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Chicano Studies: The Greater Impact on Chicanos' Academic Success

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Abstract

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Introduction

Feeling worthless and rejected, Jackie began to give up and began to believe she was not good enough. Nevertheless, Chicano Studies at Norte Vista High school in Riverside allowed her to rebuild her confidence. Even though she is not Mexican, she could relate to the courses; because, as a young Latina woman, she knows what it means to be looked down upon and minimized. Chicano Studies empowered her. It gave her the courage to understand the power she has in her culture and the power she holds in this country as Latina. It boosted her academic abilities, and she finally was able to realize that she could succeed academically. Jackie is like many minority students in the Inland Empire who experience cultural exclusion in their schools, making them feel undervalued and even belittled. Chicano Studies is essentially the course that emphasizes their Latinx culture and allows minority students to think critically about social issues.

The Inland Empire is densely populated with minority groups. One might even classify this area as an ethnic Latinx enclave era. Even though Latinos are the largest population, they still hold the third-highest high school dropout rates (first are the African American and Second Native American) (Kiddata 2015). In California, sixty out of a hundred Latinx students attending K-12 public schools graduate from high school (Sleeter 2011, 2). Indeed, Sleeter's study has shown that the implication of Ethnic Studies in California public high schools can enhance Latinx students' achievement since it can give them a sense of belonging and security in their schools.

Consequently, this study was designed to address the effect Chicano Studies courses could have on Latinx students' academic progress in the Inland Empire, where Latinx make up 50.5 percent of the population and hold the third-highest high school dropout rates. (De la Cruz

2017). I use qualitative data to examine the impact Ethnic Studies can have on the achievement of students of color. After six months of personal observation and fieldwork at Norte Vista High School in Riverside County, I was able to obtain enough information to evaluate the critical impact Chicano Studies classes can have to enhance Latinx students' academic and life skills In the Inland Empire. For instance, students who participated in this research become more aware of their family capital and historical culture. They also obtain greater academic confidence and critical thinking skills.

Literature Review

The Chicano educational pipeline

Historically, minority groups have always been undermined and oppressed in the United States. In addition, "at any given point in the educational pipeline-no matter how one goes about measuring educational outcomes- Chicano students have not performed as well as whites (Solorzano 1995, 294). Social scientists may assume that educational opportunities are the same for all students in and high school. Nevertheless, these assumptions are challenged when one examines the Chicano educational pipeline. For instance, high schools that are predominantly populated by minority schools lack college preparatory programs, better teachers, and proper school supplies (Solorzano 1995, 295). These resources are all useful since studies show that when college preparatory programs exist, and the school provides students with great teachers and school supplies, Chicano students are more inclined to be tracked away from the general and vocational tracks (Oakes 1985). In other words, schools need to provide students with such resources to help them progress in their academics. This academic progress does not only depend on the student him or herself, but also the whole educational organization.

However, recent research in educational shows that many minority students are failing academically simply because Chicax students are being tracked. This group of students is placed in the lower levels of tracking, where they are stereotyped and presumed only to become labor workers their entire lives. They are also tracked to follow an education pipeline that will only lead them to obtain a high school diploma and nothing more since many Chicax students are rarely encouraged to participate in Honors or Advanced Placement courses. In fact, in California, about 32 percent of Latinos are part of Honors or A.P. courses in their schools while whites and Asian Americans make up more than half of the students in those programs (Solorzano 1995, 312). This imbalance of resources for minority students has led them to drop out of high school or to make it hard to advance to obtain a higher educational degree. Collins and Bilge write:

By law, all children in the United States are entitled to a free public education. Yet pre-existing intersecting social inequalities assign children and youth to neighborhoods and schools that are noticeably unequal. In the United States, when children live- and the property taxes that those areas can collect- shape school policies in any given school district. Wealthy districts get better public schools, whereas poor districts do not. Early in life, children are assigned to different pipelines. Some pipelines provide a smooth path manned by qualified and experienced teachers, challenging courses for college preparation, remedial help to navigate the rough spots, good counseling about college, honors programs, and contact with full-time faculty, and fellowship for graduate education. The pipeline for other children, regardless of their talent, motivation, and self- discipline, fosters less rosy outcomes- part-time jobs with no benefits, unemployment, and prison. When it comes to talent, the children start off the same. Yet different pipelines characterized by education inequality yield markedly different results (2013, 171).

