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Los Angeles

"Ethnic Studies Is About Humanizing Us": Teachers of Color Learning, Developing, and Engaging Ethnic Studies Pedagogy

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Eduardo López

2023

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2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

"Ethnic Studies Is About Humanizing Us": Teachers of Color Learning, Developing, and Engaging Ethnic Studies Pedagogy

by

Eduardo López

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor John S. Rogers, Chair

This dissertation explores how four critical teachers of color learn and develop through dialogue and reflection about their own educational and life histories as well as their work in ethnic studies classrooms. As K–12 schools in states like California integrate ethnic studies into their curricula, educators are looking to established ethnic studies programs and experienced ethnic studies teachers as models. The existing literature on K–12 ethnic studies primarily focuses on students' educational experiences, though it offers limited examinations of the experiences of ethnic studies educators. This dissertation addresses this gap by examining the lives, experiences, and insights of four critical teachers of color who teach a ninth-grade ethnic studies program at an East Los Angeles high school. Through individual and focus group interviews, this study explores how these four teachers learned and developed their ethnic studies teaching practice. In particular, this study explores (1) the individual life and educational trajectories of these educators; (2) the ways in which they drew upon individual and shared

experiences as a pedagogy-focused collective; and (3) the ways that these educators envision ethnic studies as an inclusive, healing-centered, and restorative justice teaching practice. The study yields two overarching understandings. First, ethnic studies teacher development is a process of becoming—a process that is recursive and reflexive as educators link their own lives with their praxis. Second, the professional learning that these educators engage in is instrumental to their praxis, to the extent that critical professional development (CPD) with an ethnic studies ethos is humanizing and transformative. This dissertation argues that this type of ethnic studies-centered CPD space offers three pedagogical interventions into mainstream K–12 professional development: first, CPD holds space for reflection, vulnerability, and collaboration that cultivate a *humanizing* pedagogy; second, it cultivates teaching practices that center healing and restorative justice; and third, it encourages a counter-storytelling practice that helps educators reimagine pedagogical possibilities. In mapping out these findings, this study offers tangible ways for educators to build community, share knowledge, and heal together in the pursuit of empowering and transforming both themselves and their students.

The dissertation of Eduardo López is approved.

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2023

Dedication

To the teachers of color dedicated to this labor of love. May your compassion, understanding, and hope continue to drive your commitment to empowering students.

Para mi mamá y papá, siempre serán mi motivación para seguir adelante.

Para mi hijo Sebastián, que tu naturaleza inquisitiva y tu espíritu libre sean ancla y energía mientras navegas este mundo. Eres amado por muchos.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Dedication v

Table of Contents vi

List of Figures vii

Acknowledgements viii

Vita xi

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Frameworks 16

Chapter 3: Methodology 49

Chapter 4: When Teaching Ethnic Studies, Teacher Identity Matters 70

Chapter 5: Critical Professional Development With An Ethnic Studies Ethos 117

Chapter 6: Conclusion 164

Appendices 191

- Appendix A: First Interview Protocol 191
- Appendix B: Second Interview Protocol 193
- Appendix C: Final Interview Protocol 196
- Appendix D: First Focus Group Protocol 200
- Appendix E: Second Focus Group Protocol 202
- Appendix F: Third Focus Group Protocol 206
- Appendix G: Tuning Protocol for Second and Third Focus Groups 210
- Appendix H: Final Focus Group Protocol 212

References 216

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Visualizing the theoretical frameworks in this dissertation 17

Acknowledgements

None of this would have been possible without my committee. I want to begin by thanking my advisor, Dr. John Rogers. This journey really began back in 2009 with the Council of Youth Researchers. Your mentorship throughout the years and, more recently, these last six years helped get me to this point. My deepest gratitude for the opportunities and experiences you provided me with from the Declaration Project, the Community Schools course at the UCLA Labor Center, and the countless in-person and virtual meetings that helped expand my thinking on this dissertation. Thank you for all the feedback and suggestions throughout this process. More importantly, thank you for your patience, understanding, and friendship. Dr. Danny Solórzano, thank you for telling me as an undergraduate that I should highly consider a career in education. Your words set me on a path that has been transformative and meaningful beyond words. Being an educator has been one of the highlights of my life. Your work continues to challenge, agitate, and inspire me. Dr. Lorena Guillen, I appreciate the trips we took to schools throughout Los Angeles to discuss and learn about place, community, and the history of those sites. I admire your demeanor and approach to teaching and conducting research. The research design of this dissertation was strengthened because of you. Dr. Miguel Zavala, you are the living embodiment of an ethnic studies scholar. Our conversations and your scholarly work informed my dissertation in powerful ways. I look forward to working together to impact K–12 schools in Los Angeles.

To the UCLA community. Emma Hipolito and Darlene Lee, your leadership and humble approach to working with emerging educators is a model for any teacher education program. Thank you for letting me be a small part of this. To my TEP alumni family: Ben, Justin, Letty, Ashley, Emma, Mark, Antero, Maribel, Romik, and Jacky. Each one of you continues to shape

young lives in powerful ways. To my doctoral cohort—Sophia, Heather, Simmone, Ife, Lindsey, and Miguel (salí con un hermano)—thank you for the camaraderie, laughs, deep conversations, and meals we shared. Mariana, Sara, and JC—it was refreshing to be at UCLA with you, considering we all shared similar experiences of having spent years in the classroom, organizing in the community, and then deciding to pursue our PhDs. Going through this program together with all of you was a highlight. To the RAC families—Danny's RAC was an incredible space that brought generations of incredible folks together which motivated and challenged me to think of my dissertation in critical ways I had not considered. Profe David Garcia's RAC—Mariana, Sid, Bryant, Claudia, Gabriela, Marisol, and Cindy—the small intimate setting of this particular RAC allowed me to be vulnerable and my genuine self unlike other spaces at UCLA where I felt intimidated or did not feel like my opinion mattered. Profe Garcia, muchísimas gracias por todo. I learned a lot from you and gained an education historian lens that I plan to apply to future projects. To the UCLA crew past and present—Dr. Ernest Morrell, Maribel, Nicole, Dart (SJLI is a blessing to this world), Mark, Elexia, Oscar, Antonio (rest in power), Sharim, Josephine, Steph, Caro, and Ed—your work has influenced and impacted this study in countless ways.

To my former colleagues, students, and the community that surrounds "East Los High." We have been through a lot—the blood, sweat, and tears of joy we shared throughout the years I will cherish forever. To my participants, I hope this dissertation captures and reflects a fraction of the amazing individual and collective work you do around ethnic studies. Your work continues to inspire me.

To my familia. There are too many family members to name, pero mil gracias a toda mi famila en Mexico y aqui en los Estados Unidos por su apoyo, buenas vibras, y buenos deseos durante estos años. To my hometown homies, Luis, Edgar, Danny, and their families. We started

from the bottom, now we’re here. And to my love, Cam. Thank you for your patience and encouragement especially at times when I thought I would not get this done.

Lastly, I want to thank my ancestors, abuelos y abuelas, madre y padre, whose existence made my existence possible. Espero haberles hecho sentir orgullosos de mi.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On a July morning in 2014, as I drove to the high school I had been teaching at for the previous nine years, I remember feeling a sudden surge of adrenaline as if I were heading to campus for my first day of teaching. The excitement was in anticipation of a meeting with our newly hired principal about the possibility of teaching an ethnic studies course for the upcoming academic year. The Los Angeles Unified School Board had recently passed a resolution making ethnic studies a graduation requirement across the district. When my two colleagues and I met with our new principal, we shared that, for years, we had pushed and pleaded to increase offerings in Mexican/Mexican American studies. After sharing our experiences, we discussed the ethnic studies movement nationwide, the recent ethnic studies resolution, and the possibility of offering this course on campus. Rather than present new obstacles, our new principal told us we had his full administrative support to create an ethnic studies course for all of our incoming ninth-grade students. Upon hearing this news, I bolted out of my seat and celebrated by hugging and giving high fives to my colleagues. The struggle to create an ethnic studies program for all ninth-grade students was years in the making and now it finally had come to fruition.

As I walked out of that meeting, two thoughts instantly surfaced in my mind. First, I began to reflect on my own K–12 schooling. Although I had excellent teachers who helped develop my academic skills, I was never asked in school to share about my home life or had the opportunity to learn about my culture as a person of Mexican descent. With the exception of Mr. Limon, my high school science teacher who spoke about the Chicano/a movement in class, and who I still keep in touch with, there really was no teacher who asked students to share in a meaningful way our personal lives or who spoke about race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class,

and oppression. Reflecting on this experience as a seasoned educator, I wish I had engaged all of these topics and issues in my own K–12 experience.

Second, upon hearing that we would be teaching ethnic studies to all ninth-grade students, I felt both a sense of relief and excitement. For many years, I had integrated critical issues/topics into my history courses while simultaneously dealing with the pressure from administrators to have students prepare for yearly state exams. This subversive approach to teaching had finally paid off. I was now granted permission to teach ethnic studies, to freely engage in critical frameworks and discussions that validated my professional and personal belief in racial and social justice. I was going to collaborate with two of my colleagues to create a humanizing curriculum centered on our students' lived experiences. Now came the next phase of the journey, the development of an ethnic studies curricula for our predominantly Latinx[1] community.

***

My experience illustrates a larger narrative—the struggle and movement of teachers, students, and communities of color fighting for ethnic studies in public education. Currently, for reasons I discuss later in the chapter, ethnic studies is rapidly growing in popularity across the nation. As ethnic studies becomes part of the standard curriculum in K–12 schools in California, many educators will be looking for exemplary ethnic studies programs and seeking to learn from educators who have had experience teaching this content. This dissertation examines the school mentioned in the vignette located in East Los Angeles, California—East Los Angeles High

[1] I use this term to refer to a person of Latin American origin or descent and to challenge gender binaries with a gender-netural or nonbinary alternative to Latino or Latina (Cuautin, Zavala, Sleeter, & Au, 2019).

School (also abbreviated as "East Los High"), a pseudonym—to research four teachers of color[2] (1 English, 3 Social Studies) who teach the school's ethnic studies program. Specifically, this study examines what it means for teachers of color to individually and collectively learn, develop, and take action in powerful ways via an ethnic studies framework.

Additionally, I conducted this study at a distinct historical moment. The next section contextualizes the state of public education in 2020 and the challenges facing schools during two pandemics which make a compelling case for ethnic studies in public schools.

The State of Public Education[3]

As I began this study in June 2020, the world was whirling from the catastrophic coronavirus pandemic. In particular, public schools in the United States of America (U.S.) were attempting to serve millions of youth at home. Some of the major concerns consisted of how to continue feeding students who rely on school food for nutrition and how to provide the technology required to engage in "remote" or "distance" learning (Blume, 2020). Unfortunately, these concerns only amplified challenges facing low-income and historically marginalized communities. For underserved communities, the pandemic highlighted underlying problems long in existence: job security, housing, financial hardships, and uninsured or underinsured medical care issues (Vesoulis, 2020).

Moreover, in the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic and lack of leadership from the White House, the country erupted and the Black Lives Matter movement reignited after the barbaric and senseless deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Ahmaud

[2] I use the term "teachers of color" to reference peoples of African, Asian, indigenous, Latinx, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander descent. I also acknowledge "teachers of color" is a broad category with a range of races, ethnicities, ideological commitments, and orientations (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016).
[3] I wrote the first draft of this section ("The State of Public Education") in June 2020, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic-related shutdowns, so the commentary in this section reflects that particular historical moment.

Arbery. While highlighted in the media, these are not the only names of African Americans to be victims of police violence in this nation's history. In response, tens of thousands took to the streets to protest against racism, anti-Blackness, police brutality, and economic and educational inequality (Koran & Rao, 2020). The two concurrent pandemics revealed fault lines exposing the long history of injustice and inequality in the U.S.

As schools moved toward the 2020–2021 academic school year, I wondered how educators planned to support students' needs when various forms of anger and distress were impacting their lives? As issues of race, racism, economic oppression, police brutality, access to food and technology, to name a few, were pushed to the fore, schools and educators were asked to integrate practices and professional development around equity. Educators were challenged to educate themselves better about racism in the U.S. and to actively change institutional policies rooted in white supremacy and privilege. Unfortunately, even within a social and political context where schools are pushed to attend to issues of inequities and injustices, there is a chance this will be done very poorly—either because there is not meaningful commitment or due to a lack of knowledge and expertise. The type of teaching needed to address these issues requires a great deal of skill and understanding to engage critical issues in a powerful way. One transformative approach schools and teachers can adopt (and,in some cases, already have endorsed) is an ethnic studies philosophical and pedagogical framework. While this study was not conceived as a response to the current state of public education, I believe the demands, challenges, and opportunities brought by it reinforce the importance of ethnic studies. Grounded in the struggles of historically marginalized communities and anti-racist practices, ethnic studies offers schools and educators the tools to transform and address inequities within schools and beyond.

The following abridged section looks at the historical lineage of ethnic studies as a movement and highlights the influence it continues to have in today's K–12 ethnic studies movement.

Ethnic Studies in Higher Education

The origins of ethnic studies curriculum and programs has a long history in the U.S. but is often traced to the San Francisco (S.F.) Bay area of the 1960s. At the time, university and K–12 students, parents, teachers, and community members were advocating for educational institutions to shift from mainstream Euro-American curriculum to include histories of diverse communities, curricula, and paradigms focused on issues of race, power, culture, and identity (Acuña, 1996; Woo, 1989). The 1960s movement was part of the larger civil rights, anti-war, and liberation movements in the U.S. and seen throughout the Third World—that was guided by a strong sense of decolonization and self-determination (Umemoto, 1989). One of the demands of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) (a coalition of African American, Asian American, Chicana/o, and Native American students in the S.F. Bay area), in their quest to institutionalize ethnic studies at the university level, was to amplify anti-racist, anti-imperialist social movement ideals to counter Euro-American perspectives and inaccuracies in mainstream curriculum with the aim for a more inclusive, democratic, relevant, and meaningful schooling experience for youth of color (de los Ríos, 2019; Hu-DeHart, 2004, Rangel, 2007). From the beginning, as part of a liberatory education, ethnic studies sought to center and affirm students' identities while also working towards human liberation against all forms of oppression (Sleeter, 2011). In 1968, after months of organizing, protesting, and strikes, the TWLF forced San Francisco State University (SFSU) to create the first formal ethnic studies courses in the nation (Umemoto, 1989).

Ethnic Studies in K–12 Schools

The successful implementation of ethnic studies at SFSU and TWLF's alternate vision of schooling for liberation inspired and influenced many people, becoming a movement that spread throughout other university campuses in California and the nation (Sleeter, 2011). However, ethnic studies programs during this time did not, for the most part, make their way into K–12 schools. In the early 1970s, there was a growing number of books published for K–12 classrooms that could be viewed as ethnic studies books. With a few exceptions like the 1970s African centered schools or the African American and Mexican American elective courses offered in select high schools, ethnic studies courses remained predominantly in higher education (Sleeter et al., 2019). Instead, throughout the 1970s and 1980s the multicultural education movement emerged and grew in K–12 schools as a response to persistent, white-dominated curricula, white educator's deficit/racist perceptions of students of color which resulted in more textbook representation of people of color, especially African Americans, influencing multicultural education school policies (Sleeter et al., 2019). Until recently in the U.S., a major difference between ethnic studies and multicultural education was that one was found mainly in higher education while the other was at the K–12 level. This is no longer the case, as ethnic studies in the K–12 context has become a movement that goes beyond curriculum and pedagogy with the intent to transform schools (Sleeter et al., 2019). Eventually, the momentum for multicultural education, which still exists in schools today, slowed down as elective courses on African American and/or minority studies began to disappear in the 1990s due to schools being pressed to align curricula with state standards (Sleeter et al., 2019; Yang, 2000). Even so, the legacy of the TWLF for self-determination which believed students of color could shape the course of history, contribute to a new consciousness, and determine their own future by

redefining education and American society (Umemoto, 1989), lives on in the more recent K–12 ethnic studies public school programs.

The best-known K–12 ethnic studies programs is the Mexican American/Raza Studies (MARS) program established in 1998 in Tucson, Arizona, and the Pin@y Educational Partnership (PEP) program in 2001 in San Francisco, California (Sleeter et al., 2019). Both programs gained recognition for their academic curriculum that improved student learning outcomes through a culturally relevant lens centered on students lived experiences and around concepts such as access, relevance, and community (Gonzalez et al., 2009; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2012; Cabrera et al., 2014). Although it was not the first ethnic studies program, MARS was the first district-wide ethnic studies program in the nation while PEP pushed to institutionalize ethnic studies in San Francisco Unified Schools, eventually succeeding in 2010, and created an exemplary teacher preparation model for higher education credential programs to emulate (Cuauhtin et al., 2019; Curammeng & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2017). These successes are not without controversy. The backlash from conservatives, particularly, in Arizona led to the banning of MARS in 2010. MARS was accused of promoting resentment toward a race or class of people and choosing solidarity over treating people as individuals (Cabrera et al., 2014). The banning of ethnic studies in Arizona ignited a movement. Across the nation, especially in California, students, parents, teachers, and communities of color pressured schools to offer ethnic studies courses for its ability to positively transform lives through a meaningful curriculum that engages in issues of racial, social, educational inequalities, to name a few (Buenavista, 2016).

From the Margins to the Center

As ethnic studies gains momentum under the current social and political climate and expands to more districts/schools nationwide, we are now at a moment when school systems are

looking to make ethnic studies a standard part of the curriculum, as opposed to an occasional elective. Once this goal is established, a plan will be needed to develop who will teach these classes. This raises many important questions: Are all teachers prepared to teach ethnic studies? If not, what kind of knowledge or training do teachers need so that they are prepared to teach ethnic studies? While the question of who is prepared to teach ethnic studies or what are the competencies required to do so successfully, are big multidimensional questions (which my study does not intend to answer), my dissertation will focus on researching current teacher learning and development in an ethnic studies K–12 school. More specifically, I am interested in teachers of color who teach ethnic studies for the unique experiences, perspectives, and commitments they bring into the classroom which enrich the way ethnic studies is taught—and as a result enrich student learning. The next section looks at the context of teachers of color nationally in public education and locally in Los Angeles, California, where my study takes place.

Teachers of Color in the U.S.: Dominant Cultural Framework & Structural Inequities in Schools

According to Alim & Paris (2017), in the U.S. context for communities of color living out "the legacies of genocide, land theft, enslavement, and various forms of colonialism," the purpose of state-sanctioned schools has been "largely assimilationist and often times [aims to forward] a violent White imperial project" (p. 1). The intended outcome of these discriminatory policies and beliefs has resulted in students and families being asked to lose or deny their histories, languages, and cultures in order to succeed in school. Considering this educational reality, public schools should never be thought of as "neutral" spaces or having ever existed in a vacuum devoid of hegemonic societal influences. Rather, they have been designed and, for the

most part continue to be designed (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), to reflect and perpetuate White supremacy by advancing particular cultural and linguistic ideals and narratives of power (Picower & Kohli, 2017; Dumas, 2016). In response, many scholars, educators, students, and communities of color have demanded an end to this oppressive dominant cultural framework and the structural inequities that continue to exist in schools. These stakeholders have also argued for a critical and diverse teacher workforce dedicated to racial and social justice—specifically noting the important role teachers of color play in schools (Cuauhtin et al., 2019; Jackson & Kohli, 2016). Teachers of color have demonstrated that their lived experiences and identities can inform pedagogies that can help students, particularly students of color, make sense of themselves, address educational injustices, and improve academic achievement (Kohli et al., 2019; Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). It is also known that teachers of color are more likely to align themselves with a social and racial justice pedagogy (Villegas & Jordan Irvine, 2010).

I define teaching for social and racial justice as teachers who recognize social and racial inequities and strive for transformation in schools, communities, cities, states, nation, and the larger world through raising social, political, racial and economic consciousness (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018; Katsarou et al., 2010; Pour-Khorsid, 2018). I also do not seek to essentialize all teachers of color and suggest that they all carry the same commitment to racial and social justice. However, teachers of color do tend to recognize inequities more readily and scholarship has shown that teacher's lived experiences are important as they often influence pedagogies, practices, and their ability to contextualize their teaching, especially for students of color (Kohli et al., 2019; Navarro, 2018).

Student & Teacher Demographics in U.S. Schools

Moreover, in recent decades there have been large demographic shifts in public schools, where the racial composition of the largest 60 school districts in the nation is 80% non-white and the proportion of students of color is projected to increase in the coming years as states move toward non-white pluralities in school systems (de los Ríos et al., 2015). Unlike the growing numbers of students of color in schools, at the moment there is a lack of racial diversity in the K–12 educator workforce. Teachers of color compromise just 18% of the teaching profession (Department of Education, 2016). The low number of teachers of color is often attributed to low pay in the face of higher college debt, employment in schools with less stable employment situations leading to high turnover rates as they leave the profession, and the racism they face in hostile school campuses that impact their retention (Achinstein et al., 2010; Dingus, 2008; Pour-Khorshid, 2018). Even under these conditions and even given demographic disparities, a growing body of literature has demonstrated the positive impact teachers of color have on students of color. So, what are the benefits of teachers of color for youth of color?

Benefits of Teachers of Color

The need for, benefits, and importance of teachers of color for racial and social justice in schools cannot be overemphasized. Research has shown teachers of color tend to have a more favorable perception than do white teachers of the academic potential of students of color (Dee, 2005). In addition, teachers of color have shown to increase the engagement and achievement of students of color (Burciaga & Kohi, 2018), and have high expectations for student learning (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000).

Additionally, teachers of color often play an active and vital role in addressing racial educational disparities (Villegas & Jordan Irvine, 2010). Teachers of color are more likely to

engage in culturally responsive teaching and have a strong awareness of injustice and inequity (Brown, 2009; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). Teachers of color also tend to share common cultural histories with students of color offering insight to the racialized experiences of their students to support them as they navigate structural barriers (Sleeter, 2001; Weisman & Hansen, 2008; Gomez & Rodriguez, 2011; Kohli, 2009; Mabokela & Madsen, 2007). Lastly, teachers of color often serve as cultural brokers with the community reflecting a commitment and passion to serve beyond the classroom (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011). These are invaluable traits teachers of color carry and this is important when considering the changing demographics and needs of students in public schools. The value and indispensable role teachers of color have in public schools is significant. As ethnic studies programs continue to sprout across the country, teachers of color, although low in numbers, are well positioned to converge at schools seeking to provide positive educational and social transformation for students of color and their communities.

Teachers of Color in Los Angeles

This particular study takes place in Los Angeles where the experiences of teachers of color are quite distinct from being a teacher of color in other districts throughout the nation. In the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), 88% of the student body are youth of color ("LAUSD Fingertip Facts," 2020). The demographic makeup of teachers in the district is 44.2% Latinx educators; Black 9.4%, Asian 9.6%, Filipino 3.1%, American Indian 0.6%, Pacific Islander 0.2%, Undeclared 0.4%, while their white counterparts make 32.5% of the teaching force ("Teacher Demographics," 2019). These statistics are striking when compared to the rest of the nation. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n. d.), more than half of all US public school students are students of color, yet 80% of teachers in US public schools are white. The racial dynamics are unique in LAUSD, the second largest district in the nation, where

teachers of color and students of color are in the majority. Although these two groups share commonalities be it racial, cultural, or linguistic, they should not be essentialized as one large monolith.

Rationale of the Study & Research Questions

What does it mean for teachers of color to learn in the context teaching ethnic studies? As we think about teachers of color who are engaged in teaching ethnic studies, we need to think beyond just the numbers. Research has shown the positive impact teachers of color have on students of color, and the potential transformation that comes with teaching through an ethnic studies framework. Ethnic studies, as it resonates with anti-racist and humanizing pedagogy, challenges educators to examine the impacts of racism and colonization "on their own identities, relationships with others, and understandings of education" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015, p. 15). There is a need for teachers to reflect on the privileges and positionality they carry into the classroom relative to their students' lived experiences. It is also crucial for ethnic studies teachers to reflect on the ways they interact with their students. So, what does it mean for teachers of color teaching ethnic studies to learn and develop as educators?

For this study, I explore three general domains to better understand what it means for teachers of color to learn and develop within the context of ethnic studies teaching. I am interested in: (1) the individual life trajectories of a group of educators of color which includes their lived experiences, identities, and pivotal moments of consciousness; (2) the ways that ethnic studies teachers potentially draw upon both individual and shared identities/experiences as they come together to learn and develop as a collective; and (3) the extent to which ethnic studies educators, in acknowledging the painful histories and current realities of oppression and struggle, envision ethnic studies as an inclusive, healing-centered, and restorative teaching praxis.

Literature Gap

At present, the existing literature on ethnic studies in a K–12 context has focused on students' academic, learning, and educational experiences, and studies generally pay limited attention to educators teaching ethnic studies (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Curammeng, 2017). Relatedly, literature on teachers of color often has focused on obstacles faced in schools where most of the teachers are white. This literature has documented the ways that teachers of color in such settings feel silenced, pedagogically questioned, and isolated. They are viewed as less competent than their White peers, and have their insights and contributions undervalued or negated by school leadership (Dingus, 2008; Kohli, 2016; Burciaga & Kohi, 2018).

Accordingly, then, this study takes up the opportunity to examine the professional learning experiences of teachers more closely in the context of K–12 ethnic studies teaching. Specifically, this study focuses on teacher learning and development in schools where students of color and teachers of color are in the majority. As I note above, school districts in the United States often employ far fewer teachers of color than they enroll students of color. Nevertheless, there are many schools in California and across the nation where both students of color and teachers of color are in the majority. These schools provide an important learning context for both students and for teachers, particularly when the schools support and offer ethnic studies. In this dissertation study, I ask the following interrelated research questions:

1. How do teachers' experiences (their own schooling experiences; their own early identity as youth of Color; their own experiences coming to critical consciousness) inform their identities as ethnic studies teachers?

2. To what extent do ethnic studies teachers working as a collective draw upon both individual and shared identities to forge a common teaching approach, and to what extent does this allow for individual differences?

3. To what extent and in what ways do educators in this collective draw upon healing centered and restorative justice practices as they dialogue with one another and reflect on their work as ethnic studies teachers?

What I Examine and How

To answer my research questions in this dissertation, I conducted a case study of four Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x[4], Mexican American educators, these labels are how my participants self-identify, teaching ethnic studies at East Los High. My decision to focus on East Los High stems from having co-created the ethnic studies program and relationships I have built with teachers and the school community. In addition, East Los High was one of the first schools in LAUSD, following the 2014 Board resolution, to create an ethnic studies program and since has received multiple recognitions as an exemplary program for educators interested in teaching ethnic studies. Throughout the spring semester of the 2020-21 academic year, I conducted individual and focus group interviews with this group of educators. Through this process, I explored what it meant for teachers of color to individually and collectively come together to learn, develop, and take action in powerful ways via an ethnic studies framework.

As ethnic studies programs in K–12 schools expand and scale up, I am reminded of my own teaching experience back in 2014. From the very beginning, my colleagues and I knew that

[4] I use this term to refer to someone who consciously adopts the cultural and political identities of resistance popularized during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s. To an extent a person of Mexican or Mexican-American origin, although not all Mexican origin people embrace this term while some non-Mexican Latinxs do. I also use *x* as a way to "recognize gender fluidity and to challenge the gender hierarchy and binary present in the Spanish language (the use of the masculine *o* at the end of words to refer to both males and females)" (Aleman & Delgado Bernal, 2017, p. 99).

our ethnic studies program would be distinct from others because ethnic studies is meant to be responsive and reflective of the community it is taught in. We were also intentional about our purpose. In addition to engaging in discussions around issues of race, racism, and forms of oppression, our liberatory curriculum would be an affirming and validating space for both our students and for ourselves. We encouraged one another to integrate our lived experiences and identities into the classroom as a way to build community with our students. This was part of our initial effort to humanize, nurture, and forge generational solidarity in the struggle for justice. So, from the outset, teaching ethnic studies meant, among many things, that we were committed to engaging in a collective transformative learning experience that would benefit not just our students but would also inform our individual and collective identities and teaching practices as educators of color. Within this context, there is a need for schools and teachers to think of ethnic studies differently from just putting textbooks in the hands of educators. For teaching and learning to be alive, ethnic studies must always be connected to real people and to the world. Ethnic studies encourages teachers as individuals and as a collective to forge new identities in the process of teaching. And in light of the current pandemics and social upheaval, there is also an expectation for ethnic studies educators to constantly evolve and strengthen their curriculum to meet their students' socio-emotional needs. This case study not only seeks to highlight some of the complexities and underpinnings of teaching ethnic studies, but more importantly attempts to capture and provide insight on teacher learning and development for a group of educators engaged in ethnic studies teaching.

Chapter 2: Literature Review & Theoretical Frameworks

As introduced in the first chapter, my dissertation study primarily analyzes how the individual experiences, collective efforts, and healing-centered & restorative justice approaches of a group of Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American teachers inform the way they learn and develop when teaching ethnic studies in a ninth-grade high school setting. Although there are many theoretical underpinnings to ethnic studies, I am particularly interested in foregrounding three elements that not only inform what happens to students but also impact the practice that educators are involved in. The three elements or theoretical/conceptual frameworks are: (1) critical race theory (CRT) and, more specifically, Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit); (2) critical professional development (CPD), as rooted in sociocultural learning theory and community of practice (CoP); and (3) healing-centered engagement and restorative justice (RJ) practices.

This chapter begins with a framing of ethnic studies in the classroom. I provide an overview of two essential articles on ethnic studies that focus on pedagogy and core curricular tenets for the K–12 context. I then identify a few recent articles on ethnic studies at the elementary and secondary level which illuminate the tenets and teaching practices of ethnic studies. From this point, the chapter shifts focus to each of the three elements—(1) critical race theory and LatCrit; (2) critical professional development (CPD), sociocultural learning theory, and communities of practice (CoP); and (3) healing-centered and restorative justice practices—as pictured below in Figure 2.1. I draw on a CRT and LatCrit framework not only to explore, examine, and address historical and contemporary realities of race, racism, and other forms of subordination in the lives of my Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American teacher participants but also to capture how their experiences, identities, and histories as people of color inform their

identities as ethnic studies teachers. I use sociocultural learning theory and communities of practice theory to stress the importance and potential of facilitating meaningful critical professional development for teachers of color—centered around concepts of collaboration, sense making, criticality, and how this work can inform the collective identity of a group of ethnic studies teachers. My review concludes with an analysis of healing-centered engagement and restorative justice approaches to teaching ethnic studies. I consider how these humanizing approaches offer teachers a set of tools/practices to engage with one another and students through the challenging, complicated, oftentimes difficult conversations required when attempting to teach for racial and social transformation.

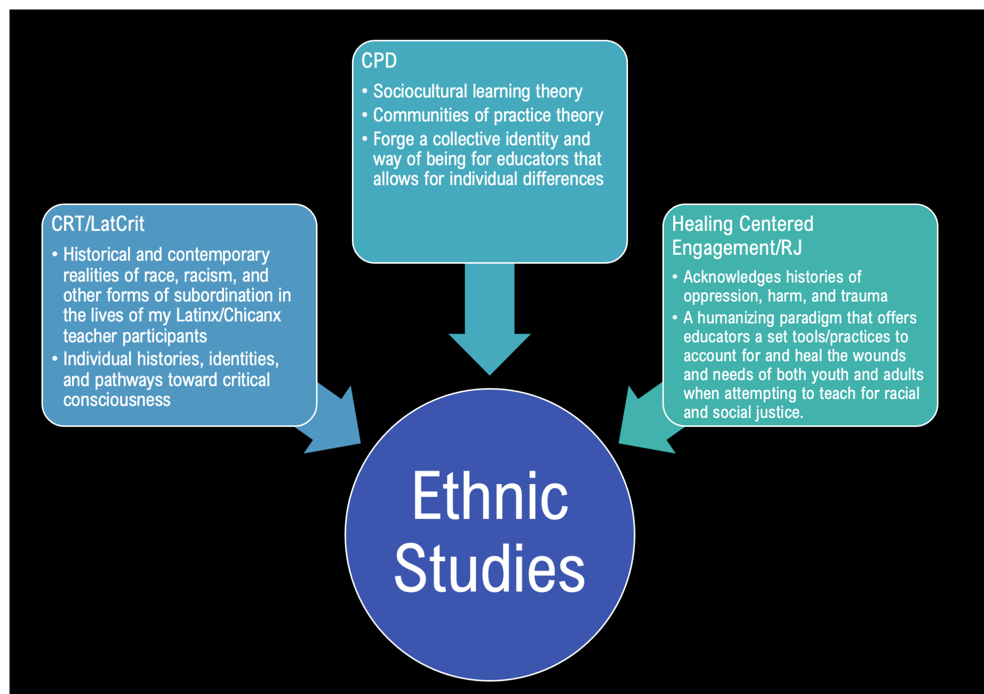

Figure 2.1. Visualizing the theoretical frameworks in this dissertation.

Framing Ethnic Studies In K–12 Classrooms

For those interested in the actual process of teaching ethnic studies in the K–12 context, two essential articles that are foundational and can assist educators and researchers are: 1) *Toward an Ethnic Studies Pedagogy: Implications for K–12 Schools from the Research* (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015); and 2) *Ethnic Studies with K–12 Students, Families, and Communities: The Role of Teacher Education in Preparing Educators to Serve the People* (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016). Before delving into these two recent articles it is important to acknowledge that Ethnic Studies as an idea comes from a long history that builds off of the work of people like Anna Julia Cooper (1892), W.E.B DuBois (1903), Carter G. Woodson (1933), and Black literary societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Freedom Schools, Black Independent Schools, tribal schools, and language immersion schools, among others (Muhammad, 2020; Lee, 1992; Durden, 2007; Begay et al., 1995; Sleeter, 2011; Goetz, 2020).

In *Toward an Ethnic Studies Pedagogy: Implications for K–12 Schools from the Research*, Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2015) examine what effective ethnic studies pedagogy looks like in K–12 classrooms by reviewing a handful of studies on exemplary teachers of ethnic studies. Ethnic studies pedagogy builds upon existing scholarship of culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995), culturally responsive education (Gay, 2000) and other cultural models in education (Lee, 1995; Moll Gonzalez, 1994; Paris & Alim, 2017; McCarty & Lee, 2014, Halagao, 2010). In their article, Tintiangco-Cubales et al. identify several commonalities of strong pedagogy and teaching practices among the teachers in their study. Some of these include: a commitment to developing students' critical understanding of the world and their place in it; and the continuous practice of reflecting on one's cultural and racial identities in

relation to their students and the community they teach in (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015, 2019). Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2019), argue that an ethnic studies pedagogy "must be rigorous, culturally and community responsive, and reflective to be effective in living its promise of decolonization and challenging racism" (p. 25). In particular,

> An ethnic studies pedagogy [is] defined by its purpose, context, content, methods, and the identity of both students and teachers, [it] includes 1) engagement with the purpose of Ethnic Studies, which is to address racism by critiquing, resisting, and transforming systems of oppression on institutional, interpersonal, and internal levels; 2) knowledge about personal, cultural, and community contexts that impact students' epistemologies and positionalities while creating strong relationships with families and community organizations in local areas; 3) development of rigorous curriculum that is responsive to students' cultural, historical, and contemporary experiences; 4) practices and methods that are responsive to the community's needs and problems; 5) self-reflective on teacher identity and making explicit how identity impacts power relations in the classroom and in the community (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, p. 25)

This conceptual article not only provides educators with a powerful, humanizing, and anti-racist pedagogical approach to teaching ethnic studies but also underscores the importance of teacher reflection about their own cultural and racial identities. And so, essential to any strong ethnic studies teaching is a pedagogy that encompasses a teacher's commitment to personal transformation as they teach for racial and social justice (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; 2019).

Similarly, in *Ethnic Studies with K–12 Students, Families, and Communities: The Role of Teacher Education in Preparing Educators to Serve the People,* McGovern & Buenavista (2016), identify four key tenets that are fundamental for teachers to understand and to apply when teaching ethnic studies—these four tenets complement and build on the pedagogical foundation found in Tintiangco-Cubales et al. article. According to Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista (2016), the four pedagogical tenets require educators to: "1) question white supremacist notions of ideological objectivity and neutrality in processes of knowledge construction, 2) move towards anti-essentialist representations of racialized communities, 3)

develop and practice a community-grounded praxis in the teaching of content, and 4) foster opportunities for individual empowerment and collective self-determination and social transformation (Fong, 2008)" (p. 4). The four tenets become visible as ethnic studies teachers reflect on their lived experiences, see students as equal partners in learning, recognize students and their families as knowledge holders and knowledge producers, and work in solidarity with students in co-constructing ethnic studies curriculum (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016). This approach to teaching ethnic studies provides a base for educators to expand and interweave their own pedagogical practices nurturing opportunities for individual and collective growth and action as they *serve the people*—as implied in the title of this article.

Moreover, recent classroom-based studies have shown the way certain ethnic studies courses in K–12 schools align with an ethnic studies pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015) and its pedagogical tenets (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016). Ethnic studies courses create conditions for social and political critique, academic and critical consciousness development, counter-narratives to hegemonic mainstream curriculum, and opportunities for empowerment and sense of civic agency (Cuauhtin et al., 2019; Dueñas et al., 2019; de Los Ríos, 2017, 2018, 2019; Morrell et al., 2013; San Pedro, 2015; Valdez, 2017; Morales et al., 2016: De los Ríos et al., 2015; Sleeter, 2011; Cammarota & Romero, 2014; Acosta, 2007, 2013; Thomas, 2017). The following is not meant to be an exhaustive review of literature on ethnic studies teaching and learning but rather to recognize a few notable studies that advance ethnic studies pedagogies and practices in elementary and secondary schools.

As part of the work that Curammeng et al. (2017) did with Pin@y Educational Partnership (PEP)—which the authors describe as "an ethnic studies teaching pipeline that connects undergraduate and graduate students interested in the field of education to local San

Francisco public schools" (p. 412)—the authors conducted a study at an elementary school where young predominantly Filipina/o students engaged in a community responsive literacy development curriculum. The study describes an ethnic studies literacy tool, the *Ethnic Studies Praxis Story Plot*, that enabled teachers to simultaneously be responsive to both their students' developmental needs and the community's cultural needs. In this way, teachers encouraged students to connect classroom learning with their home and community life; helped students develop their critical consciousness; demonstrated how the stories students read in class could be analyzed to act on community needs; and enabled students to disrupt and interrogate dominant and oppressive narratives of their community.

In another article, Kwon & de los Ríos (2019) look at a ninth-grade curricular unit on how students' daily urban environment impacts their health and well-being. In East Oakland, California, in a predominant Latinx, African American, and Pacific Islander classroom, Kwon takes an innovative and community-based approach to ethnic studies that refined students' critical digital literacies and civic action practices through engagement with digital media apps. At the end of the unit, students shared how the unit helped them resist deficit-oriented ideologies and empowered them as they used critical civic literacies as a lens and tool to name the social conditions of their community and identify the actions needed to transform them. Similarly, Lopez's (2020), teacher research explores humanizing teaching approaches to ethnic studies across different grade levels at East Los High. Using *testimonios, platicas,* and *encuentros* as part of his methodology, Lopez builds on the narratives and experiential data from his Chicanx and Latinx students to conceptualize humanizing pedagogy in his ethnic studies classroom as a project sitting on three critical pillars: trust, dialogue, and literacy. Through this process, both

students and teachers build “an intimate learning space made up of students, their lives, their families, and the worlds that matter most to them” (Lopez 2020, p. ix).

While limited in scope, recent research on ethnic studies pedagogy and practice has not directly addressed the identities of ethnic studies teachers. With this dissertation, I plan to contribute to this emerging scholarship on K–12 ethnic studies by foregrounding the experiences of educators of color, specifically Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American educators, in the way they learn and develop while teaching ethnic studies.

First Element: Critical Race Theory & Latina/o Critical Race Theory

One of the primary theoretical frameworks informing this study’s examination of a group of teachers at East Los High is critical race theory (CRT) and Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit). I draw on CRT and LatCrit to explore and examine the historical and contemporary realities of race and racism and other forms of power/oppression in the lives of my Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American teacher participants and the impact this has on their teaching of ethnic studies. In this section, I briefly define the terms *race*, *racism*, *intersectionality*, and *critical consciousness* in the particular way that each term relates to my study. I then transition to the historical and educational context of Latinx students, specifically Chicanxs, in the U.S to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the larger Latinx/Chicanx narrative. I then provide an overview of CRT and more specifically CRT in education. Guided by CRT in education, I tap into CRT’s conceptual, theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological framework for its ability to capture the experiences of teachers of color and for the tools it provides to analyze and critique systems of power and oppression. I end this section with a look at LatCrit to account for and gain insight on the lived experiences of the Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American teachers in this project.

