

“White” Washing American Education

The New Culture Wars in Ethnic Studies

Volume 1: K–12 Education

*Denise M. Sandoval, Anthony J. Ratcliff, Tracy
Lachica Buenavista, and James R. Marin, Editors*



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Contents

Volume 1: K–12 Education

Introduction: The Making of a Movement: Ethnic Studies in a K-12 Context
Tracy Lachica Buenavista

vii

PART I HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. *Hecho en Berkeley: A Brief History of the Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies Program at Berkeley High School*
Pablo Gonzalez

3

2. *Xicana/o Indigenous Epistemologies: Toward a Decolonizing and Liberatory Education for Xicana/o Youth*
Martín Sean Arce

11

3. *Healing Identity: The Organic Rx, Resistance, and Regeneration in the Classroom*
R. Toltéka Cuauhtin

43

4. *Education in Nepantla: A Chicana Feminist Approach to Engaging Latina/o Elementary Youth in Ethnic Studies*
Socorro Morales, Sylvia Mendoza Aviña, and Dolores Delgado Bernal

67

PART II ETHNIC STUDIES PEDAGOGY IN PRACTICE

5. *The Youth Will Speak: Youth Participatory Action Research as a Vehicle to Connect an Ethnic Studies Pedagogy to Communities*
Mark Bautista, Antonio Nieves Martínez, and Dani O'Brien

97

6. Rise Above: Filipina/o American Studies and Punk Rock Pedagogy <i>Noah Romero</i>	117
7. "You Can Ban Chicano Books, But They Still Pop Up!" Activism, Public Discourse, and Decolonial Curriculums in Los Angeles <i>Elias Serna</i>	133
8. Struggle in the Mud: Stockton, Ethnic Studies, and Community Engagement: An Autoethnography <i>Moteczuma Sanchez</i>	157
PART III CRITICAL PRACTITIONER PREPARATIONS	
9. The Power of Ethnic Studies: Developing Culturally and Community Responsive Leaders <i>Arlene Daus-Magbual and Allyson Tintiango-Cubales</i>	181
0. Brown Washing Hermeneutics: Historically Responsive Pedagogy in Ethnic Studies <i>Roderick Daus-Magbual</i>	199
1. Common Struggle: High School Ethnic Studies Approaches to Building Solidarity between Black and Brown Youth <i>Jerica Coffey and Ron Espiritu</i>	223
2. Resistance and Resilience in Tucson: The Xican@ Institute for Teaching and Organizing (XITO) as Form of Resistance and Liberation <i>Anita Fernández</i>	239
3. The Story of Our Day: Moving Our Imaginations to the Immense Revolutionary Potential in America <i>Luis J. Rodriguez</i>	257
Index	265
About the Editors and Contributors	277

Introduction

The Making of a Movement: Ethnic Studies in a K-12 Context

Tracy Lachica Buenavista

Until 2010, never before had Ethnic Studies been formally criminalized. As a seminal year in the history of Ethnic Studies, 2010 marked one of the most prominent battles in the new culture war in American public education. Arizona Republican governor Jan Brewer signed into law Arizona House Bill (AZ HB) 2281 (Romero 2010). AZ HB 2281 was an attack on Ethnic Studies in Arizona public schools and, in particular, facilitated the dismantling of the Mexican American/Raza Studies Department (MARS) in the Tucson Unified School District. Originally established to address educational disparities faced by a large Chicano/Latino student demographic in Tucson, MARS represented to educators, students, and families a viable academic program that improved student-learning outcomes, nurtured critical educators, and enhanced community engagement for more than a decade (Cammarota & Romero 2014). While not the first time Ethnic Studies has been challenged as a valid form of study, AZ HB 2281 was unprecedented in that it legally threatened the rights for educators and students to implement and engage in curriculum that centered the experiences of People of Color¹ in the United States. The crisis in Arizona represented the persistent devaluing of Ethnic Studies, which began with its inception as an academic discipline in the 1960s (Hu-DeHart 2004); but such is the condition that has simultaneously nurtured a critical movement of scholars, practitioners, students, and community members to defend the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies. In this volume of *White Washing American Education: The New Culture Wars in*

Ethnic Studies we examine the contemporary struggle to establish Ethnic Studies in K–12 schools across the United States. Drawing from the educators and students in the trenches, we hope to document the battle for Ethnic Studies as a means to prevent future attacks on our right to a relevant education.

THE MISDEFINING OF ETHNIC STUDIES

AZ HB 2281 was a major blow to Ethnic Studies because it legally invalidated decades of work to bring culturally relevant and community-responsive education to students, many of whom had been marginalized by traditional schooling. At its core, AZ HB 2281 was problematically grounded on an audacious assumption that American public education is objective. In reality, “standard” or “mainstream” curriculum is routinely characterized by a bias toward white perspectives and experiences—a phenomenon that education scholar Christine E. Sleeter (2011) calls “Euro-American Studies.” The normalization of a whitewashed education provides ideological and material advantages to white students at the expense of students of color, namely an education that systematically espouses a narrative of white dominance and the invisibility and/or inferiority of racially minoritized communities. In this white supremacist context, we must examine the complexity of the attacks on K–12 Ethnic Studies.