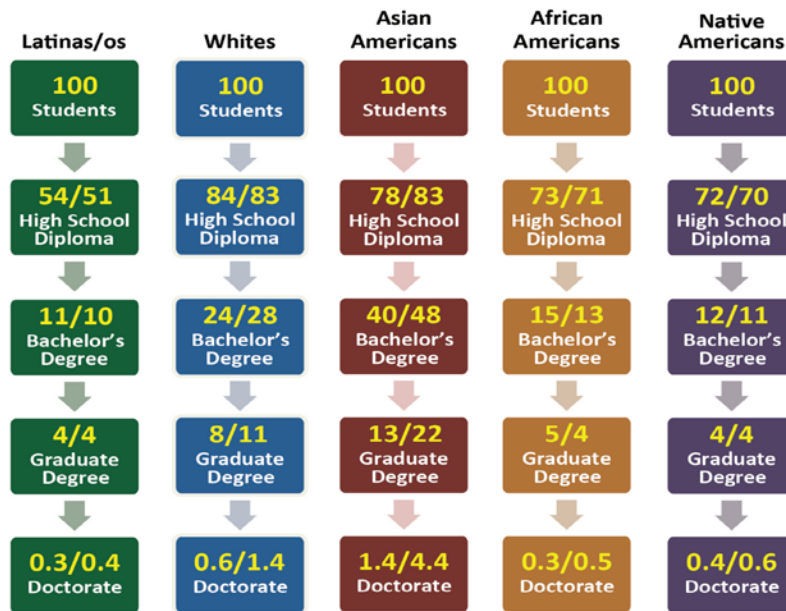
Figure one, from the Latina/o subgroup and Gender organization, demonstrates how from the five different ethnic groups of 100 males and females in each group, Chicano students are the ones to experience more high school dropout and obtain fewer degrees. This decline of numbers

is due to the negative stereotypes, cultural exclusion, and the negative system of tracking minoritized students' experience.

Euro-centric curriculum in California public schools

In 2011, the National Education Association published a review of research on Ethnic Studies that summarized K-12 textbooks in this way:

Figure 3. The US Education Pipeline, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2000



In education, whites continue to receive the most attention and appear in the widest variety of roles. They seem to have dominating storylines and lists of accomplishments. On the other hand, African Americans, the next most represented racial group, in textbooks, appear in a more limited range of functions. They usually receive only a sketchy account historically. Consequently, they are featured mainly concerning slavery. Asian Americans and Latinas appear mostly as figures on the landscape with virtually no history or contemporary ethnic experience. Lastly, Native Americans are primarily seen as individuals from the past, who no longer exist (La Comadre 2016, 5).

Overall, our blame and Euro-centric perspective on other ethnic minority groups led to a poor representation of our population of color in our history books.

For years, school textbooks had contained many stereotypes, even when national concerns opted to shift towards a more multicultural curriculum. School textbooks and syllabi, however, are not entirely cleared of bias. While some content related to African Americans, Latinx, and Native Americans have been added to textbooks, Euro-American history and worldview overpower most, if not all, of the K-12 schools' textbooks. For example, even though Chicanos are the second largest group of minoritized people in the U.S., the only mention of Chicanos is in connection with the Texas "War of independence" and the "Mexican-American War" (Council on Interracial Books for Children 1972, 55). Additionally, U.S. History textbooks describe how Chicano inhabitants were unopposed, utterly unbothered by the conquest over Northern Mexico. Unfortunately, this is inaccurate and a subjective perspective of established history in textbooks. Chicano history is distorted as the textbook's narrative omits Anglo brutality, rapacity, and several other events (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1972, p.5). Mexico is often portrayed through textbooks and media as a half-civilized land of constant revolution. They are frequently mentioned with distortion, ethnocentrism, and stereotypes (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1972, 5). Nevertheless, the dominant narrative fails to acknowledge the description of subordinate groups as a means to preserve the heroic U.S. narrative of strength and triumph. History textbooks have the power to influence the construction of identity. Luna, a teacher in this book, explains how the Eurocentric curriculum affects students of color. She states, "if kids don't see themselves in the classroom, they'll see themselves as outside [of the narrative] ... disconnected identity of who they are" (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1972, 5). When students of color learn that subordinate groups are portrayed as poor, lower class, violent, uneducated, and affiliated with crime, they take on a persona that fits such identity. This can lead to the educational disadvantages of our interviewees' mention.

