

May 2023

The Effect of Ethnic Studies on White Student Populations

Kelly Coffey

Dominican University of California

<https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2023.EDU.02>

IRB Number: 11043

Survey: Let us know how this paper benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Coffey, Kelly, "The Effect of Ethnic Studies on White Student Populations" (2023). *Master of Science in Education | Master's Theses*. 71.

<https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2023.EDU.02>

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Liberal Arts and Education | Graduate Student Scholarship at Dominican Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Science in Education | Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Dominican Scholar. For more information, please contact michael.pujals@dominican.edu.



This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the program chair, has been presented to and accepted by the Department of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education.

Kelly Coffey
Candidate

Jennifer Lucko, PhD
Program Chair

Katherine Lewis, PhD
First Reader

Jennifer Lucko, PhD
Second Reader

The Effects of Ethnic Studies on White Student Populations

by

Kelly Coffey

A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

2023

Copyright © Kelly Coffey 2023. All rights reserved

Abstract

The effect of Ethnic Studies courses have shown to impact People of Color in a positive way academically, socially, and emotionally (Cabrera et al., 2014; Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Dee & Penner, 2017), however, for White students the effect is less clear. Often there are feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment for White students when confronted with the exposure to the individual and systemic oppression of People of Color by White colonialism and much of this oppression still resonates today (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Research also shows that there could be a link between Ethnic Studies coursework and anti-racist behavior (Brock-Petroshius, 2022). The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of Ethnic Studies on White students. The researcher used a qualitative research design using the analysis and interpretation of White student participant interviews. The questions for the interviews were formed based on the following central questions: (1) How will Ethnic Studies coursework affect White students' views on race, various forms of racism, implicit bias, and White privilege? (2) What are the psychological and emotional effects of Ethnic Studies on these students' White identity? (3) What are the lasting effects of this coursework on White students for their future as potential social justice advocates and for the future of Ethnic Studies at the high school level? The findings show that Ethnic Studies coursework had an overall positive educational impact on student participant views on race and various forms of racism. Findings also showed that Ethnic Studies elicited feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness in White students. However, the study also found that these strong, negative feelings led to an increase in White student anti-racist behavior in the form of social justice action and the desire for further Ethnic

Studies education. The significance of the findings indicates that Ethnic Studies can lead to anti-racist behavior in White students, even when generating negative feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I want to thank my wife Michelle and our little ones, Sienna and Kieran for allowing me the time and space to complete this work. It took longer than expected but we got it done! Also a huge thank you to Dr. Katie Lewis for all of her empathy, compassion and support throughout this final process, it wouldn't have been possible without your understanding and belief in me. To all the professors in the Dominican Education Department; you all are changing the world one teacher at a time, real social change begins with Education and you all are the changemakers!

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | iii |
| Acknowledgements | v |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| Statement of Purpose | 2 |
| Overview of the Research Design | 3 |
| Significance of the Study | 5 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review | 7 |
| History of Ethnic Studies | 8 |
| Assembly Bills 2016 and 101 | 9 |
| Race as a Social Construct and Racism | 12 |
| Systems of Power in White America | 16 |
| The Impact of Ethnic Studies on Students of Color | 18 |
| The Achievement Gap | 19 |
| The Impact of Ethnic Studies on White Students | 20 |
| Bias, Racism, and Anti-Racism | 20 |
| White Guilt | 21 |
| Conclusions | 22 |
| Chapter 3: Methods | 24 |
| Research Questions | 24 |
| Description and Rationale for Research Approach | 25 |
| Research Design | 26 |
| Data Analysis | 29 |
| Validity | 31 |
| Chapter 4: Findings | 33 |
| Ethnic Studies Courses Help Students Develop Critical Consciousness | 34 |
| Ethnic Studies and the Impact on White Identity | 37 |
| Effects of Ethnic Studies on Social Justice Action and Further Education | 41 |
| Chapter 5: Discussion | 47 |
| Implications for Literature | 50 |
| Implications for Practice and Policy | 52 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Limitations of the Study | 53 |
| Directions for Future Research..... | 54 |
| Conclusion..... | 55 |
| References..... | 57 |
| Appendix A IRB Approval Letter..... | 65 |
| Appendix B Recruitment Flyer/Survey..... | 67 |
| Name (first only) | 67 |
| Appendix C Interview Questions | 69 |

Chapter 1: Introduction

There is a fight being waged in our country over the teaching of Ethnic Studies in schools. California has taken the lead to be the first state to require Ethnic Studies for graduation but there are other states that have banned Ethnic Studies in secondary schools (Chen, 2022). The fight that government officials and lawmakers are having has to do with the effects, real or perceived, that Ethnic Studies has on students. Florida's Governor Ron Desantis spoke these words directly from the state's recently passed Individual Freedom Act (2022):

An individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, does not bear responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex. An individual should not be made to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race. (Farrington, 2022).

However, what if this guilt and anguish comes from developing a critical consciousness about the history of racism and origins of oppression in this country? And what if these "forms of psychological distress" can drive young people to fight for change and equity in the world?

White people, mostly men, hold a disproportionate amount of leadership positions in this country in areas of government, business, and education. The byproducts of these structures are generational wealth, property, healthcare, access to higher education, etc. (Dettling, et al., 2017; Hanks, et al. 2018; Lombardo, 2019; Velasco, 2021). Addressing these systemic equity issues is a complicated, multifaceted problem and one area that is important to acknowledge is that if White adults hold a

majority of the positions of power in these important areas we, as a society, need to find a way to reach these power brokers to help drive equity for the future. The way that we do this is through education. By educating White students we can begin to build the critical consciousness that creates awareness and therein, the impetus for change. The complicated part to this equation is that Ethnic Studies has been shown to change White student attitudes on race and racism (Okoye-Johnson, 2011) but also to create feelings of guilt and shame that effected White student anti-racist behavior (Brock-Petroshius, 2022). Every year after 2029-30, the California Department of Education reports cohorts of over 100,000 White students will graduate from the public high schools in California completing at least one course in Ethnic Studies (2021) and this is how we reach the White power brokers by educating their sons and daughters and creating generation after generation of critically conscious, anti-racist, White, young people.

Statement of Purpose

Previous research has shown Ethnic Studies to have a positive academic, social, and emotional impact on People of Color (Cabrera et al., 2014; Cammarota & Romero, 2007; Dee & Penner, 2017). However, there is limited research on the effects of Ethnic Studies on White students at the secondary school level (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020), although studies that have been conducted have shown positive effects on White student racial attitudes (Brock-Petroshius, 2022; Klepper, 2014; Martin, 2010; Okoye-Johnson, 2011). The positive effects on White students are not always evident and are nuanced to some degree. When White students take Ethnic Studies courses and begin to develop a deeper critical consciousness regarding the embedded racism and

oppression against People of Color that have occurred over centuries, this can elicit feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and sadness (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). These emotions are complicated for White students and can be construed as negative.

Much of the qualitative and quantitative research has found that Ethnic Studies increases critical consciousness in White people regarding various forms of racism while at the same time causing feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and sadness. However, there is very limited literature on how these feelings impact White students on their racial attitudes as well as future behaviors such as anti-racist actions or social action. Acknowledging that these emotions occur in an Ethnic Studies classroom is important for the teacher in their conveyance of the subject and for the students within the class, amongst each other. This research project aimed to better understand these emotions in White secondary students and how these “negative” emotions would affect their racial attitudes and future anti-racist behavior or social action. By understanding the origins of these visceral, emotional reactions and the effects on White students, we can help develop pedagogical strategies to assist Ethnic Studies teachers as well as the next steps for the students themselves in their critical consciousness growth.

Overview of the Research Design

At the time the data was collected during the 2022-2023 academic school year, the researcher worked at an urban, public high school in Northern California. The school was in its second year of adding Ethnic Studies into its curriculum, so the teaching staff and administration were still developing and adjusting the curriculum and pedagogy for the course. During the time the study was conducted, there was intense scrutiny in

California and around the United States about social justice protests and civic action for the equitable treatment of People of Color.

Most of the research took place at the researcher's own school site in Northern California which has 1,379 students with 67% of the students identifying as Hispanic, 28% White, 3% Asian, 1% African American and 1% of students are two or more races. There was one other school site used, this one in Southern California with 2,282 students with an ethnic makeup of 39% Asian, 33% White, 12% Latino, 2% African American and 12% identify as two or more races.

Four participants participated in the study and each participant appeared White and identified as White. Three were female and one was male. Three were freshmen and one of the female participants was in her junior year. Each participant took Ethnic Studies in their first semester in high school as freshmen. The researcher did not teach any of the participants prior to the study.

In order to gain a better understanding of how Ethnic Studies affected White Students in this research, a qualitative approach to data collection was used. Data collection included transcribed notes and observations from separate, individual interviews with each of the participants. Two interviews were conducted in person and two were performed on Zoom. Through analyzing the qualitative data gathered, this study sought to find the impact of Ethnic Studies coursework on White students' racial attitudes and views on race. This study had three primary research questions; (1) How will Ethnic Studies coursework affect white students' views on race, various forms of racism, implicit bias, and White privilege? (2) What are the psychological and emotional effects of Ethnic Studies on these students' White identity? (3) What are the lasting

effects of this coursework on White students for their future as potential social justice advocates and for the future of Ethnic Studies at the high school level?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study are important to understanding how Ethnic Studies affects White student views on various forms of racism and how these effects manifest themselves emotionally for these students. This research found that Ethnic Studies courses did create feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness in the White student population; however, in contrast to much of the previous research, this study also found that these emotional reactions led to student desire for more Ethnic Studies education as well as increased anti-racist behavior such as participating in social justice initiatives, increased social action, and civic engagement.

The strong negative emotions that White students had after learning about the history of racism and oppression were important findings, however, the key to the study was the student response to these feelings and the behavior it elicited. Many lawmakers and members of the media would have us believe that these negative emotions create animosity between White people and People of Color (see Ron Desantis, Individual Freedom Act quote above) and drive hostility between racial groups. The research in this study demonstrates quite the opposite. The White population that took Ethnic Studies *did* feel these negative emotions but these feelings drove them to strive for greater equity in any way that they could. Students were more likely to continue educating themselves about racism and oppression by expressing interest in further, higher level Ethnic Studies classes in their high schools. Additionally, the White

students were more likely to join social justice initiatives and civic engagement to fight for equity for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Implications

Ethnic Studies will become fully integrated into the California public school system in 2025-26 and the graduating class of 2029-30 will need to have taken at least one semester of Ethnic Studies to fulfill their graduation requirement. As the State of California moves towards this integration, there are further implications for creating a better, more comprehensive and intuitive Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy. Upon experiencing Ethnic Studies coursework, the research suggests White students will have powerful feelings and emotions. To properly navigate and manage these emotions teachers must acknowledge these emotions and be trained on how to navigate them within a classroom setting. Additionally, the research also suggests that these emotions can cause students to increase their desire for more advanced Ethnic Studies courses and to participate in social justice causes and civic action.

