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Student and Teacher Perceptions of the Impact Ethnic Studies Courses Have on Students of Color: A Collective Case Study

Zulema Naegele

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Student and Teacher Perceptions of the Impact Ethnic Studies Courses Have on
Students of Color: A Collective Case Study

by

Zulema Naegele

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of,

Doctor of Education
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Students of Color: A Collective Case Study

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Zulema Naegele

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

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Abstract

This qualitative research study explored student and teacher perceptions of the impact ethnic studies courses have on students of color. This study utilized conscientização or critical consciousness, authentic caring, and Critical Race Theory to understand teacher methods and strategies and the nature of instruction of ethnic studies curriculum in two urban public high schools in the Pacific Northwest. This research also examined how students perceived the curriculum and teaching strategies impacted their learning and engagement in the courses.

Data collection included classroom observations, open-ended student survey, teacher and student interviews, and student work products. Data analysis included both inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive analysis revealed several themes about how teachers and students perceived ethnic studies curriculum and instruction including caring and creating classroom community, academic rigor, Critical Race Theory as a foundation for the course, discussion-based instruction, and de-centering Whiteness. Deductive analysis utilized pre-defined ethnic studies codes inspired from Sleeter's (2014) work, including origin of knowledge, historical U.S. colonialism and contemporary colonialism, historical construction of race, and institutional racism. Results revealed that, overall, the ethnic studies courses had made a meaningful

impact on student understanding of historical and contemporary issues affecting ethnic groups in their community.

This research sought to learn from the experiences and perceptions of students of color in the ethnic studies courses. With the support of their ethnic studies teachers, students were able to engage in meaningful learning experiences that also impacted their educational aspirations. Students of color in the courses noted they have gained more confidence in how to navigate racism at their school and have a newfound courage to speak up against microaggressions and racial slurs. They felt that they had learned more in their ethnic studies class than they have before in other courses.

The results and implications from this study are discussed and provide insight to educational practice and teacher preparation programs that better prepare teachers to meet the needs of all students.

Keywords: ethnic studies, curriculum, culturally responsive teaching, critical consciousness, social justice, multicultural education, diversity, anti-bias education

Acknowledgements and Dedication

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Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to all of my antepasados, to those who came before me and paved the way and also to our future, my children, grandchildren,

nieces and nephews. This is an act of love and passion that I hope will impact your education and how you see and engage in the world. ¡Sí Se Puede!

List of Tables

Table 1. Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices for Each Theme	44
Table 2. Demographics of Participating Schools in 2014-2015	62
Table 3. Teacher and Student Interview Participant Characteristic Information.....	64
Table 4. Description of Commentaries That Helped Label the Inductively Derived Themes	71
Table 5. Description of Commentaries That Support the Sleeter (2014) Inspired Codes	72
Table 6. Description of Commentaries That Label the Inductive Themes	73
Table 7. Sample of Instructional Materials Utilized in Ethnic Studies Courses at Kahlo High School and Huerta High School	87
Table 8. Evaluation of Student Artifacts Utilizing Sleeter’s Ethnic Studies Themes	91

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Relationship Between Four Education Models Best Serving Students
of Color 33

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements and Dedication	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Ethnic Studies: A Possible Remedy	2
Resistance to Ethnic Studies Programs	5
Racial Politics Affecting Equity in Education	6
The Role of Ethnic Studies in Education and Society	7
Purpose of this Study	10
Significance	12
Summary	15
Chapter 2: Literature Review	17
Theoretical Framework	18
Brief History of Education Through a Multicultural Lens	22
Education of African American Students	23

Education of Mexican American Students	26
Education of Native American Students	27
Education of Asian American Students	28
Native American Education Solution	30
Intersection of Four Educational Models	32
Multicultural Education	33
Views on Multicultural Education	34
Multicultural Education Backlash	39
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	40
Culturally Responsive Teaching	43
Critical Stance Instruction in Education	49
Ethnic Studies Program Models	51
Ethnic Studies Courses	53
The Purpose of Ethnic Studies in Education	55
Conclusion	57
Chapter 3: Methodology	59
Research Questions	59
Rationale for Methodology	60
Setting	60
District	61
Schools	61
Kahlo HS	62
Huerta HS	62

Participants	62
Teachers	63
Students	63
Data Collection	64
Research Question 1: Teacher Implementation	64
Classroom Observations	65
Interviews	66
Research Question 2: Student Response	67
Data Analysis	69
Teacher Implementation	69
Student Response	72
Role of the Researcher	75
Institutional Review Board	76
Limitations	77
Summary	77
Chapter 4: Findings	79
Classroom Overview	79
Kahlo HS	80
Huerta HS	81
Teacher Profiles	84
Research Question 1: Ethnic Studies Instruction and Materials	86
Caring and Creating Classroom Community	89

Academic Rigor	90
Student-centered	92
Critical Race Theory as a Foundation for the Course	93
Discussion-based Instruction	94
De-centering Whiteness	95
Origin on Knowledge	96
Historical U.S. Colonialism and Contemporary Colonialism	97
Historical Construction of Race	99
Institutional Racism	100
Navigation of Racism	101
Research Question 2: Are Student Perceptions and Achievement Influenced?	102
Student Perceptions of Their Learning and Engagement	105
Construction of Knowledge	106
Social Justice	106
Inductive Student Interview Themes	107
Equity/Racial Lens	107
Microaggressions and Racism	108
Relevance to Student Interests and Passions	109
Ethnic Studies Approaches as Significant to Educational Aspirations	110
Challenges of Teaching Ethnic Studies	111
Teacher Isolation	112
Lack of Faculty Buy-in	112

Creating a Safe Space for Racial Discourse	112
Summary	113
Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications	115
Limitations	116
Next Steps	117
Conclusions: Research Question 1: Ethnic Studies Materials and Instruction	118
Research Question 2: Are Student Perceptions and Achievement Influenced?	123
Relationship to Other’s Findings	124
Implications for Educational Practice	126
When to Offer Ethnic Studies	128
Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs	129
Conclusion	131
References	133
Appendices	151
Appendix A: Classroom Observational Protocol	151
Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions	153
Appendix C: Student Interview Questions	154
Appendix D: Instructional Materials Assessment	155
Appendix E: Ethnic Studies Case Study Codes and Definitions	156
Appendix F: Ethnic Studies Model	157
Appendix G: Teacher Informed Consent Form	158
Appendix H: Parent Informed Consent Form	160

Appendix I: Student Assent Form	162
Appendix J: Open-ended Student Survey	164
Appendix K: Authentic Assessment Protocol	166

Chapter I: Introduction

Nationally, students of color graduate from high school at much lower rates than White students. In 2014 87% of White students, 73% of Black students, 76% of Latino students, and 70% of American Indian/Alaska Native students graduated from high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). In addition, Whites are more than twice as likely to have a university degree as people of color (U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2015). As the number of students from diverse backgrounds in K-12 schools continues to grow, the significance of these figures increases. The proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the U.S. has increased from 39% in 2001 to 50% in 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). To compound this issue, one in three students attending K-12 schools are students of color, yet about 82% of the teachers are White (Cross, 2003; National Center for Education, 2013; Sleeter, 2001a; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This gap in representation causes a significant disparity among teacher and student interaction and understanding. President Barack Obama has described equalizing educational opportunity as “a moral imperative,” and “the key to securing a more equal, fair, and just society” (2011). One potential way to contribute to this essential task is to develop ethnic studies courses, curriculum and programs that teachers can integrate in American schools.

The Children’s Defense Fund (2009) illustrates a shocking profile of the American education system related to race and ethnicity based on current Eurocentric teaching practices.

- More than four out of five Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American/Alaska Native eighth grade students cannot read in English or do math at grade level.
- Three out of five Asian/Pacific Islander eighth graders cannot read at grade level; one in two cannot do math at grade level.
- Black students are more than three times as likely as White or Asian/Pacific Islanders and more than twice as likely as Hispanics/Latinos to be suspended from school.
- Discipline policies focused on “zero tolerance” and not on achievement often encourage suspended students to drop out.
- Black and Native American students are more likely than those in other racial groups to be enrolled in classes of students with mental retardation, or with “emotional disturbance”.
- In 2009, while the national average of the high school drop-out rate was 5.2% for Whites, it was 9.3% for Blacks, 17.6% for Hispanic/Latinos, 3.4% for Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 13.2% for Native American/Alaska Natives (State of America’s Children Report, 2009).

These statistics are not a new phenomenon in the U.S. The opportunity gap in this country continues to widen, so why does the American education system insist on using “mainstream” (European American) teaching practices? Now is the time to move closer to a culturally responsive pedagogy or we will continue to disenfranchise students on the margins (Oliver & Oliver, 2013). Ethnic studies has developed as a means to address the statistics previously mentioned.

Ethnic Studies: A Possible Remedy

Ethnic studies (ES) is the study of topics focused on the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group (Sleeter, 2014). To better understand ES in the United States, it's helpful to look at five themes that Sleeter (2014) utilizes to define ethnic studies:

- Explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective;
- Examination of U.S. colonialism historically, as well as how relations of colonialism continue to play out;
- Examination of the historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism, and struggles for liberation;
- Probing meanings of collection or communal identities that people hold; and
- Studying one's community's creative and intellectual products, both historic and contemporary. (p. 3)

Banks (1975) argues that ethnic studies is a form of developing social change and educational reform in the United States and in order to foster this change ethnic studies must have three major goals: 1) to help individuals to clarify their ethnic identities and to function effectively within their own ethnic communities; 2) to help individuals to develop a sensitivity to and understanding of other ethnic cultures and to function effectively within them; and 3) to help individuals to develop the ability to make reflective decisions on social issues and to take actions to resolve social problems (p. 15). Banks calls the development of these characteristics ethnic literacy.

As with most terms referring to race and ethnicity there are various definitions for the term ethnic studies and terms have also evolved over time. First Gordon

(1964) defines ethnic group as “When I use the term ‘ethnic group’ I shall mean by it any group which is defined or set off by race, religion, or national origin, or some combination of these categories... All of these categories have a common social psychological referent, in that all of them serve to create, through historical circumstances, a sense of peoplehood” (p. 27). Isajiw (1974) took the definition further to state, “an involuntary group of people who share the same culture or descendants of such people who identify themselves and/or are identified by others as belonging to the same involuntary group” (p. 122). Based on these definitions of ethnic group every American belongs to an ethnic group including White Americans of European decent. Therefore, the study of ethnic groups implies the study of all ethnicities represented in the United States. In identifying and clarifying what ethnic studies is, myths regarding ES curriculum will be examined next.

A couple of myths exist in the education of ethnic studies, one is that the curriculum should be taught when there are students of “ethnic groups” in the classroom and two, that European American ethnic groups are not part of ethnic studies. When educators teach ethnic studies using an additive model or separate from the mainstream curriculum, there may be a feeling of an “us versus them” attitude in the classroom. Banks (1975) argues that ethnic studies should not be limited to the study of ethnic minority groups, but it should include them and not be considered an addition to the curriculum. Banks supports that “ethnic studies should be viewed as a process of curriculum reform which will result in the creation of new curriculum that is based on new assumptions and new perspectives, and which will help students to

gain novel views of the American experience and a new conception of what it means to be American” (pp. 12-13).

Resistance to Ethnic Studies Programs

Over the past 20 years, there has been a push toward unifying and standardizing curriculum in U.S. schools (Groves, 2002). Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) coupled with neoliberalism ideals (Hursh, 2008), schools have focused on high-stakes testing, accountability, and rewards and punishments that undermine gains in teaching and learning specifically in regards to students of color (Au, 2009). Teachers are forced by the pressures created by high-stakes tests to constrain or even eliminate curriculum. Teachers are forced to adapt content to their curriculum and teaching practices to match those of state standardized tests. An African American teacher gave up her original goal of teaching multicultural content due to these pressures (Au, 2007). There is a sense of unresolved and lost ideals around the success of students of color in schools. Studies show that today’s schools are more segregated than ever since *Brown v. Board of Education* (Hursh, 2008). Holding schools and teachers accountable to students of color via testing and standards misses the mark toward equalization of educational opportunity and outcomes. Following the integration of schools, the educational achievement of Black and Latino students increased until the 1990s; with the implementation of high-stakes testing the achievement gap is again widening (Hursh, 2008).

In this climate, offerings of ethnic studies courses in the U.S. have been limited; only a few full-fledged ethnic studies programs remain in existence (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014; Thornton, 2015). In 2010, the Arizona state

legislature passed a law banning ethnic studies in K-12 public schools (Arizona HB 2281, 2010). The school superintendent vowed to close down a long-standing program in Tucson, despite its compliance with state law. Many White Americans viewed the ethnic studies program as teaching an un-American curriculum (Kossan, 2009). More recently Arizona state legislators have authored another House Bill 2120 which some have described as Arizona's previous ethnic studies ban "on steroids" (Lester, 2017). This bill introduced in January 2017, subsequently killed for the year, extends beyond K-12 schools to include community colleges and public universities prohibiting courses, programs, and events principally dealing with issues of diversity.

In South Dakota, school officials recently changed history content standards to make early American history and its content, such as colonialism, slavery, Manifest Destiny, the Civil War, and women's suffrage optional (Roetman, 2015). Native American history is also no longer required in South Dakota. What tends to happen in schools today is that curriculum is centered on Eurocentric views and perspectives focusing on European American ethnic groups omitting the histories and experiences of ethnic minority groups. This disregards cultural alignment with all students in the classroom and the curriculum (Au, 2011). Resistance to ethnic studies through high-stakes testing and elimination of ES courses, such as curriculum developed by Howard Zinn, and other programs in the U.S. continues to support the widening of the achievement gap.

Racial Politics Affecting Equity in Education

Examining reasons why racial and socioeconomic disparities continue to exist in education is critical. Policy and politics shape education daily in the United States.

Historically, the relationship between politics and education has negatively affected the academic achievement of students of color (Noguera, 2001). Noguera posits that political factors exasperate efforts to reduce racial disparities. He argues that educational strategies alone will not be enough to respond to the racial opportunity gap rather political strategies are also needed to impart authentic change.

Noguera (2001) along with the Diversity Project (2000) discovered in a 4-year study at Berkley High School (BHS) that two schools in one existed. Students taking the higher-level college preparatory courses were mostly White students and those in the lower-level math and science track were mostly Black and Latino students. Students were also segregated by participation in school clubs and athletics. Considering that BHS was very diverse at the time of the study, 40% White, 40% African American, 10% Latino, and 10% Asian American, most students remained segregated throughout most of the school day. The racial situation described at BHS is often replicated in other urban schools. Noguera argues that efforts to increase student of color achievement remains a difficult charge when the system is trying to serve the educational needs of two constituencies: affluent Whites and low-income African Americans and Latinos. Racial politics are in play and to date affluent White parents are typically more powerful and politically influential than low-income Black and Latino parents (Noguera, 2001). Another force affecting equity in education and contributing to resistance to ethnic studies courses and programs is a “unifying” American ideology that has unfolded in the U.S. for last few decades.

The Role of Ethnic Studies in Education and Society

The role of ethnic studies within multicultural education as defined by Banks and Banks (2001a), “an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school” (p. 1) will be examined. Also examined is the role of culturally responsive teaching or the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy, in the classroom, as defined by Ladson-Billings (1995) that students must experience academic success, develop and or maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. Multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

Some researchers identify ARC or Access, Relevance, and Community as the educational purpose of ethnic studies. Access refers to providing students with a quality education urging educational institutions to open doors to more students of color. Ethnic studies define quality education as one that is relevant to the experiences of marginalized students of color. In addition, educators should connect student home experiences with school and community creating a bridge between formal schooling and community involvement, such as advocacy, organizing, and activism (Tintiango-Cubales, 2012). ARC influences the purpose of ethnic studies particularly at the high school level to reconstruct the counternarratives, perspectives, epistemologies, and cultures of those who have been historically marginalized in the U.S. Ethnic studies,

also brings to the forefront the contributions that people of color have made in shaping the culture and society of this country (Hu-DeHart, 1993).

Various ethnic studies programs and courses around the country have been shown to benefit students, and particularly students of color (Au, 2007). In the face of these polarizing political debates, though, reoccurring narratives are raised of communities wanting to embrace curriculum that connects and increases engagement for students of color, as in California's Inland Empire. Moreno Valley Unified offers courses in African American history, Chicano studies, and multicultural literature at all of their high schools. Community members say that ethnic studies courses are especially necessary right now in light of Ferguson and police brutality issues in the black community. Demetra Coulter from the NAACP branch in Riverside, states, "it can be scary for Black youth to see images of Black men killed by police and not know how to make sense of the violence" (Molina, 2015). Evidence of the positive impact of ethnic studies curricula in schools is emerging. Pilot programs in San Francisco and Oakland show reduced unexcused student absences, increased grade point averages of those in ethnic studies courses, higher overall academic achievement, boosts in social emotional learning, increases in self-efficacy, higher graduation rates, and a reduction in drop-out rates (Kalb, 2015). Students of color enrolled in ES courses have shown to graduate at higher rates than their non-enrolled peers (Cabrera, et al., 2014; Sleeter, 2014). Drawing on this evidence, some school boards in both California and Colorado passed legislation requiring ethnic studies for high school graduation (Kalb, 2015; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014).

A recent study by Dee and Penner (2016) indicates that ninth-grade students taking ethnic studies courses in San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) led to large and statistically significant improvements in ninth-grade student GPA, attendance, and credits earned. The district's school board approved a resolution to implement ethnic studies in SFUSD high schools in 2010. The district offered a yearlong ninth-grade ES course at five high schools.

As in other areas of the nation, educators in the Pacific Northwest are working to address the needs of students of color, but have been slow to utilize the strengths of ethnic studies in the process. However, attempts by students at Franklin High School in Portland Public Schools in Portland, Oregon, calling for the offering of ethnic studies courses has been successful as the school board of the district has unanimously approved a plan to offer ethnic studies classes in all district high schools by 2018 (Casey, 2016).

Presently, there is limited research regarding ethnic studies courses and curriculum in high school particularly in the location this study takes place. This body of research helps to fill that gap and advance the current state of knowledge in the field of education and social and cultural awareness by asking what are the perceptions that students and teachers have about the impact of ethnic studies courses and curriculum in U.S. high schools.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this case study is twofold, first to discover teacher and student perceptions of the impact of ethnic studies curriculum and second, to understand

teacher methods and strategies and the nature of instruction of the curriculum in two Pacific Northwest area high schools.

This study developed an understanding of how ethnic studies approaches can be implemented in U.S. high schools particularly in contexts where an ethnic studies program or course may not already exist.

The research had two strands—one focused on the teacher, the other focused on the student. The following research questions are addressed in the study:

1. What ethnic studies instruction and materials are teachers selecting and implementing in an ethnic studies classroom?
 - a. What do teachers' instructional materials demonstrate about the integration of diverse perspectives?
 - b. In what ways do teachers incorporate ethnic studies methods, (as described by experts in the field), in their instruction?
2. In what ways are student perceptions and achievement influenced by the ethnic studies approaches incorporated in their American history or literature courses?
 - a. What do students' work products demonstrate about their level of engagement with and understanding of the historical and contemporary issues for ethnic groups?
 - b. How do students perceive their learning and engagement when ethnic studies curriculum is incorporated?

- c. To what degree do students report the incorporation of ethnic studies approaches as significant to their classroom engagement and educational aspirations?

Significance

Some believe that multicultural education and ethnic studies curriculum will erode the current educational canon. The claim from opponents is that it could become a separatist monoculturalism and pit European Americans against people of other backgrounds creating an “us versus them” mentality (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Another fear is that multicultural education will translate into curriculum changes and do away with our “common culture.” There have already been changes in both educational policy and state legislation in various states adopting more conservative social studies and history standards diluting the teaching of slavery and the civil rights movement including removing ethnic studies courses from the curriculum.

Bloom (1987) argues for a unifying “American” education that supports colorblindness in curriculum and the dismantling of affirmative action. He claims that undergraduate students he has worked with have a high sense of egalitarianism and see each other as individuals not as members of separate groups. Bloom believes that ethnicity is no more important than being tall or short, black-haired or blond and that stereotyping has disappeared. Bloom asserts that Black leaders and “extremist” Black politics are to blame for separatism among Whites and Blacks in higher education. He is also a strong proponent of meritocracy as the principle method of achievement in a democratic society. Claims made by Bloom and Hirsch (1987), the author of *Cultural*

Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know, contradict the tenets of Critical Race Theory and contribute to the widening of the opportunity gap.

Another supporter of a unified “American” education particularly in the teaching of language to English language learners (ELLs), Rodriguez (1982) recounts his experiences as a Mexican American child growing up in California and how his relationship with language impacted his social identity. His experiences as a first-generation American shape his beliefs about education aligning with Bloom and Hirsch. Although Spanish was his first language spoken in the home, Rodriguez shares that once he became fluent in English, he could no longer speak Spanish. This experience created a cultural disconnect between himself and his parents.

Conversations between them seemed more like an interview than a casual intimate discussion (Rodriguez, 1982). He argues that bilingual educators do a disservice to ELLs because they teach children in their language, what he calls a language for private spaces, and not English, the language for public spaces, such as in school. Rodriguez, like Bloom and Hirsch, insists that children must be assimilated into mainstream culture in order to achieve public individuality and seek the rights and opportunities of the larger society.

Rodriguez (1982) proposes that it is ok for there to be some sort of loss in the process of assimilation and becoming part of the public mainstream society, which contradicts culturally responsive pedagogy and the notion that education should be child-centered and address the culture, language and racial values of the student. Supporters of bilingual education and culturally responsive teaching believe that schools should offer children the opportunity to learn in both languages at the same

time and in the same spaces. Students should not have to suffer from the loss of one language while learning another as Rodriguez once did. Ethnic studies curriculum allows for children of color to see themselves in the content and not encounter a sense of loss for who they are in the educational process.

