ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:

A NECESSARY INTERVENTION: CONCEPTUALIZING AND EMPLOYING CRITICA RACIAL ETHNIC STUDIES

Crystal Charity, Doctor of Philosophy, 2024

Dissertation directed by: Associate Professor Tara Brown, Department of Teacher and Learning Policy and Leadership

Over the last decade, secondary schools around the United States have rapidly adopted ethnic studies courses. For instance, California's governor mandated ethnic studies as a high school graduation requirement in 2021 (Magcalas, 2023). According to scholars, ethnic studies courses offer educational experiences that disrupt the erasure and oppression of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color through Eurocentrism in schools (Hu-Dehart, 1993; Lowy, 1995). However, there is currently no universally accepted understanding of ethnic studies curricula, and ethnic studies programs vary widely. As K-12 ethnic studies programs expand around the country, educators need a unifying framework that retains ethnic studies' critical integrity. This three-paper dissertation proposes critical racial ethnic studies (CRES), a curricular and pedagogical framework grounded in critical race theory and critical pedagogies, as a tool for organizing ethnic studies curricula. Collectively, this dissertation offers practical tools for educators to cultivate critical consciousness and racial literacies among youth and for teacher educators to do the same among teachers and teacher candidates.

In study 1, "Conceptualizing critical racial ethnic studies: A critical analysis of the literature," I use the CRES framework to analyze the research on secondary-level ethnic studies curricula and pedagogy, its limitations as a means of achieving racial justice, and possible future

directions for the field. Drawing from this literature, I develop a definition of CRES and establish the historical context out of which CRES emerged, thereby demonstrating an alignment between the original goals of ethnic studies and the CRES framework. I also identify several patterns in the literature: (1) the variation in critical pedagogies employed by ethnic studies educators, (2) how youth experience CRES, (3) the CRES tenets most frequently highlighted by researchers, and (4) the differences between out-of-school and in-school CRES curricula.

In study 2, "Building new worlds through an ethnic studies community education program," I employ the CRES framework to analyze the development and implementation of an out-of-school CRES program. Through individual and focus group interviews, observations, and participant reflections, this qualitative study examines the decision-making processes of three Asian American undergraduate students working collaboratively to create an Asian American Studies curriculum for local youth of color. This study reveals that educators' desire and ability to enact a CRES curriculum is largely dependent upon their backgrounds, experiences, and resources. For instance, the participants relied on their peers to help with curriculum development. This study reveals that access to university-level ethnic studies courses and a robust network of critically conscious peers can support facilitators' racial literacies and critical consciousness and, thus, their commitment to critical interpretations of ethnic studies.

In study 3, "'I wish I had this program in high school': What motivates and sustains ethnic studies community educators," I build upon the previous study by examining what motivated the three students to create the CRES program and how they persevered despite myriad barriers that can lead to burn out. Through individual and focus group interviews and participant reflections, this qualitative study interrogates how participants describe their pathways to becoming and remaining CRES educators. The findings reveal CRES educators may

be inspired to pursue teaching because of their lived experiences during childhood and adolescence, particularly in schools and their families, and their subsequent involvement in ethnic studies courses and politically engaged student groups in college. The study highlights how important community networks and resources are in the development of educators' critical consciousness and racial literacies, two key factors in employing CRES curricula. Thus, the findings provide insight into how to effectively recruit, train, support, and learn from CRES educators.

A NECESSARY INTERVENTION: CONCEPTUALIZING AND EMPLOYING CRITICAL RACIAL ETHNIC STUDIES

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
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Dedication

For my beloved grandfather and greatest teacher, Donald Lee Otis Charity, Sr. You instilled in me the devotion to community that led me here. I'm so grateful I was born to you.

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First, I am indebted to my three participants who generously invited me into their world and shared their time, energy, and space with me. Most importantly, they allowed me the privilege of telling their stories. I hope I've done their journeys justice.

To Shavonne, who would I be if not for you? You were my first student and somehow survived it. Being your sister has given me purpose my entire life. Thank you for your loyalty, generosity, and witnessing.

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Introduction

Since its inception, the U.S. K-12 education system has functioned to obscure and uphold processes of racial subjugation on which this country was built and preserved (Willis, 2019). As a result, Black and other students of color endure symbolic, structural, and epistemic violence (Coles, 2016; Love, 2016; Magill & Rodriguez, 2022) in K-12 schools. Recent media stories reveal how such violence manifests in youths' daily schooling experiences. In November 2022, a white middle school teacher told several Black students in his Pflugerville, Texas classroom, "Deep down in my heart, I am ethnocentric, which means I think my race is the superior one" (Williams, 2022, para. 2). Caught on film, this white supremacist proclamation from an authority figure visibly harmed and disturbed the students that afternoon. This teacher with antiblack, racist notions of superiority did not just enact psychological violence through words one day; his beliefs undoubtedly manifested in how he taught, disciplined, and related to these youth. This white teacher and teachers like him are responsible for educating Black and non-black students of color, yet they do not recognize these students' worth or humanity. Immediate interventions are necessary to eliminate this pattern of school-based, racial violence and transform K-12 education for youth of color.

Ethnic studies, which centers the ways of being and knowledge productions of Black, Native, Latinx, and Asian Pacific Islander communities, is one tool for creating educational experiences that counteract racially/ethnically oppressive practices and promote epistemic justice in traditional, K-12 school settings (Saldaña, 2021). Over the last decade, secondary schools across the U.S. have rapidly adopted ethnic studies courses. For example, in 2021, California's State Board of Education passed state-wide curriculum standards for secondary-level ethnic studies, and California's governor mandated ethnic studies as a high school graduation

requirement (Orange County Board of Education, 2022). By the 2025-2026 school year, public high schools across California must offer at least one ninth-grade ethnic studies course. Additionally, between 2013 and 2018, high schools in Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington established ethnic studies departments, and high schools in the cities of Austin, Atlanta, and Chicago instituted ethnic studies courses (National Education Association EdJustice, 2021).

Despite the growing institutionalization of K-12 ethnic studies, research indicates little agreement about its purpose and, thus, secondary ethnic studies programs vary widely. Some programs emphasize critical consciousness (e.g., Gomez & Cammarota, 2021; Nojan, 2020; Sacramento, 2019) or racial literacies (e.g., de los Ríos, 2017; Nevarez, 2021; Vue, 2021), while others highlight democratic citizenship (Makaiau, 2016) or cross-racial acceptance (Fey, 2019). Furthermore, the incorporation of ethnic studies curriculum into K-12 education is often mired in controversy. For example, prior to the enactment of California's ethnic studies standards, stakeholders were embroiled in debates about its content and desired outcomes. In 2010, a Mexican American ethnic studies program in Tucson, AZ, shown to improve students' high school graduation rates, was banned after being accused by state officials of disparaging the U.S. and fueling racial resentment (Fernandez & Hammer, 2012). The imposition of politically conservative perspectives and lack of consistency across ethnic studies courses suggests many K-12 students are not exposed to curriculum that aligns with the original intent of ethnic studies.

To understand the function of ethnic studies, one must look to its origins. Ethnic studies, as an academic field of study, emerged in 1969 following protests on college campuses led by student activists of color who challenged racism and antiblackness in university systems (Hu-Dehart, 1993). These activists demanded curriculum that reflected their lived experiences and histories and the redistribution of university resources to local communities. They also

emphasized solidarity between colonized people, globally, and cross-racial coalition building (Bañales, 2019). These perspectives grounded the subsequent creation of university ethnic studies courses and programs. Thus, ethnic studies reflects a critical view of the world, based on a commitment to interrogating and challenging structural racism in the U.S. and abroad, and its value transcends the classroom. However, this critical framework is missing from the design and implementation of many ethnic studies courses in secondary schools; therefore, students enrolled in these courses often do not learn about the embedded, systemic nature of racism. As a result, secondary ethnic studies, by and large, does not realize its transformative or liberatory potential.

Despite current limitations, some ethnic studies educators, both inside and outside of formal schooling spaces, are employing a critical, racial framework. Other K-12 ethnic studies educators would benefit from learning how these educators maintain a critical orientation. Research on existing critical, racial ethnic studies programs can facilitate this learning by creating the necessary knowledge and tools to educate researchers, teacher educators, and K-12 teachers on how to create critical, racial ethnic studies curriculum. This dissertation responds to the current limitations of K-12 ethnic studies research through three papers. The first is a critical review of prior research. The following two are empirical papers based on a study of three undergraduate student facilitators who designed and implemented an out-of-school critical, racial ethnic studies program. Together, these three articles present insight into the knowledge, skills, and supports facilitators need to create and enact CRES curricula.

Theoretical Framing

I use critical race theory (CRT) to theoretically ground this dissertation study. CRT derives from the work of progressive legal scholars in the field broadly known as critical legal studies. While critical theory, more broadly, can be defined as "an attempt to understand the

oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation" (Tierney, 1993, p. 4), CRT legal scholars critique the legal system for its suppression of people of color (Bell, 1995) and unequivocally reject the notion that the law is neutral. Core tenets of CRT include: (1) race is socially constructed, (2) racism is endemic and permanent, (3) racism interacts with other forms of oppression, (4) whiteness is a form of property, (5) claims of objectivity can be challenged through experiential narratives known as counterstories, (6) liberalism maintains the status quo and warrants critique, and (7) systemic changes occur due to interest convergence, the phenomenon wherein whites will only take steps toward racial equity when the interests of Black people (or other people of color) align with their own (Bell, 1995; Dixson & Anderson, 2018; Harris, 1993).

When applied to education, CRT provides a framework for understanding relationships between racism, whiteness, and schooling at the institutional and systemic levels. It asserts that current educational practices perpetuate "racial inequality and normative whiteness" (Dixson & Anderson, 2018, p. 122), illuminating how schools resist transformation because they are designed to uphold existing racial and economic hierarchies. In response, CRT encourages interdisciplinary perspectives, centers people of color's counterstories and experiential knowledge, and is rooted in understandings of and efforts to eradicate racial hierarchies in educational structures, policies, and practices (Dixson & Anderson, 2018). CRT provides a useful framework for establishing the need for ethnic studies programs, evaluating their criticality, and demonstrating their limitations in traditional K-12 school settings. Additionally, CRT can help to explain how educators and youth experience ethnic studies in relation to critical consciousness and racial literacies.

Critical Racial Ethnic Studies

While CRT establishes the urgency and purpose of ethnic studies, it does not illuminate how ethnic studies courses should be designed to fulfill ethnic studies' purpose. Critical racial ethnic studies (CRES), which conceptualizes ethnic studies through the lens of CRT, is an approach that reflects the critical origins of ethnic studies. CRES calls for the use of critical pedagogy, a dialogic educational approach that creates substantive learning experiences with racially and economically marginalized youth by engaging them in inquiry and action (de los Ríos et al., 2016). Although critical pedagogy positions students as change agents and producers of knowledge, it does not explicitly contend with race. Because ethnic studies situates racism as the primary tool of social organization, CRES necessitates an analysis of the construction of race and the structural effects of racism. To this end, CRES fuses critical pedagogies and CRT.

Building upon these theoretical groundings, CRES is meant to guide youth in their critique of structural, systemic, and institutional racism. It creates space for social organizing to transform material conditions, collective healing from racial trauma, and the development of youths' sense of agency (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). It requires learning with and from the community. To do so, CRES educators must practice reflexivity, establish meaningful relationships with youth and their families, build critical curriculum and employ critical pedagogies, and engage in activism beyond the classroom. Ultimately, CRES seeks to develop youths' critical consciousness and racial literacies. Consequently, studying the critical curricular contributions of out-of-school ethnic studies programs serves as an intervention to the continued de-radicalization of ethnic studies.

Methodological Approach

In this study, I focus on how ethnic studies facilitators make sense of their experiences. In doing so, I aim to reveal rich and specific, not universal or definitive, truths about their experiences. Therefore, I take an interpretivist approach which is grounded in the belief that there are multiple interpretations of a single event rather than one objective, observable reality. From this perspective, my research will capture participants' perspectives on and experiences creating ethnic studies programs. Due to my interpretivist stance, I selected a small, purposeful sample of participants for my empirical study, to gather the rich data set I need to effectively depict participants' varied experiences.

In qualitative research, meaning is constructed by participants and researchers, "mediated by power relations that are historically and socially constructed" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 10). Individuals' interpretations of reality are thus largely determined by social contexts and interactions, which means researchers' interpretations of phenomena are shaped by our own social contexts and subjective views. I understand the researcher to be the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research and, therefore, I do not claim objectivity. Rather, my epistemological orientation, theoretical framework, and lived experiences will influence how I collect and analyze data. As such, interpretivism requires me to grapple with the "researcher-participant relationship and how one affects the other in the research process" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 63), a practice known as reflexivity. A researchers' awareness of their positionality and its influence on the research is a critical aspect of researcher reflexivity.

Ethnographic Methods

In both empirical studies, I use ethnographic methods to generate a narrative account of the value systems and cultural practices within an ethnic studies program. My research questions

and selection of data sources are driven by a desire to understand what occurs in ethnic studies programs and make sense of the relationships between events and people in these spaces. A rich, thick, cultural description of a social setting "calls for the language spoken in that setting, first-hand participation in some of the activities that take place there, and most critically, a deep reliance on intensive work with a few informants drawn from the setting" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 29). Thick description captures the shared, interpretative meanings behind what a researcher observes in a space. Therefore, in my studies, I emphasize participants' shared meaning-making and their interpretations of their experiences. Additionally, I participated first-hand in the study setting through my ongoing relationships with the research participants. Ethnography requires us to consider membership, or degree of belonging and integration, in research spaces. As a researcher, I am an outsider and/or temporary member of the community with whom I will work. Similarly, as a Black woman working with three Asian American participants in a predominantly Asian American community, there are many aspects of their racialized experiences I do not share. As a University of Maryland graduate student with existing professional relationships with my participants, however, I am also integrated within the community. Awareness of the complexity of the insider-outsider dichotomy is an integral part of grappling with my positionality as a researcher and minimizing the harm and extraction intrinsic to qualitative research.

My use of ethnographic research methods draws on the critical ethnographic tradition. Critical ethnography explicitly critiques hegemony and oppressive power relations. Critical ethnographers often work directly with community members and produce work that promotes a more equitable society (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005). Critical ethnography is concerned with building lasting, mutually supportive relationships between researchers and participants. I have

worked closely with communities who have been marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, and age. I have collaborated with my participants and privileged their own interpretations in my analysis to create research that challenges traditional, hierarchical relations between researchers and participants (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005). A commitment to writing "to and for" (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 236) the communities with whom I conduct research guides my work.

Positionality

My studies are unequivocally informed by my lived experiences as a racialized person navigating the same system I seek to challenge. I come to this work as a Black educator, critical race education researcher, and former K-12 classroom teacher. My own experiences as a student and teacher profoundly shape how I approach my study, influencing my framing, analysis, and interpretations. I spent thirteen years of my youth as a public school student and cannot recall a single lesson explaining or critiquing systems of power, including racism. While I experienced racism and began to learn about its consequences from sources outside of school, my formal education left me ill-prepared to navigate an antiblack society. In response, I sought out ethnic studies courses in college which provided a theoretical grounding for my burgeoning critical lens. For the first time, I felt empowered by my education and the scholars around me, and I developed a politicized racial identity centered on solidarity with other oppressed peoples.

However, I believe students of color should not have to attend college to access a critical education, so I pursued a career in K-12 classroom teaching. During my time as a high school teacher in Oakland, I developed an ethnic studies class using a culturally sustaining pedagogical framework. The goal of the course was two-part: first, for students to understand and analyze the structural and institutional effects of racism, colonialism, and other interconnected systems of subjugation, and secondly, to help students develop tools for refusing and disrupting these

systems. Collectively, my time as a student and high school teacher inform how I understand the function of ethnic studies courses in K-12 schools. Despite my efforts, I know there were times when I reinforced the white supremacist, teacher-centered power dynamics of traditional classrooms. As a result, I will research critical racial approaches to ethnic studies that counter the oppression I witnessed, experienced, and at times unwittingly perpetuated in the California public school system.

Defining Terms

Racial Literacies

In this study, I define racial literacies as how one understands and discusses structural racism and white supremacy. There is a spectrum of racial literacies that perpetuate racism and white supremacy and racial literacies that disrupt these systems. Critical, counterhegemonic racial literacies (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) denote the "capacity to decipher the racial grammar that structures racialized hierarchies and frames the [national] narrative" (Guinier, 2004, p. 100), and a knowledge of the relationship between race and power, most notably how white supremacy is systemically maintained and protected (Vue, 2021). In short, counterhegemonic racial literacies critique and resist the dominant ideologies of racism and antiblackness. According to Chavez-Moreno (202), hegemonic racial literacies "support making meaning of race and racism through oppressive ideologies and preserve inequity by maintaining a racial hierarchical structure that advantages whites symbolically and materially over [minoritized] people" (p. 485). Ethnic studies may develop or sustain youths' critical, counterhegemonic racial literacies through its focus on critical analyses and social action. Often, ethnic studies educators employ pedagogies and curricula specifically aimed at fostering the development of racial literacies (de los Ríos & Molina, 2020; Nevarez, 2021; Ybarra, 2020).

Critical Consciousness

In this study, critical consciousness refers to "an active and persistent state of awareness that consistently seeks to unearth the taken-for-granted and examine it for ways that it masks institutionalized inequality, privilege, and oppression" (Radd & Grosland, 2018, p. 414). In short, it is the ongoing process of reflecting on systems of oppression, and one's place in these systems, in order to change them (Freire, 2000; Nojan, 2020). Although critical consciousness does not refer exclusively or primarily to an awareness of racism, it necessitates an understanding of interlocking systems of oppression that include racism. As a result, critical consciousness is often seen as foundational to ethnic studies (Gomez & Cammarota, 2021; Nojan, 2020; Sacramento, 2019).

Antiblackness

I frame antiblackness as a phenomenon that is related to, but distinct from racism and white supremacy. Antiblackness provides context for the specific ways Black subjects are perceived and treated in an antiblack world by both whites and non-Black people of color, thereby illuminating the Black condition (Dumas, 2016; Dumas & ross, 2016; Warren & Coles, 2020). It is the "socially constructed rendering of [B]lack bodies as inhuman, disposable, and inherently problematic" (Warren & Coles, 2020, p. 383). This positioning of Black people as "slave, dispossessed of human agency, desire, and freedom" is "how non-Black people—and particularly whites— assert their own right to freedom" (Dumas, 2016, p. 13). As such, antiblackness is not merely a form of racism, but a central organizing principle of our social world. To comprehend and eventually eliminate racism against non-Black people of color, it is first necessary to understand how Black people are positioned at the bottom of the world's racial hierarchy (Warren & Coles, 2020).

Overview of Three Articles

Despite the demonstrable benefits of ethnic studies (Bonilla et al., 2021), educators in K-12 public schools face many barriers in teaching ethnic studies, especially its more critical aspects. Such barriers include standardized testing (Vasquez & Altshuler, 2017), lack of institutional support and resources (Cardona & Cuauhtin, 2019), inadequate professional development, and working within a system they seek to transform (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). It is likely that out-of-school programs, uninhibited by many constraints imposed on state-sponsored schools, have more capacity to enact CRES.

This three-article dissertation examines the development and implementation of ethnic studies with youth. In manuscript 1, I frame my two empirical studies with a critical analysis of the literature on the history of ethnic studies and its implementations with youth that offers a historical perspective on instructional processes and educator decision-making in ethnic studies. In doing so, it establishes the long tradition of critical, racial ethnic studies in which I situate my research. It also demonstrates how my research will extend the current K-12 ethnic studies literature. I then employ two interrelated lines of inquiry into the development and implementation of out-of-school CRES programs.

In manuscript 2, I seek to understand how undergraduate student facilitators make decisions about curricular content and instructional strategies and what factors influence those decisions through an empirical study on the development and implementation of an out-of-school Asian American Studies (AAS) program. In manuscript 3, I explore what experiences led the undergraduate facilitators to become CRES educators and what they need to sustain themselves as CRES educators through a second empirical study. I investigate what brings these young Asian American women to racial justice education work, highlighting their motivations,

struggles, triumphs, and contradictions. Collectively, these three articles offer insight into what knowledge, skills, relationships, and supports facilitators need to create and enact CRES curriculum.

With the three articles, I contribute to the K-12 ethnic studies literature by examining the development and implementation of ethnic studies curricula through a CRES framework that addresses the need for a unifying curricular and pedagogical framework that retains ethnic studies' critical integrity. In doing so, my work bridges current gaps between ethnic studies knowledge produced outside of schools and in-school classroom practices and between teacher preparation and on-the-ground implementation of ethnic studies curricula. In centering CRES, I also identify practical resources and tools pertinent to the development of critical ethnic studies programs. Based on findings from each article, I formulate implications for how researchers can support educators in implementing CRES curriculum that cultivates youths' racial literacies and critical consciousness at a time when K-12 schools across the nation are developing new ethnic studies programs (National Education Association EdJustice, 2021).

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Manuscript 1. Conceptualizing critical racial ethnic studies: A critical analysis of the literature

Introduction

Over the last decade, secondary schools around the United States have rapidly adopted ethnic studies courses. For instance, California's governor mandated ethnic studies as a high school graduation requirement in 2021 (Magcalas, 2023). In the context of secondary schools, ethnic studies can be described as an interdisciplinary, comprehensive approach to teaching about the experiences, histories, and resistance of minoritized racial groups in the United States (e.g., African, Asian, Native, and Latine Americans). According to scholars, ethnic studies courses offer educational experiences that disrupt the erasure and oppression of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color through Eurocentrism in schools (Hu-Dehart, 1993; Lowy, 1995). However, there is currently no universally accepted understanding of ethnic studies curricula, and ethnic studies programs vary widely.

As K-12 ethnic studies programs rapidly expand around the country, educators need a unifying framework that retains ethnic studies' critical integrity. I propose critical racial ethnic studies (CRES), a curricular and pedagogical framework, grounded in critical race theory (CRT) and critical pedagogies, as a tool for organizing ethnic studies curricula. I use the CRES framework to analyze the research on secondary-level ethnic studies curricula and pedagogy, its limitations as a means of achieving racial justice, and possible future directions for the field. Drawing from this literature, I develop a definition of CRES and establish the historical context out of which CRES emerged thereby demonstrating an alignment between the original goals of ethnic studies and the CRES framework. Next, I identify several patterns in the literature: (1) the variation in critical pedagogies employed by ethnic studies educators, (2) how youth experience

CRES, (3) the CRES tenets most frequently highlighted by researchers, and (4) the differences between out-of-school and in-school CRES curricula. In highlighting critical pedagogies, I highlight research in the field of K-12 Asian American Studies because my related empirical research studies investigate an Asian American Studies curriculum developed and implemented by three Southeast Asian women. I conclude with recommendations for praxis and research, such as further research on the experiences of youths and educators in out-of-school CRES programs.

Methodology

This manuscript builds on existing research to establish the CRES framework and the need for CRES and investigate how secondary-level ethnic studies teachers have successfully developed and implemented CRES curricula. I asked the following questions of the literature: What does existing ethnic studies research convey about: (1) the historical context for CRES and (2) the successful development and implementation of CRES programs in secondary schools?

Search Methods

To conduct my literature search, I used the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), and Education Source databases. ERIC and Education Source are two high-yield education databases available through the University of Maryland library that, unlike many of the other available databases, do not focus on specialized topics of education; instead, they broadly cover all education-related research. Additionally, I searched Google Scholar to cast a wider net and include articles left out of the education databases.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

I created a separate set of inclusion and exclusion criteria for each of my research questions. For the first research question, I sought to capture all material relevant to the history

of ethnic studies, so I included peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, book chapters, and news articles. To do so, I first searched for primary sources and academic articles that described the emergence of ethnic studies on college campuses as it occurred. I set the search parameters for 1968-1978 to obtain material written during the initial movement for ethnic studies and the surge in ethnic studies programs that followed. Several of these articles outlined the subsequent spread of secondary-level ethnic studies as well. Next, I searched for more recent research highlighting the long trajectory of ethnic studies in secondary schools to offer additional historical context. To eliminate irrelevant research, I excluded any material that did not detail the history of ethnic studies in its abstract, introduction, or background sections. I noticed a sharp increase in research covering the history of ethnic studies around 2010, when the Mexican American Studies ban in Tucson, AZ gained national attention (Fernandez & Hammer, 2012), so I also set the new search parameters for 2010-present. After applying this criterion, I was left with 16 articles that addressed my first research question.

For my second research question, I included peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, book chapters, and news articles to capture all material relevant to the development and implementation of CRES curricula. I searched for sources about secondary-level ethnic studies that included phrases such as "critical race theory", "critical race pedagogy," and "critical racial consciousness." I relied on abstracts, introductions, and discussion sections to determine if a source met this criterion. Of note, no researchers identified the programs under study as "critical racial ethnic studies," but many programs met the above criteria and, thus, I identified them CRES. I also set the search parameters for 2007-present because I did not find articles prior to 2007 that purported to apply a critical framework to research on secondary-level ethnic studies. This is unsurprising given the dearth of research on secondary-level ethnic studies in the 20th

century and the rapid increase in secondary-level ethnic studies research following the Mexican American Studies ban. After applying these criteria, I was left with 45 articles that addressed my second research question.

Analysis Methodology

I approached my analysis differently in answering my two research questions. For my first research question, I divided the articles into four categories: (1) accounts of ethnic studies prior to its formalization as an academic field, (2) accounts of university-based student strikes that led to the formation of ethnic studies programs, (3) the purpose and goals of ethnic studies at its inception, and (4) the emergence and spread of ethnic studies in secondary schools. I relied on abstracts and introduction sections to determine these initial categories. Next, I examined how all sources described the function of ethnic studies. Then, to establish whether the aims of ethnic studies were critical in nature, I noted whether articles referenced critical concepts when describing ethnic studies' function. I highlighted references to the following concepts as evidence of criticality: structural, systemic, and institutional racism; power and oppression; collective action; political projects; colonization and decolonization; activism, solidarity, and/or organizing. Through this analysis, I sought to demonstrate alignment between the original goals of ethnic studies and the CRES framework.