If the impact of this study was played out across other states in this country it has far reaching implications for advancing equity and social justice. It is significant to understand that guilt, shame, and embarrassment derived from critical consciousness about racism and oppression can drive White students to want to have *more* Ethnic Studies courses and become more involved with anti-racist and social justice actions. This could create a new generation of racially conscious, equity seeking, civically engaged, White young people. The statistics say that the power holders and power brokers in this country are White, but if every high school graduation turns out a generation of racially enlightened, White young people, individuals in society have the

potential to become exponentially more critically conscious and open to moving towards greater social justice and equity.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review seeks to understand the effect of Ethnic Studies courses on White students, specifically nuances of their views on race, the many forms of racism and white privilege, as well investigating the lasting impact from this kind of coursework. The research pertaining to Ethnic Studies and its positive academic, social, and emotional impact on People of Color is well documented (Cabrera et al., 2014; Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Dee & Penner, 2017) . However, while there is limited literature that addresses the effects of Ethnic Studies on White students at the secondary school level (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020), the studies that have been conducted have shown positive effects on White students' racial attitudes (Klepper, 2014; Martin, 2010; Okoye-Johnson, 2011). The positive effects are not always immediate as there are sometimes periods of uncomfortable adjustment for White students who have not had experience interacting with People of Color or are not familiar with racism and its associated constructs (Hogan & Mallott, 2005). Oftentimes, when a White student is confronted with the uncomfortable truth about racism and their White relatives' role in the formation of the systems of power that surround all of us now, there are feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and sadness (Bigler & Levy, 2007; Todd, Spanierman & Poteat, 2011; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020). Pedagogy and the way the topics in Ethnic Studies are taught in the classroom and the way interracial interactions are facilitated can also deepen the impact of the course and the effect it may have on White students (Okoye-Johnson, 2011). Additionally, developing empathy and critical consciousness with

Ethnic Studies coursework has also been shown to correlate with increased anti-racist behaviors by White people (Brock-Petroshius, et al., 2022)

This review will provide a snapshot of the history of Ethnic Studies in California and the new legislation and Model Ethnic Studies curriculum. It will investigate the racial constructs that Ethnic Studies will be addressing and what many White students may be exposed to for the first time. Research on the effects of multicultural education and Ethnic Studies coursework on both People of Color and White students is addressed and analyzed as are the nuances of White guilt and White fear. This review will also investigate different racial constructs and the power structures in America and determine how and why Ethnic Studies could be important for White students and for People of Color, now and in the future.

History of Ethnic Studies

California has a rich, foundational place in the development of Ethnic Studies as an academic discipline. In 1968, members of the Black Student Union and other organizations including the Asian American Political Alliance at San Francisco State University came together to form the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) (Ehsanipour, 2020). The TWLF wanted the right to define their own educational experience and drafted a proposal of 15 demands, including a school of Third World studies and a Black Studies degree department. They wanted to learn about themselves and their ethnic history and, until the demands were met, they and other students went on strike. The TWLF protested for five months and, after many conflicts with riot police and the jailing of protesters, the University agreed to listen to their proposal. By the Fall of 1969, the

College of Ethnic Studies was created at SFSU, which was the first of its kind (Ehsanipour, 2020).

Assembly Bills 2016 and 101

The state of California has come a long way since that time and now many high schools have Ethnic Studies courses. AB-2016 was passed in 2016 to create an Ethnic Studies Model curriculum for public high schools in the state of California and in October 2021, AB101 was passed to mandate Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement starting in 2029-30. The framework for Ethnic Studies California Model Curriculum (2021) in California public schools defines Ethnic Studies as “an interdisciplinary field of study that encompasses many subject areas including history, literature, economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science. It emerged to both address content considered missing from traditional curriculum and to encourage critical engagement” (Ch.1, p. 4). The authors of this curriculum framework also discuss the purpose of Ethnic Studies (ES), stating that this field “seeks to empower all students to engage socially and politically and to think critically about the world around them” The document continues to state that it is important that ES courses “document the experiences of people of color in order for students to construct counter-narratives and develop a more complex understanding of the human experience...students should develop respect for cultural diversity and see the advantage of inclusion” (Ch.1 p. 4). As an academic discipline, Ethnic Studies can take many different forms, however, what is most important is that the course takes into account the historic struggle of communities of color, the intersectionality of identity and the systems that continue the cycle of racism, prejudice, oppression, and inequality.

The authors of the Ethnic Studies model curriculum for California name the following learning goals for Ethnic Studies courses: Pursuit of justice and equity; working toward greater inclusivity, furthering self understanding, recognizing intersectionality, promoting self-empowerment for civic engagement, and supporting a community focus (Ch. 1, p.14-19). This research study was designed to explore the efficacy of a class, in this case Ethnic Studies, and its effect on student attitudes towards a subject (racism, etc.). To try to determine efficacy, it is important to first define the guiding values and principles of Ethnic Studies. According to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (2021), “the foundational values of ethnic studies are housed in the conceptual model of the “double helix”, which interweaves *holistic humanization* and *critical consciousness*” (Ch.1, p. 14). The eight learning outcomes for the Ethnic Studies model curriculum are (Ch.1, p.16-19):

1. **Pursuit of justice and equity**—In the pursuit of justice and equality, ethnic studies should help students comprehend the various manifestations of racism and other forms of ethnic bigotry, discrimination, and marginalization.
2. **Working toward greater inclusivity**— California ethnic studies should emphasize educational equity by being inclusive of all students, regardless of their backgrounds.
3. **Furthering self-understanding**—Through ethnic studies, students will gain a deeper understanding of their own identities, ancestral roots, and knowledge of self.

4. **Developing a better understanding of others**—The essential and complementary flip side of self-understanding is the understanding of others. Ethnic studies should also help build bridges of intergroup understanding.
5. **Recognizing intersectionality**—People, including students, are not only members of racial and ethnic groups. These groups may be based on such factors as sex, religion, class, ability/disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship status, socioeconomic status, and language use. The lens of intersectionality helps both to explore the richness of human experience and to highlight the variations that exist within ethnic diversity.
6. **Promoting self-empowerment for civic engagement**—Ethnic studies should help students become more engaged locally and develop into effective civic participants and stronger social justice advocates, better able to contribute to constructive social change.
7. **Supporting a community focus**—Ethnic studies in all California districts should address the basic contours of national and statewide ethnic experiences.
8. **Developing interpersonal communication**—Achieving the preceding principles will require one additional capability: effective communication. Particularly considering California’s extensive diversity, ethnic studies should help build effective communication across ethnic differences.

Before we move forward, it is important to distinguish what the terms ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ mean in the context of this research project. The questions in the interviews for this study were designed to establish a baseline from participants about their experiences with race and racism prior to taking an Ethnic Studies class so as to

ascertain what thoughts and feelings may have changed *after* completing the course. Assigning the terms ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ (or using phrases like “Ethnic Studies coursework had an overall positive educational impact on student participant views on race and various forms of racism”) to the thoughts or feelings of what a participant says about their experience within the Ethnic Studies course can certainly be construed as arbitrary and subjective to the researcher’s views. Therefore, the phrase “the research had a positive impact on student attitudes,” indicates that the Ethnic Studies coursework met one or more of the eight learning outcomes. As the Model Curriculum (2021) states,

Ethnic Studies did not arise in a vacuum. It arose with the intent of giving voice to stories long silenced, including stories of injustice, marginalization, and discrimination, as well as stories of those who became part of our nation through slavery, conquest, colonization and immigration (Ch.1 p. 16).

The terms ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ lie on the ends of the learning goal spectrum. Some pedagogy may steer students deeper and more thoroughly to the learning outcomes while some strategies may fall short or have flaws, and this is what can be subjective. However, for the purpose of this research project, ‘positive’ outcomes for students refers to instances in which Ethnic Studies coursework meets the standard for at least one of the learning objectives .

Race as a Social Construct and Racism

Understanding race and the experiences of People of Color is a stated goal of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, but first we must comprehend race as a social construct to be able to address racism in its many forms. The term “race” was

used rarely before the 1500's and was routinely used to identify groups of people that had a kinship or group connection (Roediger, 2021). The modern day use of the term race, however, is a human invention. The American Association of Biological Anthropologists (2019) states that "Race does not provide an accurate representation of human biological variation. It was never accurate in the past, and remains inaccurate when referencing contemporary human populations" (p.1). In the 17th century, European Enlightenment philosophers began to shift their ideas to rational reasoning and scientific theory to explain the natural world as opposed to faith based religious beliefs. Over time, philosophers and thinkers postulated that natural laws governed the world including human beings and the notion that white humans were more intelligent and capable than nonwhite people spread and became acceptable worldwide. This belief became acceptable worldwide (Roediger, 2021). The American Association of Biological Anthropologists go on to state that "The Western concept of race must be understood as a classification system that does not have its roots in biological reality, but in policies of discrimination...race has become a social reality that structures societies and how we experience the world" (2019, p. 1).

Racism is a derivative of this social construction of race that had its roots, at least in part, in European and American colonialism and oppression. Ibram X. Kendi defines racism as "A marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities" (Kendi, 2019, p. 17-18). The construct of race itself has led to this "marriage of racist policies and racist ideas;" they manifest themselves everywhere in our society. Shedding light on the framework of race as a social construct and how it creates these systems of racism is important for People of Color to recognize, but even

more so for White people to identify because often they have less awareness of the surrounding oppressive systems of racism.

Aversive Racism

Aversive racism theory (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004) is the premise that racial bias can be divided into the constructs of explicit and implicit racism. Explicit racial bias is defined by conscious attitudes and intentional responses (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Implicit racial bias is defined by unconscious cognitive processes and associations (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Aversive racism is the combination of non-biased explicit attitudes with biased implicit attitudes. Aversive racists behave in ways that are inconsistent with their conscious beliefs (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Implicit racism is one of the most important constructs to address because it is the notion that one can unconsciously act in ways that are biased. Implicit racism, sometimes called unconscious bias (though slightly different), refers to “attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious way, making them difficult to control” (Ruhl, 2020, p.1). The difficult aspect of implicit racism or bias is that it is unconscious and because of that can be difficult to control. We don’t know what we don’t know and for many White adults, not to mention White high school students, this is an everyday reality. As we study the way high school students, in this case white students, learn about their own blind spots and internalize this concept, it is important to consider to what degree they acknowledge the existence of this kind of particular racial bias. To that end, understanding aversive racism theory should be an important consideration for Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy planning.