Legislation and policy in the U.S. has been influenced by the claims made in *A Nation At Risk* that later influenced the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001. NCLB required that every state have an annual testing program in reading and math. This policy has lead schools to focus on teaching to the test (Au, 2009). More and more time is spent on teaching students what will be on the test leaving little or no time on subject areas that will not be tested. Furthermore, recess and physical education have been reduced in many schools (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Multicultural education has also been affected including funding for teacher professional development in areas that are not test-score driven.

The findings from this study, by presenting illustrations of how to integrate ethnic studies approaches into the teaching of American history and literature, will contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of curriculum and instructional reform in achieving equitable educational outcomes. Presently, there is limited research regarding ethnic studies in high school particularly in the location this study takes place. This body of research will help to fill the gap and advance the current state of knowledge in the field of education and social and cultural awareness by asking what the perceptions and impact of ethnic studies courses and curriculum is on students of color in U.S. high schools. Since the recent school board decision of a Pacific Northwest school district to offer ethnic studies classes in all district high

schools by 2018, timing is perfect to investigate the academic impact ethnic studies has on students. The data collected in this study could help inform and shape the four-year implementation plan that was approved by the school board.

Summary

As demonstrated, ethnic studies may be a legitimate method of addressing the opportunity gap in this country between White students and students of color (Banks, 1975; Cammarota & Romero, 2014; de los Rios, López, & Morrell, 2015; Sleeter, 2014). Because there are no district or school sponsored ethnic studies programs in the Pacific Northwest, comprising of various ethnic studies courses being offered at one school, and only a few identified ethnic studies courses being offered, the timing for this study is ideal. The study will help to better understand student and teacher perceptions of the impact ethnic studies curriculum has on students in the courses.

The role of ethnic studies in education was examined in this chapter to better understand where and how ethnic studies fits into education. Definitions of ethnic groups were explained to identify potential social interactions between students of color and teachers in today's classrooms. Racial politics affecting schools and resistance to ethnic studies was examined to better understand possible barriers to implementing ethnic studies in schools. Finally, the current state of ethnic studies in the Pacific Northwest was also discussed.

The following chapters will include, first in Chapter Two, a review of the literature describing the intersection between multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and ethnic studies. The theoretical framework used to guide the study is discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Three describes the methodology utilized

in this qualitative case study. Chapter Four describes in detail what a day looks like for students in an ethnic studies course and shares the themes that emerged from the data collected. Finally, Chapter Five explains the researcher's conclusions from the study and describes implications based on the findings for K-12 educational practice, teacher preparation, and future research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Since the 1970s, scholars such as Banks (1975) have been making a claim for using ethnic studies (ES) as a means of education curriculum reform in the U.S. These scholars argue for a reconstruction of how ethnic groups and multicultural education are viewed in society through ethnic studies instruction (Au, 2007; Cammarota, & Romero, 2014; Gay, 2000; Hu-DeHart, 1993; Sleeter, 2014). Banks summarized the argument for ES curriculum: “I am not suggesting that we eliminate or denigrate Anglo-American history or Anglo-American perspectives on historical events. I am merely suggesting that Anglo-American perspectives should be among the many different ethnic perspectives taught in social studies and American history” (p. 13).

The current situation in American schools regarding the opportunity gap and the academic performance of students of color compared to their White peers can be difficult to understand without examining the history of multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching practices in the U.S. Ethnic studies is an important part of the American educational system landscape and is a legitimate option for teaching particularly students of color in an effort to close the opportunity gap. This chapter will provide examples of historical inequities in education and describe how ethnic studies curriculum intersects with multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching, and critical stance instruction.

This review of the literature will begin by taking a historical look at how racially ethnic groups have been educated in the United States, putting into perspective the current state of education for students of color. Identifying how students from different ethnic groups may have historically experienced education in the U.S. is a

vital first step in understanding the current educational situation in this country. If today's educators and policy makers understand the impact of historically discriminatory educational policies in the United States, future policy impacting children of color could be more equitable. This historical perspective helps to illustrate the crucial need for multicultural education, such as ethnic studies curriculum, in schools today. First, the theoretical framework guiding this research study will be discussed.

Theoretical Framework

The educational theories used to frame this study are critical consciousness, authentic caring, and Critical Race Theory. First and foremost, this study of ethnic studies curriculum is rooted in the work of Paulo Freire's (1970) concept of *conscientização*, or the combination of critical consciousness, self-reflection, and engaging in anti-oppressive, collective action. Freire (1970) argues that the conviction of the oppressed is that they must fight for liberation as a result of their own *conscientização* or critical consciousness. The theory allows for students to engage in the world around them while gaining a sense of empowerment to create change in some way. Ethnic studies curriculum forms out of Friere's concept of problem-posing education, in which the students become critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. In problem-posing education, students work to investigate and solve problems related to themselves in their communities (Freire, 1970).

Critical consciousness theory has influenced several education researchers in the United States. Ladson-Billings' (1995) master script theory, claiming that official school curriculum maintains a White supremacist script that silences minority voices,

is significantly influenced by the work of Freire (1970). Examples from Ladson-Billings of how this empowerment took place likens the work on conscientização or critical consciousness to work being done in the U.S. South in the 1990s to educate and empower disenfranchised African Americans. Conscientização is a process that invites learners to engage the world and others critically (McLaren, 1998). Freire (1998) explains the process of conscientização as a way for people to recognize that they are active agents who can transform their own world. He makes specific reference to the political and social situation in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, examining the need for cultural action from the community in order to break the existing *culture of silence*. Freire argues that it is not enough to uncover real problems, but one must take action to change reality. Ethnic studies course curriculum centers around “their objective of systematically examining and dismantling institutional racism” (Hu-DeHart, 2003, p. 874).

The second theory used in this research is authentic caring (Valenzuela, 1999). The developers of certain ethnic studies curriculum intertwined Valenzuela’s (1999) concept of authentic caring to incorporate the experiences of low income Latina/os. The concept of authentic caring places the responsibility on the school and teachers to validate their students’ culture and to bring issues of race and power to the forefront (Valenzuela, 1999). Caring theory is based on the ability of teacher and student to cultivate a relationship emphasizing respect and responsibility. Noddings (2002) states that the material, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of the student should guide the education process. Noddings challenges teachers to detach from

control in the classroom in order to build authentic relationships and a “care for” student environment.

Valenzuela expands on Noddings’s (2002) care-based education model. The similarity between the care-based model and ethnic studies curriculum is the focus on building authentic relationships with students and connecting with their diverse backgrounds. Valenzuela (1999) describes authentic relationships as a relationship that is initiated by the teacher and on the premise that individuals need to be recognized and addressed as whole beings. In addition, Valenzuela argues that teachers practicing authentic caring to meet the needs of Mexican youth in schools must abandon color-blind curriculum, a neutral assimilation process, and the practice of individualizing collective problems. Valenzuela further explains that if teachers and administrators do not create authentic relationships with students, the school is thus subtracting resources from students and in fact, creating an environment of subtractive schooling. Ford and Grantham’s (2003) views on deficit thinking in schools support the ease at which schools can create a subtractive schooling environment. Deficit thinking is described as “when educators hold negative, stereotypic, and counterproductive views about culturally diverse students and lower their expectations of these students accordingly” (Ford & Grantham, 2003, p. 217).

Finally, ethnic studies curriculum incorporates components of Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Developers of ethnic studies courses intended for race to be at the center of the curriculum, recognizing the importance of critically examining racial oppression. The Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the

relationship among race, racism, and power. The basic tenets of CRT are that: first, “racism is ordinary, not-aberrational – ‘normal science,’ the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country, second, most would agree that our system of white-over-color ascendancy serves important purposes, both psychic and material, for the dominant group, third, race and races are products of social thought and relations... races are categories that society invents, manipulates or retires when convenient” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 7). Collectively, these tenets of CRT help students engage as change agents in pursuit of social justice that later appears to foster student success. The tenets acknowledge that students are not empty vessels to be filled, but creators of knowledge (Freire, 1970).

In the field of education CRT evolves and is described as a series of five tenets:

1. Counter-storytelling is a method of telling a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority, such as personal stories or narratives;
2. The permanence of racism states that racism is a permanent component of American life, the notion that racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains;
3. Whiteness as property is the right of possession, the right to use and enjoy, and the right to disposition, historically in schools Whites, almost exclusively, have been the ones to use and enjoy high-quality curricula in safe and well-equipped schools;

4. Interest convergence is the concept that gains made by communities of color have only occurred because they coincide with the self-interest of White elites; and
5. Critique of liberalism is the critique of three basic notions, colorblindness (fails to take into consideration the permanence of racism and the construction as people of color as Other), neutrality of the law (the notion that the law is colorblind and neutral), and incremental change (change must come at a slow pace, palatable for those in power) (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

In education, Critical Race Theory is further described as a framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses (Yosso, 2006). CRT is considered a social justice project that has the potential to emancipate and empower youth (Friere, 1970; hooks, 1994). These three frameworks work together in guiding this study because they incorporate key principles for creating equitable outcomes in today's classrooms.

Brief History of Education through a Multicultural Lens

The theoretical framework discussed previously can provide a much-needed structure to ensure equitable outcomes for all students. Historically, each large non-dominant racial group has been discriminated against in one form or another in the United States in various areas, particularly in schooling. Each group at some point has been seen as an “other” and treated accordingly by the dominant majority group (Ogbu, 1991). This discrimination in education has been realized in the form of federal and state laws and educational policy. It is important to examine how schooling in the U.S. attempted to domesticate, assimilate and/or segregate African

Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. Ethnic studies curriculum stands to examine history from the perspective of these non-dominant groups to further understand how this diverse and rich history impacts contemporary society. The following information provides brief examples of historical inequities, as opposed to a comprehensive discussion. Each racial group discussed in the following passages has been affected by unique educational experiences, making it difficult to discuss the facts consistently based on the diverse experiences. Nonetheless, it is significant to highlight these inequities to help further explain possible causes influencing the current educational landscape and the potential for ethnic studies to impact positive change in the future.

Education of African American students. Following the Civil War and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1861, the South became reluctant to meet the challenge of educating African Americans. Consequently, even though Southern Whites saw educating ex-slaves as profoundly threatening (Span, 2014) the African American public school system was developing among African American communities during the Reconstruction era in the 1860s and 70s. In Mississippi, a new system of state schools was created that guaranteed support, although minimal (Span, 2014). This school system was segregated and extremely unequal. Following Emancipation, the education of African Americans was systematically taken over by White philanthropic organizations and the Freedmen's Bureau (Woodson, 2011). Legislation such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) prohibited Black students from getting the same education as White students (Butchart, 2010). African Americans were not included in the vision for common schools in the U.S.; in fact, African Americans

were restricted, segregated, or denied the right to send their children to school equal to Whites (Span, 2014).

For the next six decades, “separate but equal” was implemented. Southern states followed the lead of northern and western states in codifying a dual system of education by funneling public monies to private schools that benefitted White families and robbed African American families of educational dollars needed to provide equitable opportunities for their children (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Reece & O’Connell, 2016). Although the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision concluded that separate schools were “inherently unequal” educators today face growing segregation once again, despite the increasing diversity of public schools (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). The subsequent section, drawn from the work of education historian, Carter G. Woodson (2011), will help put into perspective contemporary issues related to inequities in education.

This initial history of discrimination against African Americans in the U.S. education system has led to contemporary inequities. Early on in these schools, freed slaves were taught the “simple duties of life” (Woodson, 2011, p. 13), keeping them at the lowest level of society, free, yet economically enslaved. Woodson (2011) concluded that the curriculum did not take African Americans into consideration except to condemn or pity them. Black English was ridiculed, and African Americans were excluded from most subjects, such as literature, the arts, and history. “Negro” colleges of the time did not offer courses in African American history, literature, or race relations (Woodson, 2011). Public schools did not factor African American history into the curriculum, claiming to not want to bring before the students the race

problem prematurely. Woodson (2011) argues that teachers ignored the fact that the race question was already being brought to Black and White children in the home and community. It was believed that Blacks had not accomplished much in history and that they themselves did not want to hear about their race, which meant hearing about despairs and problems of the race.

Some contemporary accounts suggest that decades later, the experience of African Americans in schools has not changed. Students today are increasingly attending de-facto segregated schools (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). This negatively impacts the benefits, noted in a growing body of research (Mickelson & Nkomo, 2012), seen in students that attend more diverse schools. Some of the benefits include, increased test scores, higher graduation rates, and success in college. Factors contributing to de-facto segregation include the funding of charter schools instead of magnet schools and electing judges and officials opposing desegregation policies (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Also, de-facto segregation supports what the authors of Critical Race Theory have said, that “racism is ordinary, not-aberrational – ‘normal science,’ the usual way society does business.” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 7). One example of a more recent account is Ta-Nehisi Coates’ (2015) personal and compelling narrative. In a letter to his son, Coates recounts that he suffered at the hands of both the streets of Baltimore and the schools. Coates maintains that schools were more concerned with keeping students quiet and compliant rather than curious and inquisitive, especially for Black children. Coates felt that he was unfit for schools and that the schools held some sort of secret that if he did not comply now, there would be consequences later. This type of treatment of African American students in

schools may be one cause leading to the fact that 60% percent of all young Black men that drop out of school will go to jail (Western & Wildeman, 2009).

Researchers (Howard & Terry, 2011) and others argue that traditional public education is rooted in Eurocentrism, which excludes and devalues the existence of the Black community (Bass & Coleman, 1997; Ferguson, 2000). In addition, scholars, have suggested that through Eurocentrism, public schools in the U.S. stereotype, criminalized, and sort Black males into weaker intellectual ability categories based on a complex system of institutionalized racism and culture of economic hierarchies that value European culture while devaluing African culture (Bass & Coleman, 1997; Ferguson, 2000; Steele, 1997).

Education of Mexican American students. Mexican American students have also historically been discriminated against in the U.S. education system. Since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants were strongly discriminated against (Griswold del Castillo, 1990). The American school system enforced the segregation of Mexican Americans in schools with the passing of the Immigration Act of 1921 and the English Only statutes in schools in 1924 (Blanton, 2004). Mexican American students were assimilated or Americanized and taught English. The anti-immigrant sentiment in the early 1900s resulted in increased measures to segregate Mexican Americans from schools, parks, pools, and restaurants (Gutierrez, 1995). Therefore, White students attended “American” schools and students of Mexican descent attended “Mexican” schools, even though the American government established that Mexicans living in the U.S. after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo would be racially classified as White (Griswold del Castillo,

1990). Discrimination against Mexican American students continued both because of the basis of limited English language skills and at the demand of White parents, who objected to their children attending school with Mexicans.

The tide changed slowly as Mexican American parents began to sue school districts in their communities that continued to segregate their children. Various landmark cases forced schools to integrate Mexican American children into their schools. De Leon (2001) describes a series of these cases between 1925 and 1948, such as, *Romo v. Laird* (1925) in Arizona, *Mendez v. Westminster School District of Orange County* (1946) in California, and *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District* (1948) in Texas. All of these cases preceded and helped set the stage in U.S. history for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

Contemporary issues affecting Latino students in schools are similar to those of other ethnic groups. Latino students drop-out of school at higher rates, have less access to gifted and higher level courses (Howard, 2010), and many Latino students are designated as English language learners (ELLs) because they speak a different home language. Sometimes ELLs are seen as coming to school with a deficit versus an asset (Valenzuela, 1999). English language learners (ELLs) in the preK-12 student population are the fastest growing group in the United States. The ELL student population grew 64% from 1994 to 2010 (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011). These students face considerable challenges. Ethnic studies methodology can help address the unique needs of Latino students in schools.

Education of Native American students. Bergstrom, Cleary, and Peacock 2003 suggest that given the oppressive history and experiences of Native Americans in

the United States and within the education system, some Native Americans share “soul wounds” or “historical trauma response” (p. 156). Examples of “soul wounds” or “historical trauma response,” derive from the experiences Native children had in the boarding school system. Richard Henry Pratt founded an off-reservation boarding school in 1879 in an effort to in his words, “Kill the Indian in him and save the man” (Pratt, 1964). This sentiment carried over to general enactment of Bureau of Indian Affairs policy. Between 1880 and 1902, Native children were taken from their homes and families and sent to boarding schools thousands of miles away. They were not allowed to speak their language, practice their spirituality, their hair was cut short, and they were made to dress in “White man’s clothing.” Christianity also played a role in the assimilation of Native Americans. Missionaries operated schools on reservations combining religious with academic training (Marr, 1998). Many Native American students became ill or died from disease. Some died in attempts to escape the schools (Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003). These stories and memories live on and are told by elders among the community and are associated with White culture and education. Cervera (2014) argues that education for Native students should include the histories of Indian education in the U.S., such as boarding schools, to help inform education curriculum rather than focusing on Eurocentric intentions of saving the Indian by destroying their cultures.

Education of Asian American students. Shortly after the early stages of Asian immigration in the 1840s during the California Gold Rush, the 1864 Amendment of California State Law was passed prohibiting “Negroes, “Mongolians” or students of Asian descent, and “Indians” admittance to public schools. However, if

parents or guardians of 10 or more children applied in writing to the Trustees of any district, they would then establish a separate school for their education (California Statutes, 1864, p. 213). The segregation model was enforced throughout the country. In 1885, Chinese American parents sued the San Francisco Board of Education for denying their daughter admission to school based on her Chinese ancestry in the *Tape v. Hurley* case, which settled on the “separate but equal” doctrine. Jahng (2013) highlights the importance of uncovering the history of education of Asian Americans, particularly in California, to better understand the politics and hidden practices of educational policy.

Like other racial groups in the U.S. during the 1900s, Asian American and immigrant families resisted discriminating educational policy through various lawsuits and protests. Two cases were filed challenging the constitutionality of segregation in schools. *Wong Him v. Callahan* (1902) and *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927) both failed as the courts upheld the “separate but equal” legislation. It wasn’t until the landmark case, *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) that forced school districts to “take affirmative steps” to correct the language deficiency of students with inadequate English proficiency so that they will have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful academic program.

While Asian Americans on average graduate high school and college at higher rates than other non-dominant groups, (ACE Report, 2001) they are sometimes not seen as a group of color. This is supported by the “model minority” stereotype that Asian Americans are plagued with because of their achievement on standardized tests and academics in general (Brenneman, 2016). This stereotype masks the reality of racism in the lives of Asian Americans (Tatum, 1997). Ethnic studies approaches can

examine and bring voice to the realities that Asian American students experience in schools.

These illustrations of educational inequities from history are meant to put into perspective the current state of the American education system, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Historical discrimination of racial ethnic groups has been prevalent in policy and practice, and the repercussions are still seen in the opportunity gap today. The following section highlights how one U.S. ethnic group strives to investigate education solutions that will increase academic success for children in their communities.

Native American Education Solutions

Two models of Native American education present in the U.S. today are the assimilative model and the culturally responsive model, implementation of both models are the responsibility of the federal government. The passage of Title IV is one example contributing to an assimilative model of education supporting the creation of community learning centers that operate after school hours and focus on activities such as remedial education, tutoring services, activities for limited English proficient students, expanded library service hours, and drug and violence prevention programs (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2011). This trend seems to be changing with the restructuring of the Office of Indian Education Programs, now the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) in 2006. The BIE's mission is to "manifest consideration of the whole person by taking into account the spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural aspects of the individual within his or her family and tribal or village context" (p. 143).

Brayboy and Castagno (2009) recount the advocacy for culturally responsive teaching in Native American education, which was published even as early as 1928 in the Meriam Report. The report called for more Indigenous teachers, early childhood programs, and the incorporation of language and cultures in schools, however little changed in Indian education over the course of the next 30 years, few of these reforms were enacted. Much of the education of Native children was and is the responsibility of the federal government. Two additional principle reports were published about the situation of education on tribal lands. In 1969, the U.S. Senate published *Indian Education: A National Tragedy, A National Challenge*, and in 1991, the United States Department of Education published *Indian Nations at Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action Final Report*. The reports contend that Indian education should be culturally responsive and help preserve language and culture. Further, in 1999, Terry Cross, founder and senior advisor of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, (NICWA) published three principles for restructuring Indian education in the 21st Century:

- The state governments should view public school education as requiring the fair and accurate representation of the American Indian people within their history and social studies curricula for the benefit of Indian and non-Indian students alike. Existing public school curricula restrict the discussion of contemporary American Indian issues to a brief mention within history, social studies, and literature classes. Rarely is contemporary Indian life or the major contributions of Indians to American life discussed or taken seriously.

- The federal government should view the education of the American Indian as its continuing trust duty that extends from the K-12 grades through higher education for qualified Indian students. The unique legal and political relationship of the Federal Government with the tribal governments and the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian and Alaskan Native students are recognized.
- The tribal governments should view the education of their tribal members as a fundamental goal of tribal self-determination, co-equal with their responsibility to protect and preserve their natural and cultural resources. Tribal governments have, of course, the primary responsibility for ensuring the appropriate education of their tribal children (Cross, 1999).

