

“BUILDING THE PLANE AS WE FLY IT”: TESMONIOS OF FIRST-TIME MEXICAN
AMERICAN STUDIES HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS DURING THE 2021-2022
SCHOOL YEAR IN SOUTHWEST TEXAS.

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Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and Administration

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Dedication and Acknowledgments

This study is dedicated to my beautiful family: my four children, my wonderful spouse Hilda, and to all my students, past, present, and future. To my parents, Mario and Yolanda, thank you for always valuing education and for your sacrifices to make my education your top priority. To my wife Hilda, I am grateful for your unwavering support and encouragement. I couldn't have done it without your unconditional love and belief in me. To my friends, classmates, teachers, and colleagues thank you for your help, your wisdom, advice, and your sharing of knowledge with me. To my committee: Dr. Edna Martinez, Dr. Isela Peña, Dr. Penelope Espinoza, and Dr. Timothy Cashman thank you for your guidance, your feedback, and your work to help me in this doctoral program. As a first-generation college student, your help and support were most important in helping me navigate the university. To my Godmother, Alma Calderon, thank you for helping me heal on my journey to wellness. Your work helped me reinvent myself, reframe my reality, and helped me get on a path to becoming who I always wanted to be. Through your tough love and guidance, I accomplished my goals and realized my dreams. To all Ethnic Studies teachers like me, keep challenging the status quo and engaging students with CRC and CRP as we struggle for social justice, equity, and a decolonized social studies curriculum.

In gratitude,

JSA

Abstract

Mexican American Studies, as a course, was approved by the Texas State Board of Education in 2019. However, there were no provisions on how the course would be implemented or supported by school districts in Texas. Further, in 2021, Texas House Bill 3797 and Senate Bill 3 were passed into law, aiming at the heart of Ethnic Studies - Critical Race Theory (CRT). Utilizing testimonio as methodology and method, I sought to understand the experiences of first-time Mexican American Studies high school teachers implementing Mexican American Studies during the 2021-2022 school year in Southwest Texas. Testimonio interviews with six teachers across five campuses in Southwest Texas shed light on the challenges, obstacles, and opportunities presented to them as the 2021-2022 school year unfolded. Conceptually, this study was guided by Critical Race Theory, Latino/a Critical Race Theory, Culturally Relevant Curriculum, and Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Conocimiento. Four salient themes are addressed in this study: 1.) Building the Plane as we Fly It, 2.) Taking the Wind Out of Our Sails - Damper on the Momentum, 3.) Identity/Conocimiento, and 4.) Dumping Ground. The study concludes that MAS class was systematically marginalized and devalued, but there is pragmatic optimism to remedy the challenges of implementation and pedagogical practices. Recommendations for policy, practice, and future research are advanced.

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PREVIEW

Chapter One: Introduction

The summer of 2021 saw the passing of “The Critical Race Theory” bill (House Bill 3797) in Texas, followed by Senate Bill 3 in the fall of 2021, effectively banning the teaching of race in K-12 classrooms (Texas Legislature Online, 2021). SB 3 came as several campuses around Texas were implementing Social Studies elective courses in Ethnic Studies, including Mexican American Studies (Perez, 2021). HB 3797 and SB3 aimed at the heart of Ethnic Studies - Critical Race Theory (CRT). As Valenzuela (2022) argued, an attack on CRT is an attack on Ethnic Studies. Without Critical Race Theory, Mexican American Studies is voided of critical thought and analysis and becomes a museum exhibit or curio of artifacts for students who stand to benefit from learning their history. Senate Bill 3, proposed by Sen. Bryan Hughes (R-Mineola), removed the requirement to teach Native American history, work by civil rights activists Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, Martin Luther King Jr, Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, writings of the Chicano movement and women’s suffrage. It also removed the requirement to teach “the history of white supremacy, including but not limited to the institution of slavery, the eugenics movement, and the Ku Klux Klan, and the way in which it was morally wrong” (Fernandez, 2021, p. 3). According to Silva-Fernandez (2021):

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and high-ranking Republican officials have passed bills in the Texas Senate that would prevent the teaching of CRT in K-12 public schools and prevent teachers from speaking about certain past and current events. New laws have been passed by Texas Republicans to ban the study of CRT in public schools and remove requirements to teach certain aspects of women’s rights,

Native American history, and civil rights activists, as well as examine the negative implications of omitting CRT from the teaching curriculum. (p. 3)

The 2021 school year was the first time many schools taught Mexican American Studies courses in high school since Mexican American Studies was approved by the State Board of Education in Texas in 2019 (Perez, 2021). According to Zou (2021), teachers and experts say that [critical race theory](#) is not being taught in K-12 schools — and that the phrase is being used as a catch-all for any mention of racism, which is an integral part of teaching history truthfully. “Critical race theory itself critiques the focus on individual blame in contemporary discussions of racism and shifts the focus to legal and social systems that perpetuate inequity” (Zou, 2021, p.3).