Structural and Institutional Racism

Implicit and explicit bias both play roles in creating forms of structural and institutional racism and it is important to understand where these constructs come from. Lander (2021) defines Institutional racism as “processes, attitudes and behaviors which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people” (p. 1). For example institutional racism relates to the institutions of education, health care, and criminal justice. Structural racism refers to wider political and social disadvantages within society such as higher rates of poverty for Black and Latinx groups or higher rates of death from Covid-19 among People of Color (Lander, 2021).

Redlining is an example of racialized residential segregation and structural racism. In 1933, the federal government created the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) to expand home ownership to aid in recovery from the Great Depression. To help determine “mortgage-worthiness”, HOLC created maps of over 230 cities in the U.S. and, using racial composition in its assessment, HOLC staff drew red lines around communities with large Black populations. The redlines flagged these areas as hazardous investment areas whose residents would not receive HOLC loans (Zinzi, Feldman, & Bassett, 2021). Redlining made mortgages less accessible to Black homebuyers, and thus more vulnerable to predatory terms, increased lender profits, which reduced access to home ownership and deprived these communities of an asset that is central to intergenerational wealth transfer (Zinzi, Feldman, & Bassett, 2021). Structural racism is also reinforced through institutional systems such as hiring practices

and recruitment policies which exclude People of Color from organizational leadership positions and positions of power (Lander, 2021).

White Privilege

In Peggy McIntosh's important essay *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (1989), she describes white privilege "as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious" (p.1). White privilege comes from historic, enduring racism and biases. Kendall (2013) defines white privilege as "having greater access to power and resources than People of Color do" (p. 2). White privilege is another racial construct that can reside outside of conscious awareness and it addresses the notion of different forms of structural and institutional racism.

Systems of Power in White America

The systems of power in America are primarily controlled by White men. These structures include business, education, government, and the byproducts of these structures including things like wealth, property, healthcare, access to higher education, etc. (Dettling, et al., 2017; Hanks, et al. 2018; Lombardo, 2019; Velasco, 2021). The research shows an overwhelming discrepancy between Whites and People of Color in these areas.

In 2016, the median wealth, defined as a family's financial net worth, for Black and Hispanic families was \$17,600 and \$20,700 compared to White families' median wealth of \$171,000 (Dettling et al., 2017). Less wealth translates to fewer opportunities for upward mobility and fewer chances to build wealth or pass down wealth to future generations (Hanks et al., 2018). As of 2018, there were four Black and 10 Latinx

Fortune 500 CEOs (Velasco, 2021); these total numbers represent less than 1% of all 500 CEOs.

Much of this power and influence begins in the form of education. A study from nonprofit EdBuild found that in the U.S., predominantly White school districts received \$23 billion dollars *more* funding than school districts that served mostly students of color (Lombardo, 2019). Even though in the 1954 case *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional, today more than half of students in the U.S. go to “racially concentrated” schools, defined as more than 75% of the school is White or 75% is Non-White (Lombardo, 2019). In Arizona during the 2018 school year, poor, primarily White school districts received about \$19,000 per student, which contrasted with high-poverty, non-White districts that received about \$8,000 per student (Lombardo, 2019). Across the nation, the study found that high-poverty districts serving mostly Students of Color received \$1,600 less than the national average, while school districts that are predominantly White and poor received \$130 less per student. This multi layered, broad financial disparity contributes to lower high school graduation rates, lower rates of college enrollment for Black and Hispanic students in comparison to Whites as well as significant differences in standardized test scores and acceptance rates into high quality colleges (Sabalich, 2016).

The intersection of Government and Education is vast and intertwined. A 2017 study by U.S. News and World Report found that 97% of all elected Republican government officials were White and 79% of all elected Democratic officials were White (Lardieri, 2017). White Americans make up a larger share of Congress than of the U.S.

population; Hispanic Americans are underrepresented compared to the population as are Asian Americans (Schaeffer, 2021). Though increasing in diversity, most Non-White ethnic groups are still underrepresented in the federal government and nationwide governmental structures are run primarily by Whites. The intersectionality of all these layers can be exemplified in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. This act used federal dollars to build highways across the country and created the suburbs. This act, while deemed universally beneficial, further entrenched racially isolated urban residents from newly formed, predominantly White suburbs. Similarly, following World War II, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) helped millions of American veterans purchase homes and obtain an education. These policies were designed to be race- and gender-neutral but in practice disproportionately helped White men (Lombardo, 2019).

Systems of power in America are controlled primarily by Whites and this brings to light the importance of understanding the impact of Ethnic Studies on this group of students. If Ethnic Studies at a foundational level is impactful to White students, then this could lead to meaningful change in the areas mentioned above.

The Impact of Ethnic Studies on Students of Color

Ethnic studies courses have shown to be beneficial for People of Color. The research has identified two primary ways that Ethnic Studies aids in development for People of Color-Sense of identity/sense of self with increased racial awareness and academic achievement.

Student Identity and Sense of Self

Ethnic Studies courses have shown to increase one's sense of identity and sense of self, which translates to greater mental health, self esteem, and academic

success. Sleeter (2020) identified sense of self and student identity, specifically ethnic identity, with academic identity as a crucial connection for school success. Chavous and colleagues (2003) found that Black high school students with a high awareness of race and racism, and a high sense of positive Black identity, were more likely to graduate from high school and attend college as opposed to those with low awareness of race and racism. Thomas, Davidson, and McAdoo (2008) performed an experimental study on an Ethnic Studies program being taught to African American high school girls. The girls that were in the ES program showed higher measures of ethnic identity, racism awareness, and liberatory action than the control group of girls that were not in the program. These studies show us that Ethnic Studies can be a high determinant for boosting ethnic identity and self awareness as well as racism awareness. These characteristics are high predictors for heightened self esteem and academic success.

The Achievement Gap

The achievement gap is most often used to describe the academic performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic White peers. Ethnic Studies has been shown to positively affect academic performance for students of color. Dee and Penner (2017) conducted an extensive pilot study on the efficacy of the implementation of Ethnic Studies in the San Francisco Unified School District. They found that Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) that is aligned with marginalized students' experiences enhances their willingness to engage in learning. Additionally, Dee and Penner found that 9th grade students that took ES classes had significantly higher GPAs, attendance levels, and credits earned. Cammarota and Romero (2009) as well as Cabrera et al. (2014)

investigated Mexican American Studies (MAS) in Arizona and compared GPAs, graduation rates, and achievement scores using the state's standardized test scores. MAS was implemented for 11th and 12th grade students and the studies showed that students that went through MAS had higher GPA and achievement test scores than the students who did not go through the program. Even though the students that went through MAS had lower GPAs and achievement test scores through the 9-10th grades. The MAS students also had higher graduation rates.

The Impact of Ethnic Studies on White Students

The research on the impact of Ethnic Studies on White students has data that points to positive racial outcomes for White students (Klepper, 2014; Martin, 2010; Okoye-Johnson, 2011; San Pedro, 2018). The literature shows that White students often have negative emotions after learning about or being confronted with racism (Todd, Spanierman & Poteat, 2011). Research has also shown that Ethnic Studies coursework and the resulting emotions can affect future anti-racist behaviors (Brock-Petroshius, 2021).

Bias, Racism, and Anti-Racism

One of the stated learning outcomes of the Ethnic Studies model curriculum is "furthering self-understanding" (Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, 2021, p.15) and that means investigating one's own implicit biases. In a quantitative study, Rivas (2020) found that White students had higher implicit racial bias compared to People of Color within the class upon completion. Okoye-Johnson (2011) found that multicultural education, defined as "programs and curricula dealing with racial and cultural diversity" (p.1259), was effective in reducing students' negative racial attitudes. He also found that

racial attitudes were more easily changed in urban areas versus suburban areas. The difference here may be attributed to more exposure to more diverse groups of students and people on a more regular basis. Additionally, Kleg (1971) found that cognitive knowledge acquired within Ethnic Relations class influenced attitudes towards ethnicity but also that newly acquired knowledge is forgotten and attitudinal changes begin to revert back to their original level. Though an older study, it is important to point out that changing one's attitude towards race may not be concrete or stable but rather fluid and prone to reverting back to the original beliefs.

White Guilt

There were limited studies that addressed the feelings of White students after taking an Ethnic Studies course. A longitudinal study by Todd, Spanierman & Poteat (2011) found that White students exhibited feelings of guilt based on their previous history and experience with racism. The study was conducted using White students and measured their feelings of guilt in relation to racism as they went through college. The researchers found that White students who entered college with a low awareness of racism or its constructs showed higher trends of White guilt after being shown videos about institutional racism and White privilege. Students that entered college with higher levels of awareness to the various forms of racism showed a downward trend in White guilt. The study shows a contrast in White student emotional reactions based upon their prior exposure and understanding of racism and its constructs.

One of the Learning Outcomes for the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (2021) is to “Promote self-empowerment for civic engagement--Ethnic studies should help students become more engaged locally and develop into effective

civic participants and stronger social justice advocates, better able to contribute to constructive social change” (p.17). A study conducted by Brock-Petroshius et al. (2022) found that White students who exhibited guilt and shame in response to racism and People of Color led to fewer anti-racist behaviors. However, in the same study, White students who had taken an Ethnic Studies course were more likely to exhibit more frequent anti-racist behaviors. The Boston University Community Service Center (2023) defines anti-racism as: “The practice of actively identifying and opposing racism. The goal of anti-racism is to actively change policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions” (p.1). The Brock-Petroshius et al. study (2021) indicates that Ethnic Studies coursework could lead to increased anti-racist activity such as civic engagement and social action. However, the study assumes that guilt and shame might inhibit a White student from anti-racist actions in the future.

Conclusions

Ethnic Studies has been around as an academic discipline since the late 1960’s and there is considerable research that speaks to the positive influence that these courses can have on People of Color. However, the power structures in the United States are still dominated by Whites and continue to perpetuate over generations and will continue to do so unless meaningful changes can be made. With evolving racial attitudes and social consciousness, the research behind Ethnic Studies has made it more mainstream and we are witnessing California being the first state to mandate Ethnic Studies for graduation. By 2029-30, in theory, there will be an entire generation of California high school students that will have been exposed and taken part in a significant critical analysis of the systems of power and more importantly their *own*

attitudes regarding different racial constructs and biases. And this generation and the next generation will enter higher education or the workforce with a heightened critical consciousness about the systems and structures that have been built around them regarding race and racism.

The previous research on the effects of White students is limited especially in the areas of emotional response and resulting behavior. The research does show that White students reduce negative racial attitudes with their exposure to information about racism (Okoye-Johnson, 2011). However, much of the research shows White students acquire feelings of guilt when exposed to Ethnic Studies coursework. The gap in the research comes from what the effect of this emotion, guilt, has on White students. We don't know whether White guilt will drive students to push back and reject this critical consciousness about racism that has been developed or whether it will drive these students to seek change in the systems of racism that they have been exposed to.