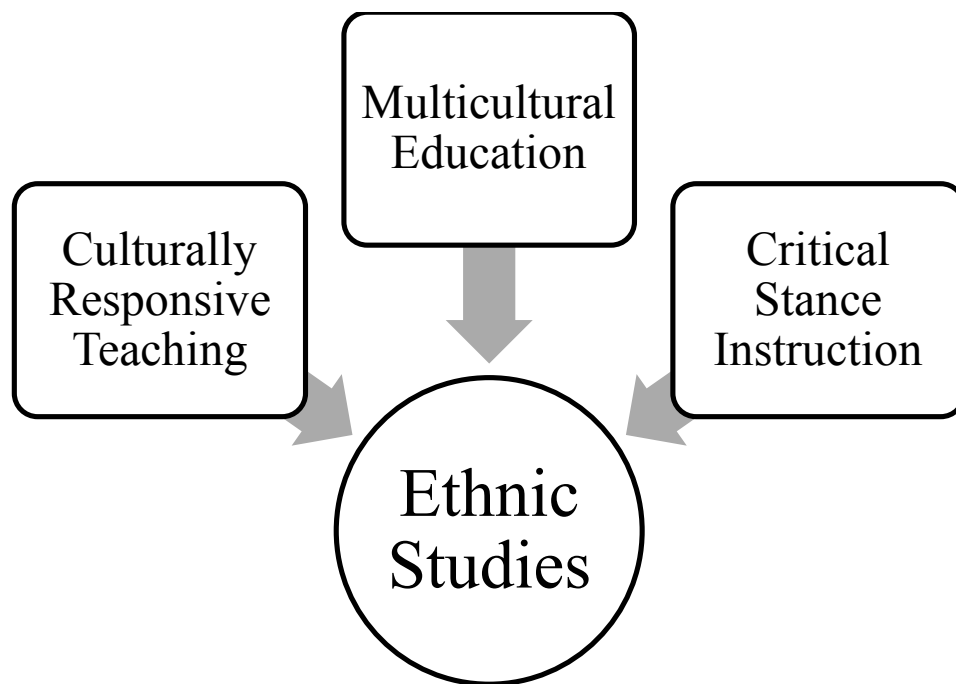
Although, researchers suggest that culturally responsive teaching that preserves Native language and culture should be practiced in schools, this is difficult to achieve due to the involvement of several government and tribal entities. The integration of ethnic studies curriculum and approaches can be a means for combating injustices in education for Native students.

Intersection of Four Educational Models

Next, the literature review will focus on how ethnic studies curriculum intersects and relates to four educational models, multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and critical stance instruction. Figure 1 describes the relationship between these education models that are utilized to best meet the needs of marginalized student populations. Culturally responsive teaching is a product of culturally relevant pedagogy and thus listed together in Figure

1. In general, ethnic studies curriculum and approaches are influenced by each of the four education models, yet uniquely seen as its own methodology. This relationship will be discussed further in this chapter.

Figure 1 *The Relationship Between Four Education Models Best Serving Students of Color.*



Multicultural Education

First, this review of the literature will focus on how multicultural education (ME), culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), culturally responsive teaching (CRT), and critical stance instruction develop and are implemented in today's classrooms.

Sleeter and Grant (2009) describe four approaches within multicultural education that address the needs of diverse student populations in the classroom. The first approach, teaching of the exceptional and the culturally different, aims to build bridges for diverse students to acquire cognitive skills and knowledge expected of

their White middle class peers. Second, the goal of the human relations approach is to promote a feeling of unity, tolerance, and acceptance among people. This approach works to eliminate prejudice and reduce stereotypes. Third, the single-group studies approach, presents alternatives to existing Eurocentric, male-dominant curriculum by studying a particular group of people. Examples of single-group studies are women's studies, African American history, Chicano literature, and Pinoy Teach. Pinoy Teach is a social studies curriculum taught from a Filipino perspective. Last, the social justice education approach deals more directly with oppression and social structural inequality based on race, social class, gender and disability (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). The purpose of this approach is to prepare future citizens to take action to create a society that better serves the interests of all groups of people, particularly people of color and those in the margins of society.

Views on Multicultural Education

Multicultural education developed as a philosophical concept within the last 30 years (NAME, 2016) although Banks (1993) locates the beginnings of multicultural education during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Various perspectives on the term exist. In some schools, multicultural education is implemented in a vacuum disconnected from school policies, practices, and societal structures and ideologies (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Also, Hu-Dehart (2003) states that schools may regard multicultural education as a form of being civil, meaning that people from different groups should try to get along without focusing on how differences are socially and historically constructed, carrying real meaning regarding power and privilege. On the other hand, researchers and other educators view the concept differently. Banks

(1993) defines multicultural education as “an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process” (p. 2). He further provides a five-dimension model to address the goals of multicultural education:

- Content integration;
- The knowledge construction process;
- Prejudice reduction;
- An equity pedagogy; and
- Empowering school culture.

Higbee, Lundell, and Duranczyk (2003) further elaborate on Banks’ definition by stating that multicultural education moves beyond group membership to encourage a method for transforming schools so teachers may more fully enable the participation of all people in their society.

Nieto and Bode (2012) define goals and key terms of multicultural education in three primary ways:

- Tackling inequality and promoting access to an equal education;
- Raising the achievement of all students and providing them with an equitable and high-quality education; and
- Providing students with an apprenticeship in the opportunity to become critical and productive members of a democratic society.

By establishing these three goals, Nieto and Bode (2012) hope to dispel the belief that multicultural education is a superficial addition of content to curriculum or the magic pill that will do away with all educational problems. Nieto and Bode’s definition of ME is similar to Banks’ (1975) definition. They assert: “Multicultural education is a

process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, gender, and sexual orientation, among others) that students their communities, and teachers reflect” (p. 42). An extension of this definition are Nieto’s seven basic characteristics of multicultural education which essentially reflect student ethnicities in the same way as ethnic studies curriculum. The following characteristics are also supported in ethnic studies curriculum (Banks, 2012; de los Rios et al., 2015; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Sleeter, 2014):

- Multicultural education is anti-racist education.
- Multicultural education is basic education, meaning it is not peripheral to the core curriculum. It is understood as basic to an excellent education.
- Multicultural education is important for all students.
- Multicultural education is pervasive. It permeates everything in the school.
- Multicultural education is education for social justice.
- Multicultural education is a process; because no one ever stops becoming a multicultural person and knowledge is never complete.
- Multicultural education is critical pedagogy.

Expanding on Nieto’s first characteristic of multicultural education as anti-racist, in an interview with Kate Nelson (1994), Enid Lee argues that anti-racist education is a point of view that can be addressed in all subject areas. It also highlights the histories and experiences of people who have been left out of the curriculum. Lee believes that multicultural or anti-racist education equips students,

parents, and teachers with tools to combat racism and ethnic discrimination. Lee asserts that there is no neutral ground on the issue of anti-racist education and that if one is against it, then one is for promoting a monocultural or racist education in schools. Lee began using the term anti-racist education as opposed to multicultural education because to some multicultural education has often come to mean something superficial like addressing culture as food, dances, and dress instead of focusing on what expressions of culture means for instance, the values and power relationships that shape culture.

Lee's views on anti-racist education are similar to Banks' views on ethnic studies, Lee asserts that anti-racist education helps us move the European perspective over to the side to make room for other cultural perspectives that must be included in today's curriculum. When asked how teachers can implement multicultural or anti-racist education in the classroom she offers four stages that schools can adopt to accomplish this:

- Surface stage, where a few expressions of culture are changed in the school, such as signs made in several languages and have a variety of foods and festivals, schools must move quickly out of this stage and on to the next;
- Transitional stage, where teachers create units of study, for example a unit on Native Americans or of people of African background, but this unit may still remain as separate from the main curriculum;
- Structural change stage, where elements of the unit of study are now integrated into existing units and what is at the center of the curriculum gets changed in its prominence;

- Social change stage, where the curriculum helps lead to changes outside of the school, use knowledge to empower people to change their lives (Nelson, 1994).

Anti-racist education encourages educators to offer students multiple perspectives in classrooms and lead discourse that addresses the histories and voices of people that are normally left out of the curriculum, which is what ethnic studies also offers students.

Ronald Takaki (2008) wrote about multicultural education through the concept of “a different mirror.” Takaki argues that multicultural history of the United States began during European settlement in the U.S. and interactions with Native Americans and Africans in New England and Virginia. These interactions and the “borrowings” and contributions racial groups made were crucial to the survival of White settlers and the growth and expansion in the U.S. Takaki borrows from feminist poet Adrienne Rich to describe the need for a “different mirror” as “when someone with the authority of a teacher describes your society and you are not in it,” Rich continues, “the experience can be and is likely to be disorienting, a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in mirror and saw nothing” (Rich, 1986, p. 199). Takaki (2008) claims that there is a need for “a different mirror” that reflects back the faces of every ethnicity in recognition of their historical importance in this country. A different mirror replaces the experiences of invisibility with a new appreciation for past contributions and strengths of the group with whom students most identify (Wallulis, 2012).

Jerald Wallulis (2012) is a professor at the University of South Carolina teaching multicultural history in the Ronald E. McNair Program preparing first

generation and low-income students for graduate school success. Wallulis utilizes Takaki's concept of the "different mirror" in his courses. The McNair Program has identifiable features that are taught in their multicultural history courses offering multiple perspectives and a more accurate view of history in the United States:

- The history is claimed to be multicultural at its very origin or beginning; the settlement of the United States at the very start involves the encounter with Native, European, and African cultures.
- The history of economic development is complex, involving important contributions and hard work from Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, of all kinds, and the Irish, Italians, Polish, Jewish, and numerous other immigrant groups.
- The history involves distorting mirrors of race and language that filter out important achievements from, especially, Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans.
- The history involves the inspiring stories of double victories for both the nation and the race by victims of segregation who fought successfully against it (Wallulis, 2012).

Multicultural Education Backlash

Resistance to ethnic studies curriculum is preceded by backlash experienced by multicultural education curriculum in schools. From the beginning, multicultural education has been criticized for many reasons, particularly for challenging the status quo, bringing to the forefront the voices of the marginalized and disenfranchised, and for encouraging curriculum transformation and the use of alternative pedagogies

(Nieto & Bode, 2012). Three common strategies utilized to destabilize multicultural education are:

- Calls for going back to basics curriculum in schools;
- Claims of erosion of the educational canon; and
- Political struggles of legislation and policy.

Hirsch (1987) is a proponent of the “back to basics” argument. He made a case for the concept in his book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* after the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) to combat the “multicultural threat”. Hirsch’s book contains a list of terms and concepts that he considers essential for every educated person to know. Many schools across the country have structured curriculum to align with Hirsch’s assertions and is now known as “core knowledge”. This list of terms, prolong a one-sided Eurocentric view of cultural literacy.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Like Multicultural Education, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a method for addressing the needs of diverse student populations in the classroom. In the 1990s, Ladson-Billings (1995) carried out a three-year study where she interviewed and observed eight successful teachers of African American students. From this study, she coined the term Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). There are three criteria Ladson-Billings uses to describe CRP: a) students must experience academic success; b) students must develop and or maintain cultural competence; and c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order.

CRP is further defined as the ability for teachers to make connections between the cultural knowledge, beliefs, and practices that students bring to school from home, as well as the content and pedagogy that they use in their classrooms (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lipman, 1995; Tate, 1995). Using this pedagogy has the potential of enhancing the academic performance and overall school experience for students. Ladson-Billings (1995) found that teachers' notion of self, their ethic of care, and thoughtful instructional focus can have instructional success with students of color. Gay (2000) posits that culturally responsive teaching is a "very different pedagogical paradigm" (p.24). There are five principles that this concept is built on:

- The eradication of deficit-based ideologies of culturally diverse students;
- Disrupting the idea that Eurocentric or middle class forms of discourse, knowledge, language, culture, and historical interpretations are normative;
- A critical consciousness and sociopolitical awareness that reflects an ongoing commitment to challenging injustice, and disrupting inequities and oppression of any group of people;
- An authentic and culturally informed notion of care for students, wherein their academic, social, and emotional psychological, and cultural well-being are promoted; and
- Recognition of the complexity of culture, in which educators allow students' personal culture to be used as an enhancement in their quest for educational excellence.

Research has shown that implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in curriculum "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by

using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 18). For instance, a number of studies have addressed CRP in the area of mathematics. A study conducted by Tate (1995) examining culturally relevant teaching in mathematics found that teachers who used community issues as a framework improved math proficiency. Civil and Khan (2001) discovered that when teachers used students’ home experiences with planting gardens important math concepts were developed. Another study examined how a teacher used students’ experiences with their local stores and price comparisons to build a better comprehension of math concepts (Ensign, 2003). These studies demonstrate how CRP can benefit students of color.

In addition, the notion of care in particular is a crucial element of culturally relevant pedagogy. Gay (2000) elaborates by stating: “Caring is one of the major pillars of culturally responsive pedagogy for ethnically diverse students. It is manifested in the form of teacher attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about students’ human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities [. . .] This is expressed for their psycho-emotional well-being and academic success; personal morality and social actions, obligations and celebrations; community and individuality; and unique cultural connections and universal human bonds. (Gay, 2000, pp. 45-46)

Ladson-Billings (1995) explains that culturally relevant instruction results in higher student achievement, “increased self-efficacy”, and positive regard for school. A principle element of culturally relevant pedagogy is the focus on “critical consciousness” that challenges the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Students

should be able to challenge content knowledge and must become comfortable with critiquing and evaluating the content of their studies (Oliver & Oliver, 2013). As researchers began to study and analyze CRP, educators created and developed the specific strategies for implementing multicultural education, and another term emerged: culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is the teaching strategies and lessons used to implement Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the classroom.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Examples of the positive impact that culturally responsive teaching has on student of color academic achievement, is described in various parts of the world, such as New Zealand and Canada, but especially here in the U.S. This positive impact holds true for White students as well, and to limit them to traditional and linear approaches to learning is likewise short-changing their academic success. Using culturally responsive teaching practices allows White students to gain appreciation for others within school and in their “real world” life experience (Oliver & Oliver, 2013). In a recent report, Aceves and Orosco (2014) share data collected to support culturally responsive teaching in schools. They give examples from the field for each of the six themes in culturally responsive teaching as listed in Table 1. The themes are: Instructional Engagement; Culture; Language and Racial Identity; Multicultural Awareness; High Expectations; Critical Thinking; and Social Justice. Suggestions for emerging evidence-based practices, recommended approaches, and considerations are made.

Table 1

Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices for Each Theme

Relevant Themes	Emerging Evidence-Based Practices	Recommended Approaches and Considerations
Instructional Engagement	Collaborative Teaching	Problem-Solving Approach
Culture, Language, and Racial Identity	Responsive Feedback	Child-Centered Instruction
Multicultural Awareness	Modeling	Assessment
High Expectations	Instructional Scaffolding	Materials
Critical Thinking		
Social Justice		

Various classroom studies indicate that elementary school students improved their learning, such as reading comprehension (Orosco & O'Connor, 2013) when there was a connection made between their cultural and linguistic background and the lesson. To accomplish this, teachers developed and implemented culturally responsive teaching practices. The following examples illustrate the importance of addressing relevant themes of culturally responsive teaching and how educators have done so utilizing evidence-based practices and recommended approaches.

Research suggests that students who participate in direct and explicit collaborative-based approaches in learning improve their literacy engagement and motivation (Au, 2011). This communal learning approach reinforces student background knowledge as opposed to a more individual, Eurocentric approach to learning. Responsive feedback is another evidence-based practice that has shown to improve student self-esteem, monitor understanding, and challenge their thinking.

Teachers can prompt students with both affective and cognitive feedback validating student contributions clarifying and expanding student statements during instruction (Jimenez & Gersten, 1999). This practice has shown to be effective with English language learners. Modeling can be a key strategy when working with specific cultural groups, particularly Native American and Alaska Native students. Learning through observation is an important tradition among Native tribes. Lipka et al., (2005) observed a teacher modeling during math problem-solving activities that reflected Native Alaskan youth's cultural tradition. Delpit (1995) shares a clear visual example from her work with Alaskan Native communities related to modeling in the classroom. During a classroom observation, an Anglo teacher directs students in ways that do not match his actions, for example, he says, "copy the words from the board" but he is away from the blackboard looking through his desk for something. In contrast, the Native American teacher supports what she says related to her physical context. When she asked her students to "copy the words from the board" she is standing at the board pointing. Simple culturally responsive adjustments in instruction can make a significant difference in student learning.

Another effective evidence-based approach in culturally responsive teaching is instructional scaffolding. Teachers integrating this approach use different types of questions, for instance, open-ended and analytic questions, providing appropriate wait time, and using supporting instructional materials such as visual organizers and story maps (Jimenez & Gersten, 1999). Students have reported that teachers using this approach encourage student discourse and show genuine interest in their student's success (McIntyre & Hulan, 2013).

Along with evidence-based approaches of culturally responsive teaching practices educators and researchers note various recommendations, such as a problem-solving approach, child-centered instruction, and materials. A problem-solving approach allows teachers to create opportunities for students to investigate real open-ended problems, formulate questions, and develop solutions. Students can focus on issues related to injustice and inequity in their daily lives (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Child-centered instruction focuses on student generated ideas, background knowledge, student values and preferences. Child-directed activities can be essential to the instruction of students of color, particularly indigenous populations. Alaska Native tradition gives respect to a newborn child as a full person, respecting a child's thoughts and feelings especially as it relates to school (Delpit, 1995). Materials selected for any classroom should reflect the students in the class, but more to ensure multiple perspectives are represented. Culturally responsive teaching is sometimes seen as the struggle against the whitening of education (Matias, 2013). Yosso (2006) stated that generally school textbooks in U.S. high schools do not represent the contributions of communities of color. Gay (2000) argues that in some schools instructional materials tend to provide poor, inaccurate, and absent representation of diverse cultural and linguistic groups. Both teachers and students can address these inadequacies in the curriculum by engaging in the following strategies:

- Conducting analyses of textbooks, mass media, Internet, library sources, and personal narratives;
- Exploring how personal backgrounds and environmental factors influence authors' scholarship;

- Examining multiple ethnic descriptions and interpretations of events and experiences;
- Investigating how different knowledge sources affect teaching and learning; and
- Reconstructing or replacing existing presentations of issues and situations in the various resources with their own acquired cultural knowledge and insights (Gay, 2000, p. 59).

Students and teachers are able to use these practices to critically evaluate materials and resources to ensure authentic representation of history and lived experiences by validating the diverse student body. Furthermore, teachers can conduct a self-assessment reflecting on their own pre-conceived notions of the students in their classroom.

Martell (2013) emphasizes that White teachers should concentrate on understanding the racial and ethnic backgrounds of their students. This can be a difficult task when traditional American school curriculum focuses on White history and culture. In order for ethnic studies instruction to be successful, teachers must reflect on their own beliefs about students of color and examine their own Whiteness. It is key for teachers to challenge the privileges of White Americans because if they don't, they will continue to teach, "White history" (Martell, 2013). Ethnic studies can deal with systems and processes to facilitate the resolution of ethnic conflict in the U.S. (Banks, 1975).

Powell (1997) studied a method in which White teachers in diverse settings could develop a critical consciousness that helped them to develop an inclusive and

affirming form of instruction that increased student engagement. These teachers used autobiographies to reflect on and examine their own backgrounds. This strategy builds on one of Ladson-Billing's (1995) tenets identifying that a teacher's conception of self is an essential element of culturally responsive teaching.

In addition, researchers have examined the importance for teachers to connect with student knowledge as a central concept of culturally responsive teaching. Moll and Gonzales (2004) refer to this concept as students' *funds of knowledge*. This is defined as "the knowledge base that underlies the productive and exchange activities of households" (p. 700). This approach to teaching requires teachers to understand students' lives outside of the classroom, such as students' roles within their families, assets learned in the home and communities, and developing a deep and holistic sense of how students interpret their world (Moll & Gonzales, 2004). Integrating this teaching approach can allow teachers and students to challenge the status quo.

Culturally responsive teaching is a complex commitment that can help improve student of color achievement in schools. Researchers at UCLA evaluated the degree of the academic performance of students at Sunnyside High School, that may have been assisted with the intervention of GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) services (Howard & Terry, 2011). The 4-year program provided intensive academic support for any student at Sunnyside that wished to participate. The program also provided a series of professional development sessions for school staff. Approximately 450 students participated regularly in the after-school tutoring activities (2-4 times a week) with about 85% of these students being African American.

The culturally responsive teaching that occurred at the high school encompassed instructional approaches similar to ethnic studies. These approaches were exhibited through culturally responsive instruction, teacher-student relationships, and the type of care and academic rigor displayed by the GEAR UP and school staff. At the end of the study, Howard and Terry (2011) found that the number of African American students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses in math and science increased. Also, of the African American students who participated in the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) tutoring program 85% passed the exam and there was an increase of 25% in the number of graduates (385) in 2007 from the previous year (291) in 2006.

Critical Stance Instruction in Education

Throughout time, various educators and theorists have supported the instruction of critical stance education in schools. Simpson (2009) expands on Habermas' (1984) Critical Theory by defining critical stance as "a philosophical attitude towards social phenomena that critiques and questions the origins of dominance as an aspect of the struggle for a better world" (p. 430). Simpson argues that critical stance education allows migrant students in the U.S. learning English to communicate in a way that empowers them to speak out and be heard in a space where they are normally inaudible. Paulo Freire's (1970) concept of conscientização or the combination of critical consciousness, self-reflection, and engaging in anti-oppressive, collective action helps set the stage for critical approaches to pedagogy in education. The theory allows for students to engage in the world around them while gaining a sense of empowerment to create change in some way. Critical stance approach

considers students' real life concerns and issues where teachers create a curriculum that meets the needs of students in the class. There is a movement in education toward orienting teaching to a critical stance.

Martell and Hashimoto-Martell (2011) conducted a study in an urban high school where the teacher abandoned the U.S. history course textbook, replacing it with teacher created reading packets assembled from primary sources, oral histories, and writings by historians and journalists. As one might see in an ethnic studies course, Martell and Hashimoto-Martell intentionally incorporated multiple perspectives of historical events particularly those of non-Whites, women, LGBT, immigrants, and the poor and working class. As a result of utilizing the reading packets, five major findings emerged from the study:

- Students expressed higher levels of interest in reading about history;
- Students reported completing more homework and subsequently recalling more historical information;
- Students reported understanding different views of historical events better;
- Students could better identify with the historical people depicted in the reading packets, particularly expressed by many of the students of color; and
- A small group of students struggled with the reading packets, because they desired to return to a more simple and one-sided narrative that told them the facts and did not push them to question the past or form their own perspectives of history (p. 13).