Chicano Studies/ Ethnic Studies

Latinx students who have enrolled in Chicano Studies classes in high school have seen their grades, GPA, academic involvement, and units improve (Alejo and Lara 2009, 10). But what is Chicano studies? In California, Ethnic Studies, which means the study of culture, history, and customs of a particular ethnic group, have become common now. Today, thousands of people are fighting to reinforce and make Ethnic Studies part of the high school graduation requirements (Noah Remnick 2010, 5). Chicano studies can be understood as a branch of Ethnic Studies. In addition, Chicano Studies is the study of the Chicana/o and Latina/o experience. Chicano Studies draws upon a variety of fields, including history, sociology, the arts, and Chicano literature.

Because the State Board of Education has encouraged school districts to offer Ethnic Studies courses that reflect the student's demographic in their communities and because most of the students in California public schools are Latinx, Chicano Studies provides a relevant curriculum. (Alejo and Lara 2013, 7). Chicano Studies is essential since it highlights racial and ethnic minorities' experiences, using cultural references in teaching and aiming to enhance social and political awareness. (Stanford 2010, 11). An example of this curriculum is teachers asking students to think about the way "advertising reinforces cultural stereotypes and the idea that some values and people are 'normal' while others are not" (Stanford 2010, 11). Sleeter, an educator who interviews people about their experiences with Ethnic Studies, recounts the story of a young man who hated K-12 schooling. However, once this young man was introduced to Ethnic Studies courses in his community college, he changed his point of view about school. This drastic change encouraged Carlos to the point where he was able to not only graduate from high school but also obtain his B.A. degree in Spanish. Carlos states how Ethnic

Studies courses made it possible for him to continue and complete his degree. Likewise, Ethnic Studies could have the same impact on high school students. This is why people are now becoming more involved and persistent in implementing Ethnic Studies courses into the K-12 public educational systems since these classes are rare in most California public schools, where about three-quarters of students don't identify as white (Noah Remnick 2010, 5). These scholars are raising a point that deserves to be publicly exposed. Their argument is relevant to our diverse and modern population in California. Nevertheless, as we analyze these researchers' articles, it is clear that they don't correctly represent the immediate need to place Ethnic Studies in the Inland Empire. The region that holds the most Latinx and lacks many resources for Latinx students in their school environment.

Methodology

I joined an ongoing qualitative research project conducted by a U.C. Riverside doctoral student in the Department of Ethnic Studies to gather data for my research project. Frank, the research coordinator, used participant observation and interviews as his research methodology to collect data. I was able to become his co-research partner for six months. During those six months, I observed two Chicano Studies classes at Norte Vista High School in Riverside for six months. I also shadowed Frank's interviews with students. As a co-researcher, I wrote field notes that reflected my own observations of the classes. I was also able to participate in classroom activities and lectures.

Norte Vista has a high percentage of Hispanic students that attend the school (Hispanics 91.0 %, whites 4.0% Asians 2.6%, and African Americans 1.6 %) (SchoolDigger 2019). This school also serves a lower- class community since about 83.7 percent of students receive free/reduced lunch (SchoolDigger 2019). It is unique since it has been pushed to place most of its working-