This research study aims to determine how Ethnic Studies affects White students and more specifically how the feelings and emotions that manifest in these students determine future behavior. The narrative that some of the media would have you believe is that White guilt should be avoided and that White young people should not be made to feel guilty about the past history of racism. However, if White guilt is real and it could be an important driver for White young people to become more anti-racist and stir this demographic into more social justice and civic action.

Chapter 3: Methods

There have been a multitude of research studies that have investigated the impact of Ethnic Studies courses on students. Most of the research has centered around the impact of Ethnic Studies on People of Color and not on the effect this coursework might have on White students. There was limited qualitative research and resulting data to speak of within the literature review and very few studies that have explored the perspectives of White students who have completed an Ethnic Studies course. Therefore, a deeper look into the students' subjective experience and resulting changes in their behavior, if any, from the coursework is needed.

The researcher designed the methods that follow by considering ways in which students' subjective experiences could be fully and richly captured and analyzed. In this study, the voice of the student was seen as the primary authority of their own experience.

Research Questions

This study focused on student responses to interview questions. The interview questions were developed based on the following central questions:

1. How will Ethnic Studies coursework affect white students' views on race, various forms of racism, implicit bias, and White privilege?
2. What are the psychological and emotional effects of Ethnic Studies on these students' White identity?
3. What are the lasting effects of this coursework on White students for their future as potential social justice advocates and for the future of Ethnic Studies at the high school level?

These questions were used as a framework to gather more information about the impact of the Ethnic Studies course on the student participants that participated in the study.

Description and Rationale for Research Approach

Two worldviews are reflected in my research: constructivist and transformative. This study embodies a constructivist view because I am seeking to understand students' subjective experiences and data relies heavily on participants' views and includes the use of open-ended responses. Creswell (2014) states the goal of constructivist research is "to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p.27). My questions to my participants are broad and general so that the participant can tell their story of the work that they did, or did not do, in the Ethnic Studies course.

Certainly, my research approach conforms most closely to a transformative worldview. Creswell (2014) states that this "worldview focuses on the needs of groups and individuals in our society that may be marginalized or disenfranchised" (p. 9), which aligns partially with my research goals. Though I am investigating the impact of Ethnic Studies on White students and their views on race and racial constructs, my reason for doing so is because of the inequities, prejudices, and biases that marginalized groups live with every day. Systems of power in our society are controlled primarily by White people and if we can educate younger White students about the deeper, overt, and underlying racial constructs, we will be making progress. With Ethnic Studies and similar educational outreach these students may become more aware of systemic

issues of race and equity in this country and, therefore, may be more likely to help with meaningful change at the structural level. My research questions connect with this education but also with social and political action.

Research on Ethnic Studies shows a positive impact for People of Color that become involved in the coursework. One of the biggest reasons is that people who have a strong sense of identity and sense of self usually have greater mental health and self-esteem which leads to higher confidence and greater academic success (Sleeter, 2020). For example, an African American student that takes Ethnic Studies and who learns about their past and heritage and then can label and identify the racial constructs that surround them in this world, will likely come out of the course with a great sense of self and racial identity. However, do White students also have this opportunity to grow their sense of self and racial identity? Potentially, in some ways. Empathy, compassion, and anger about the plight of the marginalized people that are studied in the course can certainly grow this sense of identity with, and give a person a cause to believe in and identify with but it may also have a negative effect. Some research shows that White students often have feelings of guilt and remorse when they fully grasp the scope of White supremacy and structural racism in this country and the world (Sleeter, 2020). The rationale for this research is the hope that it can contribute to positive social transformation and real meaningful change in the fight for equity in this country.

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative research approach for the study. The researcher interviewed student participants that have experienced an Ethnic Studies course in high school to find out the impact it has on their ideas about general and

specific racial constructs. The questions were very open ended and the researcher was interested in finding out about the students' own subjective experience.

Research Sites

The school setting for the interview participants were two high schools, one in Northern California. This site has 1,379 students with 67% of the students identifying as Hispanic, 28% White, 3% Asian, 1% African American and 1% of students are two or more races. The other high school is located in Southern California and has 2,282 students with an ethnic makeup of 39% Asian, 33% White, 12% Latino, 2% African American, and 12% identify as two or more races. The schools were picked because they both have Ethnic Studies programs and for the availability of interview participants.

Participants and Sampling Procedures

There were three high school students involved in this research from the Northern California high school and one from the Southern California high school. Three of the participants were female and one was male. Each student that was interviewed identified as White. All students are minors and signed a consent form as did their parents for permission for them to participate. Parent consent was procured by sending a letter to the parents. To pick my participants, I visited the Ethnic Studies class at the high schools and had all the students complete a brief questionnaire (Appendix B). From the questionnaire, I contacted my participants to participate in the interview portion of the research. Below are the demographics of the participants in the study, pseudonyms were used.

| Pseudonym | Current Grade Level | Sex | School |
|-----------|---------------------|-----|--------|
|-----------|---------------------|-----|--------|

| | | | |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Amy | 11 | Female | Southern California |
| Ellie | 9 | Female | Northern California |
| Jackie | 9 | Female | Northern California |
| Ben | 9 | Male | Northern California |

Methods

In the study, the researcher designed two interactions with the student participants. The first one was my introduction of the research to the students that had taken the Ethnic Studies course. In the classroom, I introduced my research questions, handed out the survey flier, and answered questions. The introductory questionnaire focused on the ethnicity, age, grade level, years lived in the county, whether they want to take part in the study, and how to best contact them for follow-up questions.

The second interaction with the participants was the interview portion of the study (see Appendix C). The researcher audio recorded each interview and wrote field notes down after each interview, away from the location and in private. Video is important to see body language and mannerisms, such as averting eye contact, slumped posture, fidgeting, or nervousness. The topic of race and racism is hard for many people to talk about, especially White teenagers that may experience guilt or embarrassment associated with their feelings. The researcher listened and gave full attention to the participant during the interview and recorded notes and phrases directly after the interview in my memos.

The researcher's goal in the interviews, aside from getting them to answer the questions, was to ask each participant to reflect deeply on their experience learning about race and these deeper lying racial constructs. I wanted them to tell stories about

their experience not only in the class but outside the class and experiences they had with People of Color that may have contributed in some way to their unconscious biases or White privilege.

Data Analysis

The researcher collected data through a brief introductory survey and then with qualitative, open ended interview questions. The researcher used Maxwell's (2013) strategies for qualitative data analysis: analytic memos, categorizing strategies including coding and concept mapping. Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher created a list of words and short phrases that I expected to hear during my interviews. These potential words included: changed my view, guilt, embarrassed, shame, comfortable, uncomfortable, made me think, opened my eyes, sad, understood, changed my actions, help, social action, social justice, civic action. Upon hearing these code word triggers I asked follow up questions to dig deeper into that feeling or that thought. The researcher went through each interview directly after it took place, at a different location and wrote analytic memos about details of the interview experience noting first impressions and tendencies, before listening to the recorded interview. The researcher transcribed each interview for the purposes of coding this qualitative data. The researcher used the transcripts of each interview to find common themes between the participants. The themes were developed through finding words and phrases that were common between the participants.

After coding the data the researcher categorized each participant's experience into three main categories; (1) Changed views on race and racism, (2) Feelings or emotions elicited from the Ethnic Studies class and (3) Changes in behavior because of

Ethnic Studies. It was important to recognize, first, whether the class did indeed change student views on race and racism and to explore how students' critical consciousness expanded because of what the students learned in Ethnic Studies.

Some unexpected commonalities arose during the coding process. Each of the participants in the study spoke strongly about the feelings and emotions that they felt throughout the Ethnic Studies course, these answers formed the basis for theme #2. It was not surprising that the participants had these reactions but how strong and visceral the emotions were. Another unexpected aspect of the coding process was the lack of response or even acknowledgement of Critical Race Theory (CRT). The participants didn't really know or understand the context of CRT or how it fits into Ethnic Studies. In some responses the words Critical Race Theory had not been mentioned or talked about at all through the duration of the class.

The researcher used the initial codes to create a concept map so that I could more easily define themes central to the research. Concept mapping involved grouping the coded words from the audio transcription into the three main sections of "Changed views on race and racism," "Feelings or emotions elicited from the Ethnic Studies class" and "Changes in behavior because of Ethnic Studies." Once the code words and phrases were assigned to one of the three categories I grouped the words together and create a list of words and phrases that were relevant to whether the participants' views on race changed, whether they had feelings or emotions associated with Ethnic Studies and if their behavior changed because of the coursework

Validity

This study is important to the researcher because of the implications this research has for social transformation. However, the researcher could be considered biased because of his beliefs in equity and social justice. The researcher is aware of this bias and acknowledges that it could skew how he might interpret responses to the questions but the researcher understands this “blind spot” and is committed to unbiased research. Therefore, the researcher has been as objective as possible in the data collection and data analysis. The researcher does not have any relationships with any of the students or with the classes the participants were selected from.

The qualitative data that was collected through the audio transcription, as well as the researchers own observations at the time of the interview helped to triangulate the data and increase the validity of the study. Creswell (2020) describes qualitative data triangulation as “examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes” (p. 274). The researcher asked probing questions when the source was ambiguous with an answer or conversely when they had an answer that was definitive and strong. It was important to reinforce the original answer for the source to make sure those were indeed the thoughts or feelings that they had on a specific topic. Additionally I used body language and tone of voice to corroborate meaning. Lack of eye contact, slumped shoulders might mean that they felt guilt or shame. Any kind of fidgetiness or hand wringing were indications of uncomfortability within a topic. Whereas good posture and eye contact indicated interest and confidence in a topic or a feeling about a topic. The researcher was meticulous in analyzing the data for themes, in taking analytic memo notes, writing verbatim transcriptions and carefully analyzing

the video of the interview. The researcher is aware of potential biases and was careful to “rigorously examine both the supporting and discrepant data to assess whether it is more plausible to retain or modify the conclusion, being aware of all the pressures to ignore data that does not fit your conclusions” (Maxwell, 2013, p.127).

Reactivity between the participants and researcher was also taken into consideration throughout the data acquisition process. Paterson (1994) defines reactivity as “the response of the researcher and the research participants to each other during the research process” (p. 301). To reduce the amount of reactivity from the White student participants the researcher understood the trepidation 14 or 15 year old high school students would have in doing an in-person interview with a stranger. The researcher took time to make small talk prior to the start of the official interview to get a little background on the participants and make them feel comfortable and more apt to share their true feelings and thoughts. The researcher made a point to ask questions that were open ended with the goal of having the source do most of the talking. Additionally, the researcher used multiple instances within the introduction to the interview as well as in the debrief to assure the participant of complete anonymity.

