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Integrating Ethnic Studies in Social Studies Curriculum

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Abstract

Traditional social studies curriculum in the K-12 system focuses on United States history through a Eurocentric lens. The issue with focusing on a black-and-white version of history impacts people of color from ethnic backgrounds that are not equally represented in the curriculum. The research conducted for this project specifically focuses on the impact of this subject matter on individuals in a predominantly Latino community. Through surveys and interviews, the researcher presents feedback on the experiences of these individuals and provides possible solutions on how schools can improve social studies curriculum at the high school level to be more culturally relevant and inclusive to the experiences of marginalized communities of color.

Keywords: ethnic studies, history, curriculum, multicultural, integration

Integrating Ethnic Studies in Social Studies Curriculum

Growing up Mexican-American – or as I identify myself, a *Chicana* – it was a constant struggle trying to find my place in American society. Born to a Mexican immigrant mother and Mexican-American father, I consider myself first-generation especially as I am the first in my family to attend college. The journey of finding my true-self and (re)claiming my cultural identity had its ups and downs, especially through my teenage years and into early adulthood. Being Mexican-American in the United States has many intersections when it comes to family traditions, language, customs and other aspects of life and culture.

There is a popular saying “it takes a village to raise a child.” This phrase encapsulates the importance of establishing a community that fosters cultural growth, acceptance, and an appreciation of the traditions of others. Communities also help maintain individual and personal histories, traditions, customs and the like. Often times, communities are composed of people from all walks of life, some are of similar ethnic backgrounds while others are highly diverse. Our communities are spaces where families make a home, build connections, create culture and celebrate traditions. Imagine living in a community where there is an intersection of different cultures and identities or in a society where despite claiming to be welcoming of multiculturalism there also exists stereotypes, stigmas and negative attitudes towards individuals of certain ethnic groups historically seen as a minority.

As a Mexican-American, I feel it is like we are between two cultures, two different worlds. In American society, to some, we are seen as too Mexican to be American – we are outsiders, foreigners, overall a minority – that needs to assimilate to the ideals of belonging in a white American society. In Mexican society, we are seen as too American to be Mexican. I can

recall a time where I went to visit family in Mexico and relatives would call me a *gringa* (white girl) or *pocha* (Americanized Mexican girl) because my Spanish was not all too fluent, it was spoken with an English accent and laced with Spanglish. In American society, my experience has been different. As far as language is concerned, it was frowned upon to speak Spanish at school. I remember several instances where myself and other students would be warned not to speak languages other than English in the classroom, even amongst ourselves. While speaking Spanish was frowned upon at school, it was still encouraged at home amongst my family. During this time, I also lost touch with the Spanish language as I continued through the American school system. Spanish was my first language as a child, however after I started kindergarten, learning, reading and writing English slowly started to take over my vocabulary. These experiences caused several cultural conflicts I would face later in life.

Later in middle school and high school, I remember questioning my cultural identity. I had friends throughout my schooling from all walks of life and ethnic backgrounds and never thought any different of them or of myself despite our diverse backgrounds. Yet images, attitudes, and messages from society regarding culture, ethnicity, and multiculturalism painted a different picture. American society paints the picture that being of European descent – more specifically White Anglo Saxon Protestant (WASP) – is the ideal. This ideology is present in most of our nation's institutions, especially when it comes to our nation's history. Because this foundation exists in the teaching of history in American schools, it can cause cultural representation issues for students of color and mixed ethnicities. Personally, this perception of being American led me deny my Mexican heritage and being embarrassed of my own culture because by definition I considered myself American in nationality. Before learning the complex

history behind race and ethnic classifications created throughout history by society, I felt the need to conform to the standards and image of a White society. After learning a diverse history and different narratives of American history in a multicultural perspective, I began to slowly reclaim my cultural identity as I navigated through my college journey and immersed myself in history and ethnic studies courses. This experience had ultimately been very liberating for me as I now had the resources and tools to research my ancestry, family history and reclaim my cultural identity.

During my formal K-12 education, I always found a love for history. Personally it was the easiest and most interesting subject, often times it was the subject I looked forward to the most during the school day. In elementary school, I remember learning about the different explorers and settlers to the Americas, celebrating holidays in their honor especially Columbus Day and Thanksgiving. Little did I know, the popular icons of the era of colonization and American settlement we learn about from an early age and celebrate in society are presented in a one-dimensional point of view. These European settlers and explorers are painted in such a way they are viewed as heroes or god-like, while the first inhabitants of the Americas – the indigenous nations – are portrayed as savage, backwards people that needed the White Man to save and civilize them. As a result of our history and the way it is and has been written, stereotypes and perspectives of particular groups of people have shaped our society. In response to these stereotypes and perspectives comes the social construct of racism and the systematic oppression of minority groups we see today. These institutions present in our society formed through political, economic and social tension spanning decades after European colonization. This racial divide was and still remains a critical issue within our society despite the popular

imagery that portrays America as the melting pot of cultures and embraces all ethnicities. By acknowledging the diverse past, multiple perspectives and complexities of our nation's history and its people, ethnic studies can be one of the steps that can bridge the divide that exists within society to truly embrace the multiculturalism that makes up America.

Literature Synthesis and Integration

What is the Issue?