SB 3 is more restrictive and broader than HB 3979, stating that the TEA has the authority to enforce how Social Studies will be taught in schools including race and racism, as well as a long list of prohibited concepts pertaining to social studies in K -12 (Pollack & Ura, 2021). The bill's text states that SB3 would remove the requirement to teach slavery and the ways it is morally wrong, women's suffrage and equal rights, the emancipation proclamation, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech to name a few. Texas Lt. Governor Dan Patrick stated on July 16, 2021,

Texans roundly reject ‘woke’ philosophies that espouse that one race or sex is better than another and that someone, by virtue of their race or sex, is innately racist, oppressive or sexist. Senate Bill 3 will make certain that critical race philosophies, including the debunked 1619 founding myth, are removed from our school curriculums statewide.

Texas parents do not want their children to be taught these false ideas. Parents want their

students to learn how to think critically, not be indoctrinated by the ridiculous leftist narrative that America and our Constitution are rooted in racism (KVUE, 2021, p.2).

The following section focuses on the original Texas anti-CRT House Bill 3979 that led up to the more restrictive SB 3 within a six-month period in 2021.

TXHB 3979

In May of 2021 Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed a controversial bill prohibiting teachers from engaging in race or sex stereotyping, which prescribes how Texas teachers can discuss racism historically to include discussions of current events (Mcgee, 2021). This bill went into effect on September 1, 2021, stating teachers cannot be compelled to talk about current events and if they do, they must “give deference to both sides” (Mcgee, 2021, p. 3). This bill prohibits the teaching of white supremacy and the history of the KKK. The bill prohibits people from getting credit for participating in civic activities like lobbying elected officials or political activism. In addition, HB3979 bans the teaching of *The New York Times 1619 Project*, which discusses the initial date when enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia (Mcgee, 2021). Advocates of the bill argue it aims to combat teachers’ personal biases being implemented into public education. Furthermore, advocates argue teachers are blaming white people for historical wrongs and distorting the founding fathers’ accomplishments (Mcgee, 2021). Anti-CRT legislation has swept the nation with many states adopting similar bills. As of November 24, 2021, 29 states have introduced bills or taken steps to restrict teaching CRT using the same verbiage as Texas, i.e., “prohibiting race or sex stereotyping” (Where Critical Race Theory Is Under Attack, 2021). The states are Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, South Dakota, South Carolina, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, Ohio, North Dakota,

North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Montana, Michigan, Missouri, Maine, Louisiana, Kentucky, Idaho, Indiana, Georgia, Florida, Arkansas, Arizona, Alabama (Where Critical Race Theory Is Under Attack, 2021).

It is within this context that I set out to understand the experiences of first-time Mexican American Studies high school teachers in Southwest Texas implementing Mexican American Studies during the 2021-2022 school year. In this chapter, I discuss the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study.

Statement of the Problem

A society founded on genocide, built on the labor of African slaves, developed by Latino serfs and Asian indentured servants, made fabulously wealthy through exploitation and masterful manipulation and mystification—a society like this is a society built on race. (Chandler & McKnight, 2009, p.32)

The journey to pass the Mexican American Studies curriculum in Texas was a long hard-fought battle spanning over a decade in the Southwest United States (Valenzuela, 2019). The battle between the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and “the people” harbors deep wounds, countless court battles, and activism in favor of implementing Mexican American Studies in Texas high schools (Valenzuela, 2019). This journey is not merely a battle between the TEA and proponents of Culturally Relevant Curriculum (CRC) but has much deeper roots going back to the Chicano Movement and the Plan de Santa Barbara, calling for CRC in public education from high school to the college level (Cabrera, 2014).