Race, Racism, & Intersectionality

Essential to any research on ethnic studies or ethnic studies courses is the interrogation of race and racism and their influence on the ideological foundation of this country (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019). I define race as a social construct created to differentiate groups based, "primarily on skin color, phenotype, ethnicity, and culture for the purpose of showing the superiority or dominance of one group over another" (Yosso, 2006, p. 5). As such, race is most often used to justify an ideology of racial superiority and White supremacy that creates or sustains hierarchies of power and dominance and has been used to include or exclude certain groups from distribution of material wealth and opportunities, equal participation, and of human rights—an ideology of racism (Yosso, 2006; Mills, 1997; Picower & Kohli, 2017).

Moreover, Crenshaw (1989) furthers the study of race and racism from a single-issue analysis to include the concept of *intersectionality*. Intersectionality "is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects" (Crenshaw, 2017). Originally, Crenshaw (1989; 1991) coined the term to describe bias and violence against Black women and to denote the ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of their lives and experiences in the workplace. Her focus on the intersections of race and gender "only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). The application of intersectionality to education research, and to my study, is that it reveals and accounts for the complexity of each person's identity and experiences and provides a method to de-essentialize the experiences of historically marginalized people while directly challenging systems of power.

Critical Consciousness

As part of an ethnic studies pedagogy, teachers are expected, among many things, to engage students in collaborative reciprocal relationships, where teachers build/develop students' *critical consciousness* by equipping them with tools to identify, reflect, critique, and act against systemic forms of oppression (Dee & Penner, 2016; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Sleeter, 2014; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Sleeter Bernal, 2004; Banks, 2012; Cammarota & Romero, 2009). Critical consciousness or *conscientizaçao,* as Freire (1973) called it, represents the development of awareness about institutional, historical, and systemic forms of oppression and how they limit and promote the life opportunities of individuals (Freire, 1970). Critical consciousness, as a process, is where one learns "about prescribed social, political, and economic realities, [entering] into dialogue about liberating possibilities, and engaging in transformative social action" (Kohli, Lin, Ha, Jose, Shini, 2019, p. 31; Freire, 1970). Critical consciousness then, is not "an end goal achievable through transferals of information, but rather as an ongoing journey developed through continued engagement" (Kohli et al., 2019, p. 25; Hinchey, 2004). For critical educators, teaching for critical consciousness in collaborative spaces with students often reveals that critical consciousness is not just an intellectual effort but a fundamental part to an educators' life—to their understanding and sense of being of the world, and as a way to participate in social transformation or praxis (Freire, 1970b; Kohli et al., 2019; Bartolome, 1994; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011; Hill, 2007; hooks, 1994; Lopes Cardozo, 2013; Lopes Cardozo & Hoeks, 2015; Vongalis-Macrow, 2007; Nieto, 2006). And so, as part of this study, I am interested in how and when each of the four ethnic studies teachers at East Los High cultivated their critical consciousness before teaching; the impact this consciousness has had on both their identities and way of teaching; and how they have sustained and/or deepened this

consciousness in their work as educators. I now shift from the individual teacher experience to the larger Latinx/Chicanx narrative in the U.S.—as all my participants identify as Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, or Mexican American.

The Sociohistorical Educational Context of Latinxs/Chicanxs in the U.S.

An important component of my research is to capture the lived experiences of my Latinx/Chicanx teacher participants and the influence these experiences have had on teaching ethnic studies. To gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the individual life narratives of each teacher, it is important to place them within the broader historical and educational context of Latinxs in the U.S. People of Mexican descent make up the largest population of Latinxs in the U.S. at 62% (Pew Research Center, 2019). They are rooted in and indigenous to the Southwest of the U.S., living out the legacies of various forms of colonialism, land theft, and racially discriminatory policies and systems (Paris & Alim, 2017; Garcia, 2018; Delgado Bernal & Aleman, 2017). It is also historically evident that there is a direct link between these forms of oppression and deficit oriented educational practices and policies (Acuña, 1988; Donato, 1997; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Delgado Bernal 1999; Valencia, 2008; Yosso, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

In the K–12 setting, several scholars have written on the historical and contemporary impact of policies that systemically disadvantage Latinx students in schools (Delgado Bernal, 1999; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gómez-Quiñones & Vásquez, 2014). Schools serving large proportions of Latinx students are more likely than other schools to be overcrowded, run down, and staffed with few well-trained teachers (Yosso, 2006; Valencia,

1991). They are also more likely to provide only limited access to a quality college bound curriculum (Oakes, 1985; Oakes & Lipton, 2004).

Nevertheless, within the educational history of Latinx students, there has always been a vibrant activist community of youth, parents, and community members fighting for equality in and out of schools. In many occasions these efforts or movements have led to shared relational struggles between Mexican Americans and other communities of color (Sanchez, 2004; Molina, 2006; Garcia, 2018; Partida, 2021). This legacy of organizing and collaborating across communities of color continues to the present.

Far from and not meant to be a definitive history of the Latinx/Chicanx experience in the U.S., it is important to acknowledge and contextualize the lives of my teacher participants as existing within a larger historical and contemporary racialized reality. The lenses I use to gain further insight on these and other experiences are that of CRT and LatCrit. In the next section, CRT emerges as a framework that equips researchers and educators with a lens to explore and address issues of race, racism, and other forms of oppression in schools and in the broader society.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) originated in the late 1980s in critical legal studies by scholars such as Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman who along with others sought to challenge race and racism in the United States legal system and in society (Bell, 1989; Solórzano, 2013). These scholars argued that critical legal scholarship often overlooked or paid little to no attention to the lived experiences and histories of people of color (Crenshaw, 2002). Without a critical space in schools of law to analyze race and racism, critical legal studies, these scholars asserted, could not offer strategies for social transformation (Yosso, 2006). Initially, CRT scholarship focused on

critiquing the slow pace of civil rights legislation for the African American community. Over time critical race scholars began to expand their scholarship on oppression in law and society by looking beyond Black/White binaries recognizing the histories and experiences of other historically oppressed people (Perea, 1998). Today, CRT has grown to include FemCrit, LatCrit, TribalCrit, AsianCrit, DesiCrit, DisCrit, and these fields of ongoing research continue to center the social realities and experiences of these racially and socially marginalized communities (Yosso, 2006). This proliferation in CRT also reflects the multiple forms of subjection and intersections of racism seen, felt, and experienced across dispossessed people and their communities (Matsuda, 1991). And so, how does CRT as a critical lens influence education? Ethnic studies? Or impact teaching?

Critical Race Theory in Education

In the late 1990s, CRT made its way into education. Leading scholars of color in the field of education like Gloria Ladson-Billings, William F. Tate, and Daniel Solózano, increasingly began to employ CRT to understand racial inequities in the attempt to actively transform the American educational system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These scholars and others took up CRT to analyze and critique educational research and practice (Ladson-Billings, 2005). CRT in education is guided by five principles identified by Daniel Solózano (1997) as essential to conducting CRT research which are;

> 1. The intercentricity of race and racism. CRT foregrounds race and racism and challenges separate discourses on race, gender, and class by demonstrating how racism intersects with other forms of subordination (i.e. sexism, classism, euro-centrism, monolingualism, and heterosexism) which impact students of color.
> 2. The challenge to dominant ideology. CRT challenges traditional research paradigms and theories, thereby exposing deficit notions about students of color and educational practices that assume "neutrality" and "objectivity."
> 3. The commitment to social justice. CRT offers a transformative solution to racial, gender, and class discrimination by linking theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community.

> 4. The centrality of experiential knowledge. CRT focuses research, curriculum, and practice on experiences of students of color and views these experiences as sources of strength.
> 5. The interdisciplinary perspective. CRT challenges ahistoricism and acontextualism, and insists on expanding the boundaries of the analysis of race and racism in education by using contextual, historical, and interdisciplinary perspectives to inform praxis. (pp.56-57)

These five tenets form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy that assist CRT scholars when conducting research (Solórzano, 1997)—it is important to note the five tenets are grounded in the scholarly and activist traditions of race and ethnic studies, women's studies, and critical pedagogy which further the study of race and racism in and out of schools (Parker & Stovall, 2004). By using CRT's five tenets, I am not only provided a lens to examine race in education but an approach to understand and illuminate the experiences of communities of color—offering ways to respond to racism, inequities, and its complexities as it intersects with other forms of subordination in the U.S. educational system (Yosso, 2006).

Moreover, CRT offers scholars and practitioners interested in researching and teaching ethnic studies a set of analytical tools when accounting for race and racism in U.S. schools (Delgado Bernal & Aleman, 2017; Solórzano, 1998). For example, the conceptual approaches that interrogate systems of power in schools and society include *racial realism* (Bell, 1995, Aleman & Aleman, 2010), *racial microaggression* (Solórzano, Pérez Huber, 2012; Yosso & Garcia, 2010), and *racist nativism (*Pérez Huber, 2011; Pérez Huber et al., 2008). These are a few of the conceptual impulses that are contributing to a growing field of scholarship in CRT education. Additionally, some of the methodological and analytical tools that CRT provides to confront racism and oppression include *testimonios* (oral histories) and critical race counter-storytelling, also known as counter-stories/counter-narratives. In methodology, *testimonios* challenge "objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience

marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance" (Deglado Bernal, Burciaga, Flores Carmona, 2012, p. 363). *Testimonios* exposes brutality, disrupts silence, and builds solidarity among people of color. Counterstories is a method of recounting the experiences of people of color to "raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice." It is also used as a tool to counter deficit storytelling (Yosso, 2006, p.10; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through these and other processes CRT provides scholars and educators a lens to recognize and challenge the complexities and intersectionality of racism as issues of classism, sexism, gender, and citizenship emerge in schools as forms of subordination.

Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)

In my study, I engage CRT by way of Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit) scholarship. LatCrit brings a Chicanx, Latinx consciousness to CRT in examining issues such as bilingualism, ethnicity, immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent, surname, and history (Alemán, 2009a; Espinoza & Harris, 1998; Espinoza, 1998; Johnson, 1999; Montoya, 1994; Valdes, 1997; Stefancic, 1998). My study site is in a predominantly Latinx community in East Los Angeles, California, and all my participants identify as either Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American. A LatCrit lens allows scholars like me to engage in critical race discussions within the Latinx community and to address the racialized layers of subordination that reflect the Latinx/Chicanx experiences in the U.S. and beyond (Yosso, 2006). Through a LatCrit lens I plan to gain a greater understanding of the individual and collective experiences of these educators and how these realities inform their teaching of ethnic studies curricula.

I adopt a CRT and LatCrit framework in order to center the experiential knowledge and identities of my teacher participants and the community they serve. These theories recognize the centrality and intersectionality of racism, challenge dominant ideologies, privilege contextual

and historical analysis, express a commitment to social justice, and support the development of critical consciousness that occurs in the struggle to transform conditions for oppressed people (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Second Element: Critical Professional Development by Way of Socio-Cultural Learning Theory & Community of Practice

The second domain I explore in this study is the collective practice of four ethnic studies teachers at East Los High. Specifically, I am interested in co-facilitating a space where this collective of educators come together to engage and discuss ethnic studies content in meaningful critical professional development (CPD) (Kohli, Picower, Martinez & Ortiz, 2015).
Through this process I hope to capture how this group of educators learns together while engaging in teacher driven CPD. This second element is based upon epistemological assumptions on teacher learning and development that are grounded in socio-cultural learning theory, communities of practice, and the impact these frameworks have on understanding individual and shared experiences amongst educators designing and implementing, in this case, ethnic studies curricula within CPD spaces.

This section begins with a brief overview of K–12 professional development as it exists within an educational system focused on high stakes testing. I then discuss the importance of socio-cultural theory and communities of practice as an alternative view and way of learning that recontextualizes teacher experiences in the classroom. From here, I explore the aims of a CPD model "where teachers are engaged as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society" and how this influences my research project (Kohl et al., 2015, p. 7). I conclude by discussing how a CPD approach to professional development informs part of my

data collection and the contributions I seek to provide by tapping into this pedagogical practice as part of ethnic studies teaching.

Teacher Professional Development within a System of High-Stakes Testing

A vital area for the professional growth of any K–12 educator is the need for meaningful and continuous professional development. Unfortunately, current dominant approaches for professional development for schools or districts often consist of outside experts with little knowledge of local conditions presenting prepackaged information to help teachers improve student test scores (Wilson & Berne, 1999; Kohli et al., 2015). This type of professional development is a result of decades of policies designed and enacted within a neoliberal[5] education system that has supported and favored standardized test scores as the primary measure of school quality (Ravitch, 2016). Under this system of high stakes testing, teaching and learning oftentimes centers on; uniformity, accountability, mandated curricula, biased teacher evaluations, and school practices that maintain White supremacy (Vallie & Buse, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ede, 2006; Lipman, 2011; Milner, 2013; Martinez, Valdez, & Carriaga, 2016). For critical educators taking a humanizing community-grounded praxis (Reyes McGovern & Buenavista, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015) approach to teaching requires a drastically different form of professional development. Many critical educators enter the profession with an activist agenda. These educators often seek to create "strong, critical, and intellectual communities that honor and grow the ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies of [the communities they teach in]" (Perry, Steele, & Hillard, 2004; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016, p. 75). As such, ethnic studies as a political project attends to many critical issues and must be designed "in alignment with local

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[5] Neoliberalism in education is said to "venerate change and competition, [hyperfocus on individualism,] and views citizens as individual consumers competing for advancement within unfettered markets" (Mirra & Rogers, 2016, p. 1256; Harvey, 2007; Sennett, 2006).

community needs and in response to the global conditions shaping the historical and contemporary composition of the community in which projects are located" (Reyes McGovern & Buenavista, 2016, p. 9; Buenavista, 2016). This approach to teaching makes a strong case for a much-needed overhaul to the type of training and support teachers currently receive—especially for educators committed to designing anti-racist, liberating curircula that seeks to interrupt inequities through teaching (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Moreover, within this model of high stakes-testing teachers are often seen as mere transmitters of information rather than professionals and intellectuals (Mirra & Morrell, 2011; Mirra & Rogers, 2016). This reductive way of teaching and learning not only overlooks the differences in how students learn or the local context they learn in but requires teachers to become conduits of content knowledge. The role of the educator shifts from a professional who differentiates and shapes learning experiences for his/her students to someone who merely absorbs content knowledge and passes it on to students solely to perform well on high stakes exams (Freire, 1970). As a result, trainings/professional development for educators must be reconceptualized and should not ignore that authentic teaching is full of possibilities, complexities, and is a space for lifelong learning and development (Philip, Souto-Manning, Anderson, Horn, Carter Andrews, Stillman, & Varghese, 2019).

Socio-cultural Learning Theory

An alternative view to mainstream teacher development and an approach I lean on in this study to understand teaching, learning, and development within a group of educators is through a socio-cultural learning theoretical lens. Contrary, to the belief of teaching and learning as a one-way exchange or "proxy for going through the motions" (Ellis & Orchard, 2014, p. 2), socio-cultural learning theory in education recontextualizes the role of teachers in the classroom and

posits that knowledge can be co-constructed between a more and a less knowledgeable person through social interaction (Ellis & Orchard, 2014; Philip et al., 2019; Shabani, 2016; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). Socio-cultural learning theory is often identified by three themes: "(1) human development and learning originate in social, historical, and cultural interactions, (2) use of psychological tools, particularly language, mediate development of higher mental functions, and (3) learning occurs within the Zone of Proximal Development" (Polly et al., 2018; Vygotsky, 1978). Under this premise, a learner's environment plays a pivotal role in her or his learning development and through a process of guided participation a learner can actively acquire new skills and capabilities through meaningful, collaborative activities (Rogoff, 1990). Development then is a "transformation of participation in a socio-cultural activity" and not merely the transmission of discrete knowledge or skill (Matusov, 2015, p. 315). When applied to the field of education, social cultural theorists recognize "that there are individual differences as well as cross-cultural differences in learning and development [between students and teachers]" (Polly et al., 2018). Socio-cultural theorists do not assume a universalist view of all learners; instead they tend to recognize and value diversity and different historical and cultural perspectives (Polly et al., 2018).

Additionally, an important aspect to learning is the significance of language in the learning process. Vygostky (1978) considered language the greatest tool to emerge within a culture and a form to meditate two critical roles in development which are to communicate with others and to construct meaning. For my study, language and dialogue are crucial components to constructing meaning and understanding especially when applied to the critical professional development my teacher participants engage in and to learn what they gain from those experiences. Also, using a socio-cultural theory of learning is helpful for understanding adult

(i.e. professional) learning. For socio-cultural theorists, the focus of studying cognitive development is on the process of learning as opposed to just what a learner can accomplish from what they learned (Vygotsky, 1978). Under a socio-cultural theoretical framework, learners are impacted by their peers and social interactions/scenarios; take on a shared sense of authority over their learning process; and collaborate and co-construct understanding/knowledge. Through this process, they have the potential to recreate educational classroom environments in powerful ways (Vygotsky, 1978; Polly et al., 2018; Watson & Reigeluth, 2016). And so, the idea that development occurs as we engage and learn in various socio-cultural activities has broader implications for this study when applied to the concept of communities of practice (Miller, 2011; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Communities of Practice

A central component of socio-cultural theory is the collaborative environment which encourages learners to think critically, develop, and apply knowledge and skills in authentic activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). One concept that does this and takes all of the components of socio-cultural theory is *community of practice.* A community of practice is "formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" (Wenger, 2011, p.1; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice involve learners and those facilitating or teaching in collaborative spaces/practice within a context to facilitate an easier transfer of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger (1998) identified three characteristics shared between individuals in a community of practice: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Through participation members build relationships, engage in joint activities and discussions enabling them to learn from each other, and develop a shared repertoire of resources or shared practice within the group (Wenger, 2011). All of this takes time,

commitment, and sustained interactions between people mutually engaged in a common enterprise.

Since the term *communities of practice* was first coined, there has been interest in the field of education to utilize this theory. There has been particular interest within K–12 school-based learning communities and peer to peer professional development (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2011). When applied to teacher training, communities of practice function along three dimensions that impact educational practices. These dimensions include: organizing "educational experiences that ground school learning in practice through participation in communities around subject matters," connecting experiences of learners "to actual practice through peripheral forms of participation in broader communities beyond the walls of schools," and, "how to serve the lifelong learning needs of learners….[by focusing] on topics of continuing interest to learners beyond [school]" (Wenger, 2011, p. 5). From this perspective, the purpose of training sessions, classrooms, and schools should not only be to develop mastery of knowledge for academic success but also to have a connection to the learning that happens in the broader social and cultural world (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2011).

For my research, I am interested in exploring the concept of communities of practice as it exists within a group of ethnic studies teachers at East Los High. In particular, I examine how a group of four Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American educators, with similar identities and cultural ways of being, working together create authentic collaborative spaces that allow individuals to learn and contribute to a community while simultaneously refining their own teaching practice. I am also interested in the extent to which this type of community of practice, as a relational and social process, allows for learning to be a process of identity formation where individuals and the community evolve and transform as a result of participation (Omidvar &

Kislov, 2014). This form of learning and development is never a smooth process. Communities of practice include complex and often messy interactions, particularly in the context of relationships between individuals and their community (Linehan & McCarthy, 2001; Gutierrez & Johnson, 2017). This important aspect of learning within communities of practice as sites of possibility and contradictions creates potential spaces for new understandings, activities, and forms of participation to emerge (Gutierrez, 2008). I now turn to critical professional development which embodies elements of socio-cultural learning theory, communities of practice, and reflects the type of professional development I seek to co-create and facilitate with this study.

Critical Professional Development

In teaching ethnic studies and teaching for racial and social justice, educators need critical spaces where they can develop their critical consciousness, pedagogy, and content. This type of adult learning and development can take place through CPD (Kohli, Picower, Martinez, & Ortiz, 2016). CPD offers my study a model that frames "teachers as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society" through liberatory teaching practices (Kohli et al., 2016, p. 7). Contrary to current technocratic, top-down teacher professional development that does not include teachers "in the process of examining the pressing issues they or their students face in schools, nor does it elicit teachers' professional expertise, interests or needs," CPD demonstrates how teachers can take an active role in their own justice-oriented professional growth (Kohli et al., 2016, p. 9; Corcoran, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1997).

CPD builds upon Freire's (1970) model of dialogic, problem-posing education, where teacher and student, in this case, professional development facilitator and participant, come

together to co-construct knowledge and engage in praxis—reflection and action—on topics and/or teaching practices they want to know and learn more about. CPD follows the tenets of dialogic action which is "designed to provoke cooperative dialogue, build unity, provide shared leadership, and meet the critical needs of teachers" (Kohli et al., 2016, p.11; Freire, 1970). In *Critical Professional Development: Centering The Social Justice Needs of Teachers*, Kohli et al. (2016) illuminate three case studies of justice-oriented groups that are predominantly made up of teachers of color and/or teachers teaching for racial and social justice in the U.S. The three groups are The People's Education Movement (People's Ed.) in Los Angeles, New York Collective of Radical Educators (NyCoRE), and the Institute for Teachers of Color Committed to Racial Justice (ITOC) situated at the University of California, Riverside, California (People's Ed, n.d.; NyCoRE, n.d.; ITOC, n.d.). Although there are differences between each independent case, I highlight the common dialogical practices shared across all three programs. In each program, teachers work together, outside of school, in authentic cooperative dialogue to "create spaces for learning that reflect the holistic needs of their students and themselves" (Kohli et al., 2016, p. 9; Freire, 1970). Teachers are not pitted against one another nor work in professional isolation; rather they participate and build unity with like-minded individuals where they are able to receive "critical feedback and to vent with others who [share] their views and [understand] their professional settings" (Kohli et al., 2016, p. 11; Freire, 1970). This type of space allows teachers to engage in critical discussions about content, classroom practice, and their school communities, respectively. CPD opens up the possibility for shared leadership and ownership where participants are encouraged to co-create and facilitate inquiry processes alongside the main facilitator/s. CPD was "built in direct response to the needs of working class, communities of Color and the social [and racial] justice-oriented teachers who work to serve them, creating a

context to critically analyze and act on issues of inequity and oppression" (Kohli et al., 2016, p.14).

While CPD is rarely seen in formal parts of schools, it offers a form of social and racial justice-oriented professional development that can impact teaching and learning. I intend to contribute to this field of research by co-creating and facilitating CPD with the ethnic studies teachers at East Los High. I am interested in the ways that this group of educators engages in CPD and whether and how it impacts their individual and shared identities and teaching practices.

Third Element: Healing Centered Engagement & Restorative Justice

The third element I plan to explore in this study focuses on healing centered engagement (Ginwright, 2016, 2018) and restorative justice (Winn, 2018) approaches to teaching ethnic studies. Although not always explicitly referenced in ethnic studies literature, healing centered engagement and restorative justice practices acknowledge histories of oppression, harm, and trauma.[6] These approaches also represent a process to account for and heal the wounds and needs of both youth and adults. This element also offers educators, among many things, a set of humanizing approaches to engage and dialogue with other educators and students through the challenging, messy, oftentimes difficult conversations that emerge when attempting to teach for racial and social justice. In general, ethnic studies, as an interdisciplinary subject looks at the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities with an emphasis on historical struggles and social movements and "cultural identities and conscious engagement with social and political issues" (Dee & Penner, 2017, p. 2). It also draws upon critical pedagogies "using an educational praxis

[6] Trauma is broadly defined as, "an experience, series of experiences, and/or impacts from social conditions, that break or betray our inherent need for safety, belonging, and dignity" (Haines, 2019, p. 74)

to provide students with tools for identifying, reflecting upon, critiquing, and acting against systemic racism and other forms of oppression" (Dee & Penner, 2017, p. 6; Banks, 1997, 2012; Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Sleeter, 2014; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2002, 2005; Freire, 2000; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Sleeter, 2014; & Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). Often when engaging in these topics and issues, painful, sometimes traumatic, wounds surface for both educators and students. Participants may deal with individual and generational forms of pain and trauma. Consequently, educators have been called to enact trauma-informed and/or healing-centered, restorative approaches to support, in particular, their historically marginalized students of color (Morgan et al., 2015; Pour-Khorshid, 2018; Ginwright, 2016; 2018; Winn, 2013, 2018).

In this section, I briefly contextualize the current landscape of pervasive trauma among youth and the impact of zero-tolerance policies in urban schools. I then segue to the concepts of healing centered engagement and restorative justice (Ginwright, 2016, 2018; Winn, 2013; 2018) as a paradigm and pedagogy of possibilities for educators that seek justice and "purposefully attempt to disrupt cycles of injustices and inequality" (Winn, 2018, p. 7). From here, I describe the current restorative justice program that exists at East Los High and the opportunity this presents for this study, as I explore to what extent this collective of ethnic studies teachers draw upon healing centered and restorative justice practices in both their collaborative and individual work as a way to not only teach for racial and social justice but also to heal, sustain their commitment, and build hope.

Trauma & Zero-Tolerance Policies in Schools

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016), emerging research shows that "more than half of all U.S. children have experienced some kind of trauma in the form of abuse, neglect, violence, or challenging household circumstances and 35 percent of

children have experienced more than one type of traumatic event" (Hannegan-Martinez, 2019, p. 660). In some cases, more extreme stressors or forms of trauma include, "actual or threatened death or serious injury, or another threat to one's physical integrity; witnessing an event that involves death, injury or threat to the physical integrity of another person or learning about unexpected violent death, serious harm, or threaten of death or injury," to list a few (APA, 2000 p. 463). Unresolved or untreated trauma can have negative and long-lasting impact on an individual's emotional, behavioral, physical, and cognitive well-being (Herman, 1997; APA, 2000; 2008; 2009; Perry, 2007; Van der Kolk, 2014; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015). Additionally, trauma can also manifest at a systemic level. Systemic trauma, "is the repeated, ongoing violation, exploitation, dismissal of, and/or deprivation of groups of people [where people are denied] access to safety, mobility, resources, food, education, dignity, positive reflections of themselves, and [sense of] belonging" (Haines, 2019, p. 80). Some examples include the "ongoing violence of colonization, slavery, imperialism,…. the resulting dynamics of forced….criminialization and displacement" to social toxins such as racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of opression (Haines, 2019, p. 80; Coates, 2015; Leary, 2005; Smith, 2005; Williams and Mohammed, 2009; Lebron, Morrison, Ferris, Alcantara, Cummings, Parker, 2015; Hannegan-Martinez, 2019). What becomes clear from the data is that many young people carry an "invisible mark that is embedded permanently [unless treated or addressed] on mind and body by past traumatic events"(Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 118). Educators either can ignore this trauma, contribute to it, or embrace healing practices and pedagogies that are empathetic and move towards addressing some of the pain and hurt youth experience.

In addition, for many youth of color, in particular African American and Latinx youth, schools, unfortunately, have been a source of traumatic and painful experiences. Notably, the impact of zero-tolerance or punitive disciplinary measures on African American and Latinx students is well documented. African-Americans students are four times as likely as their white counterparts to be suspended from school for similar infractions (Davis, 2018); “Black girls are suspended at a rate eight times that of white female peers” (Davis, 2018, p. 430; Morris 2015; Winn, 2019); and both Black and Latinx youth are “disproportionately funneled into the school/prison nexus through referrals, suspensions, and expulsions for misconduct at school” (Winn, 2013, p.129; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Losen, Martinez, & Gillespie, 2012; Morris, 2012; Yang, 2009). This phenomenon is part of a larger historical narrative in the U.S. that particularly criminalizes Black and Brown bodies who are and have been overpoliced, silenced and perceived as dangerous, disobedient, ‘loud’, ‘ghetto,’and, consequently, more likely to be affected by implicit or unconscious bias in schools (Davis, 2018; Morris, 2015; Howard, 2003; Winn, 2013; Winn, Graham, Renjitham Alfred, 2019). Considering these realities, educators need to be equipped with a language, teaching practice, and paradigm that prepares them to disrupt these forms of injustice and to intervene in the stressors impacting their students' lives. One such approach that can be integrated in any K–12 curricula, is a healing centered engagement approach that integrates restorative justice practices.

Healing-Centered Engagement

In the past decade, trauma-informed care, meaning—“a set of principles that guide and direct how we view the impact of severe harm on young people’s mental, physical, and emotional health”—has emerged and gained acceptance in schools, youth development agencies, mental health programs, and other institutions in the U.S. (Ginwright, 2018). This attention to

trauma represents an important approach that encourages support and treatment to young people. Yet, trauma-informed care often limits a practitioner's view by focusing on an individual through their trauma (Ginwright, 2018; Pour-Khorshid, 2018). Ginwright (2018) suggests replacing trauma-informed care with a "healing centered" approach. He describes this approach as "holistic," involving "culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing" (May 31). Ginwright argues that a "healing-centered approach views trauma not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways in which trauma and healing are experienced collectively" (2018).

Ginwright (2018) identifies four key elements to what he describes as healing-centered engagement: first, it is explicitly political, rather than clinical; second, it is culturally grounded and views healing as the restoration of identity; third, it is asset-driven and focuses on well-being we want, rather than symptoms we want to suppress; and fourth, it supports adult providers with their own healing (Ginwright, 2018). A healing-centered approach to education begins with building empathy with youth who experience trauma, allowing them to feel safe sharing their experiences and emotions, and ultimately engaging them in a process that "restores their sense of well-being because they have the power to name and respond to their emotional states'' (Ginwright, 2018). For educators, relational and engaged pedagogies are best suited to meet these holistic needs. A relational pedagogy entails establishing caring/loving relationships between students and teachers through building trust, honesty, and vulnerability in classroom routines and lessons (Ginwright, 2018; Valenzuela, 1999; Ducan-Andrade, 2009; Camangian, 2010). While engaged pedagogy refers to "teachers….actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students….[in classroom settings]where they grow, and are empowered [as well] (hooks, 1994,

p. 15, 21). Such approaches to pedagogy, along with the tenets of healing centered engagement, align to an ethnic studies pedagogical framework. Ethnic studies pedagogy is feeling-based and actively fosters opportunities for youth to self-define (who they are) and self-determine (who they will become) on the journey towards individual and collective liberation (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Halagao, 2010).

A healing centered framework provides educators involved in racial and social justice key elements and pedagogies to consider and to adopt when engaging youth and adults in work that focuses on trauma, pain, and the holistic well-being of individuals and their communities. This process and approach to healing also builds the capacity for people to act upon their environment and to "contribute to individual well-being, community health, and broader social justice where people can act on behalf of others with hope, joy, and a sense of possibility" (Ginwright, 2016, p. 8). Thus, for the group of ethnic studies educators at East Los High, a healing centered/justice[7] approach has the potential to illustrate how educators center their own collective healing as they reclaim and reframe their pedagogies and activism around a "shared vision for what could be, with a shared commitment and determination to make it a reality" (Ginwright, 2016, p. 21; Navarro, 2018).

Restorative Justice in Education

As part of a healing-centered approach to ethnic studies, and teaching in general, I argue for the integration of restorative justice practices in classroom settings and in schools. As previously mentioned, teaching ethnic studies as an anti-racist and liberatory curricula and engaging youth in discussions on different forms of oppression can be triggering, can cause

[7] Healing justice is defined as, "transforming the institution and relationships that are causing harm" and "collectively healing and building hope" (Ginwright, 2016, p. 7).

harm, and surface trauma for both students and teachers. A way to address this concern is through healing practices that weave a restorative justice mindset into classroom norms and daily activities.

Restorative justice (RJ) is rooted in Indigenous cultural wisdom and practices found throughout the world from different civilizations in Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and the Americas (Winn et al., 2019). RJ practices made their way into the Western justice system in the 1980s and eventually into schools in the 1990s (Winn et al., 2019). According to criminologist and RJ theorist Howard Zehr, RJ "begins with a concern for victims and how to meet their needs, for repairing the harm as much as possible … [and] involves a reorientation of how we think about crime and justice" (2002, p. 68). In the U.S. context, as a response to the realities of criminalization that strike Black, Latinx, LGBTQIPA+, differently abled, and other youth the hardest, some scholars have advocated and pushed for applying restorative justice principles and policies to schools, communities, and the juvenile justice system (Winn et al., 2019; Davis, 2018; Winn, 2018). In particular, for schools there has been a movement "to create a cultural shift from punitive [zero-tolerance policies] to restorative responses to youthful wrongdoing" (Davis, 2018, p. 428; Haft, 2000; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Winn, 2013). RJ in education is "not merely an alternative to punishment; it is a way of life" that views all youth as worthy of dignity and respect (Winn, 2018, p. 18). As part of this process, when harm does occur RJ asks, "who experienced harm, how the harm impacted people and relationships, and how the various stakeholders can seek a community response to the harm as opposed to fueling further polarization of those involved" (Winn, 2013, p.127; Zehr, 1997). This shift in thinking and transformative approach "assumes that justice can and should promote healing, both individual and societal" (Zehr, 1997, p. 70).

So, what does restorative justice (RJ) look like in schools and classrooms? RJ is a three-tiered approach. Tier 1 focuses on building and strengthening relationships by engaging "the entire school community, entailing training, coaching and facilitation of one-on-one Restorative Conversations and Community-Building Circles to proactively create a culture of healing and connectivity that transforms school climate" (Davis, 2018, p. 429; Winn et al., 2019; Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2010). Tier 2 centers on repairing relationships. It involves addressing conflict after it has occurred and the training, coaching and facilitation of conflict circles and restorative conferences that take place as alternatives to out-of-school suspension (Davis, 2018; Winn et al., 2019). Tier 3 foregrounds reentry and reintegration. It uses Circles to "welcome or reintegrate a youth after a period of absence due to incarceration or other cause" (Davis, 2018, p. 429).

Tier 1 requires a whole school paradigm shift where faculty and staff are trained to learn how to build community through the active pursuit of healthy relationships with students and their families. Tier 2 and 3 are usually facilitated by administrators, deans, counselors and/or others and require more specialized training and coaching (Davis, 2018; Winn et al., 2019). For the most part, educators attend to tier 1 in their daily relational practices "that are grounded in pro-social values that reassure every child and adult that they are worthy, that they have dignity, and that their community wants and needs them" (Winn et al., 2019, p. 39). Well-developed tier 1 practices translate to fewer conflicts that lead to tier 2 or 3. Ultimately, the three tiers of RJ reaffirm, repair, and rebuild relationships as it "peels back the underlying layers of conflict to find ways to help people heal and thus prevent another occurrence of the conflict" (Winn et al., 2019, p. 40). RJ offers educators and school communities a way to not only create and sustain positive relationships with youth but also helps to center the humanity of students whose needs have yet to be fully understood and met in schools and in the broader society (Winn, 2018). As a

result, schools that have adopted RJ have shown “improved relationships in the classroom, school, district and community; a reduction in suspensions and expulsions; and improved test scores” (Winn et al., 2019, p. 20; Fronius et al., 2016).

Restorative Justice at East Los High

In 2013, the Los Angeles School Board District passed the School Climate Bill of Rights (SCBR). SCBR states that students “will attend schools with climates that focus on safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, and the institutional environment that influence student learning and well-being” (Board Resolution, School Discipline Policy and SCBR, 2013). To create a positive school climate, SCBR calls for the implementation of RJ on all campuses.

The year SCBR was approved, East Los High became one of the first schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District to pilot/adopt RJ practices in the 2014/15 school year. With a supportive administration that secured funding, faculty and staff at East Los High attended a year-long professional development program on RJ. East Los High hired an RJ coordinator to lead the campus through this process. During the first phase of this school-wide effort, and prior to addressing any discipline issues, East Los faculty and staff sat in Circle and participated in tier 1 of restorative justice: building community (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2010). When discipline issues eventually arose on campus, faculty and staff were encouraged to think restoratively and implement approaches explored during their training. Unsurprisingly, this transition was not a smooth campus-wide process, yet school faculty and staff were collectively committed to embracing and implementing RJ, which at its core is about fostering positive relationships between students and students-teachers.

In addition, according to Winn (2018), educators need a mind-set shift that requires "complementary pedagogical stances that are consistent with the tenets and goals of [RJ]...." (p. 32). Naturally, ethnic studies is an ideal content area to fuse RJ practices as its tenets align and affirm the four RJ pedagogical stances of history, race, justice, and language in education (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016; Winn, 2018). In a recent article, López, Dueñas, & López (2021), document some of the RJ infused ethnic studies work at East Los High and the RJ mindset that complements ethnic studies' inherent social justice pedagogical stance. López et al. (2021), highlight the way three ethnic studies educators embrace RJ and begin to reimagine what freedom and justice for their students and themselves look like as they consider how *history matters* "as an opportunity to access painful histories collectively and to address historical wrongdoing in education and in school communities" (Winn, 2018, p. 34). History emerges as a starting point for personal storytelling and building community for these teachers and their students. The authors go on to describe the range of RJ practices they engage their students in and how their approach to teaching includes an RJ paradigm that is committed to challenging dominant narratives and hegemonic structures that exist in society (López et al., 2021).

Ultimately, within this domain of ethnic studies teaching, I hope to explore how a group of educators draw upon RJ and healing-centered approaches as they dialogue with each other and reflect on their individual work as ethnic studies teachers. I also am interested in whether and to what extent, they discuss their engagement with RJ via an ethnic studies curriculum in meaningful and not superficial ways, especially when dealing with conflict as it arises in the classroom. I am also interested in exploring, to what extent these educators envision ethnic studies teaching as a space that is inclusive, healing, and restorative for both students and adults. By focusing on this element, I aim to contribute to the growing body of research on ethnic

studies, K–12 teaching practices, and the scholarly work that attends to holistic ways of being (Ginwright 2016; 2018; Cariaga, 2019; Hannegan-Martinez, 2019; Pour-Khorsid, 2018; Freire, 1970; Darder, 2015; Anzaldúa, 2015; Camangian, 2015; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This dissertation examines how a group of Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American teachers learn and develop, at an individual and collective level, in the process of teaching ethnic studies in a high school setting in East Los Angeles. For this case study, I use the three elements—(1) CRT/LatCrit, (2) critical professional development (CPD), and (3) healing-centered engagement and restorative justice (RJ) practices—discussed in the previous chapter to analyze the data I collected. I consider the individual experiences, identities, and critical consciousness that the five educators bring to the classroom; whether and to what extent these identities and experiences influence how these educators come together to engage in activities and teacher-led professional development; and in what ways these educators forge a common teaching approach that allows for reflection and growth while recognizing individual differences. I also plan to explore how these critical educators engage and envision ethnic studies as an inclusive, healing, and restorative dimension to their teaching. Although distinct, there is overlap between these three elements which can potentially contribute to a greater understanding of ethnic studies and teacher learning and development that occurs in rich, diverse, and meaningful ways.

In this chapter, I begin with an explanation of my positionality as a researcher who seeks and takes a humanizing approach to doing research. I then segue into critical race methodology (CRM) as a key theoretical and methodological tool utilized in this study to examine racism and forms of oppression in the lives of my five ethnic studies teacher participants. CRM also offers a process to study how these educators engage ethnic studies curricula as a way to empower youth and challenge forms of injustice and subordination. Afterwards, I provide an overview of the site and context, study design (case study), and data collection methods of this study. The data

collection process details the two research tools I use to answer my three research questions: (1) semi-structured interviews and (2) focus group interviews. I then transition to data analysis, placing the theoretical/conceptual, pedagogical, and methodological (CRM, CPD by way of socio-cultural theory and communities of practice, healing centered engagement & RJ) frameworks in this study in conversation with the data collected. Lastly, this chapter ends with a look at some limitations and potential implications of this study. Ultimately, the aim of this project is to inform our understanding of teacher learning and development for four Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American teachers who engage in dialogue on their individual and collective experiences, teaching practices, and effort to teach a ninth-grade ethnic studies curriculum committed to racial and social justice.

Positionality of the Researcher

When I began my doctoral journey in 2017, one of the first questions I was asked in my qualitative research methods course was what I hoped to gain in this class and/or as a researcher. Immediately, I thought that, as a researcher, I hoped to gain insight on how research could be used to advocate for equity and racial and social justice. I come to this study committed to these principles and to the idea that researchers "can humanize[8] through the act of research" (Paris, 2011, p. 11). The history of qualitative and ethnographic research has a long track record of dehumanizing non-Western historically marginalized communities, of pathologizing, objectifying, and labeling communities of color as deficient within the U.S. and beyond (Paris & Winn, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2012; Paris, 212, & Wilson, 2008). In contrast, I intend to take a humanizing approach. Instead of treating or viewing my participants like a number, object, or

[8] In this context, as a researcher for equity, humanize refers to building relationships of dignity, respect, and care with the community being studied (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2014) .

with a deficit lens, I plan to develop and nurture relationships of care, dignity, and "dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants" which goes beyond traditional forms of conducting research (Paris & Winn, 2014, p.xvi).

The school site in this study—East Los High School (a pseudonym) located in East Los Angeles, California—is a school at which I taught for twelve years and took part in co-creating the ninth-grade ethnic studies program. As an insider with an emic perspective, I have access to conducting research with the four ethnic studies educators and I am familiar with the campus climate, teachers, students, parents, and administration. Although I collaborated with two of my teacher participants to create the core themes and essential questions for the ninth-grade ethnic studies course, it has been four years since I was in the classroom. The ethnic studies program at East Los High and the school itself has grown and evolved in that time. I acknowledge as a researcher coming back to East Los High that I am an outsider, as I no longer teach there, and I have never lived in the surrounding community. While conducting research, I also kept in mind the privileges I have as a light-skinned cisgender Chicanx male. As a researcher, this recognition of my multiple identities and the privileges it affords allows me to be critical and reflexive of my position as a scholar studying a group of teachers and the identities they carry as people of color.