For my second research question, I divided the articles into three categories: (1) critical pedagogies employed by CRES educators, (2) youths' experiences in and with CRES and (3) limitations and critiques of secondary-level ethnic studies programs. I relied on abstracts, introductions, and discussion sections to determine these initial categories. Next, I reviewed the research on critical pedagogies and frameworks to identify patterns across the articles. I noted the various approaches highlighted in these articles, including arts-based pedagogies, ethics of

care, literacy-focused frameworks, and storytelling methodologies. Then, I analyzed how scholars wrote about youths' ethnic studies experiences to find common patterns, which allowed me to further organize these studies based on additional themes: (1) affective, social, and relational experiences, (2) outcomes that align with core CRES tenets, (3) critical Asian American Studies, and (4) out-of-school versus in-school CRES programs. Finally, I assessed the articles' critiques of secondary-level ethnic studies to determine what limitations the researchers identified and their suggestions about why and how secondary-level ethnic studies educators and researchers should respond to these limitations.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framing

I propose the concept of CRES to frame this critical literature review. CRES is a framework for understanding how to teach ethnic studies, its function as an academic discipline, and its potential as a critical, educational intervention. CRES is an approach to ethnic studies, rooted in the critical origins of the field, that teaches ethnic studies concepts through the lens of CRT. CRES is a response to current efforts to sever ethnic studies from the "political and social urgency" (Vasquez, 1988, p. 23) of its origins, but more than that, it is a refusal to erode those origins and a return to the core tenets of ethnic studies. In the tradition of critical ethnic studies scholars and practitioners, I believe CRES *is* ethnic studies, and any distinction between the two is grounded in the ongoing depoliticization of ethnic studies.

CRES starts from the assumption that teaching is a political act, as posited by Freire (2000). It calls for the use of critical pedagogy, an educational process that builds authentic learning experiences with marginalized people by engaging them in a process of inquiry and action (de los Ríos et al., 2015). Critical pedagogy is a "dialogic and mutually constitutive process between educators and students" (de los Ríos et al., 2015, p. 18) that fuels critique and

disruption of power hierarchies. In short, it is reflection and action grounded in a theoretical analysis of systems of domination. Critical pedagogy rejects the banking model of education (Freire, 1994) wherein educators deposit wisdom into students, who are seen as empty vessels void of their own knowledges. Instead, education must occur *with* oppressed people to build and sustain critical consciousness and critical curiosity (F. Lopez et al., 2022).

Although critical pedagogy situates students as producers of valuable knowledge and agents of change, it is missing an explicit engagement with race. Because ethnic studies positions racism as the primary tool of social organization and control, critical ethnic studies necessitates an analysis of the construction of racial projects (Omi & Winant, 1994) and a commitment to their undoing (de los Ríos et al., 2015). As such, CRES is best understood as the fusing of critical pedagogies and CRT. At minimum, the five elements of critical race theory in education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) must also be present in CRES: (1) centers race and racism and their intersections with other forms of subordination, (2) challenges the dominant ideology, (3) demonstrates a commitment to social justice, (4) values experiential knowledge, and (5) incorporates interdisciplinary perspectives.

Building on these tenets, CRES is meant to guide youth in their critique of structural, systemic, and institutional racism. CRES is a move toward decolonization through collective healing from racial and colonial trauma, self-determination, and social organizing to transform material conditions (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). CRES curricula should center the everyday and historical experiences of Black, Asian, Indigenous, and Latine Americans, with a focus on reclaiming “lost and stolen histories” (de los Ríos et al., 2015, p. 193). CRES redistributes knowledge and resources to the community and simultaneously requires learning with and from the community. To do so, CRES educators must employ community responsive pedagogies with

content that is attentive to local contexts and helps youth investigate and act on their communities' needs (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

CRES centers building relationships with youth, their families, and other members of the communities in which educators teach because it roots the struggle for equity and racial justice in a dedication to supporting, loving, and believing in youth and their communities. This ethic of critical care (Sosa-Provencio et al., 2021) must manifest in pedagogy, curriculum, relationships, and outcomes. CRES pedagogies also require educators to be reflexive about the role race and power play in their own educational spaces and in broader institutions and systems.

Finally, CRES seeks to develop youths' counterhegemonic racial literacies (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) and critical racial consciousness. Through the development of youths' counterhegemonic racial literacies and critical racial consciousness, CRES has the potential to be more than just a curriculum taught in classrooms. As Freire (2000) asserts, the struggle to transform systems and structures of domination must include both critical reflection and activism. CRES serves as a framework for viewing or reading (Freire, 2000) the world and for living out one's liberatory principles. Consequently, CRES necessitates taking action to disrupt antiblackness, structural racism, and white supremacy. Educators who employ CRES must highlight the myriad historic and current examples of coalition-building and organizing toward collective liberation in local, national, and global contexts. Furthermore, CRES encourages educators to embody an activist orientation and support youth in re/discovering their own roles in movements for racial and social justice.

Notably, CRES takes the perspective that education is but one tool in the fight for personal and collective liberation. With this understanding, I recognize there are limitations to what CRES can accomplish, both inside and outside of the classroom, and implementing CRES

is not a substitute for eradicating racist systems. A commitment to action against all structures that harm the health and well-being of racially minoritized people must accompany a CRES education. For example, Rodriquez (2017) admonished Chicago Public Schools (CPS) for responding to demands to end school closures in predominantly Black neighborhoods by developing a K-12 African American Studies curriculum. CRES reminds us that we must be wary of how easily ethnic studies can be used as a counterrevolutionary force, absorbed into the status quo instead of unsettling it.

Historical Context

To offer a historical perspective on the function of ethnic studies and situate CRES as part of a long, rich tradition of transformative education, I explore the origins of ethnic studies prior to, during, and after its formalization as an academic field. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate how CRES represents a return to the genesis of ethnic studies, its inception as a formalized field of study in 1968, and its earlier iterations. Moreover, I elucidate the function and goals of ethnic studies at its inception to demonstrate the compatibility between CRES and ethnic studies' original purpose.

Prior to its formalization as an academic field, ethnic studies already existed as the construction and passing of knowledge that reaffirmed people of color's subjectivity (Lozenski, 2019). As Lozenski (2019) reminds us, "ethnic studies is bigger than schooling and school has never been the primary location of this work" (p. 28). Communities of color, particularly Black and Indigenous peoples, in the United States have always sought to educate themselves and their youth in ways that honored their own epistemologies. This commitment to self-education remained imperative through chattel slavery, ongoing displacement and colonization, legal and extralegal white terrorism, and later the white supremacy imbedded in state-sanctioned schools.

By the late 19th century, Black scholar-activists such as Anna Julia Cooper and W.E.B. DuBois were condemning the Eurocentrism and antiblackness of U.S. schooling and advocating for Black educational subjectivity (Lozenski, 2019). Furthermore, it is likely those who eventually organized for the creation of ethnic studies departments on college campuses in the 1960s derived inspiration from intellectuals like Carter G. Woodson, who was an early, prominent proponent of African American history and studies.

In 1926, Woodson established Black History Week to prompt the nation to reckon with chattel slavery, highlight the cultural and intellectual contributions of Africans and African Americans, and ultimately eliminate anti-black racism amongst whites (Prashad, 2006). Woodson also developed an African American history curriculum for Black educators in hopes of building a commitment to Black liberation among educated Black people (Lozenski, 2019). Around this time, the famed pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey demanded that Black students receive instruction in Negro History in the Universal Negro Improvement Association's declaration of rights (Lozenski, 2019). Similarly, CRES is concerned with disrupting structural, systemic, and institutional manifestations of racism and antiblackness. It primarily sees ethnic studies as a tool of collective liberation and not a means of addressing individual freedoms and privileges, or interpersonal discrimination. Like Black leaders throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, CRES positions education as a means of building self-determination and organizing communities of color to combat systemic dispossession.

Third World Liberation Front Strikes

Institutionalized ethnic studies originated as a university student-generated, radical response to racial and class oppression perpetuated, in part, through higher education institutions. Amidst the civil rights and Black Power movements, anti-war Vietnam protests, and a surge of

youth activism, young people of color at racially integrated universities built on ethnic studies' rich intellectual foundation to demand consciousness-building and community-engaged education (Dong, 2019). In 1966, Black students at San Francisco State University (SFSU) developed the first Black Student Union (BSU) in the country as part of a concerted effort to organize Black students on predominantly white campuses in the North and West (Roaf, 2019). BSU members were committed to politicizing Black students on campus and organizing to increase the enrollment of Black students at SFSU (Roaf, 2019). When Latine, Asian American, and Native American students approached BSU about dividing the number of slots the university granted to Black recruits amongst all students of color (Roaf, 2019), BSU elected to help these students organize and demand increases in their own admission rates. According to BSU's co-founders, this marked the beginning of cross-racial solidarity on campus and the creation of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), a multiracial coalition of student activists (Roaf, 2019). The term "Third World" connected the struggles of racially minoritized people in the U.S. to ongoing decolonization movements in the Global South, including the anti-imperialist war in Vietnam (Martinez, 2021). Under the TWLF label, Black, Latine, Asian American, and Native American students worked with white co-conspirators from Students for a Democratic Society to alter the landscape of the university (Bañales, 2019).

In November 1968, tensions escalated between activists of color and SFSU administration, most notably over the suspension of George Murray, a Black graduate student and instructor in the English department who was also the Minister of Education for the Black Panther Party and an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War (Roaf, 2019). It was widely believed that Murray, a popular instructor, was suspended as retaliation for his unequivocal denouncement of the war, antiblackness, and structural racism on both national and institutional

levels. As a result, BSU generated a list of ten demands, including: the creation of a unified Black Studies Department, admission of all Black students who would apply in fall 1969, job security for specific Black professors, and more full-time teaching positions allocated to the Black Studies Department (Nance, 2008). After voting unanimously to support BSU's call for a strike, TWLF added several of their own demands, including the development of a School of Ethnic Studies, admission of all non-white students who would apply in the spring and fall of 1969, and the allocation of 50 faculty positions to the School of Ethnic Studies (Nance, 2008). To achieve these demands, BSU and TWLF collaborated with community members, faculty, and other students to carry out the longest student strike in U.S. history.

For five months, students picketed, blocked campus entrances, occupied administrative buildings, disrupted classes, and held mass rallies and teach-ins (Bañales, 2012). The University opposed the protest and routinely sent up to 300 armed police officers to violently confront students with mace and batons, which eventually led to a temporary shutdown of the campus (Nance, 2008). Reports of protestors being beaten by officers only served to radicalize more students, leading new people to join the fight. Student protestors endured jail time, misdemeanor charges, and physical and emotional trauma in their fight to transform the university (Nance, 2008). In March 1969, University administration finally agreed to meet with student leaders and the strike ended (Hu-Dehart, 1993). Although most of the demands were not met, SFSU accepted all students of color in fall 1969 and developed an ethnic studies department, known as the School of Ethnic Studies (Nance, 2008).

While not as widely heralded today, students across the Bay, at the University of California, Berkeley held their own strike from January to March 1969. The Afro-American Student Union, Asian American Political Alliance, Mexican American Students Conference, and

Native American Student Union united to form a new political coalition, also called the Third World Liberation Front, to advocate for academic programs such as Black Studies. According to Dong (2019), Berkeley's TWLF "believed that political action was the only alternative to changing an extremely conservative, racist, hierarchical institution" (p. 63). The primary goals of the Third World Strike were establishing an autonomous Third World College at UC Berkeley and creating an open university by expanding its connections with and opportunities for local communities of color. Police met acts of protest like informational picketing and blocking campus entrances with tear gas, beatings, and arrests (Dong, 2019). Then-Governor Ronald Reagan declared a state of extreme emergency thereby permitting National Guard troops with tanks to surround the campus (Dong, 2019). Eventually, the University agreed to an interim Department of Ethnic Studies and future negotiations for establishing a Third World College (Dong, 2019). Strikers accepted this compromise, but their vision was never fully realized as the University did not establish a Third World College.

The TWLF strikes at SFSU and UC Berkeley triggered student protests on other predominantly white campuses throughout the country. These strikes were monumental, albeit temporary, disruptions to university hierarchies. They revealed that, although deeply entrenched, universities' oppressive power structures were not infallible and, with solidarity and determination, students could challenge institutional norms. Furthermore, these early student protests attempted to bridge community knowledge and needs with university resources. They offered a clear vision of ethnic studies' potential. Knowing the history of ethnic studies, including the emergence of TWLF, provides a blueprint for the foundational purpose and goals of ethnic studies, both as a formal field of study and as the always already existing epistemologies of racially minoritized communities (Lozenski, 2019). The CRES framework is

grounded in these same principles, thereby retaining the critical orientation of ethnic studies. Thus, CRES aligns with ethnic studies' revolutionary potential envisioned by undergraduate student organizers and other community leaders over fifty years ago.

Foundational Purpose and Goals

CRES is a return to the foundational goals of ethnic studies established at its formation. When presenting their demands, TWLF and other student activist organizations were explicit about the purpose of ethnic studies. Ethnic studies should subvert the existing academic power structures and, while concentrating on racialization and racially marginalized groups, also analyze power through the lenses of class, sexuality, gender, and nation (Hu-DeHart, 1993; Okihiro, 2010). The written demands of Berkeley's TWLF reflected this desire to unsettle power dynamics, stating that "people of the Third World not only want to control their own college, but also want a major role in determining the way in which the University is run" (Third World Liberation Front, 1969, p. 7). TWLF sought to determine the university structure, from funding, to hiring, to organization, to gain as much control as possible within the confines of the university. They knew self-determination was the only way to create the educational experience they desired (Martinez, 2021): one that broke down the rigid boundaries between communities and the university and rejected the "epistemic racism of the modern Western university" (Bañales, 2019, p. 233). Going beyond just transforming formal education, SFSU's TWLF explicitly stated their purpose was "to aid in further developing politically, economically, and culturally the revolutionary third-world consciousness of oppressed peoples both on and off campus" (Okihiro, 2010, para. 8).

From the beginning, however, there were irreconcilable differences between the desires of universities and those of student activists. Not only did university administrators find the aims

of Third World Studies provocative (Roaf, 2019), they also objected to the name itself. Administrators opted for the phrase "ethnic" "in part because [they] found it more acceptable, perhaps more manageable politically, than the Third World concept" (Forbes, 2008, p. 87). They knew the use of "Third World" was intentional, as both an act of reclamation and a demonstration of solidarity among colonized people globally, and they hoped to weaken this political project. Furthermore, some of the strikes' initial achievements proved fleeting. For example, twenty years after its creation, the Ethnic Studies department at UC Berkeley almost dissolved due to a lack of funding and support (Dong, 2019). It took a coalition of student activists launching a hunger strike to save the program (Dong, 2019). Despite its activist origins, the field of ethnic studies has always necessitated compromise and continuous struggle. Any attempt to revolutionize education within traditional U.S. schooling is inherently contradictory.

To assess the future directions of ethnic studies, we can learn from its liberatory past and potential, as well as its demonstrable concessions to institutional pressures. So, while CRES exemplifies ethnic studies' origins as a movement for collective, global liberation, it also operates from an understanding that ethnic studies is constantly at risk of being co-opted or diluted. As such, CRES calls for actions beyond limiting its relevance to education. CRS tasks educators with applying the CRES framework in and beyond education. For example, CRS concerns itself with all intersecting areas of racial and social justice, such as race and class-based health disparities, housing discrimination, and environmental justice.

Emergence of Ethnic Studies in Secondary Schools

Although ethnic studies began on college campuses and has remained primarily confined to higher education, it first appeared in high schools as early as 1968. Most of the initial iterations of ethnic studies in secondary education were Black Studies programs. The earliest and

longest running example is the Black Studies department at Berkeley High School. In the fall of 1968, at the same time TWLF was protesting on SFSU's campus, Berkeley High's BSU demanded its school board establish a Black Studies Department and hire more Black educators who could work in the department (Orenstein, 2018). Today, the department still offers courses such as African American Journalism, Black Psychology, and African American History (Orenstein, 2018). While Berkeley High was the first and only school district to develop a Black Studies department, other schools did offer individual courses. Spurred by student protests and walkouts, high schools in various cities, including Washington D.C.; Cleveland; Harvey, Illinois; Evanston, Illinois; Philadelphia; Buffalo; Los Angeles; and New York City (Levey, 1970; Moone, 1976), developed African American History or Black Studies courses in the late 1960s.

Some school districts in California incorporated courses focused on the experiences of non-Black peoples of color as well. For example, in the late 1960s, Los Angeles Unified School District offered not only Black Studies courses in its high schools, but also Latin American Studies, Mexican American Studies, and Asian Studies (Levey, 1970). Similarly, starting in the late 1960s, San Francisco Unified School District developed a six-course Black Studies high school program that was part of a proposed ethnic studies program to include Latin American, Asian, and Filipino Studies (Levey, 1970). However, it is unclear whether the district ever implemented the proposed programming. Meanwhile, San Mateo Union High School District, a predominantly white district located in Northern California, offered courses entitled, "Black History," "The Japanese and Chinese in America," and "The Spanish-Speaking People in America" as part of what Levey (1970) calls "its blossoming minority cultures program" (p. 28).

Many of these courses, while groundbreaking in their novelty, were a far cry from the radical demands of university-based student protestors who viewed ethnic studies as critically-

engaged, community-rooted education that should be cultivated both inside and outside of the classroom (Dong, 2019; Roaf, 2019). Nor did most of these classes align with the student protestors' belief that education was just one component of a larger political project to analyze and dismantle asymmetrical power structures in the U.S. (Okihiro, 2010). In contrast, stated objectives for early secondary-level ethnic studies courses included "developing a positive self-concept, filling in the gaps that exist in history, stimulating appreciation of urban growth, developing favorable attitudes toward all ethnic groups, understanding that all people share a common humanity, and developing awareness of ethnic cultures" (Miller, 1971, p. 43). As universities and secondary schools around the country established ethnic studies programs, it became evident that the focus frequently shifted from understanding and unsettling systemic power to understanding and embracing self and others.

Today, as ethnic studies courses proliferate and become institutionalized in high schools around the country, advocates for critical ethnic studies face similar challenges. For instance, some educators, scholars, and activists in California formed a coalition known as the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium (LESMCC) in response to institutionally-backed censorship of California's model ethnic studies curriculum led by conservative political lobbyists, especially Zionist organizations (Cunanan et al., 2023). LESMCC members were part of the original group tasked with developing California's state model curriculum for ethnic studies, but they ultimately denounced any association with the state standards as the final product removed critical concepts, such as critiques of capitalism and colonialism, and erased all mentions of Palestine (Cunanan et al., 2023). Instead, LESMCC members developed a critically-grounded ethnic studies curriculum and standards which they help teachers implement across the state. LESMCC exemplifies the potential of CRES to disrupt the ongoing, aggressive attempts to

absorb ethnic studies into existing approaches to teaching about race and ethnicity that emphasize culture and identity over power relations.

CRES in the Existing Secondary-Level Ethnic Studies Literature

Critical Pedagogies

Ethnic studies scholars have proposed several, complementary critical pedagogical frameworks. Their studies emphasize how such pedagogies subvert conventional, dehumanizing approaches to teaching, like the banking model of education (Freire, 2000). Some scholars specifically identify these pedagogies as critical acts of dissent. For example, de los Ríos et al. (2015) conceptualized schools and curricula as "racial projects where racial inequity has been naturalized" (p. 87) and a critical pedagogy of race as an intervention that disrupts these racial projects. They defined a critical pedagogy of race as a combination of "the student as agent approach of critical pedagogy and the race-conscious inquiry that grounds ethnic studies" (de los Ríos et al., 2015, p. 87). This aligns with Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2015)'s assertion that ethnic studies is an anti-racist, decolonial educational project rooted in the social movements of the 1960s. Moreover, Tintiangco-Cubales and Duncan-Andrade (2021) extend the concept of critical ethnic studies pedagogy to specifically foreground community-responsive pedagogies that center local communities' political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. de los Ríos et al.'s (2015), Tintiangco-Cubales et al.'s (2015), and Tintiangco-Cubales & Duncan-Andrade's (2021) understandings of critical pedagogies of race undergird both my definition of CRES and other critical ethnic studies pedagogies proposed in the current K-12 ethnic studies literature.

Many studies describe the pedagogical tools used in ethnic studies courses to highlight the benefits of a particular pedagogy and advocate for its proliferation. For instance, Cammarota & Romero (2009) and Cammarota (2014a, 2014b, 2017) highlighted the Social Justice Education

Project (SJEP), a curriculum Cammarota designed for Tucson's Mexican American Studies (MAS) program, as a successful example of critical pedagogies in schools. Specifically, the authors described how SJEP employed participatory action research (PAR) as a pedagogy of transformative resistance, enabling Latinx youth to critique oppressive schooling processes (Cammarota, 2017), formulate research-based solutions to urgent social issues in their lives (Cammarota 2014a, 2014b), and bridge classroom learning with students' own "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992, p. #). Likewise, E. Lopez et al. (2022) described how they combined a PAR project with an individual *testimonio* writing project to teach transformational resistance to Latine youth in an East Los Angeles high school's ethnic studies course. When implemented simultaneously, the two projects required youth to connect their individual lived experiences with broader racial injustices and transition from reflexivity to collective action. Through PAR projects in ethnic studies programs, youth have the space and tools to configure the educational experience they need and begin to imagine the world they want to inhabit. Building upon this commitment to action, critical ethnic studies pedagogues often engage youth in projects that identify, analyze, and address problems in their local communities that are the result of racist practices and policies (Kwon & de los Ríos, 2019) to bridge youths' communities and schools (Vasquez & Altshuler, 2017).

Arts-based pedagogies also align well with the goals of critical pedagogies of ethnic studies. CRES educators engage with a diverse array of arts-based practices, from Chicanx/Latinx Studies courses in Southern California where Latine youth wrote and performed monologues about their racialized experiences (de los Ríos, 2016), created bilingual podcasts discussing transnationalism and immigrant experiences (de los Rios, 2020), and developed photovoice projects to explain what ethnic studies meant to them (de los Ríos, 2017a). Similarly,

Chicanx/Latinx Studies pedagogues have used Mexican music (de los Ríos, 2018) and visual art (Garcia & Gonzalez, 2021) as mediums for learning CRES content and engaging Latine youths' existing literacies. Filipinx American Studies scholars have also advocated for arts-based critical pedagogies of race. For example, Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2016) detailed how Filipinx American educators employed critical performance pedagogy, which uses theater and performance to develop critical consciousness and generate community engagement, in their work with low-income Filipinx youth in San Francisco. The authors found that critical performance pedagogy, through its emphasis on 'reading' one's surroundings and collective action, resulted in increased critical consciousness, a sense of transformative agency, and stronger community bonds amongst the youth (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2016). Inspired by these Filipinx American educators, Romero (2016) sought to advance a pedagogical framework he believed was well-suited for ethnic studies, particularly Filipinx American Studies. His proposed framework, punk rock pedagogy (PRP), was grounded in the history of people of color in the counterculture of punk rock. In short, Romero (2016) theorized that punk music is a lens through which youth can learn about Filipinx American history while simultaneously developing an anti-imperialist, anti-racist activist stance.

Some practitioners have also used storytelling as a critical ethnic studies pedagogy. Ethnic studies curriculum itself is a counternarrative to the dominant paradigms of education in a white supremacist, systemically racist society (Kolluri & Edwards, 2022), and there are myriad ways educators employ counter/storytelling within the curriculum. For example, through the *testimonios,* a critical narrative methodology that empowers the speaker or writer to name and combat oppression, and the *encuentros,* or group dialogues, of Chicanx/Latinx youth in his ethnic studies course at an East Los Angeles high school, J. Lopez (2020) used relationality and

critical dialogue to engage students. J. Lopez (2020) demonstrated that critical pedagogy should be co-constructed with youth, context-specific, and grounded in trust.

In studying ethnic studies pedagogies, researchers often uncovered connections between caring relationships and critical pedagogies. For instance, de los Ríos et al. (2022) outlined the insights and communal support that emerged from a multi-decade, transgenerational partnership between high school ethnic studies teachers and youth, a university researcher-educator, and undergraduate students. Relatedly, Sosa-Provencio et al. (2021)'s collective case study of three secondary ethnic studies teachers in New Mexico revealed the educators' shared critical ethic of care. The authors argued that, by embracing how knowledge emanates from the mind, body, and spirit, the educators nourished their Black, Latine, and Indigenous students in ways that honored indigenous practices and epistemologies. For example, a Black female teacher drew on her own racialized experiences to affirm the pain of her Black students and provide space for them to express it through poetry and private correspondence, rather than treating their anger as inappropriate or defiant (Sosa-Provencio et al., 2021). Desai et al. (2021) studied the pedagogical choices of high school ethnic studies teachers in New Mexico and found the educators were connected by a shared framework, which the authors labeled "body-soul rooted pedagogy" (p. #), a decolonizing pedagogy that required educators to build spaces of hope and healing that honored students' funds of knowledge while nurturing their critical consciousness. For example, one teacher used reflective journaling to foster community, engage student voices, and help students interrogate how asymmetrical power relations affect their lives. It is significant that Sosa-Provencio et al. (2021) and Desai et al. (2021) emphasized spirituality and ancestral knowledge in their understanding of humanizing pedagogies because both are important to many Native, Black, Latinx, and Asian American communities but are rarely incorporated into

schooling. Integrating spirituality and ancestral knowledge into ethnic studies creates a more culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) educational experience and helps bridge the gap between young people's lives in and out of school.

Notably, models for humanizing and decolonial pedagogy already exist in the cultures, families, and communities from which students come. Through an ethnographic study of a high school Filipino Heritage Studies course in Northern California, Jocson (2008) conceptualized *kuwento* as both a cultural-linguistic practice and a useful pedagogical framework. According to Jocson (2008), in the Filipino folk and oral tradition, *kuwento* is "best described as a noun (story) and a verb (telling/listening to/participating in a story)… *kuwento* is not simply about sharing stories but also about the nature in which stories take place" (p. 242). *Kuwento* organically occurred in the Filipino Heritage Studies course as both the teacher and the students used stories to explain their realities as Filipinx-Americans and situate their experiences in the larger pattern of Filipino and American histories (Jocson, 2008). As a pedagogy, *kuwento* creates a "critical discursive space for exploring identity and building the concept of community beyond walls" (Jocson, 2008, p. 250), all while "establishing cultural continuity in the classroom [by legitimizing] students' sense of knowing" (p. 244). Ultimately, Jocson (2008) demonstrated how incorporating students' existing linguistic and cultural patterns into ethnic studies classrooms is essential to building authentic, caring spaces.