As efforts to grow Ethnic Studies gain momentum, educational efforts that attempt to challenge normative curriculum are often deemed threatening and met with reluctance, hostility, and opposition. Reluctance includes the passive actions that perpetuate the validity of whitewashed curriculum as necessary, often occurring in implicit ways. For example, reluctance might involve educators and parents directing students to enroll in non-Ethnic Studies elective courses for reasons that imply the pragmatic lessons of other courses and, in turn, the futility of race-centered curriculum. Whereas such reluctance is mainly characterized by indirect and/or unintentional messages and behaviors that underestimate the potential of Ethnic Studies, hostility is more explicit. Hostility is manifested in attitudes that promote negative perceptions of, and do not support the establishment or sustainability of, Ethnic Studies. In a K–12 context, hostility can manifest during instances in which administrators, teachers in other subject areas outwardly dismiss the relevance of such curriculum in course schedule creation and implementation. Reluctance and hostility have often plagued the state of Ethnic Studies in public education and are represented by the dearth of Ethnic Studies programs and departments in school districts nationwide despite its almost fifty-year history in higher education. Unprecedented, however, was the criminalization of Ethnic Studies in Arizona vis-à-vis HB 2281. The state-sanctioned attack on Ethnic

Studies demonstrates outright opposition, or any direct and institutionalized effort to challenge, invalidate, and dismantle Ethnic Studies in its diverse forms in K–12 education. Such opposition is vehemently racist, grounded in white supremacy, and has material consequences for Ethnic Studies educators, students, and the communities in which they are located. For example, AZ HB 2281 directly resulted in the reduction of courses that focused on Mexican American Studies, the dismantling of MARSD, and also the elimination of employment for many Ethnic Studies teachers, all of whom were teachers of color in Tucson.

A multilayered analysis of the reluctance, hostility, and opposition embodied by AZ HB 2281 is necessary as it represents how the public understands—or more accurately, misdefines—Ethnic Studies. For those who have never enrolled in, taught, or even observed an Ethnic Studies classroom, AZ HB 2281 legally defined for them what comprises Ethnic Studies. The authors of the bill stated that Ethnic Studies is any entity that teaches students to “resent or hate other races or classes of people” (State of Arizona House Bill 2281 2010).² Specifically, it laid uninformed claims that Ethnic Studies encompass courses that:

1. Promote the overthrow of the United States government.
2. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people.
3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.

In narrowly defining Ethnic Studies in this way, AZ HB 2281 simultaneously reveals what standardized curriculum should be: education that blindly promotes a nationalistic agenda, universalism, color-blindness, and individualism. Aligned with the politics of whiteness, standardized or whitewashed curriculum is not explicitly laid out, but rather is defined relative to the “other.” Ethnic Studies constitutes the “othered” curriculum, and in the case of Arizona, is inappropriately defined by non-Ethnic Studies practitioners. Thus, as Ethnic Studies scholars, teachers, and students, in this volume we attempt to more accurately depict the ideologies, curricular content, and pedagogical practices that together create Ethnic Studies.

WHAT IS ETHNIC STUDIES?

Ethnic Studies is often defined as a field that centers on the study of race, uses interdisciplinary perspectives and methods, and attempts to interrogate and dismantle systems of power—as such, Ethnic Studies is inherently a political project (Hu-DeHart 2004). While Ethnic Studies varies in form across

the United States, for the purposes of this volume, it can include but is not limited to African American/Black Studies; American Indian/Indigenous Studies; Asian American Studies; Chicana/o, Mexican American, and/or Latina/o American Studies; Critical Mixed Race Studies; Muslim American Studies; Pacific Islander Studies; and Comparative Ethnic or Race and Resistance Studies. However, scholars have identified key characteristics that often guide the formation and implementation of Ethnic Studies programs and services. These characteristics include questioning white supremacist notions of ideological objectivity and neutrality in processes of knowledge construction, the promotion of anti-essentialism in regard to the analysis and representation of racialized communities, the development and practice of a community-grounded praxis in the teaching of Ethnic Studies, and the current goals of individual empowerment for the purposes of collective self-determination and social transformation (Fong 2008). Ethnic Studies is also described to have an “ARC”: the explicit intention to increase “Access” to a high-quality and “Relevant” education for students of color, and to bridge institutions of higher education with the “Communities” in which they are located (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015). Most research on Ethnic Studies tends to focus on curriculum, pedagogy, and its institutionalization in higher education. Thus, in this introduction I review recent scholarship focused on Ethnic Studies outside of postsecondary contexts, which have been imperative in laying a foundation for K–12 Ethnic Studies and combatting false assumptions of the field.

In a comprehensive National Education Association report that examined previous research on the impact of Ethnic Studies on pre-K to college students, education scholar Christine E. Sleeter (2011) found that Ethnic studies led to positive outcomes for both students of color and white students. Sleeter began her review by naming mainstream education as “Euro-American Studies.” She supported her claim by analyzing research that demonstrated how standardized curricular content often centered white subjects and obscured and/or superficially included the experiences of racially minoritized communities. She also identified the intentionality of Ethnic studies to expose the institutional racism and systemic violence imposed on people of Color—topics repeatedly excluded and misrepresented in mainstream curriculum and textbooks. Her discussion helped to highlight the significance of her main finding, which focused on the ability of Ethnic Studies curricula to enhance the academic engagement, achievement, and social empowerment of students who participated in Ethnic Studies projects. The potential for Ethnic Studies as a mechanism to improve student learning outcomes was further demonstrated in scholarship that specifically addressed the controversy over Ethnic Studies in Arizona. Education scholars Ian Cabrera, Jeffrey Milem, and Ronald Marx (2012) conducted a

quantitative analysis of Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) student data to determine the effect of participation in Mexican American Studies (MAS), the program at the center of AZ HB 2281. In particular they explored whether or not there was a relationship between MAS participation and student test scores, high school graduation, and college-going behaviors. They examined district data of four graduating cohorts from 2008–11 and compared the data of students who had completed at least one MAS class to those students who had not participated but were in the same graduating cohort. Their findings revealed that students who completed a MAS course were more likely to pass Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) tests and graduate from high school than their counterparts who had not taken Ethnic Studies courses. However, due to data limitations, they were unable to empirically determine if there was a relationship between MAS course completion and the college-going intentions of students. In a follow-up publication, the authors and an additional colleague refined their methods and more assertively concluded, “Taking MAS classes is consistently, significantly, and positively related to increased student academic achievement, and this relationship grows stronger the more classes students take” (Cabrera et al. 2014, 1107).