Even if some students (see last bullet) were resistant, Martell and Hashimoto-Martell argue that using a critical stance approach in teaching history allowed students to see

themselves as part of U.S. history and indeed can have a positive impact on their learning of history.

Ethnic Studies Program Models

Offering ethnic studies (ES) curriculum, courses, and programs in schools is a method of implementing multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy. Before further discussion of what ethnic studies is and how it is being implemented in American classrooms and identifying the impact it has on students, examination of why and how ethnic studies emerged as an educational concept is key. Originally ethnic studies surfaced from the social movements of the 1960s. The first formal ES course was created at San Francisco State University in 1968 (Dee & Penner, 2016), however, others argue that the idea of ES has a longer history tracing back to Black independent schools, tribal schools, and Freedom Schools (Begay, Dick, Estell, Estell, McCarty, & Sells, 1995; Lee, 1992; Sleeter, 2014). During the 1960s, educators, scholars, teachers, and students of color pressed school systems, both K-12 and higher education, and textbook companies to produce and offer curricula that reflected the diversity of the U.S. population (Sleeter, 2014). The Civil Rights Movement, coupled with liberation movements in Third World countries pushed for anti-racist, multicultural curriculum reform focused on decolonization and self-determination. This social and educational movement demanded the inclusion of issues of race, culture, power and identity forming ethnic studies (Acuña, 1996).

Traditionally, in the United States, ethnic studies programs have been more prevalent on college and university campuses than in high schools. The first and only high school department of its kind, Berkeley High School's African American Studies

program, has seen a decline in the last decade (Thornton, 2015). The program began in 1968 and grew into the 1990s, offering between 20 to 25 sections of humanities-based courses that included topics such as, the Trans-Atlantic slave-trade, history, literature, language, dance, drama, and spoken word. In 2002 the number of sections dropped to 11 and eventually the department was left with only one teacher and 5 sections. Budget cuts in the district have impacted the tradition of offering ethnic studies at Berkeley (Thornton, 2015).

In the 1990s and early 2000s the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) developed and implemented the Mexican American Raza Studies (MARS) program, which until 2010, was one of the few full-fledged high school ethnic studies programs in the U.S. Essential aspects of the program include: culturally relevant curriculum, curriculum centered within the pursuit of social justice, curriculum centered within the Mexican American/Chicana/o cultural and historical experience, and working towards the invoking of a critical consciousness within every student (Cambium Learning Audit, 2011). The MARS program was developed at the request of TUSD parents and other Tucson community members who resolutely embraced the program in the early 2000s (Gomez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014). University of Arizona faculty have conducted extensive research on various aspects of the MARS program and the impact on students. One study analyzed 1,587 students on performance on the Arizona Instrument of Measures and Standards (AIMS) and graduation rates for students that participated in the MARS courses. The findings of this quantitative study established that students in the MARS program had an increased likelihood of passing the AIMS at a rate of 64% in 2010 than their non-MARS peers (Cabrera et al., 2014). According

to the audit of MARS by Cambium Learning (2011) MARS participation was a significant, positive predictor for three of the four graduation cohorts (2008, 2009, and 2010). In 2009, students who took MARS courses were 51% more likely to graduate from high school than the comparison group.

Ethnic Studies Courses

The literature offers three possible models of how to present ethnic studies in schools. The three primary models are program approach, ethnic studies courses, and integrating ethnic studies into a history, social studies, or literature course.

Some schools and districts choose to implement ethnic studies courses rather than programs. California has had a long tradition of teaching ethnic studies curriculum in high school. Courses in California focus mostly on African American and Chicana/o studies curriculum (Acuña, 1996; Ogbar, 2004; Rojas, 2007). Ethnic studies courses have been successful at implementing rigorous curriculum that correlates with the Common Core Standards (Wells, 2014) particularly in English and history. For example, a unit has been created for 11th grade English classrooms on the Chicana/o Student Movement where students strive to answer, “How can we resist educational inequalities and achieve social justice?” This unit met the common core standards CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.3 (de los Rios, Lopez & Morrell, 2015).

Recently, due to grassroots community efforts supporting ethnic studies course access for high school students in California, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) passed a resolution to mandate a college-preparatory ethnic studies course as a high school requirement (de los Rios, Lopez & Morrell, 2015). Several school districts in California are pushing to offer ethnic studies courses in their schools (Au,

2007; Kalb, 2015). Jose Lara, El Rancho Unified school board member and coordinator for Ethnic Studies Now, asserts, “It’s an issue of civil rights. All students are robbed when the voices of students of color are not in our curriculum. When you see across the country people shouting out, ‘Black lives matter,’ the question is, what are our schools doing to address those issues? An answer is ethnic studies” (Kalb, 2015).

Erikson (1968) proposes that adolescents from 13 to 19 years of age, contemplate who they are and how they fit in society. High school is a crucial component of a student’s process of exploration of one’s ethnic and racial identity (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Some teachers may choose to build curriculum both in history and literature that takes a critical perspective also dealing with issues of race, class, gender, religion, and LGBTQ. However, it may not be a state or district requirement for teachers to develop a critical perspective in the course. Therefore, schools that do not offer ethnic studies courses as part of the core curriculum ignore this aspect of exploration for students of color as a standard in education and continue to perpetuate a Eurocentric culture making it difficult for some adolescents to feel a sense of belonging and fit. Through the implementation of ethnic studies approaches educators can provide support as students form their identities and contemplate their surroundings.

Further, Asian American studies courses are mostly limited to the college or university level. In high schools, it seems that Asian American studies is included in ethnic studies courses but not necessarily as a stand-alone course. This could change, as there is a movement in U.S. high schools toward offering more ethnic studies

courses particularly in California. This shift in education is taking hold in Portland, Oregon where high school students from the Asian Pacific Islander Leaders for the Liberation of Youth (ALLY) have demanded ethnic studies courses to be taught in all Portland high schools (Wang, 2016).

The Purpose of Ethnic Studies in Education

Decolonization and the elimination of racism are central to ethnic studies (ES) curricula (Halagao, 2010; Sleeter, 2014; Tintiango-Cubales, 2015). These two concepts support the foundations of the original social and political movements during the 1960s: The Third World Liberation Front Movement in San Francisco and other Third World liberation movements. Ethnic studies allow students to systematically critique the traumatic history of colonialism on native and Third World peoples, and move toward healing from the colonial trauma. Fanon's (1963) work stresses the importance of defining the physical act of freeing territory from external control of a colonizer and the freeing of the consciousness of native peoples caused by colonization. Decolonization is a liberatory process. Therefore, ethnic studies, also engages students in the action of moving toward self-determination, claiming of an intellectual identity, and active participation in the transformation of individuals, institutions, and communities (Tintiango-Cubales, Kohli, Sacramento, Henning, Agarwal-Rangnath, & Sleeter, 2014). Tintiango-Cubales et al., (2015) suggest that an interesting aspect of ES is that students of color newly exposed to ethnic studies have to unlearn the hegemonic Eurocentric culture that have been taught all their lives in school, therefore, stressing the importance of a decolonizing curriculum.

Included in the critique of colonization particularly as it relates to the experiences of native peoples and other oppressed groups in ethnic studies is the critique of capitalism and the free market system (Mohanty, 2003). This framework in ES allows students to examine systems and institutions that determine, control, and maintain their positionality over other groups. Halagao (2010) argues that decolonizing curriculum:

- Requires deep and critical thinking of one's history and culture focusing on concepts of diversity, multiculturalism, imperialism, oppression, revolution, and racism;
- Must also be feeling-based that allows mourning, dreaming, confusion, struggle, excitement, passion, empathy, to be sources of knowledge;
- Needs to create a space for formally colonized people to come together and unite;
- Teaches life skills that serve one personally and professionally; and
- Must have a social action component that models activism toward social change.

Ethnic studies pedagogy emphasizes anti-racism instruction and is a way of evaluating inequities in school systems through a critical lens that include examining race, ethnicity, and social class. Curriculum centralizes the stories of communities of color rather than adding perspectives of people of color to a Eurocentric narrative. This methodology legitimizes students of color and allows them to challenge and reframe dominant narratives about race, culture, and language and teaches them to

challenge racial oppression (Tintiango-Cubales et al., 2015). Ethnic studies is integral to a culturally responsive orientation of teaching.

Three aspects of culturally responsive teaching are also essential in ethnic studies: building upon students' experiences and perspectives, developing students' critical consciousness, and creating caring academic environments. Students' of color experiences, and others who take these courses, help them value cultural knowledge and develop a critical lens to question and understand their realities as they discover and recover their identities (Camangian, 2010). Ethnic studies pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching practices go hand in hand. One pedagogy supports the other and work in tandem to support students in schools. For instance, in ES classroom teachers implement an ethic of caring using culturally responsive teaching practices. Teachers can express caring through nurturing behavior, having high expectations, and respect for students. Because the discourse in ethnic studies classrooms can be challenging for students it is key that students feel cared for and safe.

Conclusion

Offering ethnic studies courses in all American high schools is a worthwhile solution in education for meeting the specific needs of students of color and for pursuing the closure of the opportunity gap in the United States. This option may not seem plausible for some Americans simply because they are not familiar with the history explaining how racially ethnic groups have been educated in the United States. The information identified in this research can put in perspective the current state of education for students of color and support the crucial need for multicultural education

and ethnic studies. Many educators are already positioning their teaching to a critical stance approach by incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices that support child-centered curriculum (Martell & Hashimoto-Martell, 2011). Research supports multicultural education instruction in all classrooms to increase the academic performance of students of color in this country (Au, 2011).

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was twofold: first to discover teacher and student perceptions of the impact of ethnic studies curriculum and second, to understand teacher methods and the nature of instruction of the curriculum in two public high schools. To fulfill these objectives the research had two strands, one focused on the teacher, the other focused on the student. The following research questions were addressed in the study:

1. What instructional approaches and materials are teachers selecting and implementing in an ethnic studies classroom?
 - a. What do teachers' instructional materials demonstrate about the integration of diverse perspectives?
 - b. In what ways do teachers incorporate ethnic studies methods, (as described by experts in the field), in their instruction?
2. In what ways are student perceptions and achievement influenced by the ethnic studies approaches incorporated in their American history or literature courses?
 - a. What do students' work products demonstrate about their level of engagement with and understanding of historical and contemporary issues for ethnic groups?
 - b. How do students perceive their learning and engagement when ethnic studies curriculum is incorporated?

- c. To what degree do students report the incorporation of ethnic studies approaches as significant to their classroom engagement and educational aspirations?

Rationale for Methodology

Data was collected at two different schools in one course at each school. The researcher used the collective case study (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995) method by observing and interviewing students in one ethnic studies U.S. history course and one African American literature course. A case study is a description of a unit of analysis of a bounded system (Stake, 1995), in this case an instructional unit in two ethnic studies courses within two different high schools. Creswell (2013) asserts that in a case study the researcher explores a bounded system through detailed data collection involving multiple sources of information, such as stakeholder perceptions, actions, and materials. Qualitative research is an effective method of studying participant perceptions and experiences in their daily lives (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1988). A collective case study methodology was selected for this research for the ability it has to reveal themes about a phenomenon that is otherwise inaccessible (Merriam, 1998). Furthermore, a collective case study of the two courses versus the study of just one course, provides increased triangulation in data collection and analysis. In addition, this is a case of two ethnic studies courses bounded by comparable populations, number of students of color, and number of students experiencing economic disadvantage.

Setting

This study took place in the Pacific Northwest in an urban school district with diversifying populations. The district is situated in Oregon. The on-time graduation rate for high school students in Oregon was 74% for the class of 2015, one of the worst ranking of any state in the United States (Oregon Statewide Report Card, 2015). The graduation rate for underrepresented students in Oregon is lower, at 68%. For African American students in the state the graduation rate is even lower: just 66% (Hammond, 2016).

District. Demographics for the district's student population show 39% economically disadvantaged, 16% students with disabilities, 16% English language learners, and 70 different languages spoken district-wide (Oregon Report Card, 2015). At the high school level (grades 9-12), student racial/ethnicity demographics were 53% White, 16% Latino, 12% Black/African American, 9% Asian, 7% Multi-Racial, 1% Native American/Alaska Native, and 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The race/ethnicity of teachers and staff in the district were 82% White and 18% teachers and staff of color.

Schools. The two high schools studied were selected based on the fact that the schools each offered an ethnic studies course. These schools are part of the same school district. A third course at a third school in the same school district was also being considered to participate in the study, however the teacher did not respond to the researcher's emails. Additionally, a fourth course was considered based on a recommendation by a university professor who had worked with this specific teacher in the past. The researcher contacted this teacher, but she was not teaching an ethnic studies course during that school year, consequently did not participate in the study.

The researcher investigated a total of two ethnic studies courses in two different high schools. One course was examined at Kahlo High School and one course at Huerta High School. These two schools are similar in student of color populations and the number of students experiencing economic disadvantage (Table 2). Demographics of each school participating in the study are described in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of Participating Schools in 2014-2015

School	Enrollment	Race/Ethnicity	Socioeconomic Status	Graduation Rate
Kahlo HS	1,664	27% Student of Color	12% economically disadvantaged	93% Overall
Huerta HS	1,441	33% Student of Color	20% economically disadvantaged	89% Overall

Kahlo HS. The classroom demographics at Kahlo HS include female ($n = 18$) and male ($n = 4$) students for a total ($n = 22$) freshmen in the Ethnic Studies U.S. history course. Students identified as Asian ($n = 3$), African American ($n = 1$), Biracial/Multiracial ($n = 1$), Jewish ($n = 1$), Latino ($n = 2$), and White ($n = 14$).

Huerta HS. The classroom demographics at Huerta HS include female ($n = 8$) and male ($n = 10$) students for a total ($n = 21$) seniors in the African American literature course, three students did not self-identify. Students identified as Asian ($n = 1$), African American ($n = 5$), Biracial/Multiracial ($n = 5$), Latino ($n = 3$), and White ($n = 5$).

Participants

Teachers. Teachers ($n = 2$) were selected and asked to participate based on evidence from the district and high school directory that they teach an ethnic studies course. There were a total of four potential teachers who could have participated in this research. The researcher contacted a total of four teachers via email to inquire if they were interested and willing to participate in the study. Teachers were also selected based on positive recommendations from university and district educators who had worked with the teachers in the past and on their willingness to participate in the study.

Students. From the students ($n = 43$) enrolled in the two courses, five from each course were selected to participate in semi-structured individual interviews utilizing purposive sampling (Patton, 2002). To ensure voices from students of color were included, most of the students were selected based on race/ethnicity and on the students' willingness to participate, except for one student who identified as White. The researcher approached specific students in person to request interview participation. At that time, the race/ethnicity of the students was unknown. Considering the large numbers of White students enrolled in both schools, I made an exception to include the White student in the interview. The total sample of student of color participants in the study was 21 of 43. The percentage of the students of color enrolled in the two courses is 49% compared to an average of 30% total student of color enrollment at the participating schools. The researcher invited 10 total students to participate in the interviews at the end of the unit being observed. Table 3 describes teacher and student participant characteristics.

Table 3

Teacher and Student Interview Participant Characteristic Information

Demographics	Teachers	Students
Number	2	9*
Gender		
Female	1	6
Male	1	3
Race/Ethnicity		
African American		1
Bi-racial		2
Latino/Hispanic		4
Multi-racial		1
White	2	1

*Note: One of the students at Huerta HS dropped out of the interview process.

Data Collection

Data was collected in a variety of forms to create triangulation and ensure credibility. Data was collected in the fall of 2016 over a four-month (September, October, November, and December) period. The observations were conducted during the last two weeks of October and interviews were held during the first two weeks of November. The teachers shared student artifacts with the researcher in December. Transcription of the data occurred in November and December.

Research question 1: Teacher implementation. Each teacher's implementation of ethnic studies approaches in two classrooms: Ethnic Studies U.S. history at Kahlo HS and African American literature at Huerta HS was investigated during one unit of instruction. The unit in the Ethnic Studies U.S. history course was Foundations of the United States and African American identity through literature in the African American literature course. This data provided evidence of, the ethnic

studies materials and instruction that teachers implemented in the classroom. From the unit, four forms of data were gathered: instructional materials, observations, interviews and student work products. All instructional materials were collected to demonstrate the content-focus of the instructional unit. These include: photographs of relevant sections of any textbooks, primary sources or other supplementary resources used during the unit, the course syllabi, and teacher-created materials, handouts, and PowerPoints. The teachers shared the materials with the researcher in class during the observations and via Google Docs and email. Although, the study occurred during one unit of analysis, other supporting materials were included in the data collection and analysis because some materials were spontaneously utilized during the unit lessons and activities. This provided the researcher additional insight of the overall teaching process.

Classroom observations. Classroom observations were conducted during the fall of 2016 where the researcher observed three consecutive days of instruction based on teacher guidance as to which days of teaching and learning would be ideal to observe based on the level of student interaction during the unit in each classroom. Teacher and student interactions were observed and documented using a classroom observational protocol created by the researcher (Appendix A). The observer documented physical setting, participants, activities, interactions, conversations, and the researcher's own reactions to what was observed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Both descriptive notes and reflective notes were collected based on classroom activities and participant interactions made during the observation. During the classroom observations, the researcher was a nonparticipant observer (Creswell, 2013).

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews with teachers were conducted before and after the conclusion of the observation period. The researcher went into the first meeting, scheduled with the teacher, to share the researcher's background and to describe the details of the study while creating a comfortable rapport with the teachers. This was an informal interview consisting of three interview questions (Appendix B) that helped to develop and better to understand how the teacher began teaching ethnic studies courses, perceptions and expectations. This interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The second interview was conducted as soon after the last observation as practicable. In one course the second interview occurred on the last day of the final observation and in the other course the interview was conducted on the following day after the final observation. To increase validity and credibility the researcher administered a review of the teacher interview questions to a group of graduate students in the doctorate of education program. In response to the interview questions, the teachers shared their process for collecting and creating instructional materials to plan for the unit and lessons demonstrating ethnic studies approaches. During the second interview, teachers were asked to reflect on their general instructional approach (Appendix B). This interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The teacher interview responses were audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher. Sample interview questions for teachers are listed below:

1. Did you receive any ethnic studies training in your pre-service teaching program? If so, please describe the experience(s).

2. How are instructional materials selected for your classroom? How much input or autonomy do you have in curriculum choice? What are the content standards?
3. What are essential skills of teaching ethnic studies?
4. Please describe the overall environment of your classroom. How do you help create this atmosphere?
5. How do you build upon students' prior knowledge, experiences and or cultural backgrounds in your teaching?

Research question 2: Student response. To understand how students engaged in and learned from the unit of instruction and their perceptions of the influence of this approach on their current and future learning, three data forms were gathered: completed student work products related to the unit being observed, a short open-ended handwritten survey, and student interviews. Student work products were collected for evaluation. The teachers shared student work with the researcher as PDF attachments and in Google Docs. The researcher collaborated with the teacher to determine which student artifacts to collect and place in a digital folder. The student work in both classes was written during the unit. Student artifacts were examined and evaluated using an authentic assessment protocol adapted from the work of Newmann, Secada, and Wehlage (1995) using Sleeter's (2014) ethnic studies themes. Student work was evaluated using a 5-point rating scale to identify their level of engagement with and understanding of the historical and contemporary issues for ethnic groups. The assessment protocol and a complete description of the scoring can be seen in Appendix K. Three different assignments were evaluated. First, writing assignments

using the point, evidence, explanation, link (PEEL) paragraph method discussing selected critical race theory readings were examined, second, personal narrative essays were evaluated, and third, essays written from the perspective of Native American tribes during the time of the Removal Act of the 1830s were assessed.

Next, at the beginning of the first classroom observation, the researcher asked all students in the course to complete a short open-ended question survey to gain student perceptions of their learning and experiences in the course (Appendix J). The researcher distributed the survey to the students and recorded the results in an Excel spreadsheet. Next, the researcher interviewed five students from Kahlo HS and four students from Huerta HS individually during their lunch hour with each interview lasting approximately 20 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed utilizing denaturalized transcription guidelines (MacLean, Mechthild, & Alma, 2004). Individual student interview questions were aimed at learning about the impact that ethnic studies approaches have on their education (Appendix C). Sample interview questions for students are listed below:

1. What is your perception of race relations at your school? To what extent has this class influenced your answer?
2. How do you define the term multiple perspectives? Provide an example.
3. How do you define the term social justice? In what ways, can you work toward social justice at your school? In the United States?
4. Describe how you get along with your ethnic studies teacher. How does this compare to how you get along with other teachers at your school?

5. Is your ethnic studies class taught differently compared to your traditional social studies, history, or literature classes? Explain how using an example.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was interpreted using both inductive and deductive coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher used Excel spreadsheets and Word documents to store and organize data. Further data analysis details are provided in regards to each research question next.

Teacher implementation. First, the researcher evaluated the instructional materials for each course using an instructional materials assessment form created by the researcher to evaluate teacher approaches to ethnic studies curriculum (Appendix D). The criteria included on the instructional material assessment are based on Sleeter's (2014) characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy. The researcher examined the entire assignments and coding once against Sleeter's ethnic studies themes and again for evidence supporting inductive themes. Second, the data from the classroom observational protocol form (Appendix A) was transcribed and aggregated by observation and by teacher into one file, then coded for evidence utilizing the criteria from the instructional materials assessment form. Third, responses to the teacher interview questions were coded using deductive analysis based on Sleeter's (2014) criteria (Appendix E) as well as inductively, to capture concepts and themes that were not encompassed in the deductive codes. A preliminary list of codes containing theory-driven codes and definitions was created by the researcher and was utilized as a guide to help analyze interview data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). In this case

the codes were derived and developed from the theory guiding this research, such as critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), Authentic Caring (Valenzuela, 1999), and Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stancic, 2012) and ethnic studies themes that emerge in Sleeter's (2014) work. Finally, the researcher conducted an inductive data analysis, that did not include utilizing the coding list or definitions, evidence was tabulated each time the theme was supported in the data collected.