The topic of history has always been a topic that is presented to students in the K-12 education system of the United States through a Eurocentric lens (Epstein, 2000). In terms of this subject matter being presented in a Eurocentric lens, this means that the material is provided through the world view of Anglo-Americans of European descent and not relevant to the diverse viewpoints that exist in a multicultural society (Epstein, 2000). The need for ethnic studies courses and more culturally relevant emphasis in curriculum for United States history courses in American schools is in demand as students of color are polarizing demographics in the school system. By definition, ethnic studies is "...the study of the social, political, economic, and historical perspectives of America's diverse racial and ethnic groups..." (Anderson, 2016). As a nation made of immigrants and communities that have been marginalized over centuries, it is critical students see these histories and the struggles and triumphs of diverse ethnic groups reflected in the material being presented. Movements to bring about Ethnic Studies and other culturally relevant courses have been in motion since the 1960s during the era of the Civil Rights Movement (Hu-DeHart, 1993). The need for ethnic studies to be incorporated into schools started in communities where traditionally minority demographics are the majority. While some of these struggles and requests for ethnic studies have been realized in diverse cities like Los

Angeles and San Francisco, other initiatives have failed or have been hindered in states like Arizona and Texas (Anderson, 2015). These communities are highly diverse or made up of minority groups. While it is important for the curriculum to reflect students of color and their histories to better serve these communities, ethnic studies should be provided to all communities on a nationwide level so that as a society we can understand the complexities and multicultural diversity of American history as a whole, not just the White Man's perspective.

Why is it an Issue?

Lack of Cultural Representation and the Impact on Identity. History presented in Eurocentric point of view often leaves out the experiences of people of color and their contributions to society throughout history (Hu-DeHart, 1993). This lack of representation can lead to identity issues among children and teenagers of color and also self-esteem issues because their ancestors and people of similar ethnic backgrounds are not seen as contributors to our society's advancement and evolution over time (Jensen, 2013). Issues with self-identity in students of color in this case include internalizing their own culture (Razo-Gomez, 2016). When this happens, individuals may begin to ultimately deny aspects of their culture like language and family traditions as these aspects may cause them to be seen differently by their peers and cast as outsiders. In an increasingly diverse society, more people of color are realizing their histories remain untold in traditional curriculum, therefore creating invisibility in the classroom and education system as a whole. Although some educators and curriculum guidelines claim to equally represent Tintiango-Cubales (2015) explains, the purpose of creating and practicing culturally-responsive teaching is to centralize the teaching around the experiences and perspectives of students while being mindful and inclusive of their culture and needs.

Ethnic Studies and Race. Incorporating ethnic studies into traditional high school history curriculum includes ideas in relation to Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a series of beliefs and practices that focuses on examining the intersections of race, power, and law in society and culture (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). When examining ethnic studies in a critical lens, it can be asserted that an objective of ethnic studies is to challenge the dominant ideology. Challenging the dominant ideology is one of the five tenets of CRT that educational scholar Daniel Solorzano believes influences pedagogy and curriculum in education (Yosso, 2005). In California, traditionally minority groups make up a majority of the population. The demographics are shifting where minorities are becoming the majority, therefore the curriculum received in schools by our students is not accurate in representation to a multicultural perspective (de los Rios, Lopez & Morrell, 2014).

Traditional curriculum in the United States has been framed around the Anglo-American perspective with very minimal, if any, focus on the perspective of other cultures and groups of people that have contributed to the development of the nation (Banks & Banks, 2001). This disproportion and misrepresentation is found in various subject areas like English-Language Arts and History/Social Studies (Banks & Banks, 2001).

Academic Achievement & Multicultural Foundations for Real Life. The schooling students receive throughout their lives should be preparing them for the real world after high school. In examining the framework of current social studies curriculum, it provides the notion that society is colorblind. The focus on history through a Eurocentric lens reinforces the belief that white Europeans colonizing the country served a positive purpose. Students often do not know the true history and impact of European colonization in the Americas until they are

exposed to different perspectives of history in higher education, should they decide to pursue an educational pathway. This includes the oppression faced by marginalized groups for centuries following conquest and the exclusion of their stories in traditional curriculum. If students are exposed to ethnic studies courses and culturally diverse curriculum in their social studies courses, then they would be more prepared to handle the reality of this nation's history, especially in increasingly diverse communities (Hu-DeHart, 1993). As students learn of the true history that often times counters the material they had learned in their Eurocentric classrooms, students of color from marginalized communities enter a sociocultural process of unlearning the biased doctrines they have been exposed to. This process of decolonization and reprocessing leads to students learning to reclaim their individual cultural identities (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015). Students would not need to enter this process had there been a focus on ethnic studies and more emphasis placed on culturally relevant material in the social studies curriculum.

Throughout the research done on ethnic studies courses offered to students in high school, one of the major findings is the impact on students labeled as "at-risk" by their institutions. Research on implementing ethnic studies and culturally relevant curriculum at the high school level showed that students have increased test scores, higher academic achievement and increased school performance "at-risk" students (Romero, 2010). These studies have also shown that students become more culturally aware of their ethnic backgrounds as well as that of their peers.

