



Introduction

Despite being an important research topic, there is a dearth of empirical studies on how White individuals understand White privilege and their identity.

Whites may feel uncomfortable or confused about the topic and take measures to avoid discussing it by distancing themselves or giving diluted responses (Dottolo, 2013).

The purpose of our research is to explore how White individuals make sense of their identity and understand White privilege.

Methodology

- 36 interview participants
 - White young adults from Southern United States liberal arts college
- Semi-structured interview
 - Questions similar to 'have you heard of White privilege' and 'what do you think White privilege means'
- Qualitative responses analyzed using keywords and thematic categories

Conclusion

- Meritocracy and individualism seem to be roadblocks to achieving a clear understanding of White privilege
- Seeing White privilege as a burden or a threat to positive identity makes it harder to address the issue
- Engaging in these conversations is necessary to remove these roadblocks to form a healthier construct of White identity

Major Findings

"I don't think White privilege is really real. I mean I've worked; I've had jobs and ***I don't get stuff just handed to me.***"

"I live in a single-parent household. It's just me, my mom, and my sister. ***We've lived under the poverty line most of my life***, so I was just like ***'What privilege do I have?'*** I don't have anything going for me."

"[White privilege is] like ***what you are entitled to financially...*** Houses, cars, the whole nine yards. And ***it does come down to money.***"

"No one was really able to tell me why their life was more difficult because they weren't White if that makes sense... ***here in America I feel like it's pretty equal opportunities.***"

"I personally don't see White privilege. ***My parents were both born into very poor families.***"

"It only affects a certain amount of Whites. I grew up poor and middle and lower class, that kind of stuff. I can see some people abusing White privilege with getting everything they want while ***my family had to work for what they want.***"