On the other hand, as a person of color and former high school educator at the school, I share some commonalities with my participants on a personal and professional level. Also, I am clear about my positionality in this study as a humble scholar who views research as a process of reciprocity and respect with my former colleagues. I believe it is possible to do serious rigorous research without detaching myself from the teachers, school, and community I have embraced for over twelve years. In taking this approach, I recognize qualitative research as an important tool that creates space to dialogue, listen, make sense, and analyze the experiences of those often

overlooked, ignored, or historically marginalized (Smith, 2013). In this case, I am centering the identities and lived experiences of four teachers of color who I consider as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Throughout the research process, I shared insights and preliminary findings with my teacher participants to see if I was accurately portraying their words and experiences. My hope in conducting this research the way that I did here is to establish that I am in these spaces to listen, learn, and gain new understandings from educators of color who teach ethnic studies. I also communicated that I hope to use this study not only to further academic research but also to influence and impact educators looking to strengthen their racial and social justice pedagogies.

Critical Race Methodology

As part of a humanizing approach to research within a predominantly Latinx community, this study relies on critical race methodology (CRM) in education as it offers the space to "conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 23). For this study, CRM provides a lens and research approach to capture, analyze, and highlight the experiences of four Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American ethnic studies teachers at East Los High. I am particularly interested in how these educators engage in conversation with one another and with their students on issues of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression that manifest in and out of schools (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). For these and other reasons I lean heavily on CRM.

As a theoretically grounded approach to research, CRM elaborates and expands on the work in critical race theory in education. CRM is defined as;

> research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color; 1(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 (Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 24).

These principles, which build on Solórzano's (1997) five CRT tenets, assist CRT scholars throughout the research process (Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001). By applying these principles to my study, I provided a lens to examine and respond to racism, inequities, and other forms of oppression as it relates to both the personal and professional experiences of the teacher participants in this research project (Yosso, 2006).

Site & Context

In Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest district in the nation, the demographic makeup of both students and teachers consists primarily of people of color—with 88% youth of color and 66.4% of the teacher workforce, respectively ("LAUSD Fingertip Facts," 2020; "Teacher Demographics," 2019). This is important to note as my study seeks to expand, among many things, on the limited research on teachers of color who teach in a school and within a district with predominantly students and faculty of color. The focus of this study on teacher learning and development via an ethnic studies program in a high school setting led me to purposefully select East Los High as my study site. East Los High's ethnic studies program was one of the first ethnic studies programs to emerge in the district post the 2014 Board resolution (023-14/15)—which allows schools to offer ethnic studies with the goal to make ethnic studies a graduation requirement by 2019 ("HS: Ethnic Studies-Graduation Requirement," 2015).

East Los High is also unique as it is one of the five schools in which students participated in the 1968 East Los Angeles walkouts/blowouts. For over a week, thousands of students walked

out of school for justice and educational equity, demanding improved school conditions, teaching of Mexican American history and culture, hiring of Mexican American teachers, access to higher education, racial justice, and an end to oppressive schooling (Acuña, 1988). The student strike/walkout was a response to years of school inequality, systemic racism, school segregation, and mistreatment of Mexican American students (Gonzalez, 1990). Unfortunately, the struggle for many of these demands still continues.

Today, East Los High, is a comprehensive school that also hosts a magnet academy on its campus. For this study, I focused on the ethnic studies teachers in both the main campus and Magnet Academy, a pseudonym. Throughout this dissertation, I make distinctions between East Los High and the Magnet Academy when discussing the one of my four teacher participants who teaches in the Magnet Academy (the other four participants teach on the main campus). The most recent data on East Los High, 2017-18, has the student enrollment at 1,278 and Magnet Academy at 530 students ("East Los High[9]," 2019; "Magnet Academy[10]," 2019). Both East Los High and the Magnet Academy have a 98 to 99% Latinx student body ("East Los High," 2019; "Magnet Academy," 2019). Teachers of color in East Los High and the Magnet Academy make up 79.4% and 92%, respectively, of the teacher population (EdData "East Los High," 2019; EdData "Magnet Academy," 2019). Both schools are designated as having "socioeconomically disadvantaged" students where the majority of youth qualify or are eligible for free and reduced priced meals; or have parents/guardians who did not or have not received a high school diploma ("East Los High," 2019; "Magnet Academy," 2019). Nevertheless, there are clear differences between both schools, including the fact that East Los High has a higher percentage of "English

[9] I am using East Los High, a pseudonym, for both in text citation and in references.
[10] I am using Magnet Academy, a pseudonym, for both in text citation and in references.

learners" (17.7 % to 1.9%) and a lower graduation rate than the Magnet Academy (98.1% to 74.3%) ("East Los High," 2019; "Magnet Academy," 2019). In addition, unlike the Magnet Academy where a percentage of students are bused in from South Los Angeles, East Los High sees the vast majority of students coming from the surrounding neighborhood.

As previously stated, I taught at East Los High, from 2005 to 2017, and co-created the ninth-grade ethnic studies program. I played many roles at the school including sponsor of student activist clubs, social studies department chair, and instructional coach. I also worked closely with some of the teacher participants in this study. This familiarity with East Los High strengthened my research as I navigated the school campus and focused my attention on four ethnic studies educators for this case study.

Study Design

This qualitative study is designed as a case study. A case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') within its real-life context" (Yin, 2014, p.16). In this case study, the phenomenon are the four ethnic studies educators, who are the unit of analysis, that teach the ninth-grade ethnic studies program at East Los High (Stake, 2006). A case study allows me to explore this particular group (a bounded system) of educators in a 'real-life context' in the way they learn and develop as teachers of color when teaching ethnic studies (Stake, 2006; Merriam Tisdell, 2016). This research approach allows me to gather richly detailed data from my participants and offers an opportunity to examine teachers' lived experiences and teaching experiences within an ethnic studies high school program. This in-depth descriptive process of doing research "results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon," which for this particular study meant gaining a greater understanding of teacher learning and development for a group of educators of color (Merriam, 2009, p. 51).

To do this, I conducted this research and engaged directly with my participants through two main data collection strategies: semi-structured interviews and focus groups. This process of collecting intimate knowledge of everyday experiences from other people requires that as a critical researcher there is an appreciation for the indigeneity of meaning—of how we need to listen and understand how our participants view themselves and make sense of things in their world as opposed to focusing on what they aren't or how things make sense of them (Emerson et al., 2011; Kirkland, 2014).

This study took place during the spring 2021 and the fall 2021 academic semesters. The data collection process consisted of two phases. In the first phase, I began by conducting individual semi-structured interviews with each of the four ethnic studies teachers to explore how personal schooling experiences, identity as youth of color, and formation of critical consciousness informs their identity/ities as adults and as ethnic studies educators. I conducted mid-semester interviews and end-of-year interviews to help inform the other two research questions in this study that focus on collective identity and healing centered & restorative justice conversations shared and discussed between educators as they engage in meaningful critical professional development on ethnic studies teaching. The first round of individual interviews occurred in February 2021, the second round in May 2021, and the third round in June 2021.

In the second phase, I brought all four educators together to engage in four focus group discussions. Three of the four focus group interviews took place in the spring 2021 semester (in March, April, and May); the fourth and final focus group interview took place in August 2021. The themes of these focus group interviews included teachers' individual identities and lived histories as people and educators of color; the core values and tenets of ethnic studies in relation the ethnic studies program East Los High; classroom practices and pedagogies; challenges and

tensions that arise from teaching ethnic studies content; discussions based on the work shared during co-created/co-facilitated professional development; and a reflective session on personal and collective growth and how they envision their ethnic studies program moving forward. I now turn to my data collection methods in greater detail.

Data Collection Methods

I utilized two research tools—semi-structured interviews and focus groups—to collect data for this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As previously mentioned, East Los High hosts two separate schools on its campus. Four of my participants teach on the main campus while one participant teaches in the Magnet Academy. I emailed all four teachers, who represent all the ethnic studies teachers on both campuses, to schedule a phone call. I personally know all four of my potential participants and have a past working relationship with most of them. During this call, I explained my research and asked if they would be willing to take part in my study.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In February 2021, I spoke to each of the teacher participants to schedule my first semi-structured interviews. The first round of individual interviews occurred in February 2021, the second round in May 2021, and the third round in June 2021. I chose interviews as a data collection method for its in-depth "interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). For this study, capturing and recognizing the experiential knowledge of teachers of color was particularly important to me, as their stories are often overlooked or not told as opposed to the majoritarian white dominant teaching narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In-depth interviews allow for a deeper

understanding and appreciation of the counter-stories[11] of teachers of colors. I also interviewed each teacher three times in the course of the study—at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. I interviewed each teacher during non-instructional time via Zoom—an online platform used for teleconferencing, distance education, and social relations. The one-to-one interview sessions lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes in duration. The interview protocols were semi-structured (see Appendices A, B, and C). The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for predetermined open-ended questions with enough flexibility for my participants to share in a free-flowing discussion (Sediman, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this way, I encouraged teachers to share, question, and reflect on the interview questions posed especially when thinking about the larger objectives of this study.

In the first set of interviews (see Appendix A for the protocol), I wanted to learn more about each teacher's life story, multiple dimensions of their identities, moments of consciousness development, how they came to the teaching profession, their relationship to ethnic studies, and their approach to teaching this content area. The second round of interviews (see Appendix B) took place halfway through the semester. During this set of interviews, teachers responded to questions on core ideals/tenets of ethnic studies pedagogy (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Reyes McGovern & Buenavista, 2016) in relation to their curriculum; questions about the type of practices they utilize to build community and to address pain, trauma, and tensions that surface while teaching ethnic studies; and questions that asked them to reflect on their participation from the two focus group interviews prior to the second interview. The final set of interviews (see

[11] Counter-stories or counter-storytelling is a method "of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people….to raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006, p. 10). It is also used as a method to combat dominant narratives which have historically framed communities of color in deficit and racist ways.

Appendix C) was conducted at the end of the semester. The third interview contained questions that asked my participants to reflect on their experience in my study. The interview focused on individual growth and development and each teacher's experience while engaging in critical professional development. In framing the questions in the way that I did over the course of these interviews, I was particularly interested in how teachers make meaning of their individual and collective experience throughout a semester of teaching ethnic studies. I was also interested in learning to what extent they forge a collective identity that also recognizes differences in the journey to teach a humanizing curriculum for racial and social justice.

Once each interview was completed, I transcribed, analyzed, coded, and connected the interview data to my research questions. To do this, I used *memos* as a strategy to synthesize data and develop analytic leads and insights from notes taken during my interviews—this was an ongoing practice I used throughout the semester. Memos are "brief analytical focused writings" which allow researchers "to identify and explore initial theoretical directions [and/or...possibilities and implications]" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 123). Although not intended as a final systematic analysis, memos also allow researchers to step back and to shift their attention to reflect on larger implications listened to or observed in said events (Emerson et al., 2011).

For this study, considering how teaching ethnic studies is a very personal endeavor for many teachers as they often share their own lived experiences in relation to very difficult topics and issues discussed with students, I also regularly shared emerging themes that surface with my participants. As part of a humanizing approach to doing research, I invited my teacher participants to discuss and contribute their thoughts on what I was noticing or finding in my analyses. This form of participant engagement constituted an attempt to democratize the research process by giving my participants a space to voice and challenge ideas I put forth (Mirra, 2012;

Carspecken, 1996). Through a "democratizing" approach to research, I attempted to honor the intimate knowledge collected and to build trust and accountability with my participants.

Focus Groups

In this study, I also conducted four focus groups. During focus group gatherings, the four teacher participants were brought together in a group setting to discuss and engage in various activities and critical professional development centered around ethnic studies content (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Focus group research is unique in that it allows for an "interactive discussion through which data are generated, which leads to a different type of data not accessible through individual interviews" (Hennink, 2014, pp. 2–3). The group element is useful for obtaining socially constructed knowledge and new ideas about topics that otherwise would not be captured through individual interviews. For this study, this important characteristic meant that teachers came together to share their views, hear the views of others, refine their views, and reflect on what they heard and discussed on topics related to the teaching of ethnic studies and the potential implications it has on their lives and their teaching. Focus groups create a space to share narratives and frame issues in terms that make sense to participants. They also have the potential to lead participants to greater understanding, for example, of the growth and development that take place for a collective of educators at East Los High.

Over the span of this study, I conducted four 70 to 80-minute focus group interviews, all in 2021. The first focus group interview took place in March 2021; the second and third took place in April; and the fourth focus group interview took place in August 2021. Each meeting took place after instructional hours via Zoom. Most of my participants know each other. Some have worked closely in social studies department meetings, and other have lessons planned outside non-instructional hours. Nevertheless, the first gathering (see Appendix D for the

protocol) focused on creating a comfortable group setting and took place after the first round of individual interviews. In reviewing the transcriptions from those interviews, I identified key concepts and questions for teachers to engage in that ask participants to share about their personal lived experiences, experiences as teachers of color, their pedagogical approach to teaching, and what it means to teach ethnic studies. To establish a comfortable space, I led the group in two RJ community building activities that tap into individual and collective moments in my participants' lives as it relates to teaching ethnic studies. The goal of these activities and the first group meeting was to develop an understanding and appreciation of individual experiences and begin establishing and/or strengthening a collective sense of identity and community between these educators of color as they move along the path of teaching ethnic studies.

The second (see Appendix E) and third (see Appendix F) focus group meetings were devoted to co-creating/co-facilitating professional development. These meetings provided me with an opportunity to learn from the dialogue that emerges from these gatherings. Prior to these meetings, I spoke to each teacher to discuss and determine when they would present their work to the focus group. Each teacher was asked to identify a lesson/idea/theme in regard to their development and implementation of ethnic studies curricula in the classroom. This process gave each teacher within this community of practice the chance to share and discuss how they are making sense of ethnic studies curriculum in a supportive space. During these group gatherings, I followed a protocol (see Appendix G), to provide structure, affording the presenting teacher time to share their work/thoughts; listen to their colleagues share their thoughts, questions, and concerns with one another; answer clarifying questions; dialogue about both the presenting teacher and his/her colleagues own teaching practices when teaching ethnic studies; and lastly time to reflect and discuss issues that were raised during their conversation. In creating this

collaborative space—not often seen in mainstream forms of professional development—I wanted to create as much potential as possible for teachers to benefit and gain new knowledge and ideas from the dialogue between their peers. Ultimately, the critical conversations that emerged challenged my participants to reflect on their individual and collective teaching approach as a community of practice.

Moreover, the last group gathering (see Appendix H) focused and prompted participants to reflect on their work as ethnic studies teachers at the end of the semester. This group interview served to not only to fill in gaps in my research, but more importantly to offer the four Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American teachers the chance to reflect on their individual and collective learning and development as part of an ethnic studies community at East Los High. I guided the group in two writing exercises. The first exercise consisted of presenting themes and findings that were emerging from my study and inviting my research participants to take part in the data-analysis process. In taking this approach, I sought to "avoid claiming sole authority in the analysis of their lives" (Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 628). I wanted to allow my teacher participants in an interactive process the opportunity to offer their insights, interpretations, questions, and concerns on whether their voice aligns with the preliminary findings. Building on the conversation in the first exercise, the second exercise engaged participants in a series of questions and discussion around what it means to re-imagine ethnic studies. Specifically, I wanted to create a space for these educators to think and plan ahead for the upcoming academic year when teaching this subject within their own classrooms and possibly as a collective entity. This portion also featured questions that asked participants to reflect on concepts, ideas, and pedagogical practices in order to highlight some of the successes throughout the academic year but also the challenges and difficulties they faced when teaching during a pandemic. Ultimately,

this final meeting concluded with questions that asked participants to reflect on their experience as a whole and what they learned in these collaborative spaces.

At the end of each focus group, I drew from the same preliminary data analysis approach as my interviews: transcription, analysis, coding, sharing insights with participants, and connecting their responses to my research questions. This practice was ongoing throughout the data gathering process with every data set I collected. Also, all individual and focus group interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

The data analyzed for this case study consisted mainly of transcripts and notes taken from interviews. Throughout this study, I used inductive reasoning as it allows qualitative researchers to combine "bits and pieces of information from interviews" to build concepts, larger themes, hypotheses, or theories that emerge from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17). Also, I regularly created analytical memos throughout the data collection process and various stages of data analysis. Analytic memos are written reflections about the "participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation" and, more generally, a conversation with ourselves about our data about "coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories, themes, and concepts" researchers see in their data (Saldaña, 2016, p. 44). This approach helped me synthesize my findings and allowed me to think through the emerging concepts and themes in this study.

During the first cycle of analysis, I began to code using a 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' open coding approach. Open coding should be understood "less as a way to sort data than as a way to name, distinguish, and identify the conceptual import and significance" of data (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 175). As a qualitative researcher, I did not begin coding with fixed

analytic categories; rather, I inductively create analytic categories based on significant events, ideas/concepts, and experiences found in the transcripts (Emerson et al., 2011). During this initial phase of coding, I also stayed close to what was said in the interviews and gradually made connections. I skimmed the data looking for repetition of words/ideas and using in vivo, process, emotion, and values coding. The reason for this is my interest in capturing words or short phrases from the actual language found in the data. I looked for words connoting action in the data, and values, emotions, attitudes, and beliefs representing the experiences and perspectives of the ethnic studies teachers in this study (Saldaña, 2016). For all my data, I first began coding by hand; later, I used Dedoose, an online computer assisted data analysis software, to categorize data and to assist in the data analysis process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In the second cycle of data analysis, I utilized and constantly returned to the three theoretical/conceptual frameworks (CRT/LatCrit; critical professional development (CPD); healing centered engagement & RJ) and the three main research questions guiding this study. Building on my initial analysis, I applied these frameworks and pedagogical approaches as analytical tools to my study.

To gain insight on my first research question, which explores how my participants make sense of their racialized experiences, identities, and consciousness development in both their personal and professional lives and how these experiences influence their identity as teachers of color and the implications this has on their pedagogical teaching practices, I used a critical race methodological approach. As an interpretive lens, critical race methodology (CRM) provides various tools to "demystify the condition, history, and lived realities of peoples who are often made invisible and silenced" (Hayes, 2015, p. 46). For this study, I primarily used the tool of counter-storytelling/counter-stories, which pulls from CRT and LatCrit, to capture the

experiences of my participants, all of whom identify as Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American. Generally, teachers of color narratives are often not told or overlooked in dominant mainstream narratives (Department of Education, 2016; Pour-Khorshid, 2018). Counter-stories challenge dominant research paradigms that have traditionally focused on majoritarian storytelling/narratives[12] while silencing and distorting epistemologies of people of color (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Counter-stories serve at least four functions in the struggle for educational equality, these are to "build community among those at the margins; challenge perceived wisdom of those at society's center; nurture community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance; and facilitate transformation in education" (Yosso, 2006, pp.14-15). For these reasons, I use counter-stories as a method to capture and highlight the stories of four teachers of color as they reflect on their lived experiences, teaching, learning, and struggles while engaging youth in an ethnic studies curriculum—which inherently challenges dominant ideologies and forms of oppression. Also, as an analytical tool I use counter-stories to help strengthen "traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" by documenting the experience and knowledge of a group of Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American teachers engaged in a curriculum committed to racial and social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p.11; Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019).

During this second phase of analysis, I relied on the second element of this study, a CPD model, "where teachers are engaged as politically aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society," to guide my data analysis (Kohli et al., 2016, p. 11). In particular, I wanted to gain insight on how four ethnic studies educators come together, in four focus group

[12] A majoritarian story/narrative, "is one that [often] privileges Whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28).

gatherings, to engage and co-create/co-facilitate CPD around ethnic studies content as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). CPD builds on socio-cultural theory and communities of practice ideals which posits that teacher learning and development can be co-constructed between individuals who "engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" (Wenger, 2011, p.1; Ellis & Orchard, 2014; Philip et al., 2019; Shabani, 2016; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). An analysis of the four focus groups or CPD spaces where teachers share personal and professional experiences, co-create/co-facilitate lessons, and reflect on teaching practices as a collective, helped to shed light on the extent to which CPD's tenets of dialogic action (cooperative dialogue, unity, shared leadership, and meet the critical needs of teachers) emerged in the data. It also helped to illuminate the extent to which participation in CPD impacts the way teachers draw upon their individual and collective identities to forge a common ethnic studies teaching approach.

Additionally, throughout this cycle of analysis, I turned to the third element of this study, healing centered engagement (Ginwright, 2016, 2018) and RJ practices (Winn, 2018). Although not always explicit in ethnic studies literature, healing centered engagement & RJ practices for K–12 ethnic studies practitioners is implicitly referenced as ethnic studies content often engages in the painful histories and current realities of oppression and struggle, in particular, for communities of color. I was curious to what extent four teachers of color at East Los High embrace ethnic studies and RJ practices, as their own lived experiences are part of the larger racialized fabric/narrative in U.S. society. I was also interested in learning to what extent these educators draw upon healing centered engagement and RJ practices as they discuss community building; fostering positive relationships; mitigating tensions and issues in the classroom; and working collectively to address historical wrongdoing in education in society. Further, I wanted

to learn about how they reframe individual and collective practices and pedagogies in this shared space.

After these two cycles of data analysis, I made a master list of all preliminary codes, analytic memos, emerging themes, and conceptual categories. During this cycle, I also continued to triangulate my data seeking evidence to confirm the findings in my analysis. These preliminary findings were shared with teacher participants during our final focus group for member checking, as previously mentioned. Member checking occurred as data is analyzed to honor my teacher participants' meanings and experience (Emerson et al., 2011). Part of the way I did this during the third cycle of analysis was by inviting the teachers during their last focus group meeting to collaboratively analyze the major findings that emerged. The purpose was to create a space for teachers to reflect on their individual and collective experiences and teaching practices and offer an opportunity to refine/strengthen their pedagogies and discuss what they learned in this collaborative space (Bazeley, 2013). By including research participants in this humanizing approach to analyzing data through an interactive process that allowed teachers to discuss whether their experiences and voices aligned with preliminary findings, I attempted to "bring meaning to the data" in inviting my participants to be co-creators of the knowledge produced in this study (Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 628). In taking this approach of member checking through a collaborative analysis of sharing and discussing emerging findings with teacher participants, I also attempted to provide credibility for research assertions (Diera, 2020; Willis, 2007).

Limitations

Initially, my study design had included in-person classroom observations as part of my data collection. Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, at the time I designed this study,

it was unclear whether teachers and students would be going back, if at all, into the classroom for the spring 2021 semester. If teachers and students did return to school, they would most likely implement a hybrid model of teaching. This meant that students would physically attend school a few days out of the week and for the other days would continue taking their courses virtually as they did during the fall semester. This reality created a limitation to my study as it was unlikely that schools would go back for full in-person instruction. Considering this, I decided to remove classroom visitations from my data collection as I intended to capture ethnic studies educators' teaching and engaging youth in an in-person setting. Instead, this study's data collection consists of individual and focus group interviews. Under these conditions, all interviews were conducted synchronously (in real time) via Zoom. I also applied the same approach and considerations when interviewing my participants on Zoom as I would have done if the interviews had been conducted in person.

Implications

When considering who might benefit from this study, I instantly think of my teacher participants. As a critical researcher, I have always been committed to collaborating in solidarity with the community being studied. As previously mentioned, I have a deep connection and affinity to East Los High and the ethnic studies program having taught at this school for many years. As part of my humanizing approach to research built on care and dignity, this study pulls from the four R's (Relationality, Responsibility, Respect, and Reciprocity) of Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies (Brayboy, Gough, Leonard, Roehl, & Solym, 2012; Paris & Winn, 2014). The concept of the four R's resonates in the way I view research: as rooted in relationship building; commitment to the community; research driven by the community, in this case, creating a space for teachers of color to co-create critical professional development to share,

reflect, and build on their experiences and teaching practices to strengthen their ethnic studies curriculum; and recognizing the struggle, as educators of color teaching for racial and social justice (Brayboy et al., 2012). In attempting to do research *with* the community and not *on* the community, the principle of reciprocity—especially in sharing my final results—has been a crucial part of my research design. I conducted a 'report back' session to my teacher participants by inviting them to an informal gathering where I shared the knowledge and research and so that we could recognize the knowledge in this study as having been a collective effort between them and me (Smith, 2013).

And so, my hope for this study is that it not only reaches the people who have helped make it, but that it contributes to and furthers educational research by offering new ways of thinking about and understanding teacher learning and development when considering educators of color teaching ethnic studies curricula in a high school setting.

Chapter 4: When Teaching Ethnic Studies, Teacher Identity Matters

As K–12 ethnic studies programs expand in both California and across the nation, there are many insights and lessons that can be learned from the experiences of educators who are already successfully teaching ethnic studies. Unfortunately, literature that focuses on K–12 ethnic studies teachers and their experiential knowledge of teaching ethnic studies is limited. Even less is known about *who* these teachers are and *how* their identities and lived experiences inform and influence their teaching of the subject. This chapter addresses some of these gaps in the educational literature by looking at identity, identity formation, and critical consciousness development amongst a group of critical educators of color teaching ethnic studies at a particular high school (East Los High) in East Los Angeles, California.

Methodologically, this chapter draws on a series of dialogues and interviews with my participants about different stages of their lives: their childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, and work as ethnic studies teachers. In this chapter, I focus my analysis primarily on the first set of individual interviews and first focus group in order to capture the impact the different stages in the participants' lives had on their sense of identity and development as educators. I also begin to explore the space I created and facilitated for these teachers to share, listen, and learn from one another's experiences.

In this chapter, I detail how four educators draw upon their lived experiences, multiple identities, and critical consciousness development to understand who they are as critical Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American ethnic studies teachers. To do this, in the first section, I briefly define *identity* and *criticality* to position how I am using these concepts to situate my participants as critical ethnic studies educators who ground their pedagogy in experiential knowledge and in their identities. I then provide a snapshot of my four teacher participants/critical ethnic studies

educators at East Los High. Afterwards, I share key areas that emerged from our discussions which focus on pivotal moments in their lives and how these moments inform their teaching practice. These moments in participants' lives include their early experiences of being racialized, gendered, and otherwise minoritized as young students in the U.S. public education system and their memories around how they developed critical consciousness—that is, a more critical awareness of their difference in relation to the world (Freire, 1970)—in adolescence and early adulthood. For each teacher, I then explore how the formative educational experiences are refracted into their ethnic studies teaching. These pivotal moments, or what education scholars have characterized elsewhere as domains of identity development (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Daus-Magbual, 2010; Baptiste, 2010), highlight the central role identity plays for these critical ethnic studies teachers. Lastly, I introduce how this group of educators came together as a community of practice and in this space engaged in critical professional development (CPD) to sustain and deepen their critical Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American ethnic studies identities.

Defining ***Identity*** & ***Criticality***

Identity—which I articulate as simultaneously intersectional, experiential, and epistemological—is central to ethnic studies teaching. By *identity* (and the related idea of *identity politics*), I am referring *not* to identity as a reductive formulation of "diversity" for the sake of diversity or representation in a superficial sense, but rather identity as an intersectional, analytical, and experiential mode of interrogating relations of power in society. I recognize and conceptualize *identity* as a collective set of fluid, non-static, and heterogeneous experiences that cannot be essentialized or reduced to any singular dimension. Rather, every person embodies multiple identities at once—including but not limited to their gender identity, language identity,

geographic identity, national identity, and so forth (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020); in turn, those identities shape the ways they understand their communities and their relationships to power, the ways they think about their social worlds and their positions within them, and the ways they learn in the classroom and outside of it. This view acknowledges that a person's identity is necessarily complex and exists at the intersection of power relations and their multiple social identities (McCall, 2005; see also my earlier discussion of intersectionality in Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

Throughout this chapter, I use the terms *identity*, *identities*, and *identity/identities* interchangeably to capture this always-present plurality of identities that the teacher participants inhabit. When I use the term *identity*, I am referring to the multiplicity of *identities* that are present in the discussion. For example, my teacher participants racially self-identify as Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, or Mexican American. At the same time, they also embrace other identities, such as being women or social justice educators, which are dimensions of their identity that have shaped their experiences and ways of seeing the world. In this study, I invoke this conceptualization of *identity* as intersectional, experiential, and epistemological to make the case that teaching ethnic studies requires an understanding and working definition of *identity/identities*, especially as teachers are constantly asked to revisit their identities in relation to ethnic studies content.

Moreover, a hallmark to teaching ethnic studies is the *critical* domain in ethnic studies. Teaching ethnic studies is difficult work, as educators, alongside their students, are asked to engage and develop a critical analysis of racism and other forms of power relations and oppression. In this instance, *critical* (adjective) as a descriptor or *criticality* (noun) as a position in relation to a "stance that seeks knowledge that helps to liberate people from oppressive circumstances" (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020, p. 10; Bohman, 2005). In other words, I am

conceptualizing *criticality* as a kind of epistemological position in which its practitioners develop an awareness of their social, political, and economic conditions in order to change them; in this way, my understanding of *criticality* draws from Freire's (1970) theorization of *conscientization*, which requires a critical awareness of one's social reality.

For critical ethnic studies educators, the liberatory work of teaching students how to "read" the world and their social positions in it encompasses developing and nurturing not only students' critical consciousness but their own consciousness development (see my earlier discussion of critical consciousness in Chapter 2 of this dissertation). Critical consciousness development is a journey, an unfinished process (Freire, 2000), and a fundamental part of any critical educator's life whereby educators constantly self-reflect to inform their praxis. Therefore, when identifying elements for critical ethnic studies teaching identity, identity work/development in the direction of critical consciousness emerge as necessary attributes for educators to have.

In the following sections, I first introduce the four critical ethnic studies educators in this study and then begin to identify pivotal moments in their lives that they draw upon that inform their identity and teaching practices.

Snapshots of the Teacher Participants

The four teacher participants at the center of my study were Jaime Lozano, Rita Dunes, Kenny Amado, and Melissa Cendejas (all pseudonyms). Prior to delving into my teacher participants' adolescent experiences, I briefly introduce each of them. These snapshots include some personal and professional background information, including the number of years they have been teaching, how their students describe them as educators, and the thinkers or ideas that inform their teaching practice.

Jaime Lozano

At the time of this dissertation's writing, Jaime Lozano has been teaching for over two decades at East Los High. Jaime was born in Northern California but grew up in Southern California's Imperial Valley adjacent to the U.S.-Mexico border. His parents were migrant workers who lived in a tight knit community of farm workers. Jaime describes having a transnational experience living on both sides of the border: during the week, he lived and attended public school in Calexico, California, but on weekends, he crossed the border and lived in Mexicali, Mexico. Jaime identifies as Chicano/Mexican. In college, he majored in Chicano/a studies at San Diego State University. He has always felt passionate about integrating Chicano studies into his curriculum, and this was especially the case when he first started teaching. Jaime has been teaching ethnic studies in different iterations for 15 years. He has heard students describe him as "someone who is understanding, caring, who loves teaching, and has an ability to connect with them." Students see Jaime as "an advocate, as chill, patient, kind, calm, good listener, and not punitive." Some of the thinkers that inform his teaching are Paulo Freire, Antonia Darder, Frantz Fanon, Gloria Anazaluda, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Angela Davis, the Black Panther Party, and Ernest Morrell.

Rita Dunes

Rita Dunes is in her fourteenth year of teaching. Rita grew up in East Los Angeles and attended a parochial elementary school before moving to public schools for middle and high school. The high school she attended was one of the East Los Angeles schools that participated in the 1968 Chicano/a Blowouts. Rita mentions that unfortunately, " [with] such a deep history there…muralisms, walkouts, activism….that I never learned that in elementary school, not in middle school and not in high school. That's crazy. That's wild to me." As an educator, she first

taught at her high school alma mater, then was displaced, an involuntary job loss due to economic factors, and hired at East Los High. Rita self-identifies as a first generation Mexican American/Latina cisgender woman. When asked about how her students would describe her, Rita said, "kind and passionate." She reports that her students have told her, "I make them feel safe, am understanding, patient, energetic, and doing a great job." Rita has been teaching ethnic studies for six years and says the thinkers and ideas that inform the way she teaches are Paulo Freire, Antonia Darder, Adrienne Maree Brown, and Octavia Butler. The core ideas that inform her teaching are critical consciousness, critical thinking, the concept of dehumanization, transformative justice, restorative justice, and the practices of "colleague friends" who enact and embody these pedagogies.

Kenny Amado

Kenny Amado is in his fourteenth year of teaching and in his second year at East Los High. Kenny is a third-generation Mexican American who grew up in Pico Rivera, a suburb of Los Angeles just two towns over from East Los High. He describes Pico Rivera as the suburban destination to which residents of East Los Angeles (ELA) have historically moved as "some sort of upward mobility." Kenny had a traditional "American" upbringing of playing sports—in particular, Little League baseball—and going to parochial schools for his entire K–12 schooling experience. He identifies as a Chicano and considers that label a "very political identity [that includes] my history as an activist and progressive minded person." Kenny says his students would describe him as, "a teacher who has high expectations, comes from a place of love and empathy, and is supportive of them overcoming obstacles." In terms of thinkers who inform his teaching, Kenny draws inspiration from education Gholdy Muhammad and Paulo Freire; in terms of ideas that guide his teaching, Kenny cites problem-posing education, pedagogy of love,

and the collective journey of figuring things out with his students. At the time of this dissertation's writing in 2023, Kenny has been teaching ethnic studies for the past five years.

Melissa Cendejas

Melissa Cendejas is a fifth-year educator and has returned home to teach at East Los High where she attended as a young person. Melissa was born and raised in East Los Angeles—more specifically, in the neighborhood of Boyle Heights. She is the youngest of nine and, in her own words, comes from a "very school-oriented" family that encouraged her to strive for "the best grades to get into college." As a result of the active school engagement of her mother and siblings, Melissa viewed school as a vital part of her community.

As a teacher in training, Melissa did her student teaching at East Los High and was later hired there as an English teacher. She was given the unique opportunity to teach ethnic studies as an English teacher, even though the course normally is only offered as a social science course. Melissa has been teaching ethnic studies for four years. She identifies as both Latinx/Chicanx and Chicana/Latina to acknowledge her gender. As an educator, Melissa says students would describe her as "understanding, chill, funny, caring, and always tries her best." The thinkers that influence her teaching are Paulo Freire, Lisa Delpit, and Gholdy Muhammad; Melissa also draws on critical pedagogy, liberating spaces, historically responsive learning and literacy frameworks as guiding pedagogical ideas.

Early Memories of Racialization: Childhood & Early Adolescence

For most of my participants, the earliest recollection of being aware of their identity or their positionality as people of color came from their racialized experiences at school. In this section, I focus on each participant's educational experience to identify the specific pivotal

moments in their lives when they become aware of their racialized, gendered, and classed identities. These moments serve as critical moments that continue to inform their teaching praxis.

Jaime

For Jaime, these pivotal moments of racialization occurred during elementary school. Recounting early experiences of attending schools in the bordertown of Calexico, resurfaced memories of pain, humiliation, and sadness. Jaime recalls in first grade that "all of my teachers are white and a good number of the kids…I was put in ESL [English as a Second Language] and remember not understanding English fully yet." Unlike Jaime's kindergarten experience, in which he attended another school with a majority of faculty and students of color, at this new school, he felt "slow because [he] didn't know the language." During back-to-school night, an annual school event during which parents have the opportunity to meet their children's teachers, Jaime had to learn to translate for his parents as they did not speak English and his teacher did not speak Spanish. Jaime remembers "struggling with that [the translating] and feeling embarrassed because even my parents didn't speak English." These formative moments for Jaime capture the beginning of a racialized and linguistic schooling experience that progressively got worse for him.

The elementary school Jaime attended was a K–8 school. The campus was near a military base where many of the students who attended were white and children of parents who served in the military. He remembers older white students calling him "enchilada" and other derogatory racialized names instead of Jaime. Jaime remembers how attending this school was traumatic in many ways:

> I would say for the most part it [Jaime's schooling experience] was negative. I had Ds and Fs or just really low grades. I struggled making sense of the content. I remember my third-grade teacher would pinch me in class when I didn't pay attention because I remembered in that class I struggled in Math and was scared to ask for help. In fourth

> grade, I remember my teacher was this old, tall, white woman. I got in trouble for talking and she called me up to the front of the class. I walked over and she grabbed her chalk and drew a circle on the chalkboard and ordered me to put my nose inside the circle. I sat there facing the board the entire period. [And another teacher] I don't remember why I got in trouble, but I have a memory of her lifting me up to reach the classroom sink. While her teacher's assistant held my hands back. [The teacher] opened up the water and put soap in my mouth. She actually called my sister to come out, who was in third grade, to watch her torture me. I remember my sister crying, and I was just crying, and I was trying to spit the soap out as I gagged on soap. It was really dehumanizing to go through that.

Lamentably, these terrible experiences and forms of corporal punishment are not unheard of for students of color. Historically, and some would argue until the present, students of color have been victims of dehumanizing discipline policies and practices (Winn, 2018). In Jaime's case, these traumatic events negatively impacted his early sense of identity as a Spanish-speaking child of Mexican immigrant parents. He had to navigate a hostile student body, struggled to "make sense of the content" while learning a new language, and dealt with harmful-inflicting teachers.

In Jaime's own words, his early schooling experience was "really dehumanizing"; these formative experiences set the racialized tone for the remainder of his K–12 educational experiences. By the time Jaime entered fifth grade, these negative schooling experiences had taken their toll: Jaime had internalized a self-loathing for his own Mexican-ness and his family background, to the point where he found himself lying to teachers and students to avoid further public embarrassment because of who he was and where he came from. Jaime remembers one particular incident in which he lied about his parent's jobs:

> Mr. Moses had an activity where he asked all the students, one at a time, going down the rows to stand up and, and share out what your parents did. And a lot of the kids in the class, their parents be working for the Navy. And so, you know, their parents had careers in that field. I remember just being embarrassed, nervous because I was coming up, what am I going to say? Everyone's parents have all these cool jobs. And so I remember lying and saying that my dad was a supervisor. He wasn't. He was a farm worker.

Jaime's recollections of his early educational experiences underscore the many ways in which school was not a safe space for him, both in terms of his classroom learning environments and the social context of his peers. Considering his experiences at school, it is understandable why he hesitated to mention he was a child of a "farm worker." In a school context shaped by dominant ideological beliefs about whose cultural experiences and work merited value, being a farm worker—in all of its racialized and classist meanings—was associated with shame and led to ridicule from Jaime's teacher and classmates. Jaime would later share that it was in college where he made sense of this particular incident and reflected on why he felt he needed to lie and the feeling of embarrassment for doing so. He stated, "So all these things that I was learning—all these messages, right—all the things that I was internalizing in my school and experience were tremendously negative. I didn't have a lens or a critical lens." In retrospect, Jaime remembers, lacking a "critical lens" at that age to make sense of these pivotal moments influenced, among many things, his approach to teaching. As an educator, he became committed to providing his students with a critical lens to interrogate forms of oppression. He also aimed to create the type of classroom he never had—one that affirmed students' Latinx identities; engaged students in conversations around ethnicity, race, culture, and language; and recognized students' familial capital (Yosso, 2005).

Rita

Rita's memories of her racialized difference were rooted in her experiences in an English-only classroom. It was in kindergarten at the parochial school she attended where she became aware of certain aspects of her identity—in other words, where she learned that she was different. Rita recalls, "I think the first time I felt different I internalized it in a negative way was

when I started school” as a monolingual Spanish speaker. She goes on to share about this racialized experience:

> They didn’t have a bilingual program. So I was in an English-only class—like the kids spoke Spanish where my teachers didn’t, they only spoke English. I just remember really struggling and disliking school. I had anxiety, I hated school so much. I would get stomach aches. I was getting bullied. Kids would say stuff and I would try to communicate to the teachers, and they were so dismissive. And I was trying to communicate and there was this disconnect where they would just, they couldn’t understand. I feel those years, I felt something was wrong with me because I didn’t understand what was happening. So I would talk to my classmates and then would get in trouble or I was copying from my classmates and I didn’t know I was doing something wrong. If we were doing an assignment, I would be like, ‘Well, what are we doing?’ And so then they would show me, I would copy it, because I thought this is what we’re supposed to do. And then a teacher would be like, ‘Oh, she copies.’ I had no idea what was going on. I didn’t know I was doing something bad. So I think I started to feel out of place. [Another teacher] straight up called us [Rita and her group of friends] ‘savages,’ because I had a sweater tied around my waist and we weren’t allowed to do that. And then they had conversations with my mom, like maybe I might have a disability or they just couldn’t quite pinpoint it. But I think it was because I didn’t speak English. And there was no resources or support for that. So I remember feeling something was not quite right with me.