Although Cabrera and his colleagues quantitatively examined the impact of Ethnic Studies, other scholars have frequently taken a more qualitative approach. For example, education literacy scholar Carri V. de los Ríos (2013) conducted a longitudinal critical teacher inquiry that explored the impact of a Chicana/o-Latina/o Studies course in Pomona, California, on the academic and identity development of thirty-five Chicana/o and Latina/o high school students, the majority of whom were classified as English Language Learners. Aligned with a Chicana/o Borderlands framework, de los Ríos asserts her subjectivity as a Chicana feminist to recognize and provide an analysis of how students negotiate their multiple identities within Ethnic Studies spaces. While her nine-month ethnographic study enabled her to deeply engage with the students who participated in the course, de los Ríos was then able to center their narratives as she keenly described how the students benefited from Ethnic Studies curriculum. She found that the Chicana/o-Latina/o Studies course provided a space for students to develop more nuanced cultural identities, personal and educational trajectories, and stronger commitments to the multiple communities of which they were members. Throughout, de los Ríos used interview excerpts to highlight students’ acute level of critical thinking, which often manifested in the ability of students to understand their local experiences within larger social, historical, economic, and political contexts.

Due to the attacks on Ethnic Studies, outcomes-based research is increasingly commonplace, but some scholars have also begun to explore *how* Ethnic Studies shapes student experiences. De los Ríos and her colleagues Jorge

López and Ernest Morrell (2015) focused on the role of pedagogy in Ethnic Studies spaces. Through an investigation of two high school courses and one afterschool program they conceptualized a “critical pedagogy of race,” an approach to teaching and learning that centered race-conscious inquiry and student agency to examine the complex world in which students traversed. In the first two case studies, the authors described two examples of high school Ethnic Studies courses in southern California that were interdisciplinary, used classroom texts written by scholars of color, and incorporated community-based projects. The third case study was on a university–high school partnership in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) that relied on youth participatory action research (YPAR) as a tool to guide students in a critical examination of racial disparities in LAUSD schools. In each example, the authors described in-depth how they scaffolded scholarship by diverse authors with experiential learning within their local communities to develop students’ literacies around academics and political engagement. Thus, the authors make an important link between what is taught in Ethnic Studies courses and how educators guide learning processes for students both inside and outside of the classroom.

While enhancing students’ literacies and engagement have always been primary goals in Ethnic Studies, Allyson Tintiango-Cubales and her colleagues (2015) identified the dire need to better prepare educators to learn and teach Ethnic Studies. After reviewing the institutional barriers that often prevent the recruitment and hiring of teachers with extensive undergraduate experience in Ethnic Studies, Tintiango-Cubales et al. highlighted research that focused on the experiences and practices of Ethnic Studies teachers to conceptualize an “Ethnic Studies pedagogy.” Specifically, they outlined key factors central to teachers enacting an effective Ethnic Studies pedagogy: (1) a strong foundation in Ethnic Studies as a field of study dedicated to the decolonization of racially oppressed communities; (2) a culturally responsive and academically affirming approach to working with students from different backgrounds and with diverse needs; (3) community-responsive practices that honor student experiences within curriculum development and implementation, and facilitate the development of relationships with students, families, and community members beyond the classroom; and (4) an ability to be empathetic and reflective of one’s multiple subjectivities, particularly one’s racial identity, which was often a more distinct asset for race-conscious teachers of color who worked with students of color. The identification of key actors that shape a critical Ethnic Studies pedagogy is paramount in the sustainability of the field in K–12 schools and spaces.

Anecdotally, Ethnic Studies often evoke visceral reactions to anyone who has participated in its various programs and projects. Yet, under a neoliberal education agenda, there’s increasing pressure to legitimize Ethnic Studies

through empirical research that emphasizes the academic outcomes of students who have participated in race-centered programs and projects. Indeed, over the last decade and even prior to AZ HB 2281, scholars have explored Ethnic Studies in K–12 schools.³ In the wake of the institutional attack on Ethnic Studies in Arizona, the need to study the impact and relevance of Ethnic Studies for students in elementary to secondary education has grown and become imperative in order to implement and sustain the field in K–12 education. However, we cannot forget the centrality of Ethnic Studies’ community-responsive agenda. That is, while the contemporary research on Ethnic Studies in K–12 settings asserts its positive learning impact, Ethnic Studies at its core is a political project and practitioners must remain vigilant to ground their lessons in the subversive history of the field. Self-determination, or the ability for people to rely on their experiences to inform the processes by which their community operates and looks like, is what defines Ethnic Studies as a field for the people and by the people. Student-learning outcomes must be (re)conceptualized beyond individual academic performance and we must better consider the ability of students to apply Ethnic Studies lessons to addressing the material conditions of their communities and toward larger structural change and social transformation.

THE CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENT

The current grassroots efforts to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in K–12 public education should be considered part of a longer history of culturally relevant education movements, including the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) that established Ethnic Studies in American higher education (Umemoto 1989). Further, although not traditionally referred to as Ethnic Studies, the Freedom Schools in Mississippi and other parts of the South, which emerged during the civil rights era, were predecessors (Omatsu 2003). At the core of Freedom Schools was an antiracist, popular education program that encouraged students to become familiar with the structural barriers that led to the systematic exclusion of Blacks and other People of Color in the United States. Freedom Schools relied on experiential learning and equipped students with opportunities to participate in community-based projects and political actions focused on desegregation, as well as redistribution of and equal access to public resources and services. Similarly, Ethnic Studies theoretically asserts an antiracist and decolonizing agenda, relies on culturally relevant texts and educational practices, and emphasizes a community-grounded praxis that addresses the needs of local communities.

