Ms. Harvey’s testimony as proof that students were being indoctrinated, he created a sense of urgency for the eradication for the MAS courses. Representative Montenegro rearticulated Ms. Harvey’s testimony in a similar manner during the HB 2281 House Committee

of the Whole #2 hearing.

The rearticulation of the counternarratives offered is also evident in Tom Horne's testimony during the HB 2281 House Education Committee hearing. Figure 11 shows an excerpt from Tom Horne's testimony on February 15, 2010.

Figure 11 Tom Horne's HB 2281 Testimony (February 15, 2010)

1 My point of view is that these students' parents and grandparents came to
2 this country, most of the legally, because this is the land of opportunity.
3 They trust their children to our schools,
4 and we owe it to them to teach these kids
5 that this is the land of opportunity,
6 and if they work hard, they can achieve anything they want to achieve
7 and not teach them that they're oppressed.
8 Indeed, in the hearing held before the Senate Judiciary Committee on a similar
9 bill one of the students got up to testify
10 and the senator asked her, "Couldn't you learn these things in another course?"
11 She said, "No. Before I took this course, I didn't realize I was oppressed.
12 Now that I took the course, I realize that I'm oppressed."

In lines 1-2, Tom Horne advances his conceptions of the US as the “land of opportunity” (Testimony, February 15, 2010). He indirectly points to the significant immigrant student population comprising TUSD and the MAS program, when stating “these students’ parents and grandparents come to this country, most of them legally, because this is the land of opportunity” (Testimony, February 15, 2010). Such framing shifts attention away from the multiple ways immigrants and Latinx communities are marginalized and oppressed within the “land of opportunity” (Testimony, February 15, 2010). Then in lines, 3-4, he uses this focus to establish this bill as simply honoring immigrant parents’ decisions and journeys.

In lines 5-6, Tom Horne suggests students should be taught to indisputably embrace notions of meritocracy, claiming students “can achieve anything they want to achieve” (Testimony, February 15, 2010). In arguing students should not be taught to be oppressed, Horne frames the MAS program as in direct conflict with notions of meritocracy. In lines 8-12,

he then references Ms. Harvey’s testimony as illustrating his point. Here we see how like Representative Montenegro, Horne took snippets of Ms. Harvey’s testimony out of context to advance his argument. Moreover, he shifted the focus of Ms. Harvey’s testimony from the benefits she reaped from these courses to the ostensible disservice educators were granting to MAS parents and students. Ultimately, he appropriated Ms. Harvey’s testimony as evidence that the MAS program kept them from honoring the sacrifices of immigrant parents. That is, Horne used Ms. Harvey’s testimony to falsely prove students were being taught they wouldn’t be able to “achieve anything they wanted to achieve” (Testimony, February 15, 2010).

A CRT lens identifies Horne’s and Montenegro’s rearticulation of Ms. Harvey’s testimony as advancing a majoritarian narrative that conceals presuppositions and assumptions privileged persons bring to discussions of racism and other forms of subordination (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993). In this case, CRT scholars, Solórzano & Yosso (2002b) remind us that the distortion of counternarratives is often not challenged or questioned because majoritarian narratives are seen as normal aspects of life or as truths. As we can see through Representative Steve Montenegro’s testimony, bill proponents leveraged Ms. Harvey’s testimony as evidence that the MAS program incurred harm upon students by indoctrinating them with beliefs that separated them from American values without questioning his interpretation of her testimony. In parallel, the excerpt from Tom Horne’s testimony shows how bill proponents advanced the majoritarian narrative of meritocracy that posits everyone has the same opportunities and successfully obscured the persisting racialized distribution of opportunities.

Subtheme 2: Rearticulating MAS Objectives and Outcomes

Bill proponents’ rearticulation of the counternarratives presented by advocates of the MAS program is also seen in the rearticulations of the testimony offered by MAS founder, Dr.

Filiberto Herrera on June 15, 2009. Figure 12 shows an excerpt from Dr. Herrera’s testimony during the SB 1069 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing where he described the purpose and objectives of the MAS program.

Figure 12 Agustin Romero’s SB 1069 Testimony (June 15, 2009)

1 The idea of what we tried to do is about inclusiveness.
2 It's about having our children develop a cultural and academic identity.
3 Through that academic identity and cultural identity,
4 we try to instill a stronger sense of purpose within our children.
5 And through that stronger sense of purpose and that cultural identity,
6 we hope that our children develop a stronger sense of hope,
7 so that they can go through society, go within their communities,
8 and make change that is positive, that is transformative,
9 and that ensures that all people have a better future,
10 including themselves and their children, and their grandchildren, and so on, and so
11 forth. That's the essence of our program.

In line 1, Dr. Filiberto Herrera counters misinterpretations of the MAS program advanced by bill proponents in explaining the MAS program is about “inclusiveness” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In lines 2-3 he goes on to note the program rather than prompting separation focused on cultivating students’ development of a “cultural and academic identity” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In line 4, Dr. Herrera’s claim that such identity serves “to instill a stronger sense of purpose” for children, aligns with the existing research documenting how engagement with culturally relevant literature prompts students’ positive relationships with schooling (Sleeter, 2001). Then in lines 5-8, Dr. Herrera outlines this sense of purpose is essential for students to create positive changes in their communities. These lines are congruent with the research documenting these courses—rather than harming students—were resulting in higher attendance rates, graduation rates, and college enrollment for students that participated in these courses (Cabrera et al., 2014).

The first rearticulation of Dr. Filiberto Herrera’s testimony is seen in the invalidation of

the statistics and quantitative research he shared with the legislative board on the second legislative attempt to eliminate the MAS program. Figure 13 shows an excerpt of the testimony Dr. Herrera presented to the board during the SB 1069 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on June 15, 2009.

Figure 13 Agustin Romero SB 1069 Testimony (June 15, 2009)

1 No Child Left Behind asks us to provide
2 equitable and academically excellent programs
3 for those children in order to overcome the achievement gap.
4 And if you can see the data I provided,
5 we've accomplished that at the sites that we're at.
6 Rather than being attacked,
7 you would think that we would be applauded.

In line 1 of his testimony, Dr. Herrera references the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which pressured schools to minimize the racial disparities in educational outcomes between historically marginalized students and their White peers (Diem et al., 2014a). In lines 2-3, he goes on to explain how this act prompted schools' adoption of programs that sought to increase "equity" and "promote academic excellen[ce]" as a means for redressing the "achievement gap" (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Through these first lines, Dr. Herrera points to the context leading to the development and implementation of the MAS program. That is, reminding legislators the MAS program emerged to address the concerning high school dropout rates present for Latinx students and growing disparities in outcomes between Tucson's Latinx and White student populations (Wanberg, 2013).

Then, in lines 4-5, Dr. Herrera points legislators to the empirical evidence demonstrating the MAS program drastically improved the educational outcomes of the Latinx student population. Empirical examinations of the impact of the program found students' participation in

the MAS program improved GPA's, standardized exam scores, high school graduation, and college enrollment rate (Cabrera et al., 2012). Dr. Herrera goes on to outline such findings are in adherence with the NCLB federal educational mandates. Bases on this adherence, in line 6, he questions the massive opposition from educational leaders and legislators to a program that is increasing equity and drastically improving the educational outcomes of one of Tucson's most historically underserved student populations. In the final line, he expresses his shock that educational leaders and legislators aren't "applaud[ing]" or supporting this program" (Testimony, June 15, 2009).

Rearticulation is visible in Chairman Jonathan Paton's response to the comments shared by Dr. Herrera during the SB 1069 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on June 15, 2009. Figure 14 shows a portion of Chairman Paton's testimony on June 15, 2009.

Figure 14 John Paton & Dr. Agustin Romero SB 1069 Testimony

1 Chairman Paton:
2 I've heard many times this that smaller class sizes
3 more attention that are given to students
4 is an indicator of academic success.
5 Isn't it possible that,
6 and not the actual content that's in the classes
7 is responsible for that academic success in the classroom?
8
9 Dr. Augustine Romero:
10 No.
11 No, because of this, our classes aren't small classes, our classes-
12
13 Mr. Chairman:
14 You give more attention to the students than any other class.
(01 SB 1069 Senate Judiciary Committee, Pos. 335-340)

In line 1, Chairman Paton brings into question the data Dr. Herrera presented showing students' participation in the MAS program was associated with the improved educational outcomes. As lines 2-3 show, he offers a different explanation for the improved educational outcomes when stating, "I've heard many times that in smaller class sizes, more attention is given to students" (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In line 4, he neutralizes the data Dr. Herrera

presented by suggesting that the smaller class sizes are producing the “academic success” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In lines 5-7, he further advances his interpretation of the data by dismissing Dr. Herrera’s claims that the unique curriculum and pedagogy employed by MAS educators resulted in the improved educational outcomes. Instead, Paton frames the additional attention students are receiving as “responsible for [the] academic success in the classroom” (Testimony, June 15, 2009).

Lines 10-11 show Dr. Herrera attempts to counter that class sizes are not responsible for the improved outcomes. Dr. Herrera explains, “our classes aren’t small classes” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Before having the opportunity to elaborate further on this point, Chairman Paton cuts off Dr. Romero. He replaces Dr. Herrera’s explanation with his own belief that the improved educational outcomes are explained by the additional “attention” students receive in the MAS courses “than [in] any other class” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Throughout this exchange rearticulation allows us to see how Chairman Paton continuously contested and reframed the interpretations of the MAS program and data advanced by Dr. Herrera. Chairman Paton’s inquiry around the smaller class sizes shifted the focus away from the positive impact the program produced. Therefore, the ways in which the MAS program was redressing the existing racial disparities became insignificant and irrelevant. The powerful reach of Chairman Paton’s discursive strategy is further visible considering the lack of empirical data he presented to support his interrogation of Dr. Herrera’s claims. Although Dr. Herrera presented empirical data showing the program rather than harming students was helping students it was insignificant in light of Chairman Paton’s rearticulation.

The rearticulations of the testimonies of Mariah Harvey and Dr. Filiberto Herrera depict the ways bill proponents strategically neutralized the counternarratives offered by MAS

advocates. The reach of these rearticulations is evident in the disregard for the first-hand experience and empirical evidence MAS advocates shared with the legislative board. Even though these counternarratives debunked bill proponents' misinterpretations of the MAS program, they were insufficient. Through this framing legislators advanced their own interpretations of the MAS program as a means to dismiss different understandings of the MAS program.

It is through the rearticulation of the counternarratives that bill proponents established a different meaning and outlined the form in which the board should interpret Ms. Harvey's and Dr. Herrera's testimonies (Hall, 1996; Philip, Martinez, Lopez, & Garcia, 2014). Considering these rearticulations were largely accepted by the legislative board despite the lack of evidence to support their claims, Hall (1996) explains that a group maintains dominance politically "not so much to the extent that it is able to impose a uniform conception of the world on the rest of society, but to the extent that it can articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized" (p. 121). Applying Hall's (1996) work allows us to recognize the rearticulations of Mariah and Dr. Herrera's testimony enabled bill proponents to advance their own distortions of the MAS program. Ultimately, bill proponents changed the meanings of the counternarratives to align with their majoritarian narratives and arguments.

Theme 3: Rearticulating Equity Oriented Discourses

In this section, I present the third theme from the three main themes that emerged from my analysis. The third theme that emerged shows bill proponents leveraged equity-related words and phrases to frame the need to eliminate the MAS program. Throughout the legislative process, bill proponents touted their efforts as 'equity-oriented' to mask their discriminatory racial and political partisan motivations.

The rearticulation of equity-oriented discourses is visible in Sam Polito’s testimony during the HB 2281 Education Committee Hearing on February 15, 2010. Figure 15 illustrates an excerpt from his testimony.