class students in the I.B. program, a program that helps students better transfer to a higher education program. Because of this program and push, Norte Vista is distinctive from other schools with its emphasis on mentoring and encouraging students to set higher academic standards than other schools with similar demographics. Even though the school is primarily an immigrant and working-class, the district was able to offer two Chicano Studies courses in their school momentarily. These classes are given during two periods, the third and the fifth periods. Both periods are the same course only offered at different times so that more students can participate. The third period was usually held in the mornings. The class started at 9:23 am and ended at 10:10 am. The third period was a small classroom size with about 23 students. The fifth period was held in the afternoons from 12:50 pm-1:37 pm. It was a bigger classroom size with about 34 students, and it had more cultural diversity in students' backgrounds. During the period of our fieldwork, Mr. Flores was the instructor of the class. He was in the process of earning his Master's degree in Ethnic Study and planned to obtain his Ph.D. to advocate for the expansion of Ethnic Study courses in public high schools.

I had the opportunity to shadow and transcribe five interviews. Two interviews were with juniors, and three were with seniors. I was also able to talk to one student who was an alumna of the Chicano Studies course. During the time of our research, she was a T.A. for the 5th-period course. From this alumna, I was able to obtain an idea of how the course has developed from last year to this year. I typically observed both the 3rd and the 5th-period classes twice a week on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Findings

La Loteria

One Spring morning in 2019, I prepared to introduce myself to a Chicano Studies course at a high school in Riverside. The day was sunny, and the sky was clear. I walked inside the registered office where Frank, the manager of the project, met me. He led me to the classroom. We made our way to room 406, a class in the back of the campus. I felt as if I was walking for a long time when suddenly Frank opened a white metal door and said welcome to the Chicano Studies course. As I walked into the classroom, it felt different. Students were actively talking about the project they would soon be presenting, La Loteria. I have heard of La Loteria before. It is a traditional Mexican game of chance, similar to bingo, but it uses images on the cards instead of ping pong balls. Every picture in the cards is named and assigned a number such as La Luna (the moon), La Estrella (the star), etc. La Loteria means lottery in Spanish. I wonder how their project will work and how it will go.

As I walked more around the classroom, I soon concluded that the classroom was unique. For instance, on the ceiling, there was a colorful pico banner that layout the whole class. The classroom walls were covered with either the students' project, historical Mexican artifacts, or motivational quotes by Mexican leaders. My favorite part of the classroom was the "Chicanos wall," which was a part of the room dedicated to the students' work. The teacher's desk area was also impressive. Mr. Flores had a unique Aztec decoration cloth, and next to the fabric, he had another decorative material with the Mayan Calendar. I loved to see those decoration clothes since their colors were vibrant red, brown, yellow, green, and black. All beautiful colors that represent the beauty of the Latinx culture.

I sat at the corner of the classroom, where there was a designated place for me to sit. Mr. Lopez introduced the classroom objectives and asked me to introduce myself.

“Hello everyone, my name is Kimberly Ruiz, and I am a fourth-year student at UCR. I am currently working on my Honors Capstone Project. My project focuses on analyzing the outcomes Chicano Studies can have on high school students. I am glad to be getting to know you. If you guys have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask me, I am here to help you guys in anything and to answer any of your questions reading my project, UCR, Ethnic studies, or any other question you guys may have. Thank you for having me.”

After I was done speaking, students were asked to make two circles with their desks. As each student was moving their desks, Mr. Flores took out a big pink cardboard box full of pan dulce. Each student got a pan and sat on their desks. Flores said, "Students, today, we will present our Loteria project. Each person should have a drawing of a family member and a number on the upper right corner. You are to tell your classmates why you drew the person, why that person is your personal hero, and the significance of the number. You guys have also been asked to write an essay about the person you have chosen. Please, make sure to give me those essays after class." As I looked around the room, each student seemed to be excited to start. "Can you start, Marcos?" Mr. Lopez asked. "Yeah, I guess, I can."

This is a picture of my sister (Figure 1), La Valiente. I named my card, La Valiente, because this word reminds me of her. My sister is a trooper. She has always been brave and there for me. My parents are immigrants and always struggled financially. They tried their best but getting a job without paper is very hard. My sister always had her best interest at heart. As soon as she was old enough to get a job, she worked hard para mantener la casa. Throughout her life, she was a great baker. She took many jobs when she was young, but one day she was able to get a job at a panaderia. There, she became the manager and was able to make it on her own. She always tells me that she works hard, so I can have a white person's lifestyle, earn a

degree, get a good job, and build a good life without having to work so hard as she did. I think my sister is brave for doing what she did. My life could not be the same without her. She truly is my superhero. Oh, and I put the number four because that is her favorite.