Today there exists a myriad of programs that embody the principles of Ethnic Studies. Shortly after the Freedom Schools and aligned with the TWLF and Black Power movements of the late 1960s, Berkeley High School was one of the first public schools to house a Black Studies department (Noguera

1994). As early as 1968, Berkeley High School students were able to take courses that ranged from Black history and literature to Swahili. Approximately thirty miles south of Berkeley is James Logan High School in Union City, California. James Logan High School is the only public high school to have a comprehensive Ethnic Studies department in the United States.⁴ Although the department has existed for more than a decade, courses have been offered in various areas including African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano Studies, Filipino American Studies, and Multicultural Studies for years prior to departmentalization. Additionally, many K–12 schools in California provide Ethnic Studies courses to students in a range of cities including but not limited to Azusa, Glendora, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Pomona, Richmond, San Francisco, San Leandro, San Jose, and Santa Ana. To note, in addition to being credentialed teachers, many of the educators responsible for creating and facilitating these courses were trained in Ethnic Studies at the collegiate level and/or were community organizers.

Other notable Ethnic Studies programs and projects that serve K–12 students include charter schools such as Hālai Kū Māna Hawaiian culture-based school in Honolulu and Roses in Concrete Community School in Oakland; community-based organizational projects such as the Black Panther Mentorship Project in Los Angeles, KINETIC in Chicago, and the Pico Youth and Family Center in Santa Monica, California; grassroots projects like the Kuya Youth Mentorship Program in San Diego, and People's Education Movement's Freedom School and the Watts Youth Collective programs in Los Angeles; and university-sponsored collaborations such as the 65th Street Corridor Community Collaborative Project of California State University, Sacramento, the Adelante Partnership out of the University of Utah, Pinoy Teach at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, the Welga! Filipino American Labor Archive project at University of California, Davis, and the U.S. Diversity and Ethnic Experience Saturday class out of California State University, Long Beach. Included in this volume are chapters that focus on two of the most successful Ethnic Studies programs to be established in K–12 schools: LARSD in Tucson and Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP) in San Francisco. We include several chapters that focus on these two particular programs because their practices and impact on students have been documented, they critically inform the current K–12 Ethnic Studies movement, and they have nurtured many of the practitioners responsible for creating and/or growing the projects previously mentioned.

Despite the passage of AZ HB 2281, Ethnic Studies has since won key victories throughout the United States. Specifically, while Ethnic Studies projects have existed for decades, current institutionalization efforts are one strategy to grow and sustain such projects. In the same year that AZ HB 2281 was signed into law, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)

passed a resolution to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in San Francisco schools (Tiniangco-Cubales et al. 2015). Ethnic Studies courses had already been selectively offered in various SFUSD schools (e.g., PEP), but the resolution included the creation of a committee of teachers who would develop Ethnic Studies curriculum at the district level. In December 2014, SFUSD unanimously passed another resolution that requires high school students to take an Ethnic Studies class to graduate (Tucker 2014). Although SFUSD had a longer history of Ethnic Studies implementation in K–12 schools, it was not the first California school district to require Ethnic Studies. In July 2014, El Rancho Unified School District (ERUSD) in southern California was the first district in the state to approve an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement. Shortly after, in November 2014, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) also made Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement after already offering Ethnic Studies as elective courses in some schools, much like SFUSD (Ceasar 2014). In 2015, two more California school districts made Ethnic Studies a high school graduation requirement, including Montebello (February) (Cupchoy & Ochoa 2015) and Sacramento (June) (Kalb 2015). Again, teachers, students, and other organizers in their respective geographical areas have been leading advocates in these institutionalization efforts and have used the establishment of Ethnic Studies in some districts to facilitate other districts to follow.

While California is leading in large-scale efforts to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in K–12 schools, there have also been important victories in other states. In 2007, Kailua High School in O'ahu, Hawai'i was the first instance in which an Ethnic Studies course was established as a requirement for graduation.⁵ Hawai'i is also home to Native Hawaiian language schools and Hālai Kū Māna, a charter school that centers Native Hawaiian epistemologies and cultural practices to explicitly challenge curriculum that promotes settler colonialism (Goodyear-Ka'opua 2013). Further, in 2014, the Texas State Board of Education voted to create instructional materials for Ethnic Studies elective courses (Planas 2014). However, this was a compromise for community organizers, who were pushing for the creation of a statewide Mexican American Studies curriculum. Regardless, some schools began to develop Ethnic Studies courses and in 2015, Mission High School in Mission, Texas, offered a Mexican American Studies course, one of the first in the state (Phippen 2015). More recently, Minneapolis Public Schools acknowledged efforts to offer Ethnic Studies as a high school elective (Matos 2014). In all of these instances, the impetus for Ethnic Studies mobilization were the needs to provide a more reflective and relevant education to the increasingly diverse student population within these geographies, and to better prepare all students for a more global citizenry.

The contemporary K–12 Ethnic Studies movement is the result of grassroots organizing by critical educators who consider Ethnic Studies an important mechanism to empower students and communities. In July 2015, the

Education for Liberation Network hosted the fifth Free Minds, Free People (FMFP) conference in Oakland, California.⁶ FMFP is a biannual gathering of educators, students, and activists who engage in workshops, symposia, and each professional development focused on the different ways that educators and students can use education as a tool toward social and political liberation. Included in the FMFP 2015 conference program was the Ethnic Studies Assembly, a space in which to strengthen strategies toward the development and teaching of K–12 Ethnic Studies nationally. Many of the assembly organizers and participants were educators and students who have been directly involved in the struggle for, and implementation and teaching of, Ethnic Studies within their local settings.