Figure 15 Sam Polito's HB 2281 Testimony (February 15, 2010)

1 What we're asking for is equity. So, the bill is spoken.
2 I personally in my district would have no quarrel
3 with not preaching hatred
4 or separatism or any of that.
5 I don't think you have to teach those things
6 to teach people pride in their ethnicity or the history of their ethnicity.

Speaking on behalf of TUSD, district lobbyist Sam Polito argued bill proponents’ intentions to eliminate the MAS program were in the best interests of students by asserting, “what we’re asking for is equity” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In line 1, lobbyist Polito explains his support of the HB 2281 as reflecting legislators’ efforts to achieve “equity” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In lines 2-3, he explains his equity efforts as his willingness to not allow the “preaching” of “hatred” within his district (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In line 4, we see Lobbyist Polito changed understandings of the MAS program as one that advanced equity to one that promoted “separatism” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Then in lines 5-6, he goes on to rationalize his efforts as reflecting equity-oriented motivations by framing the MAS program as not simply teaching students “pride in their ethnicity or the history of their ethnicity,” but rather prompting hatred and separatism (Testimony, June 15, 2009).

Steve Montenegro’s testimony during the SB 1069 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing also illustrates how concepts of equity were coopted in this policymaking processes. Figure 16 illustrates an excerpt from Montenegro’s testimony on June 15, 2009.

Figure 16 Steve Montenegro's SB 1069 Testimony (June 15, 2009)

- 1 I humbly stand before you in support of this bill,
- 2 because it is not aimed at racial agenda.
- 3 This is not about, we hate Hispanics.
- 4 This is not about, well, we hate Latinos, and we hate Mexico,
- 5 and we hate Central America and South America.
- 6 This is about, let's treat everybody equally.
- 7 Let's not start separating with regards to the race or with regards to their ethnic origin.

In line 1, Montenegro explains his willingness to support the elimination of the MAS program as a “humble” act (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In line 2, he explains his humbleness is visible given that his efforts are not driven by a “racial agenda” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In this line, Montenegro neutralizes nationwide critiques by MAS supporters that efforts to eliminate the MAS program were driven by racially discriminatory intentions (Cammara & Aguilera, 2012; Romero, 2010). In lines 3-4, he further establishes his motivations as “not about, we hate Hispanics” or “we hate Latinos, and we hate Mexico” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In line 5, he similarly outlines his actions do not reflect that bill proponents “hate central American and South America” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Here, Montenegro addresses the concerns around eliminating a program catering to the historically underserved Latinx student population. Instead, he reframes these critiques by arguing the bill reflected proponents’ efforts to “treat everybody equally” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In lines 7, he then goes on to frame the MAS program as acting at odds with equity, when stating “let’s not start separating with regards to the race or with regards to their ethnic origin” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Through this line, Montenegro references distortions of the MAS program that position it as promoting segregation and separation. Therefore, Representative Montenegro discursively frames the elimination of the MAS program as essential for honoring equity.

Another example of the reappropriation of equity-oriented discourses involves Senator John Huppenthal’s testimony on June 15, 2009. During the same SB 1069 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, Huppenthal positioned the elimination of the program as necessary for protecting marginalized students. That is, he underscored students’ educational outcomes and futures were at risk if legislators did not support the adoption of the policy into law. Figure 16 shows an excerpt from Huppenthal’s testimony.

Figure 17 John Huppenthal’s SB 1069 Testimony (June 15, 2009)

1 Our suspicion is that inside these classes,
2 students are being indoctrinated
3 by people who are in power
4 to have a certain mindset
5 of us versus them. [...]
8 People in power are doing something distasteful,
9 that they're not giving these children the skills that they need
10 to go on to be nurses and doctors, and architects, and lawyers in power,
11 but rather they're wasting time
12 with this divisive rhetoric
13 that is not going to move these children forward
14 to be in positions of power and have influence

In line 1, he shared bill proponents’ “suspicion” on what they perceive to be taking place inside MAS courses. His use of the word suspicion reflects the lack of empirical evidence bill proponents presented to substantiate their “suspicions” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Based on this unsubstantiated “suspicion,” in lines 2-3 bill proponents framed students as “being indoctrinated by people who are in power” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Further, in lines 4-5 Huppenthal positioned MAS educators as promulgating a mindset “of us versus them” to bring into question the pedagogy and expertise of MAS educators (Testimony, June 15, 2009). In lines 8-9, he further delegitimized the work of MAS educators arguing students were not being given the “skills that they need to go on to be nurses and doctors, and architects, and lawyers” (Testimony, June 15, 2009). Through this rhetoric Huppenthal grounded his claims of the

ostensible harm MAS educators were producing by keeping students from accessing the skills they needed to be successful in US society (Testimony, June 15, 2009).

Through the examples of Steve Montenegro and John Huppenthal, we see bill proponents advanced their arguments by implying an equitable education consisted of pedagogies and curriculum that only advanced Eurocentric values and ways of seeing the world (Briscoe & Khalifa, 2015; Gutierrez et al, 2002). These examples showcase how bill proponents suggested learning from literature that deviated from the mainstream curriculum—or status quo—jeopardized students’ access to equitable educational experiences. Notably, bill proponents disregarded the robust evidence linking high levels of awareness regarding systems of oppressions with positive academic outcomes for historically marginalized groups (Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006). These rhetorical practices and symbolic language align with what Gutiérrez and colleague’s (2002) refer to as “backlash politics,” or deceptive uses of discourses associated with Civil Rights efforts to restrict and regress educational opportunities for historically marginalized students of color. Two of these examples involve bilingual education and affirmative action (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Wright, 2005). For instance, Proposition 203 referenced their efforts to eliminate bilingual education as “English for the Children” (Wright, 2005). Similarly, California voters successfully campaigned Proposition 209 as the “Civil Rights Initiative” to limit the use of race in higher education admissions practices (Gutiérrez et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lopez, 2003; Wright, 2005).

Given that Senate and House representatives overwhelmingly accepted bill proponents’ arguments despite the data discounting their claims illustrates how these equity-oriented misleading race-neutral discourses support the dominant group in maintaining their “positionality and power in society by using the courts as their vehicle” to pass discriminatory policy (Lopez,

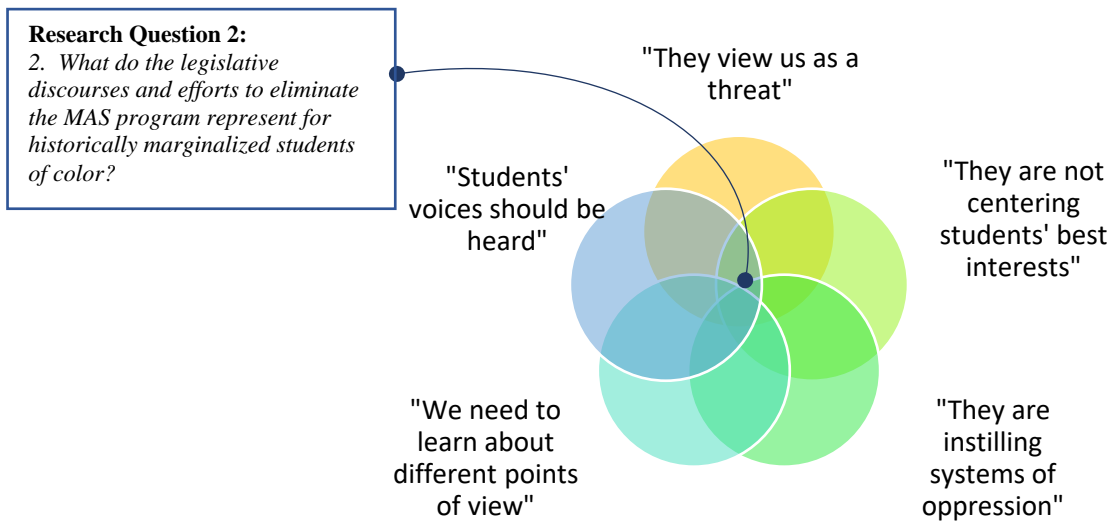
2003, p. 83). Applying CRT allows the complication of these empty claims of "equal opportunity, color-blindness, and racial neutrality" in order to expose these constructions as a façade for protecting the "self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups" (Solórzano et al., 2005, p. 623). Operating from a CRT stance also unveils equity discourses as a strategy the dominant group uses to protect themselves from accusations of bias and racial discrimination (Gillborn, 2014; Pincus, 2003). Considering equity and opportunity are cornerstones of American democracy, bill proponents used these discourses to create separation between Arizona residents and the MAS program and its affiliates (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Evading scrutiny of the motivations driving their campaign using these equity discourses illustrates contemporary manifestations of colorblind racism in the form of supposed equity discourses the dominant group employs as a "a way of avoiding responsibility" (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 87). In framing themselves as saving Arizona students from opportunity losses and increased inequities that program ostensibly produced, legislators successfully garnered support to eliminate the MAS program.

In this chapter, I presented the three main themes that emerged in efforts to answer my first research question and sub-question: *1) How were discourses leveraged in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? 1a) What was the role of race in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program?* In the next chapter, I present the main themes that emerged from my attempts to answer my second research question: *What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?*

Chapter 5: “They Don’t Value Us as Human Beings”: Students’ Critical Interrogations of Unjust Policymaking Processes

In this chapter, I describe the five main findings pertaining to the second research question guiding my study: 2) *What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?* Under this chapter, I present students’ critical interrogations of the anti-MAS legislative process where they concluded educational leaders: 1) “view [them] as a threat,” 2) fail to “center students’ best interests,” and 3) “instill systems of oppression.” Based on these evaluations of the anti-MAS legislative process, students underscored the salience of 4) learning “about different points of view” and 5) incorporating students’ voices in decision-making processes that dictate their educational opportunities. Figure 18 illustrates these main findings that emerged from my analysis based on the eight student interviews I collected. While I will carry out a full analysis of the 63 survey responses in future work, I present some of the open-ended responses that show how I triangulated the interview responses against the survey responses. As I outlined in Chapter 3, my use of the open-ended survey responses in this section serves to shed insight into how other students in the class who I didn’t interview might have responded to the same type of questions.

Figure 18 Research Question #2 Findings



As I detailed in Chapter 2, I weave civic participation with critical race theory (CRT) orientations to explain the main findings that emerged (Lee et al., 2021; Mirra & Garcia, 2017; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). A civic interrogation lens allows me to acknowledge students of color recognize that their lived experiences “do not comport to the narrative of the American Dream” and thus, possess unique insights they can leverage to “[engage] in the crucial work of interrogating the public sphere” (Mirra & Garcia, 2019, p. 152). In a similar vein, Lee et al.’s (2021) notion of civic reasoning helps me show students’ contributions are necessary for them to be “fully empowered members within the communities and societies in which they find themselves” (p. 10). Both frames are helpful for highlighting students’ capacity and aptitude in deconstructing, analyzing, and reflecting on the legislative process leading to the elimination of the MAS program.

Complementing these orientations, CRT allows us to recognize how we continue to marginalize and ignore the contributions and insights of students of color and their families. In acknowledging this historical practice, CRT offers a paradigm shift for how we view and incorporate the experiences of students of color in power-making processes. In this paradigm

shift, Delgado-Bernal (2002) encourages us to position students as possessing valuable knowledge essential for radically transforming and rebuilding our educational systems. Placing CRT in dialogue with civic interrogation orientations enable me to combat paternalistic perspectives that deem youth as lacking the maturity, intellectual capacity, and experience to shape decision-making processes. Further, these conceptual frames allow me to show why students of color are indispensable actors in policy research and processes when unpacking these five main findings. Before outlining these findings, I provide an example of the data collection interactions I engaged in with students that revealed the main findings.