Oh, I get it. This is a familia Loteria. I had never heard of such a project before, nor have I ever seen this project being presented or discussed in classrooms. Once everyone had introduced their own Loteria poster, I could see each of the students light up with pride in their culture and family. I went around the class and asked a couple of students, what their thoughts were on the project. Many told me they had never realized how important their family was to their educational progress. "My parents did so much and sacrificed so much so I can be successful and get an education," said Bianca, a 10th grader. It was evident that this project allowed students to understand their family impressions as well as to embrace their families' culture and history.

(Figure 1)



Cultural History

It had been raining all day, and I forgot my raincoat. I was running late to Norte Vista High School. Once I got there, I quickly took any parking spot I could find. I took a deep breath,

pulled up my hoodie, and ran. It took me about five minutes to walk from the front office to the class. Traffic from the rain had made me ten minutes late. I opened the white metal door and quickly slid across the classroom wall into my working area. Mr. Flores was presenting a PowerPoint. His presentation immediately got my attention because it contained a picture of what looked like the Virgin Mary.

The Virgin Mary is mostly known as being the Mother of Jesus. She is widely known in the Catholic Religion. Catholicism is the most popular religion in Mexican. Nevertheless, Catholicism was not part of the Mexican culture until the Spairns and made Catholicism the only religion able to practice in Mexico. Of course, later, Mexico acquired freedom of religion. Nevertheless, Catholicism never lost its influential ties with the Mexican people. She is considered by millions of Mexicans to be the most meritorious saint of their religion.

“Class, today we are going to talk about Tonantzin,” said Mr. Lopez. I thought the name Tonatizin sounded very familiar, but I could not place it. Mr. Lopez asked, “By the show of hands, who has heard about Tonantzin?” Only one student raised his hand. Mr. Lopez changed the slide and showed another picture that looked like the Virgin Mary. I watch in amazement, finally remembering where I heard the name. I read about Tonantzin in a class I took during one of my first two years of college. I was dumbfounded that these students would learn a topic I hadn’t learned until I took a specific course in a college class about the United States and Mexico's literature.

“Tonantzin,” continued Mr. Lopez, “is an Aztec goddess.” He explained Tonantizin's history with a story called "A Bridge of Light between Culture" by Griselda Alvarez Sesma, the same story I read in my college class. It is a story of a young Indian man named Juan Diego, who claims to have seen Tonantizin on the hill of Tepeyac near present-day Mexico City. When this

man saw Tonantzin, he essentially gave up on the Spaniard's religion, Catholicism. Tonantzin usually symbolizes the bridge between the Spanish and Mexican Indians since this goddess was a brown-skinned woman related to the Aztec community. Nevertheless, Mr. Lopez argues otherwise. He digs a bit deeper and provides a counternarrative to the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe. He posits that Guadalupe did not bridge Spanish and Aztec cultures; instead, she allowed the Spanish culture to subjugate the Aztecs' religion by replacing Tonantzin, an Aztec goddess, with an emblem of Catholicism--the Virgin Mary as Guadalupe. As he was explaining the story and its perspective, I was so intrigued that I lost track of time and could feel chills running on my spine. I turned around, thinking I was probably the only person who was stunned, but I noticed that no students were doodling or secretly texting on the phone. They were all actively listening. Once Mr. Lopez asked if anyone had questions, more than half of the classroom raised their hands.

One student named Layla asked, "Why is it that we never hear of such a story during world history class or any kind of history class in my school?" These stories are worth knowing. Layla continued and said how they could invigorate students to learn more about their culture. Indeed, that was a breathtaking classroom lesson, something I have only encountered in well-developed college classes; these students were fortunate to have the privilege to be taught with a critical pedagogy that shows them how European Colonization affected the Ingedroogde communities and culture.