At the Ethnic Studies Assembly, Allyson Tintiango-Cubales, a professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University and the director of the Pin@y Educational Partnerships, presented a working definition of Ethnic Studies as it is operationalized in K–12 education:

We are advocating for pre-K–12 Ethnic Studies in public schools that is grounded in critical consciousness, critical thinking, and that is authentic and responsive to local communities. This type of educational experience should also assist youth toward developing a positive cultural and academic identity, prepare youth for college and beyond, as well as empower youth toward taking action and becoming agents of social transformation in their communities.

Central to this conceptualization of Ethnic Studies is the ability to foster in teachers and students academic, social, and political literacies essential in individual and community-based empowerment. While projects that seek to forward an Ethnic Studies agenda must consider its relationship to similar projects, we also take the position that Ethnic Studies is necessarily a political project, and must be designed in alignment with local community needs and in response to the global conditions shaping the historical and contemporary composition of the community in which projects are located. In doing so, educators and community members who aim to establish, sustain, or grow Ethnic Studies will feel confident knowing that Ethnic Studies will necessarily look and feel different among and within various geographies.

FORWARD A K–12 ETHNIC STUDIES

In this volume we include the perspectives of Ethnic Studies scholars, practitioners, and students who collectively offer readers in-depth accounts of Ethnic Studies projects in K–12 schools and spaces. The contributors share historical background of key programs and projects, resistance strategies they

have employed to protect Ethnic Studies in their local communities, and hope toward building and sustaining a K–12 Ethnic Studies movement. The chapters can be characterized under three major themes: Ethnic Studies history and ideological foundations, pedagogical practices in classrooms and communities, and critical practitioner preparation. To reiterate, these chapters in no way offer formulaic, one-size-fits-all strategies to implement Ethnic Studies in K–12 schools because this would counter our assertion that Ethnic Studies should be developed in specific context of the local communities in which such projects are located. Rather, our goal is to expose readers to some of these programs and share the narratives of Ethnic Studies practitioners so that we can continue to grow the potential for Ethnic Studies to transform public education.

Historical and Theoretical Considerations

The high profile case of Tucson's Mexican American Studies program reinvigorated the K–12 Ethnic Studies movement. In particular, the dismantling of the program led Ethnic Studies students and scholars to document other K–12 Ethnic Studies efforts. Within these examples scholars also countered simplistic notions of Ethnic Studies as simply multicultural education: Ethnic Studies is theoretically complex and draws on multiple epistemologies to inform the ways in which educators and students read the world. Ethnic Studies is grounded in honoring the local knowledge of the communities students are from; often educators challenge students to use their experiences to frame and contextualize the problems they seek to address, while at the same time recognizing their own positionalities within the classroom. In the first part of the book, we present research that offers readers insight into the diverse history and theoretical traditions that have shaped Ethnic Studies projects in K–12 classrooms.

In “*Hecho en Berkeley*,” Pablo Gonzalez reflects on his personal experiences with the Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies program at Berkeley High School in Berkeley, California, during the 1990s. Gonzalez provides a historical account of the program's formative years and argues that in 1993, the program was the first in the United States to provide comprehensive course offerings in Chicana/o Studies. Gonzalez describes the primary role high school students played in advocating for Ethnic Studies. In doing so, students of color actively countered deficit notions of themselves and demonstrated the need to consider their perspectives in educational transformation. We include this historical account to encourage readers to explore Ethnic Studies projects in their respective communities and to highlight the longer history Ethnic Studies has had in K–12 schools. Such context also helps us to understand the educational disparities Ethnic Studies curricula seek to address.

Martín Sean Arce continues to address the role of Ethnic Studies in *Raza* communities in his chapter, “Xicana/o Indigenous Epistemologies.” He begins by describing the contentious relationship between traditional schooling and Xicana/o youth and communities. Arce then outlines in detail the Mexican indigenous epistemology of *Nahui Ollin*, the central theoretical framework that shaped the pedagogy and curriculum of the highly successful MARSD in Tucson. In doing so, Arce describes how Xicana/o Indigenous Epistemologies are “living and fluid knowledge systems” and exemplifies how such perspectives can guide teachers and students to better interrogate the ways that vestiges of colonialism continue to shape the material realities for dispossessed people. Further, he reflects upon how Xicana/o Indigenous Epistemologies can facilitate teachers and students to lovingly engage with each other and their local communities through collective learning. Arce’s work provides important insight regarding the theoretical complexity of the Mexican American Studies program specifically, and Ethnic Studies overall, which is not well represented in public discourse.

While Arce explains the Indigenous Epistemologies that informed the social justice work of MARSD, in the chapter “Healing Identity,” R. Tolteka Cuauhtin compels Ethnic Studies practitioners to more critically explore the ways we think about and apply “culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy.” In particular, he critiques the ways in which antiracist education practices often obscure indigeneity, and the vestiges of colonization and genocide that continue to shape the experiences of students of color with indigenous ancestral legacies. Using his experience as a high school teacher in Tataviam, Yangna (or the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles), he walks readers through excerpts of an autoethnographic assignment students completed during a ninth grade social justice geography course. Through a discussion of student work, he illustrates the need to “revitalize, rehumanize, regenerate, and reclaim indigenous consciousness” within the classroom, or what he terms the “organic Rx.” Cuauhtin reminds us that as educators, we must constantly revisit the ideologies that inform and shape our work to ensure our practice is reflective of our students’ rich but complicated histories.