Policy Research with Youth During COVID

I anxiously waited for twelfth grade Latina student, Lucia Baresi, to enter the Zoom meeting room. She was the first student I interviewed from Mr. Joaquin Lopez's American Government from a Mexican American perspective class. As I waited, I recalled the sea of black screens often staring back at Mr. Lopez and I during a class environment unique to the virtual learning taking place during the global pandemic. Having observed Mr. Lopez grapple with fostering the dialogue and dynamic classroom environment characteristic of his in-person classes, I worried about being able to connect with Lucia and other interviewees in questions about what at times can be perceived as dull and irrelevant policymaking processes and policies. I also contemplated whether students would feel comfortable having a conversation through Zoom or whether they would resort to the chat function or other Zoom features to share their reflections.

The transition to virtual schooling eliminated opportunities I had imagined for interacting and building humanizing relationships with students. In participating in students' class over the 10 weeks through Zoom, I had only been able to engage them all at the same time as a class.

Thus, this was the first time I was interacting with students on a one-to-one basis. As part of my humanizing research practices, I started our interview conversation with the card I had shared during the previous class activity I had led that *mi papa, mama, y hermano* (my dad, mom, and brother) had gifted me during the period that I almost withdrew from my doctoral program. I read the following words from the colorful card, “sometimes what feels like falling apart is actually everything falling into place” (Hernandez, interview, October 9, 2020). Then I delved into the words of *fortaleza* (strength), affirmation, and resilience that my familia transmitted through the card.

After sharing, I asked Lucia if she could show and talk about an item that was close to her heart. I saw her hand move towards her chest and land lightly on a silver necklace dangling around her neck hallmarking the number 11. Before I knew it my previous concerns over students’ level of contributions through Zoom disappeared as Lucia eagerly and openly spoke about how the number 11 represented her journey as a Latina navigating the borderlands of her two worlds, Mexico and the US. The transnational identity the necklace represented was embedded and woven throughout Lucia’s responses and critical interrogations of the anti-MAS legislative processes.

Throughout our interview, I shared video clips from the SB 1069 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing (2009) and the HB 2281 House Education Committee hearing (2010). As outlined in my interview protocol (see Appendix D), I would show a few seconds of the clip before pausing to inquire whether Lucia had any thoughts, reactions, or comments that she wanted to share. The clips I shared featured Tom Horne explaining how the MAS program infringed on the purpose of schooling, the climate of anger and hatred ostensible fostered by the courses, as well as the detrimental lessons students were taught in these courses that positioned

them as victims. Figure 19 illustrates a portion of one of the legislative hearings students were asked to reflect on during their interview. (Chapter 4 provides a line-by-line analysis of the excerpt illustrated here).

Figure 19 Tom Horne's Use of John Wards Opinion Piece as Evidence

- 1 But the whole inference and tone was anger.
- 2 (They taught students) that the United States was and still is
- 3 a fundamentally racist country to those of Mexican-American kids.
- 4 Individuals in this (Ethnic Studies) department are vehemently anti-Western
- 5 culture. They are vehemently opposed to the United States and its power.
- 6 They are telling students they are victims
- 7 and that they should be angry and rise up.

I followed the same processes when interviewing Lucia's peers. Lucia, like her peers, drew on her journey to reclaim her cultural roots as she reflected on this excerpt as well as others where bill proponents advanced their rationale for banning the robust multi-year MAS program previously offered at her school.

Theme 1: "They View us as a Threat"

In this section, I present the first theme from the five main themes that emerged from my analysis of the data I collected for my second research question. In this theme students shared their critical interrogations of bill proponents' descriptions of the MAS program and affiliates. Students' analysis of bill proponent's depiction of MAS students and educators, overlaps with the rearticulation of the MAS program as a threat that I outlined in Chapter 4, Theme 1. As I outlined in Chapter 4, bill proponents rearticulated the MAS program as endangering security of Arizona residents. Similarly highlighting these descriptions of MAS affiliates, students overwhelmingly noted in their reflections that the legislative process indicated bill proponents viewed students as a threat.

To illustrate this theme, I present the excerpts from the interview and survey responses of

Liliana, Fabricio, Aurora, and Aitana. For example, Liliana Figueroa, a twelfth grade Latina student, outlined in her interview the ways in which legislators constructed the MAS program and students as a threat. Figure 20 shows an excerpt from Liliana’s interview on October 10, 2020.

Figure 20 Liliana Figueroa Interview Excerpt (October 10, 2020)

1 These quotes and statements are almost unbelievable.
2 It's as though they speak about animals
3 with no linguistics skill or capability of even speaking or learning.
4 They speak about this course as a tyranny to overthrow the US,
5 really there are groups far more threatening in the state in this country as a whole
6 who have threatened the whole existence and rights of the pursuit of this country.

In line 1, Liliana expresses her bewilderment at the words and phrases bill proponents used when referencing the MAS program. She noted, “these quotes and statements are almost unbelievable” (Interview, October 11, 2020). Then in line 2 she goes on to rigorously problematize bill proponents’ descriptions when stating “it’s as though they speak about animals.” Here, in connecting the words bill proponents used as phrases traditionally used for animals, Liliana pushes us to reflect on how bill proponents used words and language to dehumanize people of color. In adding “with no linguistic skill or capability of even speaking or learning” she explains bill proponents’ representations of MAS positioned students as not possessing the mental capacity to think for themselves or be critical consumers of information that promoted hate or the overthrow of the US government.

In line 4, Liliana points to specific examples of the framing bill proponents used when she states, “they speak about this course as tyranny to overthrow the US.” Here she points to how bill proponents were framing people of color as animals viciously capable of attacking the US. Then she highlights the historical contradictions in bill proponents’ accusations when mentioning “there are groups far more threatening in the state in this country who have

threatened the whole existence” of this country. Here she counters bill proponents’ positioning of people of color as savage animals and instead argues communities of color and the courses are not dangerous. She goes on to suggest that given that the MAS curriculum is harmless, bill proponents should focus their attention on groups that are in effect dangerous, rather than spend their time and energy on banning harmless MAS programs. Liliana’s reflection allows us to understand how students perceived the anti-MAS legislative processes as an example that educational leaders viewed students of color as a threat.

In his survey response, Fabricio Cordova, a twelfth-grade Native American Latino student echoed Liliana’s evaluation of the ways educational leaders view students as a threat. Reflecting on the claims that the MAS program promoted hate and the overthrow of the US government, Fabricio jotted educational leaders “seem to target students in these programs and paint them in a radical violent light” (Survey Response, October 7, 2020). Like Liliana, Fabricio unveiled the covert messages he perceived bill proponents advanced through their discourses. That is, he explains bill proponents use of these words helped them shape the public’s association of the MAS program and students with violence. Moving beyond simplistic analyses, Fabricio and Liliana highlighted the nuance and complexity they detected in the language and words bill proponents used to present students and the MAS program as a threat.

Extending Fabricio’s and Liliana’s analysis, Aurora Ayola’s interview connects bill proponents’ construction of the MAS program as a threat to the rapidly changing racial demographics in Tucson. Figure 21 shows an excerpt from Aurora’s interview on October 11, 2020.

Figure 21 Aurora Ayola Interview Excerpt (October 11, 2020)

- 1 And what is it you know there's some some some statistic
- 2 that Latinos are going to be the biggest group in the United States
- 3 by some year right
- 4 I think a big part of you know people's well like him like people's biases
- 5 come from no longer being in a position of power.
- 6 And so they're scared of losing that, um,
- 7 and then they're going to be doing everything that they can in order to retain that.

In lines 1-2, Aurora acknowledges the social political context likely influencing bill proponents' policy actions when stating "there's some statistic that Latinos are going to be the biggest group in the United States by some year" (Interview, October 11, 2020). In this line she cues to the drastic demographical changes taking place across the nation, and increasingly transparent in Arizona. In the context of Arizona, Latinx immigrants are increasingly comprising a larger portion of the state population (Rex, 2011). In line 4, she attributes these changes in the racial makeup of the state as associated with bill proponents' "biases" or arguments. She then weighs this statistic in relation to bill proponents framing of MAS students as a threat. That is, she explains these biases reflect that bill proponents are "scared" of "no longer of being in a position of power" (Interview, October 11, 2020). Aurora's reflection echoes existing scholarship outlining how dominant groups perceive changes in the racial demographic makeup as threatening the status quo (Chavez, 2013).

In line 7, Aurora goes on to argue that based on the drastically increasing Latinx population in Arizona bill proponents "are doing everything they can in order to retain" that power (Interview, October 11, 2020). In her critical examination of the MAS legislative processes, Aurora exposes the power dynamics that are visible when considering the social historical context under which the policy is taking place. Here she describes bill proponents' efforts to ban the MAS program as part of their attempts to keep Mexicans and other Latinx communities in inferior positions. Through her reflections, Aurora suggests bill proponents view

these courses as granting Latinx communities the power to overthrow them.

Like Aurora, Aitana Aguilar, a twelfth grade Latina student, similarly acknowledged how the sociopolitical climate drove bill proponents' construction of students as a threat during her interview on October 20, 2020. She attributed bill proponents' fierce opposition to students access to Mexican American Studies courses as a byproduct of their fear around the browning of the Arizona population when she noted "I feel like in that moment, they were scared" (Aitana, Interview, October 20, 2020). She then went on to acknowledge the anti-immigrant climate characteristic of the time when she stated, "I think that was about the time where they had also passed a law like for immigration" (Aitana, Interview, October 20, 2020). Here, Aitana referenced the immigration control legislation (Senate Bill 1070) previously proposed that granted police officers the authority to profile individuals they perceived to be undocumented (Rex, 2011). Aitana rationalized bill proponents' perception of the MAS program and students as a threat through her connections to the larger sociopolitical efforts to control and curtail the growing Latinx population.

In deconstructing the language and words bill proponents used, Liliana's, Fabricio's Aurora's, and Aitana's critical interrogations point to the "larger political processes, conjunctures, conflicts, and struggles for power" implicated in educational policies (Conchas, Hinga, Abad, & Gutierrez, 2019, p. 1). Liliana's and Fabricio's critical interrogations unveiled the words and phrases bill proponents used to describe the MAS program and affiliates that signaled to students' that they are seen as a threat. Meanwhile, Aurora and Aitana explained the environmental dynamics they referenced to rationalize bill proponents' perceptions of students in these courses as a threat.

Theme 2: They are not “Centering Students’ Best Interests”

A second theme that emerged from the data collection for the second research question is that students perceived educational leaders involved in the anti-MAS legislative process did not center students’ best interests. Students’ reflections challenged bill proponents framing of their legislative efforts as an equity-oriented solution. Countering these equity-seeking claims, students overwhelmingly expressed their disillusion and bewilderment around educational leaders’ ferocious determination to ban courses that have been life changing for them. Students grappled to fathom why educational leaders would prohibit courses that were raising GPA’s, test scores, and other educational outcomes for students from similar racial backgrounds. I share excerpts from Teresa’s, Elizabeth’s, Nayeli’s and Mariah’s interview and survey responses to illustrate this theme.

In her reflection, Teresa Robinson, a biracial student, expressed her skepticism around educational leaders’ claims that they were acting in students’ best interests when banning the MAS program. Figure 22 shows an excerpt from Teresa’s interview on October 20, 2020.

Figure 22 Teresa Robinson Interview Excerpt (October 20, 2020)

1 I think a lot of them have politics
2 that play into their opinions and their decisions.
3 And as a student,
4 sometimes I just feel like they're not looking out for my best interest.
5 They're looking out for theirs.