Students of color often must wait until they reach college and university to have the opportunity to study Culturally Relevant Curriculum if they are lucky enough to get there (Cabrera, 2014). Ethnic Studies bans between 2010-2020 were rampant in Arizona and Texas bringing to light the constant struggle for representation and resistance to white supremacy in

textbooks and the public-school curriculum. “The personal is political” is the cry of the many movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Ruiz, 2000, p. 10). Now that Mexican American Studies (MAS) curriculum has been passed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), how will MAS be implemented in Texas public school districts widely? Especially, on the US/Mexico border, in Southwest Texas, where the population is composed of approximately 85% Mexican American students (census.org, 2020). Southwest Texas is home to some of the largest school districts in Texas. According to the Texas Education Agency's Educational Service Center (2022), it serves nearly 58,000 students on 89 campuses.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of first-time Mexican American Studies high school teachers in Southwest Texas implementing Mexican American Studies during the 2021-2022 school year. I investigated the reality of teaching Mexican American Studies classes for the first time at five campuses in Southwest Texas. I conducted testimonio interviews with six teachers to explore the challenges, obstacles, and opportunities presented to them as the school year unfolded.

Research Questions

The research questions (Agee, 2009) guiding this study were:

1. What are the experiences of first-time MAS high school teachers in Southwest Texas in 2021-2022?
2. How do first time MAS high school teachers describe the implementation of MAS curriculum?
3. How does implementing MAS curriculum for the first-time shape teacher consciousness?

Significance of the Study

“[We] know Ethnic Studies courses have the potential to improve educational experiences and outcomes for historically disenfranchised students” (Sacramento, 2019, p. 167). Yet, the challenges teachers and districts face when establishing Ethnic Studies courses are not well known as it is relatively new (Parker, 2019). Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by providing insight into the experiences of first-time Mexican American Studies teachers in Texas and how they implemented the curriculum. In addition to highlighting the challenges and opportunities participants faced as first-time MAS teachers, the findings of this study provide an opportunity for reflection and subsequent action in terms of both policy and practice regarding the practical uses for MAS curriculum, such as professional development, curriculum guides, culturally responsive teaching, and adequate funding and support for MAS and MAS teachers. Exploring the experiences of MAS teachers has elucidated how the class will continue to exist or not, and how it is used as a Social Studies elective course. The way MAS is scheduled will determine when and how it will be taught and how the credit will be used in Texas. This study is unique in that it explored teachers’ experiences teaching the course, as opposed to students taking the course. There is a lack of research on the teachers' experiences in the classroom teaching MAS for the first time and this is a contribution to the field for implementation of MAS curriculum.

Educational research affirms that Ethnic studies helps foster cross cultural understanding amongst all students, aids in valuing students own cultural identity, and helps students appreciate differences around them (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). “These studies also confirm that students who participate in ethnic studies are more academically engaged, develop a stronger sense self-efficacy and personal empowerment, perform better academically and graduate at higher rates”

(Sleeter & Zavala, 2020, p. 3). Furthermore, ethnic studies curriculum produces higher levels of critical thinking. By infusing knowledge that is culturally relevant to students, teachers who take a sociocultural approach to teaching and learning connect students' knowledge with new and unfamiliar academic knowledge (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Fewer studies have observed effective practices in preparing teachers to teach Ethnic Studies in high school classrooms (Curammeng & Tintiangco-Cubales, 2017; Daus-Magbual, 2010; Dos Passos Coggin, 2014; Sacramento, 2019). Ethnic Studies teacher professional development models center on critical inquiry and dialogue. "Critical approaches urge Ethnic Studies practitioners to view their role with a critical lens and reconsider the purpose of their praxis as it relates to place, social transformation, and decolonization" (Sacramento, 2019, p. 169). Sacramento (2019) argues access to critical professional development can connect teachers to transformative experiences and methods, but support for this exists primarily at the grassroots level. These statements echo the research questions that I asked, which was to understand the first-time experiences of MAS teachers.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed how Ethnic Studies has been questioned and affected by the anti-CRT movement. The ensuing anti-CRT legislation has brought into question Social Studies curriculum namely, Ethnic Studies courses like Mexican American Studies. The problem is studies on the implementation of this new curriculum have not been published yet leading to a need to understand teachers' experiences in teaching MAS classes. The purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of first-time Mexican American Studies high school teachers in Southwest Texas implementing Mexican American Studies during the 2021-2022 school year, within an anti-CRT movement in Texas. The research questions were: 1). What are the

experiences of first-time MAS high school teachers in Southwest Texas in 2021-2022? 2). How do first time MAS high school teachers describe the implementation of MAS curriculum? 3). How does implementing MAS curriculum for the first-time shape teacher consciousness? The next chapter details the journey of ethnic studies programs historically going back to their inception in the late 1960s during the Chicano Movement and beyond. The Ethnic Studies ban in Arizona between 2010-2020 will be discussed as well.