In a purely qualitative research study there needs to be checks and balances to ensure the validity of the study. The triangulation data helps to validate the experiences and words of the participants. In the case of this study the researcher was very careful to consider his own biases as well as some of the external validity and reactivity between the sources and their subjective opinions on the interview topics. The researcher bears the sole responsibility for the ethical procedures and validity within the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Views on race, racism, and identity range widely across the State of California. According to US News and World Reports (Clarke, 2020), California is one of the most racially diverse states in the United States. Because of the states' extraordinary amount of diversity, Ethnic Studies will be mandated for every student that graduates high school starting in the year 2029-30. In the following section, the researcher will detail the findings of qualitative research on Ethnic Studies and its effects on a group of White students. These findings demonstrate that Ethnic Studies coursework had an overall positive educational impact on student participant views on race and various forms of racism, including institutional racism, implicit bias, white privilege, and identity. Participant responses suggested the coursework and pedagogy was influential for increasing critical consciousness regarding race and various forms of racism. However, with increased critical consciousness and reckoning with a past and present culture of inequity, systemic racism, and White privilege, the White student participants faced questions about their own identity and role within these contexts. At times, the courses elicited strong feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment to be in some way "associated," by skin color, with the White oppression of People of Color. Though guilt, shame, and embarrassment are uncomfortable feelings, findings demonstrate that the experience of taking an Ethnic Studies course contributed to participants' interest in becoming more educated about race and racism. Participants were also more inclined to become involved with social justice causes and initiatives after taking an Ethnic Studies course.

Ethnic Studies Courses Help Students Develop Critical Consciousness

Ethnic Studies created a higher level of critical consciousness for White students involved in this study in several areas: racism, implicit bias, and white privilege. For example, Ben, a high school freshman said, “[The class] definitely changed the way that I view racism as a whole and how other people see it.” Ethnic Studies coursework fostered a deeper understanding of the systemic oppression of People of Color. For most White students who may not experience any hostile acts of obvious racism or oppression on a daily basis, the first step is being exposed to the content of our country’s past systemic actions against People of Color. For example, Ben states, “Then when we talked about race from different perspectives, there were things that I never even thought about like microaggressions...it made me more aware of that because I never learned about that before.” Microaggression as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority” (2023). After taking this course, Ben had an understanding of this basic hidden form of racism that permeates our lives but sometimes hides under the surface of recognition. This student can now put a name to what he sees and hears when microaggressions occur; he may also be more apt to notice when he may unintentionally commit a microaggression against a Person of Color and can learn to correct this behavior or call it out when he hears or sees it from others.

Structural racism and how it affects people of color is an important topic in Ethnic Studies course work. The “wealth gap” between White people and People of Color is

well documented (Hanks, et al., 2018) and generational wealth is a family's ability to pass on wealth to future generations. Generational wealth was a prominent theme that stood out among each of the participants, especially for Ellie. She remembered the lessons and discussions about generational wealth and the importance of property to accumulate wealth; she shared,

We talked about it [generational wealth] and how owning property was a big thing because it's kind of like a snowball effect, because if you don't have money to go to college then you won't get as high paying a job and then won't be able to afford buying a house.

Understanding how generational wealth can be created and passed down can explain why there is such a median wealth difference between the average white family and average family of color. The systems in place within this country were created to enable this advantage.

Each of the participants reflected on the housing discrimination that has existed against people of color in this country for centuries. Amy stated,

There were a lot of things that I learned about that I didn't think of, like the different housing discrimination; there was one where a Black family had their house appraised for something like \$500,000 less than what it was worth. Right now we are learning about redlining and the way that the government controlled who could buy houses in certain areas and restricted African Americans from buying houses in nicer neighborhoods.

Though some of the details may be fuzzy or generalized, these messages stood out for participants—that there was governmental oversight that restricted housing for people of color and White people benefitted from this institution.

How content is delivered within courses can have a big impact on how students absorb information and understand context. For one of the Ethnic Studies courses, the teacher brought in the local Fair Housing Authority (FHA) to give a presentation about the laws of fair housing and about the history of discrimination against People of Color in the housing market. The FHA guest speakers and corresponding Q&A session were meaningful and impactful for Ben especially, he said about the presentation, “We had a presentation from, I think it was the FHA, like a Fair Housing thing. It was really interesting. They do stings on the appraiser, they appraise organizations and it’s all just about unfair housing.” He went on to talk about the differences between him and his family and People of Color in his area; “I never thought of that stuff. I’m pretty lucky where I live. I don’t have to think about that [unfair housing]. And so, yeah, that presentation really stuck with me.”

The Ethnic Studies coursework expanded critical consciousness on several levels for the White students in the class. Another common theme between the participants was the expansion of their view of what they thought *racism* was and how it changed by the end of the course. Jackie said,

It [the class] definitely changed the way that I view race and how other people see it...because I had one very clear view of racism but that was just part of it.

There were so many other layers that I was not aware of or had even considered.

The “layers” of racism that Jackie speaks to are the nuts and bolts of Assembly Bill 2016 and the creation of California’s Ethnic Studies Model curriculum. The authors of this curriculum state that Ethnic Studies courses “document the experiences of people of color in order for students to construct counter-narratives and develop a more complex understanding of the human experience” (Ch.1, p. 4). Amy spoke about how her thoughts changed on racism throughout the course, “And then I think about race, coming from a different perspective, it made me more aware of different things in society that are forms of racism.” Deepening student understanding of the many forms of racism is an important aspect of Ethnic Studies and was fulfilled by the pedagogy and content within the course.

Ethnic Studies and the Impact on White Identity

The following theme pertains to student participants’ struggles with their White identity in the context of the class. Feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment were documented in participants’ words about their feelings. These feelings were real for the white students and created doubts about their own identity within the context of the history of racism in this country.

White identity is a complicated topic in education. Ethnic Studies courses have come under scrutiny by lawmakers in some states in the U.S. and one of the issues cited has to do with identity, specifically White identity. Identity is important to AB-101 and the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (2021); the document states, “central to any ethnic studies course is the historic struggle of communities of color, taking into account the intersectionality of identity (gender, class, sexuality, among others), to challenge racism, discrimination, and oppression and interrogate the systems that continue to

perpetuate inequality” (Ch.1, p. 9). The intersectionality of identity in Ethnic Studies courses is an important part of the reckoning with the past for Students of Color. In contrast, White students question their identity and it brings about strong feelings when these students discover certain truths about the way Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have been oppressed over the centuries by White colonial settlers and their descendents .

After experiencing an Ethnic Studies or a similar course, a common theme among the participants in this study were feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and even fear. In her Ethnic Studies class, Jackie remembered that discussions about White privilege were an important topic and when asked to remember the main points about it she stated, “There is a built in privilege that White people have based on generational advantages. Laws and things but also just the way they are perceived by others.” And when asked about how it made her feel she recollected,

I did feel some embarrassment, I guess. It made me think about our family’s relative wealth and our economic status. I thought sometimes that if I was poor and white that I would be perceived differently. Not that my family is rich or anything but I recognize that we have advantages...I played soccer with some kids that were from poorer neighborhoods and sometimes felt awkward around them when the topic of money came up.

After learning more about White privilege, Jackie tied her embarrassment and discomfort to her awareness of her family’s economic status. It was not necessarily tied to her Whiteness but more to her economic status.

In her Ethnic Studies class, Ellie discussed how the course was focused on different aspects of identity and stated that

...accepting ourselves and other people and understanding that everyone is different. We would have to do little things where we'd write a part of our identity and then we'd compare it to someone else's and see that we're all different. I really enjoyed that part of the class because it showed that everyone is different but not entirely because of your race.

When Ellie was asked if she ever felt feelings of guilt or embarrassment in the class, she said that she had.

Definitely. It is embarrassing. In the high school that I go to, it's mostly Hispanic [students]. So it is embarrassing. I was one of the only white people in that class. So when we would talk about things like oppression. I understood it was a little embarrassing, though, and I felt bad.

When she was asked why she felt this way, she responded, "I think it was mostly being afraid of people assuming things about me like that. Like that I'm richer than them or I'm going to be mean to them or that I might not like them because of their ethnicity." To her, it was embarrassing but there were also feelings of guilt, "I feel guilty. I didn't play a part in oppressing people. But it's just like the fact that I had ancestors who did it." Very similar to Jackie, Ellie felt as if she was being judged by others not only by the color of her skin but what that fact might connote (i.e., economic advantages, etc.).

Amy described feelings of embarrassment, when asked about times she ever felt uncomfortable in the class being White; she responded, referring to systemic racism and colonialism-

I think it's kind of embarrassing to think that my race did that. But I was never personally embarrassed to be White. But I do think it's embarrassing that our race did that...I'm just embarrassed for our past and more embarrassed to be White.

When asked to describe the feeling more and if there was any guilt associated with feelings, she responded, "Thinking about it was hard, difficult to comprehend...Guilt? Yeah. Guilt. Yeah definitely guilt. Sadness, definitely you're sad for this." These feelings are real and difficult for young White students to unpack. Ben felt similarly in regards to guilt-

The stuff about indigenous people and the boarding schools, that one was what we were talking really about; I felt guilt because my family on my dad's side came over in 1635. And was probably part of that. Yeah. So, I kind of thought about that...I felt a little guilty while we were learning about it but it just kind of annoys me that I'm related to those people, I guess.

The feelings of guilt and embarrassment that the participants felt came from their own thoughts and reflections on their Ethnic Studies coursework. These feelings of guilt and embarrassment create a complicated set of emotions to deal with. However, the aforementioned guilt and embarrassment felt by the White students did not push them away from fully engaging in "holistic humanization" and "critical consciousness," which are two of the guiding values and principles of Ethnic Studies curriculum (2021, Ch. 1, p. 15).

Effects of Ethnic Studies on Social Justice Action and Further Education

Upon completing their Ethnic Studies coursework, the White students who participated in the research study all felt more inclined to engage in social justice activities that supported People of Color. The critical consciousness that was developed through the ES coursework served to influence the White students to be more empathetic towards People of Color and to have thoughts about how to help rectify the situation. White guilt also had a part to play in this motivation towards civic engagement and social justice.

In her interview, Amy felt embarrassment, sadness, and guilt about the racism exhibited by her race over the centuries towards people of color. But these feelings drove her to want to pursue action.

I think the more it played into the embarrassment part, it made me sad...I learned that I wanted to fight for equality more than I was fighting for equality. It was more of like a step in the right direction and it kind of educated me and that's to be like, okay, I want to support these things. I want to fight for these things, I want to fight for these rights.

