Black and Brown:
The Impact of Chicana/o Studies on Chicanas/os’
Perceptions of African-Americans

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Chicano and Chicana Studies

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Francisca Rodriguez. May you rest in peace and live through these words.

I dedicate this thesis to my beautiful wife, Elizabeth Gutierrez Rodriguez. This thesis represents the ups and downs that we consciously choose to relish and withstand. I look forward to a lifetime of holding hands. Te amo!

To my beautiful children, you amaze me everyday. Your happiness makes everything better. Never stop smiling.
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Abstract

Black and Brown:
The Impact of Chicana/o Studies on Chicanas/os’ Perceptions of African-Americans

By
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Master of Arts in Chicano and Chicana Studies

This study examines the relationship(s) between African-American (Black) and Chicana/o (Brown) communities. The study provides positive, negative, historical, and contemporary examples of Black and Brown interactions. The study presents a discussion of Chicana/o Studies and Racial Identity Development in order to expand existing discussions of Black and Brown relations and discussions of the benefits of Chicana/o Studies. The following queries helped guide this research project: 1) What spaces do Chicanas/os and African-Americans share?; 2) What specific factors found in Chicana/o Studies impact the Racial Identity Development of Chicana/o Studies majors; 3) How does participation in Chicana/o Studies impact Chicanas/os’ perceptions of African-Americans? This research was, in part, conducted in an attempt to explore the idea of Chicana/o Studies serving as a medium for improving relations between Chicanas/os and African-Americans. Six recent Chicana/o Studies graduates were interviewed to explore how Chicana/o Studies impacted their Racial Identity
Development. Results suggest a positive relationship between Chicana/o Studies and Chicanas/os’ perceptions of African-Americans. Furthermore, the findings suggest that students who completed their Bachelor of Art’s in Chicana/o Studies also showed a positive relationship with their own individual Racial Identity Development. Suggestions for future research are presented at the end of this study.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Problem Statement

Black and Brown students are denied access to an education that teaches them their inherent dignity and hence know how beautiful they are. They are denied the necessary tools to understand and deconstruct racism in their lives, and they are not in an environment that fosters a healthy racial identity. The result can be feelings of shame, guilt, hate, and sometimes, even violence.

Too often, throughout my childhood other Chicanas/os and used the term nigger around me in reference to African-Americans. They assumed it would not bother me because, well, it must not have bothered any other Chicanas/os they used it around. For a while, the word did not bother me. In fact, for a part of my adolescent years, I also used the word as a term of endearment with my friends. How I used the word did not justify its usage.

Later, as an educator at a Middle/High Non-Public School, my young Chicana/o students continue to call African-American students niggers. They use the word in a negative and hateful context. They call young African-American students this word because racism is so undeniably existent in all facets of public life of the United States, including education. Young Chicanas/os are left with almost no option but to grow up learning to hate the color of their own skin and any skin that is darker than theirs (often African-Americans).
As a Los Angeles born and raised individual, I grew up thinking of myself as a part of an international and multicultural community within a much broader Los Angeles. The rich abundance of diversity in Los Angeles has influenced my personal experiences in and outside of school. However, my earliest vivid memory of diversity is a traumatic one; nonetheless, it is one worth explaining in order to contextualize my passion for understanding and embracing diversity. For my entire four years as a student at Inglewood High School from 1997 to 2001, there were annual race riots between Black and Brown students. Every May 5th, the racial tension in my school reached a level that ended in fighting and police intervention. This memory continues with me today as a constant reminder of the importance that respecting and critically understanding diversity has within an educational environment.

I could speak volumes about personal instances where racist comments were made towards African-American in front of me. However, what is more important is how I was able to overcome my internalized racism and understand the importance for Chicanas/os to challenge a colonial mentality.

Students of color are systematically denied the opportunity to engage with and experience a curriculum that reflects their histories and styles of learning. Furthermore, the educational system that is currently in place habitually ignores social justice issues. The traditional liberal approach to education in the United States has promoted a pedagogy that does not encourage students to use the classroom as a space to resolve or improve societal issues. Chicana/o Studies and all Ethnic Studies were intended to change this. Acuña writes, “The role of Chicana/o Studies is to organize and systemize
the knowledge of people of Mexican descent, as well as to serve as a pedagogical tool to educate and motivate the massive numbers of Mexican Americans and Latinas/os in the United States” (xxi). He also argues that one way to do this is to challenge the Ethnocentrism that is found throughout society (xix). Reflecting on my personal process of self-healing and progression through the Racial Identity Development (RID) statuses has led to learning to love and respect the African-American community. I have come to believe that the education I received as both a student activist and a Chicana/o Studies major was the reason I let go, and continue to let go, of my racial prejudice towards African-Americans, and other racial groups for that matter.

The current public education system does not encourage exploring individual histories. Growing up, I heard racial slurs about African-American people from my family and friends. I seldom participated in these racial slurs, but I never attempted to put an end to them either. Thus, Chicanas/os grow up being limited in the ability to develop their racial identity that is socially conscious or identified with African Americans (Chang & Diaz-Veizades, 1999), which hinders their perceptions of African-Americans. In several school environments, the inability to develop such a racial identity manifests into hostility between students of color. This is typically as result of perceived competition for a scarcity of economic and political resources. This, in turn, has resulted in instances where African-American and Chicana/o youth get into physical altercations with one another. In fact, similarly, 600 Black and Latino students rioted at Lock High School in May 2008 (Blume & Landsberg, 10 May 2008). In both situations, the schools were unable to create an environment where communities discussed their differences and
stereotypes were deconstructed. Instead, the school site became the location where physical violence took place.

Thus, Chicanas/os grow up being denied the ability to develop their racial identities through an assortment of educational experiences at CSUN, specifically within the Chicana/o Studies Department. I have come to understand the importance for Chicanas/os and African-Americans to work together. I received my bachelor’s degree in the Chicana/o Studies Social Studies Waiver Program; in this program, I was exposed to history through the Chicana/o Studies, Pan-African Studies, and History Departments.

The education I received through the Chicana/o Studies Department at California State University, Northridge allowed me the opportunity to critically examine the relationship between Black and Brown communities I witnessed growing up in Inglewood. It is because of the education I received from Chicana/o Studies that I have come to view African-Americans as people who are marginalized in similar ways as my community. This then raises the question, “How does Chicana/o Studies impact Chicanas/os’ perceptions of African-Americans?”

My personal experiences have allowed me to witness what appear to be two opposite sides of a spectrum. In high school, I witnessed riots and race-based fights between Chicanas/os and African-Americans; at CSUN, I was exposed to a series of classes and activities that encouraged community building. The education received at CSU Northridge encouraged us to understand race and racism through the lens of colonialism. It also presented racism as a dynamic that present between and throughout different groups of marginalized communities, e.g. Black and Brown, and understanding
how racism existed and impacted us globally, nationally, regionally, locally, and individually.

I began this project understanding that historically marginalized people do, in fact, have commonalities but that these commonalities do not exist in a vacuum. These commonalities exist along side friction, competition, and sometimes, even violence. I began this project understanding that as a scholar who grew up in an environment where racial tension between African-American and Chicanas/os was evident, it is my responsibility to search for spaces where Chicanas/os and African-Americans can learn to coexist and build stronger relationships with one another.

Goals of This Research Study

This study will add to the existing literature on Chicana/o Studies as an academic discipline by exploring its impact on the Racial Identity Development (RID) of those students who participate in the Chicana/o Studies Department at CSU Northridge. By doing so, this study will explore the extent, if any, to which Chicanas/os’ perceptions of African-Americans may have been impacted by their participation in Chicana/o Studies courses and activities. The literature suggests that individuals who are in the later, or more advanced, stages of RID are more likely to think positively of themselves and members of other races. Thus this research could aid in understanding the process of increasing Chicanas/os positive perceptions of African-Americans.

My hypothesis is that taking Chicana/o Studies undergraduate classes assists students in moving through the statuses of RID and that this has a positive impact on their perceptions of African-Americans. It is also my hypothesis that Chicana/o Studies
students will be able to vocally express common struggles that impact both Chicana/o and African-American communities similarly. Their ability to express these common struggles will be connected to information they learned while taking Chicana/o Studies courses. Students might also be able to discuss if and how racial tensions between communities of color as a hindrance to the advancement of their individual ethnic group.

The social problem I will be attempting to address is expanding our understanding of Black and Brown relations. For this reason, and others I will discuss below, my study will examine the ways in which participation in Chicana/o Studies courses and activities may impact Chicana/o students’ RID and their perceptions of African-Americans. Specifically, I will examine CSUN students who are currently or have completed Chicana/o Studies majors or double majors. My study will look at the statuses of Racial Identity Development (RID) that students were at when they first entered CSUN and the educational factors, events, and conditions that brought them to their present racial identity development. To do so, students will be asked questions (Appendix) that allow them to self report their perceptions of African-Americans before and after taking Chicana/o Studies courses. The goal is that this study can facilitate healing within and between Black and Brown communities and improve relations between the two communities. The goal of this research project is also to engage in a critical conversation about the current state of the Chicana/o Studies Department and explore ways it can grow. To do this, I employ Racial Identity Development Theory (RIDT) to understand the experiences and racial identity development of six CSUN graduates.
This research is important because there is a need to understand the dynamics that prevent Black and Brown communities from working together to advance socially, politically, and economically. While the dynamics that exist between Chicana/o and African-American communities are too many to fully address in this individual research project, a literature review was conducted in order to present the existing literature.

This study attempts to blend and fill the need of two existing fields. The first field is the research on Black and Brown Relations. The second area this study attempts to research on Black and Brown relations is not a saturated field, and as such, there is a large need for additional research. Furthermore, through a series of extensive meta-web searches, there has yet to be a study that explores if and how Chicana/o Studies impacts Chicanas/os perceptions of African-Americans.

Need for Research Regarding Black and Brown Relations

Focus on Chicana/o perceptions of African-Americans as opposed to another ethnic group is significant because of the shared urban spaces that these two communities share. Apart from sharing physical urban spaces, these two communities also share historical spaces. Furthermore, they share a colonial past where both communities have been victims of imperialism and colonialism. They share an overlapping history that also prompts the need to explore the dynamics that are currently taking place between these two communities. Chang (1994) argued that following the 1992 uprising, “many researchers [were] coming to Los Angeles. The city has emerged as the newest laboratory for social scientists as they begin to experiment and to develop new ideas about race relations” (Chang, 3).
There has been an emergence of new and innovate research exploring Black and Brown relations. This research is exciting in that it is exploring Black and Brown relations through an interdisciplinary approach. This current renaissance in Black and Brown research motivates and guides the efforts of this study.

Kun and Pulido (2014) point to the need for looking for ways to improve interracial relations between Black and Brown communities. They cite the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, which found that, “the majority of hate crimes in 2006 were committed by Latinas/os against African Americans and vice versa” (Kun & Pulido, 7). This is both regrettable and thought provoking. What fuels the animosity between these two racial groups, and why does it escalate to hate crimes? More importantly, how can these crimes be prevented in order to improve the living conditions of Los Angeles residents?

Kun and Pulido (2014) refer to a roundtable discussion that was held at the University of Southern California in 2009. This roundtable was part of a series titled *Black and Latinos in Conflict and Cooperation*. Its purpose was to, “move beyond vocabularies of ‘conflict’ and ‘coalition’ and instead learn how to talk through perhaps more challenging truths of ‘juxtaposition’ and ‘coexistence’” (Kun & Pulido, 3). By doing so, participants of the roundtable were attempting to expand the conversations taking place about Black and Brown relations.

Kun and Pulido (2014) describe the roundtable as providing evidence of several things. First, it showed how complicated discourse and dialogue around Black and Brown relations in Los Angeles have become. Furthermore, the roundtable showed them
that the available spaces to have such conversations are limited. She recounts that people in attendance at the roundtable discussion were, “boiling over with a desire to speak about the unhealed and, in some cases, still barely dressed wounds of the past and the challenges that still lie ahead in twenty-first-century L.A.” (Kun & Pulido, 3). Incidents like this suggest two things: 1) there is a need to have more conversations like this; 2) there is a space for academics and the university to assist in creating spaces that expand our understanding of Black and Brown relations.

Conducting this research project in California is also apropos given the high numbers of both Latinos and Blacks currently living in California. Barreto, et al. (2014) contend that California is an interesting location to explore strife between Latinos and Blacks. “Because it has the largest Latino population in the United States and the largest Black population of all the western states, the potential for competition or conflict or both between the groups there seems high” (Barreto, et al., 203-204). Conversely, there may also be a higher chance for alliances and developing strategies for reducing racism between the two groups. Edward and Leong note that Los Angeles merits attention on issues pertaining to race relations. They argue that Los Angeles has, “…emerged as a focal point for social scientists as they develop new ideas about race relations, questioning previous theories and notions of the American melting pot and of a pluralistic society” (Edward and Leong, ix).

Need For Research Regarding Impacts of Chicana/o Studies on RID

Although Stephan and Stephan (2004) argue that a multicultural education program can improve intergroup relations, they also mention the lack of and need for
more research. They note that there is a limited amount of research on how multicultural education programs impact one ethnic group’s attitudes towards another. “…It appears that most multicultural education programs achieve some success in improving attitudes toward out-group members, increasing knowledge of out-groups, and improving multicultural skills” (Stephan and Stephan, 793).

Stephan and Stephan (2004) go on to note that preliminary data has shown that multicultural education programs do in fact, have a positive impact on intergroup relations. They argue that multicultural education programs can reduce prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination (794). “Preliminary data have shown that multicultural education programs can be successful in reducing prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination…” However, because there is a gap in this research, it is necessary to conduct as much research as possible to further understand the role that ethnic studies (Chicana/o Studies) (and/or multicultural education programs) may play on impacting one ethnic group’s attitudes toward another. Such research could examine the regional, age, and differences between ethnic groups.

Although Black and Brown communities have a history of working together, there have been growing tensions between the two communities within the recent decades. Furthermore, these tensions are not receiving the resources or attention they deserve. This research project will search for spaces to improve existing relationships between Chicana/o and African-American communities. At the very least, it will provide Chicana/o Studies majors with a space to express and reflect on the individual racial identity process(es) they underwent during their time in Chicana/o Studies. By
interviewing Chicana/o Studies majors, students of color will be given a voice. Chicana/o students will have the opportunity to reflect on what their experiences in college. They will also have the opportunity to explore if and how societal, communal, familial and educational dynamics prompted them to develop the views that had and have toward African-Americans, an opportunity seldom offered otherwise. This study will also help to fortify and renew the legitimacy of Chicana/o Studies as a discipline. This is significant because Chicana/o Studies has historically been attacked for not being a legitimate academic discipline and continues to be the victim of budget cuts.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 of this thesis is a literature review that presents previous literature on Black and Brown relations. Because research on Black and Brown relations is vast, a survey of broad issues and research is presented. However, this is done with a focus on literature that focused on Los Angeles.

Chapter 3 will briefly examine Chicana/o Studies and the fusion(s) of Black and Brown cultures. This chapter combines these two topics because the research suggests that they are two areas that allow for Black and Brown relations to heal and flourish. I use the term *heal* as a literary device to create imagery for the reader, not to suggest that Black and Brown relations are broken since the research is inconclusive in this respect (as discussed in Chapter 2). The chapter then discusses music as a space where Black and Brown culture and communities can exchange ideas and build relationships together.

Chapter 3 begins with a brief history of the Ethnic Studies Movement and also briefly looks at the establishment of the Chicana/o Studies Department at CSU.
Northridge. This will help provide context for the sacrifices and commitment required to establish the Chicana/o Studies Department at CSU Northridge. A distinction is also made in this chapter between Multicultural Education and Ethnic Studies (an umbrella term in which Chicana/o Studies falls under). This study holds that multicultural education does not prioritize or address the impacts of colonialism, and therefore can not be as effective in improving Black and Brown relations as Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies.

Chapter 4 is a presentation of my theoretical framework. It begins with a comparison and differentiation between race and ethnicity, specifically as to how these two terms relate to Chicanas/os and Black and Brown relations. Then a discussion of Ethnic Identity Development is presented primarily because of its historically predominant usage to study Chicanas/os. Lastly, the benefits of utilizing RID for this particular study are presented with a discussion of how Chicana/o Studies is a viable space to promote RID.

Chapter 5 discusses methodology, participants of the study, and ethics. Chapter 6 is a discussion on my findings and results from the interviews conducted. Interviews were analyzed to search for data that supported participants’ racial identity. Chapter 7 provides a conclusion and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter will review relations between Black and Brown communities in Los Angeles. The terms Black and Brown are used throughout this thesis loosely because of their convenience to the reader. It should be noted that, throughout my research, other identifying terms were used synonymously with Black (i.e. African-American) and Brown (Chicana/o, Mexican-American, Latina/o, and Latin-American).

I begin by discussing the need to understand Black and Brown relations in Los Angeles and how existing literature suggests that those relations have manifested. Issues discussed include competition, a historical context of Black and Brown relations with an emphasis on the 1960s, the impact of media on Black and Brown relations, the Los Angeles Riots (also referred to as Uprising), attempts at coalition building, and ongoing concerns that impact both communities.

Why History Matters

Stephan and Stephan (2004) discuss how historical conditions further problematize improving intergroup relations today. “Improving intergroup relations is a formidable task because the negative elements of these relations are deeply embedded in the history of every society and, without intervention, tend to be replicated across generations” (Stephan and Stephan, 782). Stephan and Stephan’s main point is to speak to the importance of intervention and improving interethnic relations. Their second point is the importance of understanding interethnic relations within a historical context. In the case of Chicanas/os and African-Americans, it is important to explore some of the
historical events that have recently impacted how they relate to one another. For the purposes of this research, we explore some major events that have impacted Chicana/o and African-American relations in Los Angeles.

Katzew and Deans-Smith argue that those communities that have been denied access to the decision making process and the social capital associated with the ability to make those decisions have historically resisted the dominant power structure. Racially and ethnically subordinated groups have always resisted and defied the easy classifications of their oppressors and have generated their own forms of identity rooted in ethnic and religious conceptions of personhood, kinship, and community (175).

The height of community activism in the 1960s is significant because it led to both Chicana/o and African-American communities developing a sense of pride that sought to challenge the existing White structure in the United States. Additionally, the activism of the 1960s also led to the establishment of Chicana/o Studies and Pan-African Studies programs and departments across the country. While differences did exist, it is the parallels that should be explored in order to search for common grounds and starting points to develop kinship.

Need to Understand Black and Brown Relations in Los Angeles

Sears writes, “Los Angeles has a history of considerable racial and ethnic conflict, ranging from the ‘zoot suit riots’ of 1943 through the Watts riots of 1965 and the so-called ‘Rodney King’ rioting in 1992” (Sears, 1). Hence, he is highlighting the extent to which the growth and development of Los Angeles has been interwoven interracial and interethnic conflict. As mentioned in chapter 1, the need to address Black and Brown
relations has received an increased amount of attention over the last two decades, but there is still a significant gap in the research.

Black and Brown Relations in Los Angeles: Conflicted or United?

A dominant narrative is that Black Brown communities experience tension because both are vying for political and economic power (Gay, 2006; Sears, 2002). Gay (2006) found that competition for economic resources has a direct impact on Black attitudes towards Latinos. African-Americans who do not have access to economic upward mobility and who live in neighborhoods with Latinos see Latinos as an economic threat. Furthermore, Gay concludes that economic disparity has a larger influence on Black attitudes towards Latinos than does living in shared urban environments.

These arguments warrant attention and do reflect a part of the complicated relationships that exist between African-Americans and Chicanas/os. However, some authors challenge this dominant narrative and highlight some more nuanced views. These other authors (Frasure-Yokley and Greene, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Sears, 2002; Barreto, et al., 2014) offer different vantage points that: 1) provide more thorough analyses of Black and Brown relations; and 2) search for ways to improve existing relationships between Black and Brown communities.

Competition: Access to Jobs & Education

Sears (2002) found that the relationship between Latinos and African-Americans is negatively strained by access to jobs and income. He finds that this conflict was equally and mutually perceived by both groups (16). Access to jobs also impacted Black and Brown relations on college campuses. As Acuña (2011) writes, “[In the late 1980s]
Contributing to black-brown tensions on college and university campuses was the worsening economic times. ...Due to the huge growth of the Latino population, the two now often competed for jobs, housing, political offices and attention.” (173). Acuña notes that Mexican Americans began to demand more resources because they were growing in numbers.

**Deconstructing Theories of Competition**

Barreto, et al. (2014) challenge the degree to which Black and Brown communities actually (perceive that they) compete with one other. They did so by designing the Latino National Survey (LNS) in 2006. The goal of this survey was to gather information and identify trends (Barreto, et al., 204).

The LNS discovered two findings worth noting. Their first finding was that, “…Latinos actually view a higher degree of competition with fellow Latinos and that [2] perceived competition with Blacks is not emblematic of anti-Black sentiment” (Barreto, et al., 225). These findings have at least two ramifications: 1) First, it implies that Brown and Brown relations may be more fragmented than Black and Brown relations; 2) It is possible that Black and Brown relations are not as fragmented as some may think. If the latter is true, then improving Black and Brown relations becomes more realistic and attainable. Although Black and Brown communities may be competing with one another, it is possible that they are only competing to the same extent or less than they are with other groups. Suggesting that competition only exists between them and nobody else inflates the perception of competition and does a disservice to Black and Brown relations.
The LNS survey also found that it is, “clear that Latinos in Los Angeles (and California) do not perceive overwhelming competition with Blacks” (Barreto, et al., 218). Thus, the findings of the LNS are groundbreaking and legitimately encourage us to challenge previously constructed research on Black and Brown relations; at the least, we should be especially cautious of our assumptions moving forward.

