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Recommended Citation

Williams, Tess M., "Mirrors and Windows Ab 101 and the Feasibility of a Statewide Ethnic Studies Curriculum in California" (2016).
Scripps Senior Theses. Paper 728.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/728

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**MIRRORS AND WINDOWS
AB 101 AND THE FEASIBILITY OF A STATEWIDE ETHNIC STUDIES CURRICULUM
IN CALIFORNIA**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS**

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DECEMBER 18, 2015

“Everybody needs curriculum that is a mirror, where you see yourself in the curriculum, particularly for students of color. Ethnic studies also need to be a window because we need to understand where people are coming from, what their experiences are. We can’t just be ethnic silos.”-Dr. Christine Sleeter

Introduction

California has an ethnic and cultural make up that differs from any other state in the United States. Over the past century, California has become increasingly diverse. Most immigration has come from Latin America and Asia, with Mexico, the Philippines, and Chinaⁱ. According to the 2015 Census Bureau Report, California is the most ethnically and racially diverse state in the nationⁱⁱ. California's multiethnic diversity is most pronounced within the public school system. Currently, close to 75 percent of all students enrolled in the California K-12 public school system are students of color, with 54 percent of those students identifying as Hispanic or Latinoⁱⁱⁱ.

The diverse ethnic and cultural landscape of California public schools creates a unique series of challenges. One of the most significant challenges facing the public education system is the achievement gap, which has continued to grow on par with the state's increasingly large income inequality gap^{iv}. The achievement gap is shown through drastic discrepancies in standardized test results with Latino and Black students having lower standardized test scores, graduation rates, and college readiness rates compared to their White and Asian-American counterparts. For the class of 2013, Latino and Black students had a dropout rate nearly double that of White and Asian-American students, with 14 percent of Latino and 18 percent of Black students dropping out before graduating high school, while only 4.7 percent of Asian Americans and 7.6 percent of White students did not graduate. On the 2014 SAT, only 21 percent of both Latino and Black students in California met the benchmark score of 1550, whereas 42.3 percent of California students as a whole were able to reach the benchmark score^v.

The racial achievement gap is a multifaceted issue, and is affected by many areas of policy. One of the most direct ways to address the achievement gap is by identifying the flaws within the California educational system, and avenues of political action that could potentially remedy these issues. An area of study that is becoming increasingly relevant within the context of a state as racially and ethnically diverse as California is the study of the effects of cultural relevance within curriculum on the achievement of students of color. Culturally relevant curriculum, also known as “Ethnic Studies Curricula” comes from a need to engage students of color within a system whose Euro-American perspective can lead many students to feel alienated from their educational experience. As professor and educational reformer Christine Sleeter states, “Ethnic studies curricula exist in part because students of color have demanded an education that is relevant, meaningful, and affirming of their identities.”^{vi}

The term “Ethnic Studies” is used fairly broadly. However, generally, scholars define Ethnic Studies as:

“An interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and comparative study of the social, cultural, political, and economic expression and experience of ethnic groups. Ethnic Studies recovers experience of ethnic groups. Ethnic Studies recovers and reconstructs the counter narratives, perspectives, epistemologies, and cultures of those who have been historically neglected and denied citizenship or full participation within traditional discourse and institutions, particularly highlighting contributions people of color have made in shaping US culture and society.”^{vii}

Ethnic Studies courses take various forms, from Chicano Literature classes, to African-American History courses, Math in Cultural Context courses, to name a few. Courses are often reflective of the student demographics of the school. For example, in Woodland California, where an Ethnic Studies program is currently being developed, educators worked to include both the large Latino population and the growing Pakistani community within the curriculum. The resulting course combined the histories of both groups into a larger historical narrative on the working class and immigrant struggles in California. As Christine Sleeter states in regards to Ethnic Studies, “Everybody needs curriculum that is a mirror, where you see yourself in the curriculum, particularly for students of color. Ethnic studies also need to be a window because we need to understand where people are coming from, what their experiences are. We can’t just be ethnic silos.”