Linguistic Project

"Linguistic Landscape will consist of a three-page essay. Nevertheless, that is not what is significant," said Mr. Flores." This project will help us think critically about our surroundings. In groups of five or by yourself, you are all required to go to a place inside Riverside county. Once you guys have chosen a spot, your group will need to analyze the salience of languages on public and commercial signs in the region," concluded Mr. Flores. Students looked around and began to gather into groups. I sat at my corner desk and thought about how this project would work. I had never heard of such a project. Nevertheless, I thought about how unique this project was because it would teach students how to interpret their surroundings culturally.

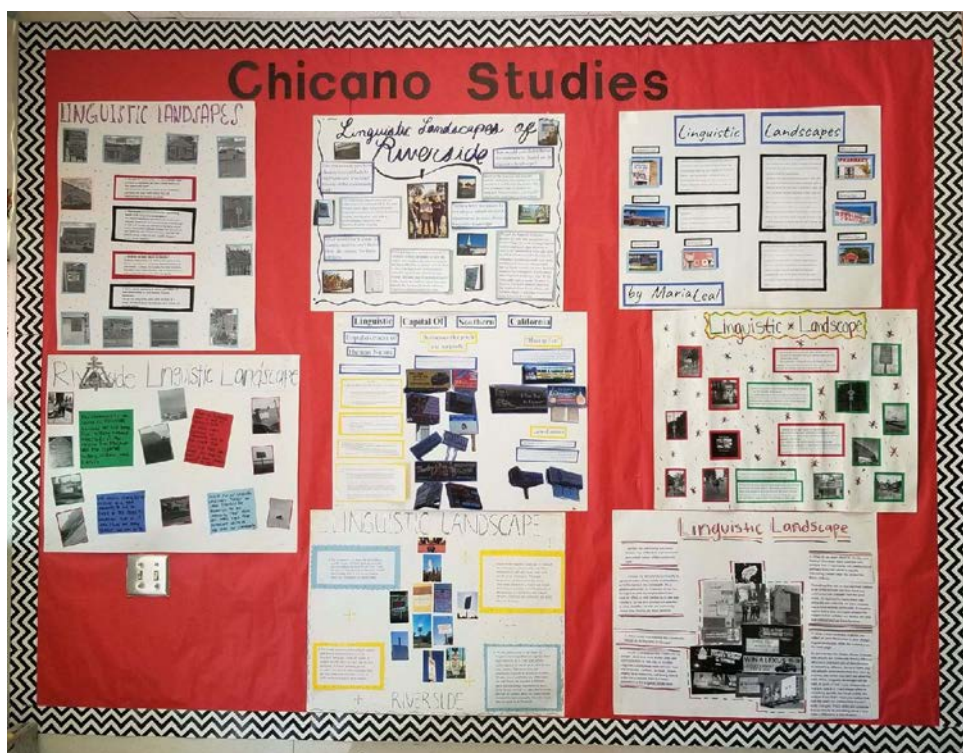
Once everyone was in their groups, I walked around the room to jot their names down. While I was walking around, I could hear how they were trying to figure out what place to go to for the project. I was amazed to see how they were so attentive to their plan; none of them were trying to get a place that would be easy to represent their culture. Instead, they were challenging themselves. It was as if they genuinely wanted to understand and learn how culture could be everywhere. For about a week and a half, all groups worked diligently in their project. They

took pictures that represented Chicano culture and wrote small descriptions of how and why such billboards, paintings, commercials, or buildings demonstrate Chicano culture or the people. In class, they had the opportunity to work on the project for three days before it was due, and as a participant-observer, I assisted some of the groups. All students were engaged in how they would create and present their linguistic landscape board. I never saw a group of about 34 students so involved in an assignment.

On the day of group presentations, all of the students walked into the classroom with their posters in hand. The second bell rang, and the class was ready to begin. Even though this was their first oral project, students looked eager to present; they were all ready and dressed to impress. Usually, students come dressed casually for class with pants or shorts and a t-shirt or blouses. Nevertheless, for the day of their presentation, many of them wore formal attire. Most of the boys wore polo shirts and business casual pants, and many of the girls wore formal dresses or formal pants with blouses. The first group of students was called to present. They all stood in front of the classroom and began to explain their project. At first, the group seemed nervous, but as more students stood up, students began to present with many confidences and easiness.