Frasure-Yokley and Greene (2014) argue that the line between commonality and conflict can be blurry when discussing Black and Brown relations depending on the issue being discussed. For example, both groups have a similar history of being discriminated in the education, housing, and job markets. While some cite these shared experiences as reasons for Black and Brown communities to form coalitions and build bridges with one another, others argue that these can be reasons for competition over resources which in turn can lead to tension and conflict” (95). In other words, the same data can be interpreted two ways. It may also depend on who is interpreting the data, and in what way it is being presented.

Other authors, (Pastor, Johnson, Frasure-Yokley and Greene) also challenge the dominant narrative that Black and Brown communities are competing with one another. Pastor (2014) writes that the competition between Black and Brown communities might exist but may only be a portion of the entire picture. Pastor (2014) maintains that the media has represented that there are increasing conflicts in gangs, local politics, youth, and violence in high school. He then goes on to say that universities can provide activists the tools (e.g. facts and theoretical frameworks) needed to explore outside of the dominant narrative of competition (Pastor, 60). Pastor’s analysis is important because it
seeks to create a bridge between activists and the university by using university resources (i.e. access to conducting research).

Johnson (2014) moves away from the position that competition defines Black and Brown relations. Her argument is that they have shared spaces and influenced each other positively despite their shared histories of racism and economic subjugation. She argues that Black and Brown people have had a high level of influence on each other’s political and cultural sensibilities. “Both groups are part of overlapping diasporas that have shaped significant intellectual traditions and visions of social justice” (Johnson, 327). The range in positions that Pastor, Frasure-Yokley and Greene represent on the concept of competition existing between Black and Brown communities tells us that our current understanding of Black and Brown relations is finite and requires further research.

Below I will discuss a result from a quantitative survey that may shed some insight on Black-Brown relations in Los Angeles. In 2001, Sears (2002) and the University of California, Los Angeles Center for Research in Society and Politics conducted the Los Angeles County Social Survey (LACSS). The purpose of LACSS is to conduct a survey every year on an issue that is highly impacting the social well being of the city of Los Angeles. The focus of LACSS in 2001 was to explore interracial and interethnic conflict in Los Angeles. Sears (2002) summarized a list of ten findings from the survey. For the purposes of this research, those points that are not directly linked to Black and Brown relations have been omitted. Sears’ first major finding is that about half of the people in Los Angeles believe ethnic groups are in conflict (15). Despite this perceived conflict, the overwhelming majority of people surveyed agree on two things: 1)
the quality of life is better with ethnic diversity; 2) ethnic conflict is, and will continue to, decline. Sears also found that all ethnic groups surveyed felt interethnic conflict is avoidable, and that we should find ways to reduce that conflict. To what extent people are willing to allocate resources to improve interracial conflict is not addressed in this report. Nonetheless, the sentiment of the population is promising and is encouraging.

Whitaker (2011) also holds a positive attitude toward the potential for Black and Brown unity. He makes the argument that the similarities in the inequalities and injustices that each group faces in their daily lives are enough to create the potential for dialogues and productive conversations between the two groups (277). While Whitaker’s attitude might be encouraging for some, his argument is limited for at least two reasons. First, similarities between the two groups’ living situations have existed for decades if not centuries; these similarities have not been able to form something tangible and long lasting. Second, potential does not equal realization; while identifying potential can be the beginning of something much larger, a Black and Brown alliance is much more complicated than simply finding a source of potential. In addition, efforts for Black and Brown elected officials to work together have also either failed or deteriorated despite documented attempts to build and maintain a productive and positive relationship between Black and Brown elected officials. However, a historical context is necessary in order to understand Black and Brown relations, and the most comprehensive historical analysis comes from understand Black and Brown relations within a colonial context.
Colonialism is embedded in all social, economical, and political aspects of life in the United States (Source). Any discussion about Black and Brown relations in the United States is incomplete without framing it in a colonial context. It is necessary to understand the roots of colonialism in the United States in order to deconstruct the ways in which racism surfaces in Black and Brown race relations.

The legacy of colonialism clearly impacts Black and Brown relations. One way it impacted Black and Brown relations was the privilege that those of Mexican descent had over those of African descent. Whitaker (2011) discusses how skin tone benefited Mexican Americans during the establishment of cities like Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Houston. Mexican American and African American workers were restricted to the abject positions in the work force. Furthermore, both groups were underpaid and exploited. However, Mexicans were able to use their fair skin as an advantage. Their lighter skin tone allowed Mexican Americans more socioeconomic opportunities than were given to African Americans (Whitaker, 262). Whitaker’s analysis provides an example of how lighter skin complexion translates to economic access and mobility.

Gutierrez writes, the establishment of cities like Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Houston. Mexican American and African American workers were restricted to the abject positions in the work force. Furthermore, both groups were underpaid and exploited in “Americanism” (21). The argument that Gutierrez makes replaces capitalism as the primary core value of American growth with Whiteness. An analysis of America as a country based on Whiteness places both Black and Brown communities at the periphery.
of the decision making process and distribution of capital, both economic and social. These tensions have also distracted Black and Brown communities from discussing White racism and its effects on Black and Brown communities. Examples of White racism include the distribution of wealth, health, and education that disproportionately fails to meet the needs of Black and Brown communities

Black and Brown Unity: A Historical Context

Los Angeles has been a testing ground for Black and Brown relations since its establishment. Bauman (2011) informs us that Los Angeles was first founded by a group of individuals who were African, Mexican, or both. “Most of the forty-four founders of the Spanish pueblo of Los Angeles in 1781 were of African or Mexican origin, or both. Both black and Mexican communities eventually experienced segregation from the expanding white population, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (Bauman, 105).

The 1960s: The Radical Left

Pulido (2006) does what other authors have not been able to do. She examines the 1960s in order to understand interethnic tensions today. By doing so, she begins to create a space and framework for understanding the historical foundation for understanding Black and Brown relations today.

Pulido (2006) explores the dynamics of radical activism in Southern California in the 1960s. She does this by examining three prominent organizations that organized during the 1960s: 1) East Wind, a Japanese American collective; 2) the Black Panther Party (BPP); 3) CASA (Centro de Acción Social Autónomo). Pulido asks the question,
“What were the attitudes of East Wind, the Black Panther Party (BPP), and CASA toward whites and toward other people of color? To what extent did they actually engage in coalition building or interethnic activism, and how does the reality correspond to the rhetoric” (Pulido, 153)? Pulido creates an umbrella term to refer to these three organizations, the Third World Left.

Pulido begins her examination of the Third World Left by reminding us that the spaces between theory and praxis often create disparities. These disparities become even more complex and interesting when they are created from efforts to organize communities at a grassroots level; even more so, when we examine how the dynamics within each organization and community interacted with those dynamics between organizations. “… The implementation of these politics varied by organization and place…In any event, the politics of solidarity within the Third World Left were far more complex than first glance might suggest” (179). She goes on to explore some of those complexities.

Pulido makes two arguments. “First, the racial politics of Southern California’s Third World Left can best be understood as a tension between nationalism and internationalism. All three organizations identified as internationalists and as such were committed to supporting the struggles of other colonized and oppressed peoples” (153). In other words, the framework that the Third World Left operated under encouraged people of color to work together. To this effect, we can argue there was a Black-Brown Unity consciousness that existed in the 1960s.
Pulido’s second argument is that the Third World Left had a hierarchy between the different groups, which was largely determined by the group’s race. She writes, “Second, the larger racial hierarchy, and specifically each group’s position within it, influenced how the group negotiated these dynamics. Those at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, in this case African Americans, enjoyed an elevated status within movement circles” (Pulido, 153). In short, a unilateral and democratic means to communicate and organize was not established.

Ultimately, Pulido does document some instances of attempts for interethnic solidarity between Black and Brown community organizations but argues that efforts by organizations grounded in nationalism trumped those efforts grounded in internationalism. Pulido writes that in the 1960s, “Chicanas/os and African Americans were much more likely to focus on their own communities” (106). This was mostly due to the popularity of nationalism in the 1960s. Furthermore, Acuña (2011) writes that in 1968, “The Mexican American militancy caused friction between Mexican Americans and African Americans who often looked at civil rights as their exclusive domain” (19). He goes on to note that a lot of this tension was fueled by Euro-Americans attempting to pit Blacks against Mexican Americans.

This should not, however, overshadow the fact that efforts were made at building relations between Black and Brown community organizations. One example were attempts to dialogue between groups by respective leaders. Acuña (2011) writes, “[Rodolfo] Corky [Gonzalez] became one of the central figures of the Chicano movement and a strong proponent of Chicano nationalism. He reached out to the black power and
Native American movements” (43). There are also examples of coalitions formed by Black and Brown communities.

The 1960s: Black and Brown Coalitions

Bauman (2011) provides one of the more thorough analyses of Black and Brown efforts at coalition building. Bauman’s article is useful in that it also provides some reason(s) why those efforts came to an end. He argues that, the relationship between African Americans and Mexican Americans has consisted of both moments of tension and moments of attempted interracial solidarity. According to Bauman (2011), competition for jobs during and after World War II is one the initial motives for interracial tension between African Americans and Mexican Americans (105-106). Despite this, several examples of Black and Brown coalition building developed.

The examples listed by Bauman (2011) are predominantly examples of Black and Brown unity through civil rights organizations. He lists examples, “like the Southeast Interracial Council, the Council for Civic Unity, and the County Committee for Interracial Progress” (105-106). However, these organizations were all short-lived due to, “anticommunist purges or strategic-political divisions between and within Mexican American and African American groups and members” (ibid.). In these examples, it is unknown if those efforts and building solidarity would have further developed had it not been for anticommmunist purges fueled by the government.

The 1960s also saw challenges to Black and Brown unity due to the switching of political leaders and the racial group they represented. The first example that Bauman provides is that of the Democratic Minority Conference. Bauman argues that the collapse
of the Democratic Minority Conference was a result of strategic leaders’ inability to accurately predict what would happen when, “city councilman Ed Roybal, who had served on the council since 1949, left after his election to Congress in 1962, he was replaced by Gilbert Lindsay, an African American” (ibid.). This angered many Mexican Americans, which in turn hurt the potential for any further large-scale Black and Brown coalition at the time.

During this time, it was clear that a successful Black and Brown coalition was unlikely based on the results of a report conducted by the Country Human Relations Commission in May of 1965. Bauman (2011) writes, “Recognizing the probable failure of interracial coalitions, African Americans refused to include Mexican Americans as members when they formed the all-black United Civil Rights Committee in 1963“ (106). This was, indeed, a dark time for Black and Brown Unity. Bauman (2011) goes on to note that, “In May 1965, the County Human Relations Commission reported significant tension between African Americans and Mexican Americans. Another study from that same period noted that only 16% of Mexican Americans supported a black-Chicano coalition” (107). As previously stated, this was due to Edward Roybal being replaced by Gilbert Lindsay.

Mexican Americans also rejected efforts to work with African Americans. Bauman (2011) writes, “Leaders of traditional Mexican American civil rights organizations, like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the American G.I. Forum, and the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) hesitated to align with the African Americans because they wanted to ensure that
Mexican Americans received their share of War on Poverty programs” (110). Each group wanted to maximize the amount of resources that they would receive from available programs and funding. Because these resources, like most tangibles acquired through politics, are a zero-sum game, each racial group did not want to risk forfeiting any of their group’s potential resources to the other group.

Another example of attempting to build Black and Brown Unity was between The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and The National Farmworkers Association (NFA). Araiza (2011) documents the collaboration between The SNCC and The NFA during the civil rights era. Araiza argues that these, “…coalitions between the two groups were only successful if they were based on more than one point of solidarity, not just a sense of camaraderie as racial minorities” (79). She describes their solidarity work as being multidimensional. While Araiza does not mention specific examples of their collaboration, she does discuss the difficulties that organizations during this era faced such as “violence and harassment from their enemies, tension and dissent within their ranks, and frequent defeat” (98-99). Despite these obstacles, there were efforts by Black and Brown organizations to build bridges and work with one another.

Another organization that made efforts to strengthen Black and Brown relations was the Poor People’s Campaign (PPC). Mantler (2011) explains how the PPC intention was to be an umbrella organization that would encompass people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The PPC’s goal was to focus on class-based issues, and as such, concentrated less on racial inequality and more on economic equality. Martin Luther King, Jr. unveiled the PPC in late 1967, and Mantler argues that it provides a snapshot of
both the potential and obstacles that existed between “Black-Chicano cooperation” in the late 1960s (181-82). As an example of the cultural and political differences between African-Americans and Chicanas/os, Mantler (2011) cites that, during this era, “many blacks such as King and Abernathy sought … to combat poverty, the Chicano activists in Washington emphasized land and language rights” (Mantler, 199). The following section discusses another aspect of 1960s activism, the Blowouts.

*Education: The 1968 Blowouts (Student Walk Outs)*

The 1968 Blowouts were a series of walkouts in schools throughout Los Angeles. These walkouts represented student resistance to schools and curriculum ignoring their individual identities and histories.

HoSang (2014) draws parallels between Chicana/o and Black student walkouts in 1968 (Blowouts). He agrees that the 1968 walkouts were led by Chicana/o students and centered in East Los Angeles, but he goes on to acknowledge the thousands of Black students who participated in walkouts in South Los Angeles, specifically mentioned is Manual Arts High School (123). Both groups of students were dissatisfied with the education they were receiving. They walked out of their schools as a form of protest demanding that their needs be met.

In the case of the Blowouts, HoSang (2014) lists the paralleling conditions in each group’s educational environments. The negative conditions that paralleled both Black and Brown students and led to the Blowouts were, “the alleged use of ‘physical threats or coercion’ against students, a refusal to take parent and student complaints seriously, disciplinary and behavioral assessment policies that too frequently removed students
from regular classrooms, and a broadly authoritarian style of school management” (123). Both groups of students were not being treated with dignity or respect.

**Community Organizing**

There are also examples of manifestations of Black and Brown unity through examples of community organizing. Examples like Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (Mothers ROC) and Community Coalition provide examples of Black and Brown communities working in solidarity to improve their communities and their overall quality of living. The examples of Wal-Mart and environmental racism speak to global issues and how Black and Brown communities can come together to deal with them locally.

**Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (Mothers ROC) - 1980s**

Rosas (2011) notes that there was mutual distrust and animosity between Black and Brown communities in the 1980s. However, two women who (im)migrated to Los Angeles who provided an alternative example of black and brown community building via the group Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (Mothers ROC). During this time, “…their interaction on the street represented a bold racial reconfiguration—an important symbolic gesture for how people can work across racial lines—as well as a model of the power of neighborly interaction and concern” (250). Ruth and Elena also communicated to one another why each of their respective community was apprehensive toward the other. They focused on issues that impacted their day-to-day lives and found ways that they, together as individuals, could directly impact. “Female residents in South Central Los Angeles worked across racial, gender, class, and ethnic lines to cope with this region’s continuous economic restructuring, immigration, and dehumanizing government
services and policies” (Rosas, 238). In other words, they did not organize together because of their race and gender; they organized despite their race and gender.

These women had familial (motherly) responsibilities, little, if any, funding, and were from two completely different cultural backgrounds. Ruth Smith was from the Deep South and Elena Santiago was from Mexico. They both moved to South Central at approximately the same time in the 1940s. That they were still able to organize together is a beacon of hope and encouragement for all activists; not just those interested in improving Black and Brown relations. Rosas (2011) writes, “Both women, and the families on 53rd Street, have found creative ways to work together in the absence of coordinated or identity-based movement” (251). They became pioneers in how they organized themselves.

Their activism was fueled by their roles as mothers and caregivers. Motherhood for them became a source of strength and energy. They did not limit the role of Motherhood as something that is only burdensome. They did not view motherhood as an, “oppressive or pejorative term. Instead, it served as a method of exerting power, allowing them to work with the community as well as complicate negative representations of working class women of color as pathological and part of the undeserving poor” (Rosas, 252). By doing so, they integrated their roles as mothers with their activism. This unorthodox approach to activism proved to be efficient and conducive to meeting the needs of their individual communities.

In the absence of an organized movement, Ruth and Elena became intermediaries in their communities to create positive relationships between community members from
different backgrounds (Rosas, 249). They agreed that it was beneficial to both Black and Brown communities for them to get along and work together. “In the end, their friendship and activism was not about understanding where they fit in a racial hierarchy, but had more to do with co-existence, cooperation, and community” (Rosas, 253). In other words, they learned to become good neighbors despite their differences and the majority of those around them refusing to exist side-by-side positively.

Community Coalition

Community Coalition of South Los Angeles (CoCo) is another community organization that fights to improve the daily lives of residents in Los Angeles. It emerged in 1989. Congress member Karen Bass and a group of activists founded it. They came together in order to find solutions to problems that plagued their community (e.g. crack cocaine). Similar to ROC, they recognize the diversity of Los Angeles and made diversity a center point of their activism. Kun and Pulido (2014) note that, “Organizations such as the Community Coalition and the Labor/Community Strategy Center have placed the cultivation of inter-racial unity at the center of their political work with impressive results” (16). Such a strategy allows its members to have a voice and be heard; this encourages building leadership within and throughout the organization.

CoCo first began by working to oust liquor stores from street corners; their argument was that is attracted crime (Pastor, 57). Their focus then became geared towards youth and education. CoCo has also led several campaigns to improve the overall (access to) education for Black and Brown youth. Pastor (2014) tells us about one major victory by CoCo in 2005. “In 2005, the mostly black and Latino students led the
Equal Access to College Prep Classes campaign, and effort to ensure that schools in South L.A. and elsewhere in the region would provide the same platform for university entrance, and they won in a 6-1 vote by the Los Angeles Unified School District” (57). This is another concrete example of a Black and Brown alliance resulting in benefits for residents of Los Angeles. The two following sections briefly discuss environmental racism and Wal-Mart. As previously stated, these are two issues that have global implications and provide examples of how local communities can overcome their differences to find solutions that best meet their needs.

**Environmental Justice**

Issues of environmental hazards have also resulted in interracial alliances. Pastor (2014) writes that one of the first examples is, “the solidarity and support between Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles and the Mothers of East LA to resist the placement of a ‘waste to energy’ incinerator in the area bordering their two neighborhoods in the mid-1980s” (Pastor, 44). These groups were victorious and communities in that area have continued to benefit from the hard work of these two organizations deciding to work across racial lines.

**Wal-Mart in Inglewood**

A major issue that has impacted communities all over the world is the issue of large companies destroying local businesses. Los Angeles is not an exception to this phenomenon, and Wal-Mart has received lots of negative attention for being a culprit of destroying local economies and replacing them with low-wage jobs. In 2004, thanks to the organizing of The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, Black, and Brown
residents, Wal-Mart was denied permission to build a supercenter in Inglewood. Pastor (2014) writes that the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy was also successful in their effort to, “clean up the port trucking industry while securing better working condition for its mostly immigrant Latino drivers” (Pastor, 58). The inception of a Wal-Mart would have surely devastated a large sector of the local economy in Inglewood. Examples such as Wal-Mart are meaningful but have not received the same level of attention as other events have.

Los Angeles Uprising (Riots): April 24, 1992

The early 1990s saw an increased level of interest regarding Black and Brown relations in Los Angeles primarily as a result of what some refer to as the Los Angeles Riots and others refer to as the Los Angeles Uprising.

On April 24, 1992 the streets of Los Angeles erupted with what some scholars have referred to as riots and others have referred to as an uprising. 1992 marked the quincentennial anniversary of Christopher Columbus making contact with the western hemisphere. Scholars and journalists have documented the Los Angeles riots, referred to here as the Los Angeles uprising. For the purposes of this research, I limit the scope on the actual activities of those days and how it impacted the physical city of Los Angeles. It is, however, worth exploring how the Los Angeles uprising of 1992 impacted race relations in Los Angeles.

Navarro (1994) discusses the destruction of the physical city of Los Angeles. He writes, “The unprecedented convulsion of violence, destruction, and death has been described by writers as a riot, rebellion, disorder, disturbance, and uprising. However
described, it awoke the nation to the painful reality of the precarious deteriorating condition of race relations in most American cities” (69). Navarro’s description of the physical city of Los Angeles being destroyed here mirrors what he argues happened to race relations in most American cities at the time. In other words, both the physical city and race relations were destroyed simultaneously; however, their destruction created the space for reinvention. Navarro also notes that even though the participants were from different ethnic groups, the activities resulted in increased tension between groups, especially between Latinos and African-Americans (78).

Chang (1994) argues that the 1992 Los Angeles uprising forced race and race relations to receive local and larger attention and that race relations in Los Angeles became a central topic for conversations about race and race relations at the time. Chang then argues that it forced people to conceptualize their beliefs on race and race relations in new ways. “Myths and theories of the melting pot, of assimilation and of the plural society were shattered as racial violence vividly exposed the inadequacy of our prior assumptions… Los Angeles’ civil unrest was America’s first multiethnic ‘riot’…” (1).

Navarro concludes his analysis of the 1992 uprising by arguing that it is in the best interest for Latinos to improve relationships with other ethnic communities. “Inter-ethnic coalition-building is a must… Only through the creation of a Latino unified effort will the barrios of South Central Los Angeles and the rest of Los Angeles be transformed from islands of deprivation to communities of prosperity” (Navarro, 82-83). While Navarro’s call for interethnic coalition building is heartfelt and well intentioned, it is flawed for two reasons. First, it is a general statement, and he provides no concrete
method(s) or recommendations for undergoing such an inter-ethnic coalition. Second, a call for an inter-ethnic coalition overlooks (pre)existing efforts to form inter-ethnic coalitions. The following section discusses the role of Latinos in the election of President Barrack Obama.