She went on to say "The class educated me enough to know what I was fighting for. Know what I wanted to fight for." Based on the critical consciousness and her feelings of guilt and embarrassment Amy was ready to engage in social justice and issues of equality.

The other participants were also motivated to engage in social justice initiatives but more based on the critical consciousness that they developed within the class.

When I asked Ben if he had any other thoughts on what he would do with the information he learned from the course he said,

I want to learn more about [Jim Crow] laws...And in different areas of the country people are educated differently and they have different ideas on the Confederate flag. I want to learn more about other people's views and where that comes from. And yeah solutions, to find solutions to things that may be harmful to others.

Ben wanted to learn more about the topics discussed in his Ethnic Studies coursework and also to put this knowledge to work by finding "solutions" to some of the problems that he became critically conscious about. Ellie felt similar to Ben but based on an experience that she had with someone of color in her class. She shared:

We met in that class. She is Hispanic. But we basically had a lot of issues that we really wanted to solve and we felt like we focused on things [in class] but didn't really get a chance to do anything about it. We hadn't done anything but were thinking about doing something together...like getting money to donate to a cause or to go out and [protest] ourselves...We definitely wanted to do something because of that class.

Ellie was ready to contribute or raise money to causes that she and her friend were passionate about and be physically engaged in civic action on the streets. When I interviewed Jackie it was just after some very violent BLM protests and the shootings that happened there and she commented on it and her desire to get involved with a cause; "that's something that's always scary to me [the shootings]. But I want to involve

myself more. It's important. So I think definitely, if I found a good opportunity, I would take it."

It is clear that Ethnic Studies and similar class work contributes to White students' desire to be involved in social justice causes. Critical consciousness plays a major role in the thought process for these students. Shedding light on the various forms of racism and oppression by White people against BIPOC populations drove these students towards social action and civic engagement. White guilt and the embarrassment of their race also drove one student to want to engage and get involved.

Further Education

After taking one semester of Ethnic Studies in their freshman year, White students were more likely to take a higher level ES course as an elective if it were offered at their school. The researcher used the question of further education to gauge White student interest in the course and whether students would be driven to take an elective, higher level Ethnic Studies course.

When asked if she would be interested in taking another Ethnic Studies course in high school if it was offered as an elective she responded; "Yeah definitely. If it were like a year long one, I would definitely be interested in seeing what they would teach." Ellie also felt that she would be more interested taking the course as long as it went more in depth on practical topics, she stated-

Because [the teacher] said a lot of things that we have learned in middle school. A lot of information she taught us was already taught. So I feel like if she had taken some of those things out that we already knew, and just added more information about like systemic racism and generational wealth and more things

that we don't know and we could really use to make things better than I feel like I would be interested in another class.

Amy also had thoughts on further education in Ethnic Studies in high school. She would prefer to have more Ethnic Studies but in the context of Religion in history, so more of a global perspective. She said; "I feel like I would be into it but it would have be more about either ethnicity or religion. It would need to be something more, you know, detailed on one side, for us history nerds!" She thought two semesters would suffice as she sought more detail on the subject, "Maybe if they [the teachers designing the curriculum] did one semester, religion, one semester race, it would make a little more sense."

Jackie felt that Ethnic Studies would be beneficial as a stand alone elective course for juniors or seniors. She stated;

I would definitely like to have the option to take another Ethnic Studies class but only as an elective, not a required class. This way I'd feel like others in the class would be more interested in the topics in the class. People would take it because they wanted to be there.

Jackie seemed to value the participation aspect of the class and having engagement within the class was important to her. She felt that having other like minded students would spur interest and therefore enrich the class.

Ethnic Studies coursework spurred a desire for more knowledge in White students. The thoughts about exactly what elective Ethnic Studies coursework might

look like varied but the theme was common among a majority of the White student participants.

Conclusion

The findings from this study demonstrated that Ethnic Studies coursework had a net positive impact on White students. The coursework developed significantly higher critical consciousness towards various forms of racism. These White students, despite having feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness, were more likely to have higher incidences of anti-racist behavior and more likely to take more Ethnic Studies courses and get involved with social justice initiatives.

The first research question this project sought to understand was: *How will Ethnic Studies coursework affect white students' views on race, various forms of racism, implicit bias and White privilege?* The findings showed that Ethnic Studies courses were effective in terms of developing critical consciousness towards the multifaceted history of racism in this country towards People of Color. The White student population also developed a higher level of understanding implicit bias and White privilege that they did not have before the coursework.

The second research question this project sought to answer was: *What are the psychological and emotional effects of Ethnic Studies on these students' White identity?* The increase in critical consciousness led the student participants into questioning their own White identity and this was difficult and uncomfortable for them. This led to feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness which were hard to process in the context of the class, knowing that it was not themselves that did the oppressing but their ancestors and the White settler colonialists that came before them. It was a hard reckoning for

these students.

The final research question this study sought to answer was: *What are the lasting effects of this coursework on White students for their future as potential social justice advocates and for the future of Ethnic Studies at the high school level?* Even though the Ethnic Studies coursework may have elicited strong emotions of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness upon completion of the course, these feelings led to the desire for more action. Each student came away with the desire to help, to do more, to get involved in some way. The students were more likely to take another Ethnic Studies course if it were offered at their high school. White students were also more likely to become involved with social justice initiatives and civic action.

The findings speak to the importance of Ethnic Studies in schools, not only for People of Color but for White students and their development as allies with People of Color and the fight for equity in the future. Understanding the feelings for White students associated with Ethnic studies can help teachers of the subject to develop strategies to help them cope with these emotions in the classroom and with their peers. Additionally, schools should plan for higher level Ethnic Studies courses so that they are ready to add them to the curriculum if the time comes. Lastly, Ethnic Studies leads to deeper student engagement in social action and civic causes. As a result, students would benefit from more social justice initiatives and civic engagement opportunities in their community.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Previous literature on the subject of Ethnic Studies showed positive effects on People of Color; however, there was little research on the effects of this kind of coursework on White students. There was also a dearth of information on negative emotions and feelings that White people feel when various forms of racism were presented to them and how this affected their behavior and future actions. This research project aimed to fill the gap by investigating the effects of Ethnic Studies coursework on White students in secondary schools to help improve the overall efficacy of the curriculum and pedagogy in the future for these newly mandated classes in the State of California. This study sought to investigate the depth of White student critical consciousness regarding racism and the nuances that accompanied their journey into the past of their ancestors. In addition, the researcher sought to determine how the guilt and embarrassment felt by White students during their development of heightened critical consciousness towards the various forms of racism, White privilege, and Colonialism would affect White student attitudes towards further Ethnic Studies coursework or any future intention of social action or civic engagement. The researcher found that critical consciousness was more powerful than guilt and embarrassment and that White students were more likely to take another, higher level, Ethnic Studies class as well as participate in social justice causes through different means of civic engagement. Additionally, the study uncovered important blind spots in Ethnic Studies pedagogy.

This study showed consistencies with several major themes covered in the literature review. One significant consistency between this research project and

literature review was the effect Ethnic Studies coursework had on White student attitudes towards various forms of racism. The findings from this research demonstrated that White students developed, through the coursework, higher levels of critical consciousness in several areas-racism, implicit bias, and white privilege. These findings correlate closely with much of the previous literature that Ethnic Studies has a positive effect on White students' views towards race and racism. Martin (2010) studied White students that took a course on race, culture, and politics. In his quantitative study, he measured student attitudes and beliefs prior to the course and afterwards. Many of the students entered the course with personal beliefs and attitudes that were often in opposition to the course materials and faculty knowledge but after the course ended, the students felt they gained "positive value from the class" and an "increased self awareness" (p. 7). After taking the class, one student stated, "Prior to the course I wondered, how are my views on racism and sexism going to change in just one class? However, little did I realize that as soon as I tried to see things from a new perspective, a whole new world opened up to me" (p. 7). This student's sentiment correlates with the White students that participated in the current study.

Another similarity between this research project and the literature review was the impact on White identity and the feelings that were elicited during Ethnic Studies coursework. This research project found that upon attaining a heightened critical consciousness towards racism and colonialism, White students developed feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness. These findings coincide with previous literature, including a study by Hogan and Mallott (2005); they found that the positive effects of Ethnic Studies were not always immediate because there were sometimes periods of

uncomfortable adjustment for White students that had not had experience interacting with People of Color or being familiar with racism and its associated constructs. A myriad of other studies corroborated these findings. When a White student is confronted with the uncomfortable truth about racism and their White ancestors' roles in the formation of the systems of power that surround all of us now, feelings of guilt, shame, fear and sadness were evoked (Bigler, & Levy, 2007; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Todd, Spanierman, & Poteat, 2011).

Another important thread that was consistent with this research study and the previous literature was that Ethnic Studies coursework leads to an increased likelihood of anti-racist behavior in the form of civic engagement and social action. This research study found that after White students took an Ethnic Studies course, they were more likely to engage in social justice initiatives and behavior that could help change the systems of oppression that they had learned about. This coincides with a previous study conducted by Brock-Petroshius et al. (2022) that found that students who had taken an Ethnic Studies class were more likely to exhibit anti-racist behavior in the future. While the previous study found Ethnic Studies to be a determinant for future anti-racist behavior it also found White guilt and shame to be a detriment to further anti-racist behavior; this study found the combination of Ethnic Studies *and* White guilt together drove the students in their desire get involved with social action and civic engagement.

Ethnic Studies has shown to have positive effects on White students in different ways and this is highlighted in both the literature review and from the results of this research study. The findings of this research indicate that Ethnic Studies developed critical consciousness regarding race, racism, White privilege, and colonialism.

However, the positive effects on White students were nuanced because feelings of White guilt and embarrassment were elicited through the Ethnic Studies coursework. This was also evidenced in the previous literature. The current study also found Ethnic Studies to be a driver of future anti-racist behavior in the form of social justice action and civic engagement.

Implications for Literature

The literature review revealed that Ethnic Studies coursework and critical consciousness about various forms of racism and colonialism contributed to feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness in White students (Hughes, Bigler, & Levy, 2007; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020; Todd, Spanierman & Poteat, 2011). However, there was limited research on what impact the feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness had on the White students and what this meant for these students in the future. In the study by Brock-Petroschius et al. (2022) the researchers found that feelings of White guilt, shame, and embarrassment led to fewer incidences of anti-racist behavior. However, the project also found that White students that took an Ethnic Studies course were more likely to exhibit anti-racist behavior. This research project aimed to find out how these feelings affect White students and their thoughts about People of Color, racism, privilege, and colonialism but also how it would affect these students in their willingness to enrich their critical consciousness by taking another, higher level, Ethnic Studies course or to get involved with social justice initiatives and civic engagement.