Here, Rita recalls the ways in which her teachers racialized her and her Latinx peers on the basis of their English proficiency. As a Spanish-speaking student in an English-only “sink or swim” learning environment, Rita struggled socially and academically. Rita recalls there was no “bilingual program” to support, validate, or understand her needs as an emergent bilingual student. When her teachers were “dismissive” after she turned to them for support against “bullies,” or when she was called a “savage” and labeled as someone who “copies” in spite of her not knowing she was not supposed to do that, she came to view her racialized student identity negatively. Rita “felt something was wrong…or not quite right” with her, “felt out of place” in the classroom—a lack of belonging that was haunted by suspicions of a “disability her teachers believed she had.”

Rita's racialized experiences as a student are well documented in educational scholarship that has studied how students might be marginalized in classroom contexts. Historically, research has shown schools and teachers that lack an appreciation for emergent bilingual and/or multilingual students' language repertoire often have deficit views of their students and their communities (Miller & Sperry, 2012; Ghiso & Campano, 2013; Flores & Schissel, 2014). Some of the repercussions of these deliberate misunderstandings are that youth like Rita process and internalize such experiences by blaming themselves for the inadequate support from teachers and schools to meet their needs. It is not difficult to imagine the impact this had on Rita's self-esteem, physical well-being, and sense of self.

In contrast, after second grade, Rita left her parochial school and attended public school. Fortunately, she remembers having positive experiences with her third-grade teacher, Mr. Rivera, who contributed indirectly to her growing awareness of identity. She notes:

> He was a really memorable teacher because, one, he spoke Spanish. He communicated well with my parents. He knew my neighbors. One time he saw us [her and her cousin] at the bus stop and he's like, where do you live? And so we told him, and we got in the car with him. And he took us home and he introduced himself to my mom. He knew everybody on the block. I remember his class. I remember he was super, like, nurturing and supportive. I remember writing my first paragraph and he used mine as an example. I can't believe I remember this. I still remember him fondly.

Rita's affirming interactions with Mr. Rivera outside and inside the classroom were the complete opposite of her experiences at the parochial school. In offering a formative memory of a teacher who affirmed her identity, Rita shares a pedagogical model for what transformative teaching could look like. When she begins describing Mr. Rivera, she prefaces it by acknowledging that he spoke Spanish and communicated "well" with her parents. Language was/is part of her identity and home life, and, unlike her previous teachers, Mr. Rivera was able to appreciate it by communicating with her parents in their native language. In addition, Mr. Rivera engaged Rita as

a teacher who was “nurturing and supportive.” He saw her for who she was—in all of the complex personhood and identities that she inhabited (as a Spanish speaker, as a Chicana daughter, as someone connected to an existing community)—and recognized her work by sharing her “first paragraph” with the class. In doing so, Mr. Rivera set an example for what teaching *could* be at its most engaging and student-centered, not what it *had been* for Rita in other contexts. It is not surprising to see that these memories left an indelible impression on a young Rita and her sense of identity as a young person of color at school. Ultimately, Mr. Rivera offered Rita a counterpoint to the teachers who treated racialized and linguistic difference as something to be punished or denigrated; instead, Mr. Rivera acknowledged, affirmed, and uplifted her various identities as opportunities for student learning and engagement.

Kenny

Kenny did not become aware of his identity through his schooling experience but rather through listening to his grandparents’ stories of attending school in the U.S. As a third generation Chicano of Mexican descent, Kenny remembers learning about identity and difference through the ways his grandparents talked about their own identities. When asked when he first realized or understood that he was a person of color, he brought up this anecdote:

> So let me preface this with, like I said, having all four of my grandparents, educated here in the U.S., when you hear those stories of having their names changed in school from, you know, you go in Maria then come out Mary to being punished for speaking Spanish. I’ve heard all those stories from them. So, you have this, we’ll use the academic term *internalized racism* that becomes super prevalent in the lives and experiences of my grandparents. I remember we were driving by a park when my grandfather on the way to the house, I remember asking him, ‘What are we?’ And he said, “Oh, if anybody asks you what you are, you tell them that you’re Latin.” And it was so funny, that he chose to use the term *Latin*, because my only knowledge of that word was Ricky Ricardo. I sort of thought I was Cuban. So I said, oh, okay, we speak Spanish so we must be that, whatever that was. I didn’t know at the time. Of course, over time, I realized our families had not come from there [Cuba].

Kenny remembers hearing his grandparents speak about their identity in relation to their educational journey. The changing of names from "Maria" to "Mary" and punishment for speaking Spanish in schools was, unfortunately, a common occurrence for many children of Mexican descent in the first half of the twentieth century (San Miguel, 2001; Garcia, 2018). Historically, in the U.S, communities of color have had to combat assimilationist policies and practices in American schools which have had devastating effects on the cultural and linguistic diversity and identities on these communities (San Miguel, 2001; Paris & Alim, 2017; Garcia, 2018). As Kenny notes, these experiences contributed to a form of "internalized racism" that continues to manifest itself in the lives and experiences of his grandparents. Kenny recognizes the moment when his grandfather told him he was "Latin," as one the earliest memories he had of learning about his identity coupled with the internalized form of racism his grandfather dealt with—as part of the legacy that American schooling had on all his grandparents and their identities.

Unlike Jaime or Rita, Kenny did not distinctly remember any specific formative moments in which race and/or identity played key roles. Instead, Kenny said, "I don't really have any kind of memories around race or ethnicity. No one ever made fun of me [at school], most of the people were people of color, we didn't talk about it." He goes on to describe not having any "impactful, influential, or strong" teachers. He sums up his teachers as "pretty whack." Kenny attended private school from K–12. As I discuss in the following section on each educator's development of critical consciousness, Kenny's experiences in private school lacked the type of engaging and meaningful learning that focuses on self-exploration that he would later implement as a critical ethnic studies educator.

Melissa

Unlike the previous three educators, Melissa first learned that she was a person of color in a context outside of the school. In remembering that moment, Melissa shared a personal story:

> I remember I went to visit my grandma. I think I was in elementary school, maybe fifth or fourth grade. I went to visit my grandma in the hospital with my sister. Then there's this nurse, we went to the cafeteria and this nurse said, 'Oh, tienes la piel como de caramelo [you have caramel colored skin],' like, 'te miras muy bonita [you look beautiful].' And I'm like, 'Wait, what's going on?' And then my sister was poking fun of me like, 'Mira la piel de caramelo over here.' And I'm like, 'What does that mean?' My sister said it means you have caramel skin. Your skin is Brown. She said that you have nice Brown skin. And I was like, Oh, okay. I guess I'm Brown. I'm glad that it wasn't negative, I wasn't made fun of for being Brown by this random person, you know, but it was the first time that I recognized that people like beauty, attached to beauty, to color, you know, attach some of those ideas to color. That's one big memory that I have of just recognizing my own color.

In Melissa's experience, the realization that she was a person of color, or "Brown," came from a positive interaction with a nurse at a hospital when she was in fifth or fourth grade. In recounting this moment, she was relieved that "it wasn't negative [or] wasn't made fun of for being Brown by this random person." This statement expresses a concern within communities of color with colorism—a phenomenon in which those with darker skin are more likely to be ridiculed or mistreated than their lighter-skinned counterparts. In many instances, people of color will experience discrimination based on complexion and skin tone depending on the darkness of the skin. Some people, usually lighter skin folks, will be treated more favorably and given advantages within the community and society.

Historically, in the Americas, the Spanish and white Americans used colorism as a divide-and-conquer tactic to control colonized peoples. Racial hierarchies enshrined in colorism and other modes of racial inequality functioned to privilege lighter-complected indigenous people and African slaves over and against darker-skinned people in those communities as a way to colonize and subjugate these groups more efficiently (DuBois, 1903; Reed, 1964; Mills,

1997). Sadly, this colonizing practice of subjugation based on skin tone continues to be an issue within communities of color as is evident in Melissa's account. In Melissa's case, her formative memory of race and colorism marked the beginning of her learning to attach beauty to her complexion; she was told she was beautiful for her caramel skin, and this "positive" experience not only gave her a new understanding that she was "Brown" but also circulated certain ideas of how skin complexion was associated with who was seen as beautiful, attractive, or desirable.

Melissa's initial encounter with colorism would be reinforced in school, and she would later start to think about colorism in relation to whiteness and racism. Through her social relationships in school, Melissa learned to recognize issues of colorism in relation to her identity. Melissa recalls having a school friend "who was light-skinned, blond hair, with blue eyes and by the time [Melissa got to] fourth or fifth grade it was very clear that everyone was fascinated with her lightness of skin, the color of her eyes, and the color of her hair." She goes on to explain that this was telling of what society appreciated. Melissa asserted, "My understanding of race was that white people are pretty and Brown people may be pretty, too, but not as much as white. Tone and physical features play a role in how people will also see you. That's when I started to associate things with race, too." In this statement, Melissa acknowledges that Brown "may be pretty, too," but the broader society and even her predominantly Latinx community still favored white, blond, and colored eyes over other skin tones and features. It is through colorism that Melissa began to understand identity and race as interconnected in ways that taught her who was perceived to be desirable and who was not. These early experiences and pivotal moments of identity awareness and of being a "beautiful, Brown" person will influence her trajectory later in school. As my study progressed and I continued to learn about Melissa's educational journey,

Melissa revealed all the ways in which, later in her life, she developed into an activist who questioned colorism, race, and other forms of marginalization and discrimination in school.

Reflecting on Early Racialized Experiences

Throughout their early lives, each teacher participant went through experiences that taught them how to articulate their own identity in relation to race, gender, and class; these experiences would go on to shape their later educational trajectory, as they started to develop a sense of critical consciousness and awareness. The next section builds on the experiences and pivotal moments discussed in this section and will focus on a different domain of identity formation which is the process of critical consciousness development in the lives of these critical ethnic studies educators.

Seeds of Critical Consciousness

Ethnic studies pedagogy, as an anti-racist project, encourages teachers and students to develop and nurture a critical stance "of the world and their place in it" (Tintiangco et al., 2019, p. 21). This criticality—a deep awareness of one's structural position within society—requires naming racial oppression and other hegemonic structures, questioning unjust power relations, and working to transform the world for the better (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). As an ongoing process, criticality or critical consciousness development is essential to the liberatory work of teachers and students as they engage in ethnic studies pedagogy in the classroom. In this section, I focus on this domain of identity formation by first looking at the moments that sparked my four participants' critical awareness. As I show through these teachers' collective experiences, it is through the development of criticality or critical consciousness that these teachers cultivated a sense of the transformative pedagogical praxis they wanted to implement in their own classrooms; I argue that this type of dialectical relationship between the teachers' lived

experiences and their teaching offers a model for bringing ethnic studies and its commitments to experiential knowledge and social change to the classroom.

Jaime

For Jaime, the emergent seed of criticality, not fully realized until he attended college, began as an act of defiance in high school. In ninth grade, he joined a tagging crew and remembers how tagging became a mode of resistance for him:

> Asking my teacher [if I] can get a pass to go to the restroom. And I would take out my fat tip [permanent marker] or sometimes I would even carry shoe polish. And just write all over the walls of the bathrooms of my school. So I was getting into that type of trouble but not really 'cause I never got caught. I love[d] tagging the walls of the school and I guess it was a way of me getting back at the school system. In hindsight, in analyzing [this] I had a lot of resentment towards the school system.

Tagging the walls of the bathrooms constituted a kind of "writing back"—perhaps a form of nascent, insurgent critical literacy—against the traumas he experienced in school, often at the hands of teachers. In reflecting on his tagging days in ninth and tenth grade, Jaime's "love" for writing on the walls indicate a sense of righteous anger and response to the oppressive and painful moments he experienced throughout his schooling. This backlash stemmed from resentment that he harbored towards the public education system, especially since it was often teachers who were carrying out the traumatizing acts that shaped Jaime's experience with school. Indeed, Jaime specifically mentions tagging was a way of "getting back" at school. Although this act of defiance is small in scale and was not driven by a deep understanding or sense of criticality, it does capture a moment in Jaime's life when he began to process and respond to his negative experiences at school with righteous indignation.

For Jaime, high school became a time of assimilation where he "remade" himself. After receiving "most improved" in his history class, he began to do well academically. He became

more “of an Americanized kid” where he introduced himself as James and not Jaime to avoid further humiliation for “expressing [his] Mexicanness.” Jaime also began to work and was able to “hide [his] parents’ poverty,” as he could now afford to purchase name brand clothing like his more affluent classmates. Other than a few classes such as creative writing, poetry, art, where he was exposed to authors and intellectuals of color, Jaime does not recall any class or other school space that “was empowering and transformational.” According to Jaime, this was the extent of his “critical consciousness development” at school; only later, after he left high school, this understanding would grow into a deeper awareness of injustice and a commitment to trying to change those structures of power.

It was actually outside of the school setting where Jaime was encouraged by key mentors to go to college; later, in college, his participation in a politically active student group would eventually nurture his critical consciousness. During Jaime’s later years in high school, he worked for an immigration rights attorney who became a mentor to him. Jaime recalls, “he was an Armenian attorney and was very conscious about city, race, and American politics. I learned a lot of skills, felt competent in myself, and then…guided me into a four-year university. ….I owe a lot to him.” He goes on to share that although he did not have any recollection of having “critical conversations” in this work, this attorney was the one who told him, “Whenever you get to college, the first thing you need to do is join MEChA.[13]” Although Jaime’s mentor did not necessarily contribute directly to his critical awakening, his relationship with this attorney was

[13] MEChA stands for *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o/x de Aztlán*. MEChA is “a student organization that promotes higher education, community engagement, political participation, culture, and history.” MEChA chapters “often strive for a society free of imperialism, racism, sexism, and homophobia.” MEChA was born out of the Chicano/a Movement during the 1960s (http://www.mechanationals.org).

relatively positive and both directly and indirectly guided and pushed Jaime towards a future where he could develop his critical awareness.

Rita

Much like Jaime, Rita identified two pivotal moments in her adolescence, one outside the school setting and the other at school, that capture the beginning of her critical consciousness journey. She proudly shared,

> My parents did instill, "you can do it if you really want." If you want to go away to college and do this or that, you can do it, you don't have to be married or have kids or stay at home. My parents did instill, "We'll support you in whatever you do as long as you do something great." I felt really empowered in that sense. I was a little feminist, albeit there's always things you have to suss out and eventually learn.

Rita shows an appreciation and recognizes the support she received from her parents as directly influencing her "little feminist" identity. Her parents challenged patriarchal notions in stating "you don't have to be married or have kids or stay at home." Rather, they instilled and empowered Rita by letting her know life as a female was not prescribed and she had options that broke from traditional female norms. If she wanted to go to college "or do this or that" they would support her "as long as [she did] something great." These moments influenced Rita's sense of self and contributed to her sense of agency as she navigated high school.

> I did embrace my feminist voice…. I remember my concept of race and racism and classism, those were things I could not name. I did not think racism was a thing, classism…like anybody can succeed and racism isn't a thing. So I do remember and was most familiar with sexism. I remember really being vocal about that. I remember calling a teacher sexist, like, 'That's sexist.' And he was like, 'Ehhh,' and was super dismissive and I was like, no, straight up to his face in front of the entire class. I was like, 'What you said was sexist.' And I remember those moments of not being afraid to speak out in that aspect. Maybe it was nurtured [at home] or in… [one of my history classes where]...we talked about systems of oppression, but it wasn't directly connected to our experience as Mexican American or Mexican or Latino kids. It was understanding system of oppression as mixed in with the Holocaust…. I don't recall a teacher ever saying, 'Hey, there's a connection between what happened in the Holocaust and Indigenous genocide.'

Here, Rita notes how she started to develop a sense of the ways in which her identity is gendered and racialized, initially by recognizing her growing "feminist voice." Although she was "familiar with sexism" through her lived experience as a Latina, she notes that, at this point in time, her feminism and level of criticality did not encompass an understanding or appreciation of race, racism, and classism—as she "could not name" those dynamics, and she did not believe race, racism, and classism "was a thing."

Notably, this retroactive acknowledgement of where she was in high school also reflects her developing critical awareness and shows the path to critical consciousness is often nonlinear, messy, and an unfinished process (Freire, 2000). After all, Rita decided to speak out against her teacher's sexist comment in a moment when she was unafraid to call out what she felt was wrong; she felt the injustice even if she did not have the vocabulary or could not fully articulate the dynamics that were at play. The confidence to question her teacher in front of the class derived partly from her home experiences and indirectly from one of her history classes. Rita recalls learning in that previous history class about systems of oppression as they related to the Holocaust but there was no direct connection ever being made to Indigenous genocide or to her Mexican/Mexican American roots. In some ways, her memory of the few discussions of oppression she had in school encapsulates the extent and limited opportunities Rita had at school to nurture and explore not only her identity as a feminist but also to make personal and cultural connections to the "systems of oppression" she was learning about at school.

Like Jaime, Rita received an "all-American" schooling experience that instilled a "bootstrap mentality." In middle school and high school, she was identified as gifted and qualified for honors courses. She describes her trajectory in high school:

> So, I had a pretty traditional—quote, unquote, 'all-American'—experience where [I took] AP Biology, AP European History, AP US [History], AP Gov

> [Government], [and was part of] the Academic Decathlon. This was kind of my life. I was tracked by the honors and gifted program there. And so I went in with this super all-American experience. I was this amazing student. I did everything that I was supposed to do. I thought I was this perfect Mexican American with an emphasis on the American part. I was trying to go to Wellesley and I wanted to be like Hillary Clinton. That's how invested I was. And then applying for colleges. I applied to six schools. I only got into UC Santa Barbara. And to me that was a shock. I did all of this work. Top of my class and I got rejected from every single school except for one, how does that happen? To me, there was this disconnect, there were just so many disconnects. And then it was when I went to college that everything changed.

Reflecting on her educational journey, Rita described a very assimilated schooling experience that emphasized the "American" part of her Mexican American identity. In her case, the "traditional all-American experience" meant taking AP and honors courses which was "[her] life" at the time. Rita subscribed to a meritocratic narrative that by doing everything she was "supposed to do" and working really hard it would translate into getting into the colleges she applied to. Rita then mentions the dissonance she felt when she only got into one of the six colleges she applied to. Given the data, she initially understood the "disconnect" as her own failure and then only later (in college) recognized it as a problem with the very meritocratic structure/ideology. It would be in college where Rita developed a critical lens by taking ethnic studies courses and was able to make sense of this "disconnect," her identity, and her "all-American [schooling] experience."

Kenny

In comparison, Kenny developed his critical consciousness outside the school setting. During his tenth-grade year, Kenny's best friend had a brother who was a student at UCLA and part of MEChA. Kenny was invited along with a couple of friends to attend the annual MEChA Raza youth conference at UCLA. He remembers fondly:

> And my eyes were open to so much on that day! In terms of my critical consciousness, within my personal life, as well as in a broader political context,

> [it] really gave me a sense of what I was maybe already thinking and feeling. It gave certain things a name, to be colonized and what that meant….it's like how do we use this as an opportunity to decolonize our minds? Because it's hard to do this on a daily. Even for folks who teach about decolonization or are passionate about it. So that was a moment where my level of critical consciousness became apparent in my life.

Kenny's account captures the indelible impact the youth conference had on him and the seeds of critical consciousness that were planted on that day. He emphatically states how that day opened his eyes "to so much" as the conference spoke to things he was "already thinking and feeling." The conference provided Kenny a space to critically learn and gain the language/vocabulary to name certain things like, what it meant "to be colonized" and how to begin decolonizing his mind. He mentions the difficulty to "decolonize our minds" and the connection between critical consciousness as part of his "personal life" within a "broader political context." This supports the argument that critical consciousness development is not only an intellectual effort but a fundamental part of a person's life where individuals are challenged to do the difficult work to confront systems and problems of power, privilege, and oppression (Freire, 1970b; Freire 1970). For Kenny this was the pivotal moment where "critical consciousness became apparent in…[his] life."

Comparable to Jaime and Rita's experience, Kenny's high school experience lacked an outlet to nurture his developing critical consciousness. The private school he attended consisted of an education where he "read the chapter, [took] notes, answered questions at the end of the chapter, and tests Friday. Very much a banking method." This type of learning treated Kenny and his classmates as passive learners and is the antithesis of critical consciousness dialogue where students are encouraged to analyze, pose questions, and "affect the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural realities that shape [their] lives" (Leistyna, 2004, p. 14; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Freire, 1970). According to Kenny, "that was kind of my schooling experience there." For

Jaime, Rita, and Kenny, then, school was not a space conducive to cultivating their critical consciousness. It was outside of the school setting, for the most part, and eventually in college where they developed their critical consciousness. Nevertheless, these moments combined with others they shared would eventually serve to motivate and inform both their approach to teaching and identity.

Melissa

Conversely, Melissa's experience is vastly different from Jaime, Rita, and Kenny as to how and when she began her process of critical consciousness development. Melissa remembered her middle and high school (she attended East Los High) as positive and supportive places that opened up space for student activist groups to meet and organize. Specifically, Melissa describes the impact that one student group—the United Students Junior Club, a student chapter of a local Eastside activist organization that brings parents, youth, and residents together—had on her as a middle school student:

> My first kind of school or not really school, but outside experience with school and learning, at least my kind of my voice as a student was doing United Students[14] Junior in sixth grade. It taught me that if you organize and share your voice with others you can make change, that you can make a difference. And I remember I was part of the protest to get A–G [college-prep course] requirements for high schools. That was my early intro to activism and power, but in terms of oppression and social justice and what that means, to speak up against oppression and what activism is, I really started to get more of that language through United Students in high school…I remember [in ninth grade] I went to a retreat where basically, I learned about the "isms" [a reference to different forms of discrimination such as, racism, classism, ageism, sexism, etc…] and I learned about different systems of oppression, stereotypes…that was my first deep conversation about those different issues and those different topics.

[14] United Students is an activist group servicing the East Los Angeles area. United Students "train [middle &] high school students to become expert community organizers through education and training, community building, and participation in direct action campaigns…working together to make a positive change in their schools and community."https://www.innercitystruggle.org/united_students

Even in recounting the ways in which her critical awakening began with United Students Junior Club, Melissa invoked a tone that conveyed precisely how transformative and empowering this process was for her as a student. Here, she uses terms like "my voice," "organize," and "activism and power" as concepts and ideas she was learning to grasp and engage in at a young age. United Students offered Melissa a critical space to be seen, to be heard, and helped to cultivate a sense of agency as she participated in a protest to get "A-G requirements for [all] high schools"—which are the course requirements necessary to get into a four-year university. Her critical consciousness development continued to be nurtured throughout high school as a member of United Students. Significantly, by noting all the things that she was learning in these spaces and recalling their organizing victories, Melissa was underscoring the ways in which these spaces might have been more formative than her classrooms in providing a language and vocabulary for her to understand her social, political realities as a student. Melissa shares that her "...first deep conversation" about issues and topics around "different systems of oppression, stereotypes" occurred during ninth grade. And from there, her understanding of "oppression and social justice" deepens and evolves as she learns more about "what that means" and how to "speak up against it" by engaging in activism. These critical moments influenced and inspired Melissa to maintain her activism well beyond high school.

Another group Melissa spoke about as pivotal to her consciousness development was her participation with the Institute for Democracy, Education, & Access (IDEA), Council of Youth Researchers[15] (CYR) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Melissa joined CYR

[15] CYR is a partnership between UCLA IDEA and Los Angeles high school students. The council provides students the avenue and tools with which to research and shed light on school and community issues that directly affect them. https://idea.gseis.ucla.edu/projects/the-council-of-youth-research#:~:text=The%20Council%20of%20Youth%20Research%20is%20a%20partnership%20between%20UCLA,issues%20that%20directly%20affect%20them.

during eleventh grade and worked alongside university professors, high school students, teachers, graduate students, and community activists with the goal of rectifying educational inequities in schools and communities by engaging in youth participatory action research (YPAR). She states,

> Through [the CYR] is where I really started more specifically thinking about educational justice. My history teacher, Mr. Lopez, was always very supportive of me. And even that relationship helped me with my relationship with UCLA, which was another huge, big part of my growth and trajectory to my future. The experience that I had with Mr. Lopez and the [CYR] UCLA IDEA program, and how we were able to bring that [referencing YPAR] back into our campus senior year just really felt like we took ownership of it…feeling like, dang, I have these connections to these different folks at UCLA. That really made me feel like I could be somebody after high school. I was already pretty confident in my grades, but I didn't know if I had the potential to be as involved as all these [referencing the people in CYR] folks. And I think that really helped me be like, you know what, I could be at a really dope school, like UCLA and continue to do some dope work.

As my former student, Melissa touches on the impact I (Mr. Lopez) had on her, and, more importantly, what she gained from being part of CYR. CYR expanded her understanding of educational justice as not just as an intellectual idea or effort. This experience also gave her the confidence and motivation to envision herself at "a dope school like UCLA" to continue "to do dope work." Typically, when discussing the process of critical consciousness, the focus is on developing a lens to identify, reflect, and critique systems of oppression. An area just as vital in critical consciousness is the dialogue about liberating possibilities, the promotion of life opportunities, and participating in social transformation (Kohli et al., 2019; Freire, 1970). By doing YPAR and participating in CYR, Melissa took ownership of her experience and the work she did which inspired her to believe she "could be somebody after high school" and continue to engage critically and civically as a college student. In doing so, Melissa embraced a sense of agency and envisioned herself in future liberating spaces.

As in the cases of Jaime, Rita, and Kenny, most of Melissa's pivotal moments of critical awakening occurred in contexts outside of school. However, Melissa does acknowledge having "really cool history teachers that always welcomed those [critical] conversations [which] helped put a historical context to it [the work she was doing outside of school]." In addition, Melissa remembers having teachers who openly supported United Students and CYR, often opening their classrooms so that Melissa and her group members could share campaigns or research they were working on with other students. For Melissa, school served as a bridge to other critical consciousness development opportunities. Still, the majority of her experiences took place outside of school or on campus during non-school hours. Melissa ends with sharing how one of her sisters encouraged her to read a lot and the impact it had on her developing critical lens. She read books like Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Virginia Grise's *Panza Monologues* and "having those conversations with my sister…helped me to think about what stories I was reading" and the importance there was in reading narratives of historically marginalized groups—some of which she could relate to.

Sowing the Seeds of Critical Consciousness

All four of the teacher participants in this study learned how to think critically about their position in the world through their involvement in contexts outside of school. Jaime, Rita, and Kenny had schooling experiences that reinforced for them the ways in which school was not a conducive environment for developing a critical consciousness. Melissa did attend a school where teachers supported student activism, which helped open up opportunities for her to engage criticality in the classroom (in addition to outside of it). In the next section, I discuss both the moments of coming to critical consciousness and the tools gained to apply that critical

consciousness during my participants' formative years in college and in their teacher preparation program.

Critical Consciousness Development During Young Adulthood

Most of my teacher participants developed their criticality and sense of inquiry to change their community during college, primarily as they enrolled in ethnic studies classes, made connections to their own identities, and engaged in various modes of activism that brought many of those ideas together. In many ways, their college experiences offered a space to reflect on how their own K–12 schooling experiences were racialized, gendered, and classed. They would eventually bring these reflections into their teaching praxis as they entered classrooms as ethnic studies educators.

For Jaime, college offered a radically different schooling experience than his K–12 experience. College became a site of social and political awakening and activism for him. Jaime recalls how his ethnic studies classes led to his increased involvement in campus activism:

> [Going into college] I did the summer bridge program and a lot of the folks, I'm going into my first year [of college], were critically conscious folks and they were already integrating these learnings. Then the first year started, I remember…a lot of folks in summer bridge…also joined MEChA. And so, I built friendships there. I met one of my close buddies there…he's now an educator. We kept going back to those [MEChA] meetings every week and that was a space where I was making friends and I was also learning about culture, politics, the movement, and student activism. By my second year, I started taking Chicana/Chicano Studies classes and got more involved in activism. With MEChA, we would go and talk to the local high schoolers about the importance of going to college as Brown people. We were just learning from each other. I was learning a lot from the older college students and from my classes. A lot of it was happening in those activist spaces, and staying up late talking politics, talking about the system, talking social justice, talking about our lives, sharing our narratives, growing up, it was a deep moment of reflection. And it was really empowering to me. It was like, what I'm starting to experience and feel, I want to go into a career where I could help other young people feel the same way.

Jaime's involvement in MEChA during his college years had a profound impact on his life. It was a space where he formed lifelong friendships and learned about "culture, politics, the movement, and student activism." Jaime's critical consciousness also grew as a result of taking Chicana/o Studies courses and later "American Indian studies, Africana studies, and Asian American studies." As is evident in the data, Jaime made a strong connection between his intellectual engagement and the activist role he had during those years. As a volunteer with the Chicano leadership camp Jaime spoke to local high school students "about the importance of going to college as Brown people." He later shared, "we were working on empowering and developing [students'] critical consciousness." Jaime would also mention, "I was living and breathing this stuff…staying up late with activist friends sharing our narratives, talking social justice." This moment of reflection for Jaime ends with a desire and the seeds planted to pursue a career where he "could help other young people feel [empowered] the same way" he did.

Similarly, Rita developed her critical consciousness primarily through her enrollment in an array of ethnic studies and gender studies courses in college. Rita shared more on this experience and her reaction to engaging these new ideas and concepts as a student:

> And then it was when I went to college and I took my first women's studies class. I'm like, what the heck? Like, this is wild. And then from that women's studies class, I took a Chicano studies class and I took a human sexuality class. And then being introduced to the concept of human behavior and learning about humans and why you do what we do. That stuff to me was really cool. And then from Chicano Studies, I took more Chicano Studies classes and I took a course with Dr. Tara Yosso. And every time it was another layer of uncovering a deeper, more painful truth. And then there's more of, "I need to get to the bottom of the meaning of my life and what I just experienced for the last 18 years." And in Dr. Yosso's class, she gave a name to so many things that you go back and there's like a flashback. I was like, 'Oh, I was tracked.' I was the exception, not the rule. Not everybody had this experience. Oh my God. The Chicano educational pipeline, the dropout rate like even the concept of push out. And then on top of tha', I'm taking a Chicano art class where all of these murals, what do you mean there's an entire movement and nobody bothered to tell me to look at those murals [in my community of East LA]. Nobody ever said [at Garfield High School],

> "Hey, a bunch of students walked out of here and did the thing, they inspired a massive educational, civil rights movement," nobody ever said that but everyone knew Jaime Escalante[16]. And so it was after taking [these classes], it was a buildup of first, the culture shock of feeling out of place. I hate it here. I need to go back home and then taking women's studies classes and then being introduced to women of color.

Here, Rita recalls how profoundly transformative that "snowball effect" process of taking different gender studies and ethnic studies courses that slowly "uncover[ed] a deeper, more painful truth." Specifically, taking Chicana/o classes with Dr. Tara Yosso equipped Rita with a critical lens to reflect on her life—in particular, her schooling experience. According to Rita, Dr. Yosso "gave a name to so many things" like "Chicano educational pipeline" and "pushout." And, in analyzing her own K–12 schooling Rita realized she was academically "tracked[17]" and was the "exception not the rule." This "painful truth" was compounded by learning in her Chicano art class the significance the murals in her hometown had which were part of the 1960s Chicano movement. She is disappointed and critiques her high school for failing to teach about the 1960s student walkouts and, especially, being the site of a "massive educational, civil rights movement." Unlike Jaime, Rita did not join a student activist group while in college but through this consciousness raising academic experience became motivated to pursue a career where she could share this knowledge and wisdom with others.

Moreover, for Kenny and Melissa, college was a place to further their understanding and expand their critical consciousness. Kenny "jumped around" multiple universities during his undergraduate years. At one point he attended a local community college where he "felt a breath

[16] Jaime Escalante was a beloved math teacher at Garfield High School who became famous after a movie called "*Stand and Deliver*" was created portraying his life.

[17] " The practice of placing students into different courses based on perceived capabilities….However, tracking and the criteria used to place students into courses and programs" is deeply rooted "in a legacy of racism and class inequality" that continues today (Ochoa, 2013, pp.62-63).

of fresh air" by taking Chicano Studies with "really dope folks." Kenny then transferred to St. John's University in New York City, where he became a McNair Scholar, a program designed to support first-generation college students in undergraduate research projects.[18] According to Kenny, "I had a professor/mentor, Dr. Roger Bush, through my process of conducting McNair research [who] empowered me as a student. He made me believe that I deserve[d] to be where I was, and built my confidence in my writing and research skills." Dr. Bush helped Kenny in many ways from building his self-confidence, realizing his academic potential, to supporting him in his research—which looked at Chicana/o college retention rates. In doing research related to his own college experience and on his community, Kenny's level of criticality grew and was nurtured by his mentor paving the way for Kenny to seek a profession that would bolster Chicana/o college rates.

For Melissa, in addition to taking a variety of courses in the field of ethnic studies, experiences of volunteering and working during college expanded her understanding of criticality. At the start of college, she had a scholarship which required her to do community service. Melissa saw in the list of options that volunteering at a school met this requisite. She decided to return to her alma mater where she was asked to present and share her college experience with high school students. Melissa also began to assist the college counselor in the school's college corner. Eventually, she applied and was hired to work as an Educational

[18] The McNair Scholars Program is a federal TRIO program funded (by the U.S. Department of Education) at 151 institutions across the United States and Puerto Rico. As the website notes, the program "is designed to prepare undergraduate students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. McNair participants are either first-generation college students with financial need, or members of a group that is traditionally underrepresented in graduate education and have demonstrated strong academic potential. The goal of the McNair Scholars Program is to increase graduate degree awards for students from underrepresented segments of society." https://mcnairscholars.com/

Opportunity Program[19] (EOP) representative at East Los High. In this role, Melissa worked "mostly with seniors [on the] college application process." Over time, she began to "really enjoy" hearing students' experiences and finding ways to engage and support students in writing their personal statements for college. It was then that she began to "think about working in education" as she saw the impact she was having on a large number of students. As a result, Melissa would reflect on her K–12 schooling experience and share how unique her experience was compared to other Latinx students—who did not have supportive educators that acknowledged their cultural heritage, histories, knowledge, and language. In particular, she began to have a greater appreciation for the space she was provided during high school to develop her critical consciousness. This would lead her to see education and teaching as an act of service to uplift her community in East Los Angeles.

Criticality via a Teacher Preparation Program

After completing their undergraduate studies, all of my participants (at different moments in time) went through UCLA's Teacher Education Program[20] (TEP) for their teaching credential and master's in education. A primary reason why this group of educators gravitated to this program was for its mission to support the development of critical pedagogues. In Chapter 6 (the conclusion) of this dissertation, I discuss TEP in more detail and consider the important role that teacher preparation programs play in teacher development. In this section, I articulate the ways in

[19] "The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) provides assistance through mentorship, academic programs, financial assistance, counseling/advising, and other campus support services to those who are first-generation college students, and/or from low-income and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds." https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/campuses-majors/campus-programs-and-support-services/educational-opportunity-program-eop.html

[20] UCLA's Teacher Education Program (TEP) mission is to "prepare aspiring teachers to become social justice educators in urban settings. We are designed for future educators who want to serve in underserved communities and schools in California, and Los Angeles in particular. We are guided by an anti-racist and social justice agenda in our commitment, partnerships, and coursework" https://centerx.gseis.ucla.edu/teacher-education/

which UCLA TEP offered a collaborative environment where teachers in training—many of whom brought experiential knowledge from their activisms and a commitment to social change—could share teaching ideas, brainstorm tactics for student engagement, and build a network with other teachers who wanted to find culturally relevant ways to engage students in the classroom.

For Jaime, there were a few key moments that led him to UCLA's TEP. It was during his junior year of college when he took an undergraduate course called "Latinos in Education" where he was first introduced to the concept of critical pedagogy[21] and realized "there is a way of teaching that is revolutionary. And to me it was just mind blowing." After completing this course, to expand his understanding of critical pedagogy and see it in practice, he applied and was accepted to do summer research at UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, & Access (IDEA). During that summer, he observed and supported youth who were engaging in youth participatory action research that was a precursor to the Council of Youth Researchers (CYR). One of the many highlights of this summer research program was the time he spent with Drs. Jeannie Oakes, Ernest Morrell, and John Rogers. Jaime remembers many conversations he had with these mentors/fementor and the influential books/articles on education he read at this time. This was a space where he also began to reflect on his own K–12 schooling. From this transformative experience he went back to complete his undergraduate degree and with these new "tools and all these lenses…I knew once I was out I want[ed] to come to UCLA [TEP]"—as the professors he had worked with in IDEA were affiliated with this teacher preparation program. In Jaime's critical consciousness journey which began in college and led him to TEP,

[21]Critical pedagogy "views teaching as an inherently political act, rejects the neutrality of knowledge, and insist that issues of social justice and democracy itself are not distinct from acts of teaching and learning"(Giroux, 2019, pp. 25-42).

there is a clear link between his critical awakening to his sense of activism. In this case, the "tools and lenses" he acquired eventually led him to seek out an education program that would not only nurture his new level of criticality but also could potentially be a place to develop into a critical educator.

Relatedly, for Melissa college also served as a bridge to UCLA's TEP. As previously mentioned, during high school Melissa had been part of CYR with UCLA's IDEA—Melissa was part of CYR at a different time than when Jaime was there. Considering Melissa's critical development and overall high school experience along with her EOP experience working with high school students while in college, once she realized she wanted to go into teaching it was a natural fit for her to apply to TEP. She was familiar with the work of many UCLA professors connected to TEP and many of her former high school teachers whom she admired were products of this critical program as well. Kenny's experience was different; a friend told Kenny that he could see him being a great teacher and he encouraged Kenny to speak to his wife, who was getting her PhD at UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information Studies. Kenny remembers, "so I talked to her and she told me about it [TEP] being a social justice program and it really appealed to me and so I said, you know what, I'm going to apply to UCLA." The social justice component of teaching attracted Kenny to the program and even after getting accepted to TEP he said it was not until he did his first week of school observations that "I had no doubt this was what I wanted to do!."

Rita went to college having many aspirations. At first she considered teaching, but said, "I just didn't know what kind of a teacher [I'd be] or what I would teach." After taking multiple courses with Dr. Yosso, Rita realized that

> there was a deeper purpose [to education] that was more connected to disruption, to activism, to doing something really purposeful. Whereas, before I was like I

> wanted to go back and perpetuate the same system after that [taking Dr. Yosso's courses] I wanted to go and do something completely different.

From this point, she was set on UCLA's TEP. The main appeal of the program was that it distinctly embraced an approach to teaching that was grounded in social justice. As Rita remembers, it "was very explicit about their vision and mission being about social justice and working with urban schools. I didn't know any other program that was doing anything quite like it." Rita was "super intentional" about going to a teacher preparation program where she could nurture and further what she was already learning in her undergraduate classes. TEP's vision and mission were in line with the level of criticality she sought.

Although my participants had distinct lived experiences and identities leading up to TEP, there are commonalities that emerged when they spoke about their TEP experience. The primary assets of the program for my participants were the critical tools they acquired and the network of critical educators they became a part of. As Jaime shared, TEP provided a "foundation with social justice principles and critical lenses" which led to many rich discussions on how to "apply critical literacy and critical pedagogy into the classroom." Kenny recalls TEP "grounded me in the theory that reminds me of why I do what I do [as an educator]." My participants also shared the sentiment that TEP did a superb job recruiting "like-minded people" to the program. Rita notes that many of the teachers in TEP came from activist backgrounds: "A lot of the people that were in my cohort were folks who were activists. Some of them had a really deep understanding of organizing, activism, and social justice. And they came with tons of prior knowledge." It was in this space where my participants began to value the importance of creating and fostering a collaborative network of critical educators as they started their teaching career. Overall, TEP provided my participants with a set of tools and lenses that expanded their critical consciousness and challenged them to find ways to put educational theory into practice. Eventually, each of my

teacher participants were able to apply their level of criticality in the classroom as a way to engage young people.

In the next section, I explore how these moments and my participants' early lived experiences and identities get refracted into each of their critical approaches to teaching ethnic studies.

Critical Identity as Part and Parcel of Ethnic Studies Teaching

As my participants reflected on the critical pivotal moments in their lives, it became clear how it informed their teaching practice. Specifically, what emerged was the central role identity plays for these four critical ethnic studies teachers. These teachers engage in what I call a *critical identity teaching praxis*, which brings together the concepts of *criticality* (an analysis of structures of power) and *identity* (an analysis of identity in relation to power). The educators engage in this praxis through encouraging students to think about who they are and who they are becoming—often by asking important questions about who wields the power that shapes their communities. A growing body of educational scholarship argues that self-reflexive identity work is crucial for both students and teachers; as this research urges educators to re-consider "how identity shapes the self," how identity can be a resource, and how identity can shape teaching practices, it also underscores the urgency of a critical teaching praxis in the classroom—insofar as *identity* and *criticality* are in constant conversation and intertwined as lived experiences are brought into the classroom and transform into resources for engaging students in ethnic studies teaching (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020, p. 97; Cuahutin, 2019; Curammeng et. al, 2017; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016; Daus-Magbaul, 2010; Baptise, 2010).