PREVIEW

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This literature review describes how Ethnic Studies programs became part of the educational landscape in higher education as well as PreK-12 levels. To understand how Mexican American Studies in K-12 came to be it is essential to understand the history of the political and social upheaval of the 1960's Civil Rights Movement which gave birth to the student group, M.E.C.H.A. (Movimiento Estudiantil, Chicano/a De Aztlán) and their own battle for more equitable education from a more representative faculty. The activists and students of the 60s and 70s pushed for Mexican American Studies to become part of the curriculum as a legitimate part of the study of history, literature, the arts, and sciences. Today we are finally seeing the fruits of their labor and of those that have come since then. "Because Eurocentrism and White privilege appear to be the norm, many people continue to believe that education in the United States is a meritocracy, unbiased, and fair process" (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p.120). Therefore, it is essential to investigate how Mexican American Studies came about and how it functions in Texas High School curriculum today.

This review of literature details a historiography of Arizona's ban of Ethnic Studies between 2010-2020 and the Texas State Board of Education signing into law Ethnic Studies curricula in 2019. I present the history of Ethnic Studies and Critical Race Theory in education, a brief history of M.E.C.H.A., and the struggle for a Culturally Responsive Curriculum during the Civil Rights Movement. Then I discuss the battle for Mexican American Studies in Arizona, at the state and local levels and how it led to a nationwide movement, influencing, and informing the MAS program in Texas. Finally, I present elements of Critical Race Theory, Culturally Relevant Curriculum, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and LatCrit, which served as my

conceptual framework to analyze teachers' experiences implementing Mexican American Studies. Finally, I discuss the theory of Conocimiento as Gloria Anzaldua (1986) formulated.

Ethnic Studies- What is it and Why We Should Care?

Ward (2019) gave us a good definition of what Ethnic Studies programs are in higher education, why and how they were established, and their current significance. Ethnic studies programs are courses devoted to the history and culture of various ethnic groups, which are valuable for members of the ethnic group being studied and for members of other ethnic/racial groups. Essentially these programs develop a sense of belonging from learning about their group's cultural history. They also develop a sense of pride and self-esteem from learning about the contributions that members of their group have made to society. "When people study the achievements and histories of groups other than their own, they develop an appreciation of the contributions that all groups have made to the development of the United States and Canada." (Ward, 2019, p.3). Ethnic studies programs help students see themselves, and others, in history which can help eliminate prejudice and racial conflicts.

In the 1970's universities particularly in California and Texas, began to offer Chicano (Mexican American) studies courses, focusing on history and literature, to include The University of Texas at El Paso, in 1970 (Ward, 2019). In the late 1960's and early 1970's, students of color demanded access to higher education, changes in the curriculum, faculty of color, and the creation of ethnic studies programs (Ward, 2019). This was happening in an era of social and political upheaval in the United States, i.e., the Civil Rights Movement. Hu-DeHart (1993) argued, "The civil rights movement might have removed the last vestiges of legal

apartheid in the United States. However, other ways have been invented to deny equal opportunity to the historically marginalized communities of color” (p. 52).

Definitions of ethnic studies programs have varied from campus to campus and changed over time, but the legitimacy of these programs was always in question due to its subversive agenda. What the programs have in common is a specific or comparative focus on groups viewed as “minorities” in American society (Mendez, 2015, p. 380). The purpose of Ethnic Studies is to counter Eurocentric culturally nationalistic curriculum from its inception. Ethnic studies scholars focus on the central role that race and ethnicity play in the construction of American history, culture, and society (Cabrera, 2013). “Ethnic studies sought to recover and reconstruct the histories of those Americans whom history has neglected; to identify and credit their contributions to the making of U.S. society and culture; to chronicle protest and resistance; and to establish alternative values and visions, institutions and cultures” (Hu-DeHart, 1993, p. 52). Ethnic Studies is easily tied to cultural pedagogy and cultural nationalism in the way that it reflects the idea that students’ cultural strengths are nurtured and valued to promote achievement and a sense of well-being (Lynch, 2011). Delgado and Stefaniec (2001) argued the creation of ethnic studies was to challenge the dominant discourse and paradigms of traditional academic discipline through interdisciplinary scholarship.

