



# Teaching White Privilege: The Impact of Instructor's Race and Teaching Method

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## ABSTRACT

Instructors who teach about White privilege often endure retaliations from White students in the form of negative course evaluations, which can have a negative impact on their career trajectory. The goal of this study was to provide empirical evidence that the race and lecture method (didactic or experiential) of an instructor could significantly contribute to students' resistance to an instructor who teaches sensitive racial topics. Results showed that the professor's race had an impact on students' resistance to learning about White privilege when teaching method was taken into consideration.

## PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE

- ❖ The complaints and negative course evaluations of White students are of consequence to faculty who teach about White privilege, because they can have a profound impact on their career trajectory (Grahame, 2004, Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008). I conducted this study to explore if race and teaching method had an impact on students' resistance to an instructor who teaches sensitive topics on race (e.g., White privilege).
- ❖ Hypothesis 1: Students would be more accepting of a didactic method of teaching, but less receptive to an experiential method of teaching from a White instructor.
- ❖ Hypothesis 2: Students would be more accepting of an experiential method of teaching, but less receptive to a didactic method of teaching from an instructor of color.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

- ❖ 166 White college students
- ❖ Mean age = 19.20, SD = 1.34
- ❖ Male = 56 (34.0 %)
- ❖ Female = 110 (66.0%)
- ❖ Freshman = 84 (51%)
- ❖ Sophomore = 48 (29%)
- ❖ Junior = 25 (15%)
- ❖ Senior = 8 (5%)

### *Measures*

- ❖ Assessment of Reactivity to Racial Topics Instructor (ARRTI; V. Suthakaran, Khuong, S., Logterman, C., & Mathijs, L., 2019) was developed specifically for this study.
- ❖ Final scale had 15 items scored on a 7-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating more resistance to an instructor teaching racial topics.

### *Procedures*

- ❖ Participants randomly assigned to one of four conditions: (White instructor; didactic method); (White instructor; experiential method); (American Indian instructor; didactic method); and (American Indian instructor; experiential method).
- ❖ Experiential condition consisted of a video clip where an instructor used an analogy to teach about White privilege.
- ❖ Didactic condition consisted of a video clip where the same instructor used a PowerPoint presentation to cover Sue's (2004) article about White privilege.
- ❖ The American Indian instructor was the same White instructor who wore a black wig and had his skin electronically darkened.

## RESULTS

- ❖ An ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the impact of the instructor's race and teaching method on students' score on the ARRTI. See Figure 1.
- ❖ There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .01$  level in ARRTI scores for the four conditions:  $F(3, 160) = 5.12, p = .002$ .
- ❖ More resistance found for White/Didactic ( $M=40.17, SD=14.16$ ) than for American Indian/Didactic ( $M=32.33, SD=14.14$ )
- ❖ More resistance found for White/Experiential ( $M=36.63, SD=13.39$ ) than for American Indian/Experiential ( $M=29.32, SD = 12.41$ )
- ❖ White/Experiential ( $M=36.63, SD=13.39$ ) was not significantly different than American Indian/Didactic ( $M=32.33, SD=14.14$ )
- ❖ ARRTI scores between didactic and experiential conditions did not significantly differ within either race.

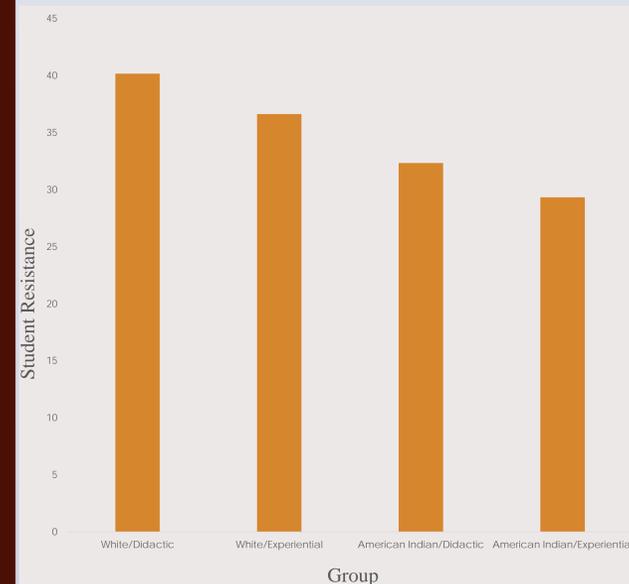


Figure 1: Student Resistance by Group

## CONCLUSION

- ❖ Students appear to be most resistant to a White instructor who teaches using a *didactic* method and least resistant to an instructor of color who teaches using an *experiential* method.
- ❖ Race of the instructor alone might not predict resistance to instructors who teach sensitive racial topics.
- ❖ When comparing the effectiveness of teaching sensitive racial topics by instructors from different racial groups, the teaching method (didactic or experiential) may have to be taken into consideration.

## FUTURE DIRECTION

- ❖ Future studies should explore the impact of an instructors' gender on students' resistance to sensitive racial topics
- ❖ Future studies should validate if the findings from this study can be generalized to other racial groups (e.g., African-American)

## REFERENCES

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