Table 4 describes example commentaries made by participants in the study that the researcher tabulated to help label the inductive themes. The number of times the researcher applied a label to support the themes that emerged from the data are indicated in the section describing the theme.

Table 4

Description of Commentaries That Helped Label the Inductively Derived Themes

Open-Ended Themes	Commentaries
Caring and creating classroom community	“At the beginning of the year we do a lot of community building work around understanding and acknowledging where different people are coming from and why they have opinions that they have.”
Academic rigor	“It’s ok that we have different opinions, and build an essay that has evidence and a clear argument that is defensible.”
Student centered	“In this class particularly it’s definitely getting the students to come to the understanding themselves, rather than me to preach to them...”
Critical Race Theory	“I’m not one to sugar coat any of that because when you start covering up our history we’re actually doing White folks a favor.”
Discussion-based instruction	“I have taken traditional English classes and this is so much more discussion-based and like group oriented and the entire class is involved in the discussion and [the teacher] is involved in the discussion.”
De-centering Whiteness	“Ethnic studies is explicitly teaching stories of color, viewpoints of color and challenging the dominant White narrative.”

Next, to analyze the ways in which the teachers in this study incorporated ethnic studies methods in their instruction the researcher utilized a list of codes. These codes were created based on Sleeter’s (2014) themes constructed to show evidence of ethnic studies in curriculum and instruction (Appendix E). Data gathered from teacher interviews, classroom observations, and course syllabi and lessons will provide evidence of ethnic studies methods implemented in the classrooms and will be shared

in the next section. Table 5 describes the commentaries that helped support the significance of the codes to the study.

Table 5

Description of Commentaries That Support the Sleeter (2014) Inspired Codes

Codes	Commentaries
Origin of knowledge	“I can learn about that [racial perspective] through literature and I can learn about that through hearing what people have to say in the class.”
Historical U.S. colonialism and contemporary colonialism	“Even when you learn about Columbus... you don’t learn about all the terrible things he did. You just learn that, um, that he was pretty cool and that he discovered it, even though there were already people living there.”
Historical construction of race	“I really like the class because it helps me put in perspective what race is, what racism is, if reverse racism is real.”
Institutional racism	“My AP English class last year had only one Black student in it. I’m mixed, so my dad is half Black, but by looking into the classroom, I fall into the sea of White students and I did advise as part Black, but by looking at the classroom there’s only one dark skinned student in the class, which says something.”
Navigation of racism	“Since ethnic studies I’ve learned to like kind of speak up about when I hear like racial slurs around me because when before I didn’t, I just let them slide and I would kind of just like ignore it. But now when I hear them I like stand up and say hey, that’s not right and like tell them the history of the racial slur they’re saying.”

Student response. First, student work was evaluated using the authentic assessment protocol illustrated in Appendix K as adapted by Newmann et al., (1995). Student work was scored using a 5-point scale. The authentic assessment protocol rubric utilized Sleeter’s ethnic studies themes for evaluation. Some of the rubric

descriptors include: Examination of U.S. historical and contemporary colonialism, historical construction of race, and taking action in the community. The researcher coded the assignments to compare student understanding and lesson outcomes with ethnic studies' goals and Sleeter's (2014) themes. One standard for authentic achievement in the guide focused on student evidence of value beyond the classroom and connections made to the world, which directly relate to Sleeter's (2014) themes. Second, responses to student individual interview questions listed in Appendix C were also coded using deductive analysis based on Sleeter's (2014) criteria (Appendix E) as well as inductively, to capture concepts and themes that were not encompassed in the deductive codes. Table 6 describes example commentaries that helped label the inductive themes as significant.

Table 6

Description of Commentaries That Label the Inductive Themes

Themes	Commentaries
Equity/racial lens	"I didn't really look at things necessarily through like a racial lens or perspective before going more in depth in this class."
Microaggressions and racism	"Wow, you're really pretty for a Mexican." "People say it [racial slurs] a lot around me. It just makes me really uncomfortable."
Relevance to student interests and passions	"It's all wildly relevant towards what we're trying to learn. That's like the most significant thing to me about this course."

To increase the validity of the findings in the study the researcher asked a colleague familiar with the research to conduct a peer examination of the raw data. The researcher provided her colleague a set of blind teacher and student interview transcriptions for review. The researcher intentionally had her colleague score without any preparation to see if the content themes surfaced (Patton, 2002). The colleague commented on the data to assess whether the findings were plausible (Merriam, 1998). The researcher and colleague engaged in several discussions regarding the process of study, the emergent findings, and possible interpretations. This debriefing was important to provide an external check of the research process (Merriam, 1998).

In addition, the researcher has created an Ethnic Studies Model (Appendix F) that can be used as a guide in the creation, development, and implementation of ethnic studies courses. The overall themes of the research findings were cross-referenced with the Ethnic Studies Model to examine differences or similarities in content development and implementation. This model was utilized to capture the presence of the main themes in the data collectively. Three main themes in this process are listed below:

- Pedagogy - problem-posing education, investigation and problem solving, critical thinking and critical consciousness, authentic caring and care-based education, students as inquirers guiding the education process, races are society invented categories derived from Critical Race Theory;
- Curriculum - examination of U.S. colonialism historically and currently, examination of historical construction of race and how people navigate racism,

examination of struggles for liberation, studying one's community, both historic and contemporary; and

- Student Action - taking action in the community, pursuit of social justice, better understanding of the role of discussion of race and ethnicity and enhancing consciousness and inter-race relations, make strides toward political and systemic change.

Role of the Researcher

I am originally from Arizona and lived there during the passage of House Bill 2281 in 2010 banning ethnic studies courses in K-12 education in the state. This ban was aimed at the Mexican American Raza Studies Program in Tucson, Arizona. I view the ban on ethnic studies as a direct attack on Latino students and families living and going to school in the state.

My role as an educator included teaching in the same district the study was conducted. I taught middle school Spanish at Guevara School and was a member of the Equity Committee and the Collaborative, Action, Research, for Equity, CARE Team at the school. Based on my experiences as a teacher of color in the K-12 system for over seven years serving diverse populations, there are potential personal biases that I brought to this study. It is easy to make assumptions about the participants and the schools where the study took place. It is important to be objective in reviewing and analyzing data. Bracketing (Drew, 2004; Gearing, 2004) is a method for self-reflection and self-evaluation that was used as a guide for consideration of ethical issues related to research and data analysis. Starks and Trinidad (2007) explain that the researcher "must be honest and vigilant about her own perspective, pre-existing

thoughts and beliefs, and developing hypotheses . . . engage in the self-reflective process of “bracketing”, whereby they recognize and set aside (but do not abandon) their a priori knowledge and assumptions, with the analytic goal of attending to the participants’ accounts with an open mind’ (p. 1376). In this study the researcher used the bracketing method by keeping a journal during the data collection and analysis phases exploring possible assumptions held by the researcher as it relates to the researcher and participant personal value systems (Hanson, 1994). The researcher also incorporated codes based on Sleeter’s ethnic studies themes supporting the systematic nature of data analysis. In addition, to increase validity of my perspective of the study’s findings, an independent peer examination was conducted by a colleague. This allowed for more congruency in the researcher’s interpretation of the data.

Institutional Review Board

Participants, both teachers and students, were asked to sign teacher informed consent and student assent forms (Appendices G and I) prior to participating in the study. Parents or guardians were also asked to sign a parent informed consent form prior to participating in the study (Appendix H). The form indicated that participating in the study is voluntary and that the participant can decline participation at any time. Student participants under the age of 18 were required to obtain parent informed consent to participate in the study. Participants were not placed under any undue risk or harm. Information about the study was shared freely and openly with participants. They were informed that interview responses and observation field notes will be kept confidential and only shared in aggregate with participating parties. Assigning aliases to each participant and building protected the confidentiality of individuals. Collected

data and transcriptions were stored in a password-protected external hard drive along with any audio recordings for security purposes.

Limitations

Although I tried to include the investigation of several ethnic studies (ES) courses in the study, this was not possible due to the limited number of ES courses offered in the region. This study investigated two ethnic studies courses in the Pacific Northwest, thus limiting the transferability to other ethnic studies courses across the country. Ideally, this study would be conducted over multiple years as a longitudinal study to provide more evidence to determine the impact ethnic studies curriculum and approaches has on student academic achievement. In addition, this study would include more observations and participant interviews to provide a more in-depth look at the impact ES courses have on students, particularly students of color. The purpose of this research was exploratory, offering insights that can inform future research, but, as with any exploratory study, it was constrained in its scope. This study was conducted in the first term of the school year with observations in October and the post-observation student interviews in November. The timing of the study was an issue because it was difficult to see the impact when the students have been in class only a few weeks. Nevertheless, regardless of the timing of the study, rich and meaningful data was collected considering the classes had only been in session for a few weeks.

Summary

To conclude, this research proposed to examine ethnic studies curriculum and teacher choices through the lens of student and teacher perceptions of the impact it has

made on student learning, as well as my observations and analysis of student work.

The design and methodology of this qualitative research study also intended to understand the effectiveness of teacher approaches to implement ethnic studies curriculum. The research questions were listed along with a detailed description of the setting and those participating in the study.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The purpose of this collective case study was to investigate student and teacher perceptions of ethnic studies (ES) curriculum implemented in high schools. This study was structured first to, discover teacher and student perceptions of the impact of ethnic studies curriculum and second, to understand teacher methods and strategies and the nature of instruction of the curriculum in two urban public high schools.

The research has two strands-one focused on the teacher, the other focused on the student. The results of this study include an extensive description detailing life in each classroom as observed by the researcher. A brief profile of the teachers explaining how each instructor came to teach ethnic studies will be shared. The findings are presented in the order of each of the research questions.

Classroom Overview

There were several similarities observed in each classroom such as a row of windows on one of the walls allowing natural light to enter the rooms and an agenda of the day's events and activities planned on the whiteboard. The desks were organized similarly in each of the classrooms in this study. In both classrooms, the desks were arranged in two semi-circle rows allowing the students to face each other during class time. The students sat in individual desks. The teacher media desk was arranged in the center of the room facing the screen. In each classroom, the teachers were engaged in casual conversations with students prior to the start of class. There was a combination of small chit chat among some students and others sat quietly at their desk.

Kahlo HS. The unit of instruction that was observed during this study at Kahlo HS was Foundations of the United States. It's important to note that the previous unit of instruction earlier in the school-year was Critical Race Theory. The students were familiar with the foundations of Critical Race Theory and race and power in the U.S. During two of the observations, the class was analyzing the Constitution through a racialized lens.

Once I settled in the back corner of Greg's classroom on the first day of observation next to the windows at Kahlo HS, I saw a music video playing on the screen as part of his PPT for the day's lesson. The music was by an indie pop Australian band called Architecture in Helsinki that I had never heard of before. As students were settling in, I observed Greg asking them questions about their weekend and encouraging discussion about their lives outside of school. I had learned during our first meeting that Greg does not have his own classroom at the school this year. He rotates from room to room depending on the course he teaches. This made it difficult to get a feeling for Greg's influence on the physical setting of the classroom. However, even though he does not have his own classroom, he was still able to build a sense of community.

During the observation that day students participated in a Constitutional Convention simulation, that included individuals that would not have been at the Convention, such as farmers and slaves. This activity provided students with the opportunity to discuss U.S. history from unheard diverse perspectives. I observed students quiet down and listen intently to the teacher's instructions for the Convention

protocol they needed to follow. The students moved comfortably about the room engaging in the role play.

The students worked in small groups comprised of farmers, bankers, workers, slaves, and plantation owners. For example, I observed students walk up to each other and begin discussion of the questions listed on their handouts. One student in the role of the plantation owner trying to build an alliance with a student in the role of a banker said, “You vote for slavery. I’ll vote for the bonds.” Once he agreed, the student in the role of a banker replied, “I feel like such a bad person.” I observed the teacher walk around to each group to check-in on their progress. Toward the end of the class the students convened to vote on three resolutions, slavery, voting rights, and the establishment of a free market system.

Huerta HS. The unit of instruction that was observed during this study at Huerta HS was an exploration of African American identity as found in Ta-Nehisi Coates’ (2015) extended essay *Between the World and Me*. This unit of study was identity-driven and sought to make connections between the author’s identity and student self-identity. Previously in the school-year the students had examined code-switching and African American vernacular.

At Huerta HS, Cathy ushered me to a table in the back corner of the room away from the windows. I was not the only other adult in the room that day during the first observation of Cathy’s classroom. Cathy was being observed by her vice principal and a professor, Dr. Mani, from a nearby university partnering with the school on the dual enrollment offering of the African American literature course. I looked around and noticed the classroom’s extensive library of books. As I took a

closer look, I could see the diversity of the literature stacked on the shelves. Most of the books were by African American and Latino authors, such as *Passing* by Nella Larsen, *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo*, by Sandra Cisneros, and *So Far From God* by Ana Castillo. On the wall, next to where I sat hung several student drawings of the teacher, one wearing a super hero cape, and drawings of other strong looking women. One in particular stood out--a flawless depiction of a dark skinned Muslim girl wearing a subdued green hijab over her head drawn in colored pencil. Later, I asked Cathy about the drawings, and she said they started out as part of classroom project about strong women, then students continued to create other drawings including the ones of her that she posted on this wall.

During the observation students and teacher followed previously agreed upon classroom norms. Cathy shared during the interview that in the first few days of the year the class assembled a bill of rights living document that includes protocols that the students and teacher agree to observe when in the classroom. Some students walked freely in and out of the classroom to take care of personal needs. This caused minimal distraction. Furthermore, Cathy had set up a mini café in one corner of her classroom, providing an electric teapot for boiling water and a variety of tea bags and hot chocolate packets for students to drink throughout the day. Students quietly came in and out of that space in the classroom to fix themselves a cup of hot tea or cocoa.

Even with the added pressure of multiple observers in the classroom that day, Cathy seemed calm and confident as she explained the structure of the activity, which was a Socratic style seminar discussion. Throughout the discussion Cathy and Dr.

Mani, a professor at a nearby university also observing the class that day, presented the students with questions and commentary related to the course reading for that unit. I observed most students engaged in asking and answering questions about Ta-Nehisi Coates' (2015) *Between the World and Me*.

The materials selected in the African American literature course invited students to make connections and conclusions based on readings with both historical and contemporary contexts. Although this was a literature course the teacher believed in teaching an interdisciplinary curriculum, specifically treating history and place almost as its own character in the literature. For instance, when reading the novel *Passing* (Larsen, 1929), the teacher would discuss important historical themes pertinent to African Americans in Harlem in the 1920s. Students were observed discussing *Between the World and Me* (Coates, 2015) in class during the observations, and they shared how easily they related to the themes in the novel. The author described similar issues currently impacting the students in the study. Reading both historical and contemporary novels in the course allowed students to use the material to help make sense of their role in society. During the second classroom observation, students were able to share their thoughts about the Saturday Night Live clip "Black Jeopardy" and the implications that the video has on their community.

In addition, during one of the visits at Huerta High School the teacher implemented a Socratic style seminar activity. The classroom was set up in a semi-circle with students facing each other. The teacher sat toward the back of the classroom outside of the semi-circle listening to the student discussion and making minimal commentary. I observed students discuss controversial issues making the

seminar a popular activity according to student responses later discussed in this chapter.

Teacher Profiles

The teacher profiles, sourced from interview one, help to provide context of the courses and how the teachers came to teach ethnic studies. Both of the teachers in this study identify as White. The teachers are new to the teaching profession; Greg is in his third year at Kahlo High School and Cathy in her second year at Huerta High School.

Greg studied African American history in college and since then has been interested in how race and ethnicity play a role in the United States. The university he attended for pre-service training focused on race and racism. He shared in the interview that he worked on a project that focused on the Ethnic Studies Ban in Arizona in one of his social studies courses. He received district and school race and equity professional development that he then implemented in his classroom, nevertheless he had not received any formal training on how to specifically teach ethnic studies (ES). The ES course at Kahlo HS was created a few years ago by two other long-time educators at the school. Greg utilized previously developed instructional material posted in a shared Google doc precisely for this course.

Cathy completed a considerable amount of social justice work in her graduate programs. She has a Master's in Education, which focused on language acquisition and cultural awareness. Cathy also has a Master's in English, where she studied Critical Race Theory (CRT), African American literature, and Gender Queer literature. From the beginning, she wanted to teach high school, and states, "I really love this age

group, so much fun.” In addition to academic training, Cathy received lots of culturally responsive classroom training through the district and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. The AVID program seeks to assist underachieving middle and high school students to help prepare them for college.

In an effort to provide high-quality educational experiences for their students, the teachers in this study have similar hopes for what they would like their students to take away from the ethnic studies classes. First, Cathy hopes her students are able to empathize and connect with others without fear; Cathy told me that she told students, “You’re [students] gonna encounter people that are different from you or the same as you. How do you have those common stories or those common histories, or different ones. If we can demystify language, demystify narrative that we hear about different groups of people, that’s what I want them to walk away with.” Second, they hope students take away a level of comfort and ability to talk about race. Greg commented that his White students “never ever really had to think about this” and that ethnic studies is equally beneficial to White students as it is for students of color. Third, the teachers hope for students to leave their classes having heard from as many different ethnic/racial voices as possible from history and literature. Cathy stated, “Short stories get a lot of different voices in them and a lot of different gender representations.” Lastly, Cathy hopes for her students to learn to think critically with the ability to see the world through an equity lens and shared in interview one, “to be able to express themselves both with written language and to realize power structures in language and in society.” Both teachers commented on the importance of being

able to thoughtfully communicate with others when participating in classroom discussions and in their communities.

Research Question 1: Ethnic Studies Instruction and Materials

The investigation of Research Question 1: “What instructional approaches and materials are teachers selecting and implementing in an ethnic studies classroom?” consisted of exploring two sub-questions: (a) “What do teachers’ instructional materials demonstrate about the integration of diverse perspectives?” and (b) “In what ways do teachers incorporate ethnic studies methods, (as described by experts in the field), in their instruction?” The teachers shared with the researcher instructional materials used to implement lessons via interviews, observations, syllabi, and materials shared in Google docs. The instructional materials utilized in their courses listed in Table 7 demonstrate the integration of several distinct voices disrupting the Eurocentric dominance in today’s public school curriculum. Although, the study occurred during one unit of analysis, other supporting materials were included in the data collection and analysis because some materials were referenced from previous lessons and connections were made to materials that were going to be utilized in future activities. The instructional materials provided the students an array of diverse perspectives.

Table 7

*Sample of Instructional Materials Utilized in Ethnic Studies Courses at Kahlo High**School and Huerta High School*

Instructional Materials	Ethnic Studies U.S History Kahlo High School	African American Literature Huerta High School
Books/Novels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria (Tatum, 1999) • A Young People’s History of the United States (Zinn, 2009) • A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America (Takaki, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Norton Anthology of African American Literature • Their Eyes Were Watching God • Passing (Larsen, 1929) • Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Douglass, 1845) • Between the World and Me (Coates, 2015)
Short Stories/Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Lives Matter blog and articles • Dakota Access Pipeline Protest articles • Native Lives Matter publications • Race Stories (Jesus Colon, Jennifer Wang, and Susie Phipps) • Critical Race Theory Packet • Employers Reply to Racial Names (National Bureau of Economic Research) • White Fragility (DiAngelo,) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading for Black Presence (Toni Morrison/Thomas Jefferson) • Vernacular in Norton Anthology • Suite for Ebony and Phonics (Rickford, 1997) • Characteristics of Negro Expression (Hurston, 1934) • The Negro in American Literature (Braithwaite, 1925)
Book Passages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism for Whites Only? (Tatum, 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Jacobs, 1861) • Self-Reliance (Whitfield, 1841) • Ain’t I a Woman (Truth, 1851)
Video Clips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race: The Power of an Illusion • Zianna Oliphant speaks at Charlotte City Council Meeting • Looney Tunes Cartoons • Proud to Be, Daily Show clip on Redskins fans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barack Obama Speeches • Video “Articulate” • Saturday Night Live clip of Black Jeopardy
Movies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Pan “What Makes the Red Man Red?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precious Knowledge

Both teachers incorporated a variety of resources ranging from novels, short stories, and articles, to video clips, documentaries, and movies. In the Ethnic Studies U.S. History course students learn about U.S. History from diverse perspectives shared in *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* (Takaki, 2012) and *A Young People's History of the United States* (Zinn, 2009). Students also examine current blogs and articles from the Black Lives Matter and Native Lives Matter movements as well as video clips from the Daily Show about cultural appropriation exhibited by the National Football League (NFL). Similarly, the African American literature course demonstrates the integration of diverse perspectives by studying literature from various timeframes in history and the present. Examples range from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Douglass, 1845) and *Ain't I A Woman* (Truth, 1851) to *Between the World and Me* (Coates, 2015) and the Saturday Night Live clip of "Black Jeopardy."

The data sources from this study that were analyzed to investigate the ethnic studies approaches incorporated by the teachers include classroom observation notes, student and teacher interview responses, open-ended survey responses, and student work products. Six inductive themes emerged from teacher and student data: caring and creating classroom community, academic rigor, student-centered, Critical Race Theory as a foundation for the course, discussion-based instruction, and de-centering Whiteness. The next section will examine these themes to answer part of Research Question 1. In addition, data coded deductively supporting Sleeter's themes will be discussed.