This research project uncovered that White students did indeed feel guilt, embarrassment, and sadness after taking an Ethnic Studies class but they were also more likely to exhibit anti-racist behavior. White students that took Ethnic Studies

courses were more likely to want to take another, higher level Ethnic Studies course and were also more likely to participate or contribute to social justice initiatives and civic engagement. The nature of Ethnic Studies and what the coursework reveals to White students and Students of Color is powerful and causes visceral, emotional reactions that are difficult for all students to handle sometimes, even White students. The study showed that these visceral, emotional reactions to being exposed to new information drove the students to exhibit anti-racist behavior. Additionally, the study showed these students sought more information in the form of more, higher level Ethnic Studies courses as well as a willingness to take up social justice causes in the future.

These findings are significant because of the implications they pose. The findings *support* Ethnic Studies coursework to develop critical consciousness, to drive interest in further, higher level ES classes as well as stimulating interest in becoming involved with social justice initiatives and civic engagement. However, deeper significance lies in the fact that even though White students felt strong emotional reactions to what they learned in Ethnic Studies coursework that can be considered negative such as guilt, embarrassment, and sadness they were still driven to react positively. These emotions contributed to the students' forward thinking manner towards their role in the present day environment of systemic and structural racism as well as White privilege and colonialism. The reckoning within the White students was driven, in part by their deeper critical consciousness towards these societal issues but also by their guilt, embarrassment, and sadness for the past and present.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Based on the research from this study there are important implications for improving the efficacy of Ethnic Studies pedagogy to address the guilt, embarrassment, and sadness that White students felt. This research project also proved the importance of expanding the scope of the Ethnic Studies curricula and creating more ways for students to pursue social justice initiatives and boost civic engagement.

The feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness were real feelings that these students had in the classroom and these feelings need to be acknowledged and nurtured. Just as culturally responsive teachers want to create a safe space for everyone in their classroom where open dialogue and the sharing of ideas can happen, real feelings need to be addressed and acknowledged, especially those that can be construed as negative. For a 14 year old freshman in high school, it is hard to find out that your race may have been responsible for the racist policies that our government created or that your ancestors may have owned slaves. While it is extremely traumatic for young Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to learn about the oppression that their ancestors faced it is also important to recognize that young White students are seeing the scope of these oppressions for the first time, seeing the invisible veil of White privilege for the first time and are potentially saddened, embarrassed, and filled with guilt because of it. Teachers have a responsibility to be empathetic to these emotions and give these students a voice in their classrooms. Just as Ethnic Studies can redefine how People of Color view their own identity, it can do the same for White students. It can be a delicate balance for teachers but creating a safe space in the classroom for both Students of Color and their White classmates to share

their experiences, their viewpoints, and their feelings about what they are absorbing in Ethnic Studies is of paramount importance.

The research from this study showed White students were more likely to want to join social justice initiatives or civic engagement after taking an Ethnic Studies course. Creating social justice or civic action clubs could start at the individual school. These could be school based clubs that could be developed into community partnerships with social justice or civic agencies and leaders. Teacher led but student run, the long term goal could be to acquire funding from the school district to fund the clubs.

The research from this study also found that White students, after experiencing just one semester of Ethnic Studies, desired an opportunity to take another, more advanced Ethnic Studies course. Based on this data, school districts should implement a plan for more Ethnic Studies classes in addition to the California State mandated introductory course. The school district should help develop curricula for upper grade level, elective courses for interested students. The implementation of upper level Ethnic Studies courses should be based on what students want for a junior or senior year elective class.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study that must be recognized. First, the sample size of White student participants was relatively small. With more time the researcher could have interviewed more White students or conducted a survey to address additional questions to produce more data on the effects of Ethnic Studies coursework on White student views on race and racism. A second limitation is that three of the four students that the researcher drew participants from, White students

were the minority at the school and within their Ethnic Studies classes. This could have contributed to the feelings of guilt, embarrassment, and sadness because of the higher number of Students of Color in the classes and the feeling that they may have been judging the White students or assuming things about them. The researcher's own beliefs may have influenced the data because of his beliefs and the way some of the questions may have been phrased. The researcher is White but identifies as an anti-racist and social justice advocate.

Directions for Future Research

The continuation of this study should include a more thorough investigation of the causes and effects of White guilt, embarrassment, and sadness for students after taking Ethnic Studies coursework. The phenomenon of guilt and shame could drive White students to push back and feel negatively about the information that they are learning. Though this study did not show the negative behavior exhibited from White students that had guilt or shame, there are studies that have shown less anti-racist behavior because of these feelings (Brock-Petroschius Et al., 2022). This could be accomplished by surveying White students that had a negative experience in an Ethnic Studies course and interviewing these students more in depth, then creating a longer timeline where the effects of Ethnic Studies are measured on these students over time.

Another research direction that could be explored is effective classroom strategies teachers can use to create a safe space for racial dialogue and effectively address White guilt within the Ethnic Studies setting. Gathering data on what works and what does not in the Ethnic Studies classroom would be of vital importance for teachers developing daily lesson plans and pedagogy. Now that Ethnic Studies courses are

becoming a mandated part of the high school curriculum, there will be more points of reference regarding pedagogy and lesson planning to help with formulating effective classroom strategies for these important internal aspects of teaching the class. A researcher could certainly conduct a qualitative study using experienced Ethnic Studies teachers to find best practices to address the sensitivities of this coursework.

Conclusion

The California mandate for Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement is a crucial step forward in the identification of power structures in this country and the *shift* towards racial equity in these arenas. The research is clear that Ethnic Studies has numerous positive effects on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (Cabrera et al., 2014; Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Dee & Penner, 2017) and the ramifications are important if the same can be said about the effects of Ethnic Studies on White students. Research shows that White people, mostly White men, hold a disparate majority in positions of power in government, business, and education in comparison to People of Color (Dettling, et al., 2017; Hanks, et al. 2018; Lombardo, 2019; Velasco, 2021). The byproducts of these structures are things like wealth, property, healthcare, access to higher education, etc. If the statistics show that White people hold more of the positions of power in this country as adults, then creating a pathway to a higher level of critical consciousness for White high school students regarding the reality of racism in this state, this country, and the world is a positive step forward for equity in the future. Each year more and more White students taking Ethnic Studies will be exposed to the truth about the systemic and institutional oppression that has taken place in this country over the last 400 years or more. More young, White students will discover and come away

with a deeper understanding of what implicit bias means and will be able to grasp what white privilege entails.

In 2021, the CA Dept. of Education reported that 103,720 White students graduated from California high schools (2022). California is nearing the activation of AB-101, which makes Ethnic Studies a requirement for graduation starting with the class entering high school in 2025-26. Beginning with the graduating class in 2029-2030, California will graduate over 100,000 White students that year and *every year* thereafter, that have higher levels of critical consciousness about various forms of racism, implicit bias, and white privilege. Each year, this significant number of White students will be motivated to take more Ethnic Studies classes to have a deeper understanding of the systems in place that continue the oppression of People of Color across this state and our country. These same students will be more likely to be driven towards social justice initiatives and civic engagement to make real changes to these structures. As each generation of Ethnic Studies educated students graduate and head to college and out into the world, the collective consciousness towards the systemic plight of People of Color in this country will continue to grow. These young students will grow into young adults with families and the Ethnic Studies “enlightenment” will be passed down to the next generation from within the home. The critical consciousness of how the White systems of power came about in this world will develop as real equity for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and the call to social action will swell overwhelming forward. Ethnic Studies is just a building block towards true equity but when the people in power understand the origins of their power, the potential for change in the form of equity becomes greater.

References

- American Association of Biological Anthropologists. (2019). *AABA Statement on Race & Racism*. AABA statement on Race & Racism. <https://bioanth.org/about/position-statements/aapa-statement-race-and-racism-2019>
- Bailey, Z. D., Feldman, J. M., & Bassett, M. T. (2021). How structural racism works - Racist policies as a root cause of U.S. racial health inequities. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 384(8), 768–773. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMms2025396>
- Brock-Petrossius, K., Garcia-Perez, J., Gross, M., & Abrams, L. (2022). Colorblind attitudes, empathy, and shame: Preparing White students for anti-racist social work practice. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 1–15. <https://doi-org.dominican.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/10437797.2022.2045233>
- Cabrera, N. L., Milem, J. F., Jaquette, O., & Marx, R. W. (2014). Missing the (student achievement) forest for all the (political) trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American Studies controversy in Tucson. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(6), 1084–1118.
- Cammarota, J. (2007). A social justice approach to achievement: Guiding Latina/O students toward educational attainment with a challenging, socially relevant curriculum. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 40(1), 87–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680601015153>
- Clarke, S. (2020, September 10). *California is the most diverse state in the U.S. - US news*. US News & World Report. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2020-09-10/california-is-the-most-diverse-state-in-the-us>

- Chavous, T. M., Bernat, D. H., Schmeelk-Cone, K., Caldwell, C. H., Kohn-Wood, L., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2003). Racial identity and academic attainment among African American adolescents. *Child Development, 74*(4), 1076–1090.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3696209>
- Chen, G. (2022, May 20). *Should Ethnic Studies be banned in public schools?* Public School Review. Retrieved April 25, 2023, from <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/should-ethnic-studies-be-banned-in-public-schools>
- Coates, T.-N. (2015). *Letter to my son*. The Atlantic. Retrieved January 12, 2023, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/tanehisi-coates-between-the-world-and-me/397619/>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2020). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE.
- Dee, T. S., & Penner, E. K. (2017). The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an Ethnic Studies Curriculum. In *Grantee Submission*. Grantee Submission.
- Dettling, L., Hsu J., Jacobs, L., Moore, K., & Thompson, J. with assistance from Llanes, E. (2017). Recent trends in wealth-holding by race and ethnicity: Evidence from the survey of consumer finances. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Retrieved from <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/recent-trends-in-wealth-holding-by-race-and-ethnicity-evidence-from-the-survey-of-consumer-finances-20170927.htm>

- Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2004). Aversive racism. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 36, 1–52. Elsevier Academic Press. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(04\)36001-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(04)36001-6)
- Ehsanipour, A. (2020). Ethnic studies: Born in the bay area from history's biggest student strike. *KQED Bay Curious*. Retrieved from <https://www.kqed.org/news/11830384/how-the-longest-student-strike-in-u-s-history-created-ethnic-studies>
- "Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum." *Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum - Curriculum Frameworks & Instructional Materials* (CA Dept of Education), <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/esmc.asp>.
- Farrington, B. (2022, January 19). *Florida could shield whites from 'discomfort' of racist past*. AP NEWS. Retrieved February 25, 2023, from <https://apnews.com/article/business-florida-lawsuits-ron-desantis-racial-injustice-3ec10492b7421543315acf4491813c1b>
- Greenwald, A. G., & Krieger, L. H. (2006). Implicit bias: Scientific Foundations. *California Law Review*, 94(4), 945. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20439056>
- Hanks A., Solomon D. & Weller C. (2018). Systemic inequality: How America's structural racism helped create the Black-White wealth gap. *Center for American progress*. Retrieved Dec. 10, 2021. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/systematic-inequality/>
- Hart, C. M. D. (2020). An honors teacher like me: Effects of access to same-race teachers on Black students' advanced-track enrollment and performance. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 42(2), 163–187.