A growing body of research has shown that these types of curriculums have had a significant impact on the academic achievement, engagement, and graduation rates of students of color^{viiiix}. A recent study by Emily K. Penner and Thomas Dee of Stanford University found that taking ethnic studies courses was “enormously beneficial to students” and “increased 9th grade student instructional time by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23 credits^x. A research review done by the National Education Association found that, out of ten published studies on the impact of Ethnic Studies curriculum on student achievement, all but one report found positive increases in student performance^{xi}. An empirical analysis of the effects of the Mexican American Studies department in Tucson Unified School District found that over a four-year period (2009-2011) graduation rates, and student performance positively correlated with involvement in the program.^{xii}

The realization that the California public school curriculum is in need of a more accurate and culturally relevant curriculum is not a new idea. In 1968, a group of students at Berkeley High School demanded that an African American Studies department be instituted. The student's concerns were addressed, and Berkeley High School's African American Studies department was created, a department that has now existed for over 45 years. That same year, students at Garfield, Lincoln, Belmont, Roosevelt, and Wilson high schools protested against the school's' sub-standard material conditions and quality of education. They demanded that the school incorporate Chicano/a history, language, and culture into the existing Eurocentric curriculum^{xiii}. More recently, in 2014 El Rancho Unified School District in Southern California was the first district to establish an ethnic studies course as a graduation requirement. Within the past year, Los Angeles Unified School District, Montebello Unified, Oakland Unified, and San Francisco Unified School District also created district-wide ethnic studies programs^{xiv}.

While ethnic studies programs have become increasingly prevalent at the local level, at the California state level all, attempts at creating a statewide Ethnic Studies curriculum have failed. Assembly Member Luis Alejo (D-Watsonville) has made two attempts within the past year, the most recent bill, AB 101 (2015), was vetoed by Governor Jerry Brown early October, 2015.

With both of Alejo's attempts, he has had support in the legislature, and very little opposition from outside groups. Why then has the bill had such a difficult time getting past the Governor's desk? And what social and political conditions are necessary for the bill future passage? This analysis will address these questions by first challenging the validity of the main oppositional arguments against the bill. Second, by positing the true

social and political barriers that more likely impeded the bills passage. And lastly, by identifying the social and political conditions needed to overcome such barriers.

Research Methods

This analysis will be done through the evaluation of qualitative data collected as direct sources through interviews, transcripts of hearings, public comments and feedback on existing curriculum drafts.

Interviews were conducted by phone. In order to gain a broad perspective on the issue, interviewees varied in terms of their position in regards to the bill. The aim was to gather information from individuals directly involved in the creation of the bill, such as legislative staffers, and Assembly Members. The legislative analyses provided the names of organizations and teachers unions who were in favor of the bill. I also identified individuals who have been instrumental in pushing local measures similar to AB 101. For example, Jose Lara, of the Ethnic Studies Now Coalition, proved to be a valuable source of commentary on the issue, as a teacher and having been a key player in moving forward ethnic studies programs at the local level. Lara has also been involved in Alejo's efforts, giving a broad perspective on the challenges at both levels and how local measures affect the passage of measures such as Alejo's.

Through a thorough review on the limited material regarding the subject of ethnic studies, I was able to find key academics/educational reformers to give a bit more of a distanced and academic perspective on the bill. One such resource was Christine Sleeter, whose academic work has been cited in many of the briefings and hearings, serving as the main source of research used to support the claims made by proponents of AB 101 who

argue that ethnic studies do have a positive correlation on overall academic achievement of students.

In terms of identifying the main barriers for a statewide ethnic studies curriculum to pass, understanding the opposition's motives for killing the bill is crucial in analyzing the political conditions under which the bill would pass. However, in terms of oppositional research, it was more difficult to find individuals to speak with. The only opposition listed was a group called the California Right to Life, Inc. The group was a Pro-Life Organization based in Walnut Creek, California. While I was able to contact a representative from the group, Camille Giglio, as a Pro-Life organization, her arguments were based in more of a social framework that functioned so far outside the realms of the more utilitarian arguments made by the state regarding opposition to the bill, that it was hard to connect what she said within the context of the statewide, legitimized debate.

Through the analysis of the transcripts from legislative hearings regarding AB 101, I noted that the California Department of Finance spoke in opposition to the bill, and I was then able to contact CDF's legislative director, Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez. Wong-Hernandez was able to give me a detailed description of her department's position at various stages of the bill, which was very useful to my analysis.