Caring and creating classroom community. An ethic of care on behalf of the teachers was observed six times during the visits and in the interview responses. This observation helped affirm the selection of this theme, caring and creating classroom community. Evidence of students recognizing that their ethnic studies teachers cared for them, and held them to high standards also emerged in the study. David at Huerta HS shared in the interview that he feels closer to his ethnic studies teacher than other teachers. During one of the classroom observations a student commented about the ethnic studies course, “There is a huge separation at the school and it’s good to have someone to go to, a safe space.” Several students from this study commented on how helpful and supportive the teachers were.

Both teachers focus their time at the beginning of the school year to build community in their ethnic studies courses. Each teacher described facilitating a series of interactive activities that allow students to get to know each other and engage with each other. Cathy asked her students to write an autobiography in the form of a blank verse poem by listing five things from seven different categories. One example is to list five things that you lost, it can be things or it can be people. Cathy commented that she learned so much more about the students than using other activities; she states, “It’s so much more intimate in a way and they don’t really expect me to read it that way, but I learn so much about their families and sense of goals, achievement, gain. I can pinpoint places where students can be pulled. Where I can tailor my instruction to them.” The goal expressed by both teachers is to create a community of learners. Greg shared, “At the beginning of the year we do a lot of community building work around understanding and acknowledging where different people are coming from and

why they have opinions that they have.” During one of my visits, I observed a group of four boys walk into Cathy’s class to have lunch. I asked Cathy about them and she said they’ve been eating lunch in her room everyday most of the school year. She said that only one of the boys is in her class and that she does not know the others very well. Cathy provided a welcoming atmosphere in her classroom.

Academic rigor. Along with examining race in education and in society, ethnic studies courses focus on meeting curriculum and content standards. There is a strong emphasis on academic rigor in ethnic studies courses and the approaches utilized. I evaluated 15 student artifacts using the authentic assessment protocol rubric that affirmed the rigorous nature of the courses. Three different assignments were evaluated. First, writing assignments using the point, evidence, explanation, link (PEEL) paragraph method discussing selected critical race theory readings were examined, second, personal narrative essays were evaluated, and third, essays written from the perspective of Native American tribes during the time of the Removal Act of the 1830s were assessed. The authentic assessment rubric helped to examine the characteristics of the student work. One standard for academic achievement in the guide focused on student value beyond the classroom and connections made to the world. The artifacts evaluated in the study were completed by nine different students. The artifacts received either a four or five ($n = 9$) and were able to show evidence of connection to personal experiences and recognize connections between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom. Table 8 describes how the student artifacts were evaluated utilizing the codes inspired from Sleeter’s themes.

Table 8

Evaluation of Student Artifacts Utilizing Sleeter's Ethnic Studies Themes

Sleeter's (2014) themes	Examples	Score
Examination of U.S. colonialism	The foundation of this article's argument is that after suffering from decades of oppression and discrimination, people of color have a right to equal career and education opportunities (PEEL Essay).	5
Examination of historical construction of race and how people navigate racism	They [code switchers] have the advantage of being able to use different dialects to connect with different groups of people at different times, so they can use Standard English when working directly with their superiors or those that connect best with this dialect, and their own dialect with others who connect best with that (Personal Narrative).	5, 4
Examination of struggles for liberation	If we don't give Black people more opportunities for advancement, then the concept of equal human rights, regardless of race, is almost inconsequential (PEEL Essay).	5
Taking action in the community	It has compelled me to go to protests and to speak up when I see or hear something that is not right (Personal Narrative).	5
Pursuit of social justice	In order to stop what is going on people need to fight back. I've experienced the fight for justice and freedom through the Black Lives Matter movement, it shows others care and want a changed world (Personal Narrative).	5, 4
Understanding of race and ethnicity and better inter-race relations	When I allow someone to teach me and listen to their thoughts and ideas I know I will have something new to take in and process it in how I see the world. With the effort to make a change and great teachings about race for the generations to come there will be a better understanding about race for all (Personal Narrative).	5
Make strides toward political and systemic change	The experiences we have had over the past year as a result of my brother speaking up have made me realize that if we do not have more voices like my brother's, people will not have the opportunity to think about different perspectives other than the conventionally white normed experiences that dominate our society (Personal Narrative).	5

At Huerta HS, the ethnic studies course is marked as a dual credit course with the high school and a nearby university. The teachers ensure that students are well prepared for future English or history courses and provide equal access and opportunity for all students to be able to take the courses. Cathy stated in the interview that she incorporates scaffolding and differentiation strategies in instruction. She shared, “I didn’t want to shut this class off for kids on modified diploma, for kids with different learning needs, and for people who don’t think themselves academic. I want access to be here for them, for all kids, but still be able to do this upper level stuff.” Further, Cathy builds on students’ analytical abilities to learn more and tackle difficult concepts together. She said, “It’s ok that we have different opinions, and build an essay that has evidence and a clear argument that is defensible.” In the Ethnic Studies U.S. history course, Greg commented on how students are expected to read and differentiate between primary and secondary sources and to plot the main idea of a primary source and secondary source and write about them.

Student-centered. The data provided several examples of a student-centered instructional approach in both ethnic studies courses. Both teachers affirmed that a student-centered approach is key in an ethnic studies course. During the classroom observations and student interviews seven students commented on how they appreciated being able to choose essay and assignment topics. Octavia said in the interview, “I like that we have discussions about our thoughts and I think that’s really effective in comprehending ideas that can be difficult.” The teachers build on student’s prior knowledge and see students as an authority in their own learning. The teachers focus on drawing on the wisdom of the room and what the students bring with

them to school. Greg shared, “In this class particularly, it’s definitely getting the students to come to the understanding themselves, rather than me to preach to them, only when I need to, but really letting them have more of a guided discussion amongst themselves to where they can share ideas and their thoughts with the group.” During one of my visits to the ES U.S. history course at Kahlo HS, I observed students engaged in a Socratic style seminar sharing information and concepts based on topics they selected themselves as part of the assignment.

Critical Race Theory as a foundation for the course. Several student comments from the open-ended survey conducted during the observations helped affirm Critical Race Theory as a significant theme with 18 out of 43 student responses stating that it is influential to their education. David commented in the interview, “[ethnic studies] educated me more on race theory and helped me be more racially aware.” Both teachers stated that teaching Critical Race Theory (CRT) was the foundation for their ethnic studies courses. Greg draws heavily from books such as, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* (Tatum, 1997), *A Different Mirror for Young People* (Takaki, 2012), and *A Young People’s History of the United States* (Zinn, 2009). Greg also brought in several primary documents written by people of color, such as, publications from groups like Black Lives Matter and Native Lives Matter. Cathy sends out parent permission slips to make students and parents aware of the difficult content that will be discussed in this course. Cathy stated, “I’m not one to sugar coat any of that because when you start covering up our history we’re actually doing White folks a favor. So, I want to make sure parents and students know what we’re going to be reading.”

Throughout the classroom observations I heard students discuss controversial topics that emerged in the course reading of *Between the World and Me* (Coates, 2015) about Black identity in the U.S. One student said, “Slavery never truly went away. It’s now mass incarceration of minorities. Some don’t call it slavery; it’s called the Trans-Atlantic Trade.” Another student added, “Black people have been living in fear and have for centuries.” The courses are built on the foundation of how you critically look at race and then history and literature through a critical lens.

Discussion-based instruction. The incorporation of discussion-based instruction is apparent in the ethnic studies courses. Evidence of efficacious teacher implementation is clear in the student interview responses. Seven out of nine students interviewed commented several times that they appreciated the discussion-based nature of the ethnic studies courses deeming this theme significant. David, a Black male senior at Huerta said, “I like that the class is very discussion-based, just because it’s really important to hear what your peers think and like other student’s perspectives, so because the class is discussion-based, I get to really access other perspectives.” Sean, also a senior at Huerta, identifying as Biracial commented, “I have taken traditional English classes and this is so much more discussion-based and like group oriented and the entire class is involved in the discussion and [the teacher] is involved in the discussion.” Students were able to use discourse as an intellectual process to self-awareness and academic growth. Students described the interactive nature of ethnic studies and explained different experiential activities facilitated in class that helped them understand what racism and ethnic studies are. Liz, a freshmen Latina student at Kahlo shared, “I took it [U.S. History] last year and it’s just a book

and it's just work and nothing else. I learned a lot more here [ethnic studies] than I have before." Another affirmation of this theme is that 22 out of 43 students commented in the open-ended survey that they valued the discussion-based nature of the course. The question on the survey asked, "What class activities or assignments have influenced you the most?" One student wrote, "Class discussions, I don't normally participate much because I don't have many opinions and I'm not great at articulating them, but hearing other people who have different experiences in race than me is enlightening." This instructional approach seems to engage a diverse group of students even when they seem like they are not engaged.

De-Centering Whiteness. The theme of de-centering Whiteness in the curriculum surfaced in the teacher and student interviews. The curriculum in both courses focused on questioning Western canon; and the status quo. Of the eleven individuals interviewed in the study, nine referred to the importance of de-centering Whiteness in the curriculum. Greg commented, "Ethnic studies is explicitly teaching stories of color, viewpoints of color and challenging the dominant White narrative." Similarly challenging the White narrative, the same teacher supported Sleeter's (2014) theme of isolating race in ethnic studies and said, "Isolating the idea of race and ethnicity in this case in U.S. history and explicitly talking about how people of color experienced this "American thing" is an important aspect of the curriculum."

This characteristic of ethnic studies was equally important in the African American literature class. Cathy recounted, "Kids walk into this class and have never heard of 90% of the people that we read. I teach a lot of history in here because it's the silenced history. It's the stuff that needs to be talked about and then along with

ethnic studies comes the contemporary work.” Cathy further explained how the de-centering of Whiteness in the curriculum helped to bring a more complete view of the English language and literature. She stated, “With a variety of voices we can look at argument, we can look at word choice, we can look at these things and how language affects outcome and the very words we use and being egalitarian about the kinds of material that you bring in and making sure that everybody is there, as many everyone’s as you can get.” David from Huerta HS affirms de-centering Whiteness as a key theme by commenting in the interview, “I’m Black, so it’s cool to hear these Black perspectives and this Black literature.” This data support the importance of including as many different voices as possible in the curriculum.

Origin of knowledge. The origin of knowledge refers to Sleeter’s (2014) theme: Explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective. Evidence of origin of knowledge is demonstrated in the responses to the student and teacher interview questions. Students described that the teachers structured the course in a way that allowed them to connect to the ethnic studies material unlike in any other course before. In an interview Brian from Huerta HS commented:

“One perspective is gonna have a completely different viewpoint than others. It’s very important to take into account both really realizing that when you’re talking about race, that a White perspective is not what you really need to be concerned about when you’re talking about, you know, issues that African Americans are facing or immigrants are facing, because it’s more about...

understanding the other perspective and that requires self-reflection, it requires listening, it requires patience.”

David, also at Huerta shared, “I can learn about that [racial perspective] through literature and I can learn about that through hearing what people have to say in the class.”

The teacher responses to the interview questions aligned closely to those of the student responses. Teachers stressed the importance of de-centering the teacher role in instruction, allowing the student to “own” their learning. Cathy commented that she draws on the wisdom of the room in an effort to validate student experiences. She states, “Things they bring to the classroom are all of a sudden elevated in status, so admitting that you don’t have it all [information/answers] and you’re not gonna.” The teachers in this study recognize that student’s experiences contribute to their learning and knowledge. Greg described how in his course the student is at the center of instruction. He said, “I think, building on their prior knowledge experience is asking ‘what they see going on around them at school, in the larger society, in [city], etc....’”

Historical U.S. colonialism and contemporary colonialism. This section refers to Sleeter’s (2014) theme: Examination of U.S. colonialism historically and examination of how relations of colonialism continue to play out. The discussion of this theme attempts to answer Research Question 1 part (b) by describing how teachers incorporate ethnic studies methods. Evidence of this theme surfaced often throughout the data. It was clear to see that students had a solid understanding of the relations of how historical U.S. colonialism impacted contemporary colonialism that plays out today. One student shared that she felt the U.S. history that she learned in school

before was a “lie or a gossip.” Having grown up in Puerto Rico, Natalia realized that Americans see U.S. history from a different perspective than people in other countries, such as Mexico and the Caribbean. She states that in Puerto Rico the educational system focused on the study of colonization and she notices that is not the case in the United States. Another student identifying as Jewish commented that most history taught in the U.S. has been taught from a very Eurocentric perspective. Octavia stated, “History kind of as we know it follows the course of, you know, what happened in Europe and how Europe lead to America... But even when you learn about Columbus or something, you don’t learn about all the terrible things he did. You just learn that, that he was pretty cool and that he discovered it, even though there were already people living there.”

The students also commented on how they see that colonialism continues to play out in today’s society. One student highlighted that he perceives race relations at his school as an extension of how the greater community seems to brush over the topic of race. David stated that the history of this community impacts the school and his experience as a Black male: “It being like a White Utopia and I mean, that’s still reflected today when you look at the demographics of [the city], and so I think it’s being in such a White city it reflects in our school population.” In response to the interview question, “How do you define the term social justice?” David shared his perception of contemporary colonialism:

“I see equality as being like, oh, like we freed the slaves and now you’re not slaves anymore and you just, you leave the slaves, the ex-slaves to do what they can to make it in this society, but they’re extremely disadvantaged so

equity would look like helping them knowing that they're coming from a place that you caused and made them disadvantaged so I think social justice is about creating more equitable culture in society in the world because there is such a crazy amount of injustice going on in the world and I think it's about recognizing those and doing your part in battling those.”

This student has an understanding of how the structure of historical colonialism still exists today. By incorporating this theme in ethnic studies curriculum, the teacher supports pedagogies as suggested by experts in the ethnic studies field.

Historical construction of race. The historical construction of race refers to Sleeter's (2014) theme: Examination of the historical construct of race, probing meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold. Several times during the interviews and classroom observations, students referred to their understanding of race and racism as being a socially constructed concept. Nikki, a freshmen student at Kahlo who identifies as African American stated, “I really like the class because it helps me put in perspective what race is, what racism is, if reverse racism is real.” Analysis and discussion in one of the courses of the documentary “Race: The Power of an Illusion” is a primary example of students examining race as a social construct. One student, during a classroom observation, declared, “Race is a made-up concept.”

The researcher observed students during the first observation discussing culture and racism in the Socratic style seminar activity at Kahlo HS. One student asserted, “Race is culture. It's where you were raised.” The conversation transitioned to the topic of racism and another student referred to the Critical Race Theory reading packet and read, “To be called racist is a serious insult, most Whites don't have to

think about their race as often and it feels like the worst thing.” Another student added, “Whites get defensive because they have White privilege. They think they have a right to defend themselves.” In this setting, students explored and examined meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold.

Institutional racism. Institutional racism is defined as the examination of the systemic nature of racism in society (Sleeter, 2014). Responses to the student interview questions yielded data supporting an understanding of institutional racism. Natalia shared that there is a racial and socioeconomic structure set up in the U.S. that may support institutional racism. She commented in the interview that before enrolling at Kahlo HS she visited several high schools in the city and noticed a significant difference in the racial make-up of the schools. Natalia continued, “Well, I think that it’s not fair that, there’s first of all not many students of color [at Kahlo], I understand it’s because of the state and all of the laws they had before.” During a classroom observation students discussed whether racism they had witnessed was institutional or a series of isolated acts. One student commented, “They [people of color] don’t benefit from institutionalized racism, but they can be prejudiced.” Another student asserted, “Whites are racist because they are benefitting from the system inherently it makes you think you are better than.”

Students are aware of the existence of segregated courses at the high school level. A senior at Huerta HS in the study described his perception of a tracking system at his school. Brian states that the high-level college courses and AP class demographics at his school are very White, he continued:

“My AP English class last year had only one Black student in it. I’m mixed, so my dad is half Black, but by looking into the classroom, I fall into the sea of White students and I did advise as part Black, but by looking at the classroom there’s only one dark skinned student in the class, which says something.”

Navigation of racism. The navigation of racism can play a critical role in the high school experience for students of color. The examination of sociocultural communities and how students might identify with them and the analysis of why collective identities matter (Sleeter, 2014) is shown in the responses to the interview questions of this study. Seeing that of the 43 students that completed the survey seven elected to comment on the open-ended survey how ethnic studies has helped them navigate racism in their daily lives helped the researcher label this significant theme. One student wrote that they are more aware of the effect race has had in their community. Student participants in both ethnic studies classes shared that they learned content knowledge and social skills related to increased positive navigation of racism in school and in their communities. David said, “The class has definitely taught me some things about like, one, just educated me more on race theory and just helped me myself be more racially aware and like given me tools to be better equipped to confront issues of race.” Nikki shared about how she is now able to speak up against racial comments, she stated, “Since ethnic studies I’ve learned to like kind of speak up about when I hear racial slurs around me because when before I didn’t, I just let them slide and I would kind of just ignore it. But now when I hear them I stand up and say hey, that’s not right and like tell them the history of the racial slur they’re saying.”

Research Question 2: Are Student Perceptions and Achievement Influenced?

The investigation of Research Question 2 consisted of exploring three sub questions: (a) What do student work products demonstrate about their level of engagement with and understanding of the historical and contemporary issues for ethnic groups? (b) How do students perceive their learning and engagement when ethnic studies curriculum is incorporated? (c) To what degree do students report the incorporation of ethnic studies approaches as significant to their classroom engagement and educational aspirations?

Prior to sharing analysis of student work products and student perceptions of their learning and engagement and other data that will help answer the research questions, commenting on the discussion that occurred in the courses during the classroom observations is critical to understanding the overall environment in the classroom. I was hoping to see positive response from students through classroom observations, comments on the academic rigor of the courses as well as examples of thoughtful dialogue and writing on ethnic studies topics.

Two key takeaways from the classroom observations include, one, that the environment in the classroom allows students to speak freely about issues that may be considered controversial, such as feeling comfortable enough to share from personal experiences. During a class discussion about cultural appropriation, I observed a White female student say, “When the N-word comes up at concerts half the crowd goes quiet.” Another White student said, “The N-word holds so much history, Whites don’t have a word like that, Cracker is not the same.”

The second takeaway from the observations demonstrates the academic rigor of the curriculum in that students are able to build a clear argument during discussions and are able to defend their argument with supporting evidence from prior knowledge. For instance, in a discussion at Huerta HS about African American identity a Black student commented, “America idolizes Black features, but not on Black people, such as the Kardashians, fashion, and entertainment.” A Latina student added, “We can relate to that and don’t have to be Black to understand the injustice.” Other quotes and examples from the classroom observations are listed throughout this text as supporting evidence for each theme discussed.

Students demonstrated an understanding of historical and contemporary colonialism, addressing Research Question 2. The examples that are shared and analyzed in the following section scored either a four or five, five being the highest score possible on the evaluation protocol, which is a general authentic instruction rubric.

In support of Sleeter’s (2014) ethnic studies theme the examination of U.S. colonialism historically and currently, Natalia, a freshman at Kahlo HS wrote, “The foundation of this article’s argument is that after suffering from decades of oppression and discrimination, people of color have a right to equal career and education opportunities.” This student makes the connection between historical and contemporary colonialism. Students also examined the historical construction of race and how people navigate racism. In one assignment about code-switching a student identifying as Asian commented, “They [code-switchers] have the advantage of being able to use different dialects to connect with different groups of people at different

times, so they can use Standard English when working directly with their superiors or those that connect best with this dialect, and their own dialect with others who connect best with that.” This student explains how critical code-switching is to authentically communicating in today’s society. Students further examine struggles for liberation experienced by oppressed groups. Another student said, “If we don’t give Black people more opportunities for advancement, then the concept of equal human rights, regardless of race is almost inconsequential.”

Additional ethnic studies themes (Sleeter, 2014) analyzed by students in their essays correspond to exploring issues in their community. A freshman in the ES U.S. history course wrote, “We have come a long way from where we started in the conflict of racial covenants and housing discrimination, but there is still more to be done to create a world where everyone has equal opportunity to have the benefits from being a homeowner.” This statement demonstrates that the student understands how past housing policy impacts existing policy in her community.

The following section draws from the experiences shared in Maya’s essay for the African American literature course at Huerta HS. Maya wrote that her ethnic studies class has led her to form an understanding for what her brother has experienced and encouraged her to take action in the community in support of social justice. She said, “Just watching my brother grow and accomplish what I think is the unimaginable has been inspiring and ever so motivating for myself to find my voice and become more involved. It has compelled me to go to protests and to speak up when I see or hear something that is not right.” Maya continued to establish evidence of Sleeter’s (2014) themes, particularly ‘making strides toward political and systemic

change' demonstrating a high level of engagement and understanding of ethnic studies curriculum. She declared, "When I allow someone to teach me and listen to their thoughts and ideas I know I will have something new to take in and process it in how I see the world. With the effort to make a change and great teachings about race for the generations to come there will be a better understanding about race for all. I will continue to be a part of this movement towards the end of racism." The use of ethnic studies methods encouraged a better understanding about race and ethnicity in their communities and better inter-race relations allowing students to hear and learn from diverse perspectives. David's sister Maya wrote, "The experiences we have had over the past year as a result of my brother speaking up have made me realize that if we do not have more voices like my brother's, people will not have the opportunity to think about different perspectives other than the conventionally White normed experiences that dominate our society."

Furthermore, evidence from analysis of all 43 students described a genuine desire to change the world through the pursuit of social justice. Maya at Huerta affirmed, "In order to stop what is going on people need to fight back. In today's world, there are so many things I think of, and if everyone put the effort in those things, they can be changed. I've experienced the fight for justice and freedom through the Black Lives Matter movement, it shows others care and want a changed world."

Student Perception of Their Learning and Engagement

In this study, students shared evidence of how they perceived their learning and engagement when ethnic studies curriculum was incorporated. Two significant

themes emerged from the data, first the construction of knowledge and second social justice.