Despite being theoretically rigorous, Ethnic Studies should not dissuade us from using difficult frameworks to shape our teaching of and learning with younger students. Socorro Morales, Sylvia Mendoza Aviña, and Dolores Delgado Bernal show us how to do this by providing an account of an Ethnic Studies project with Latina/o elementary school students in Salt Lake City, Utah. In “Education in Nepantla,” they recount how they took a Chicana feminist approach to teach bilingual fifth and sixth graders in an extracurricular Ethnic Studies elementary-level course. The authors offer what they call “rasquache pedagogy,” which in form takes into consideration and centers the youthfulness of students, and necessarily allows elementary school

youth to express their “physical and emotional energy” during the learning process. By constructing the classroom as a space in which students and teachers are encouraged to freely reflect on who they are, the authors found students possessed a critical ability to articulate how they saw and understood the world in which they lived—a process that offered opportunities for personal and collective healing. Their work underscores the delicate balance Ethnic Studies practitioners continually negotiate in the operationalizing of critical theories that inform our work, challenging students beyond what is commonly expected of them, and simultaneously honoring where students are in their educational trajectory.

Ethnic Studies Pedagogy in Practice

Bombarded by an overemphasis on standardized testing and the imposition of common core curriculum, the creativity of K–12 teachers in American public education is increasingly becoming constrained, as is their ability to implement content, classroom exercises, and assignments reflective of students’ complex lives. Ethnic Studies pedagogy is one strategy to center marginalized student experiences, a phenomenon seldom found in traditional classrooms. Paramount to Ethnic Studies pedagogy are the various practices that deeply and critically engage students with their family histories and local communities. In part II of the book, we feature innovative classroom and community praxis that embody the principles of Ethnic Studies. Taken together, these strategies emphasize a need to conduct structural analysis of power; develop students’ academic literacies; foster relationship building between educators, students, families, and other community members; and promote processes of humanization that traditional schooling often deemphasize.

Expanding on education scholarship, Mark Bautista, Antonio Nieves Martínez, and Dani O’Brien lay out the benefits of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) as a classroom tool to develop students’ literacies around research and political organizing. Through a case study of the Council of Youth Research (CYR), a youth research program in Los Angeles, California, they detail how students conducted collaborative community-based research and developed recommendations regarding how local schools could better serve students of color in Los Angeles Unified School District. Whereas YPAR projects traditionally encompass student-centered learning and a critical analysis of power in schooling, the authors argue that YPAR guided by an Ethnic Studies framework enables students to pointedly examine racial disparities and propose mechanisms to resist multiple forms of oppression. Specifically, an Ethnic Studies YPAR process involves working with students to understand structural oppression, using an asset-based approach to counter deficit perspectives of students and communities of color, and composing

action-oriented recommendations that promote the transformation (versus reform) of schools. Bautista, Martinez, and O'Brien highlight the utility of Ethnic Studies' interdisciplinary character in the designing of effective pedagogical practices.

Critical Ethnic Studies pedagogy often incorporates the cultural practices in which communities of color participate. In "Rise Above," Noah Romero makes the connection between the teaching of Filipina/o American Studies and punk counterculture. Despite the assumption that punk rock is a white space, Romero discusses the long history of People of Color using punk rock as a mechanism to understand and critique systemic racism, white supremacy, and capitalism. He does so to explain punk rock's function in teaching Filipina/o American experiences and to contextualize what he deems "punk rock pedagogy." In turn, such an approach used within a Filipino American Studies space entails establishing a foundation of Filipina/o American history and issues, studying punk as a form of protest practiced within the Filipina/o diaspora, and involving students in an experiential engagement with punk. Through the conceptualization of punk rock pedagogy, Romero provides an example of how educators can use subversive cultural practices already familiar to students in the teaching of Ethnic Studies content.

Ethnic Studies pedagogy is necessarily fluid in that it must respond to the diverse and constantly changing needs of marginalized communities. Concurrent with the attack on Mexican American Studies in Arizona was the banning of Ethnic Studies books in Tucson, particularly works written by authors of color and works that feature characters of color. One response to the ban was the construction of pop-up books as a classroom tool for students to discuss censorship and the production of original texts. In "You Can Ban Chicano Books, But They'll Still Pop Up!" Elias Serna shares his experience using pop-up books as a creative way for students to study and produce cultural texts focused on community movements. While Serna introduces readers to an innovative teaching tool that can be incorporated into classrooms, more important, he reminds us that students are central to the defining, teaching, and learning of Ethnic Studies. Our praxis must reflect the belief that students are not just consumers of knowledge but also producers.

Whereas the majority of chapters in this section highlighted the ways in which Ethnic Studies pedagogy can shape learning in formal classrooms, Moteuczoma Sanchez makes the case for its use in larger community spaces. In "Struggle in the Mud" Sanchez delineates how lessons learned from Ethnic Studies informed the community mobilization to reopen the Fair Oaks Public Library in a primarily Mexican neighborhood in east Stockton, California. He contextualizes the contemporary disparities suffered by People of Color in Stockton through a historical discussion of the institutional racism that

characterized city policies and social practices, including local politics. Sanchez then presents a detailed account of his involvement with grassroots organization Scholastic Educational Movement in Language Literacy and Scholarship (SEMILLAS), and the strategic plan they developed to mobilize a multiracial coalition of community members around the library. In addition to building a multiracial support base, the combination of community-based rallies with demographic and policy research to inform their campaign exemplified what Sanchez described as Ethnic Studies pedagogy in action. Through Sanchez's discussion of Ethnic Studies pedagogy in action outside of a formal educational context, readers become familiar with the long-term impact of Ethnic Studies' community-responsive purpose.