Another area of oppositional research I pursued were legislators who voted in opposition to the bill. A "no" vote on a bill can have many implications, so I was careful to choose a legislator who had publicly commented on their opposition for the bill. Reading various newspaper articles, I found Assembly Member Mike Morrell had spoken against the bill, so I therefore chose him as a source of oppositional research. Other legislators I contacted were: Assembly Member Rocky Chavez (R-San Diego), Assembly

Member Jay Obernolte (R-Big Bear), Assembly Member Frank Bigelow (R-O'Neals), Assembly Member Devon Mathis (R-Visalia), Assembly Member Beth Gaines (R-El Dorado Hills), Assembly Member David Hadley (R-Manhattan Beach), and Senator Tom Berryhill (R-Twaine-Harte).

Typically, when contacting the legislators, I was directed to their staff members most of whom had no statement regarding the legislator's position. Two offices, the office of Assembly Member Beth Gaines and Assembly Member Jay Obernolte, told me that they would go back and research the Assembly Member's positions, and then send me an email with the information. However, I never heard back from either Assembly Member's office.

When contacting Governor Brown's office, the only individual I could speak to was a staff member who had little information on the bill or the veto past Governor Brown's veto message. Since the main reasoning behind Governor Brown's veto was that the creation of an Ethnic Advisory Committee would be redundant as the IQC is already working on a social studies history curriculum, I thought it would be useful to speak with some members of the IQC. I was unable to get an interview with the Commission Chair; however, I was able to get in contact with Commission Member Dr. Brian Muller, who provided useful insight into the IQC's process.

The IQC has two legislators on the commission, Senator Carol Liu, and Assembly Member Kevin McCarty. Given the Governor's veto message, I found it interesting that both legislators actually voted in favor of AB 101. However, what I found difficult in contacting both McCarthy and Liu's offices was that it was hard to have a conversation

with staffers who actually had information on their stance on the bill, as neither legislator were involved in drafting the legislation.

When contacting Alejo's office, I was put in touch with Laura Cabrera, a staffer who has just recently been put in charge of Alejo's next attempt at pushing AB 101 forward going into the new session. However, the information I received was also very formulated and uncertain, as the staffer had been given this project fairly recently.

In addition to interviews, I also used transcripts from hearings and legislative briefings found online. Upon request, I was sent close to 300 pages of comments on the IQC's latest *Draft History Social-Science Framework*.

I. OPPOSITIONAL RHETORIC

Legislative History

The first step in understanding the legislative struggle towards the creation of a statewide ethnic studies curriculum is through a thorough understanding of the legislative history of the bill. The creation of a statewide ethnic studies curriculum in California has been the goal of Assembly Member Luis Alejo (D-Watsonville) for the past two years. According to Laura Cabrera, a staff member of Assembly Member Alejo, "As a Latino Assembly Member, one of his main goals is to shrink that gap of minorities not getting to college and getting a higher education. That is one of the reasons we are so passionate about moving this forward. It's the fact that we want to encourage more minorities to do better, not just in the history of social science part of it, but it gives them a better more well-rounded education."

Assembly Member Alejo made his first legislative effort for a statewide ethnic studies curriculum as a Capital Fellow under Assembly Member Manny Diaz^{xv}. The bill, AB 2001 (2002) was vetoed by Gray Davis.

Governor Gray Davis' veto message stated:

“While I support encouraging respect for diversity and educating children about the impact of California's different ethnic groups, this bill is duplicative of existing efforts. Current law specifically requires instruction about various ethnic groups and existing teacher training programs already train teachers in how to work with pupils from diverse backgrounds. In addition, existing state academic content standards and curriculum frameworks include substantial discussion of the history and contributions of various ethnic groups, and how to implement programs teaching this information.^{xvi}”

Over a decade later, Assembly Member Alejo approached the same issue, this time with optimism that Governor Jerry Brown would be more receptive to the idea of a statewide ethnic studies curriculum than Governor Gray Davis had been, stating “We have a different governor whose forward thinking, who is on the cutting edge of policies.”^{xvii}

In 2014, Assembly Member Alejo authored AB 1750 (2014). AB 1750 worked through the Instructional Quality Commission, an advisory body to the State Board of Education (SBE). The IQC is responsible for evaluating curricula, establishing standards and statewide curricula, and advises SBE on implementation, professional development,

and methods of statewide evaluation. The Commission is made up of thirteen members appointed by the SBE, one appointed by the Governor, one by the Speaker of the Assembly, one appointed by the Senate Rules Committee, one State Senator, and one State Assembly Member.