An example of this as discussed by Romero (2010) is the Mexican American Studies program at schools in Tucson, Arizona. As part of this program, students in 11th and 12th grade were offered an opportunity to substitute the traditional American history and Government

courses with a Mexican-American studies course in 11th grade and a US government class that that examined the institutions and functions within American government with a foundation in critical race theory. An influence on the pedagogy of the government course was rooted in Paulo Freire's (1994) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Romero, 2010). Arizona government banned ethnic studies programs state wide after the controversial Mexican-American Studies program offered at a high school in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), was said to be radicalizing the Latino youth and turning them against their Anglo-American counterparts. Ignorant viewpoints, prejudices, stereotypes and overall intolerance of other cultures leads to conflict and impacts communities negatively.

In other studies, Stanford University researchers analyzed ethnic studies programs in schools throughout the San Francisco Unified School District and the impact on high school students with low academic achievement but also included students that were performing well in school. Students with grade point averages (GPAs) below 2.0 prior to entering 9th grade were required to be enrolled in ethnic studies courses while enrollment was optional for students with a GPA above 2.0. The study was conducted from 2010 to 2014 and results showed that the GPAs, attendance rates and overall class credits earned for "at risk" students increased significantly (Donald, 2016) (Anderson, 2016). Implementing ethnic studies or just making these courses available to students, especially students labeled "at-risk" by their institutions, can have a positive impact on their overall school experiences and academic achievement.

What Should Be Done?

Emphasis on Community Involvement. Ethnic studies programs influenced by culturally relevant pedagogy advocate for student involvement in the community. By students

recognizing the importance of their communities and establishing the connection between themselves, their home, school and community, it would provide critical consciousness and community awareness (Tintiango-Cubales et al, 2015). The incorporation of community issues within the curriculum provides an aspect of social justice, community organizing and resistance where students can act in situations of injustice. This ability to decide when to act is critical when it is expected for students to be contributing members of society.

Revisiting Materials and Curriculum. When examining the content being studied in English and History, most of the required material is presented in the perspective of Anglo-Americans. For example, history textbooks often have biases present insofar as they are written by the dominant group so it glorifies the achievements made by this demographic rather than recognizing oppressive and exploitative actions carried out through colonialism (Anyon, 1979). In this content, there is little to no representation of women or groups of different ethnicities other than Anglo-Americans. Very little information is presented when it comes to contributions of immigrant groups in the development of this nation or current contributions (Banks & Banks, 2001). There is also little to no reference made to the struggle certain groups had to overcome in order to be recognized in our society. The fact that there is little to no representation of these groups and their struggles and contributions paints that picture that history has been skewed to favor the demographic with privilege. Since the Eurocentric perspective dominates much of the curriculum, it dismisses the viewpoints and voices of minorities. By oppressing these viewpoints, it can be asserted that the current curriculum includes influences of antiquated ideals of White superiority and racism that this country was founded on, yet are painted in a positive light in Eurocentric history (Bernal, 2002).

Ethnic Studies for All. Mandating the completion of one ethnic studies course as a requirement for high school graduation for all students can have a positive impact on the student body as a whole. Ethnic studies courses promote critical thinking and examination of society and cultural identities. An example of this would be ethnic studies courses in San Francisco schools (Donald, 2016). These courses still teach American History as required by state standards, however the context in which they are studied involves examination of the subject through multiple lenses intersecting race, ethnicity, and cultural identities in society and their community. Discussion of these intersections and diverse perspectives promotes critical thinking among students and also allows for expression through lived experiences. In some communities, like Los Angeles and San Francisco, ethnic studies have been made a graduation requirement for high school students in some districts as it promotes a greater understanding of society and ultimately provides “access to the full spectrum of human knowledge, not just parts of it.” (Anderson, 2015).

Conclusion

Since not all students pursue higher education because of financial hardship or other circumstances, they may not have the opportunity to be exposed to different perspectives and culturally-sound curriculum. If students are exposed to a more multicultural and diverse curriculum in their formative K-12th grade years, students would have a better understanding of their ethnicities and the amalgam of cultures that shape our society. Many researchers say that children and young adults often stray away from their educations when they reach middle school and high school grades, 7-12, so it is best to intervene in their studies to get them on track in

elementary and reinforce the concept of pursuing higher education. The need for ethnic studies education and a diversified curriculum is out there.

Method

The topic of culturally relevant curriculum in the classroom has been a topic of discussion over the years. As society becomes more diverse, it seems like it is more critical than ever for classrooms across the country to be more inclusive of diverse perspectives that reflect the students being served by public educational institutions. This project focused on the experiences of recent high school graduates, current college students and educators to gauge the experiences they had as students in public high school social studies classes to examine the presence of multiculturalism in the curriculum and offering of diverse perspectives that would benefit a community of underrepresented or minority demographics.

Context

Taylorville¹, California is a consistently growing city about 20 miles from the coast in Central California. Known for providing a large amount of agricultural goods and services to the local community and worldwide, there exists a large immigrant and migrant population predominantly of Hispanic/Latinx origin. This population is reflected in many of the area's schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, yet the required curriculum they are presented in the classroom hardly represents their ethnic backgrounds and ancestry. Moving to post-secondary education in Taylorville, the local community college offers several ethnic studies courses in Chicano Studies, Women's History, Race & Ethnicity studies and several others in the Sociology

¹ Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

discipline. However, the offerings are limited per semester and not accessible by all students since not everyone pursues higher education or has equal opportunity to do so. Because of this factor, it is critical that local public schools provide a more diverse curriculum focusing on multicultural experiences and the experiences that are relevant to the cultural backgrounds of students in the local community.