In line 1, Teresa shares her perception that legislators and educational leaders “have politics” that influence their actions and policy solutions (Interview, October 20, 2020). In this case, she suggests bill proponents’ decisive efforts to eliminate the MAS program are shaped by their personal political agendas, rather than their pursuit of equitable outcomes. Then, in line 2, Teresa signals to the biased and subjective nature of these agendas, claiming the ban on the MAS

program did not reflect a neutral and objective democratic process. Instead, she explains bill proponents' restriction of students' access to the Mexican American Studies curriculum as representing their own opinions and decisions. That is, unlike students, educational leaders failed to see the indispensable value these Ethnic Studies courses bore for historically marginalized youth. Teresa's critique of the nature of the legislative processes reflects existing research showing legislative processes continue to prioritize, benefit, and protect the interests of Whites at the expense of marginalized communities (Gillborn, 2005).

In lines 3-4, Teresa signals that as a student sometimes she feels like educational leaders are not looking out for her best interest. In this line, Teresa points to the confusion she voiced in another portion of the interview around educators' consistent push for her and her peers to get good grades yet failed to support a program that is helping them succeed academically. Therefore, Teresa in line 5 confidently affirmed the legislative processes reflected how educational leaders are "looking out for their" own interests, rather than centering students' needs.

Like her peer, Elizabeth similarly questioned educational leaders' investment in student success, yet also probed into the racialized dynamics informing their commitment to students. Figure 23 shows an excerpt from Elizabeth's interview on October 14, 2020.

Figure 23 Elizabeth Garayzar's Interview Excerpt (October 14, 2020)

- 1 **And I don't see why they would want to like eliminate**
- 2 **something that was helping students excel.**
- 3 **No matter like what race or ethnicity [...].**
- 4 **So, I think they eliminated it**
- 5 **because they didn't want us to don't want us to excel.**
- 6 **They wanted us to like stay in our place,**
- 7 **they didn't want change.**
- 8 **They don't want to see us like become more.**

In lines 1-2, Elizabeth expresses her disbelief that educational leaders “would want to eliminate something that was helping students excel” (Interview, October 14, 2020). She references the information she heard in news videos covering the MAS debate during class that noted the Mexican American courses drastically improved Latinx students’ educational outcomes (Fieldnotes, September 3, 2020). Then in line 3, she goes on to affirm that legislators should be invested in helping all students succeed regardless of their “race or ethnicity” (Interview, October 14, 2020). Here she begins to problematize bill proponents’ elimination of a program catering to the underserved Latinx population.

In lines 4-5, Elizabeth articulates her perception that bill proponents eliminated the MAS program “because they didn’t want us to, don’t want us to excel” (Interview, October 14, 2020). Elizabeth uses “us” to reference Latinx students and other students of color. Thus, here she suggests the overwhelming White legislative board didn’t want Latinx students and other students of color to excel. In line 6, she elaborates, “they wanted us to like stay in our place” (Interview, October 14, 2020). Here, Elizabeth indicates that in eliminating a program that was helping marginalized students succeed, reflects the ways educational leaders and legislators continue to subjugate and control communities of color. She further explains bill proponents

“didn’t want change” (Interview, October 14, 2020). That is, in not supporting students, legislators’ actions reflected they wanted to keep the status quo, a hierarchy that disadvantaged students of color. This is further seen in the last line, where Elizabeth mentions, “they don’t want to see us like become more” (Interview, October 14, 2020). Here she explains that bill proponents purposefully undermined these MAS courses to ensure students couldn’t change the status quo. Moreover, she also points to the numerous ways the MAS courses drastically altered students’ lives beyond educational outcomes. In commenting legislators don’t want to see students “become more” she references the ways Ethnic Studies courses have been found to empower students of color (Acosta, 2007).

In her survey response, Nayeli Santos, a twelfth-grade Latina student, similarly echoed Elizabeth’s tensions around educational leaders’ persisting desire to eliminate a program supporting students. For instance, Nayeli wrote, “I feel like they shouldn’t prohibit [these] classes. If the students are learning and showing interest, then why prohibit the class” (Survey Response, October 7, 2020). Nayeli’s response alludes to the alienation and disengagement mainstreams courses often produce among historically marginalized students of color (Sleeter, 2011). Based on this context, Nayeli affirms her belief that educational leaders should not be exerting their energy towards eliminating a class fostering students’ learning and engagement.

Extending her peers’ reflections, in her interview response Maria Suarez Campos also indicated educational leaders failed to adequately understand and represent students’ needs. Maria referenced the “An Ethnic Studies Program Sued the Lawmakers That Banned It” video Mr. Lopez showed the class when pointing to educational leaders’ distortion of student perspectives. Figure 24 shows an excerpt from Maria’s interview on October 30, 2020.

Figure 24 Maria Suarez Campos (October 30, 2020)

- 1 Like that girl
- 2 who said she thought she wasn't going to graduate until she took this class
- 3 and then afterwards he said that these classes are worthless and toxic,
- 4 even though it's giving kids motivation.

In line 1, Maria references “that girl” from the portion where a MAS Latina student commented to reporters why the MAS courses were critical for students’ learning experiences (Interview, October 30, 2020). In this video, the MAS student from the video noted: “I started thinking I’m a Chicana, I aint going to be able to graduate. I’m going to have kids young. And then, I started coming to these classes and I started seeing like why am I believing all of this? And instead of believing this, I should change it” (Fieldnotes, October 3, 2020). Here this MAS student points to the racist messages she had internalized that she’s heard about Chicanas. She goes on to share how she began to internalize the widespread stereotypes that claim Latinas are likely to get pregnant and drop out of high school. She then attributes her participation in the MAS classes as opening her eyes to the stereotypes she had internalized and realized she should not let these racist ideas constrain her academic potential. The learning she underwent in these classes empowered her to instead try to challenge these stereotypical perceptions of Chicanas.

Noting this MAS students’ comments during her interview, Maria goes on to summarize the girl’s response in line 2 stating, “who said she thought she wasn’t going to graduate until she took this class” (Interview, October 30, 2020). Here she emphasized the drastic changes the Chicana MAS student voiced that bill proponents failed to recognize or value. This is evident in line 3 where she comments, “and then afterwards he said that these classes are worthless and toxic” (Interview, October 30, 2020). Here, Maria points to the incongruence between what

students are communicating about the MAS program and John Huppenthal's (i.e., Superintendent of the time) representations of the courses. She critiques bill proponents' descriptions of the courses when they are "giving kids motivation" (Interview, October 30, 2020). Mariah's testimony points to the dissonance between educational leaders' policy solutions and the learning experiences and needs of students of color.

Through Teresa's, Elizabeth's, Nayeli's and Mariah's interview and survey responses, we see the ways in which students made sense of educational leaders' unwillingness to protect and keep a program that was helping students of color. In their analysis of educational leaders' policy actions students, gestured to American's ongoing adoption of policies that are "harmful to minorities that they would not tolerate if those same policies were applied to majority populations" (as cited in Gillborn, 2005, p. 496). Questioning the prohibition of a program that empowered and motivated youth, students identified politics, rather than student needs, as driving the educational policies leaders proposed and implemented.

Theme 3: "They are Instilling Systems of Oppression"

In this section, I present the third theme from the five main themes that emerged from my analysis of the data I collected for my second research question. This first theme illustrates how students perceived the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program as illustrating how educational leaders "insti[l] systems of oppression." In the five student reflections I highlight, Aitana, Elizabeth, Raul, Ana, and Lucia evaluated the arguments bill proponents advanced to justify the MAS program ban. Overwhelmingly, students noted the ways in which legislators used their words and phrases to influence the board's elimination of a program that increased equity. In unpacking the discourses employed by bill proponents, students indicated the legislative processes affirmed the ways in which this bureaucratic process reflected

contemporary manifestations of oppression in the US.

In her interview reflections, Aitana questioned the neutrality of educational leaders' decision to limit students' engagement with non-dominant literature. Figure 25 shows excerpts from Aitana's interview on October 20, 2020.

Figure 25 Aitana Aguilar Interview Excerpt (October 20, 2020)

- 1 I feel like it was very manipulative,
- 2 like he just went based off what people said,
- 3 and like he didn't even try like to even see what was going on."
- 4 [...]
- 5 They haven't taught me to hate anybody
- 6 or like to resent anybody.
- 7 And then that's basically all he's saying
- 8 that that's all these classes are doing for people.
- 9 And that's like what's very confusing, like that hasn't been my experience.

In sentence 1, Aitana notes the discourses, bill author, Tom Horne used when advancing the evidence that justified the elimination of the program as “very manipulative” (Interview, October 20, 2020). Here, Aitana illustrates an awareness of the power discourses hold in shaping and constructing our understanding of the world (Fairclough, 2003). She challenged understandings of language as a neutral act, and instead pushed considerations of the ways words can shape how we interpret a particular phenomenon. In noting the “manipulative” nature of Horne’s discourses, Aitana highlighted the influential reach of the discourses he strategically leveraged to garner support for the elimination of the MAS program.

In line 2, Aitana goes on to problematize that the main evidence Horne presented given that it was “based off what people said” (Interview, October 20, 2020). Aitana evaluates Tom Horne’s continued use of “hearsay” or John Ward’s opinion newspaper piece as evidence that the program promoted hate toward a racial group. (Refer to Chapter 4, Theme 1 for an analysis of

John Ward's opinion piece). Then in line 3, Aitana points out the incongruencies in Horne's arguments noting, "he didn't even try like to even see what was going on" (Interview, October 20, 2020). Here, Aitana critiques his overreliance on others' testimonies to conclude the program fostered anger and hate, rather than empirical observations and audits of the class. She questions Horne's precipitous decision to restrict students access to Mexican American Studies curriculum before he entered or observed a MAS classroom to confirm others' perception of the program were accurate. Aitana implicitly references the widespread criticism Tom Horne received for his understandings and framings of the MAS program even though he had not attended or observed a single MAS course (Lundholm, 2011).

In line 5, Aitana goes on to exemplify the ways in which Tom Horne's arguments were manipulative. She explained the incongruence she detected in Horne's discourses when stating, "they haven't taught me to hate anybody or like to resent anybody" in lines 5-6 (Interview, October 20, 2020). Aitana referenced her participation in a MAS inspired class and how her learning in that course deviated dramatically from the framings and representations Horne advanced about the MAS program. Aitana references her learning experience when evaluating bill proponents' claims that the MAS curriculum promoted hate or resentment toward Whites. Similar to bill proponents' critique of the MAS program for exposing students to concepts like systems of oppression, Mr. Lopez fostered students' critical analysis of hegemonic structures. In line 8, Aitana points out Horne's narrow and calculating rhetorical representations of the MAS as promoting misinterpretations when she noted, "and that's basically all he's saying" (Interview, October 20, 2020). Then in line 9, she expresses her confusion around Tom Horne's adamant position to eliminate the MAS program based on descriptions of these courses that deviated significantly from her learning experience in similar types of courses.

In their survey responses, students echoed Aitana's critique of Horne's misrepresentation of the MAS courses. For example, 12th grade Latino student, Raul Reed, similarly referenced his experience taking a course that centered Mexican American literature and engaged students in analysis of systems of oppressions when reflecting on the claim that MAS courses promoted hate or overthrow of the US government. He noted the claims, "seem to not be true and not even remotely close to what we learn in our class" (Survey Response, October 7, 2020). Like Aitana, Raul drew on his experiential knowledge from taking a MAS inspired course that strove to raise his critical consciousness and awareness to form his position that bill proponents' claims did not reflect reality.

Through Raul's survey excerpt and Aitana's interview response we see the ways students noted the manipulative nature of the discourses bill proponents used to distort understandings of the MAS program and pass a policy detrimental to students of color. Raul's and Aitana's analysis points to the rearticulation of the MAS program as a threat theme I outlined in Chapter 4. Both similarly noted how bill proponents' discursive representations reflected a depiction of the MAS program drastically different than their experiences in classes like those previously offered by the MAS program.

Extending Raul and Aitana's analyses, Elizabeth applied her academic knowledge on the tools of argumentation to deconstruct educational leaders' discourses and explain how this policy decision extended injustice. Figure 26 shows an excerpt from Elizabeth's interview on October 14, 2020.