Jaime

Jaime articulated his decision to become a teacher as a logical progression of his critical consciousness development and activist journey. In other words, teaching became an extension of his college experience and to the "revolutionary work" he sought to do as a critical educator in the classroom. Indeed, as he explains it, Jaime went into teaching to "continue to be part of the movement, contribute to the movement, and to continue to do my part to contribute to everything that people of color have done for our communities before me." Jaime's mission as an ethnic studies teacher was and continues to be

> to continue to push for the teaching of our history, the teaching of our stories. It was also an opportunity to support other young kids of color who might've had a messed up schooling experiences such as I did. So my hope was to create a space that I never had in K–12 schools. That was my mission. It's still my mission to this day, to disrupt racist classes. A schooling system that has traumatized our communities since its inception. It's completely attached to my identity and that for me is what it's about. Learning about my history [as a Mexican/Chicano] and my culture is what brought me into teaching and what I've dedicated my career to. To teach and help young people, guide them into various lenses, various histories that we've built that perhaps have been hidden or neglected. That they've [students] never been exposed to.

From the very beginning, Jaime had a clear vision of what teaching meant to him and how it was tied to his own lived experiences and identities. As he mentioned, Jaime had a painful K–12 schooling experience and was intentional about creating "a space that I never had" in school. Jaime wanted to "disrupt racist classes [and]...a schooling system that has traumatized our communities since its inception" to provide students with an affirming transformative schooling experience. As a Mexican/Chicano, he is adamant about "teaching of our history" and providing students with critical lenses to uncover "hidden or neglected" stories/histories. As Jaime stated, teaching is "completely attached to my identity and that for me is what it's about."

Moreover, when further reflecting on his identities and pivotal moments and how it informs his teaching, Jaime elaborated on the motivation behind creating empowering and

transformational spaces in his classroom. He noted that in his own transformation it began with "becoming aware of the oppression that my parents were experiencing…being exploited as farm workers, being exploited and discriminated against, marginalized." Jaime goes on to explain,

> Part of my transformation also was embracing my identity, my culture, my skin color, my indigenous roots as well. That was really transformational for me because I lived through a period where I was ashamed of having Brown skin and having a Spanish name to learning that I have indigenous roots. Ethnic studies allowed me to realize that my grandparents and great-grandparents were Purépecha, something that I never realized. So I think that kind of going through that, and living through that, this kind of weight of oppression was lifted from my shoulders. Living through that, that transformation and feeling empowered as a 19 year old in college, that is something that I work towards to create that opportunity or that space for my students.

This level of critical awareness is consistent with the definition of *critical* from Sleeter and Zavala (2020) I am using for this study. Jaime identified both his parents' oppression and his own internalized oppression growing up being "ashamed of having Brown skin and having a Spanish name." Reflecting on this during college and later as an educator who sought to create opportunities for his students so they could embrace their own identity, culture, and skin color is in line with the view of criticality as a "stance that seeks knowledge that helps to liberate people from oppressive circumstances" (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020, p. 10; Bohman, 2005).

For Jaime, the transformation and empowerment began with having a greater appreciation and understanding of his own identity/identities. This then allowed him to feel a "weight of oppression" lifted off his shoulders. Jaime later shared, "that's why [when teaching ethnic studies] I spend a lot of time, centering my curriculum around identity, knowledge of self, family stories, narratives, and telling each other stories." He wants his students to "learn about our roots and…other communities of color, to take pride and grab onto our culture." Jaime usually begins his curricular year with an exploration on identity and then ventures into other domains of ethnic studies content. Jaime ends by stating, "So seeing young people, seeing their

transformation. It's just a beautiful thing. It's nurturing my own spirit and it's very personal. The transformations and experiencing the things that the students learn and how they change…. 'cause I relate so much to it, to those experiences." And so, Jaime's approach to teaching as a critical educator is deeply connected to his overall identity/identities and lived experiences.

Rita

For Rita, as a critical educator, a huge part of her teaching focuses on creating "a space so that all, as many aspects of my students' identities…feel seen." This directly stems from the neglect and trauma she experienced in her own K–12 schooling. Rita recalled,

> Because of what I experienced, because I was a person of color. So everything from not having access to bilingual education, experiencing assimilation and internalizing all this oppression or internalizing these ideologies that I wanted to be, feeling ashamed of who I was and my cultural identity. Because I experienced some of these things firsthand, because I am a working class person, a woman of color, I think about how I was harmed. I'm like that was straight up trauma, not being able to communicate with my teachers, being bullied, being ignored, being made to feel that your language, your culture, your identity aren't valuable, some low-grade neglect. Nobody explicitly said, 'Oh, you're dumb,' or, 'We don't value you because you're Mexican.' It was all done through like we're just not going to talk about it. We're just going to ignore it. Now that I'm learning about trauma and the psychology of it, I'm, like, ignoring someone's emotional needs is deeply traumatic. When somebody is crying out for help and needs to be protected, to ignore that, it's traumatic to your mind, body and spirit. And that's literally what happened to me during the most formative years of my life. Teachers didn't explicitly harm me; it was neglect. Like you don't understand and we're just gonna leave you there and ignore you as a four-year-old. I think about it now and it's nuts.

Rita describes in detail the devastating effects of being ignored and neglected as a young bilingual "woman of color." The unmet "emotional needs were deeply traumatic" for her as she was made to feel ashamed of who she was, of her culture, language, and her overall identity. These traumatic experiences on "mind, body, and spirit" were insidiously enacted by simply being ignored or left alone as a child to deal with the many needs she had as a young student. As an adult, critically analyzing these pivotal moments informed Rita's approach to teaching. She

now considers: "How do I make sure that when …students are in our classes that they're not being actively harmed by either our neglect or by whatever it is that we choose to ignore." According to Rita, part of an empowering classroom space means being intentional about making students feel seen and having their identity/ities valued and recognized. As a response to having been made to feel "invisible" as a child, Rita's approach clearly reflects the way her own identities and lived experiences influence her teaching.

In addition, Rita critically reflected on the privileges she had both as an adolescent and as an adult that also inform her pedagogical practices. She recognized growing up she had some degree of privilege, such as "really supportive parents," "light-skin privilege," and being "documented." This shows the complicated intersectional ways Rita is making sense of her identities. As an educator, she "always [tries] to stay aware of the privileges that I do have…that come with going to college…being cis-gender, I think about that all the time." She concluded by sharing, "So how do I create a space where students remain themselves and that they have an opportunity to explore identity? Something that I didn't get to even explore until I was an adult. Nobody asked me, who am I, or who are you? And I struggled to answer these questions… ." Hence, the emphasis on identity/ities, exploration of self, and privilege became, and continues to be, a fundamental piece to Rita's teaching which is rooted in her lived experiences.

Kenny

For Kenny, teaching requires a balanced approach which is attached to his lived experiences and identity/ities. Kenny stated,

> I think it's this balance—on one end of the spectrum, you have this savior mentality[22], and on the other end, this wanting to serve, wanting to serve others. I

[22] The "savior mentality" in education is a reference to the idea that students, oftentimes students of Color in urban areas, and their community are viewed with a deficit lens and are in need of "saving" (Yosso, 2005). In this instance,

> feel I had a tremendous amount of privilege growing up. Coming from a family who experienced struggle, I heard so many stories of their hard lives and their struggle in this country. Veterans, World War II, that's my family…Chicanos in Europe and all that. That's my family history. And having their names changed [at school] and the trauma around that. I have within me a sense of obligation or duty to serve.…And we want to avoid this idea of saving, right. So, I feel very much that my perspective has allowed me to maintain a really good balance in my approach to my work, in my ability to connect on, on various levels and understand kind of both worlds of privilege and, and lack thereof in certain contexts.

Here, Kenny described a predicament many educators face when teaching—the struggle between a "savior mentality" and "wanting to serve." Teachers often have to be careful about approaching their students as objects of rescue in a paternalistic framing of students as passive; instead, a critical approach to teaching might articulate students as having their own agency and find ways to encourage them to empower themselves in the learning process. To avoid being on the "savior mentality" end of the spectrum, Kenny pulls from his own familial experiences. He references the history, struggles, and pain his grandparents went through which he did not experience as a third-generation Chicano. Acknowledging his privilege and family history has provided Kenny with a "good balance" to his approach to teaching. It has ingrained a "sense of obligation or duty to serve." In addition, as an "activist and progressive minded" Chicano, Kenny's identity/ities guide his decision on what and how he teaches. He mentioned, "we want to hold down certain aspects of the schooling system…but at the same time be able to do it in a way that challenges and resists an oppressive institution. It was oppressive to my grandparents, to my parents, and even in private school it was oppressive to me." This dilemma elevates the difficult work for critical educators like Kenny who must strike a

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the educator is the savior who possesses the knowledge and tools to educate where only they can "save" the students.

balance between educating youth, in particular, youth of color, in an institution known to be historically “oppressive,” yet finding ways to “challenge and resist” that same institution. This motivates him to constantly reflect on what he chooses to teach and to keep in mind in what ways, if any, what he teaches “allows for a student to liberate their mind or their way of thinking, to empower them.”

Furthermore, when reflecting specifically on teaching ethnic studies, Kenny goes back to his family’s educational history and how “our colonized minds…caused us to lose sight of where we come from as a family.” As an educator, he sees his own grandparents in his students, who are often first-generation Latinxs. He explains this connection:

> [I view my students as my grandparents] in terms of being educated here in this country but still being much more closely connected to their country of origin and seeing an opportunity for them to retain so many of the valuable skills and tools that I think in my family’s experience have been lost along the way. Maintaining a sense of pride in their identities, as opposed to being shamed like shedding aspects of who they are and where their parents come from and the types of cultural practices, music, cooking, etc...And embracing those as opposed to pushing them away. Again, in my family, it was my grandparents like I said, changed their damn names! It was the school, the school had the power to do that.

Similar to Jaime, Kenny identifies the trauma and loss of cultural identity not just in his own life but in his family’s experience. From this data, school as an institution is considered a site that holds “power” to “colonize” and strip people of color of their identity. According to Kenny, this occurs in many ways such as by changing students’ names and shaming students to shed aspects of “who they are,” “where their parents come from,” and their “cultural practices.” For Kenny, teaching ethnic studies presents an opportunity to provide students with a drastically different experience than his grandparents and even from his own. His classroom becomes a space for students to embrace and take “pride in their identities” and to “retain so many of the valuable skills and tools” associated with that. Kenny then shared, “So I want for my students to be able

to salvage and hold on to…[their culture]. And again, that process of de-colonizing, not just holding onto them but nurturing that, you know." Thus, identity and lived experiences surface again as visibly refracted in Kenny's teaching but also as a tool to empower and decolonize the harm oftentimes caused by schools.

Melissa

As a fifth-year teacher and a person who identifies as Chicana/Latina, Melissa spoke on the disadvantages and advantages in the classroom and at school that come with her identity/ities and lived experiences. As a relatively young Chicana/Latina educator within her campus, Melissa recalled

> I think there's intersectionality at play. I think about like my Latino male teacher counterparts, I think sometimes when they share their experience or insight it's validated. Because, I guess my style is laid back…. Like another part of my identity is that I don't look that old either. And so I wonder sometimes if that plays a role in how serious some people take me when I'm teaching or sharing my experiences. The other part is my race gives me some legitimacy in the classroom space but then does my gender take some of that away? And does this take away some of that legitimacy as someone who maybe you should listen to sometimes, not all the time.

Melissa began by prefacing the "intersectionality at play" when describing the challenges she faced and continues to face as a young Chicana/Latina educator. She distinguishes and does not essentialize her teaching experience as being the same as those of her predominantly Latinx teacher counterparts—specifically, her male colleagues. Due to her age, gender, and "laid back" style, Melissa has questioned whether "some people" take her seriously as an educator because of those identities. In contrast, the loss of "legitimacy" as an educator is regained when discussing her race and cultural background. Melissa noted being a Brown Chicana/Latina from the East Los High surrounding community:

> My students are Brown. I think it definitely makes me think about how I bring my experiences to the class. It helps me feel confident to bring my experiences in the class

> because I want them [the students] to feel the same way they can bring their experiences to the class too and are valued.

For Melissa, her confidence grows when she reflects on the ways she brings her experiences to her "Brown" students and in return she creates room for her students to share their own experiences in an affirming space. She ends her thought with, "...because I share these racial and community backgrounds with my students it gives me authenticity, like this person is genuine versus I think for other folks it takes a bit longer to maybe feel that out." This "legitimacy" and "authenticity" derives from who Melissa is and where she is from which is not always the case for other educators who do not have those same advantages.

Additionally, Melissa sees teaching at East Los High as a form of "homegrown teaching." As previously mentioned, Melissa was born and raised in the East Los High surrounding neighborhood. She fondly recalled,

> I have a bunch of aunts who worked in the school. I have such a big family that's just dispersed throughout this community and is involved within East Los High in so many different places. I think that it's really helped me see, there's so much wealth within [East Los Angeles]. There's so much wealth within where I'm from. There's so much wealth within the community that goes sometimes unacknowledged, like invalidated. And I think that really has made me want other people who are also from here to feel the same pride and the same love and the same connection that I feel for East Los High. I want to help other people. I want to help plant the seed to have pride in where you're from, where your family, your identity, your culture, all that goes into where you are from.

Melissa has deep roots in East Los Angeles and considers her family's involvement throughout the community and in East Los High as part of the "wealth within the community" that sometimes is overlooked or "unacknowledged." In this excerpt, Melissa is gesturing toward what Yosso (2005) has articulated as *community cultural wealth*—the breadth of knowledge, skills, and abilities that already exist in minoritized communities that are framed in terms of deficiency and their "lack" of resources. More specifically, urban neighborhoods like East Los

Angeles—and by extension, their public schools—are seen with a deficit lens as gang ridden violent wastelands lacking any positive attributes. As an educator and part of "homegrown teaching," Melissa wants to change this deficit narrative and have her students see the community cultural wealth that exists in their community and at East Los High (Yosso, 2005). She does this by planting seeds for students to "have pride in where you're from, where your family, your identity, your culture, all that goes into where you are from." Melissa also recognized the privilege she had in her life in having both family and teachers validate her culture and lived experiences. As a result, in her classroom she strives to create this type of space where pushes her students to see that they play a role in the community, "where it's' not just for one individual person, but it's ultimately supporting everyone here. And I really did feel that growing up, in my big family, in the community, and the school that I was a part of." This critical component of liberatory teaching to challenge students to see beyond oneself and to see themselves as contributing to the wellbeing of the larger community has shown to be impactful as it was for Melissa growing up. Melissa's "homegrown teaching" approach is also not limited to studying and discussing the local context. She shared that she thinks a lot about the "balance between localized stuff and the larger stuff…because I think they're both important in instilling pride in who you are, but also acknowledging the oppression that's happening out there." As a critical educator, Melissa balances between working to instill cultural pride with her students to not losing sight of the larger struggle and oppression that happens in the broader society. Therefore, as the data indicates, Melissa's identity/ities and lived experiences clearly inform and are foundational to her "homegrown teaching" approach.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on identity, criticality, and its relationship to being a critical ethnic studies teacher. Through the conversations with my teacher participants, what emerged, among many things, was a collective recognition that when teaching ethnic studies, teacher identity matters. My teacher participants identified pivotal moments which drew from their identity (lived experiences and layered identities) and critical consciousness development as fundamental to their sense of being and the role they play as critical ethnic studies educators. In particular, what emerged was a *critical identity teaching praxis*. In other words, the teacher participants' histories of racialization and oppression in and out of school differentially affected their identity development and critical awareness; this process eventually informed and transformed into a resource for these teachers to engage students in ethnic studies teaching practices.

Another important finding was that reflection about their teaching is central to their ongoing identity development. The practice of self-reflection (Freire, 2000) to inform praxis is a vital component to my participants and also an essential ingredient, for any educator, when taking a critical approach to teaching; this idea is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. For these educators, one of the sites through which they sustain and deepen their identity development and teaching practices is *critical professional development* (CPD) (Kohli, Picower, Martinez, & Ortiz, 2016). This is a space I created and facilitated for these teachers to share, listen, and learn from one another's experiences. Through this CPD space, my participants were given opportunities to reflect on their teaching and this practice of reflection surfaced as core to their identity development. I describe this process of reflection and its impact on each participant's praxis in the following chapter, which examines how this group of critical ethnic studies educators built a sense of vulnerability, collaboration, and community in the CPD space that

allowed them to rethink their own teaching practices and lesson plans to better attend to students' needs inside and outside of the classroom.

Chapter 5: Critical Professional Development With An Ethnic Studies Ethos

While chapter 4 examines the individual lived experiences of my participants, this chapter highlights the ways in which these educators came together to learn, reflect, and grow in their approach to teaching ethnic studies. As previously stated, professional development often fails to meaningfully engage teachers who want to design anti-racist, liberating curricula that interrupt inequities. In response to this lack of explicitly antiracist professional development, I created and facilitated a form of *critical professional development* (CPD)—a model that frames "teachers as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society" (Kohli et al., 2016, p. 7). CPD focuses on allowing teachers to take an active role in their own justice-oriented professional growth (Kohli et al., 2016). For this study, I leaned on CPD as a space to come together to co-construct knowledge and engage in praxis—reflection and action—on topics and/or teaching practices related to ethnic studies. Two practices emerged as crucial to our engagement and to my participants' development as critical ethnic studies educators: (1) humanizing reflection that led to vulnerability, collaboration, and healing, and (2) counter-storytelling which enabled my participants to see and understand their lives as part of a broader pattern and movement. This chapter focuses on these two practices—humanizing reflection and counter-storytelling —and how they informed my teacher participants' learning and development in this space and beyond.

Additionally, through the critical collective CPD space I facilitated, I attempted to address the following research questions:

RQ 2. *To what extent do ethnic studies teachers working as a collective draw upon both individual and shared identities to forge a common teaching approach, and to what extent does this allow for individual differences?*

RQ 3. *To what extent and in what ways do educators in this collective draw upon healing-centered and restorative justice practices as they dialogue with one another and reflect on their work as ethnic studies teachers?*

In this chapter, I draw primarily from the data gathered during my four focus groups and the second and third set of individual interviews. This data illuminates many aspects of teacher identities and teaching practices. In particular, I center my attention in this chapter on the processes and practices that proved critical in facilitating a CPD space that embodies an ethnic studies ethos. I argue that this type of ethnic studies-centered CPD space offers three important pedagogical interventions into the dominant modes of K–12 professional development: first, CPD holds space for particular modes of reflection, vulnerability, and collaboration that cultivate a *humanizing* pedagogy, in a manner that is often overlooked in K–12 professional development spaces; second, it encourages and cultivates teaching practices that center healing and restorative justice; and third, it encourages a counter-storytelling practice that helps educators articulate their positions within broader structures of power and, in the process, reimagine the possibilities for their teaching praxis.

The chapter begins by contextualizing the type of CPD I engaged my participants in and the ethnic studies processes and practices of centering healing and counter-storytelling as part of their professional learning. The second section focuses on the ways in which CPD created a humanizing reflective space, impacted Rita and Kenny's own healing, and shaped their healing-centered teaching practices. The third section considers the ways Jaime and Melissa enacted counter-storytelling—both in their professional engagement and in their classroom. In each case, I capture how these processes and practices broaden and deepen my participants' understanding and humanity as critical ethnic studies educators. By spotlighting the process, learning, and

development in which these critical educators engaged both individually and collectively, this chapter makes the case that professional development grounded in ethnic studies ideas offers an opportunity for teachers to bring a critical awareness of power, injustice, and their own social positions to their pedagogy, and to do so in relation to their own lived experiences and personal healing journeys, in community with other educators, and in ways that are attentive to their students' needs.

Critical Professional Development with an Ethnic Studies Ethos

This study began with the idea of creating a collective space for my teacher participants to engage in CPD. Yet, over time what emerged was a distinctive sort of CPD that embodied an ethnic studies way of being. Although the core elements of CPD, which follow the tenets of dialogic action and is "designed to provoke cooperative dialogue, build unity, provide shared leadership, and meet the critical needs of teachers" (Kohli et al., 2016, p. 11), were evident in our gatherings/focus groups, certain ethnic studies processes and practices surfaced that contributed to teacher sense-making in relation to their identities and development as critical educators (Freire, 1970). As previously mentioned, an ethnic studies pedagogy[23] "must be rigorous, culturally and community responsive, and reflective to be effective in living its promise of decolonization and challenging racism" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, p. 25; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). When I invoke the term *ethnic studies ethos* or *sensibility*, I am using it in a

[23] In particular, An ethnic studies pedagogy [is] defined by its purpose, context, content, methods, and the identity of both students and teachers, [it] includes 1) engagement with the purpose of Ethnic Studies, which is to address racism by critiquing, resisting, and transforming systems of oppression on institutional, interpersonal, and internal levels; 2) knowledge about personal, cultural, and community contexts that impact students' epistemologies and positionalities while creating strong relationships with families and community organizations in local areas; 3) development of rigorous curriculum that is responsive to students' cultural, historical, and contemporary experiences; 4) practices and methods that are responsive to the community's needs and problems; 5) self-reflective on teacher identity and making explicit how identity impacts power relations in the classroom and in the community (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, p. 25)

way that encompasses all the components of ethnic studies pedagogy. More specifically, by *ethos* I am thinking of the *affective* dimension of this praxis—the feelings, emotions, and vulnerability that ethnic studies teachers often bring to the classroom and their interactions with students—and how it affects their teaching practice. To unpack my conceptualization further, an ethnic studies ethos is often feelings-based, in a rigorous way that sustains its attention and analysis on the transformative ways in which "mourning, dreaming, confusion, struggle, excitement, passion, empathy to be sources of knowledge" (Halagao, 2010, p. 508). It also centers the experiences of people of color to "raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice" (Yosso, 2006, p. 10; Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015; Halagao, 2010).

For these and other reasons, I integrated a healing centered/restorative justice and counter-storytelling process to the CPD I conducted. These gatherings and the semi-structured interviews themselves became generative spaces to co-construct knowledge and to engage in praxis—that is, a combination of reflection and action—for my participants. As part of self-reflection—or, more specifically, a humanizing reflective process—I invited my teacher participants to bring their whole humanity into the process by incorporating their identities and lived experience which in turn had healing consequences. I also incorporated counter-storytelling practices to afford my teachers the opportunity to learn from one another and in the process take certain insights that then shaped their approach to teaching Ethnic Studies.

The next section describes how my participants enacted a humanizing reflective process. I focus on how the process promoted healing, supported development, and became incorporated into their teaching practices.

Reflection As An Opportunity to Heal

Reflection is a crucial practice for anyone in the teaching profession. Some people who hear the term *reflection* may think of it as a careful consideration of an experience or set of experiences from a distance. The type of reflection I am describing, however, invites my participants to bring their full humanity—that is, the totality of their lived experiences, traumas, and resilience—into the process of teaching. As previously mentioned, often when engaging in topics and issues on racism and other forms of oppression, painful, sometimes traumatic, memories surface for both educators and students. An ethnic studies approach offers opportunities to heal and address forms of historical and personal trauma. Hence, as I planned the gatherings for my teacher participants, I created space for reflection while infusing an ethnic studies feelings-based, humanizing approach to this practice.

For example, our first focus group began with building community. I asked teachers to reflect and respond to the following question: "In reference to your first individual interview where I asked each one of you questions about your early childhood. I want you to think about yourself now as a teacher and think about how you today as a teacher would look at yourself as an elementary student. How would you, as a teacher, describe 'little you' in that classroom?" This question offered a way for me to evoke personal memories from my participants in order to build on the first set of individual interviews. The question also set the reflective tone of the gathering, which invited the teacher participants to read and discuss excerpts from one another's interview transcripts. The specific excerpts I shared with the group highlighted key moments from their lived experiences as people of color, moments of critical consciousness development, and whether there was a connection between their identity to the way they approach teaching ethnic studies. Through this and other humanizing reflective activities, I facilitated more understanding and appreciation among my participants in this space, which allowed them to

speak more openly about their personal experiences. As they engaged the opportunities to reflect and heal collectively, the educators built deeper personal connections with each other and formed a sense of community. I now turn to two of my participants, Rita and Kenny, who embody and capture this experience.

Rita: "Ethnic studies is about humanizing us"

For Rita, the humanizing reflective process throughout this study served to strengthen and influence her own personal healing and ethnic studies teaching practices. During Rita's first individual interview, there were instances where our conversation became an opportunity for her to speak on the importance of mental health and socio-emotional well-being in relation to ethnic studies teaching. When asked, "To what extent have your life experiences and identity influenced your approach to teaching ethnic studies?" Rita replied,

> I think more recently therapy has really changed my teaching practice. I really think about our nervous system and trauma and what it does to our nervous system—how it hijacks us, how we get triggered, how we self soothe. And these things that we as adults may or may not know how to do and our students may or may not know how to do. And how we can talk about social justice, restorative justice, transformative justice, we can talk about ethnic studies, but it's really hard to really embody that if we don't have a regulated nervous system or if you don't know why your nervous system is dysregulated. It kind of goes back to this idea that you can talk about the [Chicana/o] Blowouts and you can talk about Black Power, but if you have a dysregulated nervous system, then the moment that a kid does something that pisses you off, you snap and you insult them, or you have this really rigid deadline and you kick them out or you just even look at them, some sort of way, it's constantly happening. I just think about all the little bodies in our classes and how there's always some form of dysregulation happening. I have the most dysregulated nervous system and for a multitude of reasons no one taught me how to learn how to self-soothe. I get really anxious about things that might not make somebody nervous but makes me extremely nervous and irritable and scary. And now I'm learning how to manage those things. And that's made me a better teacher. But we all have nervous systems—our babies, our students, other teachers, our colleagues, our parents. To me, I need to make sure my nervous system is regulated. And then that can hopefully influence the space that I'm in. That will then make learning and taking risks and being brave and vulnerable okay in class.

Here, Rita questioned the effectiveness of educators with dysregulated nervous systems who attempt to engage youth in conversations on "social justice, restorative justice, transformative justice, [and] ethnic studies" but engage in punitive teaching behaviors that are antithetical to the "social justice" concepts in their lesson plans. As a critical educator, Rita argued that it is imperative to have a regulated nervous system, which helps make individuals less anxious, less irritable, and (as a teacher) more patient with students and open to taking risks and being vulnerable in their classroom. In other words, for Rita, the curriculum comprises the lesson content and, just as importantly, the affective ways through which teachers engage their students. In her example, a teacher who teaches about historical moments of activism but who mistreats students or reproduces punitive measures in the classroom may be harming their relationships with students. Rita understood that it is not just a matter of *what* she teaches but *how* she is engaging students that makes for effective student-centered pedagogy. Interrogating the *how* of student engagement in the classroom centers the humanity of students in the teaching process.

Grounded in Rita's understanding of the totality of the classroom and the complex lives of her students, this approach to teaching considers not only the content but also the emotional dimension. In doing so, it gestures toward the *humanizing* pedagogy and reflection that the CPD space encouraged among the educators. Notably, too, the CPD space cultivated a sense of community that encouraged Rita's honesty and vulnerability, which allowed her to express how mental health and going to therapy impacted her teaching practice. Rita's candor in sharing this personal reflection also likely derived in part from the trust and camaraderie that we (as the group of educators in the CPD space) share, having worked together for many years. This also shows the way that the CPD created space to recognize what mattered to Rita as she shared and explored the emotional dimension in her teaching.

Rita's critique and reminder that teaching is about much more than the content tacitly draws on healing-centered approaches to teaching that centers strategies to support students' healing from their traumas rather than punishing them for acting out because of them. Ginwright (2018) stresses the importance of focusing on the "well-being we want rather than symptoms we want to suppress" (par. 15). In Rita's conceptualization of well-being, both teachers and students openly acknowledge the importance that their nervous systems play in the learning environment and identify ways to regulate their emotions. By sharing this knowledge with her students, something that she only learned as an adult through therapy, Rita encourages students to expand the possibilities for their well-being and, more specifically, their repertoire of techniques for managing their emotions both in the classroom and outside of it. This asset-driven approach creates opportunities to build upon "their experiences, knowledge, skills and curiosity as positive traits to be enhanced" (Ginwright, 2018, par. 15). Moreover, Rita went on to share:

> I think about just the science of trauma and our bodies and how we learn, why we learn, what are the optimal conditions for it? Ethnic studies is about humanizing us. How can we be humanizing with a dysregulated nervous system that forces us to detach ourselves and dissociate and numb. I don't have the answers and I'm still super dysregulated, but I'm deeply curious about that. If my teaching practice is about humanizing, then sometimes content will take a back seat because I'm there to show up for my students too. Sometimes we'll have those moments where we just want to have a moment where we can practice seeing each other, listening to each other, practicing empathy, compassion, courage…I think sometimes we can get caught up in…content after content, but it's like we're burning out our kids and they're having mental meltdowns. These are all things I've been thinking about while we've been in quarantine.

Here, Rita underscores the idea that the socio-emotional well-being of students and teachers is just as important as the course content. Notably, this CPD set up the conditions of trust, rapport, and vulnerability that made it possible for Rita to speak authentically about reevaluating her approach to teaching ethnic studies while in quarantine. Instead of focusing solely about *what* they teach, Rita argues, educators must prioritize *how* they are engaging students and allocate

time in the classroom to “[see] each other, [listen] to each other, [and practice] empathy, compassion, courage” to avoid student burnout. In a later conversation, Rita shared one technique she uses to integrate socio-emotional well-being into her praxis: every Monday, she holds a ten-minute socio-emotional check during which she asks students to identify, name, and share the emotions that they are feeling. Through these sessions, students learn about themselves, their fellow classmates, and their teacher before starting the week’s lessons. Although Rita claimed to not have the answers in the excerpt above, it is clear from her response that a humanizing approach to teaching integrates a feelings-based pedagogy and encourages teachers to work on regulating their nervous systems and managing their emotions in direct relation to students. This approach upholds healing from traumas—acute and chronic, past and present, big and small—as an ongoing process. It also underscores the well-being of adults as vital, especially for educators who work to support young people’s well-being (Ginwright, 2018). In these ways, we gain a better understanding of what it means when Rita said that “ethnic studies is about humanizing us.”

At the same time that Rita was thinking about what humanizing her students could look like, the CPD space itself became a place where a kind of humanizing reflection unfolded. As I prepared for the first focus group, I selected this response from Rita to share with the group. I wanted to create a space for Rita to further reflect and explore her curiosity on the relation between a dysregulated nervous system, healing, and ethnic studies teaching. In addition, as part of the reflective space in this study, I integrated activities in which my participants were invited to contribute and make sense of each other’s ideas, confusion, and struggles. Each session began with questions meant to build community and trust amongst my participants. To ground the group in the meditative process of reflection, I posed prompts to the group like this one: “Close

your eyes and imagine a moment when you felt at your best as a teacher. Where are you? What time is it? What are the surroundings? Is it certain morning routines, something around your commute, exercise, a run, etc….” I then transitioned to other prompts and questions like this one: “Take a minute and think about a powerful experience you had prior to coming to East Los High, in which you were part of a community. This can be within a formal academic setting or outside a school institution, family, etc., that was affirming and was a space for development as a learner.” Through guided reflection activities like these, my participants engaged in critical professional development that tapped into their lived experiences to nurture and encourage a sense of community within the group. This approach created a trusting environment that then opened up the possibility for generative dialogue and collective support for the participating teachers to grapple with the pedagogical challenges and issues they each brought to this space.

The conversations that teachers had in this CPD space around Rita’s reflections demonstrated two important things: first, the CPD space became a site where teachers thought seriously about how to integrate healing-centered practices into their work in concrete ways; and second, the CPD space offered a place for teachers to reflect meaningfully in a reflective, humanizing pedagogical dialogue that thought expansively about ethnic studies pedagogy. During our first group session, Rita elaborated on the conversation we had on mental health with her colleagues. After sharing Rita’s two excerpts—the same two block quotations provided above—the group agreed that attending to their own mental well-being and incorporating healing practices was crucial to the teaching of ethnic studies. Kenny commented on the importance of integrating mental health into pedagogy: “What an awesome thing for us as educators for this to be part of our therapeutic process, mental health, and wellness needs to be at the center of everything we do within ethnic studies.” Jaime named a powerful connection between his

traumatic schooling experiences and the ways he envisioned healing-centered teaching as an alternative: “I feel like what brought me to ethnic studies was partially some of the dehumanizing, traumatic experiences I had in the school system….and then teaching has been humanizing for me. And so I think that we need to explore and find the tools to heal ourselves and to be able to figure out ways we could integrate that into the curriculum.” This collective affirmation of healing-centered teaching approaches highlighted the importance of creating space for critical educators to be able to listen, learn, participate, and develop from ideas and thoughts like the ones shared by Rita. Conversations like these helped strengthen a common teaching approach to ethnic studies amongst the group that attended to matters of mental health, wellness, and healing. As a response to the group, Rita further identified the role that therapy played in shaping her own knowledge:

> ….where I’m at in my personal journey around therapy and knowledge, my access to knowledge and self has been through therapy. ‘Cause when I talked to my grandparents [and] parents there’s really limited knowledge about our ancestral roots. So for me, it’s going inward and therapy has been that place. I…also want to point out Resmaa Manakem’s work. His book *My Grandmother’s Hands* really helped me understand the idea of regulated nervous systems. … Resmaa’s work really articulates what I was feeling around, trauma, regulated nervous systems, and how it connects to some of the ideas that we study in ethnic studies.

This rumination illustrated how this space allowed Rita to express the significance therapy and Manakem’s work had on her sense of self and mental well-being. From these conversations, I noticed how creating space for reflection and dialogue gave Rita the platform to describe and speak on the impact that therapy had had on her understanding of healing. This eventually influenced the lesson she brought to this community of practice and the techniques she used to enhance her ethnic studies curriculum.

The second and third focus group meetings were devoted to curriculum and teacher development. Each meeting began with a series of reflective questions such as, "Thinking about professional development, can you describe one of the more powerful experiences you have had in professional learning?" The idea behind these questions was to create opportunities for meaningful reflection and dialogue about the type of professional development critical educators need. During these specific gatherings each teacher identified a lesson, idea, or theme to share and discuss with this community of practice in regard to ethnic studies curricula. Following a tuning protocol (see Appendix X) each teacher was given 35 to 40 minutes to discuss their respective work.

For Rita, what emerged in this collaborative space was an increased commitment to restorative justice practices, personal healing, and developing ethnic studies lessons around feelings-based pedagogy. In Rita's second individual interview, which took place after the first three focus groups, she commented on the transformative power of these CPD gatherings:

> Listening to what my colleagues shared about their personal life, narratives, and their curriculum, it just…reiterated the power of healing. And even though maybe they didn't all use that language, we all have this experience where we may have experienced some kind of harm. And as educators, I think in general, you just want to give young people…. you want to be the teacher that you wish you could have had. But that's kind of, to me, partly like thinking about restorative justice, like how do we create healing so that… young people don't have to go through what we went through, how do we create that in our classrooms and in our school [and] in particular ethnic studies? These sessions just really made me excited about being able to plan again!

Here, Rita commented directly on the energizing power of these CPD conversations. After listening to the harmful moments shared within the group, Rita asked an important question about how restorative justice could be used as a healing tool, specifically "so that…young people don't have to go through what we went through." This question is consistent with restorative justice work that typically "begins with a concern for victims and how to meet their needs, for

repairing the harm as much as possible" (Zehr, 2002, p. 68; Winn, 2018). In other words, restorative justice approaches attempt to center the needs of the people who were harmed. In this instance, restorative justice emerged as a potential tool and way to begin addressing some of the harm or trauma students have experienced in their schooling journeys. By creating a safe space to process their experiences with the help of a supportive and trusted adult, teachers like Rita who take restorative justice- and healing-centered approaches are trying to help students build the tools to restore and sustain their own well-being. Rita's response reaffirmed the ways in which the CPD space created a nurturing environment in which she grappled with ideas such as restorative justice in relation to healing which eventually influenced and informed her teaching practice—and, importantly, made her excited to keep doing the work of teaching.

All teacher-participants were asked to share a lesson for feedback during the second and third gathering; the lesson Rita brought to the group reinforced elements around healing that she discussed and engaged in throughout our humanizing reflective spaces. The work she shared with this community of practice was a draft of her ethnic studies final assessment prompt. In this prompt, distributed to students at the end of the semester, she asks students to self-reflect and write a letter where they give advice to teachers "especially during the pandemic" around a set of essential questions they discussed throughout the semester. The essential questions were, "Who am I? How do I resist? How do we cultivate resilience? How do I practice resilience? How do we re-imagine our world to be more just and joyful?" Considering the discussions we had, Rita felt that "healing as resistance" emerged as a theme to thread these questions together. Based on the input she received from her colleagues, Rita decided to create a course evaluation where students reflected on their own growth and engagement in the class as opposed to responding to all

essential questions in a letter writing format. The evaluation also included a section where students had the option to answer some of the aforementioned essential questions.

The CPD community encouraged Rita to think about how to implement humanizing pedagogy in her lessons (specifically her final assessment at the end of semester), even as she was thinking about how to humanize interactions in the classroom. Specifically, this gathering encouraged Rita to reevaluate her final in a way that did not overwhelm her students and appreciated the reality of teachers and students feeling burnt out due to quarantining, remote learning, and all the factors unfolding in their lives as a result of the pandemic. She later expressed the physical and mental exhaustion from virtual teaching during the pandemic and the toll it took on her students' well-being as well. Consequently, Rita designed her end-of-semester final to accomplish two primary goals. First, she created a space for students to self-reflect on their semester and encouraged them to tap into their lived experiences and the historical and contemporary movements they studied. Rita wanted students to learn not only how to dismantle systems of oppression but to "feel like resilience is something that human beings need, we make mistakes, sometimes are harmed, how can we learn to nurture our resilience and be intentional about that because life is full of unexpected things like a pandemic." Resilience surfaced as an important tool to heal and grow from difficult circumstances both at an individual and societal level. Second, Rita hoped that her final would illuminate another element important to healing centered and restorative justice work: the idea of re-imagination. She asked students, "How do we re-imagine our world to be more just and joyful?" The ability to see beyond an event or situation that causes painful memories and/or trauma is powerful. According to Ginwright and other scholars, "research shows that the ability to dream and imagine is an important factor in fostering hopefulness, and optimism which both of which contributes to overall well-being"

(Ginwright, 2018; Snyder, et al, 2003). Rita's deeply personal healing journey and aspects of teaching and learning shared within the CPD space clearly manifested itself into a final prompt that embodied liberatory ethnic studies practices—where students were challenged to envision a future beyond negative experiences and for a more hopeful world to live in.

Kenny: "When I talk about that sense of service, it's that healing process"

Just as it did for Rita, the CPD space served as a site for Kenny where he thought through pedagogical questions with the support of other ethnic studies teachers and identified concrete ways to integrate some of the ideas into his curriculum. For Kenny, the humanizing reflective process enacted throughout this study led to a greater appreciation for healing, supported his development as a critical educator, and informed his teaching practice. During the first focus group, when my participants read and discussed excerpts from one another's interview transcripts, Kenny saw an opportunity to speak on familial and personal healing. After reading Rita's transcribed response to a question about how her identity as a person of color shaped her experience as an educator of color, Kenny noted that his own lived experiences resonated with those of Rita. He asserted,

> I want to build on what Rita talked about and this idea of healing from trauma. I look at the history of my family and this process of healing from historical trauma. Even for me to do this, for me to feel this way, I feel very privileged and lucky and fortunate that I have a job that I benefit from personally. In my own growth and my reflection and what I teach and learn. I guess, like when I talk about a sense of service it's that healing process. And it's all connected to, to mental health and wellness. I'm still continuing to humanize my grandparents by the work that I do now, and they're gone. So I still identify, like I'm still growing, I'm still healing for them. It's a crazy process of learning together with our students. So thank you Rita for helping me articulate that or even to come to understand what I was trying to say.

Earlier in the gathering, Kenny had shared his grandparents' painful assimilationist experience in U.S. schools and the impact this had on his identity as a Chicano—this was discussed in detail in

Chapter 4. As a response to Rita's transcript, Kenny connected the idea of healing and trauma to his life. He acknowledged his family's trauma and in a later conversation shared that he integrates their schooling experiences into his curricular unit on the history of schooling in the U.S to honor those memories. When Kenny stated, "When I talk about that sense of service, it's that healing process," he meant that ethnic studies is not just about teaching critical content but also encompasses a concern for the socio-emotional well-being of his students and of his own. In essence, this excerpt captured how this reflective space helped Kenny articulate the way he was making sense of his familial and personal experiences as it related to concepts of identity, trauma, and healing in his life and within his own classroom. The opportunity to reflect and learn alongside his colleagues contributed to Kenny's development.

