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Implementing Ethnic Studies in Washington State K–12 Schools: Challenges, Training Gaps, and Pathways for Educator Preparation

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Abstract

Several K-12 public school districts in Washington state are developing and implementing Ethnic Studies curricula. Despite state legislation mandating a model curriculum, there is a significant gap in educators' readiness to teach Ethnic Studies effectively. Current teaching endorsements do not require an in-depth understanding of race, racism, indigenous epistemologies, and decolonial frameworks. Research shows that without proper professional development (PD) in these areas, educators may inadvertently harm students, particularly students of color. The Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has highlighted the need for PD that promotes anti-racist practices and safe learning environments.

In response, Washington Ethnic Studies Now (WAESN) launched a pilot program in the 2021/2022 school year to develop a K–12 Ethnic Studies specialty endorsement funded by the Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB). The program involved 20 educators and included 36 hours of PD focused on antiracist and decolonial pedagogies. Interviews with participants revealed significant gaps in their pre-service training, especially in practical application and intersectionality. While the pilot increased their confidence, ongoing support is essential. The study emphasizes the need for systemic changes, including a K–12 Ethnic Studies endorsement pathway, to adequately prepare educators. This research underscores that Ethnic Studies is a vital, longstanding discipline requiring dedicated training and attention from policymakers and educational leaders.

Background

Several K-12 public-school districts in Washington state are in the planning phase or implementation phase for Ethnic Studies curricula and courses. The largest school district in the state, Seattle Public Schools, has been developing an Ethnic Studies program since 2017 (Seattle Public Schools, 2018). Legislation at the state level included a mandate to create a committee to design a model Ethnic Studies curriculum for grades K–12 (OSPI, 2019). The Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) assembled a committee tasked with creating a model K–12 Ethnic Studies curriculum per Senate Bills 6066 and 5023. These bills do not mandate K–12 Ethnic Studies but rather suggest it.

Currently, there are no endorsements that require educators to demonstrate a strong understanding of race, racism, indigenous epistemologies, and decolonial frameworks. All of these are key to Ethnic Studies (Calderón & Urrieta, 2019; Fernández, 2019; PESB, n.d.a; Pulido, 2018; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2020; Tolteka Cuauhtin, 2019). As a wealth of research suggests, without professional development (PD) on this transformational curriculum and pedagogy, educators are poised to commit harm to students, especially students of color (Jones, 2020; Keng Hui & Sánchez-Guerra, 2022; Weber, 2015).

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) (2021) acknowledged the existing gap in the readiness of Washington State educators to teach Ethnic Studies. In their Ethnic Studies framework, OSPI emphasized the need to, "build adult capacity . . . to be anti-racist in [their] practice, and to create learning environments in which students feel safe and supported" (p. 7). The language in the framework continues:

> Professional development must precede implementation and be ongoing. Ethnic Studies is not a curriculum. Ethnic Studies is an epistemology, or a paradigm. It requires educators to transform their beliefs about the purpose of education, the cultural and community wealth of their students, and their role in supporting students to achieve success—as defined by their students and families. For these reasons, transformative professional development is vital before any attempts at transformation in the classroom. Professional development must focus on racial identity development of educators and culturally responsive pedagogy. (pp. 9–10)

Additionally, a concept paper commissioned by the Washington State Board of Education (SBE) found that various stakeholders were concerned about the lack of training for educators in Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogies (Patrón-Vargas, n.d.).

In response to the gaps in training for K–12 educators on Ethnic Studies, Washington Ethnic Studies Now (WAESN), a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding Ethnic Studies to every K–12 classroom in Washington State, developed a pilot program for a K–12 Ethnic Studies specialty endorsement funded by a grant from the Professional Educators Standards Board (PESB). The pilot was conducted during the 2021/2022 school year and included 20 participants. Each participant was a practicing K–12 certificated educator or classified instructional assistant. The pilot program consisted of 18 hours of Ethnic Studies PD focused on antiracist and decolonial pedagogies and 18 hours of engagement in a professional learning community, during which participants practiced applying the learning from the PD to their practice and content. The culminating activity of the pilot program was developing a Professional Growth Plan (PGP). PGPs are self-directed professional development tools created by PESB in which educators set goals aligned with certification standards, create action plans, document progress, and reflect on their growth (PESB, n.d.b).