Participants and Participant Selection

This study consisted of two in-person interview of a professor of ethnic studies and a current college student. The two individuals interviewed were:

Andrew DeLuca. Mid-50s, Mexican-American male, educator, Bachelors and Master's degrees in US History. Texas native, current resident of Taylorville.

Enrique Armenta. Early-20s, Mexican-American male, recent community college graduate, current resident of Taylorville.

In addition to the interviews, I conducted a survey of current college students and college graduates to reflect on the experiences they had in their high school social studies courses to canvass the different types of material presented in the curriculum in regards to multicultural perspectives. The survey participants were selected from a private group on Facebook I am affiliated with. There are about 600 group members total, however only about 25 members participated in my survey. The members of this group are women in their early 20s to early 40s from diverse ethnic backgrounds. While the group is affiliated with Latinx interests and issues, the membership is composed of women from all walks of life and all ethnicities, not just those of Hispanic/Latinx heritage. There are individuals of Asian backgrounds, Pacific Islander, Northern European/White and African/African American.

Researcher

Students in virtually every classroom come from a diverse ethnic background. As demographics are constantly changing within our society, it is important for students to be recognized in the curriculum they are presented with, this includes historical representation. Often times, educators think the curriculum offered by the district and required by the state is sufficient for multicultural representation, however this does not meet the needs of all students. The context the social studies framework is written in focuses on the Eurocentric point of view. To indigenous people and people of color in marginalized communities, this is the point of view of the oppressor and colonizer. Reframing social studies curriculum to include accurate and diverse perspectives of historical events and social movements as they happened is beneficial for students to obtain a full understanding of history and the effects it has on society today. It is important for students to be exposed to accurate accounts of history while they are in the required education courses during their K-12 education because not everyone has access or the opportunity to pursue higher education and be exposed to diverse histories as they are presented in college-level courses. Growing up in a predominantly Latino/Hispanic community, I personally believe that offering ethnic studies courses can be beneficial to students, especially at the high school level. In a community like Taylorville, many teenagers are lost in the school system or labeled as “at risk” at this level due to a number of factors not limited to gang-violence and truancy.

From the research done in Tucson, Arizona on Mexican-American Studies programs, students that were labeled “at-risk” thrived in these programs and were more engaged in their studies because the curriculum represented people of their heritage and was relevant to their

interests. In my experience as a student in Taylorville, I did not learn about the struggles and impact Mexican-Americans had on United States history until my junior year of high school when we watched the film *Walkout* about the Chicano Student Movement in East Los Angeles. If more students are exposed to additional perspectives on American history that reflects all ethnicities and nationalities that have helped shape American society, this would make classes more engaging for students and create a broader worldview.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

Interview 1

- Demographic questions, brief introduction (age, gender, occupation, hometown)
- What is your educational background?
- Why did you choose to incorporate Ethnic Studies into your American History curriculum?
- As an educator, what is the reaction you receive from students in regards to the material you present them?

Interview 2

- Demographics questions, brief introduction (age, gender, occupation, hometown)
- As a resident of Taylorville, can you describe your experience in the local school system?
- How was your experience in high school history classes? What material was covered?
- Was there any focus on California state history or local history?
- Did you feel that the curriculum was mostly black and white or were other ethnic groups?

(More questions are to follow as the interviews continue. Other questions may arise as the interview/open discussion goes on).

Online Survey

- What is your gender?
- What is your race/ethnicity?

Agree/Disagree questions (scale 1-5, 1= strongly disagree, 3= neutral, 5 strongly agree)

1. Your culture was represented in your high school history courses
2. You learned about key historical events that represented your culture
3. Your teacher was the same race/ethnicity as yourself (scale: yes or no)
4. You learned about the experiences of indigenous groups in American in your history courses
(ex. Native Americans, Mexicans)
5. Your teacher provided additional readings not included with the course textbook.
6. Your teacher made an effort to include alternative perspectives of historical events
7. You learned about the contributions of immigrant groups in the United States during the development of this nation (ex. Mexican labor in the fields, Asians in the Gold Rush, etc).
8. You learned about the oppression of marginalized groups and the struggles they faced to obtain equal rights in this country.

Procedure

One participant for the interviews was one of the researcher's former teachers. He is highly experienced in the field of American History and ethnic studies. The second participant was the mutual friend and life-long resident of Taylorville who recently graduated from the local community college with a degree in Social and Behavioral Sciences before transferring to a local

four-year university. This participant reflected on his personal experiences as a resident of Taylorville and student of its school system from kindergarten through 12th grade and even through the first two years of college. The online survey was administered to a social media group of individuals interested in minority group causes and issues that impact marginalized communities. While the foundation of the group is based around Latinx issues, membership is open to people of all nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. The online survey was conducted in a Likert Scale linear survey using a series of 9 questions on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The researcher obtained results to questions concerning the participants' experiences in high school history classes.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by examining emerging themes in the interview answers and online survey responses. Data from the interviews was transcribed and annotated for key words and phrases that related to ethnic studies and multiculturalism. For the online survey, Google Forms provided an analysis of the survey results which I examined in addition to the interview answers. All responses from each method of data collection was examined with the analyzed literature from previous research to identify three possible options for the issue at hand.