2008: Our First Black President

President Barrack Obama’s election in 2008 also brought national attention to issue of Black and Brown relations. Whitaker (2011) writes that as it looked like President Obama was going to surpass Hillary Clinton and become the Democratic nominee, Black and Brown leaders began to fill in spots on National Public Radio, major newspapers, scholarly forums, and Sunday morning news shows. “Many wondered aloud if the large numbers of Latino voters who had pledged their support for Clinton would cast their vote for Obama” (259). Whitaker also writes that many black Obama supporters felt betrayed by Latinos for not supporting Obama in the first place. While Latinos’ support for Hillary Clinton does not equate to dislike for Obama, it does suggest that the national election process makes (at least in this case) Black and Brown relations a challenging goal. As I discuss later, the most effective collaborations between Black and Brown communities has been done locally and regionally.

Ultimately, the Democratic Party was able to win the 2008 presidential election and President Barrack Obama became the first ever African-American president. Whitaker (2011) makes the argument that President Obama’s election then became a moment in history that Black and Brown communities are able to share as a mutual triumph. “Despite the distrust and conflict that has often existed between these two
groups, 67 percent of Latino voters, many of whom are Chicanos, voted for and helped elect the first African American President of the United States” (278). While some may argue that a national election is not an accurate measure for Black and Brown relations, it is worth noting this event even if for no other reason than its historic significance. Furthermore, Obama’s election did not and does not put racism behind us. However, it does highlight the complexities that have historically (and continue to) accompany Black and Brown relations.

**Ongoing Tensions/Challenges for Black and Brown Unity: Interracial, Violent Conflict**

Whitaker (2011) writes that some Chicano and African-American leaders have stated that a conflict between the two communities does not exist. This is interesting because there is a lot of research that suggests this is not true. Whitaker finds the absence of interracial conflict nearly impossible. Whitaker (2011) is certain that there must exist tension or hostility between Black and Brown communities. He attributes this certainty to, “ongoing demographic shifts, battles over illicit drug markets, and gang turf wars, intensified by xenophobia and lingering racist stereotypes, generated anxiety and dissonance between the groups” (274). Whitaker’s reasons are plentiful and diverse. Each of the reasons mentioned by Whitaker are valid concerns that impact people’s lives regularly.

Often, hate crimes are targeted most towards Black and Brown communities (Pastor, 2014). Furthermore, each group is the suspect in the other group’s hate crime a majority of the time (43). This is very upsetting and is an issue that deserves more local, regional, national, and possibly even international attention and resources.
The results of the 2001 Los Angeles County Social Survey (Sears, 2002) also provides insight into understanding interracial conflict in Los Angeles. Sears (2002) lists two major reasons that people in Los Angeles think increase interethnic conflict in Los Angeles. His findings conclude that African-Americans feel that “gang-related crime is a primary source of ethnic conflict” (16). African-Americans were also found to be discontent with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).

The Media

Media has a powerful influence on how we come to our decisions. It also has an influence on how Black and Brown communities view and interact with one another in Los Angeles. Ortiz Cuevas (2014) point suggests that the media does not report on the general pulse of Black and Brown relations but rather tends to focus on anomalies. These anomalies are those accounts of Black and Brown violence, which are the, “most widely disseminated representations of Black-Brown relations in the city” (239). This Black and Brown violence has become the predominating narrative in many circles. Needless to say, this narrative is not conducive to creating an environment of coalition building or even improving race relations.

Ortiz Cuevas is not alone in her position on the media and its approach toward Black and Brown relations. Pastor (2014) echoes the argument of Ortiz Cuevas, but Pastor argues that the media has depicted a steady rise of increasing and worsening relationship between Black and Brown communities. He believes that the focus of the media has been on conflicts in gangs, local politics, youth, and violence in high schools
The arguments of Ortiz Cuevas and Pastor are similar in that they suggest the media is presenting a one-sided (and limited) account of Black and Brown relations.

The problem, then, is not what the media is portraying; the problem lies in what the media is not portraying. By only focusing on negative aspects of Black and Brown relations, the media is not presenting the other side of the story. Positive stories like the ones discussed in this thesis project are not receiving the same amount of attention or resources that negative stories are receiving. For example, Johnson (2014) notes that negative media accounts can, “negate-the persistent, often radical coalitional politics that are more consistent with our intertwined histories” (335). Following this logic, the media fails to be a source of objective truth and is instead working at suppressing Black and Brown communities.

Frasure-Yokley and Greene (2014) practically accuse the media of fabricating stories, or at least not doing their research before presenting stories. They discuss the immigration reform debacle of 2006. During this time, the media reported about a Black-Latino divide in Los Angeles. The media’s argument was that Black leaders did not support immigration reform. However, “there remains little systematic research on Black views toward undocumented immigration to the United States” (91). Frasure-Yokley and Greene’s argument takes the media’s role in Black and Brown relations one step further by turning the media into an agitator of Black and Brown tensions.

African-American Views on Immigration

The following section is a discussion on the existing literature discussing Black and Brown relations as they relate to immigration. Research on Black and Brown
relations as they relate to undocumented immigration has focused on the Black community’s opinion on undocumented immigration and immigration reform. The research has found that Blacks either see undocumented immigrants as a threat to their well-being or as deserving to be naturalized.

Frasure-Yokley and Greene (2014) note that undocumented immigration in Los Angeles is usually perceived as being linked to Latinas/os. This means that, “Blacks who hold negative racial stereotypes about Latinos are more likely to favor more punitive policies toward undocumented immigrants (107). Conversely, Frasure-Yokley and Greene (2014) found that there is a positive relationship between Blacks’ racial identity and perceived commonality with Latinos influence Blacks’ opinions on policies toward undocumented immigrants.

There are also some members of the Black (and Brown) community who feel threatened by the presence of undocumented immigrants in Los Angeles. These individuals feel threatened because they feel that undocumented immigrants are taking away from a finite amount of resources available to the public. HoSang (2014) tells us that immigration oppositionists argue that immigrants are stealing finite resources from everyone else. Thus, immigrants are (partially) to blame for the lack of Black progress.

However, this argument ignores, “decades of racist policies, structures, and abandonment” (HoSang, 123). The research on Black Brown relations as they relate to undocumented immigration is not vast, but the existing research does suggest that there is room and need for general education about immigration and how it impacts Black and Brown relations. However, it is important to note that the area of Black and Brown
relations as they relate to immigration deserves further attention. Barreto, et al. (2014) recently found that Latino immigrants, in fact, do not, “perceive competition with African Americans in California” (219). This research contradicts the current overwhelming consensus. They note that most research to date has focused on the question of African-Americans viewing Latinos as a threat, not vice-versa. Barreto, et al. (2014) also note that a lot of studies that examine the idea of competition between Black and Brown communities do not juxtapose that sense of competition with other groups. Thus, to only focus on Black and Brown competition overlooks competition these groups might sense with other groups (i.e. Whites, Asians, etc.).

**Ongoing Common Concerns**

Despite the many examples of Black and Brown communities working together there continues to be common concerns that impact both communities. These might be thought of as areas where dialogues can exist and bridges might be built. We know that there is other factors at play that help turn small differences into large wedges. These factors can be internal or external; they can be local, regional, national, or even international. There are issues diving Black and Brown communities that stem from historical circumstances and some that are evolving now because of new policies that have yet to be introduced. The only constant in the research discussing divides between Black and Brown communities is that there is not black and white, only gray. Some of these issues are discussed below in an attempt to show the magnitude and plethora of issues preventing (or potentially open the possibilities for) a Black and Brown alliance.
Jails

Ortiz Cuevas (2014) reminds us that the Los Angeles County Jail is a physical space that Black and Brown communities share. It is worth mentioning this statistic if for no other reason than to remind ourselves of how society as it currently is continues to fail Black and Brown youth. “More than one million predominately Black and Brown people are processed through the Los Angeles County Jail every year-an extraordinary number in a county of nine million people” (248). Even more important, Ortiz Cuevas argues, is how the jail is a site of racial coalescence but is ignored by many scholars and public intellectuals whose primary focus are sites of racial intersection (ibid.). These Black and Brown individuals continue to be on the periphery of ongoing discussion of race and racism.

Economic Concerns & Job Opportunities

Issues concerning job production and the economy affect both Black and Brown communities. Although specific needs may be different for each group, this is one area that calls for attention from both groups. Pastor (2014) lists reasons to justify why Black and Brown communities have a shared interest in the development of a workforce agenda. Besides benefitting people in their daily lives, economic development is a strategic area to organize around because it has tangible goals and tangible benefits. Reaching these goals could show communities that an interracial coalition can reap benefits. He lists reasons such as, “a better performing education system at all levels, a broad commitment to new employment that can replace the role of manufacturing, and the sort of public transit system that will connect blacks and Latinos to jobs” (55). He
goes on to state that these are issues that progressive organizers have been focusing on for decades.

*Lack of Public Space*

Another issue that works against Black and Brown unity is the insufficient amount of available public spaces in many Black and Brown neighborhood. Pastor (2014) calls attention to this lack of public space by comparing Black and Brown communities to crowded roommates. “Just like crowded roommates who may or may not like each other, Latinos and blacks living in close quarters are bound for an occasional fight” (Pastor, 43). Here, Pastor is referring to public spaces such as public parks where individuals can go for recreational activities and have access to greenery and natural wildlife.

*Summary of Issues Preventing Black and Brown Unity*

Kun and Pulido (2014) agree that there have been occasions when Black and Brown communities work in unison. However, she argues that this has happened along separate, parallel paths. They also note that there are occasional openly, and sometimes violent, rifts between both communities (9). Separate and parallel paths, as Kun and Pulido refer to them, could both be healthy and necessary for Black and Brown communities. After all, each community should be granted the ability to discuss, develop, and resolve issues facing them as they see fit.

Stephan and Stephan (2004) argue that ignorance, in short, plays a part in interethnic relations. They write that people often rely on stereotypes when interacting with people from a different group. They argue that multicultural materials can have an
impact this because this “puts a human face on out-groups” (789). While this may hold true for a lot, or possibly even most, people, there does continue to be examples of organizational attempts where Black and Brown communities work together towards a common goal. The following sections present some of these examples.

Examples of Black and Brown Sharing Community Organizations

This section discusses four organizations that practice interracial dialogue through their organization. These organizations are The Black and Brown Brotherhood, Youth Action, SCOPE, and the Colorful Flags Program. Each of these organizations focuses on issues that they felt were most important to them. Following these four organizations, there is a discussion on cultural spaces and how cultural spaces have also allowed Black and Brown communities to engage in dialogue. The reoccurring theme in these organizations was the use of exposure to the other culture and dialogue between groups to improve Black and Brown relations.

The Black and Brown Brotherhood

Racial tension has and continues to exist on school campuses, but these tensions are sometimes countered through organizing and leadership. The Black and Brown Brotherhood came together in the 1970s to address this at Hollenbeck Junior High School in Boyle Heights. Kun and Pulido (2014) document an instance in the 1970s when racial tensions grew between Black and Brown students at Hollenbeck Junior High in Boyle Heights. Ruben Leon formed the Black and Brown Brotherhood Band in order to alleviate the racial tension at their school (4). Creating this organization provided an alternative space for discussing solutions. Efforts like the ones by Ruben Leon require
bravery because of the risk of becoming an outcast for going against what is popular at the time.

The example of the Black and Brown Brotherhood was found on school grounds, but Youth Action is an example of an organization with a similar goal but based in the community.

*Youth Action*

Youth Action also incorporated dialogue to improve Black and Brown relations in what they referred to as learning and discovery. Watkins, et al. (2007) attempt to decrease racial biases between Latinos and African-Americans through a community youth activism program named Youth Action. Gathering information from a series of interviews that took place over a four month time period, the article concludes there are three steps associated with race/ethnicity perception changes: 1) developing relationships across groups; 2) learning and discovery; 3) practicing/implementing the knowledge gained. Youth Action was successful in reducing racial biases between Latinos and African-Americans.

*SCOPE*

Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) utilizes dialogue in order to improve Black-Latino relations. Pastor (2014) discusses one strategy that is used by (SCOPE). This strategy could be implemented in business and work areas throughout. SCOPE has created spaces where their members can have Black-Latino dialogues. In these spaces, members stop their work and have conversations with one another. (59). This is one strategy that is not confined to a specific location or a specific
group of people. Dialogues such as the ones by SCOPE could be held in any locale and be catered to any group(s) of people represented there.

**Colorful Flags Program**

The fourth example is the Colorful Flags Program. This organization utilized exposure to culture in order to improve interethnic relations. In 1993, as a doctoral student at USC, Reese (2001) developed the Colorful Flags Program (CFP) in response to the Los Angeles Riots. The purpose of the CFP was to decrease interracial tension by exposing students to cultures outside of their own. The CFP consisted of, “a program guide, phonetic cards in 22 languages, audiotapes, an 8-minute introduction videotape, a 27-minute educational videotape, an 18-minute short film, and a board game. CFP serviced approximately 130,000 K-12 students in 17 school districts in California” (277). CFP was a success through southern California.

CFP was so successful that it was used in fields outside of education. “This program has also been implemented in police departments, hospitals, and various other organizations. In 1996, the Los Angeles Human Relations Commission endorsed the Colorful Flags approach as one of its seven recommendations to stem racism and anti-immigrant sentiment in Los Angeles” (ibid.). Its popularity and recognition is testimony to the notion that curriculum can improve our perceptions of cultures outside of our own.

The following chapter discusses how Lowriders and popular culture serve as cultural expressions for, and reflect, Black and Brown communities.
Chapter 3

**Healing: Popular Culture and Ethnic Studies Departments**

Like all intergroup alliances, it is important to understand that each group will have its individual wants, needs, and concerns. Whitaker (2011) argues that the decision for these Black and Brown communities to focus on their own interests instead of working with each other might bring forth rewards for them in the short term (267). However, these short-term rewards might be at the expense of a long-term relationship that could reap greater rewards. In this chapter, I discuss two examples of spaces that have historically allowed Black and Brown communities to heal. The first one is Hip-Hop and is included here because of its ability to overcome barriers of race, gender, sexuality, language, age, and level of education. The second section discusses Ethnic Studies as a site for improving interracial relations, and it is this section that is the emphasis of this study and transition to the following chapters.

Lowriders and music have been documented as being able to create spaces that encourage communication between Black and Brown communities. The following sections discuss research on Lowriders and music, and how these two forms of cultural expression have created dialogue between Black and Brown communities.

**Fusion(s) of Expression: Culture as a Space for Black and Brown Unity**

Through my research, cultural expression surfaced as a space where different cultures can blend almost seamlessly. In the case of Black and Brown relations, three specific areas were the most documented and scrutinized. In the next section, three areas where Black and Brown communities fused and manifested through cultural expression...
are discussed. The first topic of discussion is low riding culture, where cars were modified into a form of public art. The second section discusses music; specifically, Brown-Eyed Soul and Hip-Hop are presented as musical genres that have successfully incorporated both Black and Brown culture.

In the examples of both Lowriders and music, it appears that Black and Brown communities did not just blend for the sake of creating culture. In both examples, political statements are made. Both lowriders and music provide spaces where Black and Brown communities can come together to create new dialogues and develop relationships that empower them.

Chicana/os and African-Americans have a history of influencing one another. For example, Alvarez and Widener (2008) provide a long list of specific examples where Chicana/os and African-Americans have worked together in a sociopolitical setting. The authors note that the California Eagle, a black newspaper, assisted young Chicanos during the Zoot Suit Riots. The authors also argue that Chicana/o Studies and Pan-African Studies Departments have recently paralleled each other by focusing on postnational/international sociopolitical issues. MacDonald, et al. (2007) argue that the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the 1965 Higher Education Act were intended to benefit Blacks, but eventually opened up opportunities for Latinos. The authors also provide an overview of the influence that Black colleges had in developing Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Examples of Black and Brown Critically Sharing Popular Culture

Alvarez (2007) attempts to explore how Black and Brown youth have not only
shared the physical space of Los Angeles but its history as well. He does this by looking at how they have transformed spaces collectively in an attempt to retain their dignity. Alvarez (2007) begins his research by discussing the paradox that exists in the interactions and shared living experiences between Black and Brown communities. While coexistence between the communities can create new and wonderful experiences, it can also reap competition and unhealthy relationships. “The continued growth of global cities like Los Angeles, New York, and Houston facilitates inter-ethnic cultural expression among resident youth, who often share schools and neighborhoods, yet also strengthens inter-ethnic conflict among working-class communities competing over jobs, housing, and urban resources” (65). Alvarez focuses on exploring how Black and Brown communities have shared cultural expression throughout the years.

Alvarez examines three eras of what he refers to as Chicana/o youth cultural production. The first era is the zoot suit and jazz scenes of the 1940s. He then looks at the art and poetry scenes of the Civil Rights Movement, and last, he looks at the hip-hop and underground music scenes of the postindustrial era. His conclusion is that Chicana/o identity is deeply shaped by their relations to other communities of color. Essentially, his argument is that what was historically able to bind Chicanas/os and other communities of color together has been, not just shared experiences, but their, “profound connection between their efforts to reclaim dignity amidst difficult life conditions, including internment, discrimination, and poverty” (Alvarez, 55). Here, Alvarez’ argument means that these communities of color were not merely trying to survive, but that they were attempting to see the humanity in each other. By reclaiming their dignity, Chicanas/os
and African-Americans were humanizing each other and creating relations that went beyond coalitions that sought immediate and shortsighted results.

Alvarez argues that communities of color were denied their dignity during World War II by reminding us of examples such as Japanese American internment, Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles for Chicanas/os and racial violence targeting African Americans throughout the United States. Another example is the treatment of returning GIs. Black GIs were not allowed to purchase homes in just any neighborhood. They were steered towards Pacoima. Latina/o GIs also faced discrimination. Alvarez argues that the zoot suit, a popular cultural expression in both Chicana/o and African-American communities, is evidence that youth was resisting. “These cultural practices are, in part, a politics of refusal: a refusal to accept humiliation, a refusal to quietly endure dehumanization, and a refusal to conform” (Alvarez, 5). Alvarez then argues that the zoot suiters of the 1940s and modern day hip-hop artists create a historical line, a legacy, of youth culture that is fighting for their dignity. He also argues that zoot culture facilitated cross-cultural borrowing (60-61). The following section discusses Lowriders and their ability to transcend Black and Brown racial lines.

**Lowriders**

Lowriders are vehicles that have hydraulic jacks installed. These hydraulic jacks allow the vehicle to be lowered or heightened through a control system. The lowrider culture has become an international sensation; in Los Angeles, it has resulted in shared spaces between Black and Brown communities.
Black and Brown communities have both shown a high interest in lowrider culture. Sandoval (2014) writes that lowriders have, “led to interconnections and the creation of multicultural spaces” (177). Beyond simply creating these spaces, Sandoval (2014) goes on to compare lowriders as a bridge that have connected East Los Angeles and South Central. Indeed, lowriders have the ability to transcend language, skin color, and immigration status.

Sandoval (2014) continues her conversation on lowriders by putting forward the idea that lowriders have been a constant link between Black and Brown communities since the 1940s. She makes this claim by suggesting that the history of lowriders is interconnected with the history of Black and Brown communities, “reaching back to the swing and jazz scene of the 1940s and to the R&B and rock ‘n’ roll scene of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s… The explosion of hip-hop culture in the 1980s and 1990s in Los Angeles also displayed this interconnectedness and transformed low-rider culture” (178). Here, Sandoval (2014) is successful in doing at least two things: 1) She is able to identify a space that can be used as a hands on tool for those working at improving Black and Brown relations; 2) She reinforces existing notions of a Black and Brown shared history.

In the next section, I explore music and provide some examples of how music has been used to, not only create dialogue but also encourage community building between Black and Brown communities.

Music

Music has received more attention than any other venue for artistic expression with respect to Black and Brown collaboration. Perhaps this is due to music’s popularity.
The research on this topic has provided a historical context with Brown-Eyed Soul and a more recent understanding with music that emerged after the Los Angeles Riots of 1992. The following section explores some of the more documented examples of Black and Brown communities fusing to create music. What is especially important to note is the reoccurring theme: this fusion has not been music for the mere purposes of entertainment but rather the music has emerged as a response to larger issues their communities were facing at the time.

Brown-Eyed Soul

Alvarez and Widener (2011) discuss the musical genre brown-eyed soul, which was most popular during the 1960s through the 80s. They argue that it reflects a long legacy of black-brown relations in Los Angeles and California. Brown-eyed soul combined elements of, “rock, soul, jazz, R&B, country western, Mexican, and Caribbean rhythms, grew from the city’s interracial past to challenge the segregated and culturally nationalist streams of the era’s ethnic politics” (Alvarez and Widener, 212). They go on to argue that the spaces where brown-eyed soul was performed also allowed Black and Brown communities to discuss social and political relationships. The infusion of Black and Brown cultures is worth exploring especially if it led to social and political discussions and alliances.