For the pilot program that this study examined, the curriculum incorporated tenets from the concept of pan-Ethnic Studies (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). According to
Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2008), pan-Ethnic Studies, "[has] to begin with the relationship between racialization in U.S. society and the dehumanization of students of color attending urban schools" (p. 134). This means that, rather than taking the traditional Ethnic Studies approach of

analyzing the colonization and exploitation of marginalized ethnic groups separately (i.e., African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano Studies, Native American Studies, etc.), pan-Ethnic Studies examines how asymmetrical power dynamics, rooted in racism, impact all marginalized ethnic groups. As such, the curriculum that the educators in the cohort were provided was constructed to develop this fundamental understanding.

Literature Review

Pre-service Teachers' Previously Held Beliefs as Barriers

Several scholars have sought to understand the impact of pre-service teachers' beliefs on their teaching strategies and engagement with antiracist and/or social justice-oriented curriculum. For example, in a survey conducted by Kreamelmeyer et al. (2016), undergraduate pre-service teacher candidates continued to hold biased beliefs, even after completing one or more courses on multiculturalism. These beliefs included the common assumptions that colorblindness or racial appreciation will solve systematic racial oppression in education.

However, these ideas further systemic racism (Gorski & Parakh, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Sleeter, 2011). Sleeter's review (2011) concluded that focusing solely on multiculturalism and celebrating diversity without acknowledging and confronting systemic racial oppression led white students to believe that simply knowing facts about a peoples' history and culture would solve racism.

In addressing the persistent exclusion of social justice themes in K-6 classrooms, Hubbard and Swain (2017) examined how pre-service educators' understanding of and commitment to social justice and antiracism shaped their willingness to embed these issues into their lesson plans. A pre-intervention survey revealed that 82% of the 66 participants were unable to name specific systemic factors being challenged by activist communities. Instead, their responses relied on vague, non-committal language such as seeking equality (Hubbard & Swain, 2017). Despite the intervention, follow-up surveys showed minimal shifts in participants' perspectives, underscoring the necessity of sustained, intentional training on social justice and antiracism. As the researchers noted, deeply ingrained ideologies such as protectionism and nationalism, along with fears of backlash from administrators, parents, or communities, remained largely unchallenged (Hubbard & Swain, 2017).

Parallel research highlights the obstacles faced by teacher educators when navigating these topics with pre-service teachers. Allen (2022) explored teacher educators' perceptions of the resistance often exhibited by White pre-service educators during discussions about racism. This resistance frequently manifested in behaviors associated with White-saviorism (see Frey, 2016), which created tension between the educators' efforts to prepare teachers for working with diverse communities and the need for White pre-service teachers to confront their own privilege (Allen, 2022). Moreover, Allen (2022) found that some White teacher educators' reluctance to engage in critical conversations about race further hindered the development of necessary skills and strategies for effectively teaching Black and Brown students.

Expanding the focus, Cherry-McDaniel (2019) challenged assumptions about the inherent cultural competence of educators of color (EOC), emphasizing the pervasive impact of White supremacy in shaping pedagogical practices, even for EOC. Labeling this phenomenon settler teacher syndrome,

she argued that teacher education programs alone cannot adequately prepare educators to adopt culturally responsive or sustaining practices (Cherry-McDaniel, 2019).

Instead, she advocated for the creation of reflective communities of practice as essential spaces for all educators—regardless of racial identity—to deepen their commitment to antiracism, cultural responsiveness, and social justice. This approach, she found, was particularly effective in supporting and retaining EOC, who often face additional systemic pressures within the field (Castro-Gill, 2023; Cherry-McDaniel, 2019).

The Impact of Preservice Teaching Programs

Overwhelmingly, teachers who have completed conventional teacher preparation programs have reported that they enter the profession with few skills to engage diverse student populations. Currently, educators who hold conventional history and English language arts endorsements are teaching Ethnic Studies courses in districts with Ethnic Studies programs (Castro-Gill, 2023). This is problematic, because a study by Gorski and Parekh (2020) found that most teacher preparation programs in the United States offer only one course on what some scholars call, "liberal multiculturalism." These courses focus solely on diluted understandings of diversity and fail to prepare educators to discuss or adequately critique asymmetric power relations. These programs also lack indigenous epistemologies and decolonial frameworks.

Miller's (2012) study highlights how the absence of critical coursework in teacher education programs perpetuates pre-service educators' feelings of unpreparedness. In this study, the all-White pre-service educators identified several deficiencies in their training, including a lack of meaningful discussions on race and racism, insufficient strategies to process the guilt often experienced by White educators, and neglect of the challenges they would face working with diverse student populations. These gaps left participants feeling ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of teaching in racially and culturally diverse settings once they entered the profession as full-time educators (Miller, 2012).