AB 1750 required the IQC to create an ethnic studies curriculum through consultations with educators, researchers, community-based organizations and professional associations.^{xviii} The bill mandated that the IQC to submit a report by 2016 outlining the most current research on ethnic studies for secondary education, evaluate existing standards and types of teacher and administrator training in ethnic studies for secondary education, establish an approach to implementing ethnic studies in public high schools, review the effectiveness of existing ethnic studies courses in California public high schools, and argue for the establishment of ethnic studies courses or a “California Cultures” course as a part of the public high school curriculum^{xix}.

After passing through the Assembly with a vote of 59-20, AB 1750 was held under submission in the Senate. However, no further action was taken on the bill before the session ended on November 30, 2014.

At the start of the 2015 winter session, Alejo reintroduced the bill with a few changes. Unlike AB 1750, AB 101 created an Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee under the Superintendent of Public Instruction. This temporary committee would have been separate from the IQC, and would have taken over the responsibilities delegated to the IQC in AB 1750. The Advisory Committee would have been made up of students, parents, state personnel, ethnic studies scholars, university professors, and teachers with ethnic studies background. The majority of the committee would consist of either high

school educators or educators of higher education. Within a year of developing the curriculum, schools would have had the option to offer the course as an elective. Under the legislation, the model curriculum would count as an elective credit under the Regents of the University of California A-G requirements. Courses that are A-G approved will appear on the University of California A-G list. In order to apply to a UC, students must satisfy a number of A-G requirements. However, the final version of AB 101 only stated that the curriculum has the potential to apply to be an A-G requirement. The process of approval would have to occur after the legislation would have passed.

While more directive than AB 1750, the final version of AB 101 was significantly weaker than the original version. As Jose Lara, an ethnic studies teacher and organizer with the Ethnic Studies Now Coalition, states, “The original bill, which required all districts in California at least offer an ethnic studies curriculum, got watered down to a bill that created a statewide sample curriculum.”

After passing in both the Assembly (59-20) and Senate (61-15) the bill was enrolled and presented to the Governor in September 2015. However, despite its success in the legislature, Governor Brown vetoed the bill. Governor Brown’s veto message stated:

OCT 9 2015

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 101 without my signature.

This bill would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction to oversee the development of a model curriculum in ethnic studies for adoption by the State Board of Education.

This bill creates what is essentially a redundant process. The Instructional Quality Commission is in the midst of revising the History-Social Science Framework, which includes guidance on ethnic studies courses.

Creating yet another advisory body specific to ethnic studies would be duplicative and undermine our current curriculum process.

Sincerely,


Edmund G. Brown Jr.

Despite Governor Brown's veto, AB 101 had the political support of both the California State Assembly and Senate. It had the support of the Assembly Speaker, Tony Atkins, and the Senate President Pro Tem, Kevin De Leon. Only one outside organization was listed in opposition, California Right to Life Inc. Both legislative representatives in the California State Department of Education's Instructional Quality Commission voted in support of the bill. There was, and is, strong political support for the creation of a state ethnic studies curriculum. However, despite legislative support, there were various barriers outside the legislature that impeded AB 101 from becoming law.

Unpacking Governor's Veto Message

Both Governor Brown's and Governor Davis' reasoning behind vetoing a statewide ethnic studies curriculum centered on the argument that the creation of an statewide ethnic studies curriculum would be unnecessary duplicative of existing efforts to reform the curriculum. This analysis challenges the validity of both Governor Brown's and Governor Davis' veto statements, and then posits more realistic driving forces behind their opposition

In 2002, Governor Davis claimed "existing state academic content standards and curriculum frameworks include substantial discussion of the history and contributions of various ethnic group.^{xx}" However, that same year, Sleeter did an in depth analysis of social science curriculum in California, known as the *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools*. Her analysis found that of the 96 Americans who were named for study in the framework's course descriptions, they were 77 percent

White, 18 percent African American, 4 percent Native American, 1 percent Latino, and 0 percent Asian American. All of the Latino and all but one of the Native American names appeared at the elementary level. At the secondary level, 79 percent of the named people were White.^{xxi}

Additionally, within the current standards in place, standards adopted in 1998, there is very little discussion of topics that would fit under an “ethnic studies” framework. Essentially, the extent of such subject’s mention is contained in one clause of the 68-page document:

“Discuss the diffusion of the civil rights movement of African Americans from the churches of the rural South and the urban North, including the resistance to racial desegregation in Little Rock and Birmingham, and how the advances influenced the agendas, strategies, and effectiveness of the quests of American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans for civil rights and equal opportunities.”