Furthermore, as a result of the first gathering and listening to his colleagues, Kenny continued to explore and develop his understanding of identity and healing. In my second individual interview with Kenny, I asked him, "During our first focus group, your colleagues and you looked over excerpts from each other's first individual interview. What insights will you take from these conversations for your work as an ethnic studies teacher?" Kenny immediately referenced a question I asked at our first gathering when I had them reflect on "how you today as a teacher would look at yourself as an elementary student, how would you as a teacher describe 'little you' in that classroom?" He shared,

> I was definitely thinking of 'little' Melissa, 'little' Rita, 'little' Jaime in sharing their experiences. I kind of use that to like, okay, these are the different kinds of contexts that I have coming from my students. From within my own class where some feel this way, some feel that way and how to basically address all their needs. You know, that's really hard to do, but again, just thinking about the spectrum of the differences and the diversity of types of students that we have within our classrooms. They all come from very different experiences and have very different views of the world.

By citing previous questions I had asked and previous responses from the other participants as inspirations for his own thinking, Kenny's response demonstrated that the CPD space proved crucial in encouraging him to reflect on his experiences in community with other teachers. This dialogue and reflective process humanized the schooling experiences of the teachers in the CPD space and also reminded Kenny of all the different ways that his students might be coming to his classroom. Indeed, the opportunity to reflect on his colleagues as adults who were once students made him mindful of his own students who as young people are currently forging their own identities. Kenny went on to appreciate the diversity of students in his classroom but expressed the challenge he faced in addressing their needs. He later clarified that the student needs he referred to include both academic and socio-emotional needs. It is apparent Kenny was using this CPD space as an opportunity to discuss and work through the challenge of honoring the diverse experiences, identities, and views of his predominantly Latinx students while also addressing their socio-emotional well-being. The power of the CPD space to encourage these conversations help deepen the insight that Kenny brought to his teaching approach. This conversation informed the lesson Kenny shared during our third focus group.

Additionally, prior to our third focus group I identified some ideas and themes that had emerged during our second gathering that supported Kenny's growth. As previously mentioned, our second and third gathering focused on having each participant identify a lesson, idea, or theme to share and discuss with this collective in regard to ethnic studies curricula. At the beginning of our third focus group, I shared with my participants a few questions that emerged from our second gathering: "What is a safe community? What is healing as resistance? How do we create joyful schools?" I used these questions and a few ideas and themes my participants shared such as mental health and wellness, healing trauma, humanizing, self-reflection,

collaboration, and intellectual work to validate, build on, and introduce the four dimensions of healing-centered engagement (Ginwright, 2018) with this community of practice—as it complemented many of the questions and ideas and themes they had discussed. The group was asked to reflect on the types of professional learning they had received throughout their teaching career and whether or not those professional developments embodied a healing-centered engagement approach. This process helped set up and support a few things in my study. In particular, Kenny's response to a question I asked him during his second individual interview (which took place after our third focus group) brought up some of his thoughts on how to bring healing-centered approaches into his classroom. The question was: "During our gatherings your colleagues and you spoke about healing-centered engagement and healing centered engagement in regard to your professional developmental experiences. Now, I would like you to consider healing-centered engagement as it applies to your teaching practice. Can you describe a powerful lesson/unit/project that embodies and reflects a healing-centered approach to Ethnic Studies?" Kenny noted:

> We had talked about at one point addressing historical wrongdoings and painful histories. So how do we heal as individuals from that? How do we heal as a community? With your own healing. For someone like me who has a little bit more privilege in terms of economics, time, and freedom, I can go outside and work on my bonsai trees for 30 minutes and come back feeling rejuvenated. Calm, relaxed, and just ready to take on the next day. Coping mechanisms. So how do we distinguish for students between both healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms?

Here, Kenny articulated the relationship between historical traumas and personal memories and underscored the urgent need to heal from these wrongdoings at both the community and individual levels. Kenny's line of questioning here demonstrated his willingness in this CPD space to make connections between the individual and the community—an important principle of ethnic studies pedagogy, which often challenges students to reflect on their social positions in

larger structures of domination. He also brought up the idea of coping mechanisms as a way to heal and his aim to introduce his students to healthy strategies; this will be evident when I discuss the lesson he shared with the group. We see, in Kenny's recollections of lived experiences, the impact and influence this humanizing space had on him and his teaching practice. Specifically, Kenny's account demonstrates the reflective, vulnerable, and collaborative modes that contribute to a humanizing pedagogy and were nourished in this space. In the same way that it did for the other participants, the CPD offered a place for Kenny to join with other trusted colleagues to listen, develop, and learn from one another. Thus, the generative nature of this study coupled with ample reflective opportunities supported Kenny's learning and development as a critical ethnic studies educator.

Moreover, on multiple occasions, Kenny commented on the transformative power of the CPD space on how he was thinking about teaching; more specifically, Kenny mentioned being inspired by the activities, discussions, and ideas that emerged and took place throughout this study—specifically, around the idea of identity, trauma, and healing. During our third focus group, Kenny—just as Rita did—shared his end-of-semester final assessment. He sought feedback on his prompt and his overall approach to his semester-long unit on identity. Kenny began by stating that his assessment was shaped by previous conversations in this CPD that centered on addressing historical wrongdoings, painful histories, and healing as an individual and community act. He noted, "We had talked about trying to incorporate music and every type of art, visual, digital, performing, every kind of artistic element that you could think of to address some of those [injustices]." So, Kenny decided to create a final that invited students to use an artistic medium to present on six different aspects of their identity and how those various identities were associated with either advantages or disadvantages, privileges, or lack thereof.

The prompt, titled "Artistic Resistance & Healing," called on students to select an artistic artifact which demonstrated resistance to or healing from oppression for each of the aspects of their identity they wanted to share. Students could choose from creating a Spotify playlist, short film, recorded speech, visual art, song, poem, photography, and clothing/fashion. After describing his lesson, Kenny reflected on how his goal of creating a safe space in his classroom motivated the process of presenting the project to his students:

> I think even someone like myself, who…I don't consider to be very creative and artistic, but I am someone who's definitely a true connoisseur of certain types of art. Like music, for example, and my love of hip hop and kind of how this music politicized me and empowered me. Creating a project involving art [provides] coping mechanisms to help us in a way heal. [In regard to the project] I did a template, I did one myself, different aspects of who I am. And I did a presentation for them and I shared it. Just Google slides and the images [and] a writing component that they had to do. It was made clear, this is something you're going to share. Only share aspects of your identity that you feel comfortable with your classmates knowing about you. So that's the culminating project for the identity [unit].

Before asking students to work on their final, Kenny modeled what a finished project looked like by presenting and sharing aspects of his own identity with his students. This approach to teaching contributes to the conditions needed when creating a safe space and developing trust amongst teachers and students especially when discussing personal aspects of one's identity. According to Zavala (2018), "creating safe spaces necessitates that teachers take risks; it demands that teachers walk alongside students" (p. 64). In this instance, Kenny built trust within his classroom as he took "risks" being the first to share aspects of his identity and asking students only what he was willing to do himself—and what they were comfortable with sharing. In addition, his personal inclination and emphasis to use the arts as a coping mechanism and tool to heal and empower students aligns with a healing centered approach to teaching. Healing centered engagement is said to use culture "as a way to ground young people in a solid sense of

meaning, self-perception, and purpose" (Ginwright, 2018). In this case, using art to express forms of identity and culture offered Kenny and his students a "shared experience, community, and sense of belonging" to shift towards healing and to having a healthy identity (Ginwright, 2018). Also, in creating a project that attended to students' multiple social identities and the intersecting relations of power within those positions as they were asked to identify "advantages, disadvantages, or privileges" is consistent with ethnic studies literature. Kenny's project moved toward anti-essentializing the experiences of racialized communities as multidimensional and did not limit it to a singular identity and experience (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Reyes-Mcgovern & Buenavista, 2016).

Notably, what surfaced for Kenny within this CPD community of practice was an engaged praxis—reflection and action—that mirrored and built on his experience in this humanizing reflective space (Freire, 1970; Kohli et al., 2016). Through his final, Kenny provided students an outlet to express aspects of their identity that neither his grandparents nor he were given throughout their schooling experience. This culminating task also provided students with a space to reflect and consider how identity and resistance could be used as tools to heal from trauma and combat forms of oppression. Ultimately, the feedback Kenny received from his colleagues in the third focus group was positive, reassuring, and supported his development. As he later stated, "Straight up, I learned so much. I just feel very reassured right now." Moving forward, Kenny felt confident with his prompt and Identity unit which sprung from his participation in this collective endeavor to support and empower one another as ethnic studies educators.

For Rita and Kenny both, the CPD space—which I refer to throughout this chapter as a community of practice—facilitated a humanizing reflective process and became a site through

which teacher participants took up the opportunity to explore and deepen their understanding and application of a feelings-based ethnic studies pedagogy in their personal and professional lives as critical educators of color. In the next section, we turn to the other teacher participants in this CPD space, Melissa and Jaime, to see how the dynamic of counter-storytelling practice emerged from this study and contributed to the ways in which the CPD pushed these educators to elevate their pedagogical thinking and praxis.

Reflection As An Opportunity for Counter-Storytelling

The humanizing reflective practice embedded throughout this study included both healing and counter-storytelling—this section focuses on the latter. Ethnic studies is rooted in counter-storytelling[24] or counter-stories/counter-narratives and "ancestral wisdom of peoples marginalized on the basis of racism and colonialism" (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020, p. 69; see also Hu-Dehart, 1993; Yang, 2000; Butler, 2001; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). Vasquez and Altrschuler (2017) explain that counter-narratives "[provide] opportunities for the voices of people usually not heard… to correct erroneous assumptions constructed and perpetuated about them by mainstream narratives. This principle…creates a way of challenging the manner in which mainstream scholarship and the curriculum renders the voices of marginalized people mute" (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020, p. 25). For these reasons, I integrated a counter-storytelling method within the professional learning I created for my ethnic studies teacher participants. The type of critical professional development (CPD) with an ethnic studies ethos I facilitated builds on the premise that CPD is a "direct response to the needs of working class, communities of

[24] Counter-storytelling is a method "of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people....to raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006, p. 10). It is also used as a method to combat dominant narratives which have historically framed communities of color in deficit and racist ways.

Color and the social [and racial] justice-oriented teachers who work to serve them, creating a context to critically analyze and act on issues of inequity and oppression" (Kohli et al., 2016, p.14). Fostering and integrating critical reflective spaces for my participants, afforded them the opportunity both to listen to each other's needs and experiences and to learn from one another. In this section, we focus on the ways Melissa and Jaime enacted counter-storytelling both in their professional engagement and in their classroom. As a result, counter-storytelling enabled my participants to see and understand their lives as part of a broader pattern/movement.

Melissa: "I feel in this space we're helping each other. We're co-constructing lessons and knowledge and that's kind of what I try to do in my classroom as well."

In addition to serving as a site for humanizing reflection and dialogue among teachers, the CPD space also became a place where teacher participants shared their own narratives—what Solórzano and Yosso (2002) have called counter-stories, or "the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26)—as a way to support each other and challenge racialized, gendered, and classed structures of power. For Melissa, engaging in CPD with an ethnic studies ethos became an invitation for this kind of counter-storytelling. In particular, the reflective process allowed Melissa to not only share her insecurities and challenges as a young Chicana/Latina educator but more importantly the value she placed on community, collaboration, and teacher identity as a result of this learning space—which then gets refracted in her teaching. These outcomes reflect elements of counter-storytelling practice. According to Yosso (2006), counter-stories serve "at least four functions in the struggle for educational equality (1) counter-stories can build community among those at the margins, (2) counter-stories can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center, (3) counter-stories can nurture community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance, and (4) counter-stories can facilitate transformation in

education" (pp. 14–15). For Melissa, the functions that surfaced included building community "among those at the margins,...community cultural wealth,...and facilitating transformation in education" (Yosso, 2006, pp. 14–15).This section discusses these functions of counter-storytelling and how Melissa and other teacher participants use them in their own pedagogy.

During our first focus group, Melissa identified functions of counter-stories she heard within the discussion and hinted at the challenges she faced as an educator. Participants read and discussed excerpts from transcripts of their first interview. In many ways, the excerpts I selected initiated a process for counter-storytelling as I centered the discussion on moments of each participant's lives and encouraged them to tap into their experiences as people of color, critical consciousness development, and the ways this may or may not have influenced their approach to teaching ethnic studies. Also, recognizing that all my four participants are products of UCLA's Teacher Education Program (TEP), as previously mentioned, I crafted a question on counter-stories. As an alumnus of TEP, I knew my participants would have been familiar with literature on counter-stories/counter-narratives as it was required reading within the program. Therefore, the question I posed to the group during this gathering was, "So, we have been talking about your past experiences so far, do you feel we've been naming counter-stories? Why or why not?" Melissa responded:

> I mean, I think that we definitely are naming counter-stories like we build community among those at the margins, challenge perceived wisdom, nurture community cultural wealth and memory. As I was reading through people's experiences, I definitely saw these ideas. We challenged the perception of what schooling looks like for young people. The idea that ethnic studies programs push students to think critically about themselves about their communities. I think that just by reading these experiences, we're also thinking about this in our teaching. Learning about our own identity and struggling with our own identity plays a role in how we think about what we're teaching in a classroom and how we're teaching it. Like, the comment that you [Kenny] said: 'We hold down certain aspects of the schooling system to fit the criteria but at the same time being able to do it in a way that challenges and resists an oppressive institution.' So that line

> resonated with me because I feel that's something that I'm struggling with. The internal work I'm doing and how I'm planning or what I'm planning to teach or how I'm talking about certain issues.

In reading and listening to her colleagues' lived experiences, Melissa listed the many ways counter-storytelling elements emerged and inspired her within this CPD space. Considering the painful memories her colleagues drew from in their own K–12 schooling experience, she made a direct reference to the idea that counter-stories challenge perceived wisdom of those at society's center (Yosso, 2006). In the case of East Los High, this group of critical educators have subscribed to a pedagogical approach where in teaching ethnic studies, students are being equipped with a critical lens "about themselves about their communities'' to eventually push back against deficit narratives about their community and themselves—which is in stark contrast to privileged white majoritarian narratives. In other words, rather than focusing on assumptions and narratives that overemphasize what minoritized communities lack, counter-storytelling encourages alternative stories (counter-stories) that take an asset-based approach to celebrate the ways in which these minoritized communities actually already produce knowledge and have different forms of wealth (community cultural wealth). As the study progressed and as was apparent for Rita and Kenny, this space became an opportunity for Melissa to work through some of her concerns (around identity, teaching, and planning) and to learn and grow alongside her colleagues. In this way, the CPD space offered a crucial place for Melissa to build counter-stories and alternative framings that reminded her of the multitudes of wealth and knowledge that she and other teachers of color already have when they engage their students.

This study foregrounded the voices of critical ethnic studies educators teaching for racial and social justice, which was integral for facilitating a counter-storytelling practice that upheld the importance of critical ethnic studies teachers; this centering also bolstered the CPD space and

community as a humanizing reflective space that resonated with her teaching and helped Melissa make sense of her experience within the group. Throughout our gatherings there were questions I asked the collective to prompt critical reflections on their teaching practice. At the start of our second focus group, I had my participants consider a definition of ethnic studies pedagogy[25] and the four tenets of ethnic studies teaching[26,], and asked: "Some people say this is what Ethnic Studies is, to what extent do you feel this captures your vision?" Melissa noted the student-centered nature of ethnic studies pedagogy:

> I always kind of knew ethnic studies had to do with acknowledging student voices and bringing in community. But that really helped, the theory behind it. When I saw the first one [referencing the first tenet of ethnic studies], I thought teaching is political. We can't be neutral in moments of racism and things like that. The second [tenet], I thought every location matters, you're bringing what stories, what experiences you're bringing into your class. The third [tenet], community cultural wealth, having our students recognize the beauty in their community and the beauty that is being a part of the community. And then the fourth [tenet], student voice humanizing students. And like Kenny was saying that self-actualization and a lot of students start their journey towards or continue to make their way towards, through these classes, through these texts through these experiences.

Melissa's response immediately reflected key elements of counter-storytelling. All the ethnic studies tenets she mentioned mirror functions of counter-stories which challenge power and reframe dominant narratives by focusing on the voices, experiences, and the community cultural

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[25] Ethnic studies pedagogy, "must be rigorous, culturally and community responsive, and reflective to be effective in living its promise of decolonization and challenging racism" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, p.25; 2014). 4 tenets fundamental for teachers to understand and to apply in regard to ethnic studies teaching: Question white supremacist notions of ideological objectivity and neutrality in processes of knowledge construction. Move towards anti-essentialist representations of racialized communities. Develop and practice a community-grounded praxis in the teaching of content. Foster opportunities for individual empowerment and collective self-determination and social transformation (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016, p. 4).

[26] Four tenets fundamental for teachers to understand and to apply in regard to ethnic studies teaching: (1) Question white supremacist notions of ideological objectivity and neutrality in processes of knowledge construction. (2) Move towards anti-essentialist representations of racialized communities. (3) Develop and practice a community-grounded praxis in the teaching of content. (4) Foster opportunities for individual empowerment and collective self-determination and social transformation (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016, p. 4).

wealth of those racially and socially marginalized in society (Yosso, 2006; Burciaga & Kohi, 2018). Melissa's reflection showed how given the space to reflect on pedagogy it validated her understanding of ethnic studies and became an opportunity to build on ideas she heard from her colleagues. This space was a place to reorient her understanding of ethnic studies pedagogy and led her to align her teaching with core principles of counter-storytelling—providing a glimpse of how one critical educator was making sense of their CPD experience.

In addition, towards the end of the second focus group, Melissa enacted and articulated an essential component of counter-storytelling which is its ability to "build community among those at the margin of society" (Yosso, 2006, p. 14). The last question I asked during the second gathering was meant to elicit counter-narratives and have my participants recall their experiences as students, teachers, and as racialized beings in society. I began by having my participants do a quick thought exercise where they contemplated the following scenario, "The four of you come to this space/session with all of your lived experiences. Now, I want you to think for a moment about the teachers you had growing up and think about one of your teachers that didn't enact an ethnic studies approach in a meaningful sense. In what ways might today's conversation be different if they were sitting in your chair?" After a minute or two, I asked, "In what sense do you feel like all of your experiences as a student, as a teacher, as a racialized being in this society shape the way today's conversation as 2 presenting and 2 responding participants played out?" In her response, Melissa commented on her own social location as a young Latina teacher:

> I feel I was given a lot of support and resources [as a student]. I felt so seen, I felt so supported and I need to make sure I'm that kind of teacher to my kids as well. Cause that helped me be where I'm at. I think of where I was as a student. I felt very confident then when I got to college that confidence was gone. It was like, dang, I'm not the smartest. And, I feel like I retreated back to I don't have really good things to say or I'm scared to speak up because I'm going to be seen as a dumb Brown girl from LA. Now, when I present even my first couple of years of teaching I'm barely feeling like I'm getting that confidence back to speak up,

> share, lean into bravery a little bit more. What I want to do and say, I think that definitely helped today, cause I'm always really nervous about presenting my work to others, because I'm afraid of feedback with no support. I think about my radicalized being and that has a lot to do with my teaching and the people that I've met through teaching. And so just knowing that I was going to be in this space with these peeps, made sharing my lesson a lot easier for me. To be silent while people were talking about my lesson. And not be like, I want to justify why I did that. It made it easier for me to just sit and listen and take it in and reflect.

In this particular CPD space (which fostered trust, collaboration, and vulnerability among the teacher participants), and surrounded by supportive colleagues, Melissa felt comfortable sharing and confessing her insecurities as a college student and an early-career teacher. Although she does not specify any particular incident or moment for "retreating back" while in college or for not feeling smart, she clearly internalized these feelings. On one level, Melissa's candor illustrates (as shown through similar reflections from other teacher participants) the ways in which the CPD space became the site of humanizing, reflective dialogue among teachers. Notably, too, the experiences that Melissa shared also present an experience that is specific to teachers of color—especially women teachers of color—who might have to deal with impostor syndrome as young teachers.

Unfortunately, Melissa's experience is not uncommon for Chicanxs along the educational pipeline who often face various challenges from hostile campus racial climates to dealing with different forms of microaggressions which have lasting socio-emotional impact (Yosso, 2006; Delgado Bernal & Aleman, 2017; Yosso et al., 2009; Perez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). Yet, counter-stories such as the one Melissa shared serve as a tool of empathy and solidarity building. In this case, Melissa's account fostered a sense of community amongst a group of educators who commiserated around shared experiences. Additionally, she admitted to recently regaining her confidence as an educator when asked to present her work. Melissa alluded to the community

and trust she felt amongst this group of critical educators, something that did not exist in other professional learning spaces and was a huge contributing factor to apprehension.

Candidly sharing her life experiences (that is, Melissa's counter-stories as a young Latina teacher at East Los High) and her appreciation for this supportive collaborative learning space led to a deeper connection between her colleagues and herself. This professional and personal growth became clearer as the study progressed. During our third focus group, Melissa centered her discussion on ideas of community, collaboration, and teacher identity. In an attempt to capture what may or may not have been unique about our ethnic studies CPD, I asked, "As you think back to other professional development (PD) experiences you've had, do you feel those experiences enact Ginwright's model[27] of healing centered engagement?" Melissa noted:

> When I read this, I thought about what Rita had said during our last gathering about PD in the sense of planning with other folks and developing professionally and working with other like-minded teachers, to collaborate with them. These are our goals [when I lesson plan with other teachers], to be political, to be culturally grounded, to view our students as asset driven. But also in the same sense how these spaces provide a space for me to share how I'm feeling about teaching, share how I'm feeling about planning this unit, or how I feel about implementing it. Just really giving me that space also to share with other people who may have experienced similar things, to build that community with them. I feel like a lot of PD, views us in deficit lenses. A lot of school PDs tell us, y'all, don't have these tools. So this is what the district thinks are the best tools for us to use at the moment.

Melissa's account expressed discontent with a lot of professional learning. In Melissa's opinion, PDs at East Los High often convey the sentiment that educators lack the expertise to teach and so decisions are made top down without their input. In contrast, her account of engaging in an ethnic studies inclined CPD challenges these deficit notions and recenters the attention on the

[27] Ginwright (2018) identifies four key elements to what he describes as healing centered engagement: [It] is explicitly political, rather than clinical, [It] is culturally grounded and views healing as the restoration of identity, [It] is asset driven and focuses well-being we want, rather than symptoms we want to suppress, and, [It] supports adult providers with their own healing.

assets that can potentially emerge in authentic collaborative learning spaces (Yosso, 2005; Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). This space allowed Melissa to collaborate, learn, and develop alongside committed critical educators, a sentiment expressed by all group members. The goals that Melissa listed when lesson planning with her colleagues reflect the values relevant to her teaching that were supported and nurtured in this collaborative space. Her appreciation for this space as a place to collaborate, build community, and to share feelings about her teaching and lived experiences captures some of the impact this CPD was having on Melissa.

Similarly, Melissa's response to the final question posed during the third gathering highlighted not just the influence of this CPD on her teaching but various aspects of the counter-storytelling process. I asked, "Let's finally reflect on the dynamics that unfolded amongst us as a group who were engaging with one another as a collective. In what sense do you feel that the way we were engaging one another builds on or expresses the sorts of dynamics that you try to enact in your classrooms?" Melissa expressed:

> I mean this space always just makes me think, dang, I need to collaborate with these folks. 'Cause there's just so many different ways to create units that sometimes you can't see because you've been working on it for so long. And so I really appreciate all the ideas that were shared and the resources. Cause that just helped me grow in my own teaching practice. It just makes me feel like part of a collective like I'm not teaching these things by myself. I'm teaching these things in community and we're all still learning. When I first started teaching ethnic studies, I felt like an imposter. I don't think I'm at the level that some of these other ethnic studies teachers are at. I don't know if I can push my kids to that critical level of thinking that maybe they're pushing their students. I think just being in these spaces and hearing folks validates your work. It's dope and I really do appreciate it and it helps me reflect on what I'm teaching and why I'm teaching it. I feel in this space we're helping each other. We're co-constructing lessons and knowledge and that's kind of what I try to do in my classroom as well. I try to give space for my students to share and express themselves so we can co-construct that learning that's happening in the class. Co-construct those expectations that we have in our community. It's just kind of like what we did here. We created those expectations, what sharing is going to look like. How we were going to interact with each other. The kind of feedback we were going to give each other. And, having that open communication within the group to feel

> like what you say is important and matters in the community will help it grow. I was able to share where I'm at, hear acknowledgement, but also guidance to where I could go. I feel like that's the kind of environment, community that I want in my classroom. I want you to feel comfortable to share in the space where you're at but also be willing to hear feedback and hear support from the community that can maybe help guide us to where we want to go.

The impact that this CPD space had on Melissa was tremendous. She spoke on her teacher identity and the insecurities she had when she initially started teaching ethnic studies. Fortunately, her participation in collaborative spaces like these helped change these beliefs. The CPD contributed to Melissa's growth and inspired her to continue collaborating with this group where she no longer felt alone but rather taught ethnic studies within a supportive community. This view reflects an element of counter-stories; by sharing early experiences of teaching where she internalized deficit notions, Melissa built community with her colleagues as they listened to her and often echoed having similar feelings (Yosso, 2006). She felt a connection and affirmation in knowing other participants struggled too. Another element Melissa shared was the impact the collaboration process had on her teaching practice. Following in the sociocultural tradition, she noted that "in this space we're helping each other. We're co-constructing lessons and knowledge." Melissa's statement here embodies a socio-cultural framework where Melissa was impacted by her peers, took on a shared sense of authority over her learning, and collaborated to "co-construct" knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978; Polly et al., 2018; Watson & Reigeluth, 2016). This also reflected the counter-storytelling function of challenging perceived wisdom and/or majoritarian beliefs (Yosso, 2006). More specifically, as Melissa shared her counter-story of her experiences as a young Latina teacher and reflected with the counter-stories of the other teacher participants, the CPD participants collectively (1) participated in a dialogue that validated their experiences as teachers of color who came from minoritized communities and (2) built a stronger sense of community among each other that reminded them of the "bottom up"

ways in which ethnic studies pedagogy often encourages knowledge production. As Melissa previously mentioned, a lot of professional development (PD) often takes a top-down approach in professional learning in which an "expert" passes or banks knowledge to "participants" who receive that knowledge. Conversely, through co-constructing lessons and knowledge she challenged the dominant system underlying much PD by engaging in a process that focused on allowing critical educators to co-create lessons around ethnic studies curricula. This approach to professional engagement demonstrates how teachers can be positioned as experts in their own justice-oriented growth. It challenges broader structures of power, such as oppressive banking practices seen in formal parts of school PD that do not honor or meet the needs of critical educators. Engaging in alternative pedagogical methods like CPD influenced and impacted Melissa's sense of agency and professional growth. This approach to teaching builds knowledge from the voices of underrepresented and underserved people (Yosso, 2006, p. 15; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

Through her participation in CPD, Melissa found ways to strengthen her teaching practice. She stressed a desire to recreate the experience and process she underwent in her classroom. The ability to give students space to express themselves, feel comfortable, and listen to feedback from fellow classmates clearly showed Melissa tapping into her experience within the collective to inform praxis (Yosso, 2006; Montoya, 2002). She committed herself to refashioning her classroom by providing students with a transformative educational experience similar to the one she had in this space. Ultimately, this professional engagement contributed to Melissa's development and influenced the lesson she shared with the group and eventually implemented in her classroom.

The lesson Melissa brought to the group focused on community cultural wealth[28] and reflected the type of counter-storytelling elements she enacted throughout her professional engagement in this study. Melissa shared a few essential questions she planned to ask students: *What makes a healthy or toxic community? What can a healthy community provide for individuals? [Where] you feel supported and seen? How can I create a healthy community? And, how has my vision and view on my community shape who I am and who I want to become?* She then spoke about ideas she had for potential lessons she wanted to create to address some of these essential questions but was really interested in developing a final for the semester. After receiving feedback from the collective, she decided to center the concept of community cultural wealth for her final class assessment. In a later interview, she recalled her motivations for using community cultural wealth to encourage students to think about asset-based strategies:

> When we were talking about community, I wanted to frame [the final and have students] think about the assets of the community, space, thinking about their community. I went over terms like asset versus deficit-based lens. We [Melissa's classroom] actually looked at community cultural wealth [the Tara Yosso article]. I had students reflect on how their communities are wealthy. Before that I had them think about how other folks might view the community that they're from, whether those deficit-based views that they've heard or that they themselves might think. And then kind of flipping it as we read the Tara Yosso piece. To have them think about all the ways that their community actually has wealth. What does that look like for them? And so in their final they actually had the chance to either write a poem or a narrative or interview someone who basically reflected one of the cultural capitals, the cultural wealth that they see in their community. It was important for students to just think about this idea and share their stories to really feel that connection to their community. For their counter-narratives, thinking of where they see wealth in their lives, this cultural wealth in their lives. In my experience, there's young people because of some of their experiences, or what they've seen might not always see their community with an asset-based lens. And

[28]The term community cultural wealth was coined by Tara Yosso (2005) in her article, "Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth." This article focuses on challenging traditional interpretations of cultural capital shifting the research lens from a deficit view of communities of color as barren poverty-stricken wastelands to places full of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts that go unrecognized (p. 69). Yosso states that there are various forms of community wealth in communities of color, such as, aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. These capitals speak to the core tenets of CRT and empower people to challenge deficit views and to acknowledge the wealth in their communities.

> so I just wanted to give them the terms to identify how people think about folks, communities, and how counter stories help fight back against those deficit perspectives. And that they have a community and it's important to see the beauty in that and to help others see that and that we could do that through our counter stories. Whether that's telling it through a poem through a narrative, or whether that's you asking questions to see how other folks in the community see that, there's that wealth.

Melissa's final clearly mirrored components of her own engagement within this community of practice. Her essential questions looked at feeling supported and seen, grappled with both positive and negative notions of identity, and placed importance on community, all ideas expressed with the group. Considering the harmful myths and beliefs Melissa dealt with in her own development as an educator, she took what she learned from the collective and created space for a distinct experience for her students. She engaged her students in discussions and readings where they challenged deficit views about their community, which is also the same community she is from. and raised in. Through this process, Melissa empowered and equipped her students by introducing language taken from college level text on community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) to combat negative stereotypes about their community. This lesson, which was part of the build up to her final, exuded elements of counter-narratives. Melissa's final also highlighted the power of counter-stories as a form to capture the assets and community cultural wealth in her students' lives and community. Ultimately, this final assessment, among many things, reflected the way Melissa relied on counter-stories and her experience in the CPD collective to nurture a sense of community, collaboration, and positive identity development for her students. Once again, the CPD space proved instrumental in shaping the ways that Melissa thought through how to engage students using ethnic studies principles and implemented these teaching practices in the classroom.

For Melissa, the counter-storytelling method embedded throughout this study allowed her to engage in dialogue where in sharing her struggles as a younger educator amongst the collective found support that led to an increase in confidence as a critical educator. This process also influenced her teaching practice and deepened her sense of community amongst her colleagues as she became part of the larger struggle of learning and developing alongside educators for racial and social justice. Relatedly, in the next section we will see the impact this humanizing reflective space had on Jaime.

Jaime: "I think that this [critical professional development] makes the experience rich, our various experiences coming together."

In this section, I illustrate the counter-storytelling process and the connection between Jaime's individual experiences and the ways he drew from the collective to grow as a critical educator. I also highlight how the critical professional development process informed the lesson he shared with the group. In describing Jaime's experience, I draw on the central components of counter-storytelling highlighted by Yosso:"challenge perceived wisdom of those at society's center; nurture…memory and resistance; and facilitate transformation in education" (Yosso, 2006, pp. 14–15). These components came to reflect and embody aspects of Jaime's life, activist nature, and his desire to collaborate beyond his classroom as part of a broader transformative movement. As was the case with Melissa, Jaime experienced the humanizing, reflective CPD space in this study as an opportunity to engage in counter-storytelling—to borrow the words of Solórzano and Yosso (2002), "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26). This counter-storytelling practice within the CPD space contributed to Jaime's development as a teacher and his approach to teaching ethnic studies. Throughout his participation within the group, Jaime recalled painful K–12 schooling moments that he came to

view as the motivation to narrate stories and counter-stories and enact them in the classroom to engage students in a process of thinking more critically about their own social worlds.

During the first focus group, Jaime tapped into both his lived experiences and colleagues' counter-stories to strengthen his teaching practice and commitment to learning in collective critical spaces. As previously stated, in this gathering, participants read and discussed excerpts from one another's transcribed interviews about their early school experiences as students of color, their critical consciousness development, and the ways these experiences may or may not have influenced their approach to teaching ethnic studies. To initiate a process for counter-storytelling, I asked the group: "In reference to our first interview about your early childhood, I want you to think about yourself now as a teacher and think about how you today would look at yourself as an elementary student. How would you describe little 'you' in that classroom?" Jaime reflected on his own schooling experiences (often traumatic) as a child:

> He's struggling in school academically, is scared to ask for help because he's traumatized from former teachers who have swatted him and punished him. And there's no RJ [restorative justice] in his school. Older white kids call him names, all these racist assaults. He needs loving, caring, ethnic studies teachers in his life.

Here, Jaime recalled painful moments from his schooling; he also named the necessary conditions for students to have a drastically different experience than his own. In thinking about what students like young Jaime needed to succeed in school, Jaime was describing East Los High. Indeed, at East Los High, RJ exists and ethnic studies teachers there provide the pedagogical love and care that he did not experience as a student. This brief account from Jaime captured an element of counter-storytelling: by recounting his experiences as a racially marginalized youth, Jaime raised awareness "about social and racial injustice," articulated what he needed as a youth, and identified what he now felt compelled to offer as an educator (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006, p. 10).

Towards the end of this first gathering, I asked the group, “Do you feel we’ve been naming counter-stories? Why or why not?” Reflecting on his experiences in the collective, Jaime stated:

> Sharing our narratives is a way that really counters the dominant narrative of American teachers. Given that most teachers in the U.S. are White and the schooling of America has been historically White [people centering] their narratives and experiences. Dramatically different from our experiences [as students] and as teachers and what we bring to our classroom, our backgrounds. I think by telling, naming, and documenting our stories, our backgrounds before we became teachers, it’s really a disruption to the traditional racist and deficit narrative that American schools have been. …And, as Rita was saying just the nuances of things. Like our own personal experiences, our identities and our own personal traumas are so distinct even within our own community of Latinos, people of color. Even within our students. And I think that the complexity of that is why it takes so much work. And that’s why it’s so beautiful, to connect learning from our students to their experiences, identities, and personal traumas. I think that it requires us to listen closely to our students and also listen closely to ourselves as educators, and to kind of gather all that up and try to put together a curriculum that is going to be responsive and more understanding of their experiences, ‘cause it’s hard, ‘cause we all come from different experiences. I think it takes collective work and it also means learning from the students and from other educators.

Here, Jaime recognized his colleagues’ personal narratives as counter-stories, to the extent that these narratives are often minoritized and marginalized in the dominant landscape of K–12 education generally and professional development specifically. He distinguished both his own and his colleagues’ stories as being different from their white counterparts. He viewed everything his colleagues and he brought to the classroom as assets that enriched their teaching rather than anything that detracted from their praxis; in articulating their backgrounds as sources of rich experiential knowledge, Jaime appears to be invoking a dimension of ethnic studies pedagogy that often encourages learning that builds on the experiential knowledge and wealth of minoritized students. This community of practice challenged the perceived wisdom of knowledge by shifting the dialogue from the majoritarian narrative, in this case of white

American teachers, and focused on the counter-stories, the voices and experiences of four educators of color and their approach to teaching ethnic studies (Yosso, 2006). In this space, Jaime also referenced Rita's comment on the "nuances of things'' to de-essentialize and acknowledge the complexity, diversity, and distinct experiences within the Latinx community. For these reasons, Jaime described teaching ethnic studies as both beautiful and at the same time challenging. On many levels, then, his response captures the ways that he and his colleagues use this CPD space as a collaborative place from which they can reflect and advance their work and pedagogy.

Reflecting on this first session, Jaime showed a deep appreciation for professional learning within the collective. He emphasized the importance of listening, learning, and doing collective work which provided a glimpse into the process needed to develop critically and how counter-stories were and continue to be a vital component of teaching ethnic studies for him.

On another occasion, during his second individual interview, Jaime underscored the impact counter-stories and the collective had on his approach to curriculum development. I asked, "During our first focus group, your colleagues and you looked over excerpts from each other's interview. Through this process, you have had a chance to listen to your colleagues talk about their own experiences growing up as young people and students of color. What insights will you take from these conversations for your work?" Jaime responded:

> We all have had different and similar experiences. Similarities in the form that we've experienced marginalization and oppression in different forms. The road that brought us to ethnic studies and to critical consciousness has varied. But I think those differences also bring a unique lens for all of us. It even translated into how we design some of our curriculum. For example, my experience growing up with marginalization and oppression or the way that I experienced racial trauma, the color of my skin or being made fun of because of my dark skin. So because of that, I am much more intentionally creating curriculum where students embrace their brown skin or explore their indigenous identities, which was something that I was never given the opportunity to explore, or [much as I was not provided with

> the opportunity to explore] my family roots or family languages, indigenous languages that I'm connected to. But I was never aware about it until I started taking ethnic studies classes in college. I think that everyone's experiences with marginalization brings a particular passion and the type of curriculum that we create, and the motivation as well, and a very unique lens to what we're kind of formulating. I think that this makes the experience rich, our various experiences coming together. And we're creating curriculum [which] kind of makes it much stronger.

In listening to his colleagues' narratives, Jaime was reminded that many of the lessons he has designed for ethnic studies are often influenced by the painful experiences in his life. Jaime recalled the racial trauma in school he was subjugated to. Now, as an educator he creates a curriculum where students embrace their brown skin and indigeneity, something denied to him as a youth and as a way to address the wrongdoing he endured at school. In this example, Jaime deliberately enacted a function of counter-storytelling when he described the motivation and unique lens he carried when creating curriculum. He tapped into a crucial element of the counter-storytelling process which is to nurture "memory and resistance" (Yosso, 2006, p. 15). In this scenario, Jaime's painful memories directly influenced his approach to curriculum that integrated students' lived experiences and identities in order to empower them. During this reflection, Jaime also acknowledged the impact of learning and collaborating within the collective when he said, "I think that this makes the experience rich, our various experiences coming together. And we're creating curriculum." This illustrates not just Jaime's individual growth, but how he recognized and leaned on the collective as a powerful entity that enriches and strengthens the group's teaching practice. For Jaime, these dialogues eventually led to developing a common teaching approach amongst his colleagues which was evident in the lesson he brought to the CPD.

During our third gathering the lesson Jaime presented to the group reflected both powerful counter-storytelling elements and how he applied what he gained from the CPD in this

study to inform his teaching. Jaime's end of semester project he shared with the collective focused on integrating an art component into the annual 826LA project[29]. Jaime's dilemma was integrating classroom curriculum with art and getting students to paint a mural in the community. Drawing on his history of activism that began during his undergraduate studies, Jaime sought to engage his students alongside artists from the local neighborhood to paint a mural reflecting aspects of the book project about "the theme of our roots and culture." The essential question for this project was, "how can we clap back or resist what has been taken, destroyed, erased or colonized from our native culture and history?" He elaborated:

> So the idea was, how can we resist colonialism in the present? The idea is to present muralism [a historically Mexican artform that focuses on humanitarian, social, and political themes] as a way to assert ourselves and insert ourselves back into the curriculum and create murals—as a form of codice [a reference to Mayan bark paper books] or text in our community. Earlier in the year, we did a project… connected to the burning of our history, burning of our books. And the students had to see themselves as an [indigenous] scribe, a painter or a writer. They had options to write or draw some type of symbol. And then they had to tell a story like a place, person, or a moment in school, or in your neighborhood that is special to you. Tell a story of a historical trauma and negative experience or problem that impacts them on the daily. A story from home or from family… it could describe their own identity, or daily life, or cultural tradition. They could describe their indigenous, native ancestry or family. They can describe why maybe they don't know the tribe that their family comes from. They can describe an indigenous practice that belongs to their family like making tortillas or tamales or planting milpa [maize, beans, squash]. So I did this last quarter. And so the idea with this was to build momentum, excitement, to engage them in the mural project.

Jaime's essential question set the counter-storytelling tone for this project when he asked students, "How do we clap back or resist erasure and colonization?" Counter-stories are

[29]As part of the yearlong ethnic studies curriculum at East Los High, students engage in a creative writing process in collaboration with the nonprofit organization 826LA. Students are provided various prompts where they can write poems, short essays, or open letters to their future or past selves and/or to "family members, friends, or even institutions to raise grievances or complaints…essentially anything they can imagine, so long as it touches on the content of the course and highlights the themes of resistance, resilience, and/or reimagination" (López, Dueñas, López, 2021, p. 21).

grounded in “recounting experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people” (Yosso, 2006, p. 10) who have been oppressed by racism and/or colonization (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Working in a predominantly Latinx community, Jaime used muralism and codices as a form of counter-storytelling to “assert” and “insert” students’ lived experiences and narratives as part of his ethnic studies curriculum. This approach aimed to center and preserve students’ counter-stories via art as a way to resist and combat the legacies of colonization. By having students engage in this project, he encouraged them to claim or reclaim their cultural identities past and present as they sought to capture through art and in writing their daily life and the possible indigenous connections to those experiences. In addition, through this process, Jaime re-rooted his curriculum in cultural, ancestral knowledge, and traditions from MesoAmerica (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). The activity Jaime described embraced concepts of indigeneity, community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2006), memory, and resistance, all of which are strong characteristics that contribute to the development of powerful counter-stories (Yosso, 2006). Afterwards, Jaime asked the group for advice on how to include “some type of art,” that addressed the aforementioned components, to accompany the book project.