To further understand why and how ethnic studies came about Sleeter (2011) offered five consistent themes to consider:

1. Explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective.
2. Examination of U.S. colonialism historically, as well as how relations of colonialism continue to play out.

3. Examination of historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism, and struggle for liberation.
4. Probing meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold; and
5. Studying one's community's creative and intellectual products, historic and contemporary (p.3).

The above-mentioned components were part of the creation of Mexican American studies in the Arizona K-12 curriculum (Valenzuela, 2019). Ethnic studies scholars realized the importance and limits of perspective in shaping and understanding the world which is positioned in relation to power (Hu-DeHart, 1993). It is important to note the way higher education and K-12 approach Ethnic Studies is very different (Cabrera, 2013). Historically, K-12 education focuses on heroes and holidays. Banks (1993) argues, by focusing celebratory attention on non-dominant groups outside the context of the rest of the curriculum, the teacher is further defining these groups as "the other." Curricula at this stage fail to address the real experiences of non-dominant groups, instead focusing on the accomplishments of a few heroic characters. The special celebrations at this stage often are used to justify the lack of effort at more authentic transformative measures. The Heroes and Holidays approach trivializes the overall experiences, contributions, struggles, and voices of non-dominant groups, consistent with a Eurocentric, male-centric curriculum (Banks, 1993). In higher education ethnic studies is taught by someone who has established expertise in the field and or conducted scholarly research based on theoretical foundations and historical analysis used to deconstruct gender and racial frameworks (Hu-DeHart, 1993). In K-12 the teacher may or may not have training or in-depth knowledge on ethnic studies topics. The next section will examine the Mexican American student movement which laid the foundation for MAS in Texas public high schools in 2021.

Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan: A Struggle Against Educational Subtractive Practices in the U.S. in the 1960's and 1970's

To deny anyone their expression, their own expert language, is to disempower them; and it is this unequal distribution of power in the U.S. that catalyzed the Chicano Movement of the 1960's (Doran & Hengesteg, 2019). The movement, one can say, was the convergence of multiple movements for political power, farmworker rights, educational equality, and land entitlement among others (Ramirez, 2020). This section will focus on the student movement which sought educational equality in both K-12 and post-secondary institutions. The student movement was collectively called Movimeinto Estudantil Chicano de Aztlan or MEChA and represented the ideas and struggles of Chicanos in mostly, higher education although Mechistas were also active in the community outside of education (Ramirez, 2020). One of the key goals of MEChA was to revolutionize the curriculum, which at best, provided a stereotypical image of Mexican Americans within a historical context (Garcia, 2014).

The students of MEChA comprehended an important reality about the power structure in the U.S.: That there are rules and codes for participating in power and the attainment of an education was one of them (Garcia, 2014). The culture of power, Delpit (1996) explained, is a set of five features that define power relationships in society: 1) Issues of power are enacted in classrooms, 2) There are rules and codes for participating in power, 3) The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power, 4) If you are not a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rule of that culture makes acquiring power easier, and 5) Those with power are frequently least aware of-or at least willing to acknowledge its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence (Delpit,

1992, p. 2). The refusal of those in power to historically and culturally disenfranchise the *other* in the curriculum through “subtractive schooling” measures is common (Valenzuela, 1999). Angela Valenzuela argued subtractive schooling is the process that “divests youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure” (Valenzuela, 1999, p.20). The movement sought to overturn the status quo and hegemony in education, both which have a symbiotic relationship with subtractive practices (Valenzuela, 1999).

The culture of power that is practiced in schools relates to subtractive schooling in the way that U.S. born Mexican youth are not being taught the codes and rules of power so that they too are empowered. Instead, those that are in power strip the youth of their social and cultural identities, thereby alienating them from teachers and other groups (Yomantas, 2021; Delpit, 1992). Those who are in power teach what they know, and it is not sensitive to multicultural perspectives, because it is not what they know as a participant in the culture of power (Delpit, 1996). Delpit (1996) explained that those in power are least aware of it, so then, subtractive schooling, in a few cases may be a subconscious manifestation of being in power.

In his presentation to the National Institute on Access to Higher Ed for the Mexican American, Martin H. Gerry also made a correlation between the socioeconomic status of Mexican Americans, K-12 education, and inequalities in access to higher education in the 1970’s (Gerry, 1971). He also expressed that, often, symposiums ignore the linkages between secondary schools and colleges and universities (Casso & Roman, 1976). Gerry goes on to name three forms of institutionalized discrimination that have bred disparities for minoritized youth in

education: the unequal distribution of resources to minority schools (human and financial), educational dumping grounds, and language and culture of minorities (Gerry, 1971).