Asian American Studies Pedagogies

The work of scholars like Jocson (2008) is foundational to critical, secondary-level Asian American Studies (AAS). While AAS scholars and practitioners have written about arts-based pedagogies, storytelling, relationality, and numerous other pedagogies, it is imperative that I highlight their connections within critical secondary-level AAS to honor the specificity of the

critical AAS tradition. Sacramento et al. (2023) theorized a radical AAS pedagogy that "centers the experiences of Asian Americans in order to examine power relations, community building, resistance, and justice formations" (p. 209). Their pedagogical framework both attends to the diversity of experiences among Asian Americans and defines the racialized Asian American identity as a political identity rooted in solidarity (Sacramento et al., 2023). Notably, Sacramento et al.'s (2023) radical AAS pedagogy is informed by many of the same theories underpinning a broader CRES pedagogy: critical pedagogy, CRT, and ethnic studies pedagogy. In Chen et al. (2023), Asian American practitioners, students, and scholars reiterate this commitment to a critical reading of U.S. history and society. They reject interpretations of AAS that avoid discussions of colonialism and imperialism in favor of absorbing the U.S. historical narrative that emphasizes Asian Americans' contributions to empire and achieving the "American dream" (Chen et al., 2023).

Other critical work focuses on using AAS to develop student-centered writing pedagogies (Lee, 2023), an ethnic studies praxis story plot (Curammeng et al., 2016), and cultural citizenship education (Rodriguez, 2018). According to Lee (2023), the principles of a critical, AAS pedagogy of writing include: students' renderings of their evolving analyses of power, student-generated ideas and inquiry about racial and social inequities, and context-specific writing strategies to address community needs. Similarly, Curammeng et al. (2016) described the theoretical groundings, purpose, and potential of a pedagogical tool known as the ethnic studies praxis story plot, a community-responsive literacy that develops "students' abilities to identify and respond to a community's needs as change agents and activists" (p. 415). This tool, based on the tenets of critical AAS, aims to center collective action and organizing in literature courses, which are spaces that often embrace a surface-level, cultural approach to AAS. Turning to the

social studies classroom, Rodriguez (2018) also attempts to disrupt hegemonic approaches to education. Specifically, she uses the counterstories of three Asian American teachers to critique citizenship education and the normative conceptualization of the citizen (Rodriguez, 2018).

Building upon these theoretical and practical applications of critical AAS pedagogy, other scholars offer visions for supporting the implementation and expansion of critical, secondary-level AAS. Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2010) and Daus-Magbual et al. (2023) describe how, for over twenty years, a collective of university educators, classroom teachers, and aspiring educators have worked together to sustain a teacher pipeline called Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP) in San Francisco. This "counter-pipeline" supports local Filipinx Americans in their journey to become critical Filipinx American Studies educators. Relatedly, Curammeng (2020) used case studies of two Filipino American teachers in California to demonstrate how their formal and informal ethnic studies education, including time in PEP and community organizing, was foundational to their critical pedagogical and curricular choices. Curammeng (2020) concluded that teacher education and professional development can look to ethnic studies as a critical theoretical orientation and pedagogical resource. Finally, Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2020) presented a critical framework to evaluate K-12 Filipinx American Curriculum. Altogether, these scholars offer tools for building not just robust secondary-level AAS programs, but specifically critical, impactful secondary-level AAS curriculum taught by trained and well-supported educators.

These studies all described pedagogical frameworks that benefit ethnic studies and the myriad advantages of using them. Researchers presented most of the pedagogies, from critical performance pedagogies to ethics of care, as radical reimaginings of education through building trusting relationships, bridging schools and communities, and honoring youth of color's agency.

By doing so, these pedagogies uphold the foundational goals and purpose of ethnic studies as established by campus activists over fifty years ago. For instance, Romero (2014)'s suggestion that PRP "deconstructs the hegemonic coloniality of the discourses that shape the very fabric of Filipinx American identity" (p.120) mirrors the TWLF critiques of Western colonialist structures. Ultimately, I believe applying a CRES framework can ensure K-12 ethnic studies researchers and practitioners consistently employ critical pedagogies and frameworks as they work to disrupt white supremacist schooling practices.

Experiencing CRES

Practitioners and researchers of CRES should not focus on traditional, utilitarian markers of academic success to measure the benefits of CRES. CRES' value does not lie in improved test scores or higher GPAs. Instead, practitioners and researchers of CRES should seek to understand how youth experience and are affected by CRES curricula and pedagogies. Although most existing studies emphasize the benefits of CRES curricula and pedagogies, some studies do examine how students experience ethnic studies and the strengths students bring with them into the classroom. These studies serve as touchpoints for exploring how youth affectively, socially and relationally, and cognitively experience CRES.

For example, San Pedro (2015) examined Indigenous high school students' use of silence during discussions in a Native American Literature class in Arizona to complicate understandings of classroom participation and create space for "meta-voices" (p. 520), or internal dialogue. He challenged the frequent interpretation of "silence as a deficiency within standard schooling" (San Pedro, 2015, p. 510), inviting educators and researchers to see silence as a way for students to assert agency in conversations about colonization and oppression. Moreover, de los Ríos (2013), Cammarota (2014a), and F. Lopez et al. (2022) highlighted how Latine students

in ethnic studies programs communicated their experiences, and Hinrich (2019) captured Black youths' experiences in an introductory ethnic studies course in Oakland. de los Ríos (2013) explored how 35 students described their experiences in a high school Chicanx-Latinx Studies course in Southern California. The youth focused on how the space made them feel and little on quantifiable outcomes such as improved GPAs. Moreover, Cammarota (2014a) examined how Latine youth in Arizona articulated their personal encounters with racism in education as part of a research assignment documenting racism in schools. Students primarily identified instances of microaggressions, institutional discrimination, and linguistic racism (Cammarota, 2014a). Likewise, Latine youth enrolled in Mexican American Literature in Arizona reported that they felt more connected to their racial/ethnic identities, families, and communities after taking the course, especially as compared to their previous English courses that they described as Eurocentric and isolating (F. Lopez et al., 2022). Further, Hinrichs (2019) revealed that when asked what they took away from their ethnic studies course, Black youth in her study emphasized positive racial identity formation and an increased sense of agency. Collectively, these ethnic studies courses served as protected spaces for students to discuss and contest their everyday experiences with racism in schools. Examining youth's experiences rather than academic outcomes is important because CRES was conceptualized as a tool for nurturing critical racial consciousness and solidarity, not increasing academic achievement. To this end, numerous studies have interrogated how CRES supports and builds youth's racial literacies, critical consciousness, and capacity for solidarity and activism.

Racial literacy is "the capacity to decipher the racial grammar that structures racialized hierarchies and frames the [national] narrative" (Guinier, 2004, p. 100). It denotes knowledge of the relationship between race and power, most notably how white supremacy is maintained and

protected (Vue, 2021). As such, developing youth's racial literacies is a foundational objective of CRES. Importantly, CRES educators aim to nurture and expand youth's existing racial literacies and cultural ways of being, rather than approach the youth as blank slates upon which to project the educators' own understandings of the world. In his case study of two high school ethnic studies teachers, Nevarez (2021) found both teachers supported Latine students' racial literacy development process by "naming oppression through a sustained, process-oriented approach, rooting learning in place-based knowledge, centering the experiences and experiential knowledge of communities of color, and connecting students' critical analyses towards social action" (p. 57). Furthermore, he posited that a four-stage racial literacy development process emerged over time, with students developing critical frames through which to analyze classroom content, then applying those frames to outside-of-school experience, and finally imagining or enacting resistance (Nevarez, 2021). Thus, Nevarez (2021) created a framework for measuring racial literacy development that can be applied to other ethnic studies classrooms.

Several scholars, meanwhile, emphasized the distinctive racial literacies Latine students brought to their ethnic studies classrooms and how their racial literacies grew and changed throughout ethnic studies programs. These scholars theorized several original frameworks to describe the racial literacies of Latine youth: *corridista* literacy practices (de los Ríos, 2018), literacies of refuge (de los Ríos & Molina, 2020), and *mujerista* literacies (Ybarra, 2020). Based on data from an ethnographic case study of a Chicanx/Latinx Studies course, de los Ríos (2018) explored how one emergent bilingual, transnational Mexican-American youth engaged in literacies of *corridos*. de los Ríos (2018) described the ways this youth listened to, wrote, and performed *corridos,* Mexican ballads that tend to focus on the stories of the Mexico-U.S. border, as a *corridista* consciousness, a literacy practice that emerged from youths' relationship to the

border. *Corridista* consciousness positions Mexican-American youth as storytellers. Although many Mexican-American youth have rich language practices rooted in corridos, these literacy skills are rarely engaged in the classroom. Similarly, de los Ríos & Molina (2020) documented how students in a high school Chicanx/Latinx Studies course organized a Social Justice Posada, a secular reinterpretation of a Catholic Mexican religious ritual, for their community. In doing so, ethnic studies educators and students reframed a familiar cultural, spiritual practice to highlight anti-immigrant legislation and promote immigrant rights. According to de los Ríos & Molina (2020), this was an example of literacies of refuge, or literary practices that affirm the rights and futurity of immigrants. Additionally, Ybarra (2020) led a community-based ethnic studies program in an im/migrant housing community that was meant to help high school-aged Latinas think about community engagement and identity. Through her conversations with four Latinas, Ybarra (2020) concluded they embodied knowledge shaped by their "sociopolitical locations of being" (p. 240), which she deemed *mujerista* literacies. These studies reveal how educators can integrate Latine youth's existing funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) into ethnic studies curricula. These authors simultaneously celebrate students' racial literacies and illuminate how ethnic studies curriculum develops and sustains their literacies. Their work is a reminder that CRES necessitates engagement with youth of color's familial and cultural practices and the totality of their existing racial literacies.

Researchers have also frequently discussed the function and importance of critical consciousness, which can be defined as "the ability to recognize and analyze systems of inequality and the commitment to take action against these systems" (Al-Amin et al., 2017, p. 18). Some scholars, however, still emphasized academic skills alongside critical consciousness. For example, Chapman et al. (2020) analyzed course assignments from 225 ninth graders in an

introductory ethnic studies course in San Diego, California to determine how teachers integrated academic skills with critical consciousness. Based on their results, Chapman et al. (2020) argued that ethnic studies can "dismantle curriculum as the property of Whiteness" (p. 572) and foster more equitable educational spaces and experiences for students of color if educators equally emphasize academic skills and consciousness-building. It is unsurprising that Chapman et al. (2020) presented academic skills and critical consciousness as equally important given that in-school ethnic studies courses are held to the same measures of success as other courses, namely students' test scores and grades. Under these circumstances, it is logical for K-12 ethnic studies scholars and practitioners to see demonstrable gains in academic achievement as a means of legitimizing ethnic studies. However, a focus on grades and test scores detracts from and contradicts CRES's commitment to fostering critical racial consciousness and disrupting current educational practices, including the harmful testing culture that persists in schools. It serves to legitimize the same systems CRES critiques.

After conducting a case study on an afterschool program teaching ethnic studies to 61 middle school students in California, Nojan (2020) similarly concluded that ethnic studies curriculum cultivates students' critical consciousness while building their academic abilities and confidence. Although Nojan (2020) found that teaching ethnic studies can be "messy and contradictory" (p. 29), as young people may be examining their racialized experiences for the first time, the consequences of not cultivating critical consciousness can be far more damaging. For instance, youth of color may blame inequitable circumstances on themselves rather than systems (El-Amin et al., 2017; Nojan, 2020). Although I agree with Nojan's (2020) assertions about the importance of building critical consciousness, I again reject an emphasis on traditional measures of academic ability. From a CRES framework, I question how academic abilities are

being defined and measured. Further, portraying critical consciousness as a means of achieving academic success undermines its true function as a means of liberation. Academic abilities are undoubtedly important but are not a central goal of CRES.

Other scholars demonstrate commitments to and conceptualizations of critical racial consciousness that align with the aims of CRES. For instance, Simmons et al. (2019) examined a Black Studies course taught at a Missouri high school. They analyzed the course instructors' curriculum and pedagogy to demonstrate why Black historical consciousness, which they define as "a balanced approach to Black history that examines agency, oppression, resiliency, and perseverance as interlocking human characteristics" (Simmons et al., 2019, p. 56), is a foundational framework for high school Black Studies courses. They argue that this framework, unlike other attempts to mainstream Black history education, roots Black history in Black epistemologies (Simmons et al., 2019, p. 56). Simmons et al.'s (2019) Black historical consciousness and its juxtaposition with mainstream Black history education is an example of an approach to ethnic studies that centers critical racial consciousness over neoliberal interpretations of ethnic studies.

Based on 50 interviews with Black high school students in the northeast, El-Amin et al. (2017) outlined the following strategies for developing students' critical consciousness: "teach the language of inequality, create space to interrogate racism, [and] teach students how to take action" (pp. 22). Several studies (Cammarota, 2016; Gomez & Cammarota, 2021; Sacramento, 2019; E. Lopez et al., 2022) reveal how some ethnic studies educators employed the strategies outlined by El-Amin et al. (2017). For example, Cammarota (2016) described how in participating in PAR projects, Latine youth shifted from merely recognizing the oppressive structures working against them to critical consciousness about these structures as a precursor to

transformative organizing. Using PAR, the Social Justice Education Program guided students through the cycle of praxis, from reflecting on society to developing and implementing a plan of action before finally evaluating the outcome of their work (Cammarota, 2016). Furthermore, Gomez & Cammarota (2021) monitored how Latine high school students developed critical consciousness through a similar MAS course offered at an Arizona university in the summer. The authors' ethnographic study revealed that equitable, caring teacher-student relationships and youth self-efficacy may be catalysts for building critical consciousness.

In a study of the development and implementation of a district-wide ninth grade ethnic studies curriculum in California, Sacramento (2019) examined how five teachers met regularly as an Ethnic Studies Collaborative to engage in critical race dialogues, which established a critical collective consciousness and informed their classroom practice. As a result, the teachers "established a framework for students to develop a critical lens to interrogate hegemonic knowledge" (Sacramento, 2019, p. 72), "produce counterhegemonic knowledge" (p. 74), and "respond to the injustices about which they learn" (p. 92). Lastly, E. Lopez et al. (2022), practitioner-researchers who taught ethnic studies in a predominantly Latine Los Angeles high school, use youth *testimonios* to demonstrate the internal transformation students underwent as they were taught about community resilience and transformational resistance. Youth demonstrated increasingly sophisticated analyses of social inequities after taking a year-long ethnic studies course. The authors attributed this growth in part to the curriculum, which used a *testimonio* book project and PAR to help students "[imagine] and [write] into existence the ways in which [they] want to exist beyond oppression" (E. Lopez et al., 2022, p.10). Each of these studies depict the development of critical consciousness as an ongoing process, beginning with awareness of societal injustices and ending with the strategies and tools for action. They present

critical consciousness as part of a continuum toward collective social action, not a tool for developing youth's academic skills to meet existing school standards.

In this vein, some scholars specifically address how CRES encourages solidarity, coalition-building, and activism. Coffey & Espiritu (2016) were practitioner-researchers who taught ethnic studies in Los Angeles high schools that predominantly served Black and non-Black Latine students, whom the authors identified as "Brown." Because they witnessed racial tensions and divisions amongst Black and Brown youth, they sought to teach their students histories of collective resistance and interethnic organizing to build "a consciousness of solidarity between Black and Brown youth" (Coffey & Espiritu, 2016, p. 226). In their first example, Coffey developed an afterschool program in which youth leaders learned about ethnic studies concepts, such as Frantz Fanon's (1963) horizontal violence, which helped them contextualize the racialized hierarchies and violence created by divisive school policies. As a result, the youth organized a Black and Brown solidarity campaign, a week of action with workshops, and a PAR project that led to dialogue about the root causes of the intergroup tensions (Coffey & Espiritu, 2016). In their second example, Espiritu attempted to build solidarity in his ethnic studies course through an Afro-Latino unit, meant to help students "understand that Black, Indigenous, and Latino histories have been directly linked for more than five hundred years" (Coffey & Espiritu, 2016, p. 232). The goal was for students to recognize this history of shared struggle and solidarity as a model for how African Americans and Latines can similarly unite today. The youth then held community forums and theater performances to encourage similar "intercultural breakthroughs" (Coffey & Espiritu, 2016, p. 232) among other community members.

Additionally, Cabrera et al. (2013) and Serna (2013) investigate how Latine youth responded to Tucson's MAS ban. Cabrera et al. (2013) used counterstories to highlight student-led protests and the development of a community school known as the School of Ethnic Studies. In the School of Ethnic Studies, students who had been enrolled in MAS taught the banned MAS curriculum to their peers who chose to walk out in protest during the regular school day. Serna (2013), meanwhile, drew connections between embodied indigenous practices, indigenous and Chicano epistemologies, and activism. Specifically, Serna (2013) wrote about students who participated in a collective spiritual run, in the tradition of the Tohono O'odham peoples of Arizona, from their hometown of Tucson to the state capital of Phoenix to protest the MAS ban. Serna (2013) saw this as a manifestation of tenets of Chicano Studies and ethnic studies, such as (re)connecting with ancestral practices, reflexivity, and communal activism. Cabrera et al. (2013) and Serna (2013) revealed how ethnic studies, when taught through a CRES framework, can generate knowledges that engender student organizing and sustain indigenous epistemologies and practices, while Coffey & Espiritu (2016) portray CRES as a vehicle for students to build lasting solidarity. Through these examples, it is evident that CRES has the potential to not only expand youth's knowledge of systemic oppression and resistance movements, but to serve as an organizing tool and pathway toward organized resistance. Collectively, the existing literature on how youth experience CRES and how CRES sustains and transforms their critical racial consciousness, racial literacies, and capacity for solidarity and activism demonstrate that the function, goals, and outcomes of CRES cannot and should not be measured by quantifiable academic measures, such as grade point averages. Also, the literature highlights the potential and existing value of CRES programs while simultaneously revealing the labor and care required to effectively engage a CRES framework. A close reading of the literature, however, reveals that

schools may present barriers to implementation that out-of-school CRES educators can, at times, circumvent.

CRES In and Out of Schools

Schools have never been the only or even primary means of teaching and learning CRES, and community-based educational spaces have attempted to mitigate the resistance to and whitewashing of ethnic studies in schools (Lozenski, 2019). As such, it is essential that we study out-of-school CRES spaces to learn how community-based educators implement CRES. There are myriad existing studies on the pedagogies, curricula, outcomes, and experiences of those who pass on CRES knowledge outside the confines of schools. These CRES programs have taken place on university campuses, in community centers and other neighborhood spaces, and in after school programs. Some have occurred after hours on school campuses when school buildings transformed into dance halls for *folklorico* practice or sites of "Youthtopias" (Akom et al., 2008) wherein young people identified and explored lines of inquiry through PAR.

PAR is a methodology and pedagogy that requires a significant amount of time, careful planning, and thoughtful execution. While PAR is commonly utilized in a variety of ethnic studies programs, educators in out-of-school spaces can often dedicate more time to PAR than classroom teachers. Because PAR positions youth as architects of their own realities and guides them in taking action, it puts into practice CRES's commitment to emboldening youth and contributing to social movements. For instance, Lozenski (2019) studied a Minneapolis-based organization's year-long course designed for Black high school students to explore the cultural critical epistemologies of Africana Studies through PAR research methods. Over the span of a year, educators and youth dove deeply into the political goals, epistemologies, and histories of Black liberation movements and Black scholars (Lozenski, 2019). Youth only began the research

design and implementation process of PAR once they situated themselves within a Black intellectual tradition. Lozenski's (2019) study demonstrated the power of PAR and outlined the commitment and care necessary to implement PAR projects effectively and sustainably. Licona and Gonzales (2013) also explored the process of developing and implementing an action-oriented, youth-driven critical pedagogy forged outside of schools. In Licona and Gonzales's (2013) study, Latine youth in Arizona participated in a summer program wherein they developed media projects addressing youth-identified issues, including ethnic studies bans and the school-to-prison nexus. Like Lozenski (2019), Licona and Gonzales (2013) engaged in a complex, multi-step process with the youth to facilitate their meaningful engagement, and the entire program was built around the objective of collective action and education. In contrast, in schools, the theme of taking action often shows up briefly at the end of ethnic studies courses. In these ethnic studies units, youth often study resistance movements and contemplate solutions to real-world problems, but do not have an opportunity to enact change (e.g., Fey, 2019).

Additionally, some out-of-school CRES programs focus on sustaining and building youths' diverse literacies in ways that counteract the rhetorical, symbolic, and physical violence of formal schooling. Studies on these spaces often highlight bridging cultural practices and knoweldges with CRES concepts such as structural racism and settler colonialism. Ybarra (2020)'s ethnic studies program for high school-aged Latinas in an (im)migrant housing community emphasized maintaining the girls' existing racial literacies and helping them connect their lived experiences to larger sociopolitical issues. Because the program was held in an out-of-school, community space, Ybarra (2020) did not have to contend with prescribed curriculum standards and could also outreach and teach to a selected group of students. As such, Ybarra (2020) was able to attend specifically to the complex, evolving experiences of young Latinas.

Meeker (2016) conceptualized *baile folklorico*, a collection of Mexican folk dances practiced by dance troupes throughout the U.S., as an embodied counterstory and form of ethnic studies. She highlighted the experiences and narratives of a middle school *folklorico* group in the Bay Area, California who, through dance, refused assimilation, re/learned about their indigeneity, and recognized their own cultural capital. CRES need not, and should not, be enacted solely through traditionally recognized modes of learning, such as literature. Meeker (2016) presented an example of how ways of knowing and being critical to CRES are passed through arts and movement, in addition to the spoken and written word.

Sometimes CRES begins in the classroom but transcends the space in which it was created, transforming into a youth-led movement beyond a singular class (San Pedro et al., 2017). Moreover, when adult stakeholders ban or restrict the teaching of ethnic studies, youth demonstrate that CRES is not limited to a curriculum or classroom (Cabrera et al., 2013) by sharing and teaching ethnic studies content amongst themselves. Often, to organize and educate, these young people put theories and concepts they learned in CRES courses into practice. For instance, Cabrera et al. (2013) highlighted Latine student activists in Tucson who organized a School of Ethnic Studies to provide critical, autonomous education to their peers after they were denied access to MAS in schools. In San Pedro et al.'s (2017) study, we learn about a young, Indigenous person in Arizona who, after taking Native American Literature in high school, created a space for critical, reflexive dialogue and communal practices rooted in the epistemologies of the Akimel O'odham. He developed a grassroots, community discussion group to expand class lessons and conversations into generative dialogues about Indigenous peoples' experiences, including the ongoing violence of settler colonialism (San Pedro et al., 2017). Over the span of three months, his group met weekly at a coffee shop to "transform their reflective

listening- which they were very much engaged in while in the classroom- into active understandings" (San Pedro et al., 2017, p. 671) beyond the semester-long course. These examples indicate that even when CRES education begins in schools, the awareness and inspiration it generates in youth can expand beyond the classroom and may be reflected in their future actions.

However, while out-of-school spaces have the potential to offer CRES programs that adhere to CRES' radical origins with fewer barriers than in-school ethnic studies programs, community-based educators must be conscious of how practices of schooling that undermine CRES' goals can still be present in their spaces. Albright (2023) highlighted how Latine youth rejected the hierarchical and apolitical nature of schooling during an afterschool YPAR program in Western Massachusetts, but also described how aspects of schooling- such as adultism and linearity- seeped into what was intended to be a democratic, cross-generational collaboration. Thus, Albright (2023) revealed that out-of-school, CRES educational projects must actively refuse some of the same barriers to liberatory learning that in-school educators experience. While barriers such as prescribed curricula and testing may not exist outside of school, because the onto-epistemology of schooling transcends school hours and walls, educators and youth in all learning spaces may sometimes rely on restrictive practices like discipline, surveillance, and adherence to preexisting structures (Albright, 2023). Additionally, Nojan (2022) demonstrated how an afterschool ethnic studies program in California cultivated 34 Black, Latine, and Southeast Asian middle schoolers' critical consciousness, but posited that developing critical consciousness could be a nonlinear process. For example, although youth overwhelmingly recognized systemic racism is a problem in the U.S., Nojan (2022) found that some of the youth struggled to locate forms of racism in their own lives and schools. Nojan (2022) also noticed that

youth overemphasized education as a pathway to success and defined success in narrow terms. Students may initially misattribute or misunderstand complex CRES concepts, but Nojan (2022) reminds us that this is all part of the learning process. In sum, educators must contend with the non-linear nature of learning, particularly when it comes to the complexity of critical consciousness and situating one's self within the nation's racialized hierarchy. Out-of-school CRES can offer educators the necessary time and opportunity to address these challenges whereas in-school programs may have competing priorities, such as prescribed learning objectives and greater time constraints.

Limitations and Critiques

Many researchers have emphasized the benefits of ethnic studies, often in response to conservative critiques of secondary-level ethnic studies (Cabrera, et al., 2014). In doing so, ethnic studies advocates frequently rely on the language, values, and measures of ethnic studies' detractors. Ethnic studies, when taught with fidelity through a CRES lens, defies the logics of white supremacy and neoliberalism that are at the core of many conservative critiques of the discipline. For instance, some critics have sought to delegitimize ethnic studies by claiming it evokes feelings over facts, but Cacho (2010) insisted that the affective value of ethnic studies should not be denied nor accepted as a problem to overcome. Cacho (2010) presented two arguments in defense of affective learning: (1) learning about racialized violence should evoke strong emotions and (2) ethnic studies makes the untenable horrors of our current social structures legible and encourages youth to imagine more equitable futures. Ethnic studies' affective value, then, is part of what makes it a threat to the status quo and a potentially effective tool for social change. Practitioners and researchers of CRES must lean into its affective value and describe the value of CRES in our terms, not those of its conservative critics.