Construction of knowledge. Banks defines construction of knowledge as “The knowledge construction process relates to the extent to which teachers help students to understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it.” Students shared how the ethnic studies teacher structured the course to support the knowledge construction process. In an interview Sean at Huerta stated, “We read something, we write about it to absorb more and learn more about what we just read and then we discuss it to learn more and share how and what we learned.” Octavia at Kahlo commented, “I like that we have discussions about our thoughts and I think that’s really effective in comprehending ideas that can be difficult when, you know, when it’s just like open discussion and learning in that way.” Further evidence of the construction of knowledge is drawn from the open-ended survey, students commented that reading *Between the World and Me* has influenced them the most and one student wrote, “It is so thought provoking and makes you look inward and ask questions.”

Social justice. Social justice is an essential component in an ethnic studies course. In this setting, social justice is the ability of taking what an individual has learned in class and taking action in school or in the community, this can include making strides toward political awareness and systemic change. Student interview responses indicated an understanding and pursuit of social justice. Most of the students commented on their involvement in school clubs and organizations that allow

them to take action in doing something for their community. Octavia, freshman at Kahlo said, “I’m joining a bunch of clubs that deal with social justice issues.” Lila, at Huerta, identifying as Latina noted, “I’m part of Key Club so we volunteer a lot and do, you know, I think that’s like social justice to me.” Some students mentioned awareness of the ethnic studies ban in Arizona and commented on how disappointed they were in that policy. Lila, senior at Huerta said:

“Last time, last class we were talking about how the ethnic studies class got shot down in Arizona and I was thinking after class that, like the bell rang and everything and I’m just thinking about how stupid that is. Especially me personally, this class has been like awesome and I actually enjoy coming here and I don’t dread the reading... I think it’s just so silly that they shut it down because it does have like a very positive impact on students.”

Additionally, in the open-ended survey one student from Kahlo HS wrote, “[ethnic studies] has made me want to help for change.”

Inductive Student Interview Themes

Three inductive themes emerged in the student interviews and responses to the open-ended survey: equity/racial lens, microaggressions and racism, and relevance to student interests and passions.

Equity/racial lens. Students have shared that since taking ethnic studies they have begun to see society through an equity or racial lens. Sean at Huerta said, “I didn’t’ really look at things necessarily through like a racial lens or perspective before going more in depth in this class.” Freshmen student at Kahlo noted that after a month of being in the ethnic studies class it has helped her learn to see how racism and

stereotypes are portrayed in movies, even in children's movies like Peter Pan. In fact, several students, seven out of 22 responded on the open-ended survey that they were most influenced by video clips and activities related to the racism of Native Americans. The student interview responses described the knowledge and understanding of equity-focused language that the students in turn are able to use as a tool or skill in their communities. Students in these courses are equipped with language and concepts that allow them to see and navigate the world through an equity lens.

Microaggressions and racism. Students at one school have heard quite a few microaggressions targeted at students of color. Jessica, identifying as Latina heard these microaggressions firsthand, targeted at her. She recounted that another student said to her, "Wow, you're really pretty for a Mexican." Prior to taking ethnic studies she would not have considered the comment offensive, but now she argues that it's a pretty racist thing to say to someone. Nikki, who recently moved to this area from the east coast where she attended a majority Black school, has experienced a vast change in the racial make-up of her new school. She shared that she hears a lot of racial slurs at her new school and sometimes she doesn't know how to deal with that. Nikki noted, "People say it [racial slurs] a lot around me. It just makes me really uncomfortable." This is similar to what David from Huerta shared about his perceptions of race relations in his community by stating, "It's more like implicit biases and just hidden like microaggressions and things like that, that I notice and when it comes to those things, people aren't super like open to critique on those things."

Another form of microaggression is cultural appropriation, which is defined as taking intellectual property, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions or artifacts from someone else's culture without permission. During one of the classroom observations students grappled with this concept. One student commented, "Wearing Native costumes during Halloween is cultural appropriation, but sometimes they don't know it." The teacher asked whether hip-hop culture and dress by non-Black individuals was considered cultural appropriation. One student responded, "If you start thinking you are Black that could be appropriation."

Relevance to student interests and passions. As students shared their thoughts and perceptions about their ethnic studies course the theme of relevancy surfaced. Students commented several times that the topics they studied were really important to them and that the essays they write in class are about real issues that are going to impact their lives. Sean, senior at Huerta said, "It's all wildly relevant towards what we're trying to learn. That's like the most significant thing to me about this course. It's one of the reasons I enjoy it so much is because it's all really relevant." In addition, another student commented about one of the course readings, "It's [book] relatable to a lot of people. It's a survival guide for minorities in America." Responses to the open-ended survey also affirmed this theme as significant. A freshmen student at Kahlo HS asserted, "I get to have a class about issues that are important to me."

Like students of color, White students enrolled in the courses chose to take ethnic studies. The findings suggest, they also wish to be part of meaningful social change in their communities. For instance, during the classroom visits, I observed

White students directing questions to their peers seemingly in an effort to better understand the experiences of people of color. Offering ethnic studies in schools allows students of color to see themselves in the curriculum which is something that White students already benefit from in school. All students need to see the value in knowing that ethnic studies is part of the core curriculum not an extra or supplement to be discussed on holidays.

Students in this study offered compelling words and descriptions about how they perceive the relevance of ethnic studies courses:

- “wildly relevant”
- “refreshing”
- “awesome and I actually enjoy coming here”
- “I don’t dread the reading”
- “I wanted to take this class really badly”

These students describe the integration of ethnic studies materials and instruction as having a critical impact on high school students of color.

Ethnic Studies Approaches as Significant to Educational Aspirations

Many variables play a role in impacting a student’s decision for what they plan to do beyond high school. Parents, friends, teachers, and classes they take in high school among others all influence educational and career aspirations. Students shared a variety of professions they aspire to such as, law, medicine, politics, education, food sustainability, and film. The students at one of the schools described the universities they had either already applied to or planned to apply to that year, such as, Whittier College, Oregon State University, Berkeley, University of San Francisco, Columbia,

and NYU. A couple of students also declared they were applying to Howard University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), after having read *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates in their ethnic studies course. The author of the book attended the HBCU, which made an impact on the students in the class. Several students shared that the ethnic studies course has impacted the type of work they want to focus on in their careers. David expressed:

“Taking this class has made me realize that I definitely want, I plan on taking classes in the future like ethnic studies and Black studies classes and stuff like that because I find so much interest in it and I just have so much passion for learning about these things more so than any other subject I’ve taken in the past. Another thing that has made things complicated is sort of how, what I want to do when I get older because it’s also made me want to like be a teacher so badly because I recognize the need for high school students to be accessing these different perspectives and be having classes like these and having teachers who are not teaching the traditional way.”

Ethnic studies may be one method of introducing high school students to the teaching profession and to increasing teacher diversity in schools.

Challenges of Teaching Ethnic Studies

The teachers in this study shared in the interviews that there were some challenges to teaching ethnic studies. Themes that surfaced during the interviews included: teacher isolation, lack of faculty buy-in, and creating a safe space for racial discourse.

Teacher isolation. At one of the schools in my study the ethnic studies teacher was the only ethnic studies instructor at the school. This logistical situation caused a strong sense of isolation. The teacher lamented not being able to collaborate with many others on issues related to social justice or ethnic studies. The school offered two new courses in Latin American literature this year and no one would volunteer to teach the courses. The teacher stated, “No one else wants to touch it with a 10-foot pole.” Consequently, she now teaches the new Latin American literature courses as well.

Lack of faculty buy-in. In some instances, school faculty are not willing to support ethnic studies curriculum, making it difficult to justify ethnic studies courses. Cathy, for example, commented having this problem with faculty in her own department. She expressed that there was a lack of legitimacy in the work she is doing. Cathy stated, “There’s a lot of lip service too, they say oh it’s so beautiful that you’re doing this kind of work and how noble of you.” This is a point of contention that this ethnic studies teacher dealt with. In addition, Cathy stated that there was a challenge when working with the school counselors. Sometimes ethnic studies courses are treated as a dumping ground and perceived as academically lower level classes. In this study the ES courses are academically rigorous and at Huerta HS the African American literature course is offered to students as dual credit with a nearby university. The teacher stated that ethnic studies courses are worthwhile opportunities for students of all levels and capacities.

Creating a safe space for racial discourse. Although creating a safe space and community in the classroom is an essential part of an ethnic studies course, this

can still be a challenge. Greg shared during the second teacher interview that he met with a student and her parent about the student's discomfort speaking in class. She did not want to sound like she was speaking for all people in her ethnic group. In this particular case, the student felt uncomfortable sharing her thoughts and ideas because the class was so White.

Part of creating a safe space for racial discourse involves building on students' prior knowledge and experiences by asking specifically what they see going on around them at school, and in the larger society. Greg describes how he builds a case for the study of socio-political issues in his class. He was able to provide students with links to help them understand the historical and political reasons behind the current demographics of their community. The examination of this topic in the class comes from the questions students ask. Students are aware of their surroundings and want to learn more about them at a deeper level.

Summary

The interviews, observations, and student work yielded critical student and teacher perceptions of the impact ethnic studies courses have on students of color. The discussion during the observations and in the interviews underscored the outcomes and potential of ethnic studies courses and programs for youth of color. Students commented that they viewed their classes as a safe space for which to openly engage in issues of race that were relevant to them.

Students overall stated that the ethnic studies course had made a significant impact on their understanding of historical and contemporary issues affecting ethnic groups in their community. With the support of their ethnic studies teachers they have

been able to engage in meaningful learning experiences that also impact their educational aspirations. Students of color in the courses noted that they have gained more confidence in how to navigate racism at their school and have a newfound courage to speak up against microaggressions and racial slurs. They all felt that they had learned more in their ethnic studies class than they have before in other courses.

Chapter V: Discussion and Implications

This concluding chapter provides a summary of the previous chapters that include a brief overview of the research findings, a discussion of the themes and findings, implications for practice, and possibilities for future research. The discussion of this chapter is organized by research question and how the findings are related to the literature. This collective case study sought to investigate the student and teacher perceptions of the impact ethnic studies courses have on students of color based on student interviews, classroom observations, and student work products. The research had two strands, one focusing on teacher perceptions and the other focusing on student perceptions. The purpose of the study was to demystify ethnic studies (ES) curriculum and the belief that some have that it will erode the current educational canon and create divisiveness between racial groups (Bloom, 1987; Rodriguez, 1982). This preliminary study examined student and teacher perceptions of the impact ethnic studies approaches and instruction can have on student learning from which to build more thorough studies in the future.

This case study involved interviewing and observing two ethnic studies teachers multiple times and interviewing nine ethnic studies students from the courses. The students also completed a short open-ended survey and the teachers shared student work products to be analyzed. The findings in this study during the deductive analysis supported the importance of integration of Sleeter's (2014) ethnic studies themes such as historical U.S. colonialism, contemporary colonialism, and institutional racism. For example, it was clear to see students begin to grasp an understanding of how historical U.S. colonialism impacted contemporary colonialism

that exists today. Students understand that there is a power structure in this country supporting institutional racism. In addition, findings from the inductive analysis revealed themes that support effective ethnic studies approaches. For instance, teachers and students commented on the significance of incorporating classroom community, academic rigor, student-centered curriculum, and Critical Race Theory as a foundation for ethnic studies. In summary, the findings generated data strongly supporting the perceptions of positive impact ethnic studies courses have on students in regards to learning, engagement, and educational aspiration. Prior to delving into the discussion of my findings and suggestions for implications, a description of the limitations of the study are offered to put in perspective the conclusions and suggestions made in this chapter.

Limitations

This qualitative study yielded several important findings demonstrating the impact ethnic studies (ES) courses have on student engagement and educational aspiration. Yet, there were some limitations to the execution of the study. First, the purpose of this research was exploratory, the study helped provide insights that can inform future research, but, as with any exploratory study, it was constrained in its scope. The observations were conducted early in the school year in varied categories, but was unable to see the full effects of the course. The researcher was unable to catalogue and respond to changes over the trajectory of the course. Although, the study was conducted in the first part of the school year, the researcher garnered important findings for such a short period of time that the classes were in session. Second, it was not possible to include the investigation of several ethnic studies

classes due to the limited number of ES courses offered in the region. Third, the small sample size of courses and participants limits the transferability of the results. On the other hand, this study helped gain new insights and understandings of how successful ethnic studies approaches can be when effectively implemented in U.S. high schools, particularly in contexts where an ethnic studies program or course may not already exist.

Next Steps

I am hopeful to build from this case study to further conduct research over multiple years as a longitudinal study to provide more evidence to determine the impact ethnic studies curriculum and approaches has on student academic achievement. In addition, this study would include more observations and participant interviews to provide a more in-depth look at the impact ES courses have on students. This study attempts to offer preliminary suggestions from which to build future studies.

It is suggested that a longitudinal quantitative research study be conducted in the Pacific Northwest, much like those conducted in Arizona and California (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016) in the future to determine the impact ES courses have on student academic achievement. A quantitative study could test for variables such as, class attendance, high school graduation rates, and student higher education aspirations. A quantitative study could also include a series of pre- and posttest surveys creating a baseline for more accurate measurement of student achievement. Online survey instruments completed by teachers and students could provide quantitative data that increases our understanding of student achievement.

Conclusions: Research Question 1: Ethnic Studies Materials and Instruction

The materials should provide students with an array of multiple perspectives, support a rigorous curriculum, and should be relevant to the students (Gay, 2000, Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2014). The teachers participating in this study demonstrated the incorporation of effective ethnic studies materials. At the beginning of the course they both built a strong foundation developing students' equity lens to increase their capacity for analysis of course readings and assignments. Readings like *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in The Cafeteria* (Tatum, 1997) and *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* (Takaki, 2012) in the Ethnic Studies U.S. history course allowed students to learn from the experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds. Discussions of these readings further encourage students in the class to interact and learn from each other. I witnessed this process during the observations in the course where students facilitated their own discussions with little to no direction from the teacher. Students referenced the readings frequently to share supporting evidence of their learning. The findings from this study are similar to what Martell and Hashimoto-Martell (2011) found. The teacher prepared and replaced the course history textbook with reading packets. The teacher intentionally incorporated readings comprising non-dominant diverse perspectives that challenge a Eurocentric curriculum. The students expressed higher levels of interest in reading about history and reported completing more homework and recalling more information.

Further, the combination of various instructional materials utilized in the classroom can be effective in student learning. For instance, in this study reading

novels, short stories and articles, as well as incorporating movies and video clips allowed students multiple avenues to access information. This approach is a form of scaffolding instruction for diverse learners which has shown to encourage student discourse (Jimenez & Gersten, 1999; McIntyre & Hulan, 2013). The findings suggest that the teachers integrated numerous instructional materials in their ethnic studies courses. The themes that emerged suggest that students perceived the instructional materials to be points of interest and relatable. Data supporting Sleeter's (2014) previously selected ethnic studies codes reveal similar findings. Students found the materials to be relevant and important to their learning. Data sources such as student interview responses and open-ended survey replies suggested that it was refreshing for them to read novels from African American authors and from diverse perspectives they had never been exposed to in their classes before. This is especially important for students of color because in most schools the curriculum reflects the White dominant narrative as normative, leaving the history and experiences of ethnic groups in the U.S. invisible (Takaki, 2008; Wallulis, 2012). The student and teacher comments in this case study align with the literature.

Curricular materials incorporated by the teacher in this study can make ethnic studies courses successful. Not only do the materials encourage discussion of several of Sleeter's (2014) ethnic studies themes, but they also sustain the theories that framed this study. Following Freire's (1970) pedagogic approach the materials used in the classes studied the development of a critical consciousness by asking students to reflect and respond to information that was relevant to them. Teachers using Critical Race Theory (CRT) encouraged students to construct CRT as a foundation for the

course, students were able to construct their own equity lens that allowed them to discuss the material in a manner they had not been able to do before (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The use of these diverse materials provided an opportunity for student growth and learning. One student made this clear in this comment, “I’ve learned about topics that I never would have otherwise.” One aspect of learning that emerged as efficacious in this study is the discussion-based approach.

The discussion-based approach surfaced several times in the student interview responses of this study. Students commented that ethnic studies courses were distinct from other courses because they were discussion-based. This is important because contrary to traditional direct instruction, allowing students to openly discuss topics, even controversial ones, shows that as teachers we believe in their ability to think critically. Valenzuela (1999) proposed that it’s imperative for teachers working with students of color to truly believe in their abilities to learn and succeed in school. Through integrating ethnic studies, educators can incorporate an ethic of authentic caring and the rigor that this type of caring demands in their school. One teacher added that humility on the part of the instructor is an essential characteristic of ethnic studies teaching. The characteristic of caring was highly developed in the ethnic studies courses in this study. The teachers made an explicit attempt to build community in the class by being authentic and open with their students. Through the modest practice of providing tea and hot cocoa to the class, Cathy initiated a relationship with her students acknowledging a physical and emotional need dissolving a conventional boundary between school and home. The little teaching

experience these teachers have had does not limit their abilities to offer a meaningful learning experience for their students.

From this research, it appears that ethnic studies courses must integrate the study of historical and contemporary U.S. colonialism into history and literature courses. The examination of the notion that race is a historical and societal construct, the examination of institutional racism and what that looks like in society provides students the space to explore how to navigate racism (Sleeter, 2014). Including these themes in ES courses is key because they are topics that impact students of color on a daily basis and when they are not addressed academically in school, the education system further marginalizes this group of students (Au, 2011).

Another vital theme that students noted was the relevancy of topics examined to students' lives. Instructors of ethnic studies courses can incorporate not only materials that are relevant to students of color, but also relevant instructional approaches. Approaches such as isolating race and ethnicity while challenging the dominant narrative in history and literature carve space in the curriculum for voices of color. For example, during one of the observations, the teacher asked the students to describe a painting of the founding fathers and others during the Constitutional Convention. Then he asked if anyone was missing from the painting and the Convention. Students had already begun to share some of those observations prior to the teacher's question, making it an easy transition to a conversation about isolating race and ethnicity in this lesson. Students were also asked to review their Critical Race Theory notes prior to analyzing the Constitutional Convention more closely. These approaches reflect and validate student diversity in the class. Ethnic studies

teachers can be allies for students of color. They may be challenged to defend the curriculum against dominant thought and ideals that exist in the classroom. Greg, the Ethnic Studies U.S. history teacher, commented on the importance of being able to push back with students and being a voice for facts by interrupting racist comments in class. The integration of ethnic studies approaches that allow discussion of controversial topics provide students an opportunity for open dialogue regardless of their perceptions of racial issues. This interaction also demonstrates the ability to positively validate the experiences of students of color and challenge White students to think more critically about the experiences of others in the class.

Integrating social justice as a critical component of ethnic studies provides students with the ability to express their emotions and personal growth by taking action in their communities. Students in both courses described during classroom observations, interview responses, and student work examples of taking action toward social change in their school and the larger community. The study of the pursuit of social justice can offer students a model for political and social systemic change. This is particularly crucial now in an era of deep divisions related to race, ethnicity, and religion. Students of color may be feeling a sense of loss and hopelessness (Costello, 2016). The current presidential administration has already and continues to strip women and people of color of basic human rights (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017). Ethnic studies courses provide students with a safe space at school to examine what is going on around them in a way that involves them in the process. In ethnic studies courses students are not bystanders being talked at; instead they have the

opportunity and support to be an instrumental part of the democratic process that can influence change in this country.

Ethnic studies courses have an immense potential to engage students of color in their own education. They afford all students the opportunity to examine their society through a racial lens, fostering a strong sense of relevance and critical consciousness which students desire.

Research Question 2: Are Student Perceptions and Achievement Influenced?

Findings from my study suggest, that students perceive that the incorporation of ethnic studies instruction in the curriculum positively influences their learning. Supporting the theme coded as relevance to student interests and passions, students commented about how much they enjoyed the course. This is attributed in part to the topics and materials discussed in the course and also to how the teachers structured the course. The students in this study affirm what ethnic studies researchers have said: when students can relate to the material their engagement and motivation increases (Au, 2011; Ramirez, 2009; Sleeter, 2014). The findings in this study support what Martell and Hashimoto-Martell (2011) found: Integrating ethnic studies materials and approaches increases student levels of interest in school, influences their understanding of different views, allows students of color to identify more closely with historical figures, and allows students to conduct critical investigations of historical contributions.

This study attempts to fill the gap in the literature regarding the relationship between critical ethnic studies in instruction and how students perceive their academic engagement. Based on evidence shared by students and teachers this study found that

students responded well to the ES approaches implemented. Both the deductive and inductive themes that emerged in the findings show evidence similar to that of other ethnic studies literature suggesting that students perceive that observed ethnic studies approaches positively influence their achievement in American history and literature courses (Cabrera et al., 2013; Sleeter, 2002).

Relationship to Others' Findings

Data collected in this study reveal strong similarities to themes expressed in the literature, such as relevance and educational engagement. For instance, in a study by Cabrera, Meza, Romero, and Rodriguez (2013) students commented that the content in the Mexican American Studies (MAS) Program in Tucson, AZ was relevant to their everyday lives. One student said, "I finally got to learn about things that relate to me," and another student said, "I want to know my history." It was evident that students were very engaged in the MAS curriculum because once the program was eliminated they were prepared to fight the state for their education (Cabrera et al., 2013). Regardless of where and when ethnic studies courses are taught comparable themes emerge among students stating the importance of studying curriculum that is relevant and engaging to them.

The ethnic studies courses in this study incorporate the history of several U.S. ethnic groups, which seem to have led to an increase in student motivation and engagement. During the observations students were engaged with culturally responsive readings, contemporary video clips, and interactive activities. Several students mentioned how they valued the importance of learning through African American literature which helped connect them to their historical background. Being

able to relate to the curriculum helped these students increase engagement and comprehension.