The third group showed seven pictures. All of the images were of various buildings. Their buildings were unique since, as they presented, they told us how some buildings were built by Mexican Americans to help establish community building, others were built where Chicano students fought for civil rights, and others were created to benefit the Chicano community. All these buildings held a crucial historical context of the Latino community and how they were involved in their communities. There was a specific picture that caught my attention among the rest. It was a photo of Madison and Evan street close to downtown Riverside. They took a picture of this era since it is known for being one of the oldest Latino Communities in California.

The origins of the community in the area can be traced to the 1870s. Here, Mexican- Americans lived and called it Casa Blanca. Also, in this area, many work to enhance the production of the navel orange groves. It was amusing; As the students of the group spoke, one can see their desire to learn more about their people and their impact on their community. Mike, a student from the third group, claimed how he never knew Mexican Americans were part of Riverside California history. For him, the United States history was always about the white man. As he learned how his people were part of the United States history, he felt a sense of power and belonging since he could see how his people were also involved and critique the lifestyle in California.



Field Trip to UCR

As the bell rang, and everyone entered the classroom, Mr. Lopez instructed everyone to have a seat. Frank, my co-researcher, was preparing to give an announcement. I sat in front of the classroom in the corner where I usually set up my workstation. Frank got up and announced to the class that the 30th Annual Chicano/Latino Youth Conference at UCR would be happening the following Saturday (April 27, 2019, from 8 am- 3 pm). All students were invited to attend. He said that the event was directed mainly for juniors so they could have the experience of being on a college campus and allow them to interact with UCR students and faculty who would be at the event.

As the event was approaching, students were given updated information regarding the activity. Frank told the students how they would get a chance to present their perspective on Chicano Studies since the UCR event wanted to discuss the impact this course can have on K-12th students. In addition, they would be able to present their work and how the course has affected them. When Frank announced this, I thought that many would not want to participate since I can see many high school students being afraid to speak in front of University staff. Nevertheless, I was so surprised to see that, ultimately, 46 students from Mr. Lopez's Chicano Studies class signed up to speak.

Mr. Lopez worked daily to reserve a bus that would transport the students directly from Norte Vista to U.C. Riverside. After multiple emails to the district and a couple of adjustments, Mr. Lopez was able to obtain a bus that would take all 46 students to the conference. These students committed not only to attend the meeting but also to publicly present their personal experiences in a Chicano Studies classroom to an audience of professors and college students. I admired their confidence. Certainly, they were different from other high school students, since

they were determined to present and defend this Chicano Studies program to an audience of college students.

When the day of the conference arrived, I parked on the UCR campus and contemplated how my life would have been different if I had the same opportunity that the Norte Vista Chicano/a Studies students had during an earlier part of my life. I looked at my watch and saw that it was about to be 8 am, so I decided to hurry up a bit. As I got there and sat down, I saw about 20 students on the stage. They were all sitting down in their chairs, ready for their portion to start. The rest of the students would go up in the second part of the panel. As the first panel began, the students remained seated until Frank asked them to stand. Each one of them bore their testimony of how this program changed their lives. One story that stood out to me the most was Jackie's story.

A Junior at Norte Vista high school, Jackie migrated to the United States with her family when she was nine years old. Leaving her home country, El Salvador, at a young age, broke her heart. Nevertheless, the hardest thing she needed to do was to adapt to a new culture, language, and lifestyle. Because learning English was difficult, she felt excluded from her classes. Sometimes she would even get teased by her classmates, and they would tell her many times how she would not go very far due to her inability to speak English. She felt like many of her teachers simply gave up on her. This sort of negativity from classmates and teachers affected her self-esteem. She thought that she didn't belong in her school. Once Jackie began high school, she tried to speak and learn English adequately to fight against the negative experiences she had. Nevertheless, she continued to feel insignificant and repudiated by her peers and teachers; Jackie began to believe she was not good enough.