Figure 26 Elizabeth Garayzar Interview Excerpt (October 14, 2020)

1 He's using these emotions
2 to instill these systems of oppression
3 like this itself is what like we're learning
4 how to like deconstruct and things like that.
5 And this bill is like they don't see that they're an example of what we're learning.
7 They really are the systems of oppression
8 that like they don't want to see us succeed
9 or they don't want like, they're not helping students succeed. (...)
10 It's like ethos, pathos, logos.
11 He's just appealing to people's emotions
12 and he's just trying to like get a rise out of everyone to make this (...)
13 an actual law in the state.

In line 1, Elizabeth exposes the “emotions” covertly present in Tom Horne’s descriptions of the MAS program (Interview, October 14, 2020). (Please refer to Chapter 4 for a line-by-line analysis of the arguments Elizabeth heard Tom Horne present in the legislative videos.) Here, like Aitana, Elizabeth acknowledges the implicit elements embedded in discourses and the use of language. In line 2, she contends, Horne used these emotions to instill “these systems of oppression” (Interview, October 14, 2020). Through this statement, she describes Horne’s efforts to eliminate the MAS program as a contemporary marginalization of communities of color. As Elizabeth explained in subsequent lines, she refers to systems of oppression as the elimination of programs that help students’ untap their full potential. In lines 3-4, she articulated her analysis of Horne’s actions as an example of what she was “learning” in her classes. In line 5, she further elucidates that the legislative efforts to eliminate the program is an example of the systems of oppression they are learning how to “deconstruct” (Interview, October 14, 2020). Elizabeth acknowledges the critical thinking skills she developed in her classes equipping her with the tools she needed to deeply evaluate Horne’s arguments.

In line 7, Elizabeth reflects on her analysis and firmly affirms her conclusions that educational leaders really are “the systems of oppression” (Interview, October 14, 2020). Here she points to the ways in which legislators and educational leaders are creating and cultivating

educational environments that fail to help students of color grow and thrive academically. In lines 8-9, she argues this is clear in how educational leaders' adamant legislative efforts to eliminate a program improving the educational outcomes of Latinx students signal they "don't want to see Latinx [students] succeed" (Interview, October 14, 2020). Here, Elizabeth exposes bill proponents' misrepresentations of the MAS program as a purposeful tactic they employed to keep Latinx students' from succeeding.

In lines 10-11, Elizabeth masterfully draws on the knowledge she's gained from her English classes to evaluate Horne's arguments and substantiate her claim that this legislative process reflects a contemporary manifestation of the systems of oppression that exist in the US. In deconstructing Horne's arguments as reflecting the use of "ethos, pathos, and logos" she adeptly references the rhetorical tools traditionally used to persuade an audience (Interview, October 14, 2020). Analyzing Horne's use of the tools of argumentation, she posits, "he's just appealing to people's emotions" (Interview, October 14, 2020). She then exposes his use of these tools to generate a "rise out of" the legislators and the public in line 12 (Interview, October 14, 2020). As Elizabeth concludes on line 13, Horne's discursive manipulation of the board, made it possibly for him to garner support for this policy and successfully eliminate the MAS program.

Expanding Elizabeth's interview reflections, in their survey responses students elaborated on how the elimination of the MAS program reflected contemporary systems of oppressions. For instance, Ana Pelagio, a twelfth grade Latina student, wrote educational leaders' ban of the MAS program reflected their efforts to keep students from "seeing how bad they were treated in the past" (Survey Response, October 8, 2020). Here, Ana alludes to the enslavement, genocide, and systemic oppression of communities of color (Lee, 2021). According to Ana, educational leaders didn't want this "truth" "about other races' history to come to light" (Survey Response, October

8, 2020). This comment reflects Ethnic Studies' efforts to decolonize knowledge systems that obscure the histories, perspectives and experiences of communities of color (de los Ríos, 2020). Seeing bill proponents' discourses as inextricably linked to the racialized history of the US, Ana believed educational leaders restricted students' access to the MAS curriculum because they didn't want students to learn about the nation's racially brutal past. She then goes on to indicate omitting the racial injustices targeted at communities of color served to "protect the government in a way" (Survey Response, October 8, 2020). In referencing the US governing body, Ana signals eliminating the MAS program protected the interest of those in power.

Lucia Baresi, also a twelfth grade Latina, echoed and expanded her peer's interrogation of the anti-MAS legislative processes as an unjust process in her interview. In particular, Lucia interrogated the legislative processes that made it possible for bill proponents to ban the MAS program based on hearsay. Figure 27 shows an excerpt from Lucia's interview on October 9, 2020.

Figure 27 Lucia Baresi Interview Excerpt (October 9, 2020)

1 Oh, wow.
2 I don't see how he's putting up a strong enough case
3 to even have that type of power to create a whole bill. [...]
4 He's not saying it if he had, let's say test scores. [...]
5 That's disappointing
6 because I'm sitting here and I'm analyzing and picking apart his argument
7 and how [is it that] people in the government can't do that, and I'm a senior in high
8 school [...] That's very worrisome.

In line 1, by stating, "oh, wow" Lucia shares the shock she experienced after hearing Tom Horne justifying his efforts to ban the MAS program based on the testimony of John Ward, a teacher that disapproved of the courses (Interview, October 9, 2020). (Please refer to Chapter 4 for line-by-line analysis of the arguments Lucia heard Tom Horne present in the legislative videos.) In line 2, Lucia explains what produced her shock, stating, "I don't see how he's putting

up a strong enough case” (Interview, October 9, 2020). Like her peers, Lucia critiques the use of hearsay to justify the prohibition of a program that reduced inequity. Lucia grapples understanding how legislators bought and accepted Horne’s claims based mainly on one person’s perspectives.

Lucia’s comments reflect her observations of how Tom Horne presented the same evidence in the multiple legislative hearing videos she watched. In line 3, she problematizes the power dynamics she identified that granted Horne the authority to “create a whole bill” based on the limited evidence he presented (Interview, October 9, 2020). In line 4, Lucia evaluates the evidence Horne presented stating, “he’s not saying it if he had, let’s say test scores” (Interview, October 9, 2020). Through this line, she points to the overvaluing of numerical data or empirical data that often occurs in decision-making processes (Diem et al., 2014b). Lucia rigorously critiques Horne’s ability to pass a bill without the evidence traditionally valued and indispensable in policymaking processes. In this critique, Lucia reveals the contradictions she identified in the anti-MAS legislative process considering researchers and policymakers’ “narrow fixations on testing and achievement outcomes over everything else” (Conchas et al., 2019, p. 2).

In this section, Aitana, Elizabeth, Raul, Ana and Lucia’s critical interrogations exemplify the connections students made shaping their perception that the MAS program reflected a contemporary manifestation of oppression. Aitana, Elizabeth, and Raul picked apart the ways legislators used discourses to create inaccurate depictions of the MAS program. Students identified educational leaders’ rhetorical distortions as a tool through which they institutionalized injustice. Meanwhile, Ana and Lucia highlighted the contradictions in the policymaking processes that made it possible for educational leaders to reproduce racial harm.

Theme 4: “We Need to Learn about Different Points of View”

In this section, I present the fourth theme from the five main themes that emerged from my analysis of the data I collected for my second research question. Contrary to legislators’ assumptions that students’ engagement with nondominant paradigms and analyses of systems of oppression encouraged the overthrow of the US government, students reflected accessing this knowledge cultivated a society that honored the humanity of all individuals. As I will outline through an analysis of Luis, Alejandro, Johana, Liliana, and Elizabeth’s reflections, I demonstrate how students consistently emphasized the importance of having all students learn about different cultures, points of view, and seeing the world through the eyes of those that are less privileged.

Luis Ortega emphasized the importance of understanding and appreciating other’s perspectives. Figure 28 shows an excerpt from Luis’ interview on October 11, 2020.

Figure 28 Luis Ortega Interview Excerpt (October 11, 2020)

1 And it kind of opened up my viewpoint to other cultures
2 and my own culture that I like never got to learn about
3 like everybody and I just feel like like anybody like any personally you want Eurocentric
4 like people or just African American Raza
5 or anything to learn about any other culture
6 because like it makes them more inclusive
7 when they understand other people’s viewpoints.

In line 1, Luis explains how taking courses from a Mexican American perspective “opened up his viewpoint to other cultures” (Interview, October 11, 2020). Luis describes his learning in these classes as not solely focused on one racial or ethnic group, but rather how they centered multiple cultures often not covered in the mainstream curriculum. In line 2, he explains these courses taught him knowledge he “never got to learn about” (Interview, October 11, 2020).

In this statement, Luis alludes to a comment he made in another portion of the interview where his mainstream courses mainly taught him “Western perspectives and topics” (Interview, October 11, 2020). Citing his inability to learn about other cultural groups, Luis alludes to the cultural genocide precipitated in US schools (de los Ríos, 2020).

Then in lines, 3-4 Luis goes on to argue that “everyone,” or individuals of all races should engage the knowledge that students in the MAS courses accessed. Here, he counters bill proponents’ claims that the MAS courses were only for Mexican or Latinx origin students. In line 5, he counters sanitized understandings of US society by encouraging individuals of all races to learn “about any other culture” (Interview, October 11, 2020). As he suggests in line 6-7, learning about other cultures involved transcending superficial appropriations of cultural traditions or practices, as seen in many stereotypical celebrations of Cinco de Mayo in the US. Instead, Luis described the salience of learning about other cultures as a pathway towards a deeper understanding of “other people’s viewpoints” (Interview, October 11, 2020). To Luis, this deeper understanding fostered greater “inclusivit[y]” or interconnectedness of humans across racial lines. According to Luis, the anti-MAS legislative processes underscored the importance of increasing access to the knowledge presented in MAS courses as a way to cultivate relational harmony among students.

Students’ survey responses similarly echoed Luis’ emphasis on exposing students to non-dominant perspectives, epistemologies, and experiences. For instance, Alejandro Espinoza, a twelfth grade Latino student, wrote the anti-MAS legislative processes affirmed the indispensable nature of the MAS curriculum for “teach[ing] students about inclusion and to respect each other’s cultures” (Survey Response, October 8, 2020). In stressing the need for MAS courses, Alejandro outlined respecting each other’s cultures required actively educating

students about the histories, languages, and cultures of racial minorities considering their absence in mainstream courses. Similarly, Johana Mendoza, a twelfth grade Latina, in her survey response outlined increasing access to MAS courses would ensure “more people [would] be included, more diversity, more options, and opportunities” (Survey Response, October 8, 2020). To Johana, options and opportunities were inextricably linked with the knowledge students accessed through MAS courses. Johana’s reflections align with existing research documenting students’ participation in Ethnic Studies courses similar to those offered through the MAS program helped students break the confines constraining their potential and success, in and beyond schooling (Cammarota & Aguilera, 2012; Dee & Penner, 2016).

Expanding Johana’s, Ale’s, and Luis’ contributions, Liliana buttressed learning about different cultural norms and values involved unpacking structural contexts of power in her interview. Figure 29 shows an excerpt from Liliana’s interview on October 10, 2020.

Figure 29 Liliana Figueroa's Interview Excerpt (October 10, 2020)

1 I feel like everyone should be a fully informed of the society that they're living in.
2 And I feel like everyone should be aware of what's going on around them,
3 because no matter what color race, ethnic background.
4 It doesn't matter.
5 This society has a system and it's I would say a corrupt system,
6 but it's just mainly fixed on a racist system. [...]
7 You need to understand what's more privileged for you.
8 I just feel like having that awareness can help you not to make oppression anymore worse
9 or for people.
10 I just feel like it is vital for everyone to know this.