Alvarez and Widener (2011) argue that brown-eyed soul reveals that were interracial politics taking place in postwar Los Angeles during a time when the civil rights movement had been fragmented, “into strands of black, brown, red, yellow, gay, and women’s power, along with the intensification of racial violence and rebellion in
Watts and other urban areas across the country” (222). However, Alvarez and Widener argue, that despite the fragmentation that was occurring in the civil rights movement abroad, brown-eyed soul was able to create bridges between communities. It did so, “by combining new sounds, styles, and rhythms in ways that articulated a Chicana/o and black politics that drew from one another and cultivated connections between the two” (ibid.). Music then, historically, has been a space that has allowed for Black and Brown communities to learn from each other. It also created spaces for Black and Brown communities to work together and build relationships.

More Recent Musical Amalgams

Alvarez and Widener (2011) argue that there has been a recent fusion of musical genres and communities in Los Angeles that parallels the one seen with brown-eyed soul. The authors disagree with the popular belief of many Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies scholars that accredits the birth and rise of groups like, “Quetzal, Burning Star, East L.A. Sabor Factory, and Ozomatli” (230-231) exclusively to Spanish speaking communities. Instead, the authors argue that the rise of these groups, “speaks to a left-inflected, sonic blending that represents a profound coming together of African American and Latin music” (ibid.). Kun (2014) feels that the musical group Ozomatli is the quintessential example of Black and Brown communities using music as a venue to blend their styles. Kun (2014) describes them as, “a band of multiracial urban fusionists, self-professed anarchists, and red diaper babies…” (389). Ozomatli has also been extremely successful since their creation up until the present time.
If the mixing of musical genres between Black and Brown communities has previously and continues to exist, then those alliances between Black and Brown communities are not limited to alliances in search of a tangible reward.

However, as Alvarez and Widener stated was the case with brown-eyed soul, it is possible that the blending of musical genres may not create political power, but it may create the environment, or space, that allows for Black and Brown communities to have dialogues. In other words, music may not have the power, in itself, to bring about social justice; music may, however, be a practical and logical space for dialogues to take place and form shared opinions.

*Hip-Hop*

McFarland (2008) uses hip-hop culture to understand race and ethnicity in the United States. McFarland then argues that rap/hip-hop culture is one space/setting where Chicana/os and African-Americans interact and exchange culture. The author then provides a historical and contemporary analysis of specific ways that Chicana/os and African-Americans have worked together under the umbrella of hip-hop.

Francisco and Sergio Gómez are the musical group *Akwid*. On June 10, 2003 *Akwid* released their album *Proyecto Akwid*. This album was able to successfully mix hip-hop with Mexican regional (in this case *banda*) music. What is important about *Akwid* is not just the example of being able to merge cultures successfully, but rather the spaces that exist for Black and Brown communities to create new forms, or modified, forms of expression.
Kun (2014) writes that *Akwid*, “asks us to think about what the cultural practices emerge within these systems of exploitation and abuse, within these histories of disharmony” (378). These cultural practices are potentially organic manifestations of community building that can provide insight to strengthening Black and Brown relations. This is a case that deserves additional attention from scholars in the future as it may provide further insight to understanding how music can serve as a space for improving Black and Brown relations.

Francisco and Sergio Gómez grew up in South Central Los Angeles and were surrounded by Black culture and interracial tension. They were then able to create a musical style that merged hip-hop with *banda*. While their approach may be distinct in its own right, Kun (2014) argues that their fusion of musical genres is part of a legacy of musical blending throughout Los Angeles. Kun (2014) writes that, “Akwid’s regionalization of hip-hop is a reminder that South Central and Southeast Los Angeles have long been vital spaces of exchange and coalition between black and Mexican communities” (388). Significant here then is that Akwid allows us to revisit this dialogue and introduce it to a newer generation.

One advantage that *Akwid* has over, for example, Brown-Eyed Soul is the disc jockey (DJ) and the new technological tools that they have received in recent decades. Kun (2014) credits the DJ for having been able to successfully blended Mexican regional (*banda*) music with hip-hop. He then makes the argument that this DJ should be considered a crossfader, because of their ability to work with an African American art form and incorporate that method to Mexican music (390). This analysis is important
because it encourages us to dissect music as an art form. Each individual piece, style, or instrument in its own right can be adapted as a tool for discussing Black and Brown relations.

Hip-Hop allows for race and racism to be discussed outside of the classroom and this is important. For many, Hip-Hop provides information and tools to understand the world around them they would not otherwise acquire. For a structured educational experience, Ethnic and Chicana/o Studies provide a much more comprehensive experience. Furthermore, colleges have resources that can provide additional opportunities to students so that they receive a holistic education. The college campus has and continues to be a site for Black and Brown communities to heal and strengthen their relationships.

Healing through Ethnic Studies

I will now highlight more formalized ways in which ethnic studies can institutionalize a cross-race dialogue, and interethnic collaborations. To do this, it is important that we first differentiate between Chicana/o Studies and multicultural education. Once this distinction is made, then I present a historical analysis of the origins of Ethnic Studies. Then I provide a brief overview of the genesis of Chicana/o Studies. After an overview on the genesis of Chicana/o Studies, I follow with a discussion on how Ethnic Studies can serve as a space to improve Black and Brown relations.

Ethnic Studies (Chicana/o Studies) v. Multicultural Education

Ethnic Studies and Multicultural Education are different from one another. Chicana/o Studies does not fall under the umbrella of multicultural education; Chicana/o
Studies falls under the umbrella of Ethnic Studies. Although they may appear to be similar, or even identical to some, they have fundamental differences that distinguish them from each other and should not be used synonymously. One of the biggest differences between them is that multicultural education address issues within the system, while Ethnic Studies generally seek to address the system itself. This is a fundamental difference with many implications.

Banks (2010) provides a definition of multicultural education. He identifies three characteristics that define multicultural education. They are, “an idea or concept, and educational reform movement, and a process” (3). Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies are more critical of the education system and are less interested in educational reform. Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies call to question the legitimization of the system in place as is later described when the establishment of Chicana/o Studies is discussed.

May (1999) also identifies emphasizing curriculum over activism as one of the biggest problem with multicultural education. “A key weakness historically of multicultural education theory and practice has been an overemphasis on the significance of curricular change and an underemphasis, and at times disavowal, of the impact of structural racism on students’ lives” (2). In contrast, Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies attempt to address issues by recognizing systemic problems, i.e. colonialism and racism. Chicana/o and Ethnic Studies give more credence

Chicana/o Studies has a legacy of attempting to connect their curriculum and pedagogy with direct community action. The Draft Report of CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies defines Ethnic Studies (2015) defines Ethnic Studies as,
“the interdisciplinary and comparative study of race and ethnicity with special focus on four historically defined racialized core groups: Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina/o Americans” (5). Acuña (2011) writes, “The role of Chicana/o Studies is to organize and systemize the knowledge of people of Mexican descent, as well as to serve as a pedagogical tool to educate and motivate the massive numbers of Mexican Americans and Latinas/os in the United States” (Acuña, xxi). Here, the goal is not reform; instead, the goal is to educate and motivate Mexican-Americans and Latinas/os. One of Chicana/o Studies; central goals is to support students’ development as critical thinkers and to encourage students to give back to their communities.

Additionally, Sleeter (2011) reminds us that it is important to take seriously the racism, “racism that people of color live everyday, and knowledge that arises from within communities of color” (5). It is important that all students, including students of color, receive an education that reflects their lived experiences.

Sleeter (2011) identifies five themes that appeared throughout Ethnic Studies. She argues that these five themes differentiate Ethnic Studies from other academic disciplines. These five themes are: “1) explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective; 2) examination of U.S. colonialism historically, as well as how relations of colonialism continue to play out; 3) examination of the historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism, and struggles for liberation; 4) probing meanings of collective or communal identities that people hold; 5) studying one’s community’s
creative and intellectual products, both historic and contemporary” (3). What these five themes have in common is that they challenge the legitimacy of the education system as a whole. For Black and Brown relations, the examination of U.S. colonialism is absolute necessary. It is impossible to understand Black and Brown relations anywhere in the United States without incorporating an analysis of colonialism.

These five themes also surfaced during the interviews conducted for this research, which I discuss later. Each of these five themes is important in their own right because they legitimatize the experiences of people of color. These five themes are both evident in the historical legacy of Chicana/o Studies, which is discussed in the following section.

**Historical Context: A United Movement in Universities to Resist Oppression**

Reese (2011) reminds us that the Ethnic Studies Movement developed out of the Civil Rights Movement. The purpose of the Ethnic Studies Movement was to create spaces on universities where students could further explore, understand, challenge, and develop notions of race, class, and gender (Reese, 278). The Ethnic Studies Movement felt that these were areas that were not being explored adequately by other departments at the time (Acuña, 2011). They understood the significance of understanding the role that race and racism plays in the interactions of different peoples throughout society. Therefore, understanding Black and Brown relations falls within the realm of Ethnic Studies and the Ethnic Studies Movement.

Smith & Bender (2008) write, that every major city in the United States saw an influx of students of color on their universities during the 1960s. These students demanded a curriculum that reflected them. They demanded curriculum that reflected
their intellectual traditions and cultural values. Eventually, the work of the students earned them African-American Studies, and then later Chicano Studies and Asian-American Studies (Smith & Bender, 270). Herein lies what could be considered to be an impeccable example of what can happen when disadvantaged people of color forge an alliance. Together, students of color were able to challenge the existing system and bring forth changes that benefited them both individually and collectively.

Reese (2011) reminds us that two premises fueled the Ethnic Studies Movement. One premise was that, “students representing the dominant group” should be exposed to differing historical perspectives (Reese, 278). Reese (2011) also argues that one premise of multicultural education is that it should, “enhance the self-esteem of those students who represent the non-dominant group” (Reese, 278). The literature on RID suggests that those in the Pre-Encounter status usually deny their racial identity. As a result, their self-esteem is usually negatively impacted. Through acknowledging their identity, RID theory suggests that the individual’s self esteem is developed and is more likely to result in them moving on to a different stage/status (Phinney, 1996; Ruiz, 1990; Cross, 1971; Helms, 1995). Thus, one of the original premises of Ethnic Studies parallels what RID theory suggests.

On some university campuses, Ethnic Studies formed; others were able to develop more concentrated disciplines such as Asian-American Studies, Pan-African Studies, and Chicana/o Studies. The names of these additional departments were not identical across different campuses. For example some campuses developed their programs under the name of African-American Studies instead of Pan-African Studies or Mexican-American
Studies instead of Chicana/o Studies, etc. The specific goals and mission statements of each individual department may have also differed in some details. The differences, however, are outside the scope of this research. Important to note is that students across college campuses throughout the United States were changing the epistemological landscape on universities.

In her summary of the fight for and establishment of Ethnic Studies and related departments, Hu-DeHart (2004) examined general sentiment of students of color attending universities at the time. She writes that in 1968, students of color, “had been demanding greater access to higher education, recruitment of more faculty of color, and the creation of programs that have come to be collectively known as ethnic studies and separately by a variety of names: Black Studies (also Afro-American Studies, African American Studies, Africana Studies); Chicana/o, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican Studies (also Latina/o Studies); American Indian (or Native American) Studies; and Asian American Studies” (869). These demands escalated into protests, hunger strikes, rioting, arrests, and in some cases, even students being injured. Hu-DeHart tells us that these demands, led by students of color, began at San Francisco State, University of California at Berkeley, and the University of California at Santa Barbara but spread to many campuses across the nation (ibid.). The fact that these demands spread to campuses across the nation tells us that students of color were facing a national epidemic, and not just a local or regional problem.

Although met with severe resistance from their respective universities, Hu-DeHart (2004) argues that the demands of the students were not eccentric. “These students
wanted what most other students want out of an education; to study the experiences and contributions of their community to U.S. society and culture to use the resources of the university to help solve community problems (872-873). The conception of Ethnic and Chicana/o Studies was intended to create a satellite for communities of color positioned inside of the university. Then, Ethnic and Chicana/o Studies would be able to advocate for the university to distribute resources back into communities of color in order to solve issues communities of color face. To this extent, that Chicana/o Studies should be a space to improve interethnic relations between Chicanas/os and African-Americans makes complete sense at least if placed within a historical context.

*Origins of Chicana/o Studies*

Macias (2005) argues that the establishment and development of Chicana/o Studies was two fold. First, he argues that Chicana/o Studies was a reaction to the existing research on Chicanas/os that was deficit oriented. Second, it was intended to advance the accuracy and ability to understand, “this heterogeneous population, and its place and context in society” (170-71).

Soldatenko (2009) highlights why access to the university was so important to Chicana/o students. “As self-identified Chicano(a) students arrived on campus, many became active in the educational institutions... Chicanos(as) were also concerned with curricular issues. If students were planning to change the world, they had to comprehend it” (3). In other words, these students understood how important and impactful having access to academic institutions could be for them and the Chicana/o community.
Soldatenko (2009) and Acuña (2011) both summarize the establishment of Chicana/o Studies. Soldatenko (2009) attempts to provide a general narrative for the phenomena that occurred across different campuses in the establishment of their respective Ethnic Studies department. Acuña (2011) also provides a synopsis of the events that led to different Ethnic Studies departments, but his work focuses primarily on the establishment of Chicana/o Studies at Valley State (CSU Northridge).

Soldatenko (2009) attempts to understand why activism on university campuses was so important. Chicana/o students/activists thought of the university as an important place to focus their activist efforts. Soldatenko describes why this was such an important space for Chicana/o students/activists:

…students of color initially sought to disrupt academic knowledge. In its place, they wanted to design a new body of knowledge. They required a knowledge that could more honestly and truthfully explain the condition of people of color. For Mexican American activists, this often meant that a space had to be carved out of higher education-a space that would be controlled by Mexican Americans and driven by Mexican American social and political concerns. This could be only be accomplished by direct confrontation with the academic institution. This occupied territory of higher education would deal with student services, teaching, and research. This was to be Chicano studies-a liberated zone within the oppressor’s institution. From this liberated terrain,
activists could then direct their attention to transforming the community (5-6).

Soldatenko’s work provides the general trajectory and pulse for what happened at many college campuses in 1960s. However, he acknowledges that each campus had its own individual dynamics and series of circumstances that led to the establishment of that specific Chicana/o Studies.

Sleeter (2011) also reminds us that Ethnic Studies is a result of students demanding it. She writes, “Ethnic studies curricula exist in part because students of color have demanded an education that is relevant, meaningful, and affirming of their identities” (vii). To this extent, Sleeter links the ongoing existence of Ethnic Studies to the ongoing demand by students to continue to have Ethnic Studies.

Acuña (2011) chronicles the specific and unique circumstances, individuals, and activism that led to the establishment of the Chicana/o Studies at CSU Northridge. He acknowledges Black and Brown students coming together and that unity, in large part, resulted in Ethnic Studies:

… change had come to Valley State in 1967 as a critical mass of black students and a small number of Mexican American students enrolled on campus… Chicana/o students participated in the anti-Vietnam War rallies and the civil rights movement, and they were supportive of the East Los Angeles walkouts… With the students they hammered out what was to become known as the twelve-point agreement, which incorporated key elements of both black and
brown demands (Acuña, 48-50).

Chicana/o Studies on Interracial Relations

We are quickly becoming more aware of the positive impacts that Ethnic Studies can and are having on the racial identity of individuals. Sleeter (2011) writes, “Ethnic studies curricula are supported by research documenting a positive relationship between the racial/ethnic identity of students of color and academic achievement, as well as research on their impact” (vii). Similarly, Acuña (2011) writes, “…identity has been an important component of Chicana/o Studies. The subject matter and the production of knowledge are critical to the courses that form Chicana/o Studies” (viii). The specific dynamics that individuals undergo while participating in Ethnic Studies deserves further study and documentation.

Black and Brown relations are a topic that warrants attention from education and curriculum. Reese (2001) argues that it is important for education to, “address the seriousness of intergroup relations” (297). Reese (2001) then reminds us that education is a large part of what direction a society moves in. Furthermore, Reese (2001) argues that improving interracial relations is more effective before a crisis. “Recent history has proven that it is too costly to wait for crises to occur and then begin to teach about intergroup relations and cultural understanding” (ibid.). In other words, education as a means to reduce interracial tensions should not be limited to reconciliation but instead be focused towards a preemptive strategy to prevent crises.

A serious problem that Chicana/o Studies faces is one that it has always faced. Hu-DeHart (2004) argues that most campuses deny ethnic studies “academic currency”
by not recognizing it as a legitimate epistemological source within the university (878). This is problematic because it burdens Chicana/o Scholars with an unnecessary burden that strips resources away from further developing the discipline. However, Hu-DeHart (2004) juxtaposes his first argument with encouragement for future scholars. Hu-DeHart (2004) argues that Ethnic Studies is positioned at the core of the “project to rethink and reimagine America” (880). Although this places a burden on Ethnic Studies that other academic departments may not necessarily have to face, it allows for innovative research and approaches to solving problems. Furthermore, because Ethnic Studies is interdisciplinary, it allows for perspectives from different disciplines and backgrounds to come together.

Chicana/o Studies gives students the tools necessary to understand the world around them, specifically how race and racism impact their lives. Sleeter (2011) notes that. “Students of color experience racism; ethnic studies does not introduce them to that concept. Rather, by taking racism and culture seriously, ethnic studies curricula attempt to give students the tools to navigate racially hostile systems-tools that many high-achieving students of color acquire in their communities” (9). While participating in Chicana/o Studies courses and activities during college may not propel individuals to be completely liberated from race, racism, and colonialism, it may begin the process and serve as a solid foundation to assist individuals with that process.

Stephan and Stephan (2004) argue that education can be a space where ethnic groups can be discussed positively. They argue that this positive exposure to ethnic groups outside of one’s own can reverse existing racism. So, for example, an individual
who inherits their negative views about another ethnic group from their parents, could be exposed to, “differences in norms, beliefs, and values in a positive light” (789). This exposure, as described to Stephan and Stephan, parallels the research by Vazquez (2005).

Vazquez (2005) documented the experiences of students who participated in a senior seminar at the University of California, Berkeley in 2001. Vazquez found that students were able to connect personally with the literature and this connection led to an increased understanding and participation in the coursework. She found that, “Latino readers’ sense of ownership of the text of feeling of personal ethnic legitimization…” (919) Creating and establishing this relationship between students and their coursework increases the likelihood that the learning process is strengthened and that the needs of the students are being met.

Vazquez (2005) then goes on to echo what other scholars have described Chicana/o Studies having the power to do. That is, the transformational power of Chicana/o Studies, both for individuals and for society at large.

The Chicano Narrative class also provided an opportunity for students to cross and think beyond traditional power lines. This expansive, or subversive, thinking enlightens readers and indeed has the capacity to trouble the social status quo on a micro-level, as readers question the basis for predominant patterns of inequality, under-representation, and muted voices (919).

What Vasquez describes as questioning parallels what is referred to as the Dissonance (Helms) stage later in my discussion of RIDT.
Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discussed two spaces that allow for the exploration of Black and Brown relations. This exploration can manifest in many ways, shapes, and forms; Hip-Hop and Ethnic Studies are only two spaces where this opportunity exists. It is important we continue to strengthen these spaces while searching for additional spaces. What Hip-Hop and Ethnic Studies both have in common is that they offer a means by which to communicate and strengthen identities. They both allow for the exchange of ideas. Historically, Hip-Hop and Ethnic Studies were created to share stories and explore the world around for people of color. Hip-Hop and Ethnic Studies offer the space to communicate their experiences and deconstruct race, racism, and colonialism while strengthening their sense of identity. The following chapter discusses racial identity and attempts to highlight the importance of racial identity in order to improve Black and Brown relations.
Chapter 4

Theoretical Framework

This chapter attempts to present Chicana/o Studies as a means to improving existing Black and Brown relations. In order to do this, Racial Identity Development Theory (RIDT) is utilized to explain how taking Chicana/o Studies courses impacts the identities of Chicanas/os. RIDT argues that an individual begins in the conformity status where they idealize Whiteness and view their own racial group with inferiority. With the correct set of circumstances and exposure to knowledge and information, an individual can potentially advance through a series of statuses and reach what is referred to as integrative awareness (Helms). It is important to understand that this progression may not occur without critical moments and exposure to knowledge and information (Cross, 1971; Smith, 1992; Yeh & Hwang, 2000; Helms, 1995; Quintana, 2007; Torres, et al., 2012) that impact one’s racial identity. Identity is fluid and is impacted by the truths we learn, our experiences, and exposure to information and knowledge, and this is what makes Chicana/o Studies so crucial to the Racial Identity Development of Chicanas/os.

Chicana/o Studies explores racism; it further complicates existing arguments of race and racism in the United States of America. By doing so, Chicana/o Studies does what other, more mainstream and oversimplified, discussions of race and racism fail to accomplish. As an example of what oversimplified discussions of race and racism in the United States look like, the next section introduces and discusses the limitations of the Black-White binary. The Black-White binary is a popular way to understand race relations in America. The Black-White binary attempts to understand race and racism by
limiting racism to a dynamic that occurs between Euroamericans and African-Americans. This analysis does not thoroughly analyze racism, and more importantly, it does not take into consideration how racism impacts Chicanas/os.

Following the section on the Black-White binary, there is an overview of the terms race and ethnicity. First, the section defines the terms race and ethnicity. These terms are defined in this chapter in order to understand how they operate concurrently. They are also defined in order to better understand the subsequent section, which discusses Ethnic Identity Development Theory and Racial Identity Development Theory. These theories are discussed in order to illustrate how Chicana/o Studies’ potential for supporting individuals’ progression through the statuses of RIDT. Chicana/o Studies provides what Cross (1971) refers to as the Encounter stage and Helms (1995) refers to as dissonance. This is because Chicana/o Studies is a space where students are provided the opportunity to understand race and racism as a social construct that may have impacted them in negative ways.