Although infrequent, some researchers have analyzed the constraints educators face in developing secondary-level ethnic studies curriculum within the context of state-sponsored schooling and warned against conflating ethnic studies with the study of cultures. These scholars speak back not to those who portray ethnic studies as unintellectual and/or divisive, but to those who depict and understand ethnic studies as a means of celebrating and affirming cultural differences. San Juan (1995), Singh (2017) and Armonda (2019) provide useful models for such an analysis. Nearly 30 years ago, San Juan (1995) argued that ethnic studies must "attend to the problem of power" (p. 140) rather than cultural diversity. He warned that practitioners of ethnic studies need to align with the revolutionary origins of ethnic studies to avoid upholding the status quo of liberal tolerance and framing ethnic studies as a tool for "managing" difference and diversity (San Juan, 1995). According to Singh (2017), ethnic studies is a site of contestation as some stakeholders attempt to co-opt its function, "ideologically pulling subversive signs and language towards [the] center" (p. 17), leaving ethnic studies "entangled between reformist discourses of neoliberalism and more liberal democratic understandings of its common value" (p. 17). Arguing against adhering to either ethos, he pushes his readers to invest in the decolonial possibilities of ethnic studies. In doing so, he warned against embracing "neoliberal logics of productivity and excellence" (Singh, 2017, p. 21) when advocating for the future of ethnic studies. Armonda (2019) made a similar argument, ultimately emphasizing the "potentiality of ethnic studies as a site of rejection of the neoliberal order of things and the opening of new social and political horizons" (p. 31), while acknowledging its capacity is limited within classroom settings.

Rodriguez (2017) similarly rebuked the absorption of ethnic studies into neoliberal reforms through an analysis of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) policies. She examined public

school closures in Chicago in 2013 that targeted Black communities alongside the subsequent institutionalization of African American Studies in CPS. Although Black communities in Chicago had long supported ethnic studies, CPS only developed African American Studies curriculum in the aftermath of the controversial school closings. According to Rodriguez (2017), CPS strategically implemented African American Studies to prevent local activists' attempts to fundamentally disrupt asymmetrical power dynamics in the city. In this case, powerful district administrators saw ethnic studies as a safe concession and used it as a distraction from Black communities' advocacy against school closures. San Juan (1995), Armonda (2019), Singh (2017) and Rodriguez (2017) remind us that assimilating ethnic studies into formal academic structures may result in a shift away from its original commitment to liberation.

When adopting a CRES framework, it is crucial that we understand CRES' limitations as a means of achieving racial and social justice. As I hope I have demonstrated, CRES is a form of political education that critiques current oppressive structures and envisions ways to collectively re/build more equitable practices and structures. Yet, CRES alone will not end antiblackness, systemic racism, or white supremacy. When we accept its limitations, we can better understand its utility and use it as an effective educational and organizational tool. This is vital if we hope to retain its critical orientation and harness its potential as a tool of political education within a broader counter-hegemonic political project (Arce & Jocson, 2019).

Moreover, when we understand its limitations, we may better recognize when CRES, and ethnic studies more broadly, is used as a tool to suppress Black and non-Black communities of color's radical demands for structural changes and material benefits. According to CRT, steps toward racial equity are only taken when the interests of Black people (or other people of color) align with the interests of whites (Bell, 2004). Notably, these incremental steps are retracted if

and when the protected social status of white people is threatened (Bell, 2004). Because schools serve to reproduce current power im/balances, changes to the school system are only permissible when they advance the interests of middle-to-upper class white people. Thus, critical, racial educators and education researchers should question when, why, and how ethnic studies is admitted into secondary schools. CRES requires us to contend with whose interests are being served by our work and demands that we continuously recenter the needs and perspectives of the most marginalized peoples.

Recommendations

Directions for Future Research

Prior research does explore some of the benefits and challenges of secondary-level ethnic studies courses, but there is room to expand the secondary-level ethnic studies research landscape. Importantly, existing research largely aims to demonstrate how secondary-level ethnic studies courses and curricula improve or develop specific skill sets among students, including a notable focus on academic performance. As a result, most studies are concerned with either defining the curricula and pedagogies used in a given course or unit or demonstrating the significance of a skillset, such as critical consciousness. Little attention is given to the actual curriculum development process. Future research should seek to understand how ethnic studies educators conceptualize ethnic studies and why, and how this informs their decisions about curricula and praxis. Such understandings are important for ethnic studies teacher educators and researchers to support the influx of new ethnic studies teachers in states like California. During this period of mass institutionalization of ethnic studies in secondary schools, understanding how teachers develop ethnic studies curriculum is an important step toward building a shared conceptualization of ethnic studies' functions and how to effectively teach its associated

concepts. Using this information, advocates can support ethnic studies teachers and disrupt attempts to dilute the principles of ethnic studies.

Further, as I argued throughout this paper, a unifying framework is also necessary as ethnic studies becomes more commonplace in secondary schools. There is a need for an agreed upon conceptualization of ethnic studies rooted in a shared critical vision for the field. By merging existing critical ethnic studies pedagogies and identifying their common tenets, I proposed CRES as a response to the absence of a shared theoretical underpinning. Future research must first contend with the theoretical, conceptual, and pedagogical inconsistencies across the field of secondary-level ethnic studies.

Of note, most existing studies occur in traditional secondary classrooms. Additional research should be conducted on how ethnic studies is implemented outside of schools. Such spaces are rich in possibility but have rarely been studied. Without attending to CRES work outside of formal school settings, ethnic studies advocates currently overlook significant contributions to the field, including valuable ideas for developing effective ethnic studies programs. For example, we can learn from instances when youth organized community education spaces (Cabrera et al., 2013; San Pedro et al., 2017) to better understand what motivates youth to redistribute their classroom ethnic studies curriculum and what knowledge and skills they employ to do so.

Finally, ethnic studies is not only valuable because of its traditional academic benefits, such as potential increases in standardized test scores (Cabrera, et al., 2014). Yet, few studies consider students' and teachers' everyday experiences of ethnic studies outside of measurable improvements. For example, the affective experiences of those who co-create ethnic studies spaces, spaces heralded as youth-centered (Kwon & de los Ríos, 2019) and caring (Sosa-

Provencio et al., 2021) by researchers, are marginalized in the current literature. Ethnic studies is a space of "epistemological contestation" (Armonda, 2019, p. 39) wherein youth and educators collectively struggle against the oppressive power structures that shape their lives. As such, secondary-level ethnic studies researchers should also study the ways youth and educators engage with one another, (re)construct learning, and imagine "emancipatory possibilities beyond the ideological horizon of the present" (Armonda, 2019, p. 39). Despite its limitations, secondary-level ethnic studies can be an effective tool for achieving the political project student activists conceived of over 50 years ago. To harness the potential of secondary-level ethnic studies, researchers must shift their focus from proving the utility of ethnic studies to building and supporting ethnic studies programs rooted in the field's critical theoretical foundations.

Recommendations for Praxis

CRES pedagogies and curricula cannot remain solely theorized in the literature. Instead, we must ensure practitioners can access CRES and apply it to their work. To this end, CRES is a useful framework for evaluating existing ethnic studies courses to ensure they maintain a critical, racial grounding. As Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2020) demonstrated, a critical framework like CRES can be used to evaluate the criticality of ethnic studies content, instruction, and impact rather than relying on traditional standards-based evaluations. CRES offers a relevant, appropriate way to measure whether an ethnic studies course aligns with ethnic studies' radical origins, such as by centering youths of color's experiential knowledge and challenging white supremacist logics. Similarly, CRES can be used as a professional development framework for training ethnic studies educators, as we see in the work of the LESMCC (Cunanan et al., 2023). Creating and implementing a shared critical framework for ethnic studies professional development is a crucial step in training and supporting CRES educators.

Teacher educators, researchers, and educators who hope to recruit and educate critical ethnic studies educators can also benefit from employing a CRES framework when recruiting and educating new ethnic studies educators, including classroom teachers. Aligned with Curammeng's (2020) recommendations for teacher educators, I posit that stakeholders should recruit those who have studied ethnic studies or embodied ethnic studies practices in their communities through community education or organizing. Curammeng (2020) demonstrates that such students and practitioners of ethnic studies often enter the work with a deep knowledge of ethnic studies concepts, such as colonialism and cross-racial organizing, and a critical, activist orientation. Through CRES, we know these skills and knowledges lend themselves to an effective ethnic studies education. Finally, I contend that teacher educators should also use a CRES framework to train new ethnic studies educators. The grassroots efforts of LESMCC (Cunanan et al., 2023) and Pin@y Educational Partnerships (Daus-Magbual et al., 2023) demonstrate that a shared critical framework and orientation are integral to building a mass movement of critical ethnic studies educators who can, among other things, work in solidarity with local communities and mobilize youth to work toward systemic change. At a time when ethnic studies is being rapidly institutionalized, disrupting its absorption into a neoliberal agenda (Cunanan et al., 2023) is more urgent than ever. Applying a CRES framework at every level of the recruitment and education process is one vital step for building thriving communities of critical ethnic studies educators.

Significance

This literature review offers a comprehensive examination of how CRES curricula and pedagogy have been studied since ethnic studies' inception as an academic discipline in the 1960s. In doing so, it synthesizes the vast array of existing knowledge about the effective

development and implementation of CRES. Notably, past literature did not explicitly label scholarship as CRES or define CRES as distinct from other interpretations of ethnic studies. This literature review establishes a definition of CRES by consolidating the themes and concepts established in seminal work such as that by de los Ríos et al. (2015). Moving forward, a shared framework will help to protect the critical integrity of ethnic studies at a time when secondary-level ethnic studies programs are rapidly expanding and becoming institutionalized. This article also highlights the historic and current foundations of CRES to demonstrate CRES' significance and ground it in the tradition of radical ethnic studies scholarship and activism. To understand ethnic studies' function, it is integral to know and document its long history as a catalyst for youth organizing and revolutionary theorizing (de los Ríos et al., 2015). Finally, this paper extends the literature by comparing and contrasting CRES inside and outside of schools to identify what teachers and teacher educators can learn from out-of-school ethnic studies. It also builds on the existing literature that centers critical, secondary-level Asian American Studies and highlights the function, pedagogies, and content of critical Asian American Studies.

This paper sets the context for the two empirical studies by defining CRES, establishing the historical context out of which CRES emerged, and synthesizing existing literature on the development and implementation of CRES programs like the program highlighted in papers 2 and 3 of my dissertation. A critical analysis of the literature is necessary to ensure I present an innovative perspective on secondary-level ethnic studies rather than rehash existing ideas. Also, as a Black scholar conducting critical, racial research, it is vital that my work is rooted in the knowledge of those who have come before me. This paper connects my studies to the work of scholars of color who have long enriched the ethnic studies research landscape: scholars whose labor I learned from, credited, and expanded. Importantly, in my review of critical pedagogies, I

foreground the research and praxis of Asian American scholars and practitioners. Given that papers 2 and 3 focus on an Asian American Studies curriculum developed and implemented by three Southeast Asian women, it is imperative that I situate my work specifically in a critical Asian American Studies tradition, even as I promote the interconnectedness of ethnic studies' disciplines. By capturing what we already know from secondary-level ethnic studies research and identifying what we can still stand to learn, this paper establishes the rationale for the two empirical studies that follow.

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Manuscript 2. Building new worlds through an ethnic studies community education program

Introduction

In October 2021, California became the first state in the country to make ethnic studies a high school graduate requirement (Gecker, 2021). After a years-long battle between stakeholders, California's governor signed a bill that will require students at public high schools to take a one-semester ethnic studies course beginning with the class of 2030 (Gecker, 2021). Additionally, numerous states across the country now offer ethnic studies at the secondary level (e.g., Connecticut and Texas). As ethnic studies rapidly becomes institutionalized in high schools, teachers, administrators, and teacher educators scramble to develop curriculum and train new ethnic studies educators. In response, they have sought resources and guidance from existing ethnic studies teachers and researchers. To gain a thorough understanding of ethnic studies practices and possibilities, stakeholders should also engage with ethnic studies knowledge produced outside schools and universities.

Prior to its formalization as an academic field, ethnic studies already existed as the construction and passing of knowledge by communities of color (Lozenski, 2019). Communities of color in the United States have always sought to educate themselves and their youth in ways that honored their own epistemologies. As Lozenski (2019) reminds us, "ethnic studies is bigger than schooling and school has never been the primary location of this work" (p. 28). There is a long history of college students using protests and community organizing to create and demand consciousness-building, community-engaged education (Bañales, 2019; Dong, 2019). Often, the students sought to redistribute university resources to local communities of color, whom they

viewed as having a wealth of knowledge and skills but fewer material opportunities. For many, the goal was to aid in further developing the critical consciousness[1] of oppressed peoples (Okihiro, 2010), including local youth. Today, some students of color at universities build on this rich activist tradition by bringing critical racial education to youth outside of formal educational spaces. In doing so, they disseminate knowledge that may otherwise be confined to the academy and disrupt existing barriers between universities and the communities in which they are situated.

While some research highlights out-of-school ethnic studies (Ybarra, 2020), including derivations of Asian American Studies (AAS) (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016), most of these programs are facilitated by university researchers or formally trained educators. There is little in the current literature about the role other ethnic studies educators play in the teaching and learning of ethnic studies. To understand how ethnic studies is being implemented outside of formal classrooms, we must learn from those who are already doing this challenging work, which includes facilitators who are not formally trained ethnic studies educators or scholars. As such, this study examines how a team of three undergraduate students worked collaboratively to create an AAS curriculum for local youth of color, most of whom were Asian American. The study investigates the curriculum they developed, along with their curriculum design and implementation processes. The following research question guided this qualitative inquiry:

1. How is an out-of-school Asian American Studies curriculum developed and implemented by a team of undergraduate students?
    a. How do facilitators implement the curriculum and what factors influence implementation?

[1] In this study, critical consciousness refers to the ongoing process of reflecting on systems of oppression, and one's place in these systems, in order to change them (Freire, 2000).

b. What do facilitators include in and exclude from the curriculum, and why?

Positionality

My work is unequivocally informed by my time navigating the same system I seek to reconstruct. I come to this work as a Black educator, critical race educational researcher, and former K-12 classroom teacher. My experiences as a student and teacher profoundly shape how I approached my study, influencing my framing, analysis, and interpretations. I spent thirteen years as a public school student and cannot recall a single lesson explaining or critiquing systems of power, including racism. In response, I sought out ethnic studies courses in college which provided a theoretical grounding for my burgeoning critical lens. For the first time, I felt empowered by my education and the scholars around me, and I developed a politicized racial identity centered on solidarity with other oppressed peoples.

However, I believe students of color should not have to attend college to access a critical education, so I pursued a career as a high school teacher. During this time, I developed an ethnic studies course that supported students' understandings of the structural and institutional effects of racism and other interconnected systems of subjugation and helped students develop tools for disrupting these systems. Collectively, my time as a student and high school teacher inform how I understand the function of ethnic studies courses in schools. Despite my efforts, there were times when I reinforced the white supremacist, teacher-centered power dynamics of traditional classrooms. As a result, I research critical racial approaches to ethnic studies that counter the oppression I witnessed, experienced, and at times unwittingly perpetuated in the California public school system.

As a qualitative researcher employing ethnographic methods, I had to consider my positionality throughout the research process for this study. As a Black woman working with three Asian American women participants, there were many aspects of their racialized

experiences I did not share. Still, I attempted to show up as a worthy witness (Winn & Ubiles, 2011), one who privileged participants' voices and built trusting relationships with them. Awareness of the complexity of the researcher-participant relationship was an integral part of grappling with my positionality as a researcher and minimizing the harm and extraction intrinsic to qualitative research.

Literature Review

Research indicates ethnic studies participation deepens youths' sociopolitical knowledge (Cammarota, 2017), commitment to racial and social justice (Otero & Cammarota, 2011), and sense of agency (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016). Exposure to ethnic studies can also enhance youths' critical consciousness (Lopez et al., 2022) and racial literacies (de los Ríos, 2017). Understanding how and why ethnic studies generates such benefits is vital if we wish to expand ethnic studies to reach more youth and improve how ethnic studies is taught while maintaining a critical orientation. The educators imparting ethnic studies curricula have a marked effect on youths' course engagement and critical stances (Dueñas et al., 2019), and educators' choices are influenced by a host of factors, including their own learning experiences, political stances and racial literacies, and perceptions of the subject area's purpose (Garcia, 2021; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2019). As such, we must examine the role of ethnic studies facilitators to reveal how critical ethnic studies curricula are being created and implemented and how to develop and execute new, effective critical ethnic studies curricula.

Role of the Facilitator

The person enacting an ethnic studies curriculum has a profound influence on what occurs in that space, including in the development and implementation of curriculum. The totality of their lived experiences, such as their critical consciousness, racial literacies, training,

and social identities, dictates how they show up as ethnic studies educators. The few studies that explore the experiences of K-12 ethnic studies educators cover diverse themes, from exploring educators' own cultural wealth to teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic. The most relevant to this paper is Garcia (2021)'s case study investigating the professional experiences of three teachers in South Texas high schools who, despite limited preparation and resources, continue to advocate for and teach Mexican American Studies. Using a community cultural wealth framework, Garcia (2021) examined what forms of capital the teachers identified within themselves and how they used this capital in their Mexican American Studies courses. Data reveal that these educators' childhood, familial, and educational experiences influenced their teaching decisions.

Other research investigates institutional barriers ethnic studies teachers face, the alignment between teachers' course goals and the goals of ethnic studies, and how teachers adapt pedagogy in highly stressful conditions (Flewelling, 2022; Young, 2021). Flewelling (2022) found that ethnic studies teachers prioritized students' mental and emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic because they believed pedagogies of care were integral to ethnic studies. Young (2021) found teachers' purported course goals aligned with Sleeter and Zavala's (2020) Hallmarks of Ethnic Studies, despite the constraints presented by traditional school structures, including minimal professional development opportunities and mandated, punitive grading practices. To ensure youth receive quality CRES education, it is imperative we learn more about the profound role educators play in shaping the development and implementation of ethnic studies curriculum and what supports they need to overcome institutional barriers. Moreover, because this research was conducted in school settings, it revealed the limitations specific to teaching ethnic studies in traditional schools. Further research is needed on what

barriers ethnic studies educators may face outside of schools and how they overcome these constraints.

Curriculum Development & Implementation

As ethnic studies is institutionalized en masse in school districts across the country, it is important to understand how educators create critical ethnic studies curriculum to disrupt the co-optation of ethnic studies into neoliberal multiculturalism (Armonda, 2019; Singh, 2017). Some studies on ethnic studies teachers' processes of developing course content and pedagogy reveal how they decide what to include in and how best to impart their curriculum. For example, Vasquez and Altshuler (2017) reviewed the development of a K-12 ethnic studies program founded by Altshuler in western Massachusetts and argued that an effective ethnic studies curriculum requires knowledge of and commitment to critical praxis and theories. Vasquez and Altshuler (2017) specifically highlight two important considerations for ethnic studies practitioners: (1) the utility of a CRT framework when creating an ethnic studies program and (2) knowing and engaging the specificity of youths' experiences in curriculum development. For example, in Holyoke, Massachusetts, Vasquez and Altshuler (2017) attended to Puerto Rican histories, migration narratives, and ways of being; in doing so, they focused on "bridging the community to the classroom and the classroom to the community" (p. 32). Similarly, de los Ríos (2016) described how she developed projects in her high school Chicanx/Latinx Studies course using The Panza Monologues to explore Chicana/Latina feminist writings with emerging bilinguals. She also established a partnership with the local university to foster community collaboration between Latinx youth and undergraduate sociology students (de los Ríos & Ochoa, 2012), providing two examples of successful and transformative youth engagement. Additionally, the community-university partnership demonstrated the powerful lessons that occur

when divisions between universities and their surrounding communities are deconstructed and solidarity is forged across racial/ethnic, class, and generational boundaries.

Not all educators employ critical, racial ethnic studies content, however, Fey (2019), a practitioner-researcher, detailed the thematic units she created for her one-semester, ninth grade ethnic studies course in a Los Angeles high school and offered a framework for how to develop a similar course. Unlike Vasquez & Altshuler (2017), de los Ríos (2016), or de los Ríos & Ochoa (2012), Fey (2019) did not ground her curriculum in critical theories or highlight crossracial coalition-building. As a result, her units focused almost exclusively on identity, culture, and history. Although these themes are relevant to ethnic studies, without maintaining a structural critique of racism and preparing youth to disrupt these systems of oppression, practitioners like Fey (2019) do not harness the liberatory potential of ethnic studies. In this way, the knowledge produced in ethnic studies remains confined to the classroom, rather than becoming a catalyst for youths' transformative sociopolitical action.

There are myriad approaches to critical ethnic studies pedagogies, and it is advantageous to understand which to implement and how. Curammeng et al. (2016) described the creation of a pedagogical tool for ethnic studies-framed Language Arts classes, including its theoretical groundings, purpose, and potential as community-responsive literacy which "can be understood as learning to read and write while developing students' abilities to identify and respond to a community's needs as change agents and activists" (p. 415). Curammeng et al. (2016) present this tool, the ethnic studies praxis story plot, as an effective frame for how ethnic studies educators approach literacy across units and classes. Additionally, Licona and Gonzalez (2013) highlighted the community-based pedagogy they deployed in a summer camp serving Latinx youth in Tucson. Their pedagogy recognized youth as producers of knowledge during

discussions of locally meaningful topics, helped youth make connections across identities, and provided opportunities for youth to address social justice issues in their communities (Licona & Gonzalez, 2013). In sum, these studies suggest that effective, counterhegemonic ethnic studies curricula should prepare students to directly serve their local communities in meaningful, youth-generated ways. Licona and Gonzalez (2013), in particular, demonstrate how critical ethnic studies curriculum can be developed outside of schools.

K-12 Asian American Studies

Numerous pedagogies, frameworks, and thriving programs offer insight into in-school and out-of-school K-12 AAS specifically. Examples include curricula that incorporate Vietnamese American experiences and histories into secondary schools (Beevi et al., 2003), use youth theatrical performances to empower Asian American youth in a pan-ethnic, secondary AAS course (Cytrynbaum, 2010), and show how out-of-school AAS programs can lead to greater engagement in social justice action for Chinese- and Vietnamese-American youth (Suyemoto et al., 2015). Additionally, Filipinx American Studies educators and scholars provide insight into how to design and implement effective AAS curricula. Through an ethnographic study of a high school Filipino Heritage Studies course in Northern California, Jocson (2008) conceptualized *kuwento* as both a cultural-linguistic practice and a useful pedagogical framework. According to Jocson (2008), in the Filipino folk and oral tradition, *kuwento* is "best described as a noun (story) and a verb (telling/listening to/participating in a story)… *kuwento* is not simply about sharing stories but also about the nature in which stories take place" (p. 242). *Kuwento* organically occurred in the Filipino Heritage Studies course as both the teacher and the students used stories to explain their current realities as Filipinx-Americans and situate their

experiences in the larger pattern of Filipino and American histories (Jocson, 2008). As a pedagogy, *kuwento* creates a "critical discursive space for exploring identity and building the concept of community beyond walls" (Jocson, 2008, p. 250) through a curriculum that centers youths' experiences, knowledges, and practices. Altogether, Jocson (2008) demonstrated how incorporating students' existing linguistic and cultural patterns into ethnic studies classrooms is essential to building authentic, caring spaces that challenge hegemonic ideas of knowing.

Building on criticisms of traditional teaching methods, Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2016) and Romero (2016) advocated specifically for arts-based critical pedagogies of race in Filipinx American Studies. Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2016) detailed how a community-based ethnic studies program employed critical performance pedagogy, which uses theater and performance to develop critical consciousness and generate community engagement, in their work with low-income Filipinx youth in San Francisco. The authors found that the program's critical performance pedagogy, through its emphasis on 'reading' one's surroundings and collective action, resulted in increased critical consciousness, a sense of transformative agency, and stronger community bonds amongst the youth (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2016). Inspired by the work of similar programs, Romero (2016) sought to advance a pedagogical framework he believed was well-suited for ethnic studies, particularly Filipinx American Studies. His proposed framework, punk rock pedagogy (PRP), was rooted in the history of people of color in the counterculture of punk rock because these artists challenged the hegemony of white supremacy and exemplify how educators and youth of color can "reclaim their radical agency" (Romero, 2016, p. 117). In short, Romero (2016) theorized that punk music is a lens through which youth can learn about Filipinx American history while simultaneously developing an anti-imperialist, anti-racist activist stance. He speculated that incorporating PRP into Filipinx American Studies

would foster young people's sociopolitical knowledge, sense of agency, and community engagement.

Other scholars have offered guidelines for preparing, supporting, and evaluating K-12 AAS educators and programs, such as professional development models and teacher preparation pipelines. In 1996, a university researcher and a community activist co-founded a teacher preparation program for Filipinx Americans called Pinoy Teach. Pinoy Teach provided college students with the tools to teach Filipino American history and culture to middle school students (Halagao, 2010). Halagao (2010) argued that the Pinoy Teach curriculum served as a decolonizing framework that explicitly attends to the specific history and legacy of internal neocolonialism experienced by Filipinx Americans and should be replicated. Building on this foundation, Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2010) described the programmatic and pedagogical development of Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP), a San Francisco-based collaborative teacher "counter-pipeline" (p. 77) that responds to the lack of Filipinx American educators in schools and the exclusion of Filipinx American histories and perspectives from K-12 curricula. This teacher preparation counter-pipeline uses critical ethnic studies pedagogies to train its teachers. Notably, Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2020) advanced a Critical Framework of Review to evaluate K-12 Filipinx American Studies curricula, which they used to assess thirty-three K-12 Filipinx American curricula for critical content, instruction, and impact. Extending the work of Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2010), Curammeng's (2020) portraiture of two Filipino American teachers revealed how their formal ethnic studies education, participation in PEP, and experience in community organizing shaped their pedagogical practices. Curammeng (2020) argued that teacher education should "be rooted in ethnic studies, [which] includes looking toward Ethnic

Studies as a site of pedagogy and curricula and as a theoretical orientation and position to interrogate power in ways mainstream teacher education does not" (p. 466).

It is evident that AAS has the potential to provide transformative ethnic studies experiences for Asian American youth in traditional and nontraditional education spaces. Further, in AAS, there is a long tradition of sustainable partnerships between university researchers, K-12 teachers, and community activists (Halagao, 2010; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2010). Despite this robust foundation, there are innumerable challenges when implementing an AAS curriculum, such as the complex demographic diversity of Asian Americans and lack of educator training (Kiang, 2004). Better understanding effective curriculum development and implementation processes, including pedagogies grounded in Asian American epistemologies and histories, will help to expand the current impact of AAS by preparing more educators to teach critical, racial AAS.