In line 1, Liana explains individuals need a complex, full, and nuanced understanding of our society to understand their current societal position. As she explains in subsequent lines, being fully informed involved an awareness of our racially brutal past and present. Through this line, Liliana indicates that holistic renderings of information are not currently readily available or

accessible. She goes on to stress this information prompts individuals' awareness "of what's going on around them" (Interview, October 8, 2020). In line 3, Liliana notes this information implicates individuals of all colors, races, and ethnic backgrounds. In line 5, Liliana attributes the far-reaching impact of limiting information on the lives of everyone to our "corrupt system" (Interview, October 8, 2020). With this line, she exposes the ways in which the asymmetrical distribution of information is inextricably linked with a system that intentionally confines and restricts access to this knowledge.

In line 6, Liliana makes explicit the racial dynamics she refers to when replacing her previous claim that our society is driven by a "corrupt system" with a "racist system" (Interview, October 8, 2020). In line 7, Liliana explains being fully informed can help individuals recognize the racial privilege they possess currently protected and upheld by this racist system. According to Liliana, disrupting this racist system required interrogating one's racial privilege. In lines 8-9, she explains this reflection on one's own racial privilege fostered an awareness necessary to counter the ways in which one reproduces racial harm. Then, Liliana concludes engaging this process of racial consciousness and reflections as "vital for everyone" (Interview, October 8, 2020).

Similarly noting the racial dynamics embedded in the anti-MAS legislative processes, Elizabeth emphasized learning the histories, epistemologies, and perspectives of marginalized communities equipped students with tools they needed to collectively repair and redress racial harm. Figure 30 shows an excerpt from Elizabeth's interview on October 14, 2020.

Figure 30 Elizabeth Garayzar's Interview Excerpt (October 14, 2020)

1 No matter what their ethnicity to like take these courses
2 because I feel like that it just really expands,
3 it gives other students like a perspective
4 of the struggles students people face in America
5 just not only in the education system,
6 but in general.
7 I think, I think that's important for students
8 to like understand where their peers are coming from
9 and where their peers are being oppressed
10 and how they can help change that.
11 I think it's important for not just ethnic students to learn that

In arguing students of all ethnicities should take MAS courses in line 1, Elizabeth proclaims the knowledge centered in these classes are pertinent to students' regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. She goes on to explain the recovery, reclamation, and centering of nondominant paradigms expanded the lens through which students viewed those around them. To Elizabeth, engaging these paradigms introduced students to the "struggles" their peers from different backgrounds "faced in America" (Interview, October 14, 2020). This expansive lens prompted greater empathy and insight into how "their peers are being oppressed" (Interview, October 14, 2020). Here, Elizabeth urged critical analysis of the systems of oppression shaping the lives of her peers.

In line 10, she explains these interrogations of power structures held the potential for empowering students to resist systems of oppression. In stating "it's important for not just ethnic students to learn that" in line 11, Elizabeth emphasized the responsibility all students' shared in challenging existing oppression (Interview, October 14, 2020). Through this reflection, Elizabeth encourages us to avoid placing the responsibility solely on students of color in creating a just and more humane society. In essence, Elizabeth reflects, neither students of color nor their White

peers are immune from perpetuating racial harm and thus, must work collectively to change our inequitable society.

In sum, Luis, Alejandro, and Johanna's reflections illustrated the anti-MAS legislative processes as depicting the need to increase greater understanding of one another as integral to cultivate relational harmony within our society. Meanwhile, Liliana and Elizabeth, explained our interconnectedness required purposeful and explicit analysis of the systems of oppression currently severing solidarity across racial groups.

Theme 5: "Students' Voices Should be Heard"

In this section, I present the fifth theme from the five main themes that emerged from my analysis of my second research question. Recognizing educational leaders failed to center and protect students' best interests, students emphasized the anti-MAS legislative processes affirmed the dire urgency in incorporating youth in policymaking processes. Aurora, Maria, and Elizabeth's interview excerpts illustrate this theme.

Even though I hadn't considered asking students to reflect on what they noticed when watching the legislative clips, students noted the need for students' voices and perspectives to be heard in policymaking process. In noting this need, students overwhelmingly referenced the racial demographics of the legislative board. They problematized a state board of education and legislative committee that was overwhelmingly White, and the absence of individuals that looked like them. Aurora and Maria's interview excerpts showcase how students problematized the need to incorporate student voices for communities of color to have greater power over determining their educational futures.

Aurora, a twelfth grade Latina student reflected on the underrepresentation of marginalized communities she noted in the clips she watched on the anti-MAS legislative

processes. Figure 31 shows an excerpt from Aurora’s interview on October 11, 2020.

Figure 31 Aurora Ayola Interview Excerpt (October 11, 2020)

- 1 I guess what I was thinking about, like,
- 2 who sat down and wrote this?
- 3 I'm almost positive, it was not Somebody that looked like me
- 4 or somebody that is Mexican or black or Asian or a minority.
- 5 I'm pretty sure it was not one of them.

In line 1, Aurora reflects on the thoughts that came up for her as bill proponents explained their rationale for eliminating the MAS program. In line 2, she raised the following question, “Who sat down and wrote this?” (Interview, October 11, 2020). In this line, Aroura probes further by inquiring about the individuals responsible for advancing a policy banning a program helping historically marginalized students. She raises this question as a hypothetical question given her confidence around the answer. In line 3, she confirms she is “almost positive, it was not somebody that looked like me” (Interview, October 11, 2020). Through this comment, Aurora articulates her belief that a person of color did not author and propose a bill that would harm communities of color. Aurora’s reflections points to the racialized nature of the decision-making processes where majority-White voters and hierarchies govern youth populations which are mostly of color (Ginwright et al., 2006, p. 303). In this line she signals her Latinx identity distinguished her from the White legislators she observed in the clips. In line 4, she goes on to further explain that not only was she confident that someone that looked like her did not write the bill but that a Black, Asian, or “minority” did not author the bill (Interview, October 11, 2020). In line 5, she alludes to the tensions and issues that are created when minority or marginalized communities are actively included in policymaking processes.

Like Aurora, Maria also problematized the power the overwhelmingly White legislative board possessed for shaping the schooling experiences of students of color. Specifically, Maria

explains her rationale for the challenges she perceives in the lack of representation of communities of color in these processes that point to the importance of incorporating students.

Figure 32 shows an excerpt from Maria's interview on October 30, 2020.

Figure 32 Maria Suarez Campos (October 30, 2020)

- 1 **Generally the people, the people who pass laws are mainly white people**
- 2 **and like they they just focus on themselves**
- 3 **around like They don't realize that other people want to learn about their culture**

In line 1 Maria references the sea of White legislators she observed in the video clips I shared when stating, “the people who pass laws are mainly White people” (Interview, October 30, 2020). She goes on to explain why she perceived a predominantly White legislature as an issue when commenting, “and like they they just focus on themselves” in line 2 (Interview, October 30, 2020). She signals how students’ needs are not centered in these policymaking processes, but rather policymakers’ own interests. For example, in line 3, she notes, “they don’t realize that other people want to learn about their culture” (Interview, October 30, 2020). Maria references bill proponents unwavering determination to eliminate the MAS courses even though students value and treasure the opportunity to take courses where they learn about their history and culture. In this line, she references the learning experiences students are unable to access in their mainstream courses, which center Eurocentric perspectives while omitting those of communities of color (Sleeter, 2011). With these statements, she emphasizes that in banning a course that granted students exposure to their culture and history reflected bill proponents “focus on themselves” (Interview, October 30, 2020). Bill proponents’ failure to recognize and acknowledge students’ desire to learn “about their culture” underscored the importance of incorporating students in these legislative processes.

Extending beyond her peers’ acknowledgement of the racial demographics of the

legislative board, Elizabeth further elaborated on the need to involve students in these legislative processes in her interview. Figure 33 shows an excerpt from Elizabeth’s interview on October 14, 2020).

Figure 33 Elizabeth Garayzar Interview Transcript (October 14, 2020)

1 It's affecting us
2 we should have some say in that
3 you know it's affecting these parents should be able to advocate for their children.
4 These children should be able to advocate for themselves, you know,
5 Like our voices should be heard like up to there
6 and they're not being heard
7 [...]
8 So it's a very one-sided argument and its its I think it is important for these
9 But they should reflect students and parents’ opinions
10 and what they like wants because that's like in the end game
11 that to its that's who That's who’s really learning and taking these courses.

In line 1, Elizabeth confidently posits “its’ affecting us” in referencing the policy bill proponents passed that banned students’ access to the MAS curriculum (Interview, October 14, 2020). Here, she describes how students are the ones experiencing and navigating the effects of the policies educational leaders pass. Based on this reality, in line 2, she argues students should be engaged in these processes because they “should have some say” in the policies that affect their everyday learning experiences (Interview, October 14, 2020). In line 3, she also contends parents should also be given an opportunity to influence the policies affecting their children. Elizabeth acknowledges the absence not only of MAS students, but also of parents from the legislative processes.

In lines 4-6, Elizabeth outlines students should have the opportunity to communicate and shape the policies that shape their learning environments given the legislators had differing perspectives and experiences informing their decisions. In essence, Elizabeth emphasizes the educational leaders passing policies that are detrimental to youth of color are not hearing students’ “voices” (Interview, October 14, 2020). In lines 8-9, she goes on to explain the absence

of these voices is producing educational policies based on a “one sided argument” (Interview, October 14, 2020). She critiques the creation of laws that fail to represent “students’ and parents’ opinions” (Interview, October 14, 2020). Through her reflection, Elizabeth adds to her peers’ reflections by problematizing educational leaders’ failure to consider student and parent voices when creating educational policies.

Together, Aurora, Maria and Elizabeth’s reflections highlight the lack of student representation they noted when dissecting the anti-MAS legislative processes. They grappled with the tensions they perceived when an overwhelming White legislative board dictates the educational futures of youth of color. In explaining these tensions, students confirm the salience of ensuring student voices are heard in policymaking processes.

Discussion

Together, these five themes unveil the powerful ways students can “disrupt dominant ideas and expose the bedrock inequities” in educational policymaking processes (Mirra & Garcia, 2017, p. 152). As evident through these five themes, students perceived the anti-MAS legislative processes as demonstrating educational leaders view Latinx students as a threat, fail to center students’ best interests, and are instilling systems of oppression. As well, students overwhelmingly pointed to the salience of learning about non-dominant perspectives and incorporating them in the decision-making processes that affect their learning experiences. When given an opportunity to reflect on educational decision-making processes, students applied their academic and experiential knowledge to deconstruct the legislative efforts to eliminate a program that improved the educational outcomes of students like them.

Applying CDA and CRT to unpack these themes allows us to connect students’ critique of the anti-MAS legislative processes to macro-level critiques of the deceitful liberal orientations

dominating in our society. Reflecting on these theoretical orientations, students were questioning principles of liberalism, neutrality, and democracy that negated the ongoing marginalization of communities of color (Valdes et al., 2002). For example, Lucia's problematization of her ability as a high school student to detect the injustices in the legislative processes, and officials' inability to detect or counter these unjust lawmaking processes, should lead us to question the systems we have in place determining students' educational opportunities. As she alluded, if she as a high school student could recognize the ways educational leader's policy solutions would negative affect Latinx communities, why weren't educational leaders able to do the same? Lucia's and her peer's recognition of the anti-MAS legislation process as a contemporary manifestation of how educational leaders instill systems of oppression urges the disruption of the dominant groups' use of courts as a vehicle to create injustice (Gillborn, 2005). CDA and CRT in this case, connect students' decoding of the anti-MAS legislative processes to the macro-level structures embedded in our society that shows inequity within our society is not an anomaly, but rather upheld and sustained in our society.