During the feedback portion of this gathering, Jaime drew from the collective to strengthen his project. After Jaime received praise for the aim and goals of his art project, Melissa offered him some insightful suggestions. Melissa and Jaime are part of the same pathway and share similar students for a few of their classes. For those particular classes, students take English with Melissa and ethnic studies with Jaime. As a solution to Jaime’s predicament, Melissa shared with the group an interdisciplinary idea, “I’m fortunate enough to share students with Jaime. I’m thinking they could write something in my class then the art [piece] for your class, it could be the art component of that story. [We can show] our students

that there's value in storytelling, through art." Melissa further elaborated on how to carry out this collective work and stated, "When I think about how you can transition from writing to art maybe looking at different murals and having students identify whether the four Is of oppression[30] that you see are being challenged. Like how is this mural challenging or exposing oppression? What type of oppression is it exposing?, What is a way that we can create art at [East Los High] to resist oppression that we face in our community?" Building on Jaime's essential questions and idea of teaching muralism, Melissa provided meaningful feedback for Jaime to consider as he worked on modifying his project in this space.

As a response, Jaime expressed:

> I have a plan now. I like sticking with the idea, the approach of storytelling. And having students see themselves as storytellers and scribes, as Mexica [the Nahualt name of the Aztecs] scribes. I'll frame it that way by tying it to history. And since we've been discussing oppression, this is a good opportunity for the students to see how we've been resisting oppression for the last 500 years of colonization. We've been in constant resistance. I like the idea of doing both things. As we share students, perhaps the stories that they're going to write in your, [referring to Melissa's], class on the themes of the four I's….Cause you were thinking of integrating those themes in the writing as well. That'll cut back a lot of time, integrating murals, [analyzing] images of murals to be able to identify the four I's of oppression. Then creating it [the mural], participating in this project, and in the 826LA project as a way to clap back to the erasure of our stories, the master narrative.

In this critical professional developmental space, it is evident Jaime pulled from Melissa's feedback to bolster his project. He kept the indigenous element of having "students see themselves as [Mexica] storytellers" to frame over 500 years of resisting colonization by incorporating Melissa's suggestion of using the "four Is of oppression" to analyze images, murals, and historical events. In working jointly, Jaime was now given the classroom time he

[30] The "4 Is of oppression" refers to the ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internal form of oppression that exist in society (Cuauhtin et al., 2019).

sought to focus on the art component while still achieving the narrative writing needed for the book project—as students completed that portion in Melissa's classroom. A project that began as a daunting individual task developed into a collective effort. The common teaching approach forged between Melissa and Jaime reflected the collaborative nature of this version of CPD in which generative co-construction of knowledge led to engaged ethnic studies praxis–reflection and action. In this space, Jaime enriched his curriculum but also grew as a critical educator. He left this session confidently, saying "I have a plan now" to end the semester.

Additionally, what emerged for Jaime in this reflective space was the desire to continue collaborating with this group and a reaffirmed commitment to think beyond his classroom. In a later interview when asked to reflect on the CPD sessions, Jaime noted, "During the pandemic we've been a lot more isolated. It was refreshing to hear from everyone given that we haven't had the opportunity to meet." This space afforded Jaime the ability to reconnect and build community with his colleagues during a trying period in history. He felt reinvigorated from these collaborative sessions where he was able to "hear everyone's ideas [and it] really influenced my practice." Jaime said, "he got some great feedback and went ahead and applied the feedback I got. I met again with Melissa and we tackled the end of year project together." Jaime expressed an eagerness to continue meeting with this collective and noted "in the field of ethnic studies, the majority of what we teach is collective design" and these sessions provided that. Moreover, in participating in this CPD with an ethnic studies sensibility, counter-stories became a vehicle for Jaime to push himself to think and collaborate beyond his classroom. In working with Melissa on their interdisciplinary project, Jaime shared that, "we learned about the power of submitting both written work and artwork. To visualize and strengthen the message that [students are] trying to convey through the book project. The power of art." Through this reflective process Jaime was

reminded of the transformative impact the annual anthology had. He asserted, "The book that we publish is a form of counter-storytelling. Just having class sets of these students' stories in our curriculum in itself is a form of counter-storytelling, disrupting the erasure of our history. Those books become the curriculum of the course." He went on to explain how vital these narratives and books are to their ethnic studies course and the impact "those stories and words are going to continue'' to have at East Los High and on "teachers from different schools [who] buy those books to share with their students." Jaime was reenergized when discussing the added art component to the 826LA project and the way this book as a critical pedagogical tool had refashioned their curricula and moved his colleagues and him to push this work beyond their classroom. For Jaime, counter-storytelling became an approach that he leaned on to reimagine what the classroom space could look like. In doing so, he also envisioned a process that contributed to broader transformation in education: he spoke candidly about the influence of the book project not only at East Los High but beyond as teachers and students from other schools purchased and engaged their book (Yosso, 2006). By participating in these critical collaborative sessions, Jaime was able to further his individual teaching practice while simultaneously forging a common teaching approach alongside his colleagues. This reflective space allowed Jaime to also consider the influence of this work in relation to the broader K–12 ethnic studies curricular movement.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the CPD space—informed by an ethnic studies ethos of vulnerability, healing-centered strategies, and counter-storytelling practice—that I created and facilitated in this study. Specifically, it focuses on the engagement of teacher participants and the processes that encouraged and supported their development within this community of practice.

This chapter presents two key findings: (1) creating space for humanizing pedagogical reflections across educators can strengthen teaching practice; and (2) engaging in counter-storytelling practices in the CPD space helped educators to both situate their teaching in broader structures of power and find community to ground their work.

One key finding that emerged from the conversations in this CPD space was that creating space for a humanizing reflection led to teacher healing which in turn impacted and informed educators' individual and collective identities and teaching practices. As my participants came together in a supportive learning environment to share and reflect on teaching and lived experiences, when discussing topics and issues of racism and other forms of oppression difficult memories often surfaced for them. Reflective dialogue provided members of the collective an opportunity to explore these memories and to further their understanding and application of a feelings-based ethnic studies curriculum. In essence, the ethnic studies elements[31] and principles[32] within the CPD afforded this group of educators the chance to reclaim and reframe their pedagogies as they centered their healing journeys, restorative justice practices, and aspects of their identities to inform their teaching and learning in this critical reflective humanizing space.

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[31] As education scholars who study critical race pedagogies have noted, there are four tenets that are fundamental for teachers to understand and apply in regard to ethnic studies teaching: (1) question white supremacist notions of ideological objectivity and neutrality in processes of knowledge construction; (2) move towards anti-essentialist representations of racialized communities; (3) develop and practice a community-grounded praxis in the teaching of content; and (4) foster opportunities for individual empowerment and collective self-determination and social transformation (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016, p. 4). These tenets of ethnic studies pedagogy are guiding elements for ethnic studies educators in the classroom.

[32] Ethnic studies pedagogy "must be rigorous, culturally and community responsive, and reflective to be effective in living its promise of decolonization and challenging racism" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, p. 25; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014).

A second key finding is that by engaging in CPD with an ethnic studies sensibility, my teacher participants were able to construct and share counter-stories—a previously painful or joyful experience that may not have been illuminating at the time was recast and shared with deeper meaning in this space. And through this counter-storytelling process, they took certain insights from what they learned in the group that then shaped their approach to teaching ethnic studies in powerful ways. Moreover, in sharing their counter-stories, the educators came to see their own lived experiences in relation to a broader pattern as they embraced the affirming, community-oriented, and transformative nature that emerged from engaging in a humanizing critical professional learning environment.

Taken collectively, these key findings from the CPD interactions among the teacher participants offers promising ways through which K–12 professional development can engage teachers differently. Through reflection, vulnerability, and collaboration in the CPD space, teachers are able to collectively think about what *humanizing* pedagogy means in ways that inform their teaching practices. In addition, this CPD approach cultivates the socio-emotional domain of teaching—the feelings-based dimension of teaching, or what I refer to as an *ethnic studies ethos*—that centers healing and restorative justice. It also encourages a counter-storytelling practice that helps educators articulate their positions within broader structures of power and, in the process, reimagine the possibilities for their teaching praxis.

The generative nature of this CPD space, coupled with ample reflective opportunities for a group of critical educators to come together to make meaning and co-construct knowledge, grew into a space where each educator learned and developed alongside one another. As a result, their teaching practice was strengthened and so was their commitment to an emancipatory ethnic studies curriculum.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this final chapter, I highlight two overarching understandings that emerged when analyzing the findings of this qualitative case study, which focuses on four critical teachers of color teaching ethnic studies who engaged in meaningful dialogue around their learning and development at a high school in East Los Angeles, California. These two insights are (1) ethnic studies teacher development is a process of becoming, and (2) critical professional development (CPD) with an ethnic studies ethos is both humanizing and transformative for educators who engage in this mode of professional learning. I then discuss the implications of this study for teachers, schools and school districts, teacher education programs, and the research community. I conclude this chapter with limitations and suggestions for further research.

Two Key Insights on Ethnic Studies Teacher Development

Two key understandings around ethnic studies teacher development emerge in this qualitative case study: (1) ethnic studies teacher development is a process of becoming, and (2) critical professional development (CPD) with an ethnic studies ethos is both humanizing and transformative for educators who engage in this mode of professional learning. In unpacking these overarching understandings in this section, I address my research questions, summarize a couple major findings that surfaced from my data collection, and discuss the relevance and significance of these two insights.

Insight 1: Ethnic Studies Teacher Development is a Process of Becoming

Oftentimes professional development for educators adopts a banking model (Freire, 1970) of education in which the goal is to provide discrete pieces of information or skills that educators can take up and enact. In comparison, one of the insights that emerges from my study is the understanding that ethnic studies teacher development is a *process of becoming*. By this, I

mean that teacher development, in the context of ethnic studies, is recursive and reflexive. When teachers engage in ethnic studies pedagogy,[33] they are constantly asked to revisit their identities and histories. In my study, I invited my participants through a reflective process to grapple with their own identities in relation to their lived experiences, broader literatures, and histories. To build on Paulo Freire's concept of unfinishedness (Freire, 2000)—the continual process of becoming—professional development for ethnic studies teachers must take on a critical and transformative approach that begins with recognizing that ethnic studies teaching is not only a commitment to justice-oriented teaching but a recognition that development is a process of becoming which requires constant praxis—reflection and action—of one's identity in relation to self and teaching practice.

A finding that emerges in this study that contributes to the concept of *becoming* is acknowledging that when teaching ethnic studies, teacher identity matters. As previously noted, an ethnic studies pedagogy "must be rigorous, culturally and community responsive" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, p. 25). In other words, an ethnic studies pedagogy requires that teachers constantly reflect on their identity, privilege, and positionality in the classroom (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Considering this and as a result of using three theoretical/conceptual frameworks (critical race methodology, critical professional development, and healing-centered and restorative justice) for my analysis, my understanding of identity and

[33] In particular, an ethnic studies pedagogy [is] defined by its purpose, context, content, methods, and the identity of both students and teachers, [it] includes 1) engagement with the purpose of Ethnic Studies, which is to address racism by critiquing, resisting, and transforming systems of oppression on institutional, interpersonal, and internal levels; 2) knowledge about personal, cultural, and community contexts that impact students' epistemologies and positionalities while creating strong relationships with families and community organizations in local areas; 3) development of rigorous curriculum that is responsive to students' cultural, historical, and contemporary experiences; 4) practices and methods that are responsive to the community's needs and problems; 5) self-reflective on teacher identity and making explicit how identity impacts power relations in the classroom and in the community (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, p. 25)

criticality evolves in regard to teacher identity and ethnic studies teaching. This section addresses my first research question:

> RQ1*: How do teachers' experiences (their own schooling experiences; their own early identity as youth of Color; their own experiences coming to critical consciousness) inform their identities as ethnic studies teachers?*

I conceptualize identity as a collective set of fluid, non-static, and heterogeneous experiences where every person simultaneously embodies multiple identities—including but not limited to their gender identity, language identity, geographic identity, and national identity (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Through this study, I have deepened my understanding that teacher identity is more than their current race and ethnicity, but also the totality of their lived history, particularly their experiences in schools and in a racialized society. This view of teacher identity as a totality of lived experiences requires a systematic consideration of the interactions between early experiences, school structures, and a racialized society along with agency to construct identity. For example, all my participants' early memories of being a racialized person had a profound impact on the teachers they became. The negative racialized school experiences that Rita and Jaime had and the uninspired experience that Kenny had in school motivated them to become the critical teachers they never had. In contrast, in Melissa's case, the care, support, and critical consciousness development she experienced throughout her schooling inspired her to be like the critical educators she *did* have. These outcomes for Rita, Jaime, Kenny, and Melissa—which are intimately connected to their schooling experiences—aligns with and contributes to K–12 ethnic studies scholarship that has argued that identity is vital to shaping the way educators understand their relationships to power, their social worlds, and their positions within them, as

they learn alongside students in the classroom (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019, 2015; Cuahutin et. al, 2019; Curammeng, 2017).

Another key area that my study advances is my understanding of *criticality* as a domain in ethnic studies. As previously mentioned, I conceptualize *criticality* as an epistemological position in which its practitioners develop an awareness of their social, political, and economic conditions in relation to a "stance that seeks knowledge that helps to liberate people from oppressive circumstances" (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020, p. 10; Bohman, 2005; Freire, 1970). For critical ethnic studies educators, the emancipatory work of engaging students in ethnic studies curricula requires not only that they nurture and develop students' critical consciousness, but also that their own consciousness development is centered in that process. My work has surfaced a distinctive sort of criticality. Criticality in ethnic studies teaching emerges as inflected by the lived experience of the teachers. The K–12 schooling experiences of all my participants contain the seeds of critical consciousness in some shape or form. The teacher participants in my study had limited opportunities to nurture their critical consciousness during their own schooling, with the exception of Melissa, who joined an activist group in middle school and engaged in YPAR projects throughout high school. It was in college when most of the participants developed a sense of inquiry, criticality, and commitment to change their community and society—all of which were eventually strengthened for them as they went through UCLA's Teacher Education Program.

In the course of the critical professional development,when the teachers shared formative moments from their early childhood and adolescence, it became clear how those experiences inform their critical identity and their future teaching practice. Jaime and Rita spend a lot of time in their classrooms introducing themes like identity/ities, knowledge of self, and family stories

that directly stem from their experiences of neglect, trauma, and pain in school. Kenny enacts a critical identity influenced by a desire to combat the banking method of learning he experienced in much of his own schooling. Conversely, when Melissa takes on a critical identity in her classroom, it represents an extension of her own powerful transformative learning experiences at school. And so, in thinking about the development of ethnic studies teachers as a process of becoming, it is crucial to acknowledge the pivotal moments in their schooling experiences like the ones shared by my participants. These moments draw from their lived experiences, layered identities, and critical consciousness development and play a fundamentally important role in shaping their sense of being and their development as critical ethnic studies educators.

Therefore, when teaching ethnic studies, teacher identity matters, insofar as teachers are encouraged to tap into their lived experiences and multiple identities—identities that are oftentimes racial/justice-oriented[34]—to engage students in dialogue and humanizing curricula. The teachers in my study came together in a community of practice, where they reflected on teaching and lived experiences. The communal space encouraged these teachers of color—in this case, Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American educators—to share and connect as individuals and as a collective to forge new identities in the process of teaching Ethnic Studies. Ultimately, this coming together in collaboration and dialogue reflects the ways in which educators engaging in ethnic studies are always in *a process of becoming*—that is, always engaged in a dynamic, changing process that requires self-reflection, collaboration, and transformation. They are

[34] I define justice oriented or teaching for social and racial justice as teachers who recognize social and racial inequities and strive for transformation in schools, communities, cities, states, nation, and the larger world through raising social, political, racial and economic consciousness (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018; Katsarou, Picower, & Stovall, 2010; Pour-Khorsid, 2018).

constantly thinking about themselves in relation to the world, and they are always bringing those insights into conversation with each other (through CPD spaces) and with their students.

Moreover, my study holds implications for the distinctive needs of professional learning for ethnic studies teachers. In traditional professional development (PD) there often is a goal to have the PD be something that can be implemented at any place and at any time. When considering how teacher identity matters in the *process of becoming* that constitutes ethnic studies teacher development, my findings suggest that the teacher learning must affirm the value of those teachers' lives much like ethnic studies in the classroom has to affirm the values of students' lives. Without this recognition and affirmation of the humanity of teachers, it is difficult to have meaningful engagement. The following key understanding builds on this insight to illuminate what surfaces when teachers engage in critical professional development with an ethnic studies ethos.

Insight 2: Critical Professional Development (CPD) with an Ethnic Studies Ethos is Both Humanizing & Transformative

From the beginning of this study, I was particularly interested in the way ethnic studies teachers learn and develop in meaningful professional development. Throughout my engagement with the participants, I was constantly reminded that the type of professional learning ethnic studies teachers need has to not only be distinct from most professional development but also deeply rooted in ethnic studies principles. That is, ethnic studies teaching requires constant self-reflection on teacher identity, an explicit interrogation between identity and power relations in the classroom and in the community, and a commitment to addressing and transforming systems of oppression (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019). This dissertation builds on existing literature on critical teacher inquiry groups (Martinez et al., 2016; Navarro, 2016; Pour-Khorshid, 2018) and

critical professional learning (Kohli et al., 2015; Sacramento, 2019) and argues that CPD with an ethnic studies ethos, when done well, is humanizing, transformative, and can inform teaching practices. The research questions I addressed while creating and facilitating CPD with an ethnic studies ethos are:

> RQ2: *To what extent and in what ways do educators in this collective draw upon healing centered and restorative justice practices as they dialogue with one another and reflect on their work as ethnic studies teachers?*
>
> RQ3: *To what extent do ethnic studies teachers working as a collective draw upon both individual and shared identities to forge a common teaching approach, and to what extent does this allow for individual differences?*

Initially, I began with the idea of engaging my participants in CPD as I knew it to be a powerful framework for teacher learning (Kohli et al., 2015). What developed over the course of my study was something more distinct: a CPD that embodied an ethnic studies *ethos or sensibility*. CPD with an ethnic studies ethos expands on CPD as conceptualized by Kohli et al. (2015) in that it explores what it means to enact professional learning for ethnic studies teachers in an ethnic studies modality. As previously noted, by *ethos*, I am referring to the feelings-based dimension in ethnic studies—in which "mourning, dreaming, confusion, struggle, excitement, passion, empathy [are] sources of knowledge"—and the emotions and vulnerability that teachers often carry with them to the classroom and the way it affects their teaching practice (Halagao, 2010, p. 508). Integrating an ethnic studies ethos to CPD creates space for humanizing reflection. When I refer to *humanizing* here, I am conceptualizing this term as encompassing the spirit and values of ethnic studies as well as the totality of a person's lived experiences, traumas, and resilience. In this case, the humanizing reflective process of the CPD enabled my participants to

bring their humanity into the process of teaching and led to healing within the collective. As I centered critical conversations around teaching and lived experiences to build community and tap into shared sensibilities, painful memories sometimes arose for my participants as they discussed topics and issues of racism and other forms of oppression. As a former ethnic studies teacher, I was aware that these topics might surface, having experienced conversations like these before firsthand. And, as a former colleague of all four participants, I understood that the type of professional learning I facilitated had to offer multiple opportunities for this group to share, reflect, and discuss both difficult experiences and the resilience of these individuals. Hence, as I planned these gatherings, I was intentional in creating space for reflection that infused a humanizing ethnic studies ethos.

Participating in this reflective process also offered the participants a chance to reclaim and reframe their pedagogies as they centered healing, restorative justice, and aspects of their identities in their teaching practice. For Rita, the humanizing reflective process was an invitation for her to speak on the importance of mental health and socio-emotional wellbeing in relation to ethnic studies teaching. Creating an outlet to discuss her healing journey in a supportive environment was therapeutic as she made sense of her schooling experiences as a Mexican American/Latina. Our discussions influenced Rita's end of semester final, in which she had students consider healing as resistance and had them reflect not only on how to dismantle systems of oppression but also how to build emotional resilience. Similarly, Kenny drew on what he heard from his colleagues and shared how he was inspired and impacted by what he gained in this space. On multiple occasions, he referenced an appreciation of the activities, discussions, and ideas that emerged and took place throughout this study—specifically, around the idea of identity, trauma, and healing. Kenny spoke about the trauma his family had experienced in U.S.

schools throughout the twentieth century and his own personal journey of healing in relation to that. He saw the lesson he came to share with the group as a way to honor and heal from the intergenerational pain he discussed by offering his students a different experience in the classroom. Through his end of semester final, Kenny asked students to present on their identities, social locations, and relationship to broader structures of power and privilege. In doing so, Kenny engaged in praxis—reflection and action—that mirrored and built on his experience within this community of practice (Freire, 1970; Kohli et al., 2015). Kenny also revisited painful experiences and reclaimed them to inform his teaching practice as students were offered a powerful humanizing way to engage in difficult yet uplifting conversations around concepts of identity, trauma, and healing. By attending to this *affective* domain in ethnic studies and utilizing a humanizing reflective process, my participants engaged, learned, and developed in meaningful ways.

The CPD was *humanizing* in the sense that our conversations together often led to vulnerability, collaboration, and healing. We collectively created what Sacramento (2019) calls "brave space", or "an environment of vulnerability and courage, where teachers share their lived experiences to understand the nuances of race as it relates to socio-political conditions in society and schooling" (pg. 175). Several factors contributed to making this brave space and the conditions for this kind of vulnerability possible. Perhaps most notably, my participants came to this study as like-minded peers with very similar political and pedagogical inclinations. Because they have known each other for years, the authentic dialogue was built on a level of trust that allowed for engaging in vulnerable and courageous conversations. Vulnerability is an important marker especially in ethnic studies teaching, as teachers and students are asked to share and reflect on their identities and lived experiences in critical ways. Vulnerability does not occur in

any sort of space as people, in this case critical teachers of color, are not often going to be as open or vulnerable in any type of professional development as their identities or past problems could be threatened or are too painful to share in spaces that may not be attentive to and/or supportive of a teacher's identity. By taking a humanizing approach, the participants brought their whole humanity into the learning process as they candidly spoke about their identities and lived experiences as ethnic studies teachers of color, which in turn had healing consequences and implications for their teaching practice. This reality and my deliberate focus on combining theory and practice—infusing ethnic studies, CPD, healing-centered and restorative justice literature throughout our gatherings—added to the rich discussions that occurred during our convenings. And so, CPD with an ethnic studies ethos was humanizing as this professional engagement operated as an alternative teacher developmental space through which inclusive, feelings-based, and collaborative practices took place while affirming the humanity of the participants.

In addition, engaging my participants in CPD with an ethnic studies sensibility was transformative. By *transformative*, I am referring specifically to the way in which this process of engagement helped my participants invoke concepts of emancipation, liberation, and agency in their development as educators who critique oppression and center justice-oriented practices (Delgado Bernal & Solórzano, 2001). Prior to designing this study, I was cognizant that all my participants are alumni of the UCLA Teacher Education Program (TEP) and are familiar with literature on critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and Latina/o critical race theory. (I will return to this unique circumstance later in the section on implications for teacher education.) These critical educators are well suited for participation in a CPD as political beings who work "to serve [the needs of working-class communities of color], creating a context to critically analyze and act on issues of inequity and oppression" (Kohli et al., 2015, p.14).

Another dimension of the transformative nature of the CPD with an ethnic studies ethos was the use of counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling captures and centers the voices and experiences of people of color usually overlooked, marginalized, and not heard in dominant narratives. As my findings in Chapters 4 and 5 show, storytelling in community is a central mode of deepening and sustaining the critical professional development processes outlined above. More specifically, in engaging counter-storytelling in our professional learning community, the teacher participants came to see and understand their lives as part of a broader pattern and movement. As the collective came together to share stories and counter-stories where they listened and learned from one another, they took certain insights that then shaped their approach to teaching ethnic studies. Two members of the collective, Melissa and Jaime, demonstrated the power of listening, learning, and doing work in a supportive environment; in fact, the critical dialogues and storytelling in this community helped them share liberatory teaching approaches. Melissa and Jaime's participation in the give and take exchange of professional development with an ethnic studies ethos transformed their individual teaching practices (through feedback they received on classroom assignments) and forged new shared understandings of ethnic studies (as they pushed their colleagues to rethink "big picture" assignments like the annual book project). For all of the teacher participants, the space to reflect, collaborate, and co-construct knowledge led to an engaged ethnic studies praxis.

Ultimately, these key understandings offer a glimpse to the promising ways through which K–12 professional learning can engage critical educators differently. In thinking about ethnic studies as a process of becoming and the humanizing and transformative ways of a CPD with an ethnic studies ethos there are some important ideas to consider: constructing and understanding our identities is an ongoing process, vulnerability is important to the process of

becoming, collaboration is important to the process of collective becoming, healing is vital and an ongoing process, and story-telling in community is a central mode of deepening and sustaining these processes. In each case these processes and practices broadened and deepened my participants' understanding and humanity as they engaged in transformative professional learning.

Reflections on These Key Insights

In considering these two key insights, here are some notable dimensions of my study's context that are important to highlight. I worked with an experienced group of ethnic studies teachers who have already emerged as a team. Furthermore, they are working in a school with an established history of activism that includes, most notably, the 1960s Chicano movement walkouts. These dimensions raise important questions to consider: What does *the process of becoming* for ethnic studies teachers look like at other sites that do not or have few of the characteristics that exist at East Los High? What are the implications for folks who are new to the domain of ethnic studies and are beginning this critical journey as they teach the course? How are the dynamics transformed when ethnically and/or racially diverse groups of educators come together? How does the involvement of white educators affect these dynamics?

There are also a few factors I want to acknowledge about the CPD space I created. One notable reason for the rich conversations that emerged during our gatherings was the fact that participants came to the group through long-standing relationships. Moreover, my own role facilitating the group was enhanced because the teacher participants are friends and former colleagues. During our final focus group gathering, Kevin commented on my role as a facilitator and the approach I took with the collective: "I think you bring a really good balance of professionalism and homie-ism." This comment affirmed my attempt and commitment to engage

my participants in a humanizing, critical form of professional development that was built on years of trust and community. The particular context of this study, then, may not be the case for others interested in implementing CPD with an ethnic studies ethos with educators. And so the specificity of this study also raises certain questions to consider. In what ways are facilitators considering the humanity, integrity, criticality, and sustainability of this type of professional engagement? How are they centering and positioning the voices, knowledge, and stories of the critical educators participating in their CPD? The implications to these and other questions will be discussed in the next section.

Implications of this Study

In this section, I discuss the implications of this study for teachers, schools and school districts, teacher education programs, and the research community.

Teachers

At its core, this dissertation argues that teacher identity matters to teaching ethnic studies in particular, given that ethnic studies is a subject, discipline, and epistemology that calls on teachers to tap into their lived experiences and draw on their multiple identities as they think of ways to engage their students in the curriculum. Unlike other subjects or disciplines, ethnic studies—and its pedagogy—requires constant reflection on one's cultural and racial identities in relation to how those identities impact the classroom (Tintiangco-Cubales et al, 2015, 2019; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Accordingly, this study supported and documented such reflection on pivotal moments throughout my participants' childhood, early adolescence, and young adulthood. The identities and histories of the teacher participants in this study cannot be divorced from the ways in which these identities and histories inform their ethnic studies teaching and professional development.

This case study's focus on teacher identity also holds significant practical implications for the professional learning of other ethnic studies teachers. In this study, I have tracked the ways in which sharing and reflecting on lived experiences and teaching helped my participants think through their own ethnic studies teaching practices and professional development. Similarly, educators who are currently teaching ethnic studies or thinking about teaching ethnic studies in the future should ask themselves the following questions, inspired by similar productive conversations that we had in our CPD space:

- In what ways, if any, do I tap into my lived experiences and racialized identities to inform my teaching practice?
- In what ways, if any, do I engage in critical self-reflection where I interrogate power, privilege, and my positionality in the classroom?
- In what ways, if any, do I currently work towards teaching for racial and social justice?

In considering these questions, current or prospective ethnic studies teachers can begin the pedagogical work of reflecting on the experiential knowledge they bring to the classroom, the dynamics and relations of power that they might inhabit in the classroom (and outside of it), and the ways they are intentionally challenging structures of power in their praxis.

Moreover, considering the current educational context of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic era, attacks on ethnic studies, and the layered challenges teachers of color already face in the classroom, CPD with an ethnic studies ethos provides strategies to support, heal, and empower educators—especially teachers of color—by creating a critical reflective space where they can come together to listen, learn, and develop in community in pursuit of social and racial justice. This dissertation contributes to teacher inquiry group research (Kohli et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2016; Navarro, 2016; Pour-Khorshid, 2018) and provides concrete ways for

educators to participate in generative, co-constructive, praxis-oriented professional development. The limited support, as PD is often used for other reasons, that exists in formal school settings for this type of PD to develop ethnic studies pedagogies and practices makes this study all the more significant and relevant. Even for my teacher participants—who informally meet in person outside school hours to lesson plan, a practice that was disrupted during the pandemic-related quarantines—their participation in this study motivated them to continue engaging in this type of alternative model of professional learning. For critical educators interested in CPD with an ethnic studies ethos, they should not only demand this type of in-service teacher professional development at their schools, but in the spirit of ethnic studies pedagogies, they should also take agentive steps, with or without the support of their administrators, to create their own spaces to engage in transformative professional learning.

Schools and School Districts

As schools and districts across California move towards creating or strengthening their ethnic studies programs, teacher selection and professional development is essential to the process. This study offers pertinent things to consider. As previously noted, teachers play a vital role in developing and maintaining ethnic studies distinctiveness and integrity in the K–12 school setting. Administrators must begin by asking who will teach these ethnic studies courses? Considering the core principles (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015), tenets (Reyes McGovern & Buenavista, 2016) and hallmarks (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020) of ethnic studies, can anyone teach this course? As this study and other research collectively show, an ethnic studies course must be thought of differently from other classes and should not be randomly assigned to teachers in order to fill in class offerings. The importance of choosing or seeking educators who have a certain level of criticality, a particular orientation or inclination toward racial and social justice,

and a commitment to continually develop their critical teaching pedagogies—like the participants in my study—make ideal candidates. As a former high school ethnic studies educator, I have seen firsthand how school administrators often prioritize the way they schedule and support advanced placement teachers. I argue that the same approach and priority should be given to ethnic studies and how they select and support those educators. When it comes to professional development, districts and schools should first look inward to honor and tap into the expertise that may already exist within their campuses. For example, my participants have led professional development on ethnic studies teaching but have not been necessarily trained to coach or provide ongoing support for other teachers. In cases like these, districts and schools need to invest and provide opportunities to grow their critical leaders in this field.

This dissertation's emphasis on professional engagement with an ethnic studies ethos offers a model for scaling up ethnic studies' programs beyond a school site. As districts look at the type of professional learning needed for teachers to develop and sustain their ethnic studies practices, a teacher-driven CPD process can offer a multitude of possibilities to build out their ethnic studies repertoire. Educators can participate in a variety of CPD practices that focus on either one or more particular domains of ethnic studies teaching. In addition, by integrating a humanizing reflective process within this professional learning, educators can also attend to the socio-emotional domain that is essential to this critical work and that makes ethnic studies distinct from other classes and subject areas. I want to acknowledge that this type of PD should also be accompanied with other forms of professional engagement. For example, districts should look for potential university-district partnerships to provide, at the minimum, content support for teachers. There are a lot of fields of study within ethnic studies such as Africana studies, Latinx/Chicanx studies, Asian American studies, and women and gender studies. Since, teachers

may not be content experts in all these areas, university-district partnerships can be a generative way to provide in-service PD to grow teachers' content understanding of ethnic studies in areas in which they may need support or additional training. These university-district partnerships, coupled with a teacher-led CPD approach, can be transformative for teachers as they work towards developing ethnic studies curriculum—in terms of both curriculum/content and pedagogical praxis.

Teacher Education Programs

This study's findings also hold implications for how teacher education programs can potentially enhance ethnic studies professional learning.Teacher education programs play a crucial role in the preparation of teachers and design of curriculum which has a lasting effect in K–12 schools. As teacher education begins to offer ethnic studies pathways or specializations within their credential programs for pre-service teachers, they must move beyond focusing solely on content development and instructional skills in effective teaching and learning. In order to facilitate a deeper engagement with ethnic studies pedagogy, these ethnic studies pathways in teacher education programs must be rooted in the core principles, tenets, and hallmarks of ethnic studies. Drawing on the findings on critical professional development in ethnic studies learning, this study offers three concrete suggestions for teacher education programs to foster and sustain deeper professional learning around ethnic studies pedagogy: first, teacher education programs should stake out clear commitments to anti-racist teaching praxis, which (as discussed in more detail in Chapter 5) is a pre-condition for the types of deeper professional learning processes that the CPD space in this study encourages; second, teacher education programs should pay more attention to pre-service teachers and their placement with guiding teachers, in order to provide the space for critical dialogue and mentorship; and third, professional learning should not only

focus on curriculum design but also include strategies that take into account the humanizing, feelings-based elements that many current ethnic studies teachers engage in.

First, teacher education programs should make explicit their commitment to anti-racist teaching—in name, content, and structure. As previously mentioned, all my participants were products of UCLA's Teacher Education Program (TEP). Each teacher spoke highly of their experience in TEP. It was a place where they gained, among many things, a set of critical lenses and tools that expanded both their critical consciousness and ability to put educational theory into practice. Programs like UCLA TEP, whose mission statement deliberately makes a commitment to anti-racist teaching and to the surrounding urban community, serve as a teacher education model to learn from. TEP was also the first credential program in the Los Angeles area to offer an ethnic studies pathway—which began in 2015. A few questions for teacher education programs developing an ethnic studies specialization process should consider are: how are you looking at ethnic studies pedagogy, curricula, and its theoretical orientation to interrogate power and position in your own teacher education program? What teacher education programs already exist that you may look at to learn from? In what ways do you prepare and support your preservice teachers in ethnic studies philosophies and pedagogical practices?

Second, more attention should be given to pre-service teachers and their placement with guiding teachers. Most teacher education programs require their pre-service teachers to collaborate with a veteran or guiding teacher. Programs should create criteria for selecting guiding teachers especially when it comes to ethnic studies teaching that reflect the values and commitments essential to this discipline. Often, pre-service teachers have mentioned the benefits of observing strong guiding teachers, who continuously evaluate their role and position in critical ways in the classroom in relation to curriculum and relationships with students, in the classroom

and the impact this had on them as they transitioned into the classroom (Kohli, 2021). This presents a great opportunity to infuse the reflective component of this study to strengthen the relationship between pre-service and guiding teachers. Teachers should be given opportunities to reflect on the experiences and attitudes they bring to the classroom. As a reflexive tool the pivotal moments/counter-stories captured throughout my participants lives can serve as an example and form of observation of practice for teachers. How might my participants' narratives be used to learn from, build on, critique, reflect, and inspire other teachers in the work they plan to do or already do around ethnic studies? This can lead to pre-service and guiding teachers to explore and share their own personal and social identities with each other. This illustration shows how this study can push teacher education programs to develop new and creative approaches to engage their pre-service teachers throughout their credential journeys as they listen and learn from folks who are doing powerful work around ethnic studies.

Lastly, as my argument in this dissertation about the significance of CPD with an ethnic studies ethos demonstrates, teacher education programs should address the ways in which professional learning should not only focus on curriculum design but also include strategies that take into account the humanizing, feelings-based elements that many ethnic studies teachers engage in while teaching this subject. In other words, the affective, emotional dimensions of ethnic studies are just as important as the content and curricular aspects of ethnic studies teaching. Teacher education programs can draw from this study to see some of the benefits of integrating a healing-centered and restorative justice approach to having educators work collaboratively—as they build community, reflect on their identities, and dialogue on curriculum to improve instruction while meeting the needs of students.

Research Community

This study adds to current and emerging literature on critical teachers of color and ethnic studies teaching in the K–12 setting. As previously noted, the voices of teachers of color are not often documented, heard, seen, or understood. The pivotal moments captured in this case study highlight how a group of Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, and Mexican American educators made sense of their identity/identities, critical consciousness development, racialized, and lived experiences in relation to who they are. It also examines the ways in which these moments inform their pedagogical praxis. These empirical examples expand the literature on teachers of color by offering insights on the experiences, values, and pedagogical approaches required when teaching ethnic studies. This study can also help researchers interested in Critical Race Studies, particularly Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), to examine how counter-stories were utilized by four Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American educators to document experiences unique to the Latina/o community such as, “language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality” (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 311) as they challenge power structures in systems like schooling.

Also, a professional engagement model is provided in this study for sustaining and enhancing ethnic studies teaching through CPD which can influence further research methods and scholarship. The humanizing reflective process embedded throughout this study serves as a process, strategy, and model that contributes to the field of K–12 ethnic studies and CPD as it deepened understanding of ethnic studies pedagogy and praxis for a group of four critical educators. By engaging in ongoing reflection and cycles of teacher-led professional learning, my participants supported and improved their individual and collective ability to teach ethnic studies. This approach also documented and honored my participants’ stories/counter-stories, pain, and resilience, all of which reflect the feelings-based, affective aspect of teaching ethnic

studies that is understudied. Nevertheless, more scholarship is needed to examine and document the following: the experiences of critical teachers of color; the frameworks, principles, and political and ethical stances that draw them to ethnic studies; and the alternative teacher developmental spaces needed to gain a greater awareness and appreciation for the work that is required when teaching ethnic studies.

Lastly, there are also implications for taking a humanizing[35] approach to doing research. As a critical researcher, I developed and nurtured relationships of care, dignity, and "dialogic consciousness raising" with my participants as we engaged in CPD with an ethnic studies ethos (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. xvi). In taking this approach, that draws from a Freirean dialogic model of coming together to co-construct knowledge and engage in praxis, my participants and I built community and trust that led to authentic conversions that strengthened both my participants' teaching practices and this study. As someone who has known and worked alongside the participants in this study for many years, I am committed to the principle of reciprocity, whereby I created space to dialogue, listen, make sense, and analyze my participants' experiences with the intent to share insights and preliminary findings with them. Upholding this standard is especially important when attempting to do research with the community and not on the community. At times, I served as a confidant and colleague with whom my teacher participants could vent, brainstorm, and discuss teaching practices; often, they asked me for pedagogical advice or consulted me for academic resources to enhance their own pedagogies. Research should never be transactional but rather mutually beneficial in meaningful humanizing ways. Therefore, researchers should consider certain questions to ensure that their research design is

[35] In this context, as a researcher for equity, humanize refers to building relationships of dignity, respect, and care with the community being studied (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2014) .

humanizing. In what ways is your approach built on care, dignity, relationality, responsibility, respect, and reciprocity? When considering working with teachers, how can research support and improve their teaching practices? How can it inspire and empower teachers to be more agentive in addressing inequities within their schools? These considerations are vital when working with educators committed to racial and social justice.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Due to constraints that arose during the coronavirus pandemic, there were also limitations to areas I was interested in exploring with this group of educators. An important component in ethnic studies pedagogy is to create "opportunities for individual empowerment and collective self-determination and social transformation" for students (Reyes-McGovern & Buenavista, 2016, p. 4). For years this group of educators have been engaging their students in this area through youth participatory action research[36] (YPAR). With the exception of Jaime, who conducted a truncated version of his yearly YPAR project, the other participants did not have the time to do YPAR due to the challenges of learning to teach online, limited interactions with students, and not having the bandwidth to take on the huge undertaking of engaging students in YPAR during a pandemic. Nevertheless, each participant spoke highly about the importance of civic literacy, civic engagement, and nurturing future agents of change. For future research, I would like to explore the ways in which YPAR may have impacted and/or influenced their identity as ethnic studies educators. How might it inform their process of becoming as ethnic studies educators as they work alongside youth to fight white supremacy and different forms of

[36] YPAR, is a process in which youth are trained to conduct research with those who have been oppressed to seek change to improve their lives, their communities, and transform institutions intended to serve them (Mirra et al., 2016; Rogers et al., 2007).YPAR also cultivates student's critical awareness to recognize oppression and empowers them to challenge and overcome injustices in their lives (Cammarota, 2016; Lopez et al., 2022).

racism and oppression? It would also be interesting to utilize CPD with an ethnic studies ethos to support their professional learning throughout the YPAR process.

Future studies could also illuminate in more depth the ways that my research may have been informed by gendered teacher dynamics. A comparative look could focus on the intersectionality and intricacies of identifying as women, men, or nonbinary teachers and the sorts of ways this impacts the ethnic studies classroom. Student voice would be important to include as it could offer, among many things, an opportunity to capture their experience within the classroom but also to triangulate the data collected from individual teacher interviews and classroom observations. This would enrich this understudied area of exploring gender and identity within K–12 ethnic studies teaching.