Critical Race Theory

In this study, critical race theory (CRT) informs how I conceptualize the need for and function of ethnic studies and my methodological approach. CRT is the lens through which I understand how race and racism operate in institutions, such as schools. It is a tool for understanding the meaning-making of Asian American educators like my participants and social practices in out-of-school educational spaces like the AAS program under study. It establishes traditional educational spaces as sites of antiblack, racist violence, demonstrating why out-of-school ethnic studies programs are necessary interventions.

Solorzano and Yosso (2001) present the following themes to define CRT in education:

1. The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination

CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are permanent and pervasive dimensions of the structural and systemic organization of the U.S. While racism is the cornerstone of critical race analysis, CRT views racism through its intersection with other forms of oppression, such as classism. This theme highlights the need to name, define, and center race in ethnic studies curriculum. Further, my study considers the intersection between race and gender in the decision-making processes of my participants, all of whom are Asian American women.

2. The challenge to dominant ideology

CRT rejects the educational system's traditional claims of objectivity, meritocracy, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. These claims conceal the power white people procure from educational institutions, which are currently structured to reinforce white supremacy, antiblackness, and racism. In keeping with this theme, I do not believe neutrality is possible and do not strive for it as a researcher or expect it in educators. Additionally, my study operates from the belief that ethnic studies is meant to be disruptive and thus defines ethnic studies through its commitment to dismantling and reimagining the current educational structure. I seek to understand how and why ethnic studies educators enact this refusal.

3. The commitment to social (racial) justice

CRT is committed to providing a transformative response to the racist and classist, dominant educational ideology described above. Social justice education is a curricular and pedagogical approach that works toward the elimination of racial and class oppression. A critical racial interpretation of ethnic studies encourages youth to not just theorize about race, but to actively work towards racial justice through community activism that addresses the causes and consequences of structural racism. I view my participants' decision to collaboratively develop and implement an AAS curriculum as a demonstrated commitment to racial justice.

4. The centrality of experiential knowledge

CRT views the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate and valuable and encourages educators to draw from youth of color's lived experiences. Additionally, CRT posits that the experiential knowledge and embodied literacies of youth of color are critical to teaching and learning about systemic racism. This theme encourages methods such as counterstorytelling, family histories, and *testimonios*, which are all widely used in ethnic studies. I center the perspectives of my participants, who are all Asian American women of color, because I believe they can best tell their own stories. Likewise, the participants center youths' counternarratives and lived experiences in their curriculum.

5. The transdisciplinary perspective

Traditionally, schools are based on a unidisciplinary model that separates knowledge transmission into rigidly defined subject areas. This approach breeds ahistoricism and inaccuracies. CRT instead insists on analyzing race and racism in both historical and contemporary contexts, using transdisciplinary knowledge that draws from fields like history, sociology, and law. In doing so, a critical racial ethnic studies curriculum exposes how arbitrary and erroneous these divisions of knowledge are, creating a more holistic understanding of race and racism in the United States.

Critical Racial Ethnic Studies

While CRT explains the urgency of ethnic studies and establishes its purpose, it does not attend to the specificities of how ethnic studies courses should be designed or implemented to fulfill its purpose. To address this gap, I offer critical racial ethnic studies (CRES) as a conceptual framework. In this study, I use CRES to make sense of my findings and offer pedagogical and research implications for K-12 ethnic studies.

CRES is an approach that teaches ethnic studies concepts through the lens of CRT. CRES is a framework for understanding how to teach ethnic studies, its function as an academic discipline, and its potential as a critical, educational intervention. CRES assumes teaching is a political act (Freire, 2000) and calls for the use of critical pedagogy, a dialogic educational process that builds substantive learning experiences with racially and economically marginalized youth by engaging them in inquiry and action (de los Ríos et al., 2016). Although critical pedagogy positions students as conduits of change and producers of knowledge, it does not explicitly contend with race. Because ethnic studies positions racism as the primary tool of social organization, CRES necessitates an analysis of the construction of racial projects (Omi & Winant, 1994) and a commitment to their undoing (de los Ríos et al., 2016). As such, CRES fuses critical pedagogies and the five tenets of CRT in education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Building on these theoretical groundings, CRES is meant to guide youth in their critique of structural, systemic, and institutional racism. It creates space for collective healing from racial and colonial trauma, self-determination, and social organizing to transform material conditions (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). It can redistribute knowledge and resources to the community and simultaneously requires learning with and from the community. To do so, CRES educators must practice reflexivity, establish meaningful relationships, build critical curriculum, and employ critical pedagogies, and take action beyond the classroom.

First, CRES requires educators to be reflexive about the role race and power play in their own educational spaces and in other institutions and systems. Educators must interrogate their positionality and develop their own counterhegemonic racial literacies[2] and critical

[2] I define racial literacies as how one understands and discusses racism. There is a spectrum between racial literacies that perpetuate racism and white supremacy and racial literacies that disrupt these systems. Counterhegemonic racial literacies (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) denote knowledge of the

consciousness before they can effectively facilitate a CRES curriculum. Further, CRES educators should build relationships with the youth, their families, and other members of the communities in which they teach. CRES roots the struggle for equity and racial justice in a dedication to supporting, loving, and believing in youth and their communities.

Simultaneously, CRES educators need to develop critical curriculum. CRES curricula should center the everyday and historical experiences of Black, Asian, Indigenous, and Latinx Americans, with a focus on reclaiming "lost and stolen histories" (de los Ríos et al., 2016, p. 193). Through the study of racially minoritized peoples' histories, movements, and knowledges, CRES seeks to develop youths' counterhegemonic racial literacies (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) and critical consciousness. Moreover, CRES educators must employ community responsive, critical pedagogies with content that is attentive to local contexts and helps youth investigate and act on their communities' needs (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

CRES has the potential to be more than just a curriculum taught in classrooms. As Freire (2000) asserts, the struggle to transform systems and structures of domination must include both critical reflection and activism. Consequently, CRES necessitates taking action to disrupt antiblackness, structural racism, and white supremacy. Educators who employ CRES must highlight the myriad historic and current examples of coalition-building and organizing toward collective liberation in local, national, and global contexts. Furthermore, CRES encourages educators to embody an activist orientation and support youth in re/discovering their own roles in movements for racial and social justice.

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relationship between race and power, most notably how white supremacy is systemically maintained and protected (Vue, 2021).

Methods

This study draws from a larger research project on the experiences and decision-making processes of out-of-school ethnic studies educators. Data for this study were drawn from: (1) observations of six planning meetings, (2) observations of six program sessions, (3) participants' written reflections, (4) individual interviews with each of the three participants, and (5) a focus group interview with all participants. In analyzing the data, I sought to answer the following questions:

1. How is an out-of-school Asian American Studies curriculum developed and implemented by a team of undergraduate students?
    a. How do facilitators implement the curriculum and what factors influence implementation?
    b. What do facilitators include in and exclude from the curriculum, and why?

Participants, Setting, and Recruitment

Participants included three undergraduate student leaders in an Asian American student organization at a historically white institution in the mid-Atlantic. I had access to the student organization through my work as a graduate student researcher. I served on a research team with one of the organization's co-presidents, who then introduced me to the remaining members of the leadership team. Since 2006, the student organization has hosted a free, annual six-week leadership program for local Asian American youth in 9th-11th grades. In 2022, the current leadership team reorganized the program, focusing on the history of Asian American activism, strengthening Asian American solidarity and identity, and mentorship between Asian American university students and high school students. The cohort met once weekly for five weeks; the

youth presented a culminating project in the sixth week. The program was hybrid, with three sessions held on site at the university and three held virtually over Zoom.

The three participants were primarily responsible for co-developing and co-implementing the six-week CRES program under study. Due to the organization's mission, most of its members and all its leadership team were Asian American, including the participants in this study. Two of the participants organized the program, and the other participant, who was co-president of the student group, organized the program the previous spring. All three worked closely together to plan and implement the program curriculum over the course of two months. Participant pseudonyms and demographics are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Participant Profiles

Name	Ages	Ethnicity	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Role in Program Development
Cia	22	Filipino American	Woman	Heterosexual	Organizing program
Eileen	20	Filipino American	Woman	Queer	Organizing program
Jade	21	Vietnamese American	Woman	Queer	Co-president of student group, supporting Eileen and Cia

Data Sources

Observations of Planning Meetings. I observed and audio and video recorded six, one-hour planning meetings, which were held on Zoom. From these observations, I sought to understand how the participants made decisions about their curriculum, particularly what content they chose to include and exclude, and what influenced those decisions.

Observations of Program Sessions. I observed six, two-hour program sessions, three of which were held on Zoom and three of which occurred in-person. Observations focused on how participants implemented the program and what (observable) factors influenced implementation. Additionally, to capture potential biases I might have brought to my analysis, I denoted feelings, questions, and reactions that arose for me as an observer.

Participants' Reflections. Participants wrote a personal reflection on a Google Document after each of the six program sessions. In each reflection, I asked participants to respond to the following prompts about the program session: (1) What do you think went well today and why?, (2) What surprised you about today's session?, (3) What do you wish had gone differently and why?, (4) Based on today's experience, will you make changes to the next session's planned lesson? If so, what will you alter and why?, (5) Please share other thoughts, feelings, and ideas you have after today's session. The reflections provided additional insight into facilitators' decision-making processes during the program.

Interviews. Over Zoom, I conducted two semi-structured, 60-minute individual interviews with each participant and one 60-minute focus group interview with all three participants at the end of the program. The interviews were audio and video recorded. In this article, I use data from the first individual interview, which focused on curriculum development during the planning meetings and curricular implementation during the entirety of the six-week program. In the interview, I sought to understand how facilitators chose what to include and exclude from the curriculum, how working in collaboration with their co-facilitators influenced their decisions, and how they made pedagogical, relational, and content decisions once the program began. The focus group interview provided further insight into participants' decision-

making processes and demonstrated how participants' ideas expanded when they discussed their curriculum development and implementation processes together.

Data Analysis

I used transcripts from planning meetings and individual and focus group interviews, facilitator reflections, and observation notes from program sessions to answer my research questions. To prepare the planning meeting and interview transcripts for analysis, I reviewed the Zoom-generated audio and video recordings while reading the text transcripts to ensure their accuracy and make any necessary edits. Next, I uploaded the planning meetings and individual and focus group interview transcripts, facilitator reflections, and observation notes from program sessions to ATLAS.ti for analysis.

To analyze the data, I first conducted a preliminary round of deductive coding based on concepts from my conceptual framework, such as when participants mentioned racism and activism. I also coded deductively based on my research question, such as when participants mentioned their community networks and desire to foster youth engagement. Next, I conducted a round of inductive coding based on factors that appeared to be significant to my participants and my research question that were not captured by the deductive codes. For example, I inductively coded for references to community building and pan-Asian solidarity. After completing the deductive and inductive coding, I began the data reduction and refining process. First, I looked for patterns across codes to determine how the codes related to one another. Next, I collapsed codes that were conceptually similar. To avoid obscuring important findings, I also broke apart codes that contained several separate concepts. For example, I delineated the "racism" code to distinguish between different forms of racism described by participants, such as interpersonal or institutional racism. Then, I compiled coded data that were relevant to my research question or

appear significant to my participants. For instance, while I coded for "funding," it did not appear to influence their decision-making processes, so I did not use that data in further analyses.

Using the revised code list, I reviewed the coded data again and, through this process, several themes began to take shape. As I considered what facilitators included and excluded from the curriculum, I realized most of their curricular and pedagogical choices reflected concepts that aligned with or contradicted the tenets of CRES. In analyzing the motives behind their decision-making processes, I recognized that facilitators grounded their work in a shared vision. They wanted to provide an educational experience devoid of the constraints associated with traditional schooling. This vision guided many of their choices throughout the development and implementation processes. Then, I searched for commonalities in how facilitators developed their ethnic studies skills and knowledge, which were key determinants as they built and employed their curriculum. I identified the sources of facilitators' skills and knowledge, and how facilitators leveraged their support systems to compensate for their own shortcomings, as another overarching theme in their decision-making.

Findings

Although myriad conditions influenced the facilitators' decision-making processes, three primary factors defined the development and implementation of the AAS program under study. To elucidate facilitators' implementation of the curriculum and their decisions about to include and exclude from the curriculum, I highlight three themes: (1) facilitators' desire to provide youth with an experience unlike traditional schooling, (2) the program's alignment with CRES tenets, and (3) the significance of facilitators' own experiences and knowledges and how they leveraged their social capital (Yosso, 2005). Notably, these three themes, while distinct, capture interrelated findings that came together to shape the design and execution of the AAS program.

"We don't want it to feel like school."

Throughout planning and implementing the curriculum, the facilitators stated that they did not want the program to feel like school. Facilitators, all of whom were only a few years removed from high school, identified several undesirable, defining characteristics of traditional schooling. First, they were keenly aware of how Asian American epistemologies, experiences, and histories are frequently left out of traditional school curricula. They said that during their own K-12 schooling, they did not learn about Asian American histories or have space to interrogate their Asian American identities. For instance, Jade asserted that the history taught in schools is "whitewashed" and "not told from the eyes of those who are marginalized." Furthermore, facilitators recognized that many classrooms rely on a teacher-student hierarchy that discourages youth participation and engagement. Eileen described school as a place where she "just went through the motions" and expressed that she did not want their program to invoke similar feelings of disconnection or disinterest. As such, both Eileen and Cia said they did not want [the sessions] to feel like a lecture or for the youth to view them as "teacher figures.

The facilitators wanted to provide youth with the type of educational experience that was missing from their own high school education and that they believed to be missing from the youths' schooling. To determine how to achieve this, they held a pre-program focus group with local Asian American youth leaders which revealed that youth, too, did not want the program to feel like school. In their interviews, all the facilitators said the youth recommended they switch activities frequently and avoid lecturing to keep them engaged. Further, youth identified areas of Asian American history and culture they wanted to explore, including stereotypes and media representation. To apply focus group feedback and avoid creating a school-like atmosphere, the

facilitators prioritized engaging and culturally responsive curriculum, youth contributions, and community building.

First, the facilitators were focused on preventing and addressing youth disengagement. Observation data from planning meetings and program sessions revealed their curricular and pedagogical decisions were rooted in a desire to stimulate youths' interest. Specifically, they avoided lectures, assessments, and lengthy academic readings in favor of discussions, icebreaker activities, games like Kahoot, and visual media. For instance, facilitators assigned the youth videos to watch as pre-session assignments instead of academic articles because Eileen believed these sources would be "easier for people to digest and kind of more interesting." Facilitators also made efforts to connect with the youth through incorporating their own and youths' lived experiences into the curriculum. Lived experiences were central to how facilitators and youth understood their racialization, as well as U.S. histories and policies, but their experiences were absent from their K-12 school curricula. For instance, facilitators recounted their experiences as eldest daughters in immigrant families when discussing intersectionality and encouraged the youth, all of whom were girls, to share about their racialized and gendered experiences as well. Additionally, they integrated current events, such as the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and increased anti-Asian violence, into the curriculum to ensure the content was relevant to the youths' interests and incorporated their prior knowledge. Finally, facilitators prioritized creating a culturally responsive curriculum that spoke to the youths' desire to learn more about Asian American histories and experiences. To do so, they tailored the content to the youth participants. They selected topics, such as gender roles in Asian American communities and cross-racial solidarity, and pedagogical strategies, such as reflective exercises, they believed would engage the youth.

Facilitators felt fostering youth contributions to the sessions was critical to youths' engagement with the program. They understood their commitment to empowering youth as a key difference between their program and schools. First, neither the facilitators nor the youth felt their perspectives were centered in their K-12 schooling. Thus, facilitators positioned the youth as knowledge makers and created opportunities for them to learn from one another. Opportunities for youth participation included discussions, peer-led instruction, group work, and youth-generated action plans. As Jade told the youth, "You bring so many experiences from your life into this space…I want you to feel empowered and emboldened to share that." The facilitators frequently reminded youth of their "brilliance", as Jade said, and encouraged them to share how they understood complex concepts like the definition and function of race.

Unlike in school, where the facilitators reported feeling disempowered, the AAS program served as a space for youth to grapple with their own perspectives and share their ideas, even as they were still learning or making sense of some concepts. This approach to education reflected the facilitators' emphasis on "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). While Jade described the education system as "degrading… they don't consider all of these beautiful things students of color have to offer," she believed students of color "bring so much from their families, their communities, their homes." Community cultural wealth served as a framework for how facilitators honored and centered the youths' cultural and familial strengths and knowledges. Additionally, facilitators designed an activity where youth worked with college-aged mentors to explore their own cultural assets and the sources of this wealth.

Next, community-building was foundational to how the facilitators' understood the program's purpose and defined its success. They believed a strong sense of community would not only keep youth engaged but would stimulate the feelings of connection and belonging that

their in-school experiences lacked. To this end, facilitators designed the program to be discussion-heavy, incorporating numerous opportunities for youth to work in groups and exchange ideas. To foster connections between youth, the facilitators built in time for informal interactions where youth could connect with each other about personal topics, in addition to sharing socio-political ideas. For instance, they invited the youth to present on their approaches to self-care and healing. During this process, the young people discovered similarities they shared with one another and affirmed each other's stories. Further, facilitators structured the in-person sessions to include 30-minute lunches. In her individual interview, Jade explained that this choice allowed youth to break from "the confines of the assignments'" so they felt "more like friends versus classmates." During in-person sessions, the facilitators also led icebreakers that encouraged movement, peer-to-peer interaction, and self-disclosure. Taken together, these practices were meant to strengthen youths' sense of belonging and make the program feel like a community.

To further build community, the facilitators wanted to serve as mentors and sources of support for the youth. They created a day of mentorship wherein they and other undergraduate students partnered with youth participants to offer insight into the college-going process, map out the youths' cultural assets, and explore their aspirations. When asked to reflect on their time in the program during its final session, many youth identified the mentorship activity as one of the program's highlights. Reflecting on the experience, Jade summarized the effect of the mentorship activity: "I just remember the vibe in the room becoming super lively with conversation and getting to know each other and warmth."

Notably, the program space itself became a way to distinguish the AAS program from school. The facilitators manipulated the in-person space to create a relaxed, inviting environment

where youth felt comfortable participating and interacting with one another and the adult facilitators. They selected a space on campus where identity-based clubs, including their own, often held events and gathered to create art, socialize, and organize. In this space, which Jade said she "always associated with community-building," posters advertising past events held by the campus' multicultural center dotted the walls and bean bags and couches filled the room. Facilitators organized the room so that they and youth sat around a long table or on bean bags and couches facing one another. Jade felt that this choice "level[ed] the playing field a lot more as opposed to a lecture hall, where either the people at the front are elevated or everybody's looking down on the lecturer." During virtual sessions, facilitators similarly made efforts to invoke feelings of safety and comfort through music, warmly greeting youth using the chat feature, and beginning each session with an opening that eased youth into the session's content and invited their experiences and perspectives into the space. Attention to the youth participants' physical and emotional comfort, then, dictated how facilitators selected and organized their spaces and structured the sessions.

"It's more than just knowing your ancestry."

The facilitators' decision-making was guided by their goals for the AAS program, which were ultimately shaped by how they understood the function of ethnic studies. Thus, their conceptualizations of ethnic studies determined what they included in and excluded from the curriculum. Cia, for instance, viewed ethnic studies as "more than just knowing your background and knowing your ancestry…it is really used for cross-racial solidarity." She said she valued an understanding of how different systems work to oppress all racially minoritized people because "most of these issues are rooted in colonialism and white supremacy." Jade likewise felt youth should learn "to name these injustices that happen and attribute them not to just one-off

incidents, but [to know] this is all by design." Additionally, Cia posited that ethnic studies should "inspire students to do something outside of their classes," which aligned with ethnic studies' goal of moving people from analysis to action. Each of these stances revealed a critical, racial interpretation of ethnic studies.

The facilitators also understood ethnic studies courses as tools for community-building and as opportunities to build affirming spaces for marginalized youth. Cia stated that she wanted youth to know more about their identities and gain empathy for their own communities and other racially minoritized peoples. When people empathize with other groups, Cia believed they "realize a lot of [their issues] are connected." Eileen similarly highlighted the importance of forging community and learning from one another's experiences, while Jade compared the program space to a race-based affinity group. In reflecting on the program's similarity with race-based affinity groups, Jade posited, "having other peers just like you going through similar issues of identity can be really emboldening." Therefore, the facilitators vacillated between individualized interpretations of ethnic studies that emphasized acceptance and empathy and a desire to reveal and disrupt entrenched racial hierarchies and power dynamics.

Much of the curriculum aligned with the tenets of CRES. First, the curriculum addressed the effects of structural, systemic, and institutional racism and other forms of subjugation. Specifically, the curriculum interrogated interlocking systems of oppression, white supremacy, antiblackness and colorism, colonialism and imperialism, and the construction of race. For instance, Jade led youth in a discussion about immigration patterns between Asia and the U.S., and how immigration policies reflect U.S. interventions, invasions, and imperialism in Asia. Also, Eileen led a session on the construction of race, which she defined as "a social and historical system used to categorize people." This session highlighted how Asian American

ethnic groups are treated and racialized differently based on factors like skin color, country of origin, and impetus for migration. Relatedly, during the focus group interview, all three facilitators identified the importance of encouraging pan-Asian solidarity and understanding the term "Asian American" as a political identifier rooted in unity. Through these sessions, facilitators worked to advance youths' counterhegemonic racial literacies and critical consciousness. As Jade explained, "this work opens their eyes to things that we are not intended to learn… and helps them think critically about where they want to see themselves in this fight [for racial justice]."

The facilitators also centered Asian Americans' histories, movements, and epistemologies, with particular attention to their histories of cross-racial coalition-building, activism, and organizing. An important goal for the program, according to Eileen, was to "learn about the histories of cross-racial solidarity, explore real life instances of student-led Asian American activism, and reflect on how we can make meaningful change in our communities." In short, the facilitators wanted the youth to situate themselves in a long history of Asian American activism and become familiar with organizing tactics. Additionally, the facilitators employed critical pedagogies that aimed to build meaningful relationships. One goal of the program was to help youth connect to other politically conscious Asian Americans, which facilitators described as an important benefit of their involvement with Asian American student groups on campus. As such, facilitators wanted to curate a similar space for the youth. Lastly, while both planning and implementing the curriculum, the facilitators foregrounded the need to take action toward disrupting systematic oppression. For example, there was a program session dedicated to past and present social movements, including local advocacy and organizing efforts, during which they and the youth discussed examples of coalition-building and analyzed what it took to

organize and sustain movements. The youth then had an opportunity to apply their knowledge of organizing by creating their own action plans, which helped them see a pathway toward action beyond the classroom.

The actions described above represented a knowledge of and commitment to a critical, racial interpretation of ethnic studies. Yet, there were times when the facilitators strayed from a structural analysis of power and oppression, and instead individualized ethnic studies concepts. Notably, the facilitators designed a lesson on intersectionality that defined the concept as "multiple identities" rather than a way to understand differential power relations and compounding structural inequalities. When intersectionality is used merely to describe individual diversity, it no longer attends to how our social categories are related to interconnected systems of power. This effectively obscures its intended purpose as intersectionality was meant to serve as an analytical tool for describing how systems of oppression interlock to determine our social positions. As Asian American women, two of whom identified as queer and one of whom cited a working class upbringing, facilitators felt it was important to examine how all their identity markers influenced their experiences. The facilitators and youth discussed gender roles in Asian American families and how Eurocentric beauty standards affect Asian American girls' self-image. Generally, they referred to intersectionality only in terms of identity and one of their peers, who was supporting program implementation, shifted the conversation from personal identities to axes of power and social locations.

Moreover, there were several lessons or sessions that foregrounded healing and self-care, interpersonal racism and stereotypes, and culture. In these conversations and activities, interpersonal and individual analyses superseded examinations of structural oppression or collective liberation. While facilitators made a few passing references to community care, for

example, the discussion centered on acts that made facilitators or youth feel better, like journaling or binge watching television series. During this same session, facilitators asked one of their undergraduate peers to lead a lengthy lecture on healing one's inner child. In short, there were numerous moments throughout the six sessions when facilitators emphasized individual experiences, feelings, and practices over CRES, which requires facilitators to contend with systems of power.

"It takes a village and I'm glad that village showed up."

Facilitators' levels of critical consciousness and their racial literacies guided their decision-making processes. They named antiblackness and white supremacy as intrinsic to U.S. society and racism as a structural force that shapes every facet of life. They identified examples of racism in various institutions, from schools to courts. For instance, in program sessions Eileen connected media representations and political rhetoric to anti-Asian violence while Jade connected immigration policies and histories to the differential racialization of Asians American ethnic groups. All three facilitators believed this knowledge should be available to all youth of color, and they were committed to spreading their knowledge to youth participants. Much of what the facilitators knew about racial justice and oppression was rooted in their lived experiences as Asian American women who were first or second-generation immigrants. The facilitators' lived experiences, knowledge, and connections determined their levels of critical consciousness and their racial literacies and, thus, shaped how they developed and implemented their AAS curriculum. Examining how the facilitators strengthened their critical consciousness and counterhegemonic racial literacies and what sources and experiences influenced them, provides additional insight into what they prioritized in the curriculum and why.

Numerous factors influenced the facilitators' prior knowledge about Asian American Studies and comparative ethnic studies, including social media, friends, and academics. All three facilitators cited social media, particularly Twitter and TikTok, as instrumental to their critical awareness of racial and social injustices. Jade offered that she found community through digital spaces that catered to feminists and queer-identified and neurodivergent people of color. Jade also shared that she learned a lot from Twitter, saying, "Twitter threads are incredible. They teach you a lot about the history that doesn't get told in the history books." Additionally, facilitators' friends enhanced their counterhegemonic racial literacies and critical consciousness. Both Cia and Jessica described attending high school with Black students and other racially marginalized people whose knowledge and experiences informed their own sociopolitical trajectories. Cia credited her best friend in high school, who was Black and "an activist in the making," for exposing her to the realities of antiblackness and the need for cross-racial solidarity. Similarly, Jade revealed that attending predominantly Black and Latine schools in her working class neighborhood revealed to her both the joy and the struggle inherent in "the marginalized experience." Cia and Jade also described some of their high school courses as instrumental to their earliest critical awakenings. For example, Jade highlighted English courses taught by Black teachers who were "being culturally competent and giving us books that matched the experiences of the people in our classroom." According to Jade, these books "exposed [her] pretty early on to how deeply entrenched racial justice is" and "the prolonged discussions in class about what that looks like" further strengthened her counterhegemonic racial literacies. Cia also highlighted texts from her high school literature courses, such as *Just Mercy* and *Funny in Farsi,* and how her teachers used these novels to "talk about injustices and racialization."