On the other hand, a critical interrogation lens allows us to recognize and uplift student's analysis of coercive policymaking processes as indispensable for building and constructing greater pathways for justice within our society (Mirra & Garcia, 2017). Students' critique of legislators' disinvestment in the educational success of students of color, prompts a reexamination of the distance between students' realities and the solutions proposed by educational leaders. For these reasons, students' reflections demonstrate their potential for "interrogating the complexities of such issues informed by democratic values, and their ability to engage in civil and reasoned discussion of civic issues" (Lee et al., 2021). Further, their

reflections indicate transformation entails reconstructing policymaking processes around the perspectives and needs of communities of color.

Students' critical interrogations also highlight the alternate possibilities that are created when students are given space to apply their academic knowledge to analyze public issues. Despite their disillusion around legislators' fierce opposition to the MAS program, which drastically helped students like them, students proposed and offered alternate educational realities that honored their multiply marginalized peers, as well as their White peers. Contrary to bill proponents' claims that students' analysis of systems of oppression would lead them to resent a particular racial group, students' construction of a just world entailed attending and responding to the needs of all students, including those currently privileged. Thus, a civic interrogation lens allows us to interpret students' reflections as indispensable to redesigning policy processes as spaces that consider marginalized students' needs and humanity (Ginwright et al., 2005; Mirra & Garcia, 2017). In sum, students' reflections indicate our current policymaking structures are signaling to students that we don't value or honor their humanity and that our bureaucratic processes will not ensure their needs are met.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this study, I provided a critical race policy analysis to answer the following research questions and sub-question: *1) How were discourses leveraged in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? 1b) What was the role of race in the legislative efforts to eliminate the MAS program? 2) What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?* To answer the first research question and sub-question, I leveraged textually oriented policy discourse analysis frameworks to deconstruct the rhetorical strategies bill proponents used to justify eliminating a program that increased racial equity for Tucson's historically marginalized Latinx student population. Findings revealed bill proponents masked their racially driven policy actions by discursively demonizing the MAS program, reappropriating counterarguments advanced by MAS advocates, and co-opting equity-related words.

Extending these conventional methods, I leveraged youth-centered critical race methodologies to answer my second research questions. The classroom observations, survey, and interviews I collected over my 10-week participation in students' classrooms revealed the powerful ways students can critically interrogate legislative processes, evaluate the ideologies and power dynamics covertly embedded in discursive debates, and propose justice-seeking solutions critical for creating just policymaking processes. Together, these findings problematize current policymaking processes, that in their evasion of race, permit the continued subjugation of communities of color.

The injustices produced by our racialized structures and systems are increasingly transparent amidst the widely visible brutality on black and brown bodies, as well as under the current global pandemic. This study contributes to the field by offering knowledge that aims to

disrupt the ongoing institutionalization of racism through policy. Contrary to the assumptions driving our race-neutral educational policymaking processes, I argue our inability to consider the ways in which racism permeates these processes will continue to foster schooling processes that further subjugate and harm our most vulnerable youth. In the following paragraphs, I consider the scholarly contribution and implications the findings hold for the field of education, before delving into the limitations and future directions of this research.

Scholarly Contribution

While David Gillborn (2005) urges researchers to move beyond the “superficial rhetoric of policies and practices,” the anti-MAS policymaking process illustrates the urgency in understanding and countering the power of rhetoric in normalizing, legitimizing, and entrenching racism (p. 492). For instance, bill proponents successfully eliminated the MAS program in spite of the nationwide community and scholarly efforts to spotlight the harmful material consequences that eliminating these courses would create for Latinx students (Cabrera et al., 2013; Cabrera et al., 2012; Lundholm, 2011). Despite my focus on rhetoric, my research does not aim to disrupt anti-Latinx racism through “suasion” strategies that attempt to change individual ignorance and behavior (i.e., the rhetoric espoused by bill proponents) (Kendi, 2019, p. 208). Instead, my work seeks to contribute understandings of how bill proponents used rhetorical strategies to create the conditions that allowed them to institutionalize injustice and ignore the material ramifications of this racist policy.

These findings also shed insight into how powerholders use these rhetorical weapons to justify the exclusion of marginalized youth and their communities from legislative processes and, even when present, distort and invalidate their counterarguments. Through my critical race policy analysis (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019b) of the anti-MAS legislative processes, I

contribute insights that can inform the development of tools justice-seeking advocates can leverage to detect, expose, and counter the discourses extending racism in power-making processes like the anti-MAS legislative process. The findings from this study can help policymakers challenge policymaking processes restricting students' access to the transformational potential of Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy. Considering many states across the nation are considering the adoption of Ethnic Studies policies at the state-level, these findings can be leveraged in this legislative process to disrupt the institutionalization of harm and injustice across other states.

Beyond expanding the limited research offering a close discourse analysis of policymaking processes, my study contributes a detailed discursive analysis of students' analysis and interrogations of the anti-MAS legislative process. Students' sophisticated and interrogations of the anti-MAS legislative processes underscore the importance of ensuring student voices are centered and considered as states debate the support and expansion of Ethnic Studies at the state level. Their analyses push us to challenge paternalistic perspectives that deem youth lack the maturity, intelligence, and expertise to participate in these processes and instead signal the need to incorporate students in policymaking process, so policies honor all students' humanity and potential.

The findings from this study can inform future examinations of other policies and processes that disproportionately subjugate Latinx students and their multiply marginalized peers. The current attack on using CRT in public K-12 classrooms underscores the importance of the research advanced in this study. Despite the ruling in *Gonzalez v. Douglas 2017* demonstrating the use of CRT inspired scholarship did not promote the overthrow of the US government or hate towards another racial group, Arizona leaders continue to use similar

rhetorical tactics to pass restrictive legislations. For example, Governor Doug Ducey recently passed HB 2906 to prevent the teaching of critical race theory in public schools and other government entities (*Governor Ducey, Legislature Take Strong Action To Stop Critical Race Theory, 2021*). The principles advanced by critical race theory influenced the pedagogy used in MAS courses. CRT is often used to foster marginalized students' critical thinking skills, learning, and empowerment (Acosta, 2014).

Similar to the discourses analyzed as part of this dissertation, Doug explained his rationale using language that constructed CRT literature as ostensibly threatening American notions of equality and freedom. He justified the need to restrict the use of CRT arguing, "I am not going to waste public dollars on lessons that imply the superiority of any race and hinder free speech. House Bill 2906 goes a long way towards protecting Arizonans against divisive and regressive lessons" (*Governor Ducey, Legislature Take Strong Action To Stop Critical Race Theory, 2021*). The successful passage of this bill, points to the dire urgency in combatting the cooption of equity-oriented language using ostensibly race neutral language as a viable tool to pass racist legislations. Powerholders continue to leverage our unwillingness to consider race as the mask, or veil, through which they can continue to retract the opportunities available to students and communities of color. Leaders continue to exert their power and influence in legislative courts to frame public understandings to their advantage. Therefore, this study aims to inform meaningful policymaking processes and political actions that acknowledge we cannot wait until after discriminatory policies are implemented to address racial injustice.

The findings from an analysis of the legislative process that banned the MAS program further indicates race-neutral policy processes are ineffective in fulfilling their promise. Creating a just and humane education for students of color requires embracing and taking an explicit stance

against racism in policymaking processes. To achieve this goal, we must construct policymaking processes that heed to Kendi's (2019) call for supporting the production of antiracist policies that consciously and deliberately seek to "produce and sustain racial equity," rather than inequity, between groups (p. 18). A deeper understanding of these strategies can equip legislators and educational leaders with the tools to disrupt policymaking processes that seek to "tweak rather than transform" our institutional and ideological structures and preserve the status quo rather than support the liberation efforts of our Latinx, Black, Indigenous and their communities (Conchas et al., 2019, p. 15).

Implications

In this section, I outline the research implications that emerged from this study. The bullets below outline these implications.

- Position students as experts in creating just educational structures and systems.
- Minimize the overvaluing of research at the expense of the previously voiced needs and perspectives of marginalized communities.
- Reconstruct policymaking processes around students' interrogations of policy.

My findings affirm the civic reasoning and interrogation skills students possess to actively engage and analyze policies and their development. Seeing students as co-conspirators in policy research and decision-making processes can help us contribute knowledge steeped in the experiences and needs of our most vulnerable and underserved populations. Youth are an invaluable and indispensable to justice-seeking policy processes for the following reasons. First, their youth rather than serving as a weakness, serves as a strength. Their youth means students' have had less time being subjugated to systems of oppression that have sought to confine, restrict, and shape their understandings of injustices in the world. Whereas we as researchers,

have been trained to accept, normalize, and at times reproduce systems of oppression. Consequently, students offered their unapologetic and fearless critique and unwillingness to accept or normalize the moments of injustices they detected in the anti-MAS legislative processes.

Second, incorporating students in critical policy research can work towards minimizing the need for research to validate, “or serve as translators” on the ways of knowing, wealth, and funds of knowledge communities of color possess (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2009; Yosso *, 2005). What if we could live in a world where an external research study or researcher did not have to validate marginalized students’ and community’s needs? For example, students in their dissection of the anti-MAS legislated, pointed to many of the patterns that I unveiled in my document analysis of the legislative processes. Many of the injustices they noted or highlighted have also been issues that other youth have arduously been advocating and bringing to the limelight for centuries. Yet, we continue to neglect, invalidate, and ignore their valuable contributions when it’s not part of a research study or brief. Thus, I push us to consider, what if instead of waiting years for a research report to be released we engaged, listened, and valued what youth and their communities have been trying to tell us for years? Listening to the needs of youth and their communities would not eliminate the need for research, given that it provides us deeper understanding of the needs of youth and their learning experiences. Rather, acknowledging, and valuing youths’ voiced needs would allow us to address injustices proactively and immediately, rather than waiting years for research to validate what they are saying and experiencing.

Policymakers and educational leaders interested in leveraging students’ powerful interrogations of legislative processes should reconsider or recreating the forms in which

educational policy are created. This can involve creating a student committee with student representatives representing the racial demographics of each school district in local board meetings and policy processes. To this end, students should also have an opportunity to vote in these educational processes. Recreating these processes involves intentionally and purposefully embedding students' insights, needs, and lived experiences in the educational policies forming our schools.

Limitations

I acknowledge the following limitations of my work with regards to my research. First, given the focus of my dissertation research on the legislative discourses that led to the elimination of the MAS program, I mainly presented students clips that showcased bill proponents' arguments against the course. Thus, students did not have an opportunity to reflect on the arguments (although much fewer) in support of the course presented during the legislative hearings. I had limited time with students, which constrained the number of legislative clips I could share with students. In the minimal time I had with students, I tried to center the legislative clips that allowed students to hear the evidence bill proponents presented against the MAS program in the multiple versions of the bill. Based on my emphasis on bill proponents' discourses and arguments, students' critical interrogations do not reflect students' perceptions of other stakeholders' legislative actions and proposed solutions. For this reason, while my findings allow us to consider how students perceive the anti-MAS legislative attempts, my findings are not representative of the discourses used by all bill supporters or opponents. However, it is important to note that the first phase of my analysis revealed bill proponents overwhelmingly used similar language and discourses.

Another limitation of my work is that the limited time I had to show the video clips limited the ways in which I could have students reflect on the complexity of the legislative processes. For example, most students were disturbed by the lack of people that looked like them advocating in support of the bill. Although bill opponents were largely silenced and excluded in these processes, students didn't have an opportunity to reflect on the clips where MAS advocates shared their counterarguments. Further, students also did not have an opportunity to reflect on the videos where Latinx individuals advocated in favor of the elimination of the MAS program. For this reason, future research can further delve into students' reflections around how people of color may be countering or protecting systems of injustice.