Critical Practitioner Preparation

The movement to implement Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools faces a major structural barrier, namely the ability to recruit, adequately train, and retain critical educators (Tintiango-Cubales et al. 2015). Currently, there is no institutional support or formal process to credential teachers in Ethnic Studies. There are also few pathways that inform students to major in Ethnic Studies and encourage Ethnic Studies undergraduates to pursue teaching, and even less resources that prepare them to pass the myriad of standardized exams necessary to enter and complete teacher credential programs. This is not to say that there are not qualified teacher candidates to teach Ethnic Studies; many credentialled teachers majored or minored in Ethnic Studies as undergraduates and/or are longtime community organizers whose activism is informed by Ethnic Studies scholarship and practices. However, in recognition of the dearth in institutional support to pipeline Ethnic Studies students into teaching careers and to retain critical teachers already in the classroom, part III of the book features the ways in which educators have taken critical professional development into their own hands and have applied an Ethnic Studies pedagogy in the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies.

Traditional educational leadership models tend to promote hierarchies in school organization, as well as overly focus on the management of schools and classrooms. In "The Power of Ethnic Studies" Arlene Daus-Magbual and Allyson Tintiango-Cubales critique such models and outline a Critical Leadership Praxis (CLP), an educational leadership pedagogy that emphasizes the development of culturally and community-responsive leaders in education and beyond. Their model is based on the experiences of critical education leaders who have gone through Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP), an Ethnic Studies program that trains undergraduates and graduate students to teach Filipino American Studies to elementary school, middle school, high school, and community college students throughout San Francisco and

neighboring areas. Starting as a program meant to address the access and retention issues faced by Filipino American students, PEP has pipelined an impressive number of participants to pursue advanced degrees; similarly, PEP has fostered among participants strong academic and self-confidence, acute political literacies, and long-term goals to serve the community through service-oriented professions such as teaching. The CLP developed through PEP encourages Ethnic Studies practitioners to not only think about how their programming can shape student trajectories, but also their own professional development.

Due to PEP's more than fifteen-year record of direct educational outcomes, we also highlight the program's ability to prepare educators to construct a strong educational philosophy that historicizes their work and is rooted in social justice. In Roderick Daus-Magbual's chapter, "Brown Washing Hermeneutics," he uses the narratives of former PEP teachers to demonstrate how their participation enabled them to reflect on their personal histories and ultimately shaped a responsibility to dedicate their lives to educational transformation. He offers to readers what he calls a Historically Responsive Pedagogy (HRP), which utilizes the learning and construction of historical narratives to contextualize the contemporary lives of students and teachers. The impact of students and teachers engaging in an HRP is the facilitation of participants developing a strong sense to "act" against historical patterns that have marginalized their communities and toward self- and community empowerment. Daus-Magbual's findings are important in showing how teaching Ethnic Studies can be an important mechanism in shaping critical practitioner preparation and retention.

The work of PEP has been mediated by a longer history and partnerships with community organizations and San Francisco State University, which houses the only College of Ethnic Studies in the nation. However, a grassroots approach is sometimes more realistic in spaces that lack such a network or institutional support. Such is the context that shaped the work described by Jerica Coffey and Ron Espiritu in their chapter, "Common Struggle." Informed by more than a decade of teaching experience with Black and Brown communities, Coffey and Espiritu describe in-depth the process of developing Teacher Inquiry Groups (TIG), or professional learning spaces for K-12 educators in which they collectively work together to design curriculum and develop teacher pedagogy using an Ethnic Studies framework. TIGs provided opportunities for teachers from various schools and across disciplines to engage in contemporary educational research, and share and co-construct critical race curriculum. As such, TIGs served as a counterspace for participants, most of whom are teachers of color who often lack such an outlet within their respective schools. Central in their work is the assertion that educators who work with primarily students of color should necessarily develop a critical race

literacy, especially in context of the colorblind educational policies and practices that shape K-12 schooling.

Evident in this part concerning critical practitioner preparation is the immense amount of time, work, and energy that Ethnic Studies educators dedicate to their students and their craft. Such commitment is exemplified in Anita Fernández's chapter, "Resistance and Resilience in Tucson." Fernández introduces readers to the Xican@ Institute for Teaching and Organizing (XITO), a collective comprised of former teachers of the Mexican American Studies program and other allies. XITO emerged not only for critical teacher training, but also to prepare practitioners to defend the teaching and learning of Ethnic Studies in education. XITO embodies the principles of Ethnic Studies, namely the goal to develop among educators critical consciousness, and culturally and community-responsive pedagogies both within and outside of formal classrooms. XITO also relies on the activist tradition of Ethnic Studies in that their work has extended beyond curricular development and teaching strategies, and toward creating an Ethnic Studies movement. Taking the lessons learned from the criminalization of Mexican American Studies in Arizona, XITO has become a space to share student and teacher narratives with practitioners across the United States as a tool to develop strategies against current and future attacks on Ethnic Studies.

We end part III and the volume with an essay by Los Angeles Poet Laureate, Luis Rodriguez. While this volume has largely contained the work of Education and Ethnic Studies practitioners who have shared research that reveals the relevance and impact of our field, Rodriguez reminds us that the future of Ethnic Studies cannot forget the significance of cultural workers. He makes the argument that artists, writers, and community activists play a vital role in the construction of Ethnic Studies. Indeed, cultural workers often provide the stories used within classrooms and/or inspire the imagination of teachers and students. However, beyond the critical preparation of teachers and students, and the construction of popular texts that articulate the suffering, resilience, and self-determination of marginalized communities that we study, Ethnic Studies must always center the humanization of our communities, a lesson often lost in an increasingly neoliberal education.