When it came to family, the facilitators felt they had to unlearn lessons on race and racism. They mostly viewed their families as sources of hegemonic racial literacies (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) that upheld white supremacy and antiblackness. For instance, all three facilitators described failed attempts to interrogate antiblackness in their families and detailed ways colorism, antiblackness, and classism shaped their parents' lessons on race in the U.S. Cia described unwittingly using whitening soap family members brought back from the Philippines, Eileen lamented that her family members viewed affirmative action as detrimental to Asian Americans, and Jade recounted her stepmothers' distrust of the majority Black clientele at her nail shop. Ultimately, the facilitators looked to their peers and educators to counter the harmful narratives they received at home.

The two greatest influences on facilitators' critical consciousness and counterhegemonic racial literacies (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) were their peer networks, mainly peers they met in their Asian American student organization (AASO), and their university's Asian American Studies program, especially faculty and coursework. All three facilitators described their participation in AASO as transformative. They described AASO as a politically conscious space, especially compared to the social Asian American clubs that Cia described as "fluffy." They talked about how their AASO peers became their primary community and the people from whom they gained knowledge about sociopolitical topics through teach-ins and other community events. Furthermore, these same friends provided support, feedback, and resources during the planning and implementation of the AAS curriculum. When necessary, their friends' skill sets, critical consciousness, and experiences compensated for facilitators' own inexperience and gaps in knowledge. The facilitators delegated tasks and divided their workload based on their and their peers' strengths. For instance, Cia handled technology and outreach to professors while Eileen

handled logistics and communicating with the youth. Perhaps most importantly, when neither Cia nor Eileen felt confident in completing a task or covering a concept in the curriculum, they leaned on their vast network of peers. As Jade explained, "[the program] was based on leveraging the different knowledges [they] have within AASO." Their peers led lessons on student activism and organizing, self-care, community cultural wealth, and Asian American history. Frequently, Cia and Eileen relied on the structure and curriculum of the previous year's program, which Jade designed from scratch. When facilitators needed support setting up a room, engaging or connecting with youth, and troubleshooting technology issues, their peers stepped in and led the efforts. By the end of the program, the facilitators lamented that they had not delegated more tasks to their peers, whom Cia identified as their "biggest supporters."

Moreover, the university's Asian American Studies program both directly and indirectly deepened the facilitators' and their peers' critical consciousness and counterhegemonic racial literacies. Cia and Jade cited numerous Asian American Studies courses and instructors as catalysts for their consciousness. Notably, Eileen was not taking courses in Asian American Studies but similarly identified the department as a rich source of knowledge. When describing what her AASO peers gained from Asian American Studies, Eileen stated, "These students are willing to go outside of the classroom, learn more about it, and try to spread that awareness and education to a larger population that maybe isn't part of the program. I guess it worked for me."

Additionally, the facilitators relied heavily on the Asian American Studies program for guest speakers, resources, and content for the curriculum. Specifically, several Asian American Studies professors presented during program sessions or offered resources and guidance during curriculum development. Cia mined resources, content, and even activities directly from her Asian American Studies courses. For instance, she borrowed slides on the social construction of

race from an Asian American Studies course she was enrolled in during the program. The slides included a brief quiz about factors that determine race. During the session, Cia shared with the youth that the lecture was from a class she was currently taking and she "got most of these questions wrong." Thus, it was evident facilitators were learning some of the material as they prepped the lessons or had only recently been exposed to foundational CRES concepts through their own Asian American Studies coursework. The facilitators' vast network of AASO peers and Asian American Studies faculty was crucial to developing and employing a CRES curriculum despite facilitators' own limitations.

Discussion/Implications

K-12 ethnic studies research literature primarily highlights various ethnic studies curricula and pedagogies but rarely reveals why facilitators create specific curricula and employ particular pedagogies. In contrast, this study revealed multiple insights into the development of an out-of-school ethnic studies course and how and why the facilitators designed and implemented their AAS curriculum in particular ways. First, facilitators' perspectives on the purpose of ethnic studies influenced their decision-making processes, including their inclusion and exclusion of CRES concepts. Of note, the facilitators believed critical ethnic studies curriculum and pedagogies should be a necessary departure from traditional schooling methods. Further, their backgrounds, experiences, and resources shaped their racial literacies and critical consciousness, which then determined their understanding of ethnic studies' purpose and their decision-making processes. Access to university-level AAS courses and faculty and a robust network of critically conscious peers profoundly shaped facilitators' own counterhegemonic racial literacies and critical consciousness, which impacted how they designed and implemented the curriculum. This study affirms and extends prior research and offers insights into how to

support ethnic studies educators and advance the development and implementation of CRES both outside and inside of schools. Further, this study provides guidance for further research that can strengthen our understanding of critical, secondary-level ethnic studies at a time when K-12 ethnic studies is rapidly expanding.

Facilitators in this study understood the CRES program as a space where they could create community and exchange ideas in contrast to schools, which they viewed as culturally disconnected, disengaging, and disempowering. In some ways, it is easier for out-of-school CRES programs to flourish because they are not impeded by the constraints of schooling, such as grades and a culture that emphasizes control and surveillance. Although facilitators in this study generally avoided conforming to the structural and cultural norms of schooling, other research indicates that out-of-school educators sometimes adopt normative practices of schooling like operating from a deficit perspective (Baldridge, 2020). This is unsurprising given that educators in out-of-school programs spent their formative years in schools and are constantly absorbing dominant narratives about teaching and learning (Baldridge et al., 2017).

Yet, evidence from this and prior studies suggests that the goals of CRES can be achieved in and out of schools. For example, researchers highlight the success of CRES programs such as Mexican American Studies in Arizona high schools (Acosta, 2014; Serna, 2013) and ethnic studies courses in California high schools (de los Ríos, 2018; Lopez et al., 2022). Findings from this study demonstrate three ways ethnic studies educators can effectively implement a CRES curriculum and reject oppressive schooling practices, by: (1) centering youths' perspectives and emboldening them as knowledge makers, (2) prioritizing community building, and (3) using community responsive curricula and pedagogies. Research shows these strategies can be

undertaken in schools through pedagogies like Participatory Action Research (Cammarota, 2017), photovoice (de los Ríos, 2017), and counterstorytelling (Kolluri & Edwards, 2023).

Lastly, the facilitators and nearly all youth participants in the program under study were Asian American. They described the CRES program under study as one of the few spaces where they could interrogate their experiences in a racially-stratified society. Both this and other studies (An, 2016; Kiang, 2004; Rodriguez, 2020) indicate that Asian American youth have few outlets for critical conversations about race and racism in K-12 schools. The present study demonstrates that, when given the opportunity, some Asian American youth seek out critically conscious spaces, and they may be more likely to do so when they are exposed to critically conscious peers and educators. There is a need for more opportunities for Asian American youth, in particular, to engage with critical conversations about race and racism within and outside of schools. CRES programs can offer such opportunities for Asian American youth to build critical racial consciousness with each other and other minoritized youth.

To advance the development and implementation of CRES, rather than uncritical interpretations of ethnic studies, we must foster educators' counterhegemonic racial literacies and critical consciousness. Due to inexperience and lack of exposure to critical ethnic studies, some educators have a desire or opportunity to teach ethnic studies but not the skills, experience, and knowledge to impart CRES. Additionally, educators balance competing factors, such as youths' interests and structural limitations, when developing and/or implementing ethnic studies curricula. As such, educators may miss opportunities to emphasize CRES concepts and reinforce youths' hegemonic racial literacies or reproduce dominant narratives. For example, in this study, the three facilitators understood and taught some CRES concepts in ways that did not acknowledge the power dynamics involved in challenging systemic oppression and building

intra- and inter-racial solidarity. In short, despite burgeoning counterhegemonic racial literacies and critical consciousness, the three facilitators needed additional guidance to effectively employ CRES. It stands to reason that other ethnic studies educators similarly need ongoing support to maintain a critical, racial orientation.

The instructor greatly influences how a curriculum is enacted (Flewelling, 2022). Even if educators are provided with a CRES curriculum created by experts, like that offered through the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium (Cunanan et al., 2023), educators' own experiences, literacies and consciousness, and skills will determine how successfully the curriculum is delivered. As K-12 ethnic studies programs proliferate around the country, teacher educators, researchers, and other stakeholders must ascertain how to effectively grow critical, committed ethnic studies educators (Daus-Magbual et al., 2023). Training and mentoring are vital to this process, especially for CRES instructors who are new to teaching and/or to ethnic studies content. In this study, the facilitators would have benefited from access to training that focused on both critical ethnic studies content and instructional strategies. Scholars offer models for critical professional development that stimulate critical dialogue and inquiry and engage educators in political analysis, citing examples such as Los Angeles-based The People's Education Movement and a Massachusetts-based, critical ethnic studies professional development project (Green et al., 2020; Kohli et al., 2015). Through critical professional development, educators develop their counterhegemonic racial literacies alongside like-minded educators who share a commitment to racial justice (Kohli, 2019). Moreover, scholars demonstrate how critical ethnic studies is used as a framework for building critical professional development opportunities and organizations such as Xicanx Institute for Teaching and Learning and Pin@y Educational Partnerships (Fernandez, 2019; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2010).

Without critical professional development, educators may lack the experience, knowledge, and community to teach CRES curricula, and findings from prior research demonstrate CRES' potential as a framework for training effective ethnic studies educators.

It is important to remember that critical consciousness and counterhegemonic racial literacies exist on a continuum (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) on which educators' understandings may fall at different positions depending on the day or topic. Thus, the process of teaching and learning ethnic studies can be unpredictable and messy (Nojan, 2020). Educators and youth may sometimes express contradictory ideologies as they unlearn insidious, hegemonic narratives (Nojan, 2020). For instance, the facilitators in this study vacillated between structural and individualistic interpretations of the topics they covered. For example, although they discussed interracial interactions in terms of cross-racial solidarity and coalition-building, they also identified individual empathy as a solution to interracial discrimination. Thus, nurturing educators' prior counterhegemonic racial literacies and exposing them to additional CRES knowledge is imperative. To do so, it is important to understand where educators obtain their information which will help CRES stakeholders capitalize on these sources, interrupt miseducation, and fill in knowledge gaps.

In this study, the facilitators learned ethnic studies concepts through their university's Asian American Studies program, its faculty, and its students. As they described, taking Asian American Studies courses, engaging in dialogue with students in the program, and attending program-sponsored events stimulated their critical consciousness and their counterhegemonic racial literacies. These findings reinforce other research that promotes university-level ethnic studies as a tool for recruiting and training critical K-12 ethnic studies teachers. Researchers advocate for recruiting K-12 ethnic studies teachers who took ethnic studies courses in college

by illustrating what educators learned from these courses and outlining how ethnic studies can serve as a framework for teacher preparation programs (Curammeng, 2020; Curammeng, 2022; Daus-Magbual et al., 2023; Fernandez, 2019).

Short-term or even ongoing training alone is not sufficient support for CRES educators. Findings from this study reinforce prior research findings on the utility of collaboration in the teaching of CRES (Lopez, 2023; Owens, 2018; Sacramento, 2019). Collaboration between educators may include co-planning lessons, creating and sharing resources, or offering feedback on curricular and pedagogical choices. Through collaborative sensemaking, ethnic studies educators may develop a shared cohesive framework for their work, and refine their criticality and pedagogical skills (Lopez, 2023; Sacramento, 2019). In this study, the facilitators' formed a supportive community, offering opportunities for reflection and collaborative problem-solving. They also expanded their community to include peers from whom they gained invaluable feedback and assistance. In fact, they credited their network of peers with enhancing their critical consciousness and counterhegemonic racial literacies. This indicates that collaborating with more knowledgeable or experienced educators may strengthen an individual instructor's ability to effectively develop and implement a CRES curriculum. Additionally, collaborating with other educators can offer emotional and spiritual support to CRES educators of color as they navigate racial justice work that can often lead to burn out (Curammeng, 2017; Pizzaro & Kohli, 2020). Thus, working closely with other critical educators may help retain CRES educators.

The exchange of knowledge and co-construction of ideas demonstrably improves the design and implementation of ethnic studies curricula (Curammeng, 2017), yet many classroom teachers work in isolation. When district and school administration develop plans for supporting ethnic studies teachers, they must commit to providing the time and resources for critical,

continual professional development that centers collaborative learning communities (Sacramento, 2019). New and experienced ethnic studies teachers need to actively contribute to these learning communities and advocate for critical pedagogical supports. Additionally, opportunities for collaborations and knowledge sharing should include both classroom teachers and out-of-school educators. Findings indicate that the three facilitators in this study and their critically conscious peers could learn from and inform the work of classroom teachers. For instance, out-of-school educators, like those in this study, can help classroom teachers to identify and address the ways their practices might be constrained by existing school structures and culture. Classroom teachers, meanwhile, may have access to institutional resources and training materials they can share with out-of-school educators. If collaboration occurs on-site in schools and in community education programs, off site in public third spaces like libraries, and virtually, we can reach and connect a wide array of educators across geographic spaces and contexts.

Like much of the existing K-12 ethnic studies literature, this study highlights the urgency of preparing and supporting critical ethnic studies educators. Findings also extend the current research literature by revealing how facilitators' schooling experiences shaped their decision-making and motivated them to become community educators. In doing so, this study highlights the utility of out-of-school ethnic studies programs and offers a model for in-school ethnic studies courses. Specifically, the study illustrates how the CRES framework can be applied to ethnic studies curricula and the resources required to support educators throughout their curriculum design and implementation processes. It links the importance of collaborative learning communities to the advantages of recruiting K-12 ethnic studies teachers from university ethnic studies programs. Overall, this study builds upon the work of seminal K-12 ethnic studies scholars (e.g., de los Rios et al., 2016; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015) and offers

new insights into how we can develop and implement critical ethnic studies. It also interrogates the evolving, sometimes contradictory nature of ethnic studies educators' critical consciousness and counterhegemonic racial literacies, which has not been examined in prior research. Further research is needed to understand how to effectively disrupt ethnic studies educators' hegemonic racial literacies.

Conclusion

By the 2025-2026 school year, every public high school in California, the nation's most populous state, must offer a one-semester ethnic studies course (Gecker, 2021), and the numbers of K-12 ethnic studies courses is growing in other states. With this proliferation, we must ensure ethnic studies teachers, researchers, and other stakeholders learn from current ethnic studies practitioners, including those working outside of schools. Out-of-school educators have knowledge that may help classroom teachers avoid normative practices that are encouraged in schools but contradict the goals of ethnic studies. The present study reveals pedagogical, instructional, and curricular strategies for applying a CRES framework that preserves the critical integrity of ethnic studies. Moving forward, I urge advocates for K-12 ethnic studies to adopt a critical, racial framework as they research, create, and impart ethnic studies curricula. If not, we risk reproducing the same oppressive, alienating schooling practices that the youth and community educators in this study sought to escape.

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Manuscript 3. “I wish I had this program in high school”: What motivates and sustains ethnic studies community educators

Introduction

“A person who does not look back to where he came from will never reach his destination."
-José Rizal

Frequently attributed to Rizal, a Filipino nationalist and writer who advocated for the Philippines’ independence from Spanish colonial rule, this loosely translated quote is commonly truncated to the catchier “Know history, know self. No history, no self.” Rizal’s words remind us that understanding our personal and collective past helps shape our futures, and a deep knowledge of history strengthens our connections to our identities and communities. As such, this phrase is often repeated in ethnic studies spaces (Nguyen, 2023; Wilson & McMillian, 2024) and other social justice organizing contexts (Das Gupta, 2019; Fu et al., 2019) to signal a commitment to emboldening racially minoritized peoples through knowledge.

Ethnic studies (ES) examines the cultural, historical, economic, and political experiences of communities of color to understand how power operates in their lives (Curammeng, 2022). It requires educators to be reflexive, know and understand the histories of racially minoritized peoples, and organize with their communities (de los Ríos et al., 2015; Tintiangco-Cubales, 2015). ES educators need both a thorough understanding of history and its effect on the present and a sense of how they and their students are positioned in this history. This is a challenging task that requires specific pedagogical expertise and content area knowledge (Sacramento, 2019). As ES courses become increasingly common in K-12 schools across the nation (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020), more scholars and stakeholders are examining the role of the educator in ES spaces inside and outside of schools. Research has found that ES educators greatly influence how

ES curricula are developed and implemented (Flewelling, 2022; Young, 2021), and ES educators make decisions based on their lived experiences and existing ideologies (Curammeng, 2020; Garcia, 2021). As such, it is imperative that we understand how to recruit, train, support, and learn from effective ES educators to ensure ES programs are done well.

Yet, little is known about the motivations and needs of K-12 ES educators. This moment of rapid expansion of K-12 ES calls for a closer look at who is teaching ES curricula, why they were called to teach ES, and what they need to sustain themselves in this work. As such, this study examines why three undergraduate students created and employed a critical Asian American Studies curriculum for local youth of color, most of whom were Asian American. Moreover, it investigates how they persevered despite myriad barriers that can lead to burn out. The following research question guided this qualitative inquiry: What experiences motivate a team of undergraduate students to create an out-of-school Asian American Studies curriculum and what do they need to sustain themselves as CRES educators?

Positionality

I am guided to this work by an unwavering commitment to providing youth, particularly Black youth and other youth of color, with a political education rooted in critical racial ethnic studies. My own experiences as a Black student in California's public school system revealed that, in most cases, schooling is disconnected from the racialized realities of students of color and does not reckon with the ways antiblackness and racism structure this country. In college, I found refuge from the curricular[3] (Jones, 2020) and spiritual (Love, 2016) violence of schools in ES courses. Through organizing with other undergraduate students of color at our historically

[3] Jones (202) defines curricular violence as what "occurs when educators and curriculum writers have constructed a set of lessons that damage or otherwise adversely affect students intellectually and emotionally" (p. 2).

white institution, I found community and purpose. I developed a politicized racial identity based on solidarity with other oppressed peoples and a desire to achieve collective liberation.

My educational experiences inform my belief that students of color should not have to attend college to access a critical education, and those of us who do attend college have a responsibility to redistribute university resources and knowledge to the rest of our communities. This conviction led me to pursue a career as a high school ES teacher. I developed an ES course that reinforced youths' understandings of structural racism and other interlocking systems of subjugation and helped them develop a shared vision for disrupting these systems. Altogether, my time as a student and high school teacher shapes how I conceptualize the function of ES courses and its role in and outside of schools.

In qualitative research, the researcher should reflect on their positionality throughout the research process. My participants and I connected as women of color who built our critical consciousness and counterhegemonic racial literacies[4] in college through ES courses and student activism. However, as a Black woman working with three Asian American women participants, there were many aspects of their racialized experiences I did not share. Still, I attempted to show up as a worthy witness (Winn & Ubiles, 2011), one who privileged participants' voices and built trusting relationships with them. I held space for their perspectives and feelings. Although I have strong beliefs about ES teaching, striving to be a worthy witness required me to reflect on my own assumptions. As such, I entered our shared spaces with respect and a responsibility to tell their stories authentically (Winn & Ubiles, 2011).

[4] I define racial literacies as how one understands and discusses racism. There is a spectrum between racial literacies that perpetuate racism and racial literacies that disrupt it. Counterhegemonic racial literacies (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) denote knowledge of the relationship between race and power, including how white supremacy is systemically maintained and protected (Vue, 2021).

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory

This study is organized through a conceptual framework that combines critical race theory (CRT) and critical pedagogies: critical racial ethnic studies. Critical legal scholars developed CRT to examine the role of racism in U.S. law, and eventually other institutions, and to identify ways to eliminate racism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). In applying CRT to education, Solorzano and Yosso (2001) offered the following themes:

1. The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination

CRT posits that racism is endemic to U.S. society and embedded in its institutions. Racist hierarchies therefore determine how power is distributed in this country. Despite foregrounding race, CRT frames racism through its intersection with other forms of oppression, such as classism. This theme underscores the need to center race in ES curriculum.

2. The challenge to dominant ideology

CRT rejects the educational system's customary claims of objectivity, meritocracy, and race neutrality. These claims conceal the power white people procure from educational institutions, which are currently structured to reinforce white supremacy. In keeping with this theme, I contend that ES is meant to be disruptive and thus define ES through its commitment to challenging dominant ideologies and reimagining the current educational system.

3. The commitment to social (racial) justice

CRT provides a transformative response to dominant educational ideologies through curricular and pedagogical approaches that work toward the elimination of racial and class oppression. A

critical racial interpretation of ES encourages youth to actively work towards racial justice through community activism that addresses the causes and consequences of structural racism.

4. The centrality of experiential knowledge

CRT views the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate and valuable. Moreover, CRT encourages educators to draw from youth of color's lived experiences because it posits that the embodied literacies of youth of color are critical to teaching and learning about systemic racism. This theme encourages methods such as counterstorytelling and *testimonios*, which are widely used in ES.

5. The transdisciplinary perspective

Schools traditionally use a unidisciplinary model that isolates knowledge into rigidly defined subject areas rather than drawing on numerous academic disciplines at once, which offers a more accurate and nuanced understanding of topics. CRT insists on analyzing race and racism through transdisciplinary knowledge that draws from fields like history and sociology. A critical racial ES curriculum can expose how erroneous divisions of knowledge are and create a more holistic understanding of race and racism in the United States.

Critical Pedagogy

Although CRT establishes the purpose and necessity of ES, it does not offer specific suggestions for how to design and employ ES curricula and pedagogies. Critical pedagogy bridges CRT to praxis. Critical pedagogy is an approach to education that creates substantive learning experiences with racially and economically marginalized youth by engaging them in dialogue, inquiry, and action (de los Ríos et al., 2015). It aims to dismantle power hierarchies in and beyond the classroom, with an explicit focus on positioning marginalized youth as agents of change (de los Ríos et al., 2015). Critical pedagogy challenges dominant ideologies, prioritizes

experiential knowledge, and incorporates transdisciplinary perspectives, but does not explicitly contend with race. Because ES positions racism as the primary tool of social organization and control, it requires an analysis of the construction of race and racial hierarchies (de los Ríos et al., 2015). As such, critical pedagogy alone cannot serve as a framework for ES principles and practices.

Critical Racial Ethnic Studies

In this study, I fuse critical pedagogy with the five tenets of CRT in education and offer critical racial ethnic studies (CRES) as a conceptual framework to analyze my data, elucidate my findings, and guide my implications for K-12 ES research and practice. CRES is a framework for understanding how to teach ES and its potential as a critical, educational intervention. It is intended to guide youth in critiques of structural, systemic, and institutional racism. It seeks to create space for collective healing from racial trauma and social organizing to transform material conditions (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). To do so, CRES educators must practice reflexivity, establish meaningful relationships, design critical curriculum, employ critical pedagogies, and adopt an activist orientation.

First, CRES educators must reflect on the role race and power play in their own educational spaces and in other institutions and systems. They need to interrogate their positionality and develop their critical consciousness before they can effectively facilitate a CRES curriculum. CRES grounds the struggle for racial justice in a dedication to supporting, loving, and believing in youth and their communities. Therefore, CRES educators should build reciprocal relationships with youth, their families, and other members of the communities in which they teach. Reciprocal relationships are defined by mutual respect and care and are an attempt to flatten relational hierarchies.

Simultaneously, CRES educators need to develop critical curricula that emphasize the everyday and historical experiences of Black, Asian, Indigenous, and Latine Americans. Through the study of racially minoritized peoples' histories, movements, and knowledges, CRES seeks to foster youths' counterhegemonic racial literacies (Chavez-Moreno, 2022) and critical consciousness. Further, CRES educators should employ community responsive, critical pedagogies that attend to their local contexts and help youth evaluate and act on their communities' needs (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015).

Institutionalized ES originated as a university student-generated, radical response to racial and class oppression, and was never meant to be merely a curriculum taught in classrooms (Dong, 2019). The university students and faculty who struggled to establish ES on campuses wanted to transform systems and structures of domination through self-determination and the redistribution of resources from the powerful elite to marginalized peoples (Martinez, 2021). Aligned with these principles, CRES necessitates taking action to disrupt systematic subjugation, most notably antiblackness, structural racism, and white supremacy. To this end, educators who employ CRES should highlight examples of coalition-building and organizing toward collective liberation in local, national, and global contexts. CRES also encourages educators to embody an activist orientation and support youth in re/discovering their own roles in movements for racial and social justice.

Literature Review

Research indicates ES participation builds youths' critical consciousness (Cammarota, 2016), racial literacies (de los Ríos, 2017), and commitment to civic action (Gibbs, 2023; Kwon & de los Ríos, 2019). To replicate these results across ES programs and improve how ES is taught, we must understand how to locate and support critically conscious ES educators. Existing

literature reveals that educators' choices are influenced by myriad factors, including their own lived experiences, political consciousness and racial literacies, and community networks (Lopez, 2023; Varela, 2022). Specifically, some ES educators have been inspired by participating in secondary or college-level ES programs and joining activist organizations (Curammeng, 2020). Further examining what motivates educators to become and remain ES practitioners can reveal possible practices for recruiting, training, and retaining effective CRES educators. For instance, it may unveil new ways to identify potential CRES educators and build sustainable pathways to teaching CRES curricula, both inside and outside of schools.

Educators' Motivations and Pathways

Although there is a dearth of research on the motivations and pathways that lead individuals to become ES educators, some scholars have studied educators' incentives for teaching ES curricula. Research highlights the experiences of racially and ethnically diverse teachers in the U.S. South, West, and Midwest. Of note, these studies focus exclusively on classroom teachers and thus little is known about the motivations of out-of-school ES educators.