*Defining Race and Ethnicity*

Before having a discussion on race, racial identity, and racial identity development theory, it is worth providing a brief understanding of ethnicity in order to distinguish it from race. Research shows that there is not a clear distinction between racial and ethnic identity development. Pizarro & Vera (2001) also note that research in psychological literature has confused the racial status of Chicanas/os with their ethnic status (94). Many scholars and theories have not been able to successfully separate the two when attempting to understand Chicanas/os.
Ethnicity is an important part of one’s identity. It helps provide a foundation for who you are and a deeper understanding of your ancestors. It also assists in distinguishing yourself from other groups. Bernal et al. tell us that, “Variations in ethnic identity are related to important differences in attitudes, values, and behaviors among members of ethnic groups” (Bernal et al., 3-4). Ethnicity is a complicated part of one’s identity, as is race.

**Debunking the Black and White Binary**

Racism is usually presented in the United States by using a Black-White binary. In other words, any conversation about race and racism almost unexceptionally resorts to a discussion of Black-White relations in America. This simplistic approach to understanding all race relations in America becomes especially problematic when one realizes that Chicanas/os can be Black racially, and identify culturally as Latino.

An attempt at understanding racism in the United States that uses the Black-White binary omits non-Black people of color from the discussion. For example, binary approaches have labeled Eurocentricity as the dominant force in the United States and everyone at the periphery. This approach has serious ramifications that limit our potential at having a comprehensive conversation about race and racism in Los Angeles and in the United States between Black and brown.

Martín Alcoff (2003) agrees the black/white binary does not adequately provide us with the tools to understand racism. She writes, “The black/white paradigm proposes to understand all conflicts between communities of color through anti-black racism, when the reality is often more complex” (17). Martín Alcoff (2003) calls for an, “expanded
analysis of racism and an attentiveness to the specificities of various forms it can take in regard to different groups...” (25). That racism can take different forms depending on the specific groups involved directly speaks to this thesis project in that the black/white binary does not allow us to understand the dynamics that take place between Black and Brown communities.

Lastly, Martín Alcoff (2003) argues that the black/white binary has also undermined the possibility for coalitions (17). Understanding Black and Brown relations requires an approach outside of the black/white binary; undoubtedly, understanding how Chicana/o Studies impacts Chicanas/os perceptions of African-Americans cannot be achieved using a black/white binary.

The next sections in this chapter provide a brief overview of two of the more popular theoretical frameworks for understanding ethnicity. These theories, although not unequivocally related to RIDT, are provided here for reference. Most important to note, is that all of the theories listed describe a progression in an individual’s understanding of themselves that begins with uncertainty and not knowing themselves. They refer to a hostile society that denigrates and dismisses racial identity. At the ends of their evolution (or development in stages) they have a more clear and potentially healthier understanding of themselves.

The first framework discussed is Phinney’s Three-Stage Ethnic Identity Development Model (1996). This model suggests a positive relationship between a person and knowing about their ethnic identity. After Phinney’s model is discussed, we move to Ruiz’ Chicano/Latino Ethnic Identity Model (2006). Ruiz’ model differs from
Phinney in that Ruiz’ model makes reference to words like confusion and rejection, faulty beliefs, prejudice, and assimilation. The terms used in Ruiz’ model are important, especially from a social justice perspective, because they can be used to understand the Chicana/o experience within the context of colonization.

Ethnic Identity Development Theory

Phinney (1996) developed a widely cited model of ethnic identity development called Phinney’s Three-Stage Ethnic Identity Development Model. This theory is included here because of its wide usage; it continues to be an important part of current research on identity development to this day.

Phinney (1996) discussed this development as a series of stages that included exploration. Her model describes ethnic identity development as a process where, “Individuals progress from an early stage in which one's ethnicity is taken for granted, on the basis of attitudes and opinions of others or of society; through a period of exploration into the meaning and implications of one's group membership; to an achieved ethnic identity that reflects a secure, confident sense of oneself as member of a group” (923). This process generally resembles the framework used in RIDT; however, one major critique that theorists had of Phinney, and which I share, is Phinney’s decision to combine a person’s ethnicity with their race. In other words, Phinney’s theory does not distinguish race as a separate dynamic from ethnicity. Instead, Phinney treats race as an extension of a person’s ethnicity and includes them in theoretical frameworks. This is problematic for many reasons but especially for one who is attempting to understand race, racism, and race relations as is the case for this current study, as noted previously.
Phinney’s Three Stage Ethnic Identity Model (Jackson, 2006, 295):

1. *Unexamined Ethnic Identity.* This stage is characterized by a lack of exploration and search for ethnic identity. Individuals do not have any interest in ethnicity, or they accept views about their ethnic group that were provided by people around them (e.g., parents).

2. *Ethnic Identity Search.* This stage involves search and exploration of ethnic identity, and individuals in this stage try to understand what ethnicity means to them by participating in cultural events and learning the history of their ethnic group.

3. *Achieved Ethnic Identity.* As a result of a successful exploration, individuals resolve uncertainty about their ethnic identity and attain a clear understanding of what their ethnicity means to them.”

Phinney’s work is widely cited and continues to have an incredible impact on academic writings. Phinney’s model describes a progression in an individual. This progression suggests a type of positive evolution that is linked to understanding one’s self much more thoroughly. The next section in this chapter discusses Ruiz’ Chicano/Latino Ethnic Identity Model. Ruiz’ model differs from Phinney’s model primarily in that Ruiz uses language that juxtaposes ethnicity within the context of hierarchy and ethnic hierarchies. In other words, Ruiz does not just argue that an individual has not examined their ethnic identity like Phinney. Ruiz argues this confusion comes from, “confusion or lack of familiarity with one’s culture” (Jacson, 2006, 295). Ruiz’ use of this language forces academics to ask why this lack of familiarity exists and how programs like
Chicana/o Studies can help with this lack of familiarity, especially with exposure to concepts like racial identity and a legacy of resisting oppression.

*Ruiz’ Chicano/Latino Ethnic Identity Model* (Jackson, 2006, 295):

Jackson (2006) provides a synopsis of Ruiz’s Chicano/Latino Ethnic Identity Model. It is an example of Phinney’s work being interpreted to reflect Chicanas/os and Latinas/os. This model is tailored to the Chicano/Latino population, and it provides clinical implications for therapists. Five stages describe ethnic identity conflicts and resolutions, as well as recommended interventions for each stage. Ruiz’ model does take Phinney’s Three Stage Ethnic Identity Model in the correct direction by incorporating language that frames people of color as victims who are not taught to value their ethnic identity.

1. *Causal.* Sources of ethnic identity conflicts include parental messages, failure to identify with or rejection from one’s ethnic group, and confusion or lack of familiarity with one’s culture.

2. *Cognitive.* Faulty beliefs about ethnicity are held, such as associating ethnic group membership with poverty and prejudice and the belief that assimilation is the only way to succeed in life.

3. *Consequence.* Fragmentation of ethnic identity occurs. Ethnic identity conflicts are intensified, and the use of defense mechanisms to manage the conflicts increases.

4. *Working-Through.* Increased willingness to enter counseling or disclose concerns related to ethnicity because distress associated with ethnic conflicts cannot be
handled well. Increase in ethnic consciousness, reintegration of fragmented ethnic identity, and a reconnection with ethnic community occur.

5. Successful Resolution. Greater acceptance of self, culture, and ethnicity; improvement in self-esteem; and a positive internalization of ethnic identity are achieved.

However, Ruiz’ model is flawed and not suitable for this particular research project because it does not include inter-race relations or out group relations. In the next section, a brief discussion is presented that critiques ethnic identity theories.

Critique of Ethnic Identity Theories

For Black and Brown relations, the differentiation between race and ethnicity is especially important given the historical disenfranchisement that both communities have had to endure in the United States. Yeh & Hwang (2000) note that ethnic identity is not theoretically grounded in oppression (422). Any attempt at understanding Black and Brown relations sans the inclusion of oppression in its analysis is unquestionably limited at best. Furthermore, an analysis of ethnicity’s impact on Black and Brown relations might be beneficial to understanding Black and Brown relations but is outside of the scope of this particular study.

Helms & Talleyrand (1997) critique Phinney’s stance by arguing that, “…she presumed that the term ethnicity [could] encompass all aspects of race and culture. However, in psychology, and in American society at large, ethnicity seemingly has no real meaning apart from this status as a proxy for racial classification or immigrant status” (1246). However, race is usually determined or at least estimated, either by the
researcher or by a self-defined racial designation. Race then continues to have a higher significance, at least for Black and Brown communities, than does ethnicity in terms of overcoming oppressive forces.

*Racial Identity Development Theory (RIDT)*

Racial Identity Development (RID) is understood through Racial Identity Development Theory (RIDT). RID is the individual process that a person undergoes. RIDT is a set of ideas used to understand the way in which individuals view and understand their own individual process of developing their racial identity. RID happens through a series of stages, or statuses. Yeh & Hwang (2000) note that, “The term status allows for progression and regression between statuses” (423) This dynamic reminds us that racial identity is a complicated progress.

An individual goes through these statuses at different tempos and at different points in their lives. Their progression through these statuses depends on a host of environmental factors. It is necessary to facilitate and nurture this growth through an environment that is supportive of personal and positive growth. There seems to be a general consensus within RIDT theorists that the final status includes an ability to think positively of one’s racial identity and an ability to be more understanding of others’ racial identity.

Racial identity is that identity formed by an individual rooted in their skin color; it is important to understand that identity within the context that the individual finds himself or herself. It is important to understand that racial identity does not exist in a vacuum. Racism impacts a person’s racial identity. One’s racial identity is not removed
from the historical and present day racism found in their environment. Yeh & Hwang (2000) refer to racial identity as, “socially constructed understanding of race” (422) In other words, a person is not just simply Black or Brown in a vacuum, especially in the United States where there is a historic and present-day influence of racism in almost every facet of our daily lives. From a practical approach, one can pretend to be from a different ethnicity to escape xenophobia, but people cannot detach himself or herself from their skin color.

A person’s racial identity is different from their ethnic identity. White (2001) distinguishes race from ethnicity by referring to the systemic power that is granted and denied to some individuals based on their physical traits.

While identity may include cultural conflicts and prejudices associated with being of a specific ethnicity (i.e. Malaysian, Cherokee, Panamanian), is not grounded historical and social construction that powerfully labels and then systematically empowers or limits people in varying degrees based on physical characteristics and genetic origins (i.e. Asian, Native American, Latino) (3).

While White does not explicitly reference Blacks, there is no doubt that they can also be included as a group of people who have been denied systemic power because of their physical characteristics.

Racial identity can be considered a marker for understanding how an individual has withstood, reacted, and navigated through racism. Yeh & Hwang (2000) note that, “Racial identity addresses how individuals relinquish the impact of disenfranchisement
and build respectful attitudes toward their own racial group” (422). The ability to relinquish this impact is a process that consists of emotional and sometimes traumatic experiences for the individual. Moreover, this process is not uniform in its duration, so it can take different lengths of time for different individuals. Furthermore, an individual does not have to move through all of the different stages of RID. It is possible for an individual’s racial identity to remain static.

RIDT suggests that individuals do not conclude their development with the ability to have respect for their own racial group. Smith (1989) describes the racial identification process as what, “binds persons together and tears them apart” (277). Helms theorized her People of Color Racial Identity Model that proposes a later status, which she refers to as *integrative awareness*.

One characteristic of *integrative awareness* (Helms) is when an individual is able to have empathy towards other oppressed groups. This final status appears to be a realistic stepping-stone for improving Black and Brown relations. Although empathy may not sound like a satisfactory goal for a Black and Brown alliance, it is a realistic goal within the confines of a classroom. It may also be a legitimate a stepping-stone for improving Black and Brown relations. For Chicana/o Studies, the ability to empathize with other oppressed communities is engrained in its culture and historical legacy.

To summarize, Racial Identity Development Theory is fitting for this study for the following two reasons: 1) it describes a process unique to each individual that benefits from the curriculum and activities found in Chicana/o Studies; 2) an advanced racial
identity is associated with being able to empathize with other groups. This study focuses on both of these areas.

An Overview of Racial Identity Development Models

The following section provides a brief overview of some of the formations of RIDT and how they inform this study. William Cross (1971) put forward his theory of Nigrescence which described the process in which people develop a Black identity. Cross (1971) and Jackson (1976) pioneered the development of Black Identity Development Theory (BID). Cross and Jackson’s models dealt with a Black/White paradigm that positions the White population as the perpetuator of racism, and this framework also places the Black population in a subordinate position that finds itself in a position of less dominance as a result of racism.

Cross’s 1971 model of Black Identity Development suggests that there are five stages: 1) Pre-Encounter; 2) Encounter; 3) Immersion/Emersion; 4) Internalization; 5) Internalization-Commitment. In the Pre-Encounter stage, an individual is unaware of their race, and more specifically, how their race impacts their social capital. The Encounter stage is begun when an individual has an experience that forces them to call to question the role that their race plays in how the rest of the world treats them. The third stage in Cross’s model is the Immersion/Emersion stage, and here, an individual becomes proud of their Blackness. Eventually, the individual’s pride transforms into a critical consciousness and worldview. The Internalization stage (Helms) is marked by an individual being comfortable enough with their own Blackness that they are willing to create and build relationships with members of other racial groups. An individual in the
Internalization stage (Helms) does not fear sacrificing their own Blackness when they are in the company of people from different racial groups. The final stage, Internalization-Commitment (Helms), consists of an individual being confident in their racial identity as described in the Internalization stage (Helms) while also being committed and engaging in actions that work towards social justice. However, Cross’ work does not meet the needs of this research. For one, it works within a Black-White binary framework; as such, utilizing this framework would overlook the Chicana/o experience.

Cross’ model became popular, critiqued, and refined throughout the years by scholars. White (2001) states that it is impossible to have a uniform theoretical framework to understand everyone’s racial identity formation process. In other words, a universal approach is not possible. Her research found that each interviewee’s RID was unique in its own right. “The variation in stories and even with individual themes for the five student participants indicates that for them little uniformity exists” (White, 144). However, what is more unrealistic is the notion that we should eliminate theoretical frameworks from any discussion because a single framework can not encompass a multitude of experiences. Rather than eliminate existing theoretical frameworks, they should be tested and developed more thoroughly.

**Helm’s People of Color Racial Identity Model**

This model was developed based on the above two models, and its structure and conceptualization are similar to them, with slightly different names for some of the statuses. It was developed for people of color and has been applied to many racial/ethnic groups. Helms theorized her People of Color Racial Identity Model that proposes a later
status, which she calls integrative awareness. Here, an individual is able to have empathy toward other oppressed groups. This final status appears to be a realistic stepping-stone for improving Black and Brown relations. Although empathy may not sound like a satisfactory goal for a Black and Brown alliance, it is a realistic goal and one that could serve as a foundation for discussions between the two communities.

Helms (1995) extended this theory to understand how race impacts how people get along with one another. This is a concept more closely linked to the purposes of this study. Helms (1995) argues that by understanding racial identity as a dynamic process we can, "discuss the implications of a thematic interpretation of the racial identity development process for the assessment of individuals and the analysis of interpersonal or social relationships" (182).

Helms (1995) then put forward a slightly modified version of the model that she called People of Color Racial Identity Statuses and Information-Processing Statuses. In this model, Helms refers to the statuses as the following: 1) Conformity (Pre-Encounter); 2) Dissonance (Encounter); 3) Immersion/Emersion; 4) Internalization; 5) Integrative Awareness.

1. **Conformity.** Individuals idealize European American culture and denigrate their own group. They are not aware of what race means to them.

2. **Dissonance.** They experience ambivalence and confusion regarding their own and society’s definitions of race.

3. **Immersion/Emersion.** Individuals idealize and try to learn more about their own culture and denigrate European American culture.
4. **Internalization.** Individuals develop a positive racial identity, as well as balanced and objective views of European American culture.

5. **Integrative Awareness.** In addition to appreciation of their race, they are capable of integrating their racial identity with other aspects of self-identity. They also develop empathy for other oppressed groups” (Jackson, 394).

For Black and Brown relations, Pizarro & Vera (2001) note that Helms’ explanation of racial identity shows us how, “…identity differences between people can dramatically affect these interactions… furthermore, she articulated how these statuses are linked to actions and behaviors” (Pizarro & Vera, 105). In other words, the racial identity status of an individual (i.e. a Chicana/o) impacts how they interact with another individual African-American). This holds true to Helms’ model that shows that one’s racial identity is a result of their life experiences. It is also relevant to Chicana/o Studies because race and racism are discussed in the context of colonialism. Chicana/o students are provided the tools to make connections to other oppressed communities.

By understanding racial identity we can begin to explore one important component of the very complicated relationships that exist between Black and Brown communities. It is also important to look for possible (both existing and those waiting to be created) spaces where racial identities can be nurtured in order to promote healthier identities and healthier interracial relations. The next sections discuss literature that point to college, specifically Chicana/o Studies, and spaces that promote a healthier and more advanced racial identity.
Racial Identity Development and College

College is a life altering experience for those that are able to experience it. College impacts a person’s racial identity. For many, it is one of the few, if not only, spaces where they will be exposed to and encouraged to learn about people of color. The impact on a person’s RID from attending college is also relevant to this study and worth noting.

White (2001) conducted a study with college students to see how college impacted their racial identity development. The five student participants identified significant turning points throughout their lives, but many of those turning points happened while attending Oregon State University (142). White’s findings suggest that college was a space that encouraged RID. Students provided different individual responses, but in general, their experiences exposed them to diversity, which in turn promoted their RID.

Plantz (1996) and Torres et al. (2012) both show that identity is fluid for adults and that higher education can impact their RID. Plantz (1996) tested whether or not racial identity was fluid for adults. She conducted a retrospective longitudinal study with Black and White college students. She found that both Black and White students progressed through Helm’s model of racial identity. These findings suggest that racial attitudes may be fluid for adults. Plantz refers to this as normative reeducation strategies. While Plantz’ research did not include Chicanas/os, it does show how college can impact RID.
Torres et al. (2012) refer to adults revisiting their identity as *looping*. “The results indicate that approximately 35% \((N = 28)\) of the participants stated that they revisited issues of Latino identity as adults. The process seems to be one where the individual loops back to a previous point in his/her development and reevaluates how his/her socially constructed identity has changed as a result of being in a different environment...” (9-10). The concept of being in a different environment is an interesting idea for future scholars to explore. For the purposes of this study, the only connection is that five of the six participants of this study are first generation college students. A longitudinal study that followed these participants would be necessary to if any *looping* took occurred.

In a review of theoretical models of both Ethnic and Racial Identity Development, Quintana (2007) provides an analysis of the works of Cross (1971) and Helms (1995). Quintana notes that both theoretical frameworks describe some type of *encounter* where an individual is forced to challenge their previous notion of race relations. “Theoretically, the encounter experience shakes the person’s worldview from one of basic racial fairness to an undeniable awareness of the insidiousness of racism” (263). An exposure to racism is one of the core principles of Chicana/o Studies. To what extent students are exposed to racism depends on the individual courses and departments, but nonetheless, exposure does take place because of the very nature of Chicana/o Studies. As is discussed later in Chapter 6, these types of *encounter* experiences did help students develop a healthier racial identity. However, it was primarily because of Chicana/o Studies that they were able to make sense of these *encounters* years later.
Quintana (2007) makes a connection between Ethnic Identity Development, Racial Identity Development, and Chicana/o Studies. Quintana (2007) notes that research has shown the correlation between, “racial-ethnic identity development and exposure to discrimination” (263). To this extent, Chicana/o Studies (and most Ethnic Studies programs and departments) are linked to racial-ethnic identity because Chicana/o Studies exposes students to racism through its curriculum. Students often reflect on how discrimination impacts their lives. Even if the curriculum in the specific Chicana/o Studies courses may not overtly address racism, the exposure to non-Eurocentric literature encourages students in Chicana/o Studies to query their K-12 education and omission of curriculum that reflects Chicanas/os.

It is important to remember that identity is fluid even as adults. Torres, et al. (2012) remind us that identity is not stagnant for adults despite the assumption within higher education that it is. Their findings suggest that there are eight conditions that impact the identity of adults, but they put these eight conditions into three larger themes. These three themes are: 1) changes in life circumstances; 2) changes in environment, and 3) internal changes. While internal changes may not be something that can be addressed by external factors, changes in life circumstances and changes in environment are both areas where education and access to curriculum might especially be effective.

Most significant, at least for the purposes of this study, is what Torres, et al. (2012) refer to as changes in environment. “Changes in environment consisted of exposure of different cultural/social milieus/sources of knowledge and no opportunity for desired goal” (6). Both participants in the study that Torres, et. al discuss went through
changes in environment in school. The first participant went through changes in environment when she found herself in a college graduate program, and she was the only Latina in a room full of White peers. The second participant underwent changes in environment while in college and doing community-based work.

An international study by Kroger & Green (1996) found that there are eight conditions that induce identity status change. The fifth item mentioned is, “exposure to different cultural/social milieus/sources of knowledge (e.g. … literature presenting alternative values” (481). This condition could easily be considered to embody Chicana/o Studies where students are exposed to literature that puts people of color at the center of knowledge. For many students, this exposure is taking place for the first time.