Similarly, Poole-Parilla (2023) found that pre-service educators believed their preparation programs inadequately addressed the needs of Black and Brown students. Participants in her study reported feeling untrained in understanding the cultural and social identities of their students within a broader systemic context. This lack of preparation contributed to stress, isolation, and vulnerability in their early careers. As one participant expressed, teacher education programs often failed to foster an understanding of Black and Brown students "beyond considering who they are in isolation or with differentiation" (Poole-Parilla, 2023, p. 75).

Martell's (2016) interpretive case study further revealed how the curriculum of teacher preparation programs influences educators' beliefs and practices around teaching about race. While pre-service teachers recognized the importance of addressing race in the classroom, their orientations differed significantly. White pre-service educators held a tolerance-oriented perspective, believing that teaching cultural elements was sufficient to foster coexistence, with little to no attention paid to systemic inequities. In contrast, equity-oriented educators, largely EOC, focused on addressing systemic injustices, centering their teaching on the historical and ongoing struggles and achievements of marginalized communities. This dichotomy underscores the variability in pre-

service educators' readiness to implement social justice and antiracist curricula and reinforces the urgent need for systemic reforms in teacher education programs (Martell, 2016).

The Role of Teachers in Curriculum

While many standards and education policies are produced on a national level, officially approved curriculum is adopted on state and local levels. It is frequently assumed by these entities that teachers act as objective conduits, transmitting information from an approved curriculum directly to students; however, scholars have found this to be a false assumption. For example, Silver (2022) conducted a literature review of studies completed on how and why teachers supplemented approved curriculum. Silver found that over ⅔ of K–12 teachers supplemented their approved curricula, and the supplements came mostly from what they called teacherpreneurs, or practicing teachers who sell curriculum materials on websites like Teacher Pay Teacher (TPT) and Pinterest. Silver also found that supplementation occurred most frequently in low-income schools.

This reality proves to be disconcerting because of the findings of the work of Tran and O'Connor (2023) and Hodge (2023). Hodge addressed the phenomenon of hermeneutics and the theory of interpretation in the creation and implementation of curriculum by teachers.

Hodge argued that rather than objective conduits, teachers tend to approach curriculum implementation through varied contexts. The teachers' prior knowledge, area of expertise, varied reading comprehension levels, and other external factors shape how each teacher will interpret and implement approved curricula. Tran and O'Connor (2023) added to this phenomenon with what they called teacher curriculum competence (TCC) which includes a teacher's institutional, political, and philosophical contexts. Figure 1 demonstrates the TCC in which the officially adopted curriculum goes through a process of interpretation filtered through the teacher's curriculum competence and becomes the enacted curriculum, which informs the instructional materials the teacher chooses to implement regardless of officially approved curriculum.

Figure 1 of 1
Figure 1. TCC expressed at different curriculum stages.

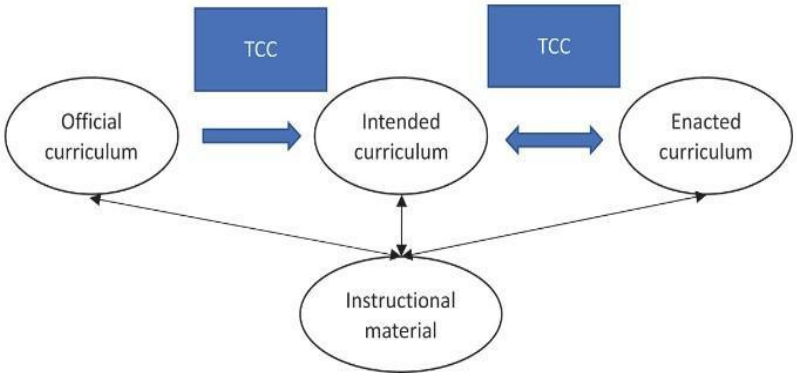

Figure 1.1. TCC Expressed at Different Curriculum Stages

As a result of TCC, the approved curriculum is often significantly modified by omission of certain ideas or supplementing curriculum to meet the interpretation and institutional, political, and philosophical values of the teacher (Hodge, 2023; Tran & O'Conner, 2023). This becomes problematic upon revisiting Silver's (2022) literature review where he found that 89% of teacherpreneurs on TPT, the largest supplier of supplemental curriculum in the U.S., were White, 92% were female, and only 54% of them reported regularly evaluating the materials they sold on TPT. Silver also found that these types of digital materials were generally of low quality with one study rating 70% of U.S. History resources on TPT poor or moderate. The marketization of curriculum has had negative effects on teacher self-efficacy and normalized the use of subpar materials (Silver, 2022).