- Hogan, D. E., and M. Mallott. 2005. Changing racial prejudice through diversity education. *Journal of College Student Development* 46(2), 115–125.
- Hughes, J.M., Bigler, R.S. & Levy, S.R. (2007). Consequences of learning about historical racism among European American and African American children. *Child Development*, 78, 1689-1705.
- Kendall, F. E. (2013). *Understanding white privilege: Creating pathways to authentic relationships across race*. Routledge.
- Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. One World.
- Kleg, M. (1971). *Attitudinal Change in White Students after Instruction in an Ethnic Relations Unit*.
- Klepper, A. (2014). High school students' attitudes toward Islam and Muslims: Can a social studies course make a difference? *The Social Studies*, 105, 113-123.
- Kwon, S. (2021). Ethnic Studies Legislation: State Scan. *Comprehensive Center Network*, Region 15: Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah.
- Lander, V. (2021, June 30). Structural racism: What it is and how it works. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/structural-racism-what-it-is-and-how-it-works-15882>. Retrieved December 7, 2021.
- Lardieri, A. (2017). Despite Diverse Demographics, Most Politicians Are Still White Men. *US News & World report*.
- Lombardo, C. (2019). Why white school districts have so much more money. *National Public Radio KQED*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/26/696794821/why-white-school-districts-have-so-much-more-money>

- Martin, K. J. (2010). Student attitudes and the teaching and learning of race, culture and politics. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 530-539.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- McIntosh, P. (1989). White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. *Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA 02181*.
- Ngo, B. (2010). Doing “diversity” at Dynamic High: Problems and possibilities of multicultural education in practice. *Education and Urban Society*, 42(4), 473–495.
- Okoye-Johnson O. (2011). Does multicultural education improve students’ racial attitudes: Implications for closing the achievement gap. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(8):1252-1274. doi:10.1177/0021934711408901
- Oxford University Press. (2023). *Oxford English Dictionary*. Home : Oxford English Dictionary. <https://www.oed.com/>
- Paterson B. L. (1994). A framework to identify reactivity in qualitative research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 16(3), 301–316.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/019394599401600306>
- Pawel, M., By, Pawel, M., Bio, M. P. A., & Bio, A. (2021, June 4). *Ethnic Studies in California*. Education Next. Retrieved October 1, 2021, from <https://www.educationnext.org/ethnic-studies-california-unsteady-jump-from-college-campuses-to-k-12-classrooms/>.
- Rivas, J. C. (2020). *Relation among Ethnic Studies courses and the reduction of explicit and implicit racial bias* (Order No. 28255471). Available from Ethnic NewsWatch; ProQuest Central Student. (2485083145). Retrieved from

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/2485083145?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>

Ruhl, C. (2023, February 24). *Implicit bias (unconscious bias): Definition & examples*.

Simply Psychology. Simply Scholar Ltd.

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/implicit-bias.html>

Sabalich, L. (2016). 7 Findings that illustrate racial disparities in education. *Brookings*

Institute. Brown Center Chalkboard. Retrieved from

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2016/06/06/7-findings-that-illustrate-racial-disparities-in-education/>

Schaeffer, K. (2021). Racial, ethnic diversity again increases with the 117th congress.

Pew Research Center. Retrieved from [https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/28/racial-ethnic-diversity-increases-yet-again-with-the-117th-congress/)

[tank/2021/01/28/racial-ethnic-diversity-increases-yet-again-with-the-117th-congress/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/28/racial-ethnic-diversity-increases-yet-again-with-the-117th-congress/)

Sleeter, Christine E. (2011). The academic and social value of Ethnic Studies: A research review. National Education Association Research Department.

Sleeter, C. (2018). Multicultural education past, present, and future: Struggles for dialog and power-sharing. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 20(1), 5–20.

Sleeter, C. E., & Zavala, M. (2020). *Transformative Ethnic Studies in schools: Curriculum, pedagogy, and research*. Teachers College Press.

Span, D. L. (2014). *Ethnic Studies and the law: Teacher understanding and interpretation* (Order No. 3621139). Available from Ethnic NewsWatch.

(1545675547). Retrieved from

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/1545675547?parentSessionId=Qexgfl34gO%2Fp%2F0awP0hXtkkuR8sUDuCxYesLNIBhNrA%3D>

The Florida Senate. 2022 Bill Summaries - The Florida Senate. (n.d.).

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/BillSummaries/2022/html/2809>

Thomas, O., Davidson, W., & McAdoo, H. (2008). An Evaluation Study of the Young Empowered Sisters (YES!) Program: Promoting cultural assets among African American adolescent girls through a culturally relevant school-based intervention. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 34(3), 281–308.

Todd, N. R., Spanierman, L. B., & Poteat, V. P. (2011). Longitudinal examination of the psychosocial costs of racism to whites across the college experience. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58(4), 508–521.

Role of psychology and Apa in dismantling systemic racism in U.S. (2021). *PsycEXTRA Dataset*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e507692021-001>

Velasco, J. (2021). 25 Statistics on the state of BIPOC-owned businesses in 2021.

GoSite Blog: Small Businesses News & Resources. Retrieved from

<https://www.gosite.com/blog/bipoc-owned-businesses>

Appendix A
IRB Approval Letter



Feb 22, 2023

Kelly Coffey 50 Acacia Ave.

San Rafael, CA 94901

Dear Kelly,

On behalf of the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants, I am pleased to approve your proposal entitled *The Impact of Ethnic Studies on White Student Population* (IRBPHP Renewal IRB Application #[11043]).

In your final report or paper please indicate that your project was approved by the IRBPHP and indicate the identification number.

I wish you well in your very interesting research effort.

Sincerely,

Michaela George, Ph.D.

Chair, IRBPHP

Cc: Katie Lewis

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants

Office of Academic Affairs · 50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, California 94901-2298 · 415-257-1310 www.dominican.edu

Appendix B
Recruitment Flyer/Survey

Name (first only)_____

Dominican University of California
Ethnic Studies Flyer and Survey

Hello and thank you for having me in your class today!

My name is Kelly Coffey and I am a graduate student in the Master of Science in Education program at Dominican University of California. I am conducting a study of the impact of Ethnic Studies coursework on the racial attitudes of white students on two secondary campuses. Broadly speaking, extensive research has shown that multicultural education has a positive effect on people of color (Dee & Penner, 2017; Sleeter, 2011; Sleeter & Zavala, 2020); however, the causal effects on white students is less clear.

I would like to conduct an in-person interview with up to 8 people from this class to ask you questions about your experience in Ethnic Studies. Anything that we talk about in our interview will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in my note taking and no record of our conversation can be traced back to you. All data from the study will be destroyed after one year.

If you decide that you are interested in participating in the interview portion of the research study please indicate as such on the survey below. If you are interested in participating and are selected there will be more details to follow. Are there any questions that I can answer at this point?

Please take a brief survey and answer all the questions listed:

- 1) Please provide the following:
 - a. Age_____
 - b. Grade_____

- 2) Which race/ethnicity do you identify with most?
 - a. White
 - b. African American
 - c. Latino/a
 - d. Native American
 - e. Asian American
 - f. Pacific Islander
 - g. Other, please list_____

- 3) How many semesters have you taken Ethnic Studies or any Multicultural Education courses at the high school level?
 - a. This is my first semester
 - b. This is my second semester
 - c. More than 2 semesters (please list how many)_____

- 4) How many years have you lived in Marin? _____

- 5) Please indicate if you would like to take part in the interview portion of this research study
 - a. Yes! I would love to participate
 - b. No, not interested

- 6) If you answered *YES* for the last question how would you like to be contacted?
 - a. Phone (please list # to contact)_____
 - b. Email (please list)_____
 - c. Other, please indicate _____

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Ethnic Studies Interview Questions

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon, thanks for being here with me. I want to give you a little background on my study and then I want to ask you a few questions. The entire process should take under 1 hour. I want to remind you about the consent form that you signed and now I would like to get your verbal consent to start with this interview (attain verbal consent). Please remember that you have the right to leave at any time. This conversation will be recorded via phone (show physical phone) and by video, indicate the camera. Any questions? Let's begin!

- 1) How many semesters have you taken an Ethnic Studies course?
- 2) Do you remember your thoughts on race and racism before you took Ethnic Studies? If so, can you describe them?
- 3) Can you please describe the course? (What assignments did you have, guest speakers, format of the course etc.)
- 4) What sorts of teaching/pedagogical aspects stood out to you? (fun interactive games, guest speakers, field trip type activities, etc.)
- 5) What was your favorite aspect of the class?
- 6) Was there anything you didn't like in the class?
- 7) Was there any time in the class when you felt embarrassed about being biased or when you may have said something that someone else construed as racist or biased?
- 8) Was there any time in the class when you felt guilty for being white because of what People of Color have gone through because of colonialism?
- 9) Before the course had you heard of unconscious bias or implicit bias? Can you tell me what it is?
- 10) Before the course had you heard of structural, institutional or systemic racism? Can you tell me what it is?
- 11) Before the course had you heard of white privilege? Can you tell me what it is?
- 12) Do you feel like this course has changed your views on racism, especially pertaining to the racial constructs listed above? If so, in what way? If not, why not?
- 13) Did the course cover Critical Race Theory? Did this resonate with you? Why or why not?
- 14) Do you know what critical consciousness is? (if not then I'll define it). Did this course enhance your critical consciousness toward the struggle that People of Color have gone through?
- 15) Do you feel differently towards People of Color after taking this course?
- 16) Did you ever have any experiences with People of Color before or during this course that you would consider negative? Can you share those experiences?
- 17) If another Ethnic Studies course was offered, would you take it?
- 18) Do you belong to any clubs at school or organizations outside of school that talk about or address social justice issues?
- 19) Have you participated in any social justice initiatives outside or inside of school?
- 20) Do you plan on participating in social justice initiatives in the future?

21) Is there anything else that you want to share about your experience in the course that you haven't shared already?

Thank you for your time and for being so candid and truthful, this has been great! Do you have any other questions at this time and please don't hesitate to reach out to me via email if any other questions come up or there is anything else you want to add to your responses to the questions.