Results

For this Capstone Project, local educator(s) and current college students were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve the social studies curriculum at the high school level. An online survey was also conducted to gauge the experiences of other recent high school graduates and current college students. This is important because the current curriculum often times is only presented in a Eurocentric perspective where the histories of marginalized

communities and people of color are ignored, thus leaving students of color left out. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1).

Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: cost, time and access. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	Special Requirements	Time Required	Access
Ethnic Studies Course	High	High	Low
Ethnic Studies incorporation into SS curriculum	Medium	Medium	Low
Ethnic Studies club	Medium/Low	Medium	Low.

Ethnic Studies Now

As communities across the United States are becoming increasingly diverse and populations are including more people of color in certain areas, it is critical that all students in these areas feel represented and given a voice to share their experiences. In my communications with educator Andrew DeLuca, many of the first-year college students he encounters in the History courses often are surprised and have little knowledge of contributions and struggles of ethnic groups other than the Black or White demographic. A majority of the students at the community college are Latinx or of Hispanic heritage, yet they know little to no information of their ancestral history. Mr. DeLuca teaches both sections of American History from the indigenous period to Civil War and Reconstruction to current era. He has observed over the years

that students are surprised when they learn of the true history of Columbus and the indigenous or the truth about Thanksgiving and so forth. A common feeling among students is that they begin to question the accuracy of what they were taught in high school history classes. This I could also relate to since it was the way I felt about learning history in college versus high school. From these conversations and my personal experience, I began to formulate different solutions on how students can be better served and exposed to these perspectives at the K-12 level.

Representation for All

Results from the survey showed that the participants that came from predominantly Mexican-American backgrounds felt they were not recognized in their high school history classes. A majority of them felt that their experiences in high school omitted a vast amount of the histories of minority and immigrant groups in the United States. Respondents of the survey also felt that their educators were not understanding of their cultural background because they were of a different ethnicity. The course materials they had available to them in their classes were standard-issue textbooks. Often times, these textbooks are written not only to meet State and district standards, but they are also written in biased formats by the textbook company. The way in which textbooks are written and approved often times are affected by the policies and politics that influence said policies implemented by individual State school board and local districts. The method in which the textbooks are utilized and taught by teachers in the classroom can also impact what students are learning. Often times, dependent on the State and textbook publisher, these books can offer white-washed or inaccurate portrayals of historical events (Isensee, 2015). In speaking to Andrew DeLuca, he utilizes textbooks and other assigned materials in his college-level history courses as a guide for discussion rather than testable material as a whole. Instead of

using the work of one author or one single textbook for the entire semester, he incorporates different materials from various historians and authors of color as well as documentaries, YouTube clips and current-event articles to start discussions in his classroom. Educators at the high school level can utilize these materials or begin exposing their students to additional materials to bring more perspectives into the curriculum and promote critical thinking.

Cultura y más

Culture-based clubs, affinity groups and special-interest organizations formed within the student body can have positive impact on its members and the school climate as a whole. Based on the experience of one of my interviewees, Enrique Armenta, he felt his involvement in the student group at his high school, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlán or M.E.Ch.A for short, brought him closer to his cultural roots by educating him on the histories of primarily Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the United States. The purpose of this organization was to improve the lives of Latinx peoples in the United States socially, politically and culturally. This group is open to people of all nationalities and underserved communities, but historically it was established to serve the Mexican American community in the Southwestern United States. Mr. Armenta felt that he not only learned about his culture but also had a purpose to give back and get closer to his community. Some of the tenets of being a Mechista include giving back to the community, political empowerment and social justice through action (chicanxdeaztlan.org).

Conclusion

Based on responses received through interviews, surveys and my own personal experience, I can conclude one of the best ways to provide ethnic studies at the high school level would be to incorporate it into the current curriculum. This can be executed since the framework

for a social science class is already there and the subject is a requirement for completion of high school. I think that if current educators can find a way to include multiple perspectives and additional materials to their lessons, it can provide an introduction to the complexities of American History and promote understanding of the diverse cultural makeup of the United States. Educators can promote critical thinking by creating a discussion in the classroom as opposed to the traditional lecture and learn method. Incorporating information from materials outside of the standard-issue textbook could result in students receiving more beneficial explanations of US history in new perspectives which would then allow them to formulate their own opinions on the matter and possibly better understanding. The history of the US is not just black or white as current curriculum perceives it to be, but complex and includes a multitude of cultures and ethnic groups that shaped society as we know it today. Incorporating ethnic studies into the current curriculum is not meant to perpetuate the idea that an ethnic group is more superior or powerful than the other but instead provide multiple perspectives and knowledge for people to understand the cultural foundations and histories of different groups that make up a nation.