The demographic of teacherpreneurs on TPT along with the phenomena of the theory of interpretation and TCC create an environment ripe for curricular violence. Because the vast majority of teacherpreneurs are White women, one study found that only 2% of TPT materials included culturally diverse topics, and ⅓ of U.S. History materials, "make light of painful parts of history or invite students to embody racist, sexist, or xenophobic roles as part of role plays" (Silver, 2022, p. 470). When paired with the lack of preparation to teach about race and racism in teacher preparation programs, racially marginalized students become the victims of curricular violence.

Curricular Violence

Ighodaro and Wiggan (2010) defined curricular violence as an intentional act of altering curricula that poses intellectual or psychological harm to students. Jones (2022), however, argued the Ighodaro and Wiggan definition ignored the implicit violence that can be present in curriculum and the bias of educators. To address the issue of bias educators may hold, Ethnic Studies scholars are moving to define curriculum, itself, to include pedagogy, because teaching Ethnic Studies requires an antiracist and decolonial praxis (Castro-Gill, 2023; Fernández, 2019). Teaching without this knowledge leads to examples of harm recently seen in the news including educators subjecting students to role plays about slave auctions and the experiences of enslaved people (Keng Hui & Sánchez-Guerra, 2022), textbooks spuriously depicting enslaved Africans as immigrants or workers seeking a new life (Weber, 2015), and educators advancing colorblindness as a solution to racism (FAIR, n.d.). Jones agreed, citing the lack of training on anti-bias and antiracism for educators, which allows them to "disregard their own complicity" (p. 2) in curricular violence because their bias is often implicit, leading them to believe their actions are not racist or violent.

For these reasons, I am expanding the definition of curricular violence to include explicitly or implicitly biased learning materials, learning activities, assessments, values of educators, educator practices, school and district policies, and disciplinary measures that result in identity trauma for students and their families. Jones (2022) defined racialized trauma as the embodiment of racialized traumatic events including being the target of racialized microaggressions, harassment, and physical assault. I am expanding on this term by using identity trauma to include intersectionality and the traumatic experiences endured by other marginalized identities, such as gender, sexuality, ability, economic status, etc.

Grinnell College has been curating evidence of curriculum violence with an interactive tool called Mapping Racial Trauma in Schools. The tool includes an interactive map of reported instances of racialized trauma that occurred in schools or related to school events and programming. It also has

a link to an X account where newer reports are posted (Mapping Racial Trauma in Schools, 2021). A conversation with one of the curators of the tool, Dr. Stephanie Jones, revealed that she collected 700 new instances of racialized trauma in the 2023/2024 school year alone (S. Jones, personal communication, June 14, 2024). While many of the instances occurred in the Eastern U.S., the reality cannot be ignored that they are also occurring in liberal bastions in the Western U.S. like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle (Grinnell College, n.d.). And these are only examples of reported incidents.

Summary

Teachers, regardless of experience level or racial identity, are generally not prepared to teach about race and racism. This lack of preparedness paired with the problematic ways many teachers supplement their curriculum creates curriculum violence leading to identity trauma for K–12 students. Though there has been a considerable amount of research on the preparedness of teachers to teach about race and racism, little to no research on their preparedness to teach Ethnic Studies exists. The decolonial aspect of Ethnic Studies makes it distinct from other antibias or antiracist curriculum, therefore further research is required to understand what teachers need to successfully teach K–12 Ethnic Studies.

Framework

The TIAHUI framework, developed by Fernández et al. (2023), framed this study. The TIAHUI framework employs three intersecting *círculos* to shape educators' praxis: community agreements, the *Nahui Ollin*, and six tenets of decolonization.

The first *círculo*, community agreements, establishes, "the humanizing culture and climate while setting high expectations for conduct and intellectual engagement" (Fernández et al., 2023, p. 75). This is achieved through the integration of three Mesoamerican philosophies: *In Lak'ech* (you are my other me), *Panche Be* (seeking the root of truth), and *Xipe Totec* (renewal through transformation). Together, these philosophies create a foundation for collaboration, mutual respect, and accountability in the learning environment.

The second *círculo*, *Nahui Ollin* (four movements), is described as, "a system of cultural relevance and responsiveness that seeks balance and harmony for self and community through curriculum and content, thus providing structure" (Fernández et al., 2023, p. 75). By centering balance among its four elements, *Nahui Ollin* supports the development of healthy, equitable educational ecosystems.

The final *círculo*, TIAHUI, represents "an Indigenous framework for decolonial and culturally humanizing pedagogy" (Fernández et al., 2023, p. 75). TIAHUI is composed of six tenets:

1) Teaching critical consciousness,
2) Interconnectedness through student-centered instruction,
3) Agency through critical praxis,
4) Historical literacy development,
5) Unity through community, and
6) Intersectional identity development.