Despite Latino students now making up the largest ethnic demographic in California, the term “Latino” is never used within the California content standards. The term “Hispanic” is used once, and despite California being former Mexican territory, “Mexico” is only mentioned four times^{xxii}. This misrepresentation is not only excluding the histories of the now majority Latino student body, but is also shortcutting a major series of events in California, and United States History. It is simply an inaccurate representation of the past. As Jose Lara argues,

“When we leave out Latinos we miss the history of people like labor union leader Emma Tenaycua who fought for labor rights long before Cesar Chavez (who

seems to be the only Latino ever mentioned in our textbooks). Students also never learn about Chicano Civil Rights Leaders like Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez, who fought for political representation and better education for Latinos. Lastly, the stories and contributions of Latino LGBT leaders like Sylva Rivera, of Puerto Rican and Venezuelan descent, who was a veteran of the 1969 Stonewall Uprising, will also never be learned about.”

Similar to Governor Davis, Governor Brown’s reasoning for vetoing AB 101 was that the bill was unnecessary as IQC is already in the process revising the *History-Social Science Framework* to include more ethnic studies content. However, as the research done in this analysis will show, the IQC’s *History and Social-Science Framework* revisions inadequately address the curriculum overhaul AB 101 calls for.

Frameworks and Standards

To understand the role that the IQC’s frameworks play within statewide education, it is necessary to understand how frameworks and standards are formed, and influence one another.

Frameworks are blueprints for implementing the content standards adopted by the California State Board of Education and are developed by the Curriculum Development and Supplemental Materials Commission, while standards explicitly list the knowledge, concepts, and skills students must have at certain grade levels. The frameworks are a resource for districts to adopt in order to fulfill the standards, which are mandatory. The frameworks significantly affect the material used, in terms of textbooks, in classrooms

throughout California. Although they do not mandate certain topics to be taught, they do impact the resources teachers use to teach throughout the state^{xxiii}.

The IQC is directed to revise the *History-Social Science Framework* on an eight-year cycle. The current curriculum framework was adopted in 2005. The most recent draft was published in September 2014. After a 60-day field review, the IQC received over 700 public comments. These comments came from community members, educators, and organizations. They included many recommendations and critiques of the draft. Many of the comments called for better coverage of Mexican-American history, Korean-American history, LGBT history, Chinese-American history, the inclusion of more indigenous groups, Pakistani-Americans, and more. The extensive level of feedback and lack of funding has forced the IQC to push back the curriculum deadline. As IQC Commission member Brian Muller explains, “Basically what happened with the social studies framework is an unusual case in that it had started to be revised but it was mothballed mid revision because of the economic downturn because one of the casualties of the budget is that it was stopped.”

In September 2015, the IQC released a new draft to the public. This draft also received many of the same comments and recommendations. Over the period of November 19-20, 2015, the IQC held a hearing to revise the framework once again. The next draft of the History-Social Science Framework is due to be released to the public for further comments at the start of 2016. From that point, the same process of revision will go underway, with the final draft due to be published by the winter of 2016.

Given the IQC’s extensive curriculum review process, it is understandable how Alejo’s efforts to create ethnic studies Advisory Committee may have sounded

“redundant” as Governor Brown states in his veto message. However, what the IQC’s long process shows is that, despite thousands of public comments reiterating the same call for the inclusion of more ethnic studies within the framework, the commission continues to generate unsatisfactory results. The deadline of the publication of the final framework has and continues to be postponed due to the public's concerns with the incompleteness of the curriculum. This is one of the issues Alejo aimed to address through AB 101. As Jose Lara states, “If you look at the IQC Committee, they don’t have the expertise to really look at what ethnic studies is, and that is the purpose of creating an ethnic studies advisory committee.”