In a similar vein, as I think about limitations and implications for further research, there was data that was collected as part of this dissertation that did not fit neatly within the findings; these are areas that I want to explore further. For example, I asked to what extent the participants discussed their engagement with restorative justice (RJ) via an ethnic studies curriculum in meaningful and not superficial ways, especially when dealing with conflict as it arose in the classroom. Particularly, when these educators engaged in conversations around issues of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression that manifest in and out of schools. A further look into this domain could capture the tension, messiness, and restorative ways critical educators respond to the challenges that arise from teaching ethnic studies. This can have implications for teaching practices especially for educators seeking ideas, resources, and approaches on how to navigate difficult conversations in the classroom in a critical, nurturing, and supportive way.

Future scholarship might further explore the meaning and significance of critical professional development (CPD) with an ethnic studies ethos. To some extent, one central contribution of this study is to take the idea of CPD and to refashion it or extend it by stating that there is a form of CPD infused with an ethnic studies ethos that should be adopted moving forward for ethnic studies teachers. As was evident in this study, the integration of an ethnic studies ethos complemented and expanded the scope of CPD, ethnic studies pedagogy, and strengthened the teaching practices of the participants. In Figure 2.1 in chapter 2 ("Literature Review & Theoretical Frameworks"), I illustrated and discussed the frameworks I drew from to inform this study. New research can re-examine this graph in light of the frameworks and processes required when engaging critical educators in CPD with an ethnic studies ethos. This reorientation can provide a model to research and analyze the affective feelings-based dimension of ethnic studies teaching that I was not able to investigate in detail like mourning, dreaming, confusion, and passion as sources of knowledge (Halagao, 2010; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). This can contribute to the emerging body of literature on embodied and holistic ways of being in relation to teaching practices and pedagogies that attend to emotions and matters of the heart (Cariaga, 2019; Hannegan-Martinez, 2019; Pour-Khorsid, 2018; Ginwright 2016, 2018; Paris & Alim, 2017; Darder, 2015; Anzaldúa, 2015; Camangian, 2015; Freire, 1970).

Conclusion

From the time I began writing this dissertation in the summer of 2020 to the writing of this concluding chapter in spring of 2023, the pendulum has swung in public education discourse. What once was a progressive call to push schools and other institutions to attend to issues of inequities and injustices following George Floyd's brutal murder and the coronavirus pandemic has now shifted to a moment of conservative backlash in which states are now passing

various policies that restrict how teachers discuss race and racism in schools and ban books and anything related to critical race theory (CRT), among other things (Najarro, 2023). This sociopolitical context undergirded by white supremacy also has meant that ethnic studies has been under attack in K–12 schools. Even in a progressive state like California, pushback to ethnic studies and CRT exists and is being advanced in local districts like Visalia Unified and Newport-Mesa Unified (Lambert, 2023). But this dynamic is playing out to a lesser extent at the state level, where conversations around expanding K–12 ethnic studies continue to gain momentum (Alexander et al., 2023). Considering these realities, justice-oriented educators find themselves navigating different circumstances depending on where they live and teach. Nevertheless, amidst the political noise and negative rhetoric, the need to listen and learn from critical educators at this time is crucial especially for educators teaching for racial and social justice. As the state implementation of ethnic studies in California moves forward, there invariably will be local- and state-level political conflicts. Such conflicts are an outgrowth of efforts to advance racial justice within political and social contexts that maintain substantial resistance to racial equality. Given this dynamic, there will be a political need to counter the reactionary politics challenging ethnic studies. Yet such political action alone will not build the capacity of educators to advance high quality learning in ethnic studies classes. Such a task requires that we develop ideas and tools for fostering the learning and development of ethnic studies teachers. This dissertation aims to contribute to that cause.

As a former high school ethnic studies teacher, I remember even within socio-political upheaval and shifts that occurred while I taught, my commitment to racial and social justice was unwavering. I constantly reminded myself that I stood on the shoulders of my ancestors and followed in the path paved by countless revolutionary educators dedicated to empowering

students and transforming institutions to better serve under-resourced and historically marginalized communities. An important component to the development of any educator that I felt was lacking in my experience was meaningful and critical professional learning especially around the teaching of ethnic studies. As a critical researcher, I wanted to engage in a research project that had tangible implications and utility for teachers like myself and the participants in this study. This dissertation was my attempt to examine a group of critical teachers of color engaging in ethnic studies professional learning that recognized their humanity and, in the process, captured individual, and collective experiences in their lives that informed their teaching practices. It was also an opportunity to analyze and offer tangible ways in which educators could build community, construct knowledge, learn from one another, and share space to heal in pursuit of empowering and transforming themselves and the classroom for their students.

I want to conclude this study with a powerfully apt response from my participants in response to a question about how important it might be to distinguish ethnic studies as a verb from a noun. Members of the collective responded that it was extremely important; for them, ethnic studies as a verb embodies and represents

> a mood, emotions, feelings, passion, an experience, relationships/friendships, a potential to keep growing, a movement, unity, empowerment in telling your own story, commitment to change oneself and change the world, and the practice of always questioning, creating, constructing, celebrating the small and big wins of our daily existence.[37]

Ultimately, at its essence, I center the guiding words of Rita earlier in this dissertation: "Ethnic studies is about humanizing us." Teachers who subscribe to this principle learn and develop while engaging in ethnic studies pedagogies and integrating ethnic studies into their praxis.

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[37] This quote is a verbatim statement of one participant in the group, but all members of the group shared their affirmation after it was said. In the spirit of the collective, I share it here as a representation of the collective as a whole.

They experience ethnic studies as a verb, as a totality of all the feelings noted above, and as a commitment to humanity over and over again. Professional learning grounded in the ethos of ethnic studies can assist educators as they re-imagine what the classroom might look like for themselves and their students.

Appendix A

1st Individual Interview:

Introductory protocol:
Hello, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation is going to deeply enrich this project. Is it okay if I begin audio recording? Are you ready to begin? Ok. Good afternoon/evening, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. I am interested in learning what it means for teachers of color, such as yourself, to learn, develop, and take action in powerful ways both individually and collectively via an Ethnic Studies framework. I will ask you some questions in regard to this topic. Feel free to share as much information as you like.

PART 1: Life Experiences, Identities, Critical Consciousness, and Educational History
Will focus primarily on early identity as youth of Color, educational experiences, instances/moments of critical consciousness development, and the relationship between their educational histories and their identities as educators.

1. Warm up: Where did you grow up? Can you describe a memory or something unique about the place you grew up in?

2. What was your childhood like? For example, can you describe one distinctive memory of the time before you started school? (Remind participant to share whatever they feel comfortable with)

3. At what point in your life did you realize and/or learn that you were a person of Color? Can you describe this memory?

4. What was your elementary schooling experience like? Can you describe either a memorable teacher/s and/or an incident during those years?

5. How about in middle and high school, what was your schooling experience like? Can you describe either a memorable teacher/s and/or an incident during those years?

6. When did you feel most comfortable in school? How did that space (teacher, peers) look/feel like? Has this had any influence in the way you teach?

7. Were there any key moments or spaces in your late adolescence that nurtured your critical consciousness? In school or in other spaces? And, has this had any influence in the way you teach?

8. When and why did you decide to become an educator? How long have you been teaching? Where have you taught?

9. How is your experience as an educator shaped by your identity as a person of Color? Also, in regard to your identity, how do you identify yourself? (For example, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sex, etc…) Does this identity also shape your experience as an educator?

10. Changing gears a bit, I would like you to think about one or more of your students, how would they describe you as a teacher? Or how would they describe what makes you unique as a teacher?

11. What ideas or thinkers inform the way you teach?

12. How long have you been teaching ethnic studies? Can you describe a particular lesson that you consider a powerful example of what you try to do in ethnic studies? Can you describe what you and your students do in that lesson and why?

13. To what extent have your life experiences and identity/ities influenced your approach to teaching ethnic studies?

Appendix B

2nd Individual Interview:

Introductory protocol:
Hello, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation is going to deeply enrich this project. Is it okay if I begin audio recording? Are you ready to begin? Ok.

Good afternoon/evening, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. I am interested in learning what it means for teachers of color, such as yourself, to learn, develop, and take action in powerful ways both individually and collectively via an Ethnic Studies framework. I will ask you some questions in regard to this topic. Feel free to share as much information as you like.

Interview Questions:

1. Some districts with little or no history in ethnic studies who employ few teachers of color are beginning to offer ethnic studies. Close your eyes for a moment and think about what it might mean to teach ethnic studies in a school like that. Now open your eyes and reflect for a moment on what it means to teach ethnic studies in a school with a deep and storied history in this domain. At Roosevelt, the teaching force and student body are predominantly people of color, specifically Latinx. Calls for ethnic studies curriculum go back more than half a century and there is a long history of course offerings in ethnic studies. *Given all that, what is distinctive about being an ethnic studies teacher at Roosevelt High School?*

2. In regard to your teaching practice, I am curious about whether you think about your ethnic studies lessons differently than lessons for other classes. *Are there distinctive ideas or questions that shape your planning for lessons in ethnic studies?*

3. During our 1st focus group, your colleagues and you looked over excerpts from each other's 1st individual interview.Through this process, you have had a chance to listen to your colleagues talk about their own experiences growing up as young people and students of color. What insights will you take from these conversations for your work as an ethnic studies teacher?

4. During our 1st focus group we also spoke about counter-stories and most of your colleagues including yourself identified elements of counter-stories that emerged from the discussion that day. *Can you provide an example of how an ethnic studies lesson invited students to share a counter-story? In this instance, what did you do to support the students? Why do you think it was important for students to share counter-stories in this way? In what sense did this shift student engagement or the dynamics of the class?*

5. During our 2nd focus group we spoke about, and most of you recognized, the ARC and tenets of Ethnic Studies teaching. Can you describe a powerful lesson/unit/project that you teach that you feel embodies elements of the ARC and tenets of Ethinc Studies teaching? And/or are there areas you might want to edit or amend from these frameworks based on your own teaching of Ethnic Studies?

6. In the weeks since our critical professional development sessions, did you find yourself drawing on ideas or feelings from our discussions in your ethnic studies classes? If so, can you share an example? If not, do you think that these discussions will influence how you approach ethnic studies in the future? And/or might there be a lesson/unit/project where you might consider integrating what you heard during our CPD discussions?

7. Considering how Ethnic Studies explores issues of covert and overt oppression, privilege, and intersectionality, to name a few, when harm, tension, and disagreements surface between students-student and/or student-teacher, *how do you mitigate and/or repair harm when these situations occur in the classroom*?

8. Considering how RHS has embraced and adopted restorative justice (RJ) practices campus-wide, *what is your understanding of RJ? What does RJ mean to you? And, what does it look like in your Ethnic Studies classroom*?

9. Dr. Maisha T. Winn asserts that RJ has four pedagogical stances—one of which is how *history matters.* Winn states that *history matters*, "as an opportunity to access painful histories collectively and to address historical wrongdoing in education and in school communities" (Winn, 2018, p. 34). To what extent do you feel this captures your vision and/or teaching of RJ within Ethnic Studies?

10. *As an ethnic studies teacher and teacher of color, what does critical self reflection and self-awareness mean to you*? (Self awareness (the process of getting in touch with one's feelings and behaviors) and Critical Reflection (where a teacher reflects on their words, their behavior, social relations, their impact on students, construction of knowledge, and…. "it situates critique within a radical notion of interest and social transformation" (Patterson Williams & Gray, 2021,p. 107- From RJ in Education book).

11. During our gatherings your colleagues and you spoke about healing-centered engagement and healing centered engagement in regard to your professional developmental experiences. Now, I would like you to consider healing-centered engagement as it applies to your teaching practice. *Can you describe a powerful lesson/unit/project that embodies and reflects a healing-centered approach to Ethnic Studies*? (Notes from that discussion: lesson planning to address mental health, well-being, joy, community, connectedness, "teaching is political", "representation matters", community cultural wealth, humanizing, student voices, "healing as resistance?" "How do we create "joyful" schools", depth, compassion, dignity, love)

12. As a former Ethnic Studies high school teacher I remember the joy and love of teaching Ethnic Studies but I also remember the social-emotional toll it took on me as well. Some scholars say that, "social-emotional wellness starts with the teacher, so teachers must establish and develop these commitments within themselves before they can effectively engage in this work with their students" (Patterson Williams & Gray, 2021,p. 118). *In what ways, if any, do you attend to your own social-emotional wellness*?

Appendix C

Final Individual Interview:

Introductory protocol:
Hello, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation is going to deeply enrich this project. Is it okay if I begin audio recording? Are you ready to begin? Ok.

Good afternoon/evening, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. I am interested in learning what it means for teachers of color, such as yourself, to learn, develop, and take action in powerful ways both individually and collectively via an Ethnic Studies framework. I will ask you some questions in regard to this topic. Feel free to share as much information as you like.

1. Think about your journey as an ethnic studies teacher since you first began. What has remained the same and what has changed in your approach to being an Ethnic Studies teacher? Do you envision your pedagogic approach evolving as you move forward? If so, how? (*This is my attempt to probe both the past and the future since I have been engaging with the teachers their own past experiences, and how that has shaped them as an educator, and E.S. is an exploration of these multiple past histories/experiences, so something where there is an opportunity to reflect on the past and the future, should I rephrase the question or be a bit more direct?*)

2. From our discussions, I have asked you to share about your personal lived experiences and the events and/or moments that led to you becoming an Ethnic Studies teacher. In what ways, if any, have your parents/family influenced this journey of you becoming an Ethnic Studies teacher? And, how have your parents/family responded to you being an Ethnic Studies teacher?

3. In previous discussions you and your colleagues have talked about the ways the 3 R's (Resistance, Resilience, & Re-Imagination) drive the Ethnic Studies course at RHS. I'm wondering if you could define each of these terms in turn. What does "resistance" mean and how is it important to the subject of Ethnic Studies? What about resilience? Reimagination?

4. In light of the events of the past year and a half (Covid-19, January 6th attack on Capitol Hill, the senseless killing of George Floyd & the continued attack on Black bodies, among other events), how important, if any, is the civic education component within your

Ethnic Studies curriculum? In particular, having students engage in doing YPAR? Many of you mentioned last year due to covid 19 you were unable to have students engage in YPAR.

5. In our last gathering, I heard the disciplinary challenges RHS was having with students. From a high number of fights, a lockdown, to paramedics being called for students who were under the influence of narcotics. Your colleagues and you said these incidents are most likely a result of students spending the last year and a half cooped up in their homes and not given a space to air out their emotions. In what ways, if any, has your healing centered and restorative justice practices addressed some of these current student needs? Has your approach/practice related to RJ remained the same and/or changed in comparison with before the pandemic? Do you feel that your own participation in healing spaces over the last 18 months shapes how you approach RJ?

6. As was mentioned in our last focus group, we have seen the backlash against teaching CRT in public education. Some critics say it makes students uncomfortable to speak about race, racism, and oppression and others go as far as saying CRT has no place in public education. This raises many important questions. And yet, Paulo Freire reminds us that conflict is the midwife of consciousness. Are there times when you focus on making students feel comfortable and other times when you seek to shake things up? If so, what is the difference? How do you know which approach to take?

7. In our conversations, you and your colleagues mentioned having been a graduate of UCLA's Teacher Education Program (TEP). In what ways, if any, did TEP help support or inform your development as an educator?

8. In addition, has your past experiences with YPAR (either as a student or a teacher) informed your current identity as an Ethnic Studies teacher?

9. From our conversations, I am struck by the fact that as a group of Latinx educators in a predominant Latinx community that this group of educators is profoundly influenced by African American freedom struggles. It's interesting to consider who we are and how we are drawing upon African American historians and theorists. Why is that? And are there

other sources beyond historians and theorists of African American freedom struggles you draw from?

10. As you plan for this academic year, in what ways, if any, do you see yourself continuing to work with the Ethnic Studies collective, community of practice, at RHS? And how likely will you continue to engage in critical professional development as a collective to plan and achieve the goals you set for yourself? (*This may be a place to bring up Politics & Pedagogy since they have briefly spoken about that space*)

Specific Question for:

Jaime & Melissa- During our conversations, you mentioned working with Jorge/Maggie and the interdisciplinary work you two do around Ethnic Studies content. What affordances does this interdisciplinary collaboration allow for you and your students?

Kenny- In our last focus group, you mentioned that you were the Social Studies Department Chair. And how department meetings are not a space for critical professional development (CPD). What conditions need to be in place to enable you to refashion the SS dept. meetings into critical professional development? (*This suggests that the conditions of affordance that allow for the depth that play out in a CPD/CoP is unusual for the educators themselves*)

Rita: In our last focus group, a term was thrown around that for any content you teach you try to "Ethnic Studies It Up!". You mentioned that it is a feeling you can't name because, "you don't know what it is but you know what it is." What did you mean by that? And how would you define "Ethnic Studies It Up"?

11. During most of our gatherings, you have been asked to reflect on multiple areas of your personal and professional life. In our last meeting, as a result of this reflective space I heard a growing sense of agency on the part of you and your colleagues. How significant, if any, is creating time and space to reflect as an educator? And how, if any, does the act of reflecting influence, in this case, your sense of agency?

12. Some people would say that an ethnic studies teacher is a teacher assigned to teach an ethnic studies class. But, our discussions have convinced me that there is a deeper meaning to being an ethnic studies teacher. What does it mean to you to say, 'I am an ethnic studies teacher?'

Appendix D

1st Focus Group Protocol

Quick check-in (2-5mins): What was one highlight from your spring break or one thing you look forward to the coming summer?

1st question (5-10mins):

1. In reference to our first interview where I asked each one of you questions about your early childhood. I want you to think about yourself now as a teacher and think about how you today as a teacher would look at yourself as an elementary student, how would you as a teacher describe little you in that classroom?

The next part of the focus group will look at participant responses to some of the questions asked during the 1st individual interviews (50mins):

Q3: At what point in your life did you realize and/or learn that you were a person of Color? Can you describe this memory?

Q7: Were there any key moments or spaces in your late adolescence that nurtured your critical consciousness? In school or in other spaces? And, has this had any influence in the way you teach?

Q13: To what extent have your life experiences and identity/ities influenced your approach to teaching ethnic studies?

Q9: How is your experience as an educator shaped by your identity as a person of Color? Also, in regard to your identity, how do you identify yourself? (For example, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sex, etc…) Does this identity also shape your experience as an educator?

Last part of the Focus Group (5-10 mins) will consist of asking my teacher participants two questions:

1. Take a minute and think about a powerful experience you had prior to coming to RHS, in which you were part of a community, it can be within a formal academic setting or outside a school institution, family, etc….that was affirming and was a space for development as a learner?

2. So, we have been talking about your past experiences so far, do you feel we've been naming counter-stories? Why or why not? (5-10mins)

Counterstories definition:

Counterstories or counter storytelling is a method “of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people....to raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006, p. 10). It is also used as a method to combat dominant narratives which have historically framed communities of color in deficit and racist ways.

Counterstories serve at least four functions in the struggle for educational equality, these are to “build community among those at the margins; challenge perceived wisdom of those at society’s center; nurture community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance; and facilitate transformation in education” (Yosso, 2006, pp.14-15).

Appendix E

2nd Focus Group:

Introductory protocol:
Hello, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation is going to deeply enrich this project. Is it okay if I begin audio recording? Are you ready to begin? Ok.

1. Community Building/Opening Question (**5mins**):

   Ask participants to close their eyes and imagine a moment when they felt at their best as a teacher. Where are you? What time is it? What are the surroundings?" (Is it certain morning routines, something around your commute, exercise, a run, etc…)

2. Now thinking about professional development, can you describe one of the more powerful experiences you have had in professional learning? What took place or was meaningful for you? (**5mins**)

After listening to their responses I will read back the elements they shared and project a slide on how this may connect and extend ideas of CPD and community of practice.

A community of practice is "formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" (Wenger, 2011, p.1; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger (1998) identified three characteristics shared between individuals in a community of practice: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire.

Contrary to technocratic, top-down teacher pd, a Critical Professional Development (CPD) model is "where teachers are engaged as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society" (Kohl et al., 2015, p. 7).

CPD was "built in direct response to the needs of working class, communities of Color and the social [and racial] justice-oriented teachers who work to serve them, creating a context to critically analyze and act on issues of inequity and oppression" (Kohli et al., 2016, p.14).

3. As we begin this conversation on E.S. lessons it may be helpful to forge a common language, here is one distillation/or important aspect of how we may think about E.S., lets play with this for a little bit, does this work for you and in what ways might you want to edit or amend this.

I will project another slide with the 4 tenets of Ethnic Studies teaching (McGovern Reyes & Buenavista, 2016) and the ARC of Ethnic studies (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).
Ask participants, some people say this is what Ethnic Studies is, to what extent do you feel this captures your vision? **(5-7mins)**

4. Transition to tuning protocol (**60/65mins**):

Critical Professional Development: Individual/Shared Identities & Teaching Approaches

This process will give each teacher, within this community of practice, the chance to share and discuss how they are making sense of ethnic studies curriculum in a supportive space. Each presenting teacher participant will have 30 minutes to share their work. For each of these sessions only 2 teacher participants will be presenters.

Introduction. Briefly introduce protocol goals, norms and agenda.

1. Project Overview-In this first step, the presenter gives an overview of his or her lesson/idea/theme in regard to ethnic studies curricula in the classroom. The presenter will share some thinking about key design principles such as why a lesson/idea/theme has been structured in a certain way, or why an assessment or accountability measure has been included. The presenter then frames a dilemma question to guide the discussion. Participants—those listening to the presenter—are silent during this time.

2. Clarifying Questions: Participants have an opportunity to ask“clarifying”questions in order to get information that may have been omitted in the presentation that they feel would help them to understand the context of the work being presented. Clarifying questions have brief, factual answers. For example, participants can ask clarifying questions of the presenter like, “how are you planning to assess what students have learned?” or “How many class periods will be spent on this lesson/idea/theme?” The facilitator should be sure to limit the questions to those that are “clarifying”.

3. Probing Questions: Participants take a couple of minutes to reflect on what they would like to ask and contribute to the feedback session. Presenter is silent; participants do this work silently.

Participants then ask probing questions of the presenter, such as:

- What made you decide to select that text for this lesson/project?
- Does it meet the literacy needs of your students?
- How does this idea/lesson/theme sit with the core tenets and/or pillars of ethnic studies pedagogies?

Probing questions help the presenter expand his or her thinking about the dilemma. Avoid questions which are advice in disguise, such as, "Why don’t you think about swapping that text for something more challenging?"

4. Discussion/Feedback: Participants discuss the work that has been presented and explore solutions to the presenter's dilemma question. Participants should direct their comments to each other, not the presenter. During this time, the presenter removes him or herself from the group, is silent, and takes notes. This encourages the participants to speak openly and engage in authentic conversation about the work and dilemmas; it also forces the presenter to listen without responding and influencing the direction of the discussion.

The feedback generally begins with a few minutes of warm feedback, moves on to a few minutes of cool feedback (sometimes phrased in the form of reflective questions), and then moves back and forth between warm and cool feedback. For the participants, it is helpful to begin with what went well, such as, "I like the approach you are taking to discuss issues of internalized forms of oppression," or "I will definitely borrow this lesson because I see real progression for students comprehension in regard to identifying instances of resistance and resilience in the civil rights movement."

Participants can then take a more critical analysis of the work and focus on the dilemma question.Warm feedback may include comments about how the work presented seems to meet the desired goals; cool feedback may include possible "disconnects," gaps, or problems. Often participants offer ideas or suggestions for strengthening the work presented. The facilitator may need to remind participants of the presenter's focusing question,which should be posted for all to see. Presenter is silent and takes notes.

5. Reflection: Participants are silent during reflection, and the presenter has the opportunity to respond to the discussion. The presenter speaks to those comments/questions he or she chooses. This is not a time to defend oneself, but is instead a time for the presenter to reflect aloud on those ideas or questions that seemed particularly interesting. Facilitator may intervene to focus, clarify, etc. The presenter then reads back briefly what he or she heard from the discussion and describes what the next steps will be. This is a brief summary, such as, "What I heard was that you really liked was…., and the fact that students are writing for a real purpose," or "You were worried about how I have balanced the readings and content with this lesson and I need to work more on…..". During this step, the presenter speaks to those comments/questions he or she chooses while participants are silent.

5. Repeat this Tuning Protocol cycle with the 2 teacher participant

6. Debrief/Close Out (**10mins)**:

1. Each participant and presenter is given time to reflect and write on key takeaways from this session both in terms of how it may inform their own individual teaching practice and/or how it influences their collective work moving forward. Teacher-presenters can share what their experience was like using this protocol. The group can also discuss their

experience as well. A more general discussion and feedback of the tuning protocol may develop. (**2-3mins)**

2. For our last question, I want to begin by having us do a quick thought exercise. The four of you come to this space/session with all of your lived experiences. Now, I want you to think for a moment about the teachers you had growing up and think about one of your teachers that didn't enact an ethnic studies approach in a meaningful sense, in what ways might today's conversation be different if they were sitting in your chair? Take a second and think about that. After a few seconds, ask them to respond to the following question, in what sense do you feel like all of your experiences as a student, as a teacher, as a racialized being in this society shape the way today's conversation as 2 presenting and 2 responding participants played out? (**8 mins)**

Appendix F

<u>3rd Focus Group</u>:

Introductory protocol:
Hello, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation is going to deeply enrich this project. Is it okay if I begin audio recording? Are you ready to begin? Ok.

1. Community Building/Opening Question (**5-8mins**):

We are coming together as a site of CPD. It's interesting to think about the very meaning of a profession and teaching as a profession. To some extent the idea of teaching as a profession has always been shaped by the State and state licensure and oftentimes does not open up space for some of the ideas we have been talking about like identity, community, and connectedness. Last time we were here I was hearing these themes of identity, community, and connectedness. I am curious as you think about what it means to think of teaching as a profession, do you think most teachers think of teaching as a profession as tied to identity, community, and connectedness? Or do they think about it in different ways? (Something to focus on the idea of profession rather than professional development per se).

2.Project Ginwright Slide (**5-8mins):** Last time we met I heard this group discuss and share ideas around teaching as political, community cultural wealth, humanizing teaching, student voices, health & wellness, healing trauma, healing as resistance, how do we create "joyful" schools, collective song writing, collaboration, compassion, dignity, and love. And so I provide this slide on these 4 dimensions of Shawn Ginwright's healing centered engagement approach to ground our next two questions.

> -As you think back to other pd experiences you've had, do you feel those experiences enact Ginwright's model of healing centered engagement? (I am curious whether you feel other pd you participate in does or does not do these four things)
>
> -Did our session last week touch on any of these four dimensions?

3. I will briefly go over the slides on community of practice and CPD & Ethnic Studies Teaching (**2min)**.

A community of practice is "formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" (Wenger, 2011, p.1; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger (1998) identified three characteristics shared between individuals in a community of practice: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire.

Contrary to technocratic, top-down teacher pd, a Critical Professional Development (CPD) model is “where teachers are engaged as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society”(Kohl et al., 2015, p. 7).

CPD was “built in direct response to the needs of working class, communities of Color and the social [and racial] justice-oriented teachers who work to serve them, creating a context to critically analyze and act on issues of inequity and oppression” (Kohli et al., 2016, p.14).

I will project another slide with the 4 tenets of Ethnic Studies teaching (McGovern Reyes & Buenavista, 2016) and the ARC of Ethnic studies (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

4. Transition to tuning protocol (**60/65mins**):

Introduction. Briefly introduce protocol goals, norms and agenda. Each presenting teacher participant will have 30 minutes to share their work. For each of these sessions only 2 teacher participants will be presenters.

1. Project Overview-In this first step, the presenter gives an overview of his or her lesson/idea/theme in regard to ethnic studies curricula in the classroom. The presenter will share some thinking about key design principles such as why a lesson/idea/theme has been structured in a certain way, or why an assessment or accountability measure has been included. The presenter then frames a dilemma question to guide the discussion. Participants—those listening to the presenter—are silent during this time.

2. Clarifying Questions: Participants have an opportunity to ask“clarifying”questions in order to get information that may have been omitted in the presentation that they feel would help them to understand the context of the work being presented. Clarifying questions have brief, factual answers. For example, participants can ask clarifying questions of the presenter like, “how are you planning to assess what students have learned?” or “How many class periods will be spent on this lesson/idea/theme?” The facilitator should be sure to limit the questions to those that are “clarifying”.

3. Probing Questions: Participants take a couple of minutes to reflect on what they would like to ask and contribute to the feedback session. Presenter is silent; participants do this work silently.

Participants then ask probing questions of the presenter, such as:

- What made you decide to select that text for this lesson/project?
- Does it meet the literacy needs of your students?

- How does this idea/lesson/theme sit with the core tenets and/or pillars of ethnic studies pedagogies?

Probing questions help the presenter expand his or her thinking about the dilemma. Avoid questions which are advice in disguise, such as, "Why don't you think about swapping that text for something more challenging?"

4. Discussion/Feedback: Participants discuss the work that has been presented and explore solutions to the presenter's dilemma question. Participants should direct their comments to each other, not the presenter. During this time, the presenter removes him or herself from the group, is silent, and takes notes. This encourages the participants to speak openly and engage in authentic conversation about the work and dilemmas; it also forces the presenter to listen without responding and influencing the direction of the discussion.

The feedback generally begins with a few minutes of warm feedback, moves on to a few minutes of cool feedback (sometimes phrased in the form of reflective questions), and then moves back and forth between warm and cool feedback. For the participants, it is helpful to begin with what went well, such as, "I like the approach you are taking to discuss issues of internalized forms of oppression," or "I will definitely borrow this lesson because I see real progression for students comprehension in regard to identifying instances of resistance and resilience in the civil rights movement."

Participants can then take a more critical analysis of the work and focus on the dilemma question.Warm feedback may include comments about how the work presented seems to meet the desired goals; cool feedback may include possible "disconnects," gaps, or problems. Often participants offer ideas or suggestions for strengthening the work presented. The facilitator may need to remind participants of the presenter's focusing question,which should be posted for all to see. Presenter is silent and takes notes.

5. Reflection: Participants are silent during reflection, and the presenter has the opportunity to respond to the discussion. The presenter speaks to those comments/questions he or she chooses. This is not a time to defend oneself, but is instead a time for the presenter to reflect aloud on those ideas or questions that seemed particularly interesting. Facilitator may intervene to focus, clarify, etc. The presenter then reads back briefly what he or she heard from the discussion and describes what the next steps will be. This is a brief summary, such as, "What I heard was that you really liked was…., and the fact that students are writing for a real purpose," or "You were worried about how I have balanced the readings and content with this lesson and I need to work more on…..". During this step, the presenter speaks to those comments/questions he or she chooses while participants are silent.

5. Repeat this Tuning Protocol cycle with the 2 teacher participant

6. Debrief/Close Out (**10mins)**:

1. Each participant and presenter is given time to reflect and write on key takeaways from this session both in terms of how it may inform their own individual teaching practice and/or how it influences their collective work moving forward. Teacher-presenters can share what their experience was like using this protocol. The group can also discuss their experience as well. A more general discussion and feedback of the tuning protocol may develop. (**2-3mins)**

2. Let's finally reflect on the dynamics that unfolded amongst us as a group who were engaging with one another as a collective, in what sense do you feel that the way we were engaging one another builds on or expresses the sorts of dynamics that you try to enact in your classrooms? **(8mins)**

Appendix G

Tuning Protocol for 2nd & 3rd Focus Groups

1. Introduction (3 minutes)

- Facilitator briefly introduces protocol goals & guidelines

2. Presentation (10 minutes)

- The presenter gives an overview of her or his lesson/idea/theme in regard to ethnic studies curricula in the classroom.
- The presenter will share some thinking about key design principles such as why a lesson/idea/theme has been structured in a certain way, or why an assessment or accountability measure has been included or is being considered. The presenter then frames a dilemma question to guide the discussion. Participants—those listening to the presenter—are silent during this time.

3. Clarifying Questions (2 minutes)

- Participants have an opportunity to ask "clarifying"questions in order to get information that may have been omitted in the presentation that they feel would help them to understand the context of the work being presented. Clarifying questions have brief, factual answers. For example, participants can ask clarifying questions of the presenter like, "how are you planning to assess what students have learned?" or "How many class periods will be spent on this lesson/idea/theme?" The facilitator should be sure to limit the questions to those that are "clarifying".

4. Probing Questions (2-5 minutes) :

- Participants take a couple of minutes to reflect on what they would like to ask and contribute to the feedback session. Participants look closely at the work, taking notes on where it seems to be in tune with the stated goals, and where there might be some issues, challenges, or problems. Participants focus particularly on the presenter's focusing question. Presenter is silent; participants do this work silently.

- Participants then ask probing questions of the presenter, such as:
  - What made you decide to select that text for this lesson/project?
  - Does it meet the literacy needs of your students?

- How does this idea/lesson/theme sit with the core tenets and/or pillars of ethnic studies teaching?

- Probing questions help the presenter expand his or her thinking about the dilemma. Avoid questions which are advice in disguise, such as, "Why don’t you think about swapping that text for something more challenging?"

5. **Discussion/Feedback** (10 minutes):

- Participants discuss the work that has been presented and explore solutions to the presenter’s focus/dilemma question. Participants should direct their comments to each other, not the presenter. During this time, the presenter is silent and takes notes. This encourages the participants to speak openly and engage in authentic conversation about the work and dilemmas; it also forces the presenter to listen without responding and influencing the direction of the discussion. Presenter is silent and takes notes.
- The feedback generally begins with a few minutes of affirming/warm feedback, moves on to a few minutes of loving critique/cool feedback (sometimes phrased in the form of reflective questions).
- For the participants, it is helpful to begin with what went well, such as, "I like the approach you are taking to discuss issues of internalized forms of oppression,” or “I will definitely borrow this lesson because I see real progression for students comprehension in regard to identifying instances of resistance and resilience in the civil rights movement.”
- Participants can then take a more loving critique analysis of the work and focus on the dilemma question. This may include possible “disconnects,” gaps, or problems. Often participants offer ideas or suggestions for strengthening the work presented.

6. **Reflection** (5 minutes):

- Participants are silent during reflection, and the presenter has the opportunity to respond to the discussion. The presenter speaks to those comments/questions he or she chooses. This is a time for the presenter to reflect aloud on those ideas or questions that seemed particularly interesting. Facilitator may intervene to focus, clarify, etc. The presenter then reads back briefly what he or she heard from the discussion and describes what the next steps will be. This is a brief summary, such as, "What I heard was that you really liked was…., and the fact that students are writing for a real purpose,” or “You were worried about how I have balanced the readings and content with this lesson and I need to work more on…..”. During this step, the presenter speaks to those comments/questions he or she chooses while participants are silent.

Appendix H

Final Focus Group

80-90 mins

1. Check-In/Opening Question (**5-10mins**)

   Potential Q's to ask: After 1 year and a half of remote distance learning, what has the transition back into the classroom been like for you? What has been one nice surprise about being back? Especially now with a classroom full of students.

Transition to 1st part of the Focus Group:

For this last focus group I am going to share 2-3 preliminary findings from this study. We are going to workshop those and then we will have space for collective planning and reflection.

2. For the first part of this session (**total time for this segment: 30-40mins)** I would like to turn over to the group and ask how we go about discussing the 2-3 preliminary findings from this study. I have a few suggestions but are there ways we can do this that would more deeply enact the principles we have been talking about while engaging in critical professional development?

   A suggestion I have is we can look at the 2-3 findings sequentially over the span of 10-15minutes. After each claim I would like you to choose 1 to 3 signals to share. You can share an affirmation if it resonates deeply with you, you can share an addendum if you want to add something, or you can share a challenge. Each of you will have the opportunity to write down your thoughts, your own interpretation of the data, questions, concerns, and/or can comment on whether your voice aligns with these preliminary findings.

   2-3 Claims:

   1. When Teaching Ethnic Studies, Teacher Identity Matters

Grounded in the struggles of historically marginalized communities and anti-racist practices, the teaching of Ethnic Studies requires a radically different approach than the traditional K–12 rotelike one way exchange of information between teacher to student—which should be the case with non-ethnic studies courses as well. When teaching Ethnic Studies teacher identity matters as teachers are encouraged to tap into their lived experiences and multiple identities, oftentimes racial/justice-oriented identities, to engage students in dialogue and humanizing curricula. As

teachers, in this case Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American educators, come together as a community of practice where they share and reflect on teaching and lived experiences; they are encouraged as individuals and as a collective to forge new identities in the process of teaching Ethnic Studies. Some notable areas that emerge is a stronger sense of community and collaboration that become evident in their teaching while at the same time reflecting their unique identities as teachers of color.

2. Ethnic Studies Is A Process That Promotes Healing

Often when engaging in topics and issues on racism and other forms of oppression, painful, sometimes traumatic, wounds surface for both educators and students. Although not always explicitly referenced in Ethnic Studies literature, Ethnic Studies invites and offers opportunities to heal and address forms of historical and personal trauma. As teachers, in this case Latinx/a, Chicana/o/x, Mexican American educators, come together as a community of practice where they share and reflect on teaching and lived experiences; feelings based, relationship building/restorative justice practices, and healing emerge as essential ingredients to Ethnic Studies teaching. In essence, for this group of educators, Ethnic Studies becomes a process and opportunity to reclaim and reframe their pedagogies and activism as they center healing as a curricular aim of their teaching grounded in concepts of love, joy, curiosity, hope, daydreaming, and possibilities, to name a few.

3. Counter Storytelling Enables Participants To See & Understand Their Lives As Part Of A Broader Pattern

As teachers have a space in which they can come together to share their stories (that are also counter-stories) and curriculum around Ethnic Studies, in the process of sharing those stories sometimes a previously painful or joyful experience that may not have been illuminating for them in effect becomes a reification of something they can share. And from this they and their colleagues can learn from and in the process take certain insights that then shape their approach to teaching Ethnic Studies. Simultaneously, through this process of sharing stories/counter-stories it actually becomes a way for these educators to see their lives as part of a broader pattern/community. More generally, this helps people to see the ways that agency is structured, in particular, to Ethnic Studies and the learning and development that take place for the educators who teach it.

3. How would you describe this experience, of being invited/included to be part of this stage of the data analysis process for this study?

Transition to the 2nd part of the Focus Group:

In past conversations I have heard each one of you speak about or mention three overarching themes that drive the Ethnic Studies course at RHS. Those are Resistance, Resilience, & Re-Imagination. 4. In what ways, if any, does the following quote resonate with your understanding of the 3Rs? Your work as an Ethnic Studies teacher? And with the work from this collective? (**5-10mins)**

Dr. Winn defines *Futures Matters*, "as a stance that grows from an ongoing commitment to developing portals or opportunities through which multiply-marginalized youth can begin to plan for and enact agentive futures and lives characterized by thriving. *Futures Matters* actively encourages [stakeholders and all members of our global community] to imagine and have optimism about multiple pathways forward. Communities of practice that engage a *Futures Matters* stance are keenly interested in leveraging community building and restorative responses to spark transformative learning experiences." (Winn, 2021, pp.194-5).

"...The *Futures Matters* pedagogical stance is to prepare Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and other marginalized young people and their families with foresight and futures tools, and to support within and among classroom and school communities the cultivation of a keen eye and robust dialogue regarding the valuable futures of all youth." (Winn, 2021, p.196).

5. Now, taking into account the Covid 19 pandemic and a year and half of remote distance learning, I heard many of you speak about the limitations caused by these two factors. In particular, a limitation in teaching the re-imagination unit. From not being able to engage students in YPAR to the difficulties in trying to have students complete the 826LA writing project. Considering a *Futures Matters* approach and the theme of Re-imagination, how do you envision and/or what does it mean to re-imagine Ethnic Studies for the 2021-22 academic year? Can you provide an example of what this will look like in your classroom? **(5-10mins)**

6. Changing gears a bit, some say Ethnic Studies can be understood, in simplistic terms, as a noun. Ethnic Studies can be understood as a body of knowledge that needs to be passed onto young people. This takes on a somewhat banking method frame similar to the way that traditional courses on western civilization are taught—rote like memorization, facts, dates, one way exchange, etc.... What I am doing is trying to lift up Ethnic Studies as a verb. Ethnic Studies as a process. And central to that process is lifting up and opening up spaces for young people's voices to emerge which is very much aligned with a liberatory and dreaming of the future with possibilities approach to teaching. To what extent, if any, is it important to distinguish Ethnic Studies as a verb from a noun? **(5-10mins)** (Perhaps asking something around the tension between the passing of certain body of information and opening up space.)

7. Oftentimes coaching/professional coaching can occur on a one to one basis. I could have met with each of you and had a series of conversations about your ES teaching. In what ways do you

feel it has been different that we've had this as a collective space? In what ways is your learning distinct because of this group experience? (**5-10mins)**

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