Future Directions

Despite critiques of decision-making processes that disproportionately affect students of color, policy research often contributes knowledge or insights about policies without consideration or input from the very communities they are harming (Ginwright et al., 2006). Thus, reproducing the injustices being critiqued in the first place. Prompting antiracist policy movement requires recognizing the forms in which existing policy research reproduces these unequal power dynamics by omitting the insights, voices, and experiences of marginalized youth and their communities in our analysis. Thus, in this section I delineate the methodological inquiries I state below that the field can consider around how to approach this work for scholars interested in carrying out similar research or asking similar questions.

- What are other models for centering student voices in textually oriented analysis of educational policy processes?
- What are the different technological tools that can be used to engage students in analysis of legislative processes?

- What are the guidelines researchers should consider when leveraging these different tools to protect the validity and reliability of the study?
- What other interview structures and questions can be used to actively engage students?

In carrying out this dissertation research, I often found myself navigating an underdeveloped methodological approach. I sought to bridge methodological approaches that are rarely merged in critical policy research. Often, textually oriented policy analysis only involves document analysis and fails to incorporate students' insights in the process (Hyatt, 2013). Likewise, policy research that centers the voices and experiences of students of color is often carried out independent of textually oriented legislative analyses (Quijada Cerecer et al., 2013). For this reason, beyond providing fruitful knowledge around the discourses leveraged in policymaking processes, my research also prompts the need for further research that seeks to incorporate students' insights and contributions in analysis of the policies that affect their everyday realities. Finally, additional guidance around possible forms of merging or placing textually oriented policy analysis in conversation with student input and reflections could minimize the challenges of carrying out policy research that centers student voices.

Specifically, the field would benefit from additional consideration and development of methodological guides that outline how to involve students in policy analysis. For example, I presented publicly available legislative video clips to students. In carrying out this approach, I also questioned whether the clips I presented were the most appropriate videos that would allow me to answer my research questions. For example, my initial interview processes with students did not involve the use of legislative video clips. However, as I began collecting data for my first research question and began participating in students' class, I began seeing students' reflections

on the legislative hearing videos themselves as a viable way to have them see this not as such as distant, disassociated process. I also saw this multimodal interview process as a way to more actively engage students in the interview, given the alienation and disengagement students were showing during their virtual instruction.

Scholarship can outline the questions or areas researchers should consider when choosing the best parts of a video that do not violate the validity of a study. I opted to show students legislative clips of the hearings rather than just talking about them to make this experience more engaging. These additional methodological guides may contribute additional formats or platforms researchers can leverage to engage students in these bureaucratic processes and gather their perspectives. Along similar lines, additional research can outline recommended guidelines researchers can reference around the interview structure and the types of questions that are used to gather students' perceptions on policymaking processes.

Considering students of color have historically been excluded from these processes, these additional frames and maps can increase the involvement of youth in spaces that have traditionally marginalized and silenced them. Countering racist policymaking processes requires upending the power dynamics currently upheld in policy related processes restricting students' and their families' opportunities to question and interrogate existing policy processes.

Concluding Thoughts

In locating the “roots of problems in power and policies” rather than in marginalized communities my research aims to upend current power imbalances creating, extending and upholding injustice in our educational systems (Kendi, 2019, p. 9). As my findings suggest, the rearticulation discursive strategies bill proponents leveraged in the anti-MAS program served as a key mechanism that enabled bill proponents to eliminate courses that increased equity among

racial groups. In centering race and racism in policy analyses, we can further unpack the complex and deceptive policy strategies that create, extend, and uphold injustice that are currently hidden behinds illusions of racially neutral policymaking processes. Further research into these discourses is necessary for developing policy frameworks and tools that can enable the proactive detection, naming, and countering of racist policies prior to their implementation.

Nonetheless, while removing existing racist policies is essential, it is not sufficient. As my research hopes to advance, antiracist policy work requires thwarting racist policies before they are woven into our systems and structures. Based on this recognition, we must continue to reflect on Audre Lorde's (1984) warning that the "master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p.112). Policy is undeniably a deleterious weapon created and used by powerholders to uphold and protect their power. Thus, we must also examine the limitations of seeing policy—the master's weapon—as a viable tool to create the meaningful, far-reaching transformation our Latinx, Black, Indigenous, and other multiple marginalized communities need (Lorde, 1984). Recognizing these constraints, I hope to prompt considerations of conventional policy research as backdrop work that strives to center and amplify the many ways marginalized communities are courageously resisting and deconstructing oppressive structures.

Appendix

Appendix A

ARIZONA PARENT PERMISSION FORM

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child has been invited to participate in a study that will help the field better understand how educational policies can attend to the needs and experiences of students. The study will be conducted by a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Davis who is a certified education policy specialist. The researcher is working under the direction of professors in the department of Education that are experts in educational policy and working with the population of students that will be asked to participate in the study. Your child's participation in this study will enable us to inform policymaking efforts nationwide that can improve the educational experiences for your student and others. The results gathered from this research will be kept confidential, and reports produced from these findings will not include any student or school names.

This project has been approved by the [REDACTED] and the principal, [REDACTED]. If you are willing to have your child participate in this study, please sign on the line below and return the form to your child's teacher. Your cooperation in this important research will be very much appreciated. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to email me at ambhernandez@ucdavis.edu.

Sincerely,

Ambar Hernandez Negrete
Doctoral Candidate
University of California, Davis

If my child volunteers to participate, I give my consent for the following:

1. for my child to respond to a short-semi structured survey regarding their perceptions of two Ethnic Studies policies.
2. for my child to participate in an interview where they will be asked questions regarding their perceptions on two Ethnic Studies policies.

Signature _____

Child's name _____

Date _____

Appendix B

Policy Overview for Students (Classroom Activity Protocol)

Objectives & Outcomes:

- a. Through the following class activity, students will become familiar with the Arizona House Bill 2281 (HB 2281) and the California Assembly Bill 2016 (CA AB 2016).
- b. By the end of the activity, students will acquire an understanding of Ethnic Studies, the legislative processes that led to the adoption of the two bills (i.e., HB 2281 and CA AB 2016), the final adopted legislative text, and the main arguments in support and against each of these bills.
- c. The objective of this classroom activity is to ensure that the students I survey, interview, or participate in a focus group, are familiar with these two Ethnic Studies policies before asking them questions related to their perceptions of these bills.

Materials Needed:

- a. Semi-structured survey that will be distributed to students.
- b. Student copies of the HB 2281 and the CA AB 2016 legislative text.
- c. Legislative testimony covering the arguments in support and against the HB 2281 and the CA AB 2016.

Procedure & Activities:

- a. Students will receive a short introduction to Ethnic Studies in the K-12 setting. In this activity, through students will receive a definition of Ethnic Studies and a brief review of the research on the impact of Ethnic Studies. Then, I will present students an overview of the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson, Arizona. Afterwards, I will cover a brief history of Ethnic Studies in California.
- b. Then, I will present the different legislative attempts to adopt an Ethnic Studies policies. In introducing the HB 2281, students will be exposed to the different legislative attempts to eliminate Ethnic Studies, such as the SB 1108 (2008) and SB 1069 (2009). In introducing the CA AB 2016, students will be exposed to the different attempts to pass an Ethnic Studies policy in California.
- c. After covering the initial legislative attempts, I will then walk students through the final adopted legislative text of the HB 2281 and the CA AB 2016. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions about any portion of the text/policies that they may not understand throughout the presentation.
- d. Then, I will show students short clips of the legislative hearings that cover the arguments in support and against the HB 2281 and the CA AB 2016.
- e. After concluding the presentation, students will receive the option to answer a few questions either through a survey, interview, or focus group.

Appendix C

ARIZONA SURVEY PROTOCOL

Demographic Questions:

The information you provide will help me understand the demographics of the survey respondents

- What is your racial/ethnic background? Check all that apply.
- What is your gender?
- Do either of your parents have a college degree from the US?

Ethnic Studies Related Policy Questions:

- Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. (Note: these statements are not connected to one another):
 - Students of color should have the option to take an Ethnic Studies course
 - All students should be required to take an Ethnic Studies course
 - Ethnic Studies courses should count as a high school graduation requirement
- Why do you think students of color should have the option to take an Ethnic Studies course?
- Why do you think students of color should not have the option to take an Ethnic Studies course?

HB 2281 Related Policy Questions:

- Please click on the parts of the legislative text that stand out to you. (You may click on multiple parts).
 - Why did the areas you selected from the Arizona House Bill 2281 policy stand out to you?
 - What would you change, remove, or add to the Arizona House Bill 2281 policy? (Please refer to the image above)
- What mood reflects your feelings around the elimination of MAS courses through the passage of the Arizona House Bill 2281?
- Why do you think Arizona sought to eliminate the MAS courses by passing the Arizona House Bill 2281?

Cross-context Ethnic Studies Related Policy Questions:

The following questions are based on the encouraged adoption of Ethnic Studies courses across high school schools in California through the passage of the California Assembly Bill 2016 (CA AB 2016).

- Please click on the parts of the legislative text that stand out to you. (Note: You may click on multiple parts).
- Why did the areas you selected from the California Assembly Bill 2016 policy stand out to you?
- Is there something you would change, remove, or add from the California Assembly Bill 2016 policy? (Please refer to the image above).
- What mood reflects your feelings toward California's encouragement for all public high schools to offer Ethnic Studies through the Assembly Bill 2016?

- Why do you think California encouraged the adoption of Ethnic Studies courses in all high school through the passage of the California Assembly Bill 2016?
- Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
 - A state-level policy that encourages Ethnic Studies for students of color is necessary
 - A state-level policy that can lead to the banning of Ethnic Studies for students of color is necessary
- Please explain why a state level policy that encourages Ethnic Studies is necessary at the state level.
- Please explain why a state level policy that can lead to the banning of Ethnic Studies is necessary at the state level.
- Please consider the following scenario: You have the opportunity to create and pass an Ethnic Studies related policy that would apply to the entire state of Arizona. What type of Ethnic Studies policy would you create?

Concluding Questions:

- Do you have any questions for me?
- Please enter your contact information if you would like to be entered in a raffle for a \$50 gift card. No information that would permit the identification of individual respondents' answers will be released in any publication. The contact information will only be used to ensure you receive the gift card if you win the raffle.

Appendix D
ARIZONA SEMI-STRUCTURED
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

RESEARCH QUESTION: What do the legislative discourses and efforts to eliminate the MAS program represent for historically marginalized students of color?

Introductory Questions:

- Do you have any questions for me?
- What is your understanding of the HB 2281?
- Do you believe it is important for students not only to learn about their culture, but the different types of oppression different ethnic/studies groups experience?
 - What has learning about the different forms of oppression meant for you?

Bill Version Two (SB 1069) Questions:

Show video clip from SB 1069 Senate Judiciary Committee (05:20-09:00) in sections to allow students to share their insights:

- What are your thoughts, reactions, feelings to the language used by this individual?
- What are your thoughts around the language used when Tom Horne says this program has been doing the opposite of the function of public schooling?
- What are your thoughts, reactions, feelings around the evidence that he presented?
- What are the thoughts, reactions, or feelings that come up for you while watching this clip?
- As you heard, Tom Horne mentioned this bill would ensure students could access equal educational opportunities? What are your thoughts around this? Do you feel this is the case?
- What are your thoughts, reactions, or feelings come up for you based on the language used during this this clip?

Bill Version Three (HB 2281) Questions:

Show video clip from HB 2281 House Education Committee (01:29:15-1:31:30) in sections to allow students to share their insights:

- What are your thoughts, reactions, or feelings to the language by this individual?
- What are your thoughts, reactions, or feelings about what he says when referencing student, Mariah Harvey's testimony?
- What are your thoughts, reactions, or feelings around the evidence that he presented?

Show video clip from HB 2281 House Education Committee (01:36:00-1:37:00) in sections to allow students to share their insights.

- What are your thoughts, reactions, feelings to the language by this individual?
- What are your thoughts around the evidence that he presented?

Concluding Question:

Do you have any questions for me or any final comments that you want to share?

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