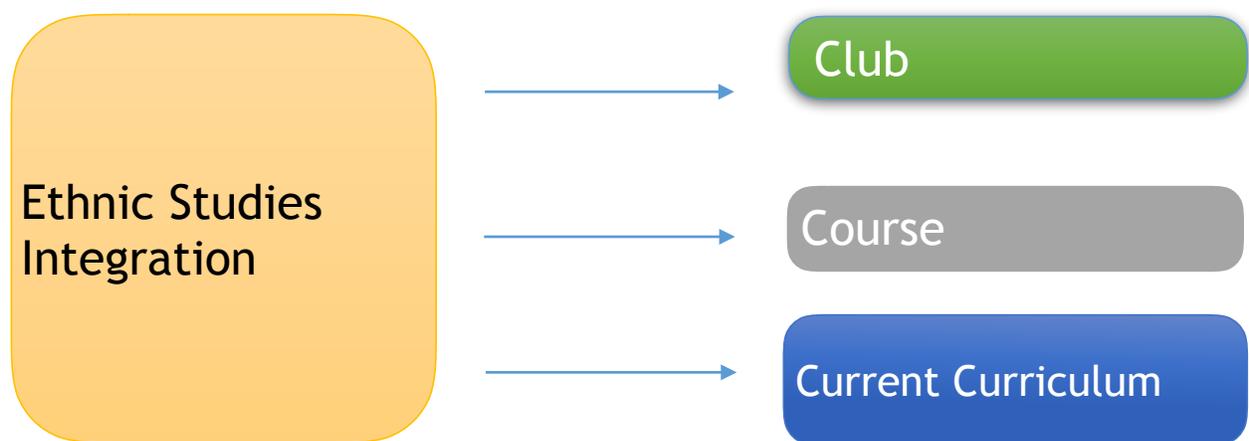


Figure 1: Options from Results

Action Documentation & Reflection

The focus issue of my project was identifying ways in which students of color could be better served by their schools in regards to the Social Studies/History curriculum they were being taught. I interviewed a local educator and a recent community college graduate from a predominantly Latino/Hispanic community. The student whom I interviewed was born and raised in the local community and received all of his education in public schools from Kindergarten through 12th grade. I expanded my survey by creating a questionnaire and sharing it to a network of individuals interested in social and political issues that affect minority or underrepresented demographics. In this group, there were women both currently in college and college graduates, their ages range from early 20s to early 40s. Based on the responses I received from the survey, personal interviews, research done and my own personal experiences there were three options that emerged. These options included schools offering a separate ethnic studies course, integrating ethnic studies materials and resources in the current social studies curriculum or establishing a ethnic studies/cultural studies club as an extracurricular activity for students.

Out of these options, I selected integrating ethnic studies material and lessons into the current curriculum. I feel that as a future teacher, this would be something I would like to do in my classroom. Integrating ethnic studies and providing additional resources for students could

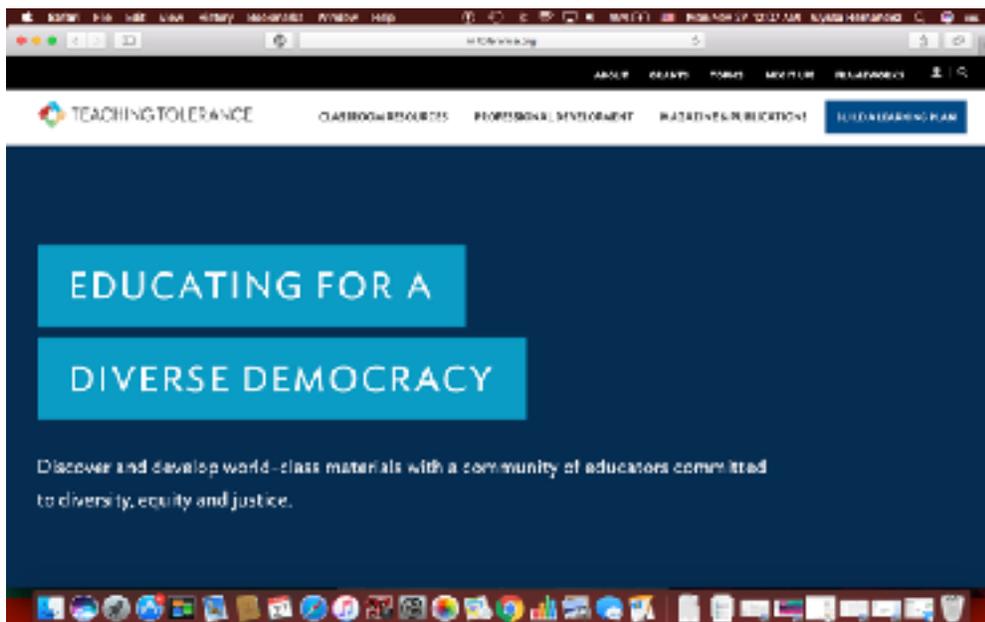
assist in encouraging them to form their own opinions and conclusions about historical events rather than taking the information at face value. This would create a deeper sense of critical thinking and analysis. While all options seemed like good ideas, the integration option would be best in my opinion.

Integration would be the most ideal option because the framework for the social studies curriculum is already there for educators to use, they would just need to incorporate additional lessons and supplemental materials for the lessons. I would recommend using excerpts from books like popular historian Howard Zinn's (1980) *A People's History of the United States of America*. There is a free website with downloadable lessons and other materials specifically designed for middle school and high school teachers to assist in teaching from Zinn's books called The Howard Zinn Education Project (www.zinnedproject.org). While Howard Zinn is considered controversial and his books have faced backlash in some states due to alternative and non-Eurocentric perspectives of historical events, testimonials from teachers across the country have shown increased popularity in the materials from the Zinn Education Project being implemented in their lessons. My interview with Mr. DeLuca proved this point as he claimed that the college students in his American History courses wished they had learned of Zinn's perspectives of historical events in their high school classes.