This study specifically utilized the six TIAHUI tenets to define the competencies and skills educators require for effective K–12 Ethnic Studies instruction. The data collected from participants were analyzed in relation to these tenets to evaluate the levels of preparedness of the participants following teacher preparation programs and participation in the WAESN pilot.

Methodology

The purpose of this simple qualitative study was to assess how Ethnic Studies PD impacts teachers' confidence in implementing Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy and to identify any perceived deficiencies from their pre-service certification programs. I chose a simple qualitative study because I was interested in teacher perceptions about their ability to teach Ethnic Studies, which is phenomenological (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The following research questions were developed to help understand and assess teacher perceptions:

> RQ1: How prepared did K–12 educators feel to teach Ethnic Studies after completing their pre-service teacher certification programs?
>
> RQ: How did completing the WAESN Ethnic Studies endorsement pilot influence K–12 educators' perceived efficacy to teach Ethnic Studies?

Study participants were limited to individuals who had completed the endorsement pilot with WAESN in 2022. An invitation to be part of the study was sent out via email to all 20 of the pilot participants. The participants in this study were the first to respond to the request for interviews. The grade and content taught by each participant varied and was not limited to teachers who taught courses officially recognized as Ethnic Studies courses. See Table 1.1. Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

Table 1.1—Relevant Participant Demographics

Name	Grade	Content	Teacher Preparation Program	Race
James	High School	Social Studies	Western Washington University	White
Lisa	High School	ELA and Social Studies	Seattle Pacific University	White
Marsha	High School	ELA and Social Studies	Antioch University	Asian
Marty	High School	Special Education/Humanities	Long Island University	White
Stacy	2nd Grade	General Education	Antioch University	White
Vicky	High School	Chemistry	Seattle University	Asian

The data for this study were collected from semi-structured individual interviews. The interview questions were open-ended and aligned with the TIAHUI framework and how Fernández et al. (2023) defined Ethnic Studies competencies. See Table 1.2. I asked probing and clarifying questions during the interviews. Follow-up questions were individualized and responsive to the data provided by participants. Participants were asked if there were any other data they would like to have considered that were not covered by the interview questions.

Interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom, were approximately 30 minutes long, and professionally transcribed.

Table 1.2—Interview Questions

General Demographic Data	
What grade and content do you teach? What teacher preparation program did you complete? After completing your pre-service teacher certification program, how effective did you feel teaching Ethnic Studies?	
TIAHUI Framework Competencies	**Interview Questions**
Teaching Critical Consciousness	What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about the role of politics in your teaching practice? What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about the correlation between social inequities and conventional education?
Interconnectedness Through Student-centered Instruction	What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about cultural wealth or experiential knowledge? What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about the role of dialogue in student learning?
Agency Through Critical Practice	What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about supporting student agency, specifically to make positive social change in their communities? What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about incorporating family and community cultural wealth into your teaching practice?
Historical Literacy	What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about

Development	fostering co-created learning spaces in your classroom? What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about historical narratives and counter narratives?
Unity Through Community	What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about intersectionality? What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about racial solidarity?
Intersectional Identity Development	What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about supporting students in positive intersectional identity development? What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about positive intersectional identity development for yourself?
Post Pilot Questions	
How did your participation in the WAESN Ethnic Studies endorsement pilot influence your understanding of the following concepts: - Understanding that teaching is political and we should foster students' consciousness toward transformation and liberation - Students' experiential knowledge should be central to curriculum and pedagogy, and dialogue is an important activity for students to engage in to have a sense of belonging - Students should be provided opportunities to be agents of change in their communities by examining relevant social, political, environmental, and economic issues - Students must have historical context about dominant narratives so they can look for and provide counter narratives - Students must learn about self and others to build solidarity across racial lines in a community responsive way - Educators and students must understand their identities as fluid and intersectional in order to transform and improve their communities After completing the WAESN Ethnic Studies endorsement pilot, how effective do you feel in teaching Ethnic Studies?	

I analyzed the data to identify themes that emerged (see Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Coding of data began during data collection to identify emerging patterns and determine saturation. This allowed me to critically reflect on all data as they were being collected. I coded manually using primary and secondary cycles (see Saldaña, 2014). The narratives created by participants were used to support and explain the themes (see Milner & Howard, 2013). Saturation was reached after six interviews, and no further interviews were required or conducted (see Saunders et al., 2018).