As with Valenzuela's (1999) study of U.S.-Mexican high school youth in California, this study also found that when students perceive there is a caring adult at school that respects them and supports their learning, they become more motivated and engaged in school. The teachers in my study demonstrated authentic caring in their classrooms and the students benefitted greatly. The teachers concentrated on creating classroom community throughout the year via activities to learn about their families and communities. The teachers build relationships with their students by being transparent about their own experiences related to race and power. The ethnic studies instructional approaches teachers implemented in this study abandoned the colorblind curriculum that often exists in schools. Even though ethnic studies is a mandated course in the district, there is not a mandated curriculum in place for teachers to implement. It is up to the teacher to ultimately decide what materials and approaches will be incorporated into the course particularly as it relates to creating classroom community. The integration of ethnic studies approaches encourages a sense of belonging allowing students to conclude that adults care for them. Students in this study perceived that their teacher cared for them based on her validating demeanor, her standards and high expectations, and the focus on race and power structure in the curriculum. Further, I observed how Cathy supported her students' diverse needs as asserted by Noddings (2002) and Valenzuela (1999) to guide the educational process. During one of the observations Cathy spent part of her prep hour meeting with a student having a difficult time in school. It seemed that in this

conversation the teacher was addressing the student's psychological and spiritual needs in an effort to encourage the student's educational success.

In combination with observed ethnic studies instructional approaches and methods that contribute to student engagement in school ethnic studies curriculum is key to helping youth navigate and make sense of their world. First, both teachers in my study teach Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) as a foundation in their courses. Teaching Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides students with a critical and equity lens from which to examine and make conclusions of their communities (Tatum, 1997). CRT is a framework that most students do not learn about in secondary school. For students of color, it provides a mechanism for understanding systemic and power structures that in a Eurocentric curriculum may cause them to feel less than and invisible. This framework de-centers Whiteness allowing all students to challenge the dominant narrative that is often at the center of history and literature courses in American schools (Takaki, 2008). Integrating CRT in ethnic studies curriculum, particularly using it as a foundation for the entire course, provides an avenue for students to academically discuss and challenge any aspect of society in a non-divisive manner (Banks, 1975). While, the current presidential administration continues to enforce presidential executive orders that oppress marginalized groups of people (Epps, 2016) using a critical lens that CRT affords can help facilitate difficult conversations among individuals with differing beliefs.

Implications for Educational Practice

In this study, I observed two ethnic studies classrooms for a series of days and listened to diverse voices about how ethnic studies curriculum and approaches

impacted students. The perceptions students shared about their experience examining and reflecting on the curriculum was considerably positive. Themes that emerged from the students in this study directly address not only what they find important for their education but also support what previous research claims about ethnic studies. Based on the observations, interviews, and student work products, I draw the following implications for practice: 1) implementation of a student-centered approach; 2) placing race and ethnicity at the center of instruction; and 3) integrating curriculum that is relevant to student interests and passions.

The study suggests that educators implement a student-centered approach to education. It is crucial that educators truly place the student at the center of their own learning, letting go of any bias or personal influence. As stated in the framework of this study, Freire (1970) argues that engaging students in self-reflection about students' real life concerns and issues can foster a sense of empowerment. Ethnic studies supports students' perception of their construction of knowledge. Educators who use various methods of student-initiated learning such as, reading, writing, self-reflection, and discussion can help students to determine and understand academic concepts.

Navigating racism is an issue for students of color in schools (Sleeter, 2014; Valenzuela, 1999). Effective ethnic studies places race and ethnicity at the center of instruction. Educators can bring awareness of issues like racism and discrimination to the classroom and teach students skills to confront them. Teachers help set the tone to encourage empathy and understanding at school. Examining racism at school is difficult. Discussing this topic in class may cause discomfort and controversy.

However, integrating ethnic studies curriculum can challenge the dominant narrative that perpetuates fear and blame and educate the school community on histories and perspectives of all students. It can be a challenge for teachers to create a safe space for racial discourse, especially when students of color may feel silenced because of the dominance of Whiteness in the room (Matias, 2013). This should not discourage educators from implementing ethnic studies. Identifying the issue and working through it with students and parents is part of the process.

As school classrooms become more diverse, topics related to race and ethnicity become more relevant for students. Findings from this study highlight the significance students place on studying issues that are important to them. Students value a curriculum that is relevant to their interests and passions. They find meaning in being able to see themselves and others like them in the curriculum. Incorporating ethnic studies is one method educators can utilize to best meet the unique needs of all students in schools and help make a difference in the lives of their students.

When to Offer Ethnic Studies

The quantitative study conducted by Cabrera et al., (2012) supports offering ethnic studies courses at each level of high school. This study examined the effects of the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program in Tucson, AZ, on high school students. The study found that for students enrolled in the Mexican American studies courses for longer periods of time in high school had an increased rate of graduation and school attendance.

There may be a benefit to offering ethnic studies courses at each level of high school by providing ethnic studies course options throughout each high school grade.

The students in my study were either freshmen in the Ethnic Studies U.S. history course at Kahlo HS at the beginning of their HS career or seniors in the African American literature course at Huerta HS preparing to graduate high school. Evidence from responses of all 43 students in both courses indicated they were appreciative of being able to take the ethnic studies courses and were both impacted by the materials and instructional approaches unique to ethnic studies. However, the freshmen seemed to accept the information more as being part of the core curriculum at the school even though they had a choice between ES and traditional history. The seniors in the study seemed to discern enrolling in the African American literature course as an action of social justice in itself. They recognized that taking this course was a rare opportunity and in doing so they were making a political statement.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

There is a dearth of ethnic studies concentrations in teacher education programs in universities across the country. At some schools students major in ethnic studies as part of an arts and sciences program then enroll in a Master's in Teaching program to attain a teacher certification to teach ethnic studies. The UCLA Teacher Education Program recently piloted a cohort of 15 teacher candidates to receive additional coursework to prepare them to teach ethnic studies in K-12 schools (Hipolito & Zavala, 2016). The lack of training and support for teachers wanting to teach ethnic studies makes it difficult to increase ES courses in schools. The teachers in this study described their journey to becoming an ES teacher noting that for them, there was not a clear path to follow. Both teachers almost stumbled upon the ethnic studies position at their schools based on their experience and interests.

In order to meet the needs of students of color, all new teachers should be prepared to teach ethnic studies. Ethnic studies includes integration of both content and instructional approaches that foster authentic relationships with students and their teacher. Therefore, pre-service teachers can benefit from learning content and making a personal emotional shift to an affective learning domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). Self-reflection can be an important component to moving from a place of cognitive learning to an emotional space providing teachers a bridge to better understanding the lives of their ethnically diverse students. The teachers in this study remarked on the need for humility and cultural self-reflection in this position. There is no sign of an increase in diversity among pre-service teachers (Ford & Quinn, 2010). Because of this lack of diversity, teacher education programs must effectively prepare their students to serve an increasingly diverse population. It is important for pre-service teachers to reflect first on their own personal cultural backgrounds, then of others. This practice will also help teachers critically examine course readings, improve interactions with classmates, and be more prepared to face issues that affect diverse communities. This will help pre-service teachers grow and shape their mindsets of racial diversity in order to better meet the needs of their students (Bleicher, 2011).

Integrating a self-reflection model as part of pre-service programs moves multicultural education curriculum beyond traditional learning outcomes such as Bloom's Taxonomy on the Cognitive Domain to using a more intuitive or Affective Domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964), creating a classroom in which pre-service teachers are more racially self-aware. One method others have found

successful in moving to this Affective Domain involves having students engage in reflecting on their own identities and experiences utilizing a cultural autobiography format (Chang, 1999; Davis, 2016). Students can also engage in anti-racist and critical conscious pedagogy by examining systemic oppression impacting children in schools every day through various experiential and discussion-based activities much like those integrated in ethnic studies approaches. Incorporating the combination of ethnic studies approaches and cultural self-reflection into teacher preparation courses can help move future teachers toward an emotional paradigm shift bringing them closer to better understanding their students of color.

Conclusion

As a Chicana educator and researcher, I often think of what my life would have been like had I been able to take ethnic studies during my K-12 education. I imagine possibly experiencing less self-doubt in my capacity as a student and later as a teacher. I imagine feeling less marginalized in society. I imagine feeling that my ideas and experiences were validated in my education. I imagine not feeling like an “other” in my own country. I imagine having similar academic advantages to my White classmates allowing me to discuss racial and other topics relevant to me and other students of color. My hope is that youth of color today are afforded the opportunity to learn about their history as a part of the core curriculum that in turn allows them to see themselves reflected in the educational mirror.

What I’ve learned from this study about integrating ethnic studies approaches is that it is a complex process that requires authentic caring in all aspects of a child’s education. For students of color, this means incorporating an asset model instead of a

deficit model utilizing students' funds of knowledge incorporating cultural and familial knowledge in the curriculum and school culture (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Ethnic studies is a method of education that encompasses this notion of authentic caring by creating classroom community, expectation of academic rigor, de-centering Whiteness, and utilizing a student-centered model.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Classroom Observational Protocol

Date: _____	
Time: _____	
Length of Observation: Start time: _____ End time: _____	
School: _____	
Teacher: _____	
Participants: _____	
Topic of the Unit:	
Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes:
<p style="text-align: center;">Physical Setting: visual layout</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 150px; margin: 10px auto;"></div>	<p>Reflective comments: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretations</p>

<p>Description of participants:</p> <p>Description of activities:</p> <p>Description of materials used:</p> <p>Description of individuals engaged in activity: Interactions:</p> <p>Describe student interaction with ethnic studies curriculum:</p> <p>Unplanned events:</p> <p>Participants comments: expressed in quotes</p>	<p>Reflective comments: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretations</p>
<p>The researcher's observation of what seems to be occurring:</p>	

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Questions

Initial Teacher Interview

1. Did you receive any ethnic studies training? In your pre-service teaching program? In professional development? If so, please describe the experience(s).
2. How are instructional materials selected for your classroom? How much input or autonomy do you have in curriculum choice? What are the content standards?
3. What do you hope students take away from this experience?

Second Teacher Interview

1. What are/were some literary works or texts that you have assigned for your students to read during the school year?
2. How do you build upon students' prior knowledge, experiences and/or cultural backgrounds in your teaching?
3. Please describe the overall environment of your classroom. How do you help create this atmosphere?
4. How do you describe your teaching philosophy?
5. What does an ethnic studies class/course look like?
6. What are essential skills of teaching ethnic studies?
7. What successes have you had using an ethnic studies instructional approach? Describe specific examples.
8. What challenges, if any, have you faced using an ethnic studies instructional approach? Describe specific experiences.

Appendix C: Student Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of race relations at your school? To what extent has this class influenced your answer?
2. How do you define the term multiple perspectives? Provide an example.
3. Describe how you get along with your ethnic studies teacher. How does this compare to how you get along with other teachers at your school?
4. How do you define the term social justice? In what ways can you work toward social justice at your school? In the United States?
5. Is your ethnic studies class taught differently compared to your traditional social studies or history classes? Explain how using an example.
6. Have your educational aspirations or goals changed since being in the ethnic studies class? What are they? Have they changed? Is so, how?

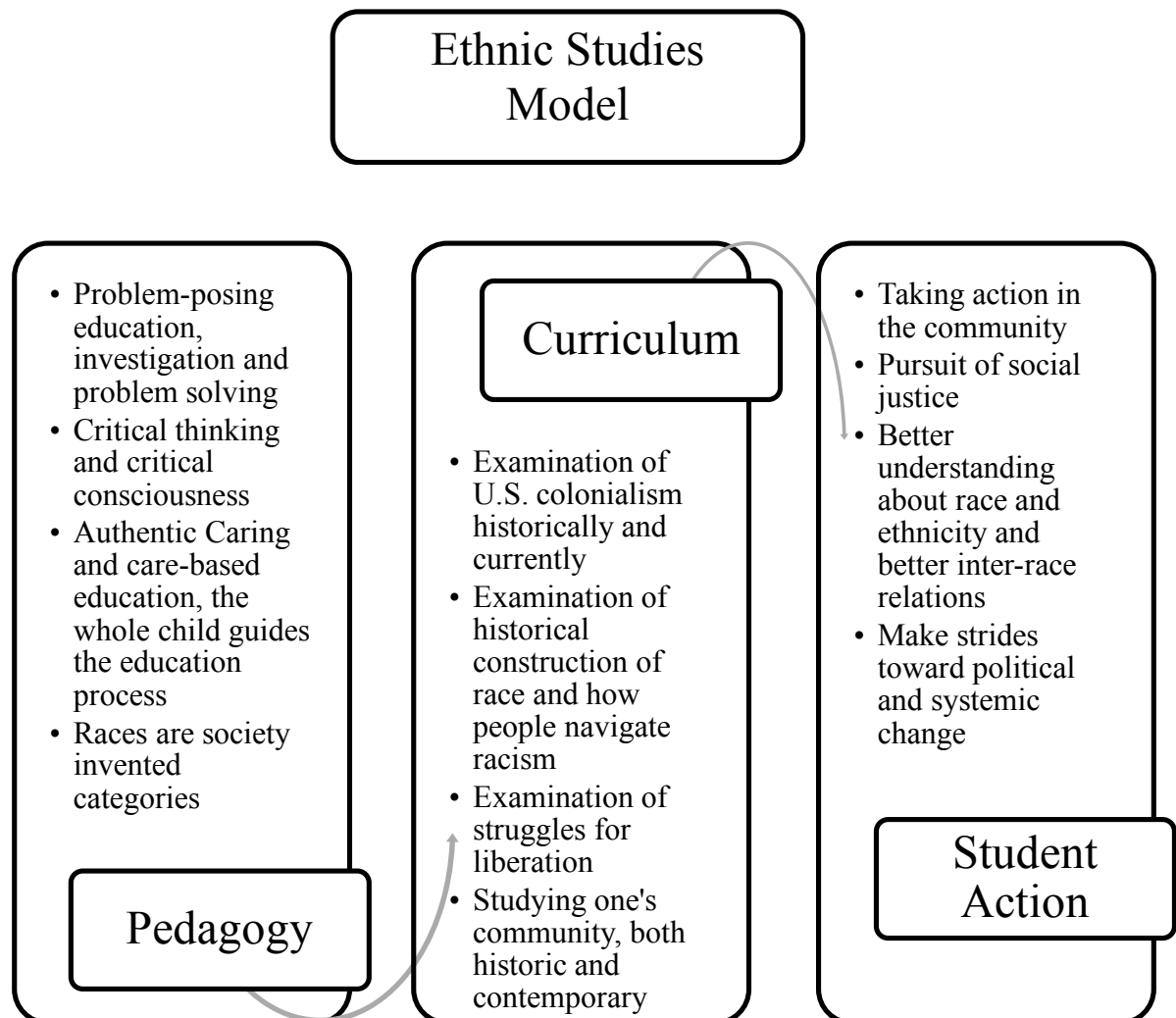
Appendix D: Instructional Materials Assessment

Sleeter's (2014) themes in ethnic studies	Course Materials	Examples (Literature, textbooks, handouts, etc...)	Evidence
Explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and relationship between social location and perspective			
Examination of U.S. colonialism historically, as well as how relations of colonialism continue to play out			
Examination of the historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism, and struggles for liberation			
Probing meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold			
Studying one's community's creative and intellectual products, both historic and contemporary			

Appendix E: Ethnic Studies Case Study Codes and Definitions

Ethnic Studies Case Study Codes and Definitions Evidence of ethnic studies themes in instruction based on Sleeter's (2014) work.	
List of codes	Definition
Origin of knowledge	Explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective
Historical U.S. colonialism and contemporary colonialism	Examination of U.S. colonialism historically and how relations of colonialism continue to play out
Historical construction of race	Examination of the historical construct of race, probing meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold
Institutional racism	Examination of the systemic nature of racism in society
Racism navigation	Examination of sociocultural communities' students might identify with and analysis of why collective identities matter
Struggle for liberation	Examination of the intellectual work of historically oppressed groups present and past
Studying one's community historically and contemporary	Examination of one's community's creative and intellectual products

Appendix F: Ethnic Studies Model



Appendix G: Teacher Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Zulema Naegele from the UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND School of Education. I hope to learn about teacher perceptions and approaches to implementing ethnic studies curriculum in two participating high schools.

If you decide to participate, the researcher will observe three consecutive days of instruction and you will be interviewed once before the beginning of the observations and again at the end about your experiences as an ethnic studies teacher and your perception of the impact the course has on students. The first interview will take about 30 minutes and the second interview will take about 50 minutes.

The interviews may make you feel uncomfortable. However, all information will be reported anonymously or via the pseudonym that is assigned to you. If you choose not to participate, I will not interview you. Participating in this research will help us better understand the instructional approaches of ethnic studies curriculum. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential by assigning pseudonyms.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with your school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Zulema Naegele at (480) 415-6149 or naegele@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

Signature

Date

Appendix H: Parent Informed Consent Form

As part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education Program at University of Portland and Portland Public Schools, I am informing you about a research study in which your child has the opportunity to participate and ask you for permission for your child to participate in this study.

Purpose of the Study

I hope to learn about student perceptions of ethnic studies curriculum and the impact, if any, it may have on student education. The findings from this study will contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of curriculum and instructional reform in achieving equitable educational outcomes. I seek to answer the question “In what ways are student perceptions and achievement influenced by the ethnic studies approaches incorporated in their American history or literature courses?”

What your Child will be Doing

The researcher will observe the teacher for three consecutive days of instruction and your child will be interviewed about their experiences as a student taking ethnic studies and their perception of the impact the course may have via a short handwritten survey while in class and 5 students from the class will be asked to participate in an individual interview. The individual interview will take about 20 minutes.

All information will be reported anonymously or via the pseudonym that is assigned to your child. If your child chooses not to participate, I will not interview your child. Participating in this research will help us better understand student perceptions of ethnic studies curriculum. However, I cannot guarantee that your child personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential by assigning pseudonyms. All raw research data will be destroyed three years after this study has ended.

Your child’s participation is voluntary. The decision whether or not to participate will not affect the relationship with the school district, teacher, or classmates. If you decide to allow your child to participate, they are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Zulema Naegele at (480) 415-6149 or naegele@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to allow your child to participate, that your child may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that your child will receive a copy of this form, and that your child is not waiving any legal claims.

Print Child's Name

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



Appendix I: Student Assent Form

As part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education Program at University of Portland and Portland Public Schools, I am informing you about a research study in which you have the opportunity to participate.

Purpose of the Study

I hope to learn about student perceptions of ethnic studies curriculum and the impact, if any, it may have on student education. The findings from this study will contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of curriculum and instructional reform in achieving equitable educational outcomes. I seek to answer the question “In what ways are student perceptions and achievement influenced by the ethnic studies approaches incorporated in their American history or literature courses?”

What you will be Doing

The researcher will observe the teacher for three consecutive days of instruction and you will be asked to complete a survey about your experiences as a student taking ethnic studies and about your perception of the impact the course may have. The survey is a short handwritten form taken while in class and 5 students from the class will be asked to participate in an individual interview. The individual interview will take about 20 minutes.

All information will be reported anonymously or via the pseudonym that is assigned to you. If you choose not to participate, I will not interview you. Participating in this research will help us better understand student perceptions of ethnic studies curriculum. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential by assigning pseudonyms. All raw research data will be destroyed three years after this study has ended.

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, you will be given a different option during the time of the observation and short survey. This will be coordinated with the classroom teacher. The decision whether or not to participate will not affect the relationship with the school district, teacher, or classmates. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Zulema Naegele at (480) 415-6149 or naegele@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

Print Your Name

Date

Signature

Date

Appendix J: Open-Ended Student Survey

Thank you for participating in this study. Please answer the following questions about your perceptions and experiences in your ethnic studies course.

1. Describe 3 examples of topics or concepts you have learned so far in this course.

a)

b)

c)

2. How has this class impacted your interactions at school and/or in your community?

a)

b)

c)

3. What class activities or assignments have influenced you the most? Why?

a)

b)

c)

d)

Continuation of Open-Ended Student Survey

Please mark below how do you identify racially/ethnically:

- _____ Asian
- _____ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- _____ Black/African American
- _____ Native American/Alaska Native
- _____ Biracial/Multiracial
- _____ Hispanic/Latino
- _____ White
- _____ _____ If necessary, please add to this list.

Please identify your gender. _____

Appendix K: Authentic Assessment Protocol

Student Product Type _____
(Essay, handout, project, etc...)

Sleeter's (2014) themes in ethnic studies	Examples (concepts, themes, quotes, etc...)	Adapted from Newmann et al. (1995) 1 to 5 scale rating
Examination of U.S. colonialism historically and currently		
Examination of historical construction of race and how people navigate racism		
Examination of struggles for liberation		
Studying one's community, both historic and contemporary		
Taking action in the community		
Pursuit of social justice		
Better understanding about race and ethnicity and better inter-race relations		
Make strides toward political and systemic change		

Description of scoring

5 – connected to their personal experiences, recognize connections between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom, creates personal meaning and significance strong enough to lead to students becoming involved in an effort to influence a larger audience beyond the classroom by: communicating knowledge to others, advocating solutions to social problems, or providing assistance to people

4 – connected to their personal experiences, recognize connections between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom, creates personal meaning and significance, however there is no effort to use the knowledge in ways that go beyond the classroom to actually influence a larger audience

3- study a topic, problem, or issue that the teacher succeeds in connecting to students' actual experiences or to contemporary public situation, recognize some connections between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom, but do not explore the implications of these connections which remain abstract, there is no effort to actually influence a larger audience

2 – encounter a topic or problem, or issue that the teacher tries to connect to students' experiences or to contemporary public situations, there is no evidence that students make connections

1 – lesson topic and activities have not clear connection to anything beyond themselves; the teacher offers not justification beyond the need to perform well in school