The unequal distribution of resources to racial/ethnic minority schools in the 1970's and earlier was a well-known practice; it was not a secret that "fewer dollars per child are allocated from the public treasury for the education of minority children (Casso & Roman, 1976. p. 25), and thus fewer dollars for experienced teachers, textbooks, health programs, and facilities. The system practiced/es educational dumping by placing minority students in lower-level ability groups, remedial textbooks, and special ed classes that are for the mentally handicapped (Yomantas, 2021). Furthermore, our language and culture were marginalized, if not all together ignored in content and pedagogy. According to Gerry, in 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Serna vs. Portales*, made an important decision pertaining to multicultural education and the importance of equality: "minority children are entitled to meaningful education services, that using English as the only language for instruction is not equality when students do not understand the language" (Casso & Roman, 1976, p. 24). When considering culture and language in a subtractive context, it can be perceived as a concept in terms of the *self* and *other* (Todorov, 1986). Todorov (1986) explained that for one to identify the *self* and create an identity one must identify the *other*. History has shown that when establishing the notion of the *self*, one often applies negative-value judgments to the *other*, and consequently catalyzes an explosion of social dominance and imperialist movements (Todorov, 1986). Next, I explain critical pedagogy of Mexican American Studies to understand the conceptual underpinning of social justice liberationist pedagogy and praxis.

Conceptual Underpinning of Mexican American Studies

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is one of the foundational texts in the field of critical pedagogy, which attempts to help students question and challenge domination, and the beliefs and practices that dominate. Paulo Freire's development of *conscientização*: the combination of critical consciousness, self-reflection, and engaging in anti-oppressive, collective action is what Mexican American Studies is based upon (Cabrera, 2013). Cabrera (2013) argues the basis of this Arizona high school Ethnic studies curriculum becomes effective "by situating themselves as historical subjects, seeing themselves as potential agents of social change and developing praxis while being critically self-reflective," (Cabrera, 2013, p. 1090). Freire (1970) argued students are co-creators of knowledge, essentially developing a different power structure between students and teachers. The banking concept hinders intellectual growth and is oppressive in that students are the receptors or collectors and never the creators of knowledge. Students possess funds of knowledge and teaching and learning now becomes a two-way street, where students are also responsible for teaching and debunking the banking system. Freire states:

Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is a spectator, not re-creator. In this view the person is not a conscious being (*corpo consciente*); he or she is rather the possessor of a consciousness: an empty "mind" passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside (Freire, 1970, p. 247).

In this view, Freire claims that by assuming the roles of teachers as depositors and students as receptors, the banking concept thereby changes humans into objects with no autonomy and

therefore no ability to rationalize and conceptualize knowledge at a personal level. The method itself is a system of oppression and control (Micheletti, 2010, p. 4). The banking concept is a negation of joint enquiry involving both the teachers and student, and ‘the scope of action it allows to the students extends only as far as receiving’ (Cabrera, 2013, p. 1091). Freire argues liberating education consists of acts of cognition, not transferal of information (Freire, 1990, p. 56). The roles and relationships in the liberation of praxis means that ‘The teacher is no longer the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach’ (Freire, 1990, p. 61; Cabrera, 2013, 1091). The stifling and conditioning behavior attached to the banking concept indoctrinates students to the world of oppression and regulates the way they ‘enter into’ the world (Cabrera, 2013, p.1091). Angela Valenzuela argues Freire’s critical pedagogy, deliberately bringing issues of race, difference, and power into central focus (Valenzuela, 1999; Cabrera, 2013). Using Freire’s work in Mexican American studies helps students examine power structures, issues of neoliberalism, and various forms of oppression. Camarota and Romero (2014) asserts Mexican American studies pedagogy centers on examining other forms of racism to include sexism and homophobia which increases academic engagement and performance on traditional metrics, i.e., standardized tests and graduation. In the following section, I explain the theory of subtractive schooling to give context to how students of color experience education as opposed to how Ethnic Studies programs are meant to combat deficit thinking in education.

Subtractive Schooling

Angela Valenzuela described how the intersections of caring and education, subtractive schooling and the social capital theory can contribute to the success or failure of students, in