This study includes methodological triangulation in the form of member checking of data (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I conducted member checks with participants to verify accurate representation of their contributions. The transferability of the current research is limited by the fact that only participants of the WAESN pilot were invited to participate; however, this increased the dependability of data in that participants had similar levels of experience and expertise on the topic of this study (see Babbie, 2017; Milner IV & Howard, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Results

Saturation of data became apparent very quickly during the interview process. All the participants had immediate and clear responses to the questions, leaving little doubt that none of them felt prepared to teach Ethnic Studies after completing their teacher preparation program.

The data resulted in several key themes demonstrating this lack of preparedness:

- Participants had varied levels of preparedness for teaching Ethnic Studies depending on the preparation program they completed.
- Little to no learning occurred on intersectionality or racial solidarity in their preparation programs.
- Learning in their preparation programs focused heavily on theory and not practical application of core concepts of Ethnic Studies as defined by the TIAHUI framework.
- While the pilot increased their confidence to teach Ethnic Studies, participants indicated it was not enough, and they needed ongoing support.

This section will explain each theme in greater detail and provide supporting evidence from the data collected.

Varied Levels of Preparedness

Five of the six participants completed a master's in teaching program at Washington state universities. The sixth participant, Marty, completed their master's in teaching program in New York state. Only one participant, Vicky, reported receiving explicit instruction on Ethnic Studies in their program at Seattle University.

Vicky explained that they were provided one 20-hour course on Ethnic Studies, but the information they learned about teaching in the Ethnic Studies course was in direct conflict with information they were learning in other courses of their program, specifically that what they were taught in their other courses was more aligned with liberal multiculturalism. Additionally, Vicky, who is Asian American, indicated that the disruption created by White students in their cohort who were uncomfortable with the topic made it challenging for them to get what they needed out of the Ethnic Studies course. James and Marsha also explicitly stated they were taught liberal multiculturalism, not Ethnic Studies, in their preparation programs. All other participants reported learning neither, except Stacy who said what they learned was an, " . . . accidental byproduct of some good social studies and other classes . . ." they took.

Stacy and Marsha, who both completed the teacher preparation program at Antioch University, had more positive responses to the questions than the other participants. For example, Marsha reported that seminal Ethnic Studies texts were assigned to them, including Paolo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, along with learning about concepts such as cultural wealth and democratic classrooms, or co-constructing learning spaces. Stacy indicated they were taught to teach antiracist, anti-homophobic, and anti-ableist topics. Conversely, James and Lisa reported that any antiracist concepts they learned in higher education came through their undergraduate programs and were directly contradicted in their teacher preparation programs. Lisa was a History major and James an American Cultural Studies major. Lisa shared that their current Ethnic Studies, antiracist practice, " . . . came out of the people I worked with . . ." and not their teacher preparation program.

Marsha and Vicky shared stories of trying to implement their learning about antiracist practices in their student teaching practice and being punished for it. Vicky stated, "What I really learned from that experience is I have to keep my head down and not cause waves, because as soon as I cause waves, then consequences will be swift and heavy." Marsha was punished for teaching students letter-writing skills by having them write letters to the school district about one of their teachers' unfair grading practices.

No Intersectional Solidarity

While learning about topics such as racial disparities in education, cultural wealth, or the role of dialogue in learning varied between participants depending on their teacher preparation program, one topic that was glaringly missing in all the participants' programs was instruction on intersectionality or racial solidarity. When responding to the question, "What did you learn from your pre-service teacher certification program about intersectionality," James responded, "I don't recall intersectionality ever being mentioned." Lisa said, "None, none." Marsha sighed, "Oh, man. Nothing." Marty lamented, "For a special education program? Not enough." Stacy and Vicky both shared that intersectionality was discussed briefly in their programs, but they were not taught specifically about intersectionality and the role it played in their teaching practice. All the participants agreed that they neither learned anything about their own intersectional identity development nor how to support students in their intersectional identity development.

The responses to the question about racial solidarity were nearly identical to the responses about intersectionality. Vicky reported that anything they learned about interactions between racial groups was heavily steeped in White savior mentality, or the belief that White people need to save people of color from their lives. Marty indicated their program taught the opposite of racial solidarity, citing being taught about the Shaker Heights studies, which pit Black and White families against one another, using socioeconomics as a wedge (see Ferguson et al., 2001).