Source: <https://zinnedproject.org/about/>

Teachers can also create their own lesson plans to incorporate diverse perspectives of history while still keeping the material within State and Common Core standards. From my own experience, in LS 380: Teaching for Social Change, an assignment was to create a lesson plan incorporating social justice principles (Appendix B). I feel that social justice is closely related to ethnic or cultural studies, especially when looking at social justice issues in a historical lens.



Source: www.tolerance.org

The website Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org) provides sources for teachers to incorporate “diversity, equity, and justice” into their lessons to build a “diverse democracy.” This website can also be a tool for educators to create justice-based and diverse lesson plans. Creating lesson plans that integrate a variety of sources and perspectives can provide students with more engaging lessons. For example, in the lesson plan created (reference Appendix B) the standards are still outlined and met within the lesson itself, however the teaching material is not limited to the textbook itself and includes a variety of mediums like film clips. By doing this, it can create a discussion or dialogue among students as a class or in small groups. This would be one of several ways to create integrated lesson plans.

Critical Reflection

Working on this project, I was able to reflect on my experiences and obstacles I faced throughout my educational career, more so the experiences I had in high school, community college and my time at California State University, Monterey Bay. The subject matter of this project, ethnic studies and culturally relevant pedagogy, is a subject that I have grown very fond of over the years and feel is something that is lacking emphasis in classrooms locally and possibly in other communities. As a future educator, it is one of my goals to create a more culturally inclusive classroom and ultimately a safe space for my students to feel accepted and

understood as this was something I felt I was lacking as a Latina in the American school system. This idea can be seen as a radical goal and something that would only exist in a utopian society, but I feel that over time this change can be made a reality. If there is anything I learned and can take away from my college experience, whether it be from community college or a four-year university, it is the importance of being a critical thinker and questioning most information I am presented with. It is because of this that I would like to incorporate a more diverse curriculum and use different mediums, platforms and materials to execute such lessons to provide my future students with a more well-rounded understanding of history.

Reflecting on my experiences as a student of the Liberal Studies (LS) department, I can say it has made me a well-rounded thinker as the major requires courses in different subject areas. One of the most significant classes in the LS courses I have taken has been LS 380: Teaching for Social Change. It was this class that exposed me to the foundation of what it means to be a social justice educator. The instructor I had for this course really exemplified what it meant to be a social justice educator. They had background as an educator in underserved schools, saw the need of these communities and could also relate to the students as a person of color. I truly admired them for their work, experiences, and dedication to helping those without equal representation in their schools and community. Apart from this, the Liberal Studies

department provided many opportunities for students to gain experience in working with students of all ethnic and economic backgrounds. This is done through service learning. Through service learning components in the courses I had taken, I was able to learn from the experiences and backgrounds of not only the students, but the teachers and staff at these schools. Each school I served in was different than the schools I grew up in and ultimate was unique in their own way. Each classroom I was placed in had teachers at different levels of their careers - some veteran teachers and others new or had only a few years under their belts. Some were local to the community in which they taught in and others were from outside of the area. Each classroom provided a new experience for me and I learned valuable lessons from these students and teachers. At the end of the day, despite the differences in the schools and classrooms, students were there for one purpose: to gain an education.

While all of the Major Learning Outcomes (MLOs) in the Liberal Studies courses are important to becoming an educator, based on my experience in college, the most significant objectives are: Developing Educator, Diversity and Multicultural Scholar, and Social Justice Collaborator. These are important to me because as teachers, it is practically a given that we will be learning for life. As this happens, we must be able to adjust the curriculum and learning materials to adapt with the times of society and offer different and changing perspectives. We

must also be able to identify what the needs of our students are and how we can provide a classroom environment that suits their needs as individuals and as a whole class unit. By becoming more in touch with our students and their community we can then empower social change in the classroom. In order for social change to impact on a larger scale, it needs to start with a smaller unit - in this case it is the classroom. These changes do not have to be solely standing up to situations of injustice and overcoming adversity, it can also be being prepared and educated in a subject to understand the complexity of an issue or circumstance. This is what an ethnic studies integrated curriculum can provide students at multiple levels.

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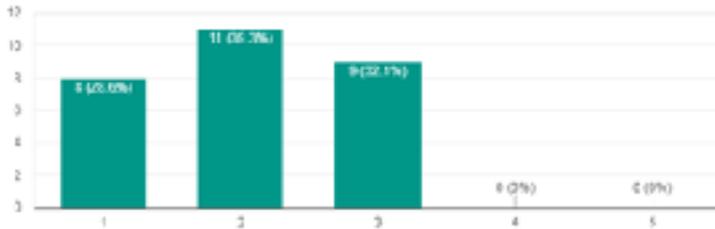
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Appendix A

Online Survey Results

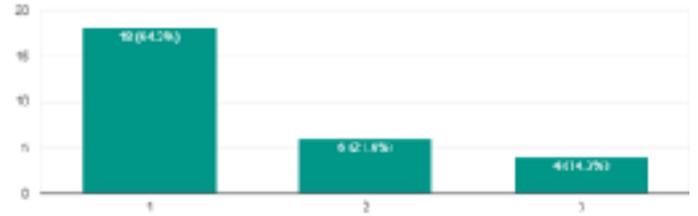
You learned about key historical events that represented your culture