Nevertheless, Jackie decided to enroll in Chicano Studies since she saw a presentation about the course and caught her attention. Being in the course allowed her to rebuild her confidence. Even though she was not a Mexican American, she could relate to the word Chicana because, as a Latina woman, she knew what it meant to be looked down upon, to feel minimized, and to strive against the odds. She stated that her Chicano Studies class empowered her and gave her the courage to understand the power she holds as a Latina in this country. It boosted her academic abilities since she felt once and for all that she was not less than. She was a Latina immigrant woman who finally understood that she could do it.

As my own tears fell on my notes, I remembered how many of my teachers deprecated me; I remember how my third-grade teacher would tell me I would never be able to graduate high or enter a higher education school. I recalled when my high school history teacher told me I was not good enough since I did not know English. I also remembered how I barely got enough credits to graduate high school because I thought I was not good enough. Because many educators would not believe in me, I began to adopt a negative aspect about myself. Then, I thought of those other students who had fallen through those oppressive cracks. It was then when I understood with more clarity why Chicano Studies is so crucial. We need this program to prevent immigrant or working-class students from falling through the cracks. We need this program, so we can culturally uplift Latinx students and let them know they can do it, and they are also capable and empowering individuals. That night as I went to bed, all I could think of was about those students who are on the verge of falling because they are experiencing discrimination. I wonder how many we have lost in this battle and how many we can still save. This experience was a great opportunity not only because it sounds great on a resume, but also

because it has allowed them to develop confidence in themselves and develop public speaking skills that would help individuals in their higher education journey and careers.

Analysis

These events show that it is more evident than not that we need Chicano Studies courses in public high schools. With this course, students can exercise their familial and cultural capital. “*Familial capital* refers to cultural knowledge nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (Yosso 2005, 73). Yosso talks about how this is a critical capital to acquire since this form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to the community of one’s family, which can give us a deeper understanding of one’s Kinship (Yosso 2005, 75). Similarly, students at Norte Vista High School gain valuable knowledge from their family history. This knowledge inspired them to become better students and gain confidence in their skills. In general, as Rivera-Murillo discusses students of color for courses that could increase their cultural acceptance in their school and allow them to freely express their cultural values and beliefs in their academic environment (Rivera- Murrillo, 2011, 5).

Besides gaining familial and cultural capital, students are also exposed to critical pedagogy that teaches them about colonization and the privileging of European over indigenous cultures. In addition, when students learn about the true story of the Virgin Mary and are encouraged to study landmarks and relate to their history and culture. When students are exposed to this cultural pedagogy, they spark an interest in their culture and are allowed to research more on their history. Elenes writes that “Chicana/o Studies has designed a curriculum that would enable Chicano youth to construct an alternative identity to promote chicanismo” (Elenes 1989, 361). This curriculum can empower them to understand their history and research further on their own interest. This is critical since it helps students become independent, critical students.

Overall, Chicano Studies can help students be liberated. Students feel empowered when they learn about their culture, their community, and their history. Rivera-Murillo states that students of color yearn for courses that could increase their cultural acceptance and allow them to freely express their cultural values and beliefs in their school environment (Rivera-Murillo, 2011, P. 5). Since this course practices pedagogical that engages students in active critical thinking and relates excess culture capital, rather than being conceptualized as something static from the past, Chicano Studies empower students to succeed academically and personally (Sleeter, 2011, P. 20). It is evident that Chicano/a Studies can enhance the Latinx educational pipeline.

Conclusion

Overall, Norte Vista Students in the Inland Empire demonstrate development in their academics and personality as they go about the course. They learn to speak their mind and academically support their argument. They exercise their public speaking skills and are fearless to challenge all other ideas. Because, as Jackie said, Chicano Studies class empowered her and gave her the courage to understand the power she holds as being a Latina in this country. Chicano Studies can liberate all Latinx students by allowing them to feel empowered. This encouragement can help enhance the Latinx educational pipeline and decrease the number of students who dropout of high school because they are pushed to drop out due to the inadequate education they are receiving.

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