The university continues to be a setting dominated by Euro centrism and patriarchy. Chicana/o Studies counters this by providing safe spaces for students to explore and examine their racial identity. Tatum (2004) notes that students at many institutions of higher education are not provided, “…structured opportunities for the affirmation of identity…” (115). Without these opportunities, an individual is at a much higher risk of not achieving a healthy racial identity.

A second point made by Tatum (2004) is that students need to belong to a, “larger, shared campus community” (115). Tatum then goes on to argue that, “cultural centers and related programs” assist in affirming identity, and that, “affirming identity is a prerequisite for building community” (Tatum, 115). Similarly, Acuña (2011) discusses the physical environment of the Chicana/o Studies Department at CSUN. “The free flow environment of the Chicano Studies office space created a student lobby, and although
the noise level was deafening, it gave students a sense of community. Students often brought their guitars and would sing or hang out” (93). Spaces such as these allow the students to engage with each other and enrich the learning that takes places in the classroom.

A third point discussed by Tatum is the benefits that cultural centers and related programs have on students’ ability to focus on their academics. Tatum argues that students preserve energy when their need for a space that promotes their identity is met. By preserving energy, students are then able to push themselves academically” (115). Therefore, if a student has their cultural and racial needs met through their enrollment in Chicana/o Studies, they are able to focus more energy and focus towards other academic areas.

This last point by Tatum (2004) coincides with the findings made by Hawley (2012) regarding the Tucson Mexican-American Studies (MAS) program. Hawley (2012) found that, “A similar trend existed for graduation rates. Participation in the MAS program was positively related to graduating in all eight regression models, and this relationship was significant in six of them. These results suggest that there is a consistent, significant, positive relationship between MAS participation and student academic performance” (Hawley, 7). By understanding that a student has a slew of needs, especially when they attend a university that is predominantly White, it is conceivable for spaces that nourish their RID to have a positive impact on their overall collegiate performance.
Explicitly Facilitating Racial Identity Development in the College Classroom

Education continues to be a space where children can be exposed to different life perspectives. To this extent, the classroom becomes a powerful instrument that can be used to encourage more positive interracial relations. Edward and Leong (1994) contend that education and teaching is one key method to building and improving interethnic relations between Asian, Latino, and African communities” (viii). The way(s) in which we utilize the classroom to do so, however, continues to be a theme that warrants further exploration.

Tatum (1992) suggests that the classroom can serve as a transformative space for communities of different racial backgrounds to embrace one another. The author draws from her personal experiences of teaching a course titled, “The Psychology of Racism” eighteen times. Tatum (1992) has written about the RID process that students go through both inside and outside of an academic setting. She has found that, over the course of one semester, students from different racial backgrounds had been able to confront their differences, discuss race, and learn how to respect one another despite their differences.

Tatum provides a list of three reasons why students in her classroom resist talking about race and racism in her classroom. These are: 1) Race is considered a taboo topic; 2) students think of the United States as a just society (meritocracy); 3) many students (specifically White students) deny any personal prejudice. “When asked to reflect on their earliest race-related memories and the feelings associated with them, both White students and students of color often report feelings of confusion, anxiety, and/or fear.
Students of color often have early memories of name-calling or other negative interactions with other children, and sometimes with adults” (6).

The author provides four tips for, “reducing student resistance and promoting student development: 1) the creation of a safe classroom atmosphere by establishing clear guidelines for discussion; 2) the creation of opportunities for self-generated knowledge; 3) the provision of an appropriate developmental model that students can use as a framework for understanding their own process; 4) the exploration of strategies to empower students as change agents” (18). She provides the list of guidelines that she read to her class at the beginning of a semester. She shares that these guidelines serve as a great groundwork for being able to discuss race relations in her classroom.

Tatum discusses setting these guidelines, or ground rules, at the beginning of the semester in order to let students know that the classroom was a safe zone. “While the rules do not totally eliminate anxiety, they clearly communicate to students that there is a safety net for the discussion” (18). Some primary principles she emphasizes are confidentiality, mutual respect, and validating peoples’ personal experience. By doing so, Tatum appears to be aiming to create an environment that allows for students to engage in their racial identity development independently. In a Chicana/o Studies course, it becomes the responsibility of the instructor to discuss these principles, or something similar, with the class. It is also the responsibility of the instructor to revisit these guidelines as necessary and recognize the confusion and trauma that might arise from students as they engage with sensitive material. Efforts such as these prioritize the well being of students and allow the instructor to deescalate potential hostile situations before
they arise. Additionally, these types environments are necessary to foster a healthy racial identity.
Chapter 5
Methodology

This study is a qualitative analysis that explores if and how Chicana/o Studies impacts Chicanas/os’ perceptions of African-Americans.

Method of Analysis

I chose a qualitative approach to this study because it would allow me to give voice to and document the experiences of students of color. Specifically, I wanted to verbalize the specific experiences of students and how their racial identity may have been impacted as a result of participating in Chicana/o Studies courses and activities. This study is interested in the process that was undergone and how that process unfolded. Furthermore, because not much has been written on this topic, the literature suggests that a qualitative approach would benefit the study more than a quantitative approach.

“Qualitative methods open up other possibilities for inquiry, allowing different kinds of questions to be addressed” (Salkind, 1057).

Qualitative approaches allow interviewees to engage critically with the topic(s) being discussed. They also allow the space to humanize interviewees. Kvale (1996) writes that qualitative studies allow interviewees to engage critically with the topic(s) being discussed. They also allow the space to humanize interviewees (11). Through the formulation of a dialogue, knowledge is generated. These discussions then lead to information that can be used to advance our understanding and ability to inflict change in a positive manner. “The sensitivity of the interview and its closeness to the subjects’
lived world can lead to knowledge that can be used to enhance the human condition (ibid.). It is the intention of this study to grow, in a positive way, Chicana/o Studies.

Interviews continue to be an excellent source for raw data. Berg, et al. (2003) write, “qualitative studies then lead to information that can be used to advance our understanding… about their experiences, opinions, hopes, fears, reactions, and expectations” (3). “Individual interviews are used generally when the topic area is private or personal or when the researcher is interested in getting in-depth information” (Salkind, 1057).

Interviews are categorized as either being structured, semistructured, or unstructured. I had to decide between structured, semistructured, and unstructured interviews. Choosing which of these three types of interviews I would implement was very important and crucial to this study. After deciding to use a semistructured format, I then needed to understand if and how I would use and incorporate a focus group.

Qu (2011) discusses the importance of being prepared to conduct an interview. She discusses the importance of note taking during the interview but also makes it a point to highlight the need for, “careful planning and sufficient preparation” (239). For this reason, several authors and research in the fields of Chicana/o Studies, Identity Development, Black and Brown relations, and conducting interviews was read and analyzed prior to conducting any interview.

Types of Interviews

Qualitative studies generally include structured, unstructured, or semistructured interviews. Once determined that I would be using a qualitative approach, I then needed
to decide how I would format the interviews; specifically, whether to use structured, unstructured, or semistructured interviews.

Salkind (2005) provides a definition for a structured format for conducting interviews. A structured format for interviews is one, “where all of the questions are determined beforehand” (1057). This approach seemed too rigid for my study and risked denying interviewees the flexibility and opportunities to add from their experiences if it meant going away from the questions asked.

An unstructured format for interviews is those interviews where, “the researcher has a general idea of areas to be covered, but the questions are not yet determined” (Salkind, 1057). Qu also writes, “The unstructured interview proceeds from the assumption that the interviewers do not know in advance all the necessary questions... Therefore, in an unstructured interview, the interviewer must develop, adapt and generate follow-up questions reflecting the central purpose of the research” (245). This approach seemed to be too uncontrollable and unmanageable. I associated too much risk with the unstructured approach for this study because: 1) interviewees might get asked questions differently and thus provide different responses; 2) the interviews would run the risk of running different lengths (longer) and this could have a negative impact on the responses from interviewees; 3) this study is grounded on existing literature, and thus has a foundation for themes that are more likely to surface during interviews.

Thus, the best approach for conducting the interviews for this study was the semistructured format. “With a semistructured format, the general areas are determined beforehand but the researcher may ask different questions depending on the direction of
the interview” (Salkind, 1057). This allowed for a well thought out set of questions. These questions help set a parameter for the interviews while still allowing interviewer and interviewees the flexibility to steer the interview in a modest different directions if it was needed. Specifically, if the interviewer felt that the interviewee felt a topic needed to be explored further or if a previously unknown theme or subtheme was emerging from the interview.

Semistructured interviews are popular amongst researchers. Doody (2013) writes that semi-structured interviews are, “The most common type of interviews used in qualitative research are semi-structured interviews” (30). One main reason is because they allow flexibility and the possibility for the interviewee to speak on issues that the interviewer might have neglected when setting up the interview questions.

Semistructured interviews allow the interviewing process to grow and adapt to best develop the research project. There are prewritten questions, which establish general direction for the interview. This helps guide the interview. Qu writes, “The semi-structured interview involves prepared questioning guided by identified themes in a consistent and systemic manner interposed with probes designed to elicit more elaborate responses” (246). However, the semistructured format also allows for flexibility during the interview process. Qu describes it as “directing the conversation toward the topics and issues which the interviewers want to learn” (ibid.).

DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) also describe how semistructured interviews allow the ability to develop and grow the interview. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree write, “[Semi-structured interviews] are generally organized around a set of predetermined
open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewees. Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either with an individual or in groups” (315).

The other main benefit of using a semistructured interview is that it allows interviewees to speak. Qu writes, “Most importantly, it enables interviewees to provide responses in their own terms and in the way that they think and use language. It proves to be especially valuable if the researchers are to understand the way the interviewees perceive the social world under study” (246).

Rowley (2015) offers advice for novice interviewers and researchers conducting semistructured interviews. Rowley (2015), “for a novice researcher, a semi-structured interview based on an interview schedule that centers on around six to 12 well chosen and well-phrased questions to be delivered mostly in a set order, but with some flexibility in the questions asked, the extent of probing, and question order, is a good starting point” (262). Rowley (2015) goes on to write, “Each question may have two to four sub-questions or prompts, which are used by the interviewer if they are necessary to ensure that the interviewee explores the main question sufficiently” (Rowley, 262).

Data Analysis Methods

Although one of the greatest benefits to a semistructured interview is its flexibility, this does not mean that the interviewer has carte blanche to aimlessly lead the interview where he or she pleases. Rabionet (2011) explains the organization that conducting a semistructured interview requires. “…Learning to conduct semi-structure
interviews requires the following six stages: (a) selecting the type of interview; (b) establishing ethical guidelines, (c) crafting the interview protocol; (d) conducting and recording the interview; (e) analyzing and summarizing the interview; and (f) reporting the findings” (563).

The interviews will be recorded to allow me to transcribe the interviews and analyze the data at a future date. The questions I will ask will explore how Chicana/o Studies impacted their RID (see attached interview questions, Appendix A).

This is relevant to this project in that I will be looking at how Chicana/o Studies impacts the negative stereotypes that Chicana/os may have about African-Americans.

Chicana/o Studies, as an educational discipline, opens the eyes of Chicana/o Students to institutional racism. By realizing that Chicana/o and other communities of color have been historically denied the equal opportunities that White communities have, Chicana/o students then begin to see similarities between themselves and African-American students. Chicana/o Studies can serve as a space for realizing similar problems that face both Chicana/o and African-American communities.

Sample/Participants

My study was conducted at California State University, Northridge. Participants were excited and eager to help the advancement on literature related to Chicana/o Studies, Black and Brown relations, and improving those relationships. Acuña (2011) writes, “California has the largest concentration of Mexican American students and Chicana/o Studies courses” (xxvii). He goes on further to specifically discuss the size of CSUN’s Chicana/o Studies relative to other campuses. Acuña (2011) writes, “Today,
California State University, Northridge (CSUN), is the largest Chicana/o Studies department in the United States, offering 166 sections per semester” (48). As such, it is an ideal location to recruit my candidates and conduct this study. Six recent graduates were interviewed for this study. Three candidates were male and three were female.

My first attempt(s) to gather participants focused on networks that I created while a student in the Chicana/o Studies Department at CSUN. This was done in hopes of creating a sense of comfort between the students and me. An improved level of comfort was intended to encourage interviewees to be critical of Chicana/o Studies and their experiences and potentially provide constructive criticism on how Chicana/o Studies might improve on their ability to assist students in their RID.

I asked the chairperson of the Chicana/o Studies Department to forward an e-mail to interested students. I also explored student organizations for interested participants such as Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlan (MEChA). I asked the chairperson of MEChA to make the initial contact with students to determine their interest in participating in the study. Third, I utilized social media (Facebook) to search for interested students. Students who indicated an interest in the research project were contacted and their availability was requested. All students found it convenient and apropos to conduct the interviews on the CSUN campus.

The importance of gathering information from students cannot be overstated. Yosso (2006) presents a series of counterstories that empower students of color. These stories highlight how educational spaces can serve as sites for change and social justice. Yosso (2005) presents these stories hoping to inspire, “a broad audience of educators and

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activists who believe in the possibility of social change through education (Yosso, Introduction).

Ethics

Before conducting any interviews, I obliged to all rules and regulations put forth by the Human Subjects Protocol through the Graduate Studies Office. This process made sure that the safety and well being of my interviewees was prioritized throughout the interview process. Interviews were conducted in a private conference room on the CSUN campus.

The interviews lasted thirty to sixty minutes to conduct. Students were read their Bill of Rights prior to the recording of any information. In addition, students were given an overview of my research and why I am conducting my research. Students had the option to decline to answer any of the questions I asked, and students were given the option to end the interview if at any point they felt uncomfortable. The interviews were audio taped with the permission of the students. Pseudonyms were used in the project and any presentations of the project. After the interviews were conducted the audio tapes were stored in a locked file cabinet in my office and destroyed after one year.

Interviews were conducted in a private conference room on the CSUN campus. The interviews took one hour to ninety minutes to conduct. Students were read their Bill of Rights prior to the recording of any information. In addition, students were given an overview of my research and why I was conducting my research. Students had the option to decline to answer any of the questions I asked, and students were able to end the interview if at any point they felt uncomfortable. The interviews were audio taped with
the permission of the students. Pseudonyms were used in my project and any presentations of my project. After the interviews were conducted, the audiotapes were be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after one year.

Students may have experienced some type of discomfort by discussing issues of racism (i.e. negative experiences they have had or negative perceptions they might have about themselves or others). Race and racism are extremely sensitive issues, especially for Chicana/o students. Kvale (2007) writes, “in an interview conversation, the researcher asks about, and listens to, what people themselves tell about their lived world, about their dreams, fears and hopes, hears their views and opinions in their own words, and learns about their school and work situation, their family and social life” (1). I ran the risk of discussing issues these students had strong feelings about. While I hoped that their passion on this topic leads to their willingness to participate, I also recognized that some students may have felt so passionate that any disagreement might make them feel uncomfortable.

Because I did my undergraduate work in Chicana/o Studies and consider myself to be in the latter stages or RID, I am expecting for what Janet E. Helms refers to as "progressive interactions." (1995). “Energy and growth-producing discourse are assumed to be general features of this type of interaction” (195). My interaction with these students served as a space that allowed students to reflect on their own racial identity development. The students who I interviewed had already begun their process through, and were at least, in the immersion/emersion stage (Helms) of RID. Rowley (2015) cautions us that researchers must be cautious of the fact that interviewees might, “feel
threatened by being asked questions about something they think they should know more about than they do” (266). This might be especially for my research because the students I interviewed might have still been discovering themselves and their RID status. Rowley (2015) suggests researchers “…choose a research topic that the interviewees are likely to find interesting and relevant to their life or work” (ibid.). Students I interviewed had a pre-existing relationship with each other through their course work and departmental interactions.

From the research, I found that many scholars went into detail discussing the emotions that come out from discussing race and racism in their classes. I recognize that race and racism are both topics that can have a lot of emotions tied to them. As such, I exercised compassion and attempted to create an environment where interviewees were not forced to do anything outside of their comfort zone. Whiting writes, “Although it may not be anticipated, the interview can provoke strong emotional feelings” (40). Some of the participants in this study became emotional, angry, and sentimental during the interviews. Participants remembered traumatic events that dealt with bodily injuries, difficulties talking to their parents, the hardships of being a Brown college student, and all in the context of their identity development and Black and Brown relations.
Chapter 6
Research Findings

“I really believed we didn’t exist.” - Valeria

This chapter discusses the common themes discovered from this study’s interviews. The first section in this chapter introduces you to the participants. There were six participants. Three participants were men and three were women. All six participants graduated from CSU Northridge within the last six years with a Bachelor of Arts in Chicana/o Studies. All six participants thought of Southern California as their home and four of them grew up in Los Angeles.

The findings of this chapter are organized in three general groups of sections. The first section includes some demographic information about the participants. This is included to allow the reader to understand who these participants were. The remainder of the sections presents findings that reflect the experiences of candidates within the context of Black and Brown relations and their racial identity development. The second group of sections discusses the experiences of candidates before they attended college. These include areas such as high school experiences, familial views toward African-Americans, and peer attitudes toward African-Americans. The bulk of this chapter then discusses the experiences and viewpoints of candidates that resulted from participating in Chicana/o Studies courses. These findings include themes such as parental support of attending college, access to language, social justice, student activism, the fluidity of racial identity, and the impact that Chicana/o Studies had on how they perceive African-Americans, and other communities of color.
Based on the research discovered when conducting my literature, I expected to discover examples of *conformity* (Helms) and *dissonance* (Helms), the first two statuses in RID, when participants discussed their racial identity prior to attending Chicana/o Studies. The first, *conformity* (Helms) is linked to idealizing European American culture while *dissonance* (Helms) is associated with confusion. Based on the literature I discovered on Chicana/o Studies and Ethnic Studies as a whole, I also anticipated to discover evidence of *immersion/emersion* (Helms) which would indicate that participants had consciously made an effort to decolonize themselves and begin to accept their racial identities as something positive. This is to be expected if individuals are actively enrolled in college courses that focus on this topic. However, the more important findings, with respect to purpose of this study Chicana/o Studies being a means to improve Black and Brown relations, was searching for evidence of *internalization* (Helms) and, most importantly, *integrative awareness* (Helms). *Internalization* (Helms) allows individuals to continue to be proud of their racial identity while being critical of European American culture. For the purposes of this study, it was finding signs of *integrative awareness* (Helms) that received the most attention. The reason is that *integrative awareness* (Helms) is associated with the healthiest racial identity. Here, an individual has the positive racial identity they gain since *immersion/emersion* (Helms) while they blend their racial identity into other parts of their unique and complicated identities. Most importantly for improving Black and Brown relations, *integrative awareness* (Helms) holds that individuals show empathy for other oppressed groups.
Meet the Participants

Esperanza grew up in Korea Town, and is currently enrolled in the Master of Art’s program in Chicana/o Studies at CSU Northridge. She identifies as a Latina because it encompasses all of Latin America. However, she also identifies as a Chicana because, to her, it means having a consciousness of the way, “she fits in her community, her environment, and wanting to critique the things that are around [her].” Esperanza’s wanting to critique the world around her suggests that she has reached at least the Immersion/Emersion status (Helms) in her racial identity. For Esperanza, the way she identifies depends on the situation and where she is. She is sometimes asked, “What are you?” In this situation, she will commonly explain that, although her parents were born in Mexico, she was born in the United States.

Esperanza explained to me during the interview that attending CSUN is what motivated her to challenge simple notions of identity. However, it should be noted, Esperanza had an encounter (Cross) experience in the 11th grade when she attended the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference (CYLC). “[This] was the start of me questioning… how I identify.” For Esperanza, her encounter helped her reach dissonance (Helms). Esperanza went on to discuss a connection in her chapter between the CYLC and Chicana/o Studies. “I think the Chicano Youth Leadership Conference definitely had an influence on me. I think that definitely changed the way that I saw myself, but in Chicana and Chicano Studies, when I actually got in here, that’s when I really began to see people like myself in history.”

During her childhood, Esperanza recalls there being two or three African-
American families growing on her street. As alum of Los Angeles Senior High School, an inner city urban high school, she remembers conflicts on campus. “There was conflicts, but I don’t think there were necessarily race-based. I just think conflicts happened, but the way that the media portrayed it was like Black and Latino conflict.” She attributed conflicts on campus as a result of more general differences amongst groups and not specifically limited to race-based.

Esperanza remembers being exposed to African-Americans during high school. “Because I played volleyball in middle school and high school, there were maybe four African-Americans that I ended up playing volleyball with.” Esperanza goes on to discuss the bond that playing a sport allowed her to build with her African-American peers. “I feel like us playing a sport together made us feel comfortable with each other…”

Both Justicia and Valiente refer to feeling shame when they were growing up. Shame is linked to the conformity (Helms). Additionally, for both Justicia and Valiente they were able to move past that and used the term Chicana and Chicano and to empower themselves.

Justicia recently graduated from CSUN and is currently working at a rehabilitation center for individuals who are incarcerated. She identifies as a Chicana because, “the term is about being an activist in the community.” For Justicia, activism became an important part of her identity since she was an adolescent. She grew up in a trailer park in the Coachella Valley next to an incinerator. She was ashamed to admit where she lived when she was in high school because her neighborhood was poverty-
Valiente identifies as a Chicano and is currently earning his Master of Art’s degree in Chicana/o Studies. For Valiente, identifying as a Chicano gives him, “a sense of ownership of my history and sense of self.” However, this was not the case for Valiente growing up. Valiente described the confusion he felt growing up a Brown male. “You loved where you came from, but you also had shame because the society told you or presented it as being something shameful.”

Valiente grew up in San Fernando. He describes the neighborhood as having been predominantly Chicana/o although there was a small group of African-Americans and one or two Asians.