CONCLUSION

On October 9, 2015, K-12 Ethnic Studies advocates experienced a major blow when California governor Jerry Brown vetoed Assembly Bill (AB) 101. CA AB 101 mandated the establishment of an advisory board to develop a "model curriculum" of Ethnic Studies for grades 7 to 12 in the state of California.⁷ California would have been the first state to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in K-12 schools at a statewide level. Although CA AB 101 received

bipartisan support, Governor Brown stated that the bill was “essentially a redundant process”: “The Instructional Quality Commission is in the midst of revising the History–Social Science Framework, which includes guidance on ethnic studies courses. Creating yet another advisory board specific to ethnic studies would be duplicative and undermine our current curriculum process.”¹⁸

Governor Brown’s justification for the veto does not take into account that AB 101 had been previously amended to streamline the process for developing Ethnic Studies curriculum and to implement Ethnic Studies at pre-school and elementary levels, and beyond Social Studies. Further, the veto and his statement affirmed the lack of understanding of the nuanced content and pedagogy specific to Ethnic Studies, and the need to rely on Ethnic Studies scholars and practitioners to guide its development in K–12 education.

The struggle for K–12 Ethnic Studies is indicative of the culture wars in public education. As the population of K–12 students becomes more ethnically and racially diverse, so should our teaching force, curriculum, and pedagogies. Education should facilitate the ability of teachers and students to apply lessons learned in the classroom to examine, understand, and transform their material realities. Instead, public education is becoming privatized and teacher effectiveness and student learning are measured by bureaucratic outcomes-based assessments that do not reflect the values and experiences of marginalized communities. The contemporary K–12 Ethnic Studies movement seeks to alter the direction of schooling from uncritical socialization processes toward education for liberation.

Throughout the volume, contributors outline multiple factors to consider in the struggle to implement Ethnic Studies in K–12 schools and spaces. Among the factors are the long history of discrimination against students and teachers of color, the ways that standardized curriculum has both obscured and validated the white supremacist violence inflicted on communities of color in education and society, and the overall dehumanization perpetuated by traditional schooling practices. More important, however, the authors highlight the factors they believe are essential to the growth and sustainability of K–12 Ethnic Studies: the continued theorization of the field, the development and incorporation of culturally relevant and community-responsive pedagogies, and the critical preparation of practitioners. However, there are many challenges ahead on the road to a widespread K–12 Ethnic Studies. In particular, the lack of institutional support to train Ethnic Studies practitioners is a reality we have to strategize against. The barrier to critical practitioner preparation is threefold. First, we must strengthen the recruitment and retention of students into undergraduate and graduate programs in Ethnic Studies so that they gain a strong content and methodological foundation in the field. Second, we have to create smoother pathways

for Ethnic Studies students to pursue careers in teaching, including the development of credentialing processes that honor their knowledge base. Last, we have to establish a large network of support and institutional mechanisms to retain Ethnic Studies practitioners who teach in K–12 schools. In several cases, teachers have been ostracized and dismissed for incorporating Ethnic Studies content and pedagogy into traditional classrooms.⁹ Thus, essential to the K–12 Ethnic Studies movement is growing a wide base of support to organize on behalf of the educators who dedicate an insurmountable amount of time to their students and craft.

Captured not only by the recent scholarship that reports the long-term impact of Ethnic Studies on students, but also evident in the passion and work of the volume’s contributors, is the message that the critical Ethnic Studies practitioner remains an active student of the field. Indeed, the contributors to this volume collectively have decades of experience as both students and teachers of Ethnic Studies. Together, they assert how Ethnic Studies in K–12 schools would challenge education that is ahistorical and does not consider or value the experiential knowledge of students in the classroom and the communities they represent. They document how practitioners must engage in ideological battles against notions of schools as neutral learning spaces, which readers can consider a theoretical starting point in their own development of a critical Ethnic Studies pedagogy. While we have seen a surge in phenomena such as “multicultural education,” “participatory action research,” or “service-learning” curriculum, we must remind educators that Ethnic Studies classrooms have always prioritized the centering of those precisely in the margins, reciprocal knowledge construction processes, and learning through community engagement. Thus, as we move forward we have to incorporate in the K–12 Ethnic Studies agenda not a desire to expand and institutionalize Ethnic Studies, but the need to fight against the commodification of Ethnic Studies in education.

NOTES

1. Throughout the volumes, we capitalize “People of Color” to acknowledge a collective, yet fluid, identity formation of the racially minoritized involved and/or impacted by cultural and political movements against white supremacy. However, aligned with our standpoint that Ethnic Studies is varied in form and contextual, the term “people of color” is used when chapter authors choose such naming.
2. Available at <http://www.aziteg.gov/legtext/491eg/2r/bills/hb2281s.pdf>.
3. For other scholars whose work has examined Ethnic Studies at the K–12 level, please see Acosta (2007, 36–42); Halagao (2010, 495–512); Jocson (2008, 241–53); Morrell et al. (2013); and Tintiangco-Cubales (2009).
4. See James Logan Ethnic Studies Department website at <https://sites.google.com/site/jlethnicstudies/>.

5. See "Ethnic Studies at Kailua High School," 2012, http://p4chawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/brochure_FTST_120409_JSM_final.pdf.
6. For more information on Free Minds Free People and the Education for Liberation Network, see <http://fmfp.org>.
7. California Assembly Bill 101, Pupil Instruction: Ethnic Studies, 2015, http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB101.
8. Governor Brown's full veto statement is available at https://www.gov.ca.gov/docs/AB_101_Veto_Message.pdf.
9. In the past decade there have been high profile cases in which teachers incorporating Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy have been dismissed from their positions, despite rampant student and community-based support. In 2008, high school English teacher Karen Salazar was dismissed from her position at Jordan High School in Los Angeles Unified School District. She was accused of "brainwashing students" and that her Ethnic Studies-based curriculum was "too Afro-centric." See Howard Blume, "School Rallies Round Dismissed Teacher," *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 2008. In 2015, elementary school teacher Marilyn Zuniga was terminated from her position at Forest Street Elementary School in New Jersey after an activity in which students wrote letters to political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal. See Bill Wichert, "District Fights Teacher's Lawsuit over Firing for Kids' Letters to Cop Killer," *NJ.com*, August 20, 2015.

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