Several Mexican American Studies teachers in Texas highlighted how their familial and educational experiences spurred their desire to teach ES, and their connections to local scholars and activists stimulated their professional growth once they became educators (Varela, 2022). They reported both supportive and alienating encounters from their K-12 schooling. According to Varela (2022), some Mexican American Studies educators are also motivated by a desire to connect with and support students from backgrounds like their own. All four participants in Varela's (2022) study were first or second generation Mexican immigrants who spent time between the U.S. and Mexico and lived and worked in predominantly Mexican American communities where they helped "students feel a sense of belonging" (p. 49). Other research

confirms that ES educators are motivated to pursue teaching because of their lived experiences. Through interviews with Indiana teachers, Patron-Vargas (2022) found that teachers of color may feel a personal commitment to teaching ES due to their own racialization. The only Black teacher in Patron-Vargas's (2022) study described ES as one way to disrupt systemic racism and antiblackness in her predominantly white school. Drawing from counterstories written by four teacher candidates of color in California, Agarwal-Rangnath (2019) likewise found that ES teachers are drawn to ES because of their experiences with racism and the encouragement of their community network. In response to their own marginalization, the four pre-service teachers in Agarwal-Rangnath's study wanted to develop youths' critical consciousness and provide them with tools to build a more just world. Additionally, Young (2021) interviewed and surveyed current ES teachers in California about their sensemaking processes and uncovered a similar commitment to youths' critical consciousness, which the teachers developed through participating in ES courses and radical student organizations in college and familial lessons about power and oppression.

Similarly, four Mexican American ES teachers in Los Angeles connected their desires to teach ES to their racialized, classed experiences in schools (Lopez, 2023). They recalled dehumanizing disciplinary practices, alienating linguistic policies, and antagonistic interactions with white peers. One participant lamented the lack of meaningful, culturally relevant curriculum and connections with his high school teachers (Lopez, 2023). Notably, the four teachers attributed their critical consciousness to either activist organizations they joined during high school or the ES courses and political student groups they joined in college; none of the participants cited high school coursework as transformational or motivational (Lopez, 2023). Further, Curammeng (2020) wrote about the experiences of two Filipino American male

educators in California who became ES teachers after taking Asian American Studies courses in college and organizing with activist collectives in San Francisco's Filipino American communities. Participating in ES courses had such a profound impact on how his participants understood and approached teaching that Curammeng (2020) proposed using ES as a framework for teacher education programs and teacher professional development. Collectively, these studies demonstrate how ES educators of color are often politicized through ES courses, activist organizations, community members, and their own lived experiences. In turn, some educators of color teach ES as a way to apply the knowledge they gained through these critically conscious spaces and people.

Sustaining Ethnic Studies Educators

To retain ES educators, it is important to first understand what supports they need to persevere despite the difficulties inherent in the work. Like the literature on ES educators' motivations, current research interrogates the experiences of classroom teachers, not out-of-school educators. As such, little is known about how we can support and recruit ES practitioners working outside of schools. We can conclude, however, that professional development, learning communities, and courses that provide opportunities for critically conscious reflection are invaluable to future and current ES teachers.

Several studies indicate that teachers need sustained professional development and training to effectively teach ES curricula. For instance, Dominguez & Kolluri (2023) led eleven professional development sessions with new ES teachers in California and conducted five observations of each teacher. They found that sustained professional development and access to coaching from ES experts were critical to the teachers' potential success (Dominguez & Kolluri, 2023). Similarly, Sacramento (2019) observed eighteen sessions of an ES professional

development collaborative in California and conducted seven interviews with participants to explore how to prepare successful ES teachers. She found that the teachers needed ongoing, critical ES professional development, an established ES framework, and time to collectively reflect and dialogue (Sacramento, 2019). Sacramento (2019) also recommended that teacher education programs infuse ES and critical race dialogue into preservice teachers' coursework and develop partnerships with community organizations and university-based ES departments. Building upon these ideas, Martell and Colquitt-Anderson (2023) used multiple data sources to examine the experiences of four teachers enrolled in an ES methods course in the Northeast. Martell and Colquitt-Anderson (2023) also advocate for using ES methods in teacher preparation programs and building critical, collaborative educator communities. Without these supports, Martell and Colquitt-Anderson (2023) warned that teachers may enter the classroom unprepared to implement critical ES curricula.

Without high quality, consistent professional supports, educators must rely on their own research to learn ES concepts and pedagogies (Young, 2021). Relatedly, Kim and An (2023) interviewed six Asian American migrant teachers in New York City about New York's Asian American Pacific Islander history curriculum initiative. These teachers decried a lack of Asian American Studies content in their teacher education and professional development programs and argued that professional development resources were required for them to effectively teach Asian American Pacific Islander histories (Kim and An, 2023).

A few studies illuminate what constitutes effective professional development and teacher preparation for ES educators. Tintiangco-Cubales et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of helping pre- and in-service teachers develop content knowledge and pedagogical tools. They highlighted the need for educators to practice critical self-reflection and learn to interrogate their

own positionality and the effects of racism, colonialism, and Eurocentrism (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Additionally, Green at al. (2020) presented a model for critical youth-centered professional development. They partnered with a school district in Massachusetts to design 44 hours of professional development for 13 ES teachers (Green et al., 2020). The professional development sessions, which they co-constructed with seven high school students enrolled in ES courses, emphasized the following: community knowledge and resources, a shared understanding of ES and its concepts, relationship-building among teachers and youth, and space to workshop ES curriculum. Importantly, Green at al. (2020) advocated for professional development that helps teachers envision and build youth-affirming, just educational spaces, rather than merely critiquing the oppressive educational structures that currently exist.

Notably, Castro-Gill (2023) found that the call to teach ES motivated some educators of color in Washington to stay in the teaching profession. Despite experiencing burnout and interpersonal and institutional racism, most of Castro-Gill's (2023) participants reported that they remained in the profession because of a dedication to their students and to teaching ES. One participant stated that ES provided her with "intellectual sustenance" (Castro-Gill, 2023, p. 128), and most participants described how they derived a sense of purpose from ES. These findings indicate that some educators are sustained by adopting an ES lens, which helps them critique the institutional racism they and their students experience and commit to struggling, organizing, and teaching against oppression.

From Student to Teacher

There is little research on how participating in ES courses affects high school and college students' long-term decision-making, such as their desire to create or teach an ES curriculum. However, some research indicates that ES educators may be motivated and sustained by a desire

to redistribute knowledge they gained in their secondary or university-level ES courses. Some of these educators in prior research became classroom teachers and others delivered ES curricula through grassroots, community-based educational efforts. Whether they taught ES in classrooms or in the community, they were transparent about the effects of partaking in ES coursework.

For instance, one Mexican American Studies teacher in Varela's (2022) study was inspired by Chicano Studies courses she took in college, particularly because she was not exposed to ES curricula in high school. She saw teaching secondary-level Mexican American Studies as an opportunity to share what she learned in college. As noted, several teachers in other studies (Curammeng, 2020; Lopez, 2023; Young, 2021) cited participation in Asian American Studies, Chicanx/Latinx Studies, and pan-ethnic studies courses as motivation for teaching ES and creating critical, culturally sustaining educational experiences unlike what they experienced in high school. In another example, Lopez & Ortiz (2022) highlighted an undergraduate-led, weeklong summer program for Latine adolescents held on a Colorado campus. The program was rooted in Chicanx Studies and ES practices and indigenous epistemologies. The undergraduate students were first trained in ES concepts and content which they then shared with the adolescents, effectively redistributing ES and Chicanx Studies knowledges.

One of the most well-documented examples of ES students becoming ES educators is the San Francisco-based Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP). PEP is a teacher "counter pipeline" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2010, p. 77) wherein Filipino American educators are trained to teach Filipino American Studies to K-12 students in lower income, racially diverse neighborhoods. The program consists of undergraduate and graduate students in San Francisco State University's Asian American Studies department who collaborate with professors and Filipino American organizers to learn and teach critical ES content (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2010). PEP provides

an opportunity for its teachers to put into practice what they learned in their ES and Asian American Studies courses (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2010).

Another well-documented example is the once-thriving Mexican American Studies (MAS) program taught in Tucson, Arizona high schools. In 2010, Arizona legislators dismantled the MAS program, which they labeled as divisive, un-American indoctrination (Acosta, 2014; Cammarota, 2011). Upon its dissolution, MAS students organized a variety of actions, including student-led walkouts during which they taught the banned curriculum to their peers who had not been enrolled in MAS (Cabrera et al., 2013). The students referred to their autonomous, community-based educational space as the School of Ethnic Studies. They intended it to provide the critical ES content they were denied by state and district leaders (Cabrera et al., 2013). They collaborated with community activists, artists, and scholars to create a space for dialogue and creativity (Cabrera et al., 2013) that existed beyond the district's control. Collectively, these diverse examples reveal the myriad ways ES inspires both secondary and college students to impart ES knowledge as a form of resistance.

From Student to Activist

Becoming an ES educator is a form of activism, and research indicates that some undergraduates and high school students who were or are enrolled in ES courses pursue other forms of activism. For instance, in 2018, California State University (CSU) proposed changes in graduation requirements that prevented many undergraduate students from taking ES courses and threatened jobs held by ES professors of color (Ruiz, 2019). Ruiz (2019) described how many students at CSU Northridge were outraged at this attempt to weaken the ES departments that provided them with mentorship and critically conscious curriculum. In response, students led walk-outs and teach-ins, presented arguments at faculty meetings and open forums, and

organized rallies to advocate against the new legislation (Ruiz, 2019). Some students created a documentary connecting their ES coursework, the current protests, and the history of on-campus student activism at CSU Northridge. Additionally, Smith (2018) detailed how two Black women undergraduate students were motivated to organize protests on their Southern California campus after taking Pan-African Studies courses and engaging with race-based clubs and cultural centers. Despite feeling marginalized at their institution, the women detailed how their Pan-African Studies courses affirmed and emboldened them (Smith, 2018). In the wake of national Black Lives Matter protests in 2015, the women initiated protests, a campus-wide walkout, and meetings with campus administrators to demand institutionalized support for Black faculty, staff, and students (Smith, 2018). Despite being a numerical minority on their campus, the Black women in Smith's (2018) study found solidarity and purpose through Pan-African Studies and the community it created with and for them.

Similarly, some high school ES students use lessons and skills they honed in ES courses to organize against regressive policies and practices. Daus-Magbual et al. (2018) highlighted how PEP motivated high school students to fight for the institutionalization of ES in their schools. They used the skills and knowledge they gained from PEP's ES lessons to advocate for more widespread access to ES curriculum in K-12 schools (Daus-Magbual et al., 2018). Additionally, following the 2010 MAS ban in Arizona, MAS students came together to protest this anti-ES legislation. Otero and Cammarota (2011) recounted how these students strategized for months to mobilize peers through vigils, board meeting presentations, and public demonstrations. Eventually, students coordinated walk-outs that ended at the district's central administrative office, where nearly 600 students obstructed the entrance and prevented the superintendent from giving a speech in support of his anti-ES bill (Otero and Cammarota, 2011).

Youth, ES teachers and professors, and other community organizers then occupied a nearby state building until police forcefully escorted them outside, arresting fifteen protestors who refused to leave the premises (Otero and Cammarota, 2011).

It is not surprising that participating in ES inspired some young people to pursue activism; after all, ES curricula frequently highlight and encourage activism. Ruiz (2019), Smith (2018), Daus-Magbual et al. (2018), and Otero and Cammarota (2011) demonstrate how young people apply ES lessons about activism and liberation. Further, Gibbs (2023) observed and interviewed three secondary-level ES teachers in Southern California and found that students in their courses exhibited an increased desire to struggle against injustices. Gibbs (2023) posits that most students do not become activists directly after participating in ES, but do gain the skills, knowledge, and desire necessary for sustained social action. When understood and taught through a CRES framework, ES courses encourage youth to take collective action to upend systems of subjugation. To this end, educators are expected to teach about resistance movements, embody activist orientations, and guide youth in their efforts to enact change. Research suggests that these lessons ultimately create pathways for youth to fight for a more just, equitable society.

Prior research suggests that some CRES practitioners become educators due to their lived experiences, racial literacies, and critically conscious community. Notably, ES educators may be motivated to pursue activism and ES teaching after participating in secondary or college-level ES courses as students. Moreover, some ES educators report that they are fortified in the work by critical professional development and learning communities. To date, however, there is little research available on the pathways that lead individuals to become ES educators. The research literature that does exist focuses mostly on classroom teachers and grassroots community-based educators remain an understudied population. Further examining what motivates individuals to

become and remain CRES educators, especially those who impart CRES outside of schools, may reveal new insights into recruiting, training, and retaining skillful CRES educators.

Methods

This study draws from a larger research project on the experiences and decision-making processes of three out-of-school ES educators. Data for this study were drawn from: (1) participants' written reflections, (2) individual interviews with each of the participants, (3) a focus group interview with all participants, and (4) photovoice project completed in conjunction with the second individual interview. In analyzing the data, I sought to answer the following questions: What experiences motivate a team of undergraduate students to create an out-of-school Asian American Studies curriculum and what do they need to sustain themselves as CRES educators?

Participants, Setting, and Recruitment

Participants included three undergraduate student leaders in an Asian American student organization at a historically white institution in the mid-Atlantic. Due to the organization's mission, most of its members and its leadership team were Asian American, including the participants in this study. I had access to the student organization through my work as a graduate student researcher. I served on a research team with one of the participants, who then introduced me to the remaining members of the leadership team. Since 2006, the student organization has hosted a free, annual leadership program for local Asian American youth in 9th-11th grades. In 2022, the current leadership team reorganized the program to focus on the history of Asian American activism, strengthening Asian American solidarity and identity, and mentorship between Asian American university students and high school students. The cohort met once weekly for five weeks to learn an Asian American Studies curriculum, then the youth presented a

culminating project in the sixth week. The program was hybrid, with three sessions held on site at the university and three held virtually over Zoom.

Two of the participants organized the CRES program under study, and the other participant, who was co-president of the student group, organized the program the previous spring. All three worked closely together to plan and implement the program curriculum over the course of two months. Participant pseudonyms and demographics at the time of the study are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Participant Profiles

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Role in Program Development
Cia	22	Filipino American	Woman	Heterosexual	Organized program
Eileen	20	Filipino American	Woman	Queer	Organized program
Jade	21	Vietnamese American	Woman	Queer	Co-president of student group, supported Eileen and Cia

Data Sources

Participants' Reflections. Participants wrote a personal reflection after each of the six program sessions. In each reflection, I asked participants to respond to the following prompts about the session: (1) What do you think went well today and why?, (2) What surprised you about today's session?, (3) What do you wish had gone differently and why?, (4) Based on today's experience, will you make changes to the next session's planned lesson? If so, what will you alter and why?, (5) Please share other thoughts, feelings, and ideas you have after today's

session. The reflections offered insight into how facilitators were processing their experiences during the program, including their affective responses.

Interviews. Over Zoom, I conducted two semi-structured, 60-minute individual interviews with each participant and one 60-minute focus group interview with all three participants at the end of the program. The interviews were audio and video recorded. In this article, I use data from the first individual interview, which focused on curriculum development during the planning meetings and curricular implementation during the entirety of the six-week program. Specifically, I drew from the participants' responses to questions about how they overcame challenges during the program's implementation and how and why they plan to continue their involvement in ES. I also used data from the second individual interview, which captured information about how participants' previous experiences and social identities shaped their decision to create an Asian American Studies curriculum. In examining their experiences, beliefs, and motivations, the second interview also revealed what inspired them to become critical racial educators and what sustained them in the work, despite barriers and challenges. The focus group interview provided further insight into how participants worked together and the role their relationships played in motivating and sustaining them to engage in ES work.

Photovoice. For the second individual interview, participants documented their racialized perspectives through a photovoice project. Photovoice is a pedagogy and participatory method wherein people from marginalized populations represent their stories through taking and responding to photographs, which serve as visual text and tools for digital storytelling. de los Rios (2017) argued that participatory arts-based pedagogies, like photovoice, align with the goals of ES because they "center the lens of the student- a lens that has a racialized gaze of the world, particularly for students of color" (p. 17). The photographs participants documented racialized

identities and experiences and how they connected to their work as CRES educators. Photovoice provided additional insight into what motivated the participants to become ES educators and what they needed to sustain themselves in their racial justice efforts.

Participants were asked to take 10 photos on a disposable camera. The prompt, purposefully broad to allow for individual interpretation, was: "Take 10 photos capturing your racialized identity and how you see the world. Be prepared to discuss selected photos and how they relate to your work as a community educator during your second individual interview." Because I asked participants to verbally elaborate on the photographs during their interview, I did not have them write up brief responses to the photos, as is customary. Their verbal reflections guided and informed our interview-based conversations, rather than serving as a separate source of data. Photovoice offered a different way for participants to present their narratives, which helped them access new perspectives on their own lived experiences.

Data Analysis

I used transcripts from the two individual interviews and the focus group interview and participants' reflections to answer my research questions. To prepare the interview transcripts for analysis, I reviewed the Zoom-generated audio and video recordings while reading the text to ensure their accuracy and make any necessary edits. Next, I uploaded the transcripts and reflections to ATLAS.ti for analysis.

To analyze the data, I first conducted a preliminary round of deductive coding based on my conceptual framework and research questions. This included coding for instances in which participants identified race and racism as motivating factors and discussed burn out and support from their community network. Next, I conducted a round of inductive coding to identify factors that appeared significant to my participants and my research questions that were not captured by

the deductive codes. For example, inductive codes included "mentoring youth" and "redistribution of ES knowledge". After completing coding, I began to reduce and refine the coded data. First, I looked for patterns across codes to determine how codes related to one another. Then, I collapsed codes that were conceptually similar. For example, I collapsed "organizing" and "activism" into one code. To avoid obscuring important findings, I also separated codes that contained several discrete concepts. For example, I delineated the "K-12 curriculum" code to distinguish between participants' descriptions of racially minoritized groups' histories and their experiences being both excluded from and included in the curriculum. Then, I compiled coded data that were relevant to my research question and significant to my participants. For instance, while I coded for "colorism," it did not appear to influence their decision to become or remain CRES educators, so I did not use those data in further analyses.

Using the revised code list, I reviewed the coded data again and, through this process, I identified several themes. As I considered what motivated participants to create and facilitate a CRES curriculum and what they need to sustain their work, I realized they were largely motivated by their lived experiences. In further analyzing their motives, I recognized that participants wanted to create an educational space for youth that was unlike traditional K-12 schooling. They were motivated by a shared vision of a space where youth could learn about ES and become part of a critically conscious community, similar to the spaces they built for themselves in college. Regarding what they needed to sustain themselves as CRES educators, participants described being burnt out from their workload and how they leaned on each other in times of stress. Then, I searched for commonalities across what motivated and sustained participants. I found that participants were motivated to become CRES educators, and persevere

when it was challenging, through the support of a community network of like-minded undergraduate students.

Findings

Study participants highlighted numerous factors that motivated and sustained them as community-based CRES educators. First, they emphasized how they initially became interested in racial and social justice and why they sought community with critically conscious Asian American peers in college. In examining their responses, I found three primary factors that defined their pathways to becoming and remaining CRES educators: their lived experiences during childhood and adolescence, particularly in schools, their families, and online spaces. Then, they outlined how their subsequent involvement in Asian American student groups and ES courses in college led them to develop an Asian American Studies curriculum. Finally, they were inspired and supported by a community of other undergraduate student-activists. These themes, while distinct, capture interconnected findings that collectively influenced the participants' choices and needs as CRES educators.

"When I was teaching, I was thinking about me in high school."

Race in School. When asked about their motivations for teaching an Asian American Studies curriculum, participants frequently cited their lived experiences, particularly during childhood and adolescence. They highlighted racialized encounters and systemic barriers as Asian American women growing up in immigrant or refugee families. All three participants highlighted the curriculum violence (Jones, 2020) and alienation they experienced in most of their K-12 classrooms. They also spoke about the relationships and curricula that molded their burgeoning commitments to racial and social justice and critical education. In sum, all three

participants described both empowering and disempowering moments throughout their lives which were collectively shaped by their identities.

Participants emphasized how they faced interpersonal, institutional, and systemic racism during their childhood and adolescence. Eileen and Cia, both of whom attended predominantly white elementary and middle schools, described racist encounters with students and teachers. For instance, Eileen recounted a time in middle school when she and her friends, also Asian, allowed several white peers to copy their homework. When the teacher caught the white students cheating and questioned them, they proclaimed, "It was the Asians!" Eileen and her friends were punished while the white students escaped accountability. Reflecting on this event, Eileen shared, "These microaggressions make you feel unsafe but [the adults] aren't going to do anything about it." In fact, in Eileen's case, the teacher reinforced the idea that Eileen and her Asian American friend group were disposable Others (Li & Nicholson, 2020). Cia also encountered anti-Asian racism from a young age. She shared how her third grade teacher often singled her out. During a unit about Japan, Cia's teacher asked the other students to raise their hands if they thought Cia, who is Filipino, was Japanese. Cia watched as most of her peers raised their hands. She shared how she reflected on the experience years later: "I went to middle school with those kids too, and I'm just like, if [only] they knew it was traumatic for me." For Eileen and Cia, these formative experiences with racism in schools were foundational to their understanding of race and racism. These experiences also created feelings of isolation that led Eileen and Cia to seek out meaningful relationships with other youth of color.

Both Eileen and Cia tried to live up to Asian American stereotypes during elementary school, but later rejected the racist expectations of their white peers and teachers. Eileen recognized that she was "trying to mold [herself] to fit in with everybody else" until she met and

befriended other Asian Americans in middle school. Then, she says "All of these experiences in my life, all of a sudden I was able to talk about them and have somebody understand them." Similarly, once Cia entered high school and befriended other youth of color, she was able to better define the racist encounters from her childhood. She shared, "I internalized the 'model minority' when I was younger, so I saw the world in that lens…but then I realized my peers were actually kind of racist." Eileen and Cia benefited from friendships with Asian Americans and other youth of color who could empathize with and affirm their racialized experiences. Their friends offered reprieve from the interpersonal and institutional racism of schooling.

Participants also highlighted how curricula influenced their school experiences. Eileen, who attended a predominantly white high school, stated that she did not interrogate race, racism, or other forms of oppression in any of her classes. The few times she read books by Black authors in her English courses, Eileen did not remember the teacher drawing connections between the characters' experiences and the students' lives. Texts were treated as period pieces that captured a moment in history, and thus antiblackness and dehumanization were confined to the time in which the novel was set. Cia also had few examples of critical curriculum in her K-12 schooling, but, unlike Eileen, her high school English courses did help her build counterhegemonic racial literacies. Cia demonstrated how exposure to even a few critical educators may positively influence youths' own pathway to critical consciousness. Notably, Cia attended a majority Black high school and had Black English teachers. She stated: "I feel like I really got to experience the world in a different view because we would actually talk about injustices and racialization." For example, she described reading "ethnic studies books" in her AP Language class, such as *Just Mercy*, and lauded the class discussions about systemic

oppression that accompanied these texts. She also recalled an impactful conversation about schooling and social class. Cia reflected:

> I learned most people who go to an Ivy League are directly connected to wealth and wealth is directly connected to race. That's when I learned about grit and how… 'if you work hard, you get the same payoff as everybody' is not the case.

Through her high school English courses, Cia gained language to describe her lived experiences and to connect different systems of oppression. Moreover, she was exposed to the histories and experiences of other peoples of color, particularly Black people, which helped her deepen her critical racial analysis. She recognized how the subjugation of her own community was interconnected with the suffering of other minoritized peoples. Taken together, the school-based experiences of Eileen and Cia reveal how curricula and pedagogies can significantly affect youths of color's racialization and critical consciousness.

Jade's schooling experience was unlike that of Eileen and Cia. Due to her family's geographic location and socioeconomic class, Jade grew up surrounded by other lower income families of color. Attending a school with other minoritized youth afforded Jade opportunities to develop her critical consciousness and feel affirmed by teachers and peers from a young age. She credited her teachers: "I didn't realize it, but my teachers were being culturally competent and giving us books that matched the experiences of the people in our classroom." Jade shared that her English teachers assigned texts by writers like Ta-Nehisi Coates, Frederick Douglass, and Sandra Cisneros and led "prolonged conversions in class about what racial justice looks like." According to Jade, her AP Government teacher led discussions on affirmative action and her AP Biology teacher created lessons on Henrietta Lacks, a Black woman who had her DNA stolen for medical research. Jade's earliest critical consciousness was not shaped solely by teachers,

however; she also credited her peers and their families for her commitment to racial justice and community education. Jade reported that in being surrounded by other working class families of color, she noticed systemic oppression at a young age and found it "outraging."

By high school, Jade and her peers found outlets for their rage. She recalled: "Our student body was politically active. There were two walkouts I participated in, one when Trump got elected and… then one for gun control." Jade's high school experience was vastly different from Eileen's and Cia's, but similar conclusions can be drawn from the stories they shared. First, Jade was exposed to critical curriculum earlier, more often, and in greater depth. She reiterated how important this was to her burgeoning critical consciousness and counterhegemonic literacies, and to her desire to teach a CRES curriculum while in college. This aligns with Eileen's frustration with her K-12 schooling and Cia's preference for her culturally sustaining (Paris, 2012) English courses. Second, Jade did not recount any school-based experiences with interpersonal racism, which Eileen and Cia described as salient to their time in majority white schools. Eileen and Cia were motivated to teach CRES to offer an alternative to the white supremacy they endured in schools, while Jade was motivated to recreate and build upon the affirming, liberatory educational experiences she had in her K-12 schools.

Family. All three participants were also influenced by other social identities, including immigration status and gender. Cia and Eileen both moved to the U.S. from the Philippines as young children, while Jade was born in the U.S. to Vietnamese refugees. The participants were all the eldest daughters in their families and had younger sisters. Eileen and Cia had sisters who recently graduated from high school and felt that having younger sisters allowed them to connect better with the high school students in the program. Moreover, it inspired them to pursue community education rather than other outlets for racial and social justice. The participants

wanted to serve as mentors to younger Asian Americans and other youth of color. Eileen and Cia connected with their specific cohort of youth participants, all but one of whom identified as girls, because, as Cia put it, "we know what it means to be the daughter of immigrants." Additionally, Eileen shared that she and Cia wanted to create a caring, familial relationship dynamic with the youth. "They just remind me so much of a younger sibling," she offered in explaining how she understood her relationship with the youth participants. They were also inspired to incorporate discussions on family trauma, dynamics, and histories due to their own familial roles and expectations. In short, family dynamics shaped how and why the participants created and implemented a CRES curriculum.