Ricardo was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley. He lived the first ten years of his life in Sylmar and has lived in Valerian Fernando since he was eleven years old. He refers to himself as coming from an educated middle class Chicano family. Both of his parents are college educated. He identifies as a Chicano-Mexicano. Ricardo stated that a Chicano identity was always there because both of his parents were Chicana/o Studies majors in the 1960s. His parents were able to assist Ricardo with his conformity (Helms). Ricardo considers himself a Mexican who was born in Occupied Mexico. Ricardo is an active member of a mariachi group in the San Fernando Valley and attributes his strong cultural identity to his active participation in this mariachi group. By being able to connect his racial identity with other aspects of his identity, Ricardo appears to be demonstrating a level of integrative awareness (Helms).

Ricardo has light complexion and shared that, on several occasions, people he
came across contested and tried to deny his Chicano identity. People made comments like, “You do not look like a Chicano. You are not even brown.” These instances fueled Ricardo to reclaim his Chicano identity. Ricardo connected his experiences to a much bigger and relevant situation that continues to impact many people. “Some tend to forget that they perpetuate the stereotype of what many perceived to be what a Mexican or Chicano looks like. They expect everybody to be brown and short. This is not the case.” Ricardo showed commitment and passion to reclaiming his sense of identity despite being constantly challenged by society at large.

Valeria identifies as a Queer Mexican-American Chicana. She refers to herself as a Chicana because she considers it a political term that has a higher level of consciousness associated to it. Valeria remembers being singled out during her childhood because of her name and her accent. She remembers that, “they always made sure that I knew that I wasn’t in terms of what they call American.” As a result, she remembers always feeling more comfortable at home than she did at school. For Valeria, the school setting appears to have reinforced her conformity (Helms).

Pablo grew up in Lynwood and earned his Master of Art’s degree in History after earning his B.A. in Chicana/o Studies. He is currently earning a Ph.D. in Borderlands History. He identifies as a Chicano because he feels that, “he does not fully encompass the other labels that tend to ascribed to those of us who are ethnic Mexicans born in the United States.” He does not feel included when society uses the term American. He does not consider himself Mexican because he was not born in Mexico, and he feels the terms Latino and Hispanic has Eurocentric connotations.
Pablo was raised on the Lynwood-Compton border. “I remember it was a pretty violent neighborhood growing up, but I did not notice how violent it was until I got older.” He remembers the gates in his neighborhood always being locked at night, and, “hearing gunshots in the distance, ambulances passing by, muffled sounds of people arguing in the distance, sounds of people running away from the police, and even drunks yelling as they passed by.” Despite this, Pablo reminded me that his childhood memories are filled with happy experiences shared with friends and family. According to Pablo, Lynwood’s population was at least 70% Latino, 25% African-American, and 5% Asian American and Pacific Islander.

Pablo embraced the term Chicano because of its, “political connotations as someone who is involved in social justice activism meant to better the conditions of not just Chicanos and ethnic Mexicans but other underserved communities.” Pablo appears to be speaking from a point of integrative awareness (Helms). He identifies himself based on his compassion and empathy for other oppressed groups.

*Parental College Support*

All interview participants reported that their parents were supportive of their enrollment at CSU Northridge. While this was not surprising, what was interesting was that in five of the six interviews, the parents were unaware of what Chicana/o Studies entailed. Furthermore, the participants also expressed an inability to articulate to their parents. Four of the six participants said there parents saw education as a means to a job so they asked, "What can you work in with Chicana/o Studies"?
Defending Chicana/o Studies to Parents

Participants described having difficulty explaining what Chicana/o Studies is to their parents. Participants also shared that their parents primarily saw college education as a means to a white collared job. Hence, parents repeatedly expressed concern regarding Chicana/o Studies’ ability to develop into a job after college. This common reaction from parents probably results from five of the six participants being first-generation college students and not having a holistic understanding of a college experience.

For Esperanza, not only did she have difficulty explaining Chicana/o Studies to her parents. She also had difficulty understanding and being able to define what Chicana/o Studies is. “My family didn’t understand what Chicana and Chicano Studies is. I think, with time, I understood it myself. I ended up telling them that it is kind of like everything in one. It’s history, culture, and art. It is also music and language.” Esperanza then shared that her parents frequently asked her, “What are you going to do with that?”

Justicia had a similar experience. “My family would just ask, ‘What are you going to do with that?’ They’re proud that I got my B.A., but they always ask, ‘what are you doing with that? I think a lot of it has to come with explanation that your major does not always necessarily take you through a direct path that leads to your ideal job.” In this situation, Justicia’s family lacks the social capital to have an overall understanding of a college experience and have an in-depth dialogue in order to best meet the academic and emotional needs of Justicia. Rather than being able to assist Justicia, her parents are
limited to asking questions.

For Valiente, and all participants, his parents were proud of the fact that he was in a university and earning a baccalaureate. Valiente remembers the feedback and conversations with his family being positive specifically for the, ”fact that I was really one of very few to even start going to a major university. Nobody in my immediate family, nobody had even graduated from high school.” Valiente remembers his older brother especially being proud of him. His brother used to brag to his friends about Valiente’s understanding of history and current events. However, despite their support, his family often asked him, “‘What are you going to do for money? How are you going to get paid doing that?’”

Valeria shared a very interesting dynamic. Valeria was able to turn her parents’ confusion regarding Chicana/o Studies into an opportunity to have family discussions. She shared that her mom expressed interest in Chicana/o Studies from the beginning, but her father took more time to embrace the idea of Chicana/o Studies. “All three of us would sit down with my mom and my dad and then try to explain what Chicana and Chicano Studies is.”

Valeria accredits Chicana/o Studies to improving communication between her and her parents. “… Chicano Studies helped us ask questions to my mom… She’d share stuff that she wouldn’t share with us before…. Later, we got my dad involved. We started bringing him to MEChA events or any events that Chicana/o Studies had.” Chicana/o Studies became a family experience.

Valeria’s parents are farmworkers who have had to endure exhausting labor with
minimal pay and no health benefits. Her father does not want Valeria to work the same way that he has to. “He wanted us to make money and not work in the fields like he did… For my dad, people are always telling him that if you’re going to go into education, become a teacher or become a doctor or a lawyer.” Her father wanted her to maximize her opportunities and gain socioeconomic capital.

Ricardo had a unique situation because his parents are alumni of the Chicana/o Studies Department at CSUN. He did not have to define or defend his decision to major in Chicana/o Studies. “They still to this day keep in touch with a lot of friends that they have from Chicano Studies in college and a lot of the professors.” For Ricardo, his parents were able to provide a source of information and historical perspective throughout Ricardo’s undergraduate experience. This may have assisted Ricardo with dissonance (Helms) he may have encountered growing up.

Access to Language

Interview participants mentioned being aware of inequality in their neighborhoods and general environments but not having the access to language, or vocabulary, to articulate these conditions. To this point, we are reminded of the importance of access to higher education. Through taking Chicana/o Studies courses, participants became exposed to language that allowed them to articulate their lived and shared experiences with one another. They gained this language and used it as a tool to understand race and racism.

Justicia grew up engaging in community activism in the Coachella Valley, but did so without having the formal language to identify herself as an activist. “Back then I
Valiente had a similar experience with gaining access to language. “I couldn't put it into words but I could see that I was more connected to youth of color because of the treatment and the way we were just kind of pushed and, I guess, just mistreated.” Valiente’s access to language increased and he was able to generalize commonalities between him and other youth of color as a result of his participation in college and Chicana/o Studies.

Pathway to Attending College

One of the most amazing parts of conducting these interviews was listening to the obstacles that participants had to overcome in order to attend college. For five of them, navigating themselves into and out of college required energy that other students are not required to exert. Five of the six participants were first generation college students. Attending college was uncommon or unheard of in their families. Despite this, they managed to enroll in a four-year university and graduate with their Bachelor of Arts degree.

High School Experiences

Several interviewees mentioned the lack of exposure to Chicana/o literature during their high school experience. The lack of exposure to culturally relevant literature during their high school experiences resulted in questioning and challenging the quality of their education. The interviewees were able to remember specific instances where
their communities were and were not reflected in their high school curriculum. This supports the research by Sleeter (2011) that shows students of color enter Chicana/o Studies already being aware of racism.

Esperanza remembers her high school teachers not looking like her peers. She also remembers the negative impact that not being exposed to culturally relevant literature had on her overall high school experience. She did not have access to tools (Sleeter, 2011) to understand her situation. "For instance, my high school was predominantly Latino, Hispanic, Central American, or Mexican, but there were mostly White teachers teaching. I remember the only book that we read that anything to do with Chicano culture was Always Running by Luis J. Rodriguez… Those experiences, or the lack of experience, with my history or being able to find role models was something that I always thought about."

Sleeter’s argument also applies to Valiente. Valiente also had a very similar experience in high school. Valiente searched for culturally relevant curriculum outside of his classroom and through the Black community by exploring Hip-Hop. Hip-Hop provided an Ethnic Studies-like experience outside of the classroom.

“I never saw any history about folks from Mexico being inserted into anything other than Cesar Chavez, I actually looked to black culture because that was something that I could connect to because I could, especially through hip-hop music and hip-hop culture, I would identify with that because I knew that there was struggle there and there was something there that I could connect with on a human level.”

Valiente’s story is an example of a student not having their cultural needs met
inside of their classroom and having to search outside of the classroom to address those needs. This placed an unnecessary burden on Valiente, but it also served as a catalyst for a heightened interest in searching for his identity through Chicana/o Studies. This parallels the work described by Vazquez (2005).

Valiente shared that, “It was because of that one class that I took over at Mission College. It sparked my interest. I had never seen more than Cesar Chavez. That was the only brown face I had ever seen really in history books, and I liked history. I gravitated towards it and once I started to see Chicana-Chicano history.” Valiente discovered information that he was searching for and was unable to find during his high school experience is consistent with the Immersion/Emersion status (Helms).

Valeria also recognized that her school curriculum did not include her. “In high school, I was really curious about why in history books I wouldn't know about what happened. I wouldn't hear… Mexican-American names or even Latino/Latina names on history or anywhere.” She felt left out of the curriculum and even shared that, “I really believed we didn’t exist.”

Ricardo noted a significant aspect of his high school experience. He shared that high school exposed him to cultures out of his because of where he went to school. “While still living in San Fernando, I went to Hamilton High School in LA, right between West LA and Culver City. That school is very culturally diverse.” It should be noted that Ricardo was referencing the demographic diversity, not the diversity of the curriculum.

Familial Views Toward African-Americans

Questions regarding familial views toward African-Americans seemed to bring
out the most emotions and trauma from participants. Participants hesitated throughout these questions. It also seemed as though Chicana/o Studies provided participants the tools to critically engage their families.

Ricardo’s exposure to views of African-Americans is probably the most positive one of all the participants. Ricardo shared that his immediate family was tolerant and accepting of African-Americans, while his extended family was not. “I remember my mom and dad had this friend that would help them with finances and stuff like that… He knew my mom and dad from high school too.” Ricardo remembered examples of this African-American man who would come over to help his parents with their finances and join them for dinner.

However, his extended family was not as open minded and accepting. He went on to share that his, “aunts and uncles and stuff, that if they were saying anything ignorant about other cultures, those would be the ones that would do so.” While Ricardo’s entire family may not have been supportive, his parents were able to provide exposure and introduce a sense of acceptance to cultures outside of his own, specifically African-Americans.

The other participants did not have as healthy of a childhood as Ricardo. In fact, some participants took pauses before answering these questions. Valiente had to clear his throat in order to keep himself from crying when we discussed this topic.

Esperanza shared that she attempts to engage in critical discussions with her families regarding racism instead of ignoring them or alienating them. She also sees her parents as victims of internalized racism:
I know, definitely, my parents, I feel like they’re racists. I think that is because of internalized racism… Now, I try to talk to them, because I have learned something. I am able to share, but ultimately, I feel like it’s up to them to really think about what they’re saying and to understand that there’s power in words. I think that’s one thing that I learned here at CSUN. Like, what is the history behind words and how do they actually impact what you say.

Pablo grew up in a similar situation as Esperanza. His parents also made racist comments towards African-Americans. “My family members growing up, in general, always seemed to have negative views of African-Americans.” Pablo attributes these racist views to, “…conflicts [African-Americans] had with them in our neighborhood and schools.” Pablo went on to share that his family’s views towards African-Americans impacted his views of African-Americans negatively.

Despite this environment, Pablo was able to form his own independent perceptions of African-Americans. “My family and peers influenced me to form negative perceptions of African-American. At the same time, these negative perceptions encouraged me to form positive perceptions of the African-American community in Lynwood.” Pablo went on to share his, “first best friend was African-American… I used to go over to his house to play video games and sports.”

Valiente’s story exposed the difference between friendship and intimacy. Valiente used words like visceral racism, trauma, negative, and hate when discussing his childhood and his family’s views towards African-Americans. Valiente shared his
experience dating an African-American during his adolescence:

I actually dated a girl who was Black… It was my first introduction to real and visceral racism from my family… Then I think they got the idea that when I met this girl and I started to date her that it was because of that influence, because of the hip-hop influence, when in fact it had nothing … It wasn't that. This person was just a wonderful person and we connected. It was a negative. It was definitely a negative feedback from family members, as bad as saying like, ‘Oh, that's why you're dating,’ and they'd use the ‘n’ word, and just be really hateful about some of that stuff, so it caused a lot of conflict and a lot of trauma when I was a youngster.

Valeria also had negative experiences with regards to her family’s views of African-Americans. “A lot of the times I felt like in terms of my family, they would just perceive them as how they would watch on TV.” Valeria described her parents’ racism as more subtle and indirect. “They wouldn't be like, ‘Oh, we don't like African Americans’, but when a baby will come or say my sister would try on a shirt, my mom will be like, Oh, don't use brown so much because you're already a little darker, so try to avoid brown.” These messages had a negative impact on Valeria’s development especially since she identified as having darker skin. Valeria’s experience speaks to the legacy of colonialism that continues to plague the Chicana/o community.

*Friendships and Peer Attitudes Toward African-Americans*

Candidates did voice some concerns regarding their friends and peers’ attitudes toward African-Americans though not as negative as those of their families. These
examples varied from taking place at school and home environments.

Pablo shared examples of his peers in elementary and middle school making racial slurs. “… I would hear ethnic Mexicans—both adults and children—say negative things about African-Americans. They would say racial slurs and make generalizations about them like saying that they were all loud, confrontational, etc…. There was definitely a lot of Latino racism against Blacks at my school.” However, Pablo also shared that he remembers speaking out against racism even if it meant being outcasted by his peers.

Pablo remembers a race riot that happened at high school between Black and Brown students. When Pablo referred to the race riots as, “stupid and racist,” one of his peers rolled their eyes at him in disagreement.

Despite these examples of Pablo standing up against racism, it was impossible for him to completely silence out the racism from around him. Pablo internalized the racism he was exposed to during his high school years. “As I got older, I also made racist generalizations about African-Americans because I remember at school some would say really racist things against us… It was just an ugly cycle.” Pablo did not have the necessary tools to make sense of the racism around him.

Valiente grew up in an apartment complex where an African-American family lived underneath him. Valiente remembers that, “…we would hang out with them.” Valiente had a very positive experience with one of his African-American neighbors at a young age. “One time my brother got hit by a car… One of them picked him up… carried him off to the side… took him inside to make sure he was all right.”
resulted in a close friendship between Valiente and his siblings and the African-American family.

A second close friendship that Valiente developed with an African-American was through playing high school football. Valiente was unable to put into words the friendship they had, but it was one where they would call each other racial slurs. “I would call him beaner and he would call me nigger, and so we'd have that kind of relationship where we would use the slur against the other folk… I still have a hard time trying to really put it into words how that worked, how that dynamic worked, but it worked.” Valiente told me that they did so out of endearment for one another.

Valeria had a different experience, primarily because she grew up in a neighborhood with near no African-American presence.: Valeria shared that, “because we didn't have a lot of peers that were African Americans, they would just repeat the same thing that they would see in movies or in films, so a lot of it was negative… the bad guys are always this big, masculine African-American black guy.” This supports the research presented earlier in this study (Pastor, 2014; Ortiz Cuevas, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Frasure-Yokley and Greene (2014). It was not until later through her experiences in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) that her views of African-Americans changed.

Social Justice

As discussed in Chapter 3, the idea of community activism and social justice is the primary difference between Chicana/o Studies and multicultural education. The theme of social justice was mentioned even though none of the interview questions asked about social justice directly. This seems to be a very powerful word with a lot of
importance to participants. It has historically been the driving force of Chicana/o Studies and should continue to be a key component of all Ethnic Studies departments. The idea of social justice led to discussion from participants that resembled integrative awareness (Helms). For participants, social justice was directly linked to having, “empathy for other oppressed groups” (Jackson, 394).

For Pablo, social justice is one of the original factors that attracted him to Chicana/o Studies. “I studied Chicana/o Studies mostly because I wanted to learn more about my history and also because I wanted to be involved in social justices causes.”

Ricardo also shared a relationship between Chicana/o Studies, himself, and social justice. “Chicana/o Studies impacted in a way where I would say that it really brought out the social justice aspect of myself.”

Furthermore, Ricardo stated that social justice was a means for Chicana/o Studies and Pan-African studies to work more closely together moving forward:

Fostering the social justice aspect of both about Chicano Studies, and Pan-African Studies. Do not forget the social justice aspect because this is part of what made us exist in the first place. To go without that, I feel would harm either department even more.

*Student Activism*

Several participants attributed two important aspects of their identity development to student activism: 1) their self-identification; 2) how they view other people of color, African-Americans in particular. They discussed having developed a sense of solidarity with African-Americans as a direct result their student activism in *Movimiento*
Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlan (MEChA). They discussed how student activism exposed issues that affected their communities, African-American communities, and other marginalized communities of color. These seem to be examples of integrative awareness (Helms) because participants were looking past the other communities’ skin color and instead basing their solidarity on the fact that these other communities were also marginalized. Participants expressed that issues impacted different communities differently, and that student activism was a space for praxis. They also discussed how student activism impacted their worldview. Participants brought up student activism during the interviews even though none of the interview questions directly asked them about student activism. This is important to note especially for future research.

Pablo was involved in student activism since as early as high school. It was here that he began to embrace the term Chicano. “As an undergraduate majoring in Chicana/o Studies, in addition to becoming even more politically involved with MEChA de CSUN, I would say I more fully embraced the term.” For Pablo, high school introduced him to the term Chicano, but it was his college experience that reinforced and bolstered his decision to identify as Chicano.

Pablo felt that Chicana/o Studies did not impact his racial identity. He accredited his racial identity being impacted more because of his student activism. He felt that he got, “more of a sense of identifying as a Chicano through MEChA rather than the Chicana/o Studies courses themselves.”

Valiente spoke to the overlap between Chicana/o Studies and MEChA when he remembered one specific demonstration in response to statewide tuition fee increases.
He remembers Chicana/o students and African-American students marching together. This had a positive impact on his integrative awareness (Helms). “[The Black Student Union] walked with us and were out there with us… they stood alongside us.” He accredited the Chicana/o Studies Department for granting exposure that allowed him to embrace them. He felt extremely connected with members of the Black Student Union when, “some of us got hit by the cops… then it was like the most blatant show of just how much we had in common, just how much we needed to work together.” Valiente went on to describe this moment as an opportunity for him to, “recognize their humanity.” Events such as this one allowed Valiente to see similarities with the African-American community and increase his empathy for them as well. Students appeared to reflect a holistic educational experience while at CSUN that was also a result because of the relationships they developed with their professors.

**Student-Professor Relationships**

Several participants referred to professors and the relationships with those professors and the primary motivation for deciding to major in Chicana/o Studies even though none of the interview questions directly asked about student-professor relationships. None of the participants shared any negative experiences with any of the faculty in the Chicana/o Studies Department.

Justicia said that she began, “taking a lot of Chicana/o Studies classes because [she] felt really comfortable with the faculty.” Ricardo also shared the relationships that his parents developed with Chicana/o Studies faculty were also extended to him to make him feel welcome. Lastly, Valiente described the professors as each having, “some little
piece and part of the puzzle that they added… to give me a pathway to start searching the stuff… to really thinking about it a little more deeply.” Valiente’s analogy of a puzzle is apropos because it describes the fluid process of moving through RID statuses.

*Chicana/o Studies and Racial Identity Development*

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that Chicana/o Studies had a positive impact on their racial identity development. Their experiences were distinct from one another but shared themes of challenging preconceived notions of identity and embracing the terms Chicana and Chicano as a term of empowerment. Preconceived notions of identity are associated with *conformity* while empowerment are linked to *internalization* and *integrative awareness* (Helms).

For Pablo, the term Chicano was something he was not exposed to until taking Chicana/o Studies courses. Pablo did not, “…recall ever hearing anyone say the word Chicano or identify himself or herself as Chicano in neither my school nor neighborhood growing up… You were either Black, Mexican, or Salvadorian it seemed.” Justicia also shared that she was limited to certain options when identifying herself growing up. When asked to identify herself, she would say she was Mexican. This was confusing for Justicia because she was not born in Mexico.

Besides finding consciousness through Chicana/o Studies courses, Valeria gave a lot of power to the term Chicana/o. She described the term Chicana/o, “as a way of life, to reclaim that word and to be proud of who we are.” When asked what teaching strategies helped her gain this perspective, she shared that, “…a lot of Chicana/Chicano studies classes… ask[ed] us to reflect and to write about what we think and our
experiences.” Valeria felt that her personal experiences were validated in her Chicana/o Studies courses.