Under existing law, the IQC develops the framework keeping in mind the feedback given by the community. However, with the creation of an Ethnic Advisory Committee under AB 101, the community would be directly involved in the original development of the framework, rather than assessing an already formed draft. This community involvement was an essential aspect of AB 101. As Lara argues, “The history of ethnic studies is an area of study that is community based, it comes from the community itself and comes from the demands and struggles of the community, so it is only right that the community is involved in the creation of the curriculum that ultimately gets implemented.”

According to Cabrera, “the Ethnic Advisory Committee is more of a focus group you would say. There is a vast majority of support from professors and teachers. There are a lot of advocacy groups, and all the teachers unions have been in support of this.” Ron Rapp of the California Teacher’s Association has had the opportunity to sit in on a

few of the IQC meetings aimed at addressing these problems. When asked if there was the same type of expert and community involvement promised under AB 101, and if the IQC's process mirrored the process Alejo calls for in AB 101, he stated that he did not see that type of development or expertise present.

Beyond a lack of expertise, funding has also been a huge barrier for the IQC. As IQC Commission member, Brian Muller states, "to accommodate that ethnic studies course work, I think that would be great. But again, unfortunately the work is prescribed by what it is the funding pays for, and the guidelines of the process. There is not a situation where you can take everybody's comments and do what everybody wants."

In addition to the concern that the IQC is not equipped with the expertise and resources needed to develop a strong ethnic studies curriculum, Cabrera also stated that, even if the new draft released is fairly complete and effective, there still remains the issue regarding how that curriculum is implemented, how mandatory it is made, and whether or not such requirements have the potential to be A-G approved. According to Cabrera, "Our fear is that, while the IQC has created a curriculum, it hasn't mandated for schools to pick it up, so the curriculum can be there but used by nobody. We are trying to make sure that this goes into our high schools, and that it is actually used."

Governor Brown's reasoning that the IQC's work on *the History and Social-Studies Framework* would have the same result on curriculum, as AB 101 is clearly false. Through the above analysis of the IQC's role in forming the History and Social Studies Curriculum, it is clear that the commission is not equipped, both financially and expertise wise, to form an effective ethnic studies curriculum. As Muller states in terms of the

IQC's work on the social studies framework, "We're stuck in the middle of the tail end of an older system." In regards to the IQC's role in incorporating ethnic studies, Muller stated that, "ultimately the goal is to make sure that those courses are in play, and help provide support with things like the framework. But right now we're stuck in the middle of that system, and there hasn't been allocating funding for us to do anything different." Additionally, the means by which the curriculum would be formed and implemented would have greatly differed from what was required in AB 101. Therefore, AB 101 was not redundant, as it mandated the creation of a curriculum that the IQC currently does not have the funding or statutory power to create. As Lara argues, "I think the whole IQC thing is a facade. I really don't think it is Jerry Brown himself. I don't think he cares either way. I think there are some key people around him that we have to sit down and have a conversation with them, and if there are any worries that they've had, but so far we don't have what those worries are."

Local vs. State

In addition to both Governor Davis and Governor Brown's arguments against the necessity of AB 101, various legislators, as well as the California Department of Finance, have voiced concerns over the bill's infringement on local government authority. As Assembly Member Mike Morrell states, "I'm a strong advocate of local control and don't believe Sacramento should be dictating what school districts teach. Ethnic studies classes are already offered at schools throughout the state. It's a decision best left in their hands." Jacqueline Wong-Hernandez of the California Department of Finance, posed a similar argument, stating, "when they redid all the funding and funding formula it was to allow

locals to try and shape their own educational programs so long as they were achieving the results they set out to and so we felt this was counter to the administrations stance on how schools should be run.”

The local vs. state control can be a gray area within politics. However, this analysis argues the local control rhetoric used in opposition of AB 101, reflects an ignorance in the actual content and implications of the bill once implemented. To prove this point, it is necessary to analyze the content of AB 101 and its effects on local government through looking at the proposed implementation of AB 101, and the implications of its implementation on school districts.