Participants understood how immigration status and global politics shaped their upbringings and opportunities. For instance, Cia summarized the impact of her family's experience: "Growing up I knew especially that the United States wasn't fair to me because I moved to the United States in 2007, and only my mom worked at the time. My dad couldn't work because of immigration status." As a result, Cia did not believe myths about the U.S. as a source of financial freedom or an arbitrator of equity and democracy. She was primed to accept the critical lessons about race and racism she first received in high school and, later, in college. Cia and her parents were not U.S. citizens until 2023, the year this study took place, which she felt limited her parents' political awareness. Cia explained: "My parents never saw a point to get involved in politics because they couldn't vote. So, I feel like there is a disconnect because they never learned why [our society] is the way it is." As such, Cia did not seek guidance from her parents when she became politically conscious because she viewed them as justifiably politically disengaged, which she reduced to voting.

Additionally, Jade described how the legacies of war and imperialism shaped her family. She believed she could not emotionally connect or have vulnerable conversations with her father, who "came here by boat fleeing famine, not knowing where he was going to go and what was going to happen to him" was "very guarded and did not want to talk about life before [he] came here." Until she discovered art by Vietnamese Americans and began to learn about Asian American histories from educators and friends, Jade felt she did not fully understand herself or her family. When asked how her family's history influenced her decision to teach ES, Jade responded, "I think it's because I know what it feels like to not be grounded in something and how powerful it is to finally get that learning for myself. I want other people to feel that power earlier." Jade added, "I feel more connected to myself now that I'm aware of how the U.S. played a role in my family having to leave [our] country. I think everyone should know that kind of history." The participants were motivated to learn and teach CRES concepts because they saw how the concepts explained phenomena in their own lives. They understood what it was like to be unmoored. As Asian American girls and then women, each participant had, at times, felt disconnected from their histories and selves. They did not want other youth of color to experience the enduring legacies of racism without the knowledge and support to name, critique, and disrupt these systems.

Digital Third Spaces. Further, participants needed opportunities to build community with like-minded peers. While Jade and Cia sometimes found this in school, all three participants felt virtual spaces fulfilled many of their unmet needs. Eileen did not trust mainstream, corporate news sources and felt she could not talk to the adults in her life about social or racial justice. Thus, she described "getting a lot of news and building understanding" about current events, such as Black Lives Matter protests, through TikTok during high school. Both Jade and Cia

indicated that they used Twitter as an information resource in high school. As Jade put it, "Twitter threads are incredible. They teach you a lot about the history that doesn't get told in history books." In addition to social media, Jade revealed that "growing up with unrestricted access to the internet as a preteen and teen" created opportunities for her to join virtual communities that attended to her needs. To connect with people who shared her experiences, she sought feminist, queer spaces designed for and by young people of color. In these digital communities, Jade could explore and discuss all facets of her identity as a queer Vietnamese-American girl. Based on these experiences, the participants expressed a desire to create spaces of belonging and critical questioning for other youth on the margins. As Eileen stated, "We want to give them a space in which they can access these materials, and really think them through in a safe space." When school and home did not provide outlets for critical conversations and community-building, the participants sought out third spaces (Wachs, 2023). They understood their CRES program to be a similar third space for the youth participants.

"And that knowledge also comes with a purpose."

Participants' lived experiences and ideologies first prompted them to seek out racial and social justice spaces and resources, more broadly. They did not initially pursue education as an outlet for their commitment to racial and social justice. As they participated in Asian American Studies courses, formed their critically conscious peer group, and developed their own counterhegemonic racial literacies and critical consciousness, they began to see education as an important component of racial and social justice. This was primarily evident through their educational experiences in college, which Eileen and Cia contrasted with their culturally disconnected K-12 schooling. As a result of their experiences, they believed it was important to share the knowledge they gained from their Asian American Studies courses and peers.

The participants were motivated by their desire to create an educational space unlike traditional K-12 schooling, which they defined as disengaging and hierarchical spaces wherein adults entirely determined youths' experiences. Through personal experience and friends' anecdotes, they found that schools generally excluded Asian Americans, and other people of color, from the curriculum. Consequently, as Jade put it, many youth of color "only have access to white [modes of] knowledge production." The participants worked to co-construct a space with youth that centered their knowledges and interests. To this end, Jade hoped "to be the role model [she] didn't really get in high school." The participants wanted youth of color to feel like they belonged to a supportive community while re/learning about Asian American histories and CRES concepts like intersectionality and coalition-building. Further, they imagined a space where youth could learn from and challenge one another. All three participants believed it was possible to create a liberatory educational space because they experienced and co-constructed similar emancipatory learning spaces in college.

Cia and Jade took Asian American Studies courses and identified themselves as part of an Asian American Studies community that consisted of faculty, staff, and students who were politically engaged. Eileen was not in the Asian American Studies program but nonetheless felt she benefited from the knowledge and resources of the community via her friends. She credited Asian American Studies students for exposing her to ES concepts:

> That shows how much potential [the Asian American Studies program] has, and how successful it is, and how much they care about their students. Because these students are willing to go outside of the classroom, learn more about it, and try to spread that awareness, and that education to a larger population that maybe isn't a part of that program. I guess it worked for me.

From the program, the participants learned about topics ranging from Asian American histories and activism, U.S. policies and global interventions, psychology, and cross-racial solidarity. Jade, who planned to pursue a career in public policy, described the Asian American Studies program as "life changing." Jade said, "It provided the lens through which I understand public policy and how I want to see myself make changes." The program helped each participant sharpen her critical analysis and develop the confidence to resist racial and social injustices. For instance, Cia shared, "I feel like what I learned really was instrumental to how I am now and how I see the world." All three participants felt that youth should not have to wait until college to access ES content. As Eileen put it, "We didn't really understand these topics when we were their age. We wanted to give them a space in which they could access these materials and really think them through." Thus, they were motivated to pursue education as a pathway for racial and social justice. They understood that, when taught by critically conscious instructors, education has the power to transform young people's sense of themselves and the world they inhabit.

Additionally, the participants knew from experience that re/education can be the first step toward political engagement and activism. For example, after taking Asian American Studies courses, Cia participated in protests for the first time. Still, she was hesitant to label her actions as activism until she became an ES facilitator. In her reflection, Cia proclaimed, "Before I was like, 'Am I really an activist?' But now I know that I am one. This is my form of activism." Jade, who had already participated in political demonstrations, found a community with whom she could continue organizing. She shared, "We wanted youth to get a sense of how we as facilitators in the program are working on student activism…we are not that much older than you, so it is possible for you, too." The participants wanted to recreate these benefits for youth who otherwise might not have access to critical ES curriculum or a politically engaged community. They were

motivated to redistribute the knowledge they gained in college because they felt a responsibility to reach back and serve their community. Jade summarized their feelings about the responsibility that accompanies a CRES education: “It brings you a lot of knowledge, and that knowledge also comes with a purpose, I think. It has helped me understand more about why I’m here, and what I can do with this knowledge.”

The Asian American Studies program also motivated the participants to remain committed to implementing their Asian American Studies curriculum. Faculty and staff assisted them throughout their facilitation, offering resources and advice. Asian American Studies faculty and staff showed up as guest speakers, reviewed the curriculum, and provided resources. In their reflections, the participants expressed gratitude for this mentorship. Moreover, the faculty and staff’s commitment to Asian American Studies and their undergraduate students encouraged participants to also remain dedicated to the work. Despite feeling burned out, Eileen was motivated to show up for the youth. She shared, “The work we're doing is very interesting and very fulfilling and very important… just remembering that and keeping that energy throughout is important.”

Finally, through the program’s coursework, study participants were exposed to principles of CRES that align with those needed to participate in sustained activism, such as a commitment to collective liberation. For instance, Jade learned that “you can break yourself out of all of these prejudices and [experience] liberation through community organizing.” The participants overcame the obstacles and stressors of organizing a community education program, in part, because they knew the legacy of Asian American activists who came before them. Aligned with this theme, Cia shared that learning about figures like Yuri Kochiyama helped her realize the purpose of “Asian American Studies, along with other ethnic studies, is cross-racial solidarity…

and inspiring [youth] to do something outside of their classes." The participants' background in Asian American Studies, then, motivated them to create a CRES curriculum and sustained them through the process of organizing and facilitating the program.

"It's nice to be in a space with people who share the same values."

Relatedly, the participants were motivated and sustained by their network of like-minded, critically conscious peers, many of whom were also part of the Asian American Studies department. The Asian American Student Organization (AASO), a politically-oriented student group to which they all belonged, served as a meeting ground for the university's Asian American undergraduates who were interested in learning more about and advocating for racial and social justice. Its principles included "building community" according to Eileen, and "developing programming that cultivates political consciousness," according to Jade. The participants' friends in AASO motivated them to first organize and struggle against injustices, more broadly, and then to do so through creating a CRES curriculum. They were drawn to AASO because of its critically conscious members who were actively engaged in organized struggle against racial injustice. Jade mentioned how members were critical of liberalism and were aware of issues she felt were important to interrogate, like antiblackness. Further, Eileen acknowledged that she had always been interested in activism but had never participated in any actions until she met her AASO peers. As Cia put it, "It's nice to be in a space with people who share the same values, have the same political consciousness, and then we all just work together to build this community at [our university]."

The participants' peers in AASO also helped them overcome barriers to teaching and assuaged feelings of burnout as the participants facilitated the curriculum. First, their AASO peers served as resources. They helped participants balance the workload by offering to step in,

particularly when they possessed knowledge or skill sets that the participants did not. For instance, AASO members frequently led icebreaker exercises, presented lessons, and organized day-of logistics during in-person sessions. Jade emphasized that "the committee was really engaged and had great ideas to contribute." Similarly, Eileen shared, "It was nice getting to interact with them and hear their feedback. They brought a lot of ideas that I don't think we would've considered if we didn't have them there." Moreover, the participants' peers offered emotional support as well. The participants were sustained in their work because they believed they had a dedicated community to lift them up. According to Cia, her peers helped her realize "you don't have to do everything yourself when you have community." Their peers also modeled what it meant to commit to a cause, despite challenges. Eileen's devotion to the CRES program deepened as she witnessed the time and energy her peers dedicated to their own causes. She described it as follows: "Seeing people that are equally passionate about the work that you're doing and are just continuing every day is really something that keeps us sustained."

Finally, the participants were motivated to develop the curriculum because they wanted to co-construct a community with youth of color that mirrored the community they built with their AASO peers. The participants perceived their AASO community as empowering, supportive, and passionate. Jade discussed feeling grounded by her peers with whom she built "a strong community of care." As previously noted, the participants believed liberatory educational spaces rarely exist for high school youth of color and, thus, felt compelled to take up the urgent task of creating an emancipatory educational space for youth. Additionally, the participants identified community-building as a source of inspiration during the program. All three participants were motivated to cultivate a warm, caring environment and build relationships with and among, which aligns with how they described their AASO community. Whenever they

observed these characteristics in the space or received positive feedback from the youth, the participants felt affirmed and reiterated a desire to keep teaching. Eileen reported that she was inspired by youth participants who wanted to create Asian American student organizations on their high school campuses to disseminate what they learned in the CRES program. Similarly, Cia said it was validating when she could tell youth had internalized program content. Jade shared her co-facilitators' perspectives. She declared, "Knowing the students are invested in this work as well helps me feel more at peace."

Discussion/Implications

K-12 ES research literature frequently examines the benefits and outcomes of ES curricula but rarely investigates the facilitators who create and implement the curricula. This study offers multiple insights into what motivates and sustains CRES. First, it reveals how facilitators' identities and lived experiences can inspire them to create an out-of-school CRES curriculum. Of note, participants emphasized the counterspaces (Shirazi, 2019) they sought out and created in response to interpersonal and institutional racism in K-12 schools. When they reached the university, Asian American Studies courses and their Asian American student group acted as the counterspaces wherein they were welcomed, empowered, and critically educated. As a result, these communities served as a model for the facilitators as they attempted to create a similarly transformative space for local youth of color.

This study affirms and extends prior research. It provides insights into how to recruit, train, and support ES educators to advance the development and implementation of CRES both outside and inside of schools. It also highlights the importance of learning from CRES educators and offers suggestions for how to sustain their work. Further, this study provides directions for

further research that can strengthen our understanding of critical, secondary-level ES at a time when K-12 ES is rapidly expanding.

Interrogating educators' identities and lived experience can illuminate their motivations for pursuing CRES, their CRES knowledge and critical consciousness, and how these factors interact to determine how they teach ES. Findings in this study demonstrate how educators' experiences with racism, sexism, xenophobia, and other oppressive social phenomena may encourage them to seek tools for understanding and interrogating structural injustices, which ES can provide. This contributes to our understanding of why some students are drawn to ES and the role they feel ES can play in their own development. Moreover, this study presents an example of how and why some educators impart a critical, racial interpretation of ES. It provided insight into how educators' form their critical racial consciousness and counterhegemonic racial literacies, which may help K-12 ES researchers, teacher educators, and other stakeholders build or harness educators' critical knowledge. In doing so, this study builds upon existing research literature (e.g., Sacramento, 2019 and Green at al., 2020) that aims to better understand how we can enlist and support CRES teachers. Knowing and incorporating educators' lived experiences into recruitment and training efforts is instrumental as ES advocates prepare thousands of new and tenured educators to teach ES (Penner & Ma, 2023).

Further, all three facilitators in this study emphasized Asian American Studies courses as valuable sources of knowledge and an inspiration for teaching CRES. These findings highlight the value of ES; the facilitators found solace, empowerment, and truth in their ES coursework. They repeatedly credited ES for deepening their counterhegemonic racial literacies, a critical objective of CRES curricula. This aligns with other ES research literature on the non-academic effects of ES, which emphasize how ES increases youths of color's sense of agency (Hinrichs,

2019), connections to their identities and communities (Lopez et al., 2022), and commitment to enacting sociopolitical change (Gibbs, 2023). Armed with heightened critical consciousness, the participants in this study sought to apply the knowledge and skills they gained from ES. Specifically, they felt a responsibility to share ES knowledge with youth of color who may not have been exposed to similar ideologies and content. Previous studies (Curammeng, 2020; Lopez, 2023; Young, 2021) highlight how other educators were also inspired to teach CRES after taking ES courses. Like the participants in this study, these educators developed much of the content knowledge, critical awareness, and pedagogical skills needed to effectively impart CRES from their ES courses.

This study's findings illustrate how a CRES framework can be a tool for training ES educators, and I believe it may be beneficial to all teachers. CRES has the potential to guide both the content and strategies used to prepare teachers. Mainstream approaches to teacher education do not interrogate power or consistently center the epistemologies of people of color, including those of the youth, families, and communities that pre-service teachers will serve (Chang-Bacon, 2022). In contrast, CRES is a theoretical orientation that necessitates reflexivity, critical analyses of power hierarchies, and an investment in and knowledge of local communities. This study underscores Curammeng's (2020) case for an approach to teacher education that builds upon the principles and pedagogies of ES. Curammeng (2020) recommended that teacher educators "[rethink] what and whose perspectives are prominent in teacher education courses… [and] carefully design ways for students to reflect on their ideologies and identities across courses" (466). Additionally, Curammeng (2020) posited that teacher education programs may benefit from working with grassroots organizations doing similar work outside of schools. Programs like the one in this study are already using CRES to build curricula and employ pedagogies that

amplify the knowledge and histories of racially minoritized peoples and can serve as a model or resource for teacher educators. Teacher education programs must increasingly prepare teachers to better serve racially, ethnically, linguistically diverse student populations (Howard & Milner, 2021), which some scholars posit should include training critical teachers of color (Lac, 2019). To address this need, teacher educators can look to CRES as a framework for growing more critically conscious, community-rooted educators.

Study findings also offer implications for where to recruit ES educators, particularly ES educators who will maintain a critical orientation. All three facilitators in this study named Asian American Studies courses and their politically engaged Asian American student organization as sites where they developed the skills and knowledge to organize a CRES program. Thus, CRES courses and spaces are potential sites for identifying and recruiting people who may wish to become critical educators. This aligns with previous studies (Lopez & Ortiz, 2022; Varela, 2022) wherein current and potential ES educators described how their high school and/or college-level ES courses inspired them to become educators. These ES educators felt enlightened and emboldened by their ES courses and wanted to create a similar learning environment for other youth. Because ES courses strengthen students' counterhegemonic racial literacies, recruiting educators who have taken ES courses may address the need for more critically conscious ES instructors.

Further, this study extends the current research literature which rarely highlights the importance of politically engaged, race-based undergraduate student organizations in ES educators' trajectories. At predominantly and/or historically white institutions, such organizations have long served as organizing spaces for politically attuned students of color looking for like-minded peers (Revilla, 2010) and as sites of initial radicalization for less

politically conscious students of color (Curammeng, 2020). Scholars have presented narratives of Filipino American ES teachers (Curammeng, 2020), Latine ES teachers (Lopez, 2023), and Black undergraduate students (Smith, 2018) who engaged in student activism after joining race-based clubs at their historically white institutions. Similarly, the participants in this study were, in part, motivated to create and implement their CRES curriculum due to the knowledge, skills, and support they gained from AASO. Spaces like AASO can serve to prepare undergraduate students to teach CRES by building their critical consciousness and encouraging them to take action against racial injustice. As such, these organizations may be sites to recruit and train potential CRES educators who are primed to understand and embody CRES principles and believe in the urgency of CRES' goals. Moreover, some leaders within these undergraduate student organizations already have experience teaching CRES outside of schools, like the participants in the present study. As such, this study also demonstrates the utility of recruiting out-of-school, grassroots ES educators to be ES classroom teachers or to support ES classroom teachers. Participants in this study and other grassroots ES educators have skills and knowledge that would translate to effective ES classroom teaching. Thus, grassroots ES programs are a rich source for teacher recruitment at a time when many schools need to rapidly prepare effective, critical ES teachers (Penner & Ma, 2023).

Finally, the findings from this study indicate that CRES cannot and should not be imparted in isolation. The participants benefited from having a team of co-facilitators and peer collaborators to learn from and with and several Asian American Studies scholars who served as mentors. The participants were fortified by their robust, supportive community. Prior research also suggests that ES should be co-constructed in learning communities. Scholars have found that collaboration strengthens educators' content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and critical

consciousness (Lopez, 2023; Sacramento, 2019). Additionally, learning communities and peer networks may offer emotional support to CRES educators as they engage in racial justice work, which might otherwise lead to burn out (Curammeng, 2017; Pizzaro & Kohli, 2020). Thus, collaborating with other critical educators may increase retention among CRES educators. Notably, the present study indicates that these learning communities do not have to be limited to school sites, and it positions out-of-school educators as sources of knowledge that have heretofore remained underutilized. Classroom CRES teachers can learn from educators in other schools and community-based education spaces. In fact, collaborating within, between, and outside of schools, which would give educators access to different resources, expertise, and perspectives, could improve the effectiveness of a CRES curriculum. For instance, classroom teachers may have institutional resources they can share with out-of-school educators, and out-of-school educators may have additional connections to community resources that can benefit classroom teachers.

Conclusion

While ES has existed as an academic discipline for over fifty years, ES courses have only more recently taken root in high schools around the country. Penner and Ma (2023) predict that over 2,000 new ES teachers will need to be trained in California alone over the next several years. With this growing proliferation of secondary-level ES courses, stakeholders committed to critical, racial ES must attend to how and by whom ES curricula is taught. The present study reveals key insights into what motivates and sustains the work of out-of-school ES educators. It also highlights critical counterspaces on college campuses where ES knowledge is produced and disseminated. Therefore, this study offers strategies for locating and supporting potential ES educators who already have a rich understanding of ES's principles. Going forward, it is vital

that we determine how to recruit, train, support, and learn from effective, critically oriented ES educators. Careful consideration must be given not just to the benefits of offering ES in K-12 schools, but to the sustained effort it will take to develop high quality ES programs and educators. If not, the rapid expansion of secondary-level ES courses may be a barrier to, rather than a tool for, constructing liberatory educational spaces.

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Conclusion

Almost a decade before Republican lawmakers began concerted attacks on the teaching of critical race theory (CRT) in schools, legislatures in Tucson, Arizona banned their local high schools from teaching a successful Mexican American Studies program (Gomez et al., 2023). Like CRT, Tucson's Mexican American Studies program was branded racist and divisive for illuminating the ways racism and white supremacy are endemic in the U.S. Furthermore, Gomez et al. (2023) argue that the 2010 Mexican American Studies ban was an attempt to inhibit the agency of youth of color, particularly Latine youth, who were emboldened through the study of their own epistemologies and histories. Today, the outcry against teaching and learning about race in K-12 schools rages on and ethnic studies (ES) remains a contested field. Some advocates for ES attempt to align its purpose with existing multicultural[5] approaches to education that emphasize inclusion and acceptance within a multicultural society (e.g., Sleeter, 2011). This is a common tactic for ES proponents to push back against conservative criticisms of ES and attempt to demonstrate its utility within traditional school systems (e.g., Bonilla et al., 2021). However, despite the barriers K-12 ES instructors face, other stakeholders argue that we must attempt to retain ES' critical orientation and harness its potential as a tool for sociopolitical change (Arce & Jocson, 2019). Similarly, this dissertation reveals important information about how CRES educators engage with each other and youth to co-construct engaging learning spaces that present emancipatory possibilities (Armonda, 2019). Thus, this dissertation aligns with scholars who believe ES' value transcends traditional markers of academic achievement, such as increased GPAs.

[5] Grant and Chapman (2021) define multicultural education (MCE) as both a philosophical concept based on the ideals of democracy, social justice, and equality and a pedagogical concept that advocates for inclusion.

Given the divergent perspectives on how to implement K-12 ES, it is important to create and convey a shared definition of ES and its purpose. It is not enough for more students to be exposed to ES through district and state mandates (Magcalas, 2023); we must ensure that K-12 students participate in ES courses that critically interrogate racist power structures. This dissertation's three manuscripts illuminate how and why we must continue to advocate for critical, racial interpretations of ES. It highlights how transformative CRES can be in the lives of students, some of whom go on to become CRES instructors, and illuminates what constitutes CRES curricula and pedagogies. Notably, it outlines a shared framework that helps protect the critical integrity of ES at a time when the field is increasingly vulnerable to co-optation and dilution. Then, it offers examples of how the framework can be used to develop and implement a CRES program. It is concerned with both the theoretical underpinnings of CRES and its application with practitioners and students. By developing and applying the CRES framework, this dissertation aligns with the grassroots efforts of organizations like the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium (LESMCC). LESMCC is a coalition of educators, scholars, and activists in California who advance a critical, liberatory vision of ES that does not compromise ES' critical origins to assimilate to traditional schooling practices (Cunanan et al., 2023). This dissertation further evinces the importance of coalitions like LESMCC that help practitioners implement CRES.

This dissertation is methodologically different from much of the existing research literature of K-12 ES because it centers the decision-making processes and trajectories of Asian American female educators in an out-of-school ES program. Typically, research has not attended to the experiences or perspectives of Asian American women educators, and it overwhelmingly highlights classroom teachers. This dissertation revealed how three Asian American female educators' experiences with racism, sexism, and xenophobia led them to seek

out ES courses and become CRES educators. Therefore, it offers insight into how educators can develop the skills, experience, and knowledge to impart CRES, which ultimately may advance how teacher educators and other stakeholders foster ES educators' counterhegemonic racial literacies and critical consciousness. Moreover, ES has long been imparted outside of classrooms (Lozenski, 2019), yet K-12 ES research literature does not currently reflect the rich ES knowledge generated in afterschool programs, community centers, and other grassroots, community-based educational spaces. As such, we are overlooking valuable insights into the teaching and learning of CRES and missing opportunities for collaboration between classroom teachers and out-of-school educators. This dissertation eschews this pattern and instead centers Asian American female out-of-school educators as knowledge makers who can inform the work of classroom teachers and teacher educators.

If we want to ensure youth are receiving effective CRES instruction, it is urgent that we streamline how we enlist, prepare, and sustain critically conscious instructors yet this continues to be an undertheorized area of K-12 ES research. This dissertation documents the importance of studying educators' decision-making processes and pathways to becoming CRES educators which may inform how we recruit, support, and retain critical ES educators. Educators' decision-making processes reveal how they develop their CRES programs and why they make specific curricular and pedagogical choices. As education researchers, we can use this knowledge to support the creation of CRES and deepen educators' critical consciousness. This dissertation revealed that some CRES educators build their critical consciousness through counterspaces on university campuses, namely ES courses and politically conscious undergraduate student organizations. When we determine where to recruit ES educators and how to maintain critical manifestations of ES, we must look to these counterspaces that model the critical, political

education we want to impart through CRES. Further, this dissertation aligns with current K-12 ES research on ES professional development. The participants in this study demonstrate the utility of critical ES as a framework for preparing educators (Curammeng, 2020) and the need for ongoing teacher collaboration in designated learning communities (Sacramento, 2019).

This dissertation has several implications for research and practice. First, future research should seek insight into CRES educators' curriculum development process to improve our shared understanding of how to effectively teach critical ES concepts. Using this information, stakeholders can better train and support ES teachers and prevent attempts to dilute the principles of CRES. For instance, a framework like CRES can be used to evaluate ES courses to ensure they maintain a critical, racial grounding. Secondly, future research should address the theoretical, conceptual, and pedagogical inconsistencies across the field of K-12 ES. CRES offers a consistent framework for conducting research on K-12 ES, preparing ES educators, and teaching K-12 ES content. More research is needed to understand how CRES can be utilized by other educators in a diverse array of contexts. Finally, this dissertation illustrates the importance of building sustainable CRES programs that provide critical education for as many youth as possible. To do so, we must understand how to best support CRES educators. This dissertation reveals that CRES instructors need critical, supportive communities with whom they can learn and collaborate. Learning to teach CRES is an active process that requires reading, questioning, and struggling alongside other critically conscious educators. Therefore, stakeholders who are serious about preparing educators to teach ES en masse in states like California (Penner & Ma, 2023) must create opportunities for educators to work together to build and enact a shared vision.

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