29 responses



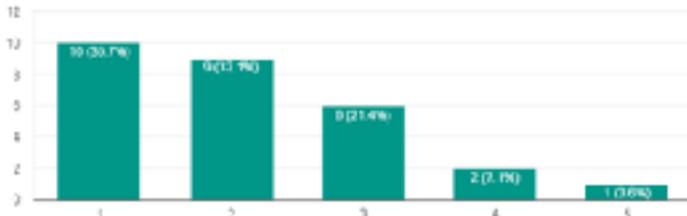
Your teacher was the same race/ethnicity as yourself

23 responses



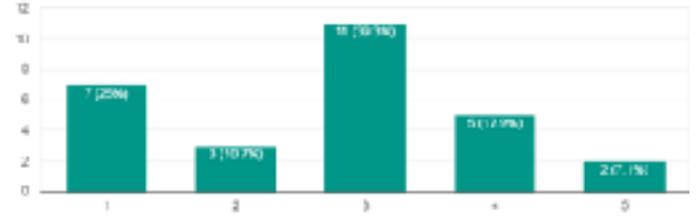
Your teacher provided additional readings not included with the course textbook

23 responses



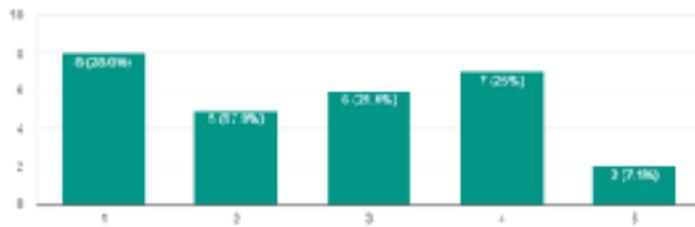
You learned about the experiences of indigenous groups in America in your history courses (ex. Native Americans, Mexicans)

23 responses



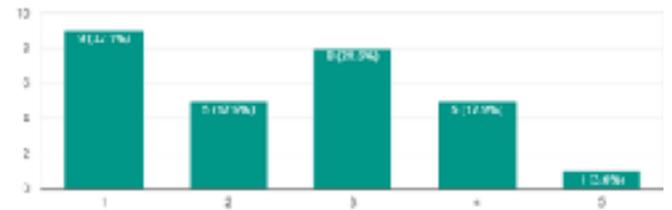
You learned about the contributions of immigrant groups in the United States during the development of this nation (e.g. Asians in the Gold Rush, etc)

24 responses



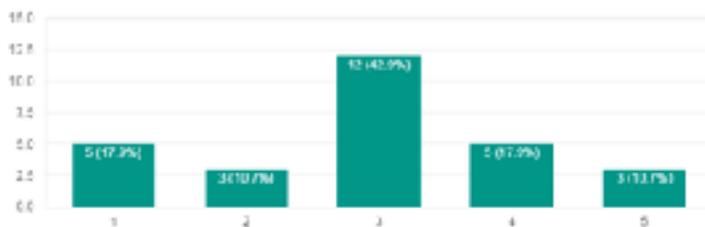
Your teacher made an effort to include alternative perspectives of historical events

24 responses



You learned about the oppression of marginalized groups and the struggles they faced to obtain equal rights in this country.

24 responses



What is your race/ethnicity?

23 responses



- Mexican/Hispanic American
- Hispanic/Latin American
- White/Caucasian
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- African American
- Native American/Indigenous

Appendix B

Integrated Lesson Plan

NAME: Alyssa Hernandez
GRADE LEVEL: 11th
CONTENT AREA: Social Studies / History

<p>Standards: CA Content Standard Social Science 11.10.5 Discuss the diffusion of the civil rights movement of African Americans from the churches of the rural South and the urban North, including the resistance to racial desegregation in Little Rock and Birmingham, and how the advances influenced the agendas, strategies, and effectiveness of the quests of American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans for civil rights and equal opportunities</p> <p>CCSS ELA-Literacy RH 11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.</p>
<p>Objective: Students will be able to compare and contrast the purpose, goals and methods of resistance used in the African American Civil Rights Movement and the Chicano Movement. Using their textbook, <i>The Americans</i>, video clips and additional readings provided by the teacher, students will be creating a PowerPoint, Google Slides or Prezi presentation in small groups to describe the similarities and difference of both movements.</p>
<p>Background Knowledge: Throughout the unit on Social Movements, students have been exposed to the foundations of the Civil Rights Movement and Chicano movement through lecture and videos presented in class.</p>
<p>Materials/Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Americans</i> by Holt McDougal publishers • "Chicano! PBS Documentary Fighting for Political Power" - youtube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEqW_IF67pw) • "The Civil Rights Movement: A Cultural Revolution" - (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqywhYkZII-A) • Excerpts from <i>Occupied America: A History of Chicanos</i> (Aguñá), <i>The New Chicanos</i> p.333-350 • <i>Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the US</i> (Gonzales) - <i>Chapter 8: The Chicano Movement</i>
<p>How is this a social justice lesson: Students will be able to learn about a series of historical events that impacted society and civil rights in the United States for two marginalized and disenfranchised communities. By studying the resistance movements and identifying common goals and parallels of both events, students will be relating the events to struggles faced by African American and Latino communities in modern society.</p>