All Theory, No Practice

Despite the varying experiences of the participants, a common theme among all of their responses is that their learning about topics outlined in the TIAHUI framework in their programs was limited to studying theory. They all agreed they received no instruction in practical application of the topics. James summed up the sentiments of the other participants:

> I do recall quite a bit of emphasis—when I say emphasis, there are classes again of like, philosophy of education. There are issues in education, but they tended to be at a certain level of abstraction. It tended to be a higher level of abstraction, right? So, it's almost, so very engaging, very interesting, but then, what do you do with that? That was the missing piece, and I think—maybe didn't necessarily highlight the tension between the technical and the transformational.

Stacy provided the most positive answers about their program of all the participants; however, they, too, reported it was all done in the abstract. When asked about what they learned about supporting student agency, Stacy replied:

> I feel like it was something that was really acknowledged as something very important in classrooms, but I didn't feel like I got a lot of specific examples of how to do that besides a classroom charter and co-creating rubrics.

Vicky echoed Stacy saying, "They say that it's good, but I don't think that they did much directly to teach me how to do that." Additionally, Marty, Stacy, and Vicky reported that specific strategies they were taught were done so with classroom management and student compliance in mind, not to teach critical thinking skills or build relationships with students and their families.

The Need for Ongoing Support

All the participants reported feeling more prepared to teach Ethnic Studies in their grade level and content area after completing the WAESN pilot. Stacy and Vicky shared they felt more empowered after completing the pilot to create more learning opportunities for their students and to continue their own understanding of Ethnic Studies. Marty and Lisa both mentioned the need for continued learning, especially from their students. Marsha said the pilot led to a deepened commitment to balance teaching about oppression with teaching, ". . . resistance and liberation . . . struggle, and celebration, and beauty." James admitted that had he not completed the pilot, he would have taught liberal multiculturalism instead of decolonial Ethnic Studies.

Despite the growth reported by the participants, they all agreed they need more. James, Lisa, Marty, Stacy, and Vicky stated one of the most powerful experiences during the pilot was the professional community created for it. Lisa shared:

> . . . I just feel like as educators, we are not often in community to grow ourselves for our students. Those things happened kind of in accidental spaces, and I feel like [the WAESN pilot was] a space where this [was] actually happening.

James added, ". . . I think having a cohort . . . helps people arrive at a place where they can interrogate, and hopefully, disabuse a propensity towards sort of a saviorism, or Messiah complex," suggesting a greater level of shared accountability than engaging in this learning individually.

The culminating activity for the pilot participants was the creation of a PGP. Table 3 demonstrates the commitment each participant made to continue their learning to become more effective Ethnic Studies pedagogues. The goals created demonstrate not only a commitment to improving their practice, but to ongoing learning and investigation, as well as re-committing to a student-centered

experience. The fact that Marsha quotes Marty in their goal is also confirmation of the value of learning in a cohort model or professional learning community.

Table 3 - Pilot Participant PGP Goals

Participant	PGP Goal
James	Ethnic Studies is about cultivating humanity and community through love. Gift giving is its expression. The challenge of adolescence is to notice, name, and claim our gifts so that as adults we can give our gifts to our communities. Unfortunately, schooling often teaches provisional self-esteem rather than unconditional self-love. Students learn to "wait for other people, better trained than ourselves, to make the meanings of our lives" (John Taylor Gatto). My professional goal is for students to make meaning for themselves. I want to develop an assessment model that does not simply show what students know, but invites students to share "precious knowledge" they "get" from each other then "give" this to their communities. The criteria for success: students will share their stories of what it means to be human by exploring questions of the heart (identity), head (history), hand (power), and helix (action).
Lisa	I want to create a curriculum that is more Ethnic Studies and student centered that brings in diverse voices and reflects collaboration with educators, families, students, and community.
Marsha	To borrow language from my colleague, Marty, I will "develop consent-based and student-centered competency opportunities." Primary ways I'll do this are to reflect and act on student feedback and my individual research to improve my teaching practices, and collaborate with students on creating more and varied ways to demonstrate and self-assess their growth in competencies practices in my classes, committees, advisory, and special programming / all-school events.
Marty	Developing consent-based and student-centered competency opportunities

Discussion

The data collected for this study confirmed previous studies on multiple levels. For example, the beliefs teachers held prior to their teacher preparation program sometimes had a greater influence on their teaching than their teacher preparation programs (Hubbard and Swain, 2017). James and Lisa both indicated this by stating their more radical beliefs about racism and systemic oppression came from their undergraduate learning, and even though James considered himself an antiracist teacher, he admitted that had he not completed the WAESN pilot, he would have taken a liberal multicultural approach to Ethnic Studies based on his prior understanding of it, confirming the research of Gorski and Parakh (2020). Vicky's story about their White classmates' resistance to learning about race and racism negatively impacting Vicky's own learning confirmed the research of Allen (2022).