For Esperanza, identifying as a Chicana gave her the power and authority over her identity. This was a power that she did not have prior to identifying as a Chicana. “The way that I identify now is the way that I see myself and the way that I identify myself, not like what other people identify me as because a lot of people could label you based on how you look.”

Valiente described Chicana/o Studies as, “an invitation to start to explore these ideas” that resulted in “feeling…connected to others.” He went on to share that, “… courses started to really shift my thinking… They definitely set the foundation… allowing… a more open realization of what… Chicana-Chicano was… the complexity of it.” In other words, it challenged preexisting notions of his identity.

Comparable to Valiente, Valeria also discussed the impact that Chicana/o Studies had on her racial identity development:

Before I took any Chicana/Chicano Studies, I was just Mexican-American or Latina. I started calling myself Chicana because I started taking Chicana/Chicano Studies courses or just learning about what happened in the 1960s… I started to become very passionate about education and about learning the truth. Once I started taking Chicana/Chicano studies courses and I started learning about my history and I started learning about my grandparents and my great-grandparents.

Participants described exposure to knowledge about the term Chicana/o and the
importance of Chicana/o Studies as a process. Participants were not able to identify one specific moment during their coursework that caused a shift in their racial identity development. Instead, throughout the interviews, participants described their racial identity development as something that was fluid and impacted throughout their entire Chicana/o Studies coursework. This supports the research that suggests identity is fluid, specifically referring to racial identity as a status, not a stage.

*Racial Identity: Stage v. Status*

While participants generally agreed that Chicana/o Studies impacted their racial identities in a positive manner, they were also unlikely to be able to pinpoint a specific moment, assignment, or class that impacted their racial identity. At first, I thought this was odd given their overall positive experiences in the Chicana/o Studies Department and the overwhelming majority opinion that Chicana/o Studies did in fact impact their racial identity. However, I later realized that this is something that is supported by the existing literature discussing racial identity. By thinking of racial identity as a status (fluid) instead of a stage (static) then it is understandable that participants were able to remember their racial identity development as one on-going and continuous process and not one that happened in sections with clear beginnings and endings. Furthermore, by understanding racial identity as a status instead of a stage, the answers provided by participants can also be seen as an opportunity to understand a process that they are still actively undergoing.

For example, Pablo acknowledged that,”...most of the assignments [he] received encompassed this change” but was not able to, “think of one in particular.”
Valiente described this process as something that began during his time at a community college. “It was because of that one class that I took over at Mission College…I wanted to take the next class.” Valiente then went on to describe this process like reading a good book to discuss a continuum:

It's like a good book. You just want to pick up the next one right away and you just want to keep reading, because it's like, what happens next? It was that feeling of inclusion and I just wanted to know what else was out there.

What else do I not know about? What else have I not been told?

*Black, Brown, and Chicana/o Studies*

All participants expressed a level of solidarity with the African-American community. This is evidence that all participants were in, if only partially, engaging in *integrative awareness* (Helms). Participants were able to contextualize this solidarity within the context of information they were exposed to in Chicana/o Studies courses. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that their enrollment in Chicana/o Studies courses had a positive impact on their perceptions of African-Americans. Furthermore, participants extended their sense of solidarity beyond just the African-American community. Participants were clearly able to articulate their own opinions on issues of social justice and inequalities. They expressed the importance of understanding these issues beyond how they impact the Chicana/o community, and spoke to the importance of understanding how these same issues impact communities outside of the Chicana/o community. This ability to look beyond their racial group and show empathy to other oppressed groups is a consistent with *integrative awareness* (Helms).
According to Esperanza, her Chicana/o Studies courses exposed her to African-American scholars. She shared that, in one class, “We’re looking at Chicana feminist perspectives. We are also look at African American feminist perspectives and how the two compare and contrast.” Here, Esperanza is making a critical connection by not just lumping the two different two communities together. Although examining diverse feminist theories is a deep and challenging task that could not be done in one class, or lifetime for that matter, this moment stood out to Esperanza because it exposed her to information that challenged her understanding of feminism at the time.

Justicia makes a point similar to Esperanza’s when she emphasized the need for, “understanding that both of them have the same struggles at different levels… There is discrimination towards African Americans, so many statistics go hand in hand with Black communities.” Again, Justicia shows a critical understanding of race relations and does not make the common mistake of generalizing the complexities of race relations.

Ricardo did not feel that his views of African-Americans were changed due to Chicana/o Studies so much as they were “enriched.” He went on to make comparisons between the two communities with regards to community organizing. He made broad references to influences in Chicana/o community organizing made by the African-American community.

Valeria began her college experience being afraid of African-Americans. “…I had a lot of negative stereotypes about them… I was walking and there were some African Americans. I would try to walk around, or I would try to avoid, or I would just try not to talk to them, especially the males…. I was really afraid of them.” This was
despite growing up in a community that had very few African-Americans. She would eventually progress to have positive views of African-Americans similar to the other participants.

She thanked, in large part, Chicana/o Studies for helping her move from fearing African-Americans to eventually seeing African-Americans as allies. “It really just changed the way I viewed African Americans, and it really taught me the value of working in solidarity with each other.”

Valeria went on to make a specific historical connection between Chicanas/os and African-Americans. She remembered how, “learning about the history of slavery and the history of...African folks in Mexico” led her to realize, “…we’re different but we’re both struggling in our own different ways.”

Valeria also made connections to contemporary social issues and made connections on how they impact Chicanas/os and African-Americans. She was able to develop these ideas in her Chicana/o Studies courses. Valeria shared that the discussions in her courses allowed her to reflect and challenge her own perspectives of African-Americans:

“We did talk about it in some of my classes, the whole school-to-prison pipeline and how most of the folks that are in prisons are majority black and Latino… Then we started to dig a little more on how unconsciously we can be biased and unconsciously we just stay toward people that look like us, or we make certain stereotypes about other people. I felt like when we started to reflect on our own experiences and started to admit
that, ‘Hey, yeah, I did that’ or ‘Hey, yeah, I was scared of African Americans.’ That's when we started to create more of a safe space.

For Valeria, Chicana/o Studies helped her realize a level of integrative awareness (Helms). This happened by engaging in critical discussions that helped Valeria move beyond her discrimination of African-Americans.

Chicana/o Studies broadened Pablo’s understanding of how social issues impact the Chicana/o community. Pablo’s answers paralleled Valeria’s. It allowed him the opportunity to, “…gain a sense of how certain restrictions and institutionalized racism not only affects [Chicanas/os] but African-Americans as well….These institutional issues could pit our communities against each other, just like the race riots that used to occur at Lynwood High School.” He went on to emphasize the importance of Chicana/o Studies as an avenue to knowledge, and how Chicana/o Studies taught him, “how our communities need to work in coalition if not at least in solidarity.” Pablo said that his college experiences changed his, “view of all people”, but had a specific and larger impact on his views of African-Americans specifically. Pablo believes that Chicana/o Studies “…helped… to examine systemic inequalities that plagued our communities, especially… African-Americans. [He] learned that while Chicanas/os do face barriers, we also need to be supportive of those who go through worse.”

Black, Brown, and Other People of Color

The final theme revealed by participants was that Chicana/o Studies did not just impact their perceptions of African-Americans but also had a positive impact on their perceptions of all communities of color. Participants also expressed a sense of solidarity
with communities beyond just Black and Brown communities while generally maintaining that the two communities with the most in common were Chicanas/os and African-Americans. To this extent, participants seemed to have communicated to me a level of *integrative awareness*.

Esperanza discussed how Chicana/o Studies helped facilitate her positive views of communities of color beyond Chicanas/os. She began by remembering a precise class and assignment that helped motivate these views. “I remember doing a particular assignment in a Chicana/o Studies Race and Critical Thinking course… We created a video to show how racism was still relevant today… Our video showed how different races saw different oppressions.” Assignments such as these granted Esperanza the opportunity to interact with community members and learn from first hand experiences.

Esperanza feels that, “Chicana/o Studies helped [her] understand histories of different people and some of the things they still struggle with today.” She went on to make a connection between how this understanding of people’s histories impacted how she views them and is able to connect with them. “I think that definitely contributes to the way that I see people now and the way that I understand the world a little bit more. There are similarities between the Japanese community and internment camps, Native-Americans on reservations, and African-Americans and slavery.”

Justicia also felt that Chicana/o Studies had a positive impact on how she viewed, “all people different from [her], because we are told something, but then in reality there’s a story behind this.” She thought highly of being exposed to information and knowledge that challenged one’s views of communities outside of their own.
Valeria had positive views of other communities of color and felt a sense of comradery with, “… African Americans, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans… Chicanos… Chicana/o Studies opened up that window for me to see the importance of working with other groups and at first exposing me to African Americans.”

Valiente also had positive views of various groups but emphasized that the most similarities exist between Chicanas/os and African-Americans:

I think Black and Brown folks occupy a place in society we have, especially for the young men… I experienced it myself… we occupy this place or this idea that we're dangerous somehow. That we're all just dangerous and vile, and at any moment we could snap and do something crazy, and that we're all high-handed and things like that.

Valiente’s answer suggests integrate awareness (Helms). It also reflects an ability to frame Black and Brown relations within a system of racism and colonialism.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

In short, this study supports that there is a positive relationship between Chicana/o Studies and Chicanas/os’ perceptions of African-Americans. This concept could potentially be studied through a multitude of different perspectives, theoretical frameworks, and guiding questions. Furthermore, one recommendation for Chicana/o Studies programs and departments would be for them to include entrance and exit interviews as an integrated part of their discipline. This would provide the opportunity to collect data from students and eventually mold their program/department to meet the needs of their students more effectively.

In this chapter I attempt to provide future researchers with some suggestions. This chapter is comprised of two sections. In the first section, I provide limitations discovered and suggestions for future research and Chicana/o Studies programs and departments to better capture the experiences of students in Chicana/o Studies courses. These suggestions come from: 1) areas I found to be lacking in literature; and 2) areas that warranted more attention during the interviews.

The second section of this chapter is recommendations and insight from the Chicana/o students I interviewed. Participants shared strategies for utilizing Chicana/o Studies as a space to improve Black and Brown Relations.

Limitations and Implications: Tips for Future Research(ers)

Limitations were expected and discovered from this study. First, the study was not designed to be longitudinal. As a result, I was not able to communicate with students
as they moved through different racial identity statuses. This prevented me from capturing key experiences that students might have undergone during their participation in the Chicana/o Studies Department. Students provided information from their current racial identity status and may not have been able to remember specific aspects of their education in Chicana/o Studies that assisted them in their movement through the different racial identity statuses. For this reason, follow up questions will be important.

Another limitation that conducting this research has continued to present is that the terms Black and Brown are umbrella terms that encompass many communities from different cultures and nationalities. As Pastor (2014) notes, using the terms Black and Brown to generalize a plethora of communities is problematic. He notes that in Los Angeles County, those who identify as Hispanic or Latino are 75% Mexican, 15% Central American and 2.5% South American (Pastor, 35). Scholars should, moving forward, attempt to document as much demographic data (i.e. nationality, culture, region, age, gender, etc.) as possible. Using umbrella terms like Black and Brown is a goal that we are laying the foundation for. It is important that we do not ignore and erase individual identities for the sake of research. Lastly, any theoretical framework will have its limitations. For this study, Helms’ theoretical framework limited my ability to identify things like organizational and intellectual development.

*Future Research*

Other recommendations for future researchers also came as a result of the interviews. The following themes emerged during the interviews. They deserved attention but were outside of this study’s scope and were thus not probed further.
Future researchers could add to the field of racial identity development by exploring high school experiences in the following ways: 1) how high school experiences impact racial identity during high school; 2) how high school experiences impact racial identity development in college; and 3) how these varied high school experiences may be reflected RID during the college going years.

Student activism is another topic that has had minimal research and attention. Based on the interviews conducted for this study, it appears as though student activism plays a large role in racial identity development and identity development as a whole.

Many participants expressed that they had difficulty communicating what Chicana/o Studies is to their community, family, and friends. Chicana/o Studies programs and departments might benefit from making a concerted effort to educate their students to be able to communicate and present Chicana/o Studies in layman’s terms. Most of the communities, family members, and friends who participants tried to communicate Chicana/o Studies to were not college educated; in fact, most did not even graduate high school or speak English. Here, utilizing and collaborating with student organizations such as M.E.Ch.A. might provide the opportunities to create such spaces where dialogues can occur.

Another area that is likely to produce a lot of valuable information is sexuality. The current study did not make a concerted effort to focus on sexuality. I omitted sexuality from this study regretfully because it was clearly beyond the scope of this study. As Jackson (2006) discusses, there is a vast need for additional research on RIDT regarding physical disability and sexuality. This is, in large part, due to the fact that
RIDT models, including Helms’ work do not include discussions of sexuality (Jackson, 392). The only way to expand our understanding in this regard is to conduct additional research and for scholars to continue to test and explore different spaces and how these spaces impact RID.

Valeria’s interview in particular demonstrates how Chicana/o Studies directly impacted her sexuality identity. Valeria made the argument that being able to express and explore her sexuality identity in Chicana/o Studies courses encouraged her racial identity development. For Valeria, her sexuality was connected to her racial identity. It was because of her exposure to queer Chicana literature (e.g. Cherrie Moraga) that she became confident in both her racial and sexual identity. For a lot of Chicanas/os, their sexual identity is embedded within their racial identity. This is true for Valeria:

We read a lot about queer Chicanas and their epistemology and their perspective and what that meant… I started to really read about…Moraga saying about how she was brought up Catholic... and knowing that she was queer. She always felt guilty, and she felt like she was a sinner. When I started reading those articles, I would see myself a lot... Honestly, that class really started to dismantle the shame that I had and the shame that I had grown up with.

Valeria remembered a specific occasion in a classroom where she was able to engage in a critical assignment with a fellow peer. “...we had to do a project...Me and my other partner who also identified as queer... teamed up… we did it on the shame of being queer and being brown.” She reemphasized the importance of her peer being brown and how
this helped provide her a sense of feeling comfortable. “... working with other queer *mujeres* who were also brown... we shared a similar story...I wasn't the only one who felt shame and felt sin...other people that were like me... I wasn't the only one... Once I started working with that person, we were there for each other.”

Sexuality is especially important for future researchers to consider because it continues to be a taboo topic in many circles, especially Chicana/o communities. Stories like Valeria’s remind us how important it is to continue to have dialogues and unearth the diversity of our individual stories.

*Recommendations: Tips from Aztlan*

In the spirit of the genesis of Chicana/o Studies, the next sets of recommendations come directly from the students who participated in this study. Students were asked, “How can Chicana/o Studies foster leadership between Black and Brown communities in order to create dialogue and build bridges between Black and Brown communities?”

Students were passionate in their responses and readily answered the question as if they had thought about this issue before the interview.

Esperanza shared that one way Chicana/o Studies can serve to improving Black and Brown relations is by emphasizing dialogue. Esperanza says, “We can share what we know with other youth, and we can... learn from those youth... with dialogue.” She gave one example of how Chicana/o Studies might even be used in community organizing based on the community work her friend does. “I actually have a friend who...works with Black and Latino youth. I think that the history, the culture, and everything else that you learn in Chicana and Chicano Studies can be a tool that can be
utilized in communities to create dialogues and build bridges between Black and Brown communities.” Similarly, Valeria also felt that, “Discussions really had a great impact on me.”

Pablo’s provided constructive criticism for Chicana/o Studies in reference to curriculum and classroom activities. “I notice that our courses do not really integrate the histories of African Americans. For that matter, we do not learn of Afro-Latinos in our courses, which I think is a great error in the curriculum.” He went on to suggest that Chicana/o Studies should, “show the good, the bad, and ugly sides of African American and ethnic Mexican relations.” He went on to make the argument that these issues can be the basis of meaningful dialogues between those communities. Pablo noted that Chicana/o Studies could incorporate a class that explored Afro-Latino history, but he also made it a point to note that this responsibility is also shared by the Africana Studies Department. “Outside of the classroom, the departments can host panels, discussions, and events on issues related to African Americans and Latinos.”

For Valiente, the most important thing that the Chicana/o Studies Department can do to improve Black and Brown relations, is for the professors to model behavior. “They have to be willing to engage black intellectuals and have discussions and forums and things like that.”

Ricardo’s point spoke to the need for engaging in critical discussions despite how difficult the process may be. Ricardo voiced the need for seeking truth and answers by, “…bringing awareness and then hopefully it would create an urge for many students to take up leadership or to take initiative to provide change…” The importance of this,
according to Ricardo, would be, “about how they can help each other... also recognizing the current problems that they have on that hand.” A collegial atmosphere such as a university would be ideal for such an interaction to take place.

Popular Culture as a Means to Improve Racial Identity

Another common theme throughout these interviews was the role that the Arts served as creating a space that allowed students to be accepting of other communities. For some, the arts also served as a space for contact with African-American culture and community. Three participants mentioned music, at different capacities, and one mentioned murals. Moving forward, Chicana/o Studies should continue to incorporate the arts into its curriculum and extracurricular spaces. It is important to remember that RID suggests that one of the criteria for integrative awareness (Helms) is the ability to incorporate a person’s racial identity with the rest of their identity.

Music was a space that perpetuated racism for Justicia throughout her childhood. “I could never think of me listening to English music especially music that is like what you would say black related or African American related… My dad did not allow me to listen to that type of music.” For Justicia, it was not until she became a student a CSU Northridge that she became truly exposed to rap and hip-hop through interacting with her peers.

Valiente understood music as a space for interaction and exposure with communities outside of his own. Specifically, he mentioned hip-hop as a space where this interaction could occur:

Within hip-hop culture there's tons of mixing… That's where I found this
place where I could meet other folks and... really it was all right to be you... because what you brought to the table was good. Folks borrowed from each other a lot, but definitely from black culture a lot. I think a lot of people do, especially if you're into hip-hop, you borrow a lot of stuff from black culture.

Valiente also saw an African presence, specifically in Mexican music through his admiration of Son Jarocho. “You definitely can see the influences of Afro-Mexicanos, which I think is great... I gravitated towards Jarocho, which is like Costeño, and there's a lot of Afro-Mexican influence...” Valiente worked with a professor in the Chicana/o Studies Department who had a strong knowledge in Son Jarocho.

Ricardo also utilized this same professor as a resource. “A professor was teaching me [harp] in his office whenever he had available office hours... I asked, ‘So, do I pay you for this?’ And he's like, 'No, no, no. Nothing like that. For one thing, I can’t do that but two, your dedication is payment. That was a big deal for me.'" Ricardo, a lifelong musician (mariachi), was able to extend this part of his identity into the college campus because of the love for the arts that he shared with a professor. In this case, the arts served as a space for a student and a professor to develop and strengthen their relationship.

Another artistic form mentioned by participants was the visual arts. Specifically, murals were described by Valeria as a being able to create dialogue and communicate Chicana/o Studies to her parents. “[My father] would love the murals. That's how we got him [to be] more positive. He started to be less resistant. Then he started to support us,
and he started to be like, 'Oh, yeah. My daughters, they study this. They study our history.'... that was a positive.” For Valeria, and many first-generation Chicana/o students, it was extremely difficult to communicate Chicana/o Studies through academes and written text. Instead, she utilized the visual arts the communicate Chicana/o Studies and used it as an entry point for conversations about her college major, life, and experiences.

Students consistently reported to be, if at least partially, in the integrative awareness (Helms) status. Their consensus of recognizing the importance and humanity in African-Americans points to Chicana/o Studies having the potential to serve as a medium that improves Black and Brown relations. As Sleeter (2011) notes, “...ethnic studies helps students to bridge differences that already exist in experiences and perspectives. In these ways, ethnic studies play an important role in building a truly inclusive multicultural democracy and system of education” (20). However, access to Ethnic Studies is, and will continue to be, an uphill battle. It is important that we continue to search for incentives to continue this battle. Fortunately, there is no prize more rewarding than the validation of our stories and experiences.


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Appendix A

*Interview Questions*

How do you classify yourself racially?

- Why do you classify yourself this way?
- What does classifying yourself this way mean to you?

Did you classify yourself differently prior to taking and majoring in Chicana/o Studies?

- Can you describe why you changed the way you classified yourself?
- What is different about the way you classified yourself before and the way you classify yourself now?

Can you describe your neighborhood growing up?

- What were the demographics like?
- Were you exposed to cultures and communities different from your own?

Did you copy or imitate any culture other than your own growing up?

- Can you describe how?
- Was this met with positive or negative criticism from your family and/or peers?

Did your family and/or peers impact your perception of African-Americans?

- How?

Why did you decide to major in Chicana/o Studies?

- Was it an easy or difficult decision?
- Can you describe the process?
- Was this met with positive or negative criticism from your family and/or peers?

Was your racial identity ever influenced in any of your Chicana/o Studies courses?

- Can you remember any examples?

What about teaching styles, actual assignments, lectures, group assignments, or fieldwork assigned from Chicana/o Studies courses. Do you remember anything specific having a significant impact on how you classify yourself racially?

- Why do you remember that in particular?

Did your experience(s) as a major in Chicana/o Studies change your perception of African-Americans?

- If so, how?

- Can you remember a specific assignment, lecture, group assignment, or fieldwork that caused this change?

- Would you say this change was specific to your perception of African-Americans only or to all people different from you?

How can Chicana/o Studies foster leadership between Black and Brown communities in order to create dialogue and build bridges between Black and Brown communities?