Each participant shared the lack of coursework on race and racism in their teacher preparation programs, confirming the research of Gorski and Parakh (2020) and Miller (2012). Only Marsha, Stacy, and Vicky stated they had been given explicit instruction on systemic oppression, but all participants of this study agreed anything they learned was limited to theory and not practice, which confirms the research of Martell (2016). This lack of practical application instruction played a significant role in participants' negative perceptions of self-efficacy in terms of teaching Ethnic Studies. It also required participants to supplement their approved curriculum with little to no guidance, or as in Marty's case, misguidance. In Marty's specific instance, the Shaker Heights example they were given emphasized the need for Black Americans to assimilate to achieve economic success, ignoring the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow Laws, and other systemic barriers.

This study builds on previous research by focusing specifically on Ethnic Studies, an antiracist and decolonial curriculum, instead of studying only antibias or antiracist curriculum. This is particularly relevant at this period in time as districts and state education agencies across the nation are approving or considering Ethnic Studies programs, including graduation requirements. The WAESN pilot also demonstrated its significance, because even after completing the 36 hours of professional learning in the pilot, participants reported feeling a need for more and ongoing support. This included the need for collaborative cohort models, which supports the research of Cherry-McDaniel (2019). Some of the benefits of the cohort model cited by participants were having a space where like-minded peers held them accountable to unlearning their biases, co-constructing knowledge, and opportunities for peer learning for understanding and unpacking complex topics like intersectionality.

Teachers in this study, who viewed themselves as antiracist Ethnic Studies educators, admitted they were poorly prepared to teach Ethnic Studies. The literature review laid bare the curriculum violence that occurs when teachers are ill-prepared to teach the concepts included in the TIAHUI framework. To create a successful and sustainable K–12 Ethnic Studies program, these realities must be taken into consideration by education leaders and policy makers. Studies have consistently shown that teachers enter the profession unprepared to engage in challenging discussions about their own identities, their students' identities, the racialized experiences of both, and systemic racial oppression. Teachers are letting us know they need and want training on these topics. An assumption can no longer be made that traditionally certificated teachers, such as history and literacy teachers, are capable of teaching Ethnic Studies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Ethnic Studies Certification

Currently, as there are no guidelines from the state of Washington regarding teaching Ethnic Studies in K–12 settings, any certificated educator may be assigned to teach an Ethnic Studies course in Washington state. This study suggests that Washington state educators are largely unprepared to do so. I suggest creating an Ethnic Studies certification pathway in which aspiring Ethnic Studies teachers may earn a certificate through a program that provides instruction rooted in pan-Ethnic Studies and the TIAHUI framework. These two frameworks will help educators move beyond liberal multiculturalism, which Ladson-Billings (2021) cites as having no mechanism for sweeping and transformative change and focuses on systems of oppression that negatively impact all marginalized people.

I also recommend that the Ethnic Studies certification be a dual endorsement requirement. Because pan-Ethnic Studies can and should be taught in every subject and grade level, providing opportunities for educators to become dually endorsed would help the implementation of Ethnic Studies as an integrated, interdisciplinary model. The WAESN pilot and this study are evidence that teachers of various grade levels and content areas want to teach Ethnic Studies. Using a stand-alone model invites opportunities to marginalize Ethnic Studies instead of making it a core part of a student's learning experience. Lastly, implementing an integrated, interdisciplinary model for Ethnic Studies will make creating a graduation requirement more feasible as students would be able to meet the credit requirement in a variety of ways.

Further Research

What is often overlooked in studies like this is the Dunning-Kruger Effect (Dunning, 2011) among educators who lack the necessary pedagogical skills to teach Ethnic Studies. The Dunning-Kruger effect posits that people who are least qualified often have higher self-efficacy, because their ignorance on the topic prevents them from recognizing their ignorance (Dunning, 2011). Teachers experiencing the Dunning-Kruger Effect may mistakenly believe they are qualified to teach Ethnic Studies, but in reality, they are committing curriculum violence. A study on the self-efficacy of teachers who are assigned to teach Ethnic Studies but lack training in Ethnic Studies may lead to a better understanding of what is happening in Ethnic Studies classrooms.

More teacher preparation programs are claiming to provide antiracist and culturally responsive instruction. A study that focuses on graduates of these programs may help us understand their efficacy and what gaps, if any, in teachers' understanding of TIAHUI tenets persist.

Disclosure Statement

I provided professional development to the WAESN pilot participants and am a full-time employee of WAESN. One of the participants of this study attended a teacher preparation program in which I taught.

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