To understand the local vs. state argument, it must first be noted that the content of AB 101 changed substantially throughout the legislative process. As the bill moved through the senate, it lost a lot of the substance the original version had. As Cabrera states, “As the bill developed, we were left with a lot of amendments that stripped down the bill. And our main push was develop the curriculum at least, and have the committee to develop that curriculum and make that an A-G requirement, but not necessarily make it mandatory for all the high schools to pick it up.” After the clause requiring all districts adopt some form of an ethnic studies course, it became, as Wong-Hernandez states, “a less substantive policy conversation than one in which you do make that requirement.”

The argument against local infringement primarily came out of the Assembly version of the bill, as the final version did not include any state mandates. As Wong-Hernandez states, “when they amended it, that requirement was removed. So it did was

allow school districts to offer ethnic studies as an elective course, which they can already do.”

However, even in the original version of the bill, the format and means by which ethnic studies would be incorporated into schools, would be determined by the local districts. Districts would not be told specifically what and how they would have to teach ethnic studies, but would have been given the resources developed by the state, to implement their own programs

One piece of legislation that had similar implications and modes of implementation as AB 101 would have had, was the SB 48 (Leno), also known as the FAIR Act, which was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown in 2011. The FAIR Act required that California K-12 schools include representations of people with disabilities and people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in history and social studies curriculum^{xxiv}. The law requires the IQC to include this content within their framework. As Brian Muller of the IQC states, “We can include things that are specific elements that are required by law.” In regards to the FAIR Act, Muller said, “that’s not something that was necessarily included in the initial framework because that was not law at the time, and now, because its law, it has to be included across the board.” However, as the California Department of Education states in regard to the FAIR Act, “Instruction in History–Social Science should include the contributions of those groups listed above in *Education Code Section 51204.5*, but it is up to local districts to determine how the instructional content is included. That section applies to the course of study in grades one through twelve, but again it falls to the teacher and the local school and district administration to determine how the content is covered and at which grade level(s).”^{xxv}

Ideally, AB 101 would have been implemented in a similar matter. It would have required districts provide some form of ethnic studies, would have given them the curriculum framework to do so, but would have given them the power to implement the programs in any form. In this sense, even the earliest version of the bill would not have infringed on local government control. As Christine Sleeter states, “Education is under the purview of the state and ethnic studies can definitely be tied to the state trying to assure that students have equal opportunities to learn. And if the curriculum matters in terms of kids engagement and kids seeing themselves as belonging in school than I think having the state try to support that makes sense.”

Other opponents for AB 101 and a statewide ethnic studies curriculum argue that because such laws are being passed at the local level, a statewide program would be unnecessary. However, although various districts have implemented and formed their own ethnic studies programs, these local efforts should not denounce the need for a statewide ethnic studies curriculum. Jose Lara, of the Ethnic Studies Now Coalition, has played an instrumental role in many of these local programs, specifically in El Rancho Unified and Los Angeles Unified School District. When asked about the role of local versus the State of California in the creation of such curriculums, he stated, “We’re not pushing for one or the other, we’re pushing for both.”

According to Lara, the question is not whether or not the creation of ethnic studies curriculum should be delegated to state or local governments. Both levels of action are needed. In order for a robust ethnic studies curriculum to be implemented throughout California, there needs to be both local and state legislative action. As Cabrera states, “thankfully big cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles have picked this

up, which becomes a great model for everybody to follow. We would love for it to be picked up locally, but a lot of times it takes a law like AB 101 to really make schools push this forward.” While there are an increasing number of districts pushing such curriculums at a local level, still out of the 49, 884, 181 public school students in California, only 8,129 students were enrolled in ethnic studies courses in the 2012-13 school year^{xxvi}.

The problem with relying on local governments to address the issue is that it is impossible to guarantee that such programs will be implemented in every district in California. As Lara argues,

“I think there is going to be some districts that don’t know about ethnic studies, there are a lot of districts that don’t know much about ethnic studies and don’t have the expertise within their own district to really put together a robust program or robust curriculum. We need guidance from the state department of education number one, number two, there’s going to be a lot of districts that won’t do it. There are going to be districts that are ninety percent Latino, or students of color, but the powers that be, the majority of the voters, not the community, but the voters, and the school board, the political power, is going to be a conservative, older, White one that doesn’t reflect the demographics of the actual students, and they’ll have a different agenda of what’s right for the students and what’s right for the state.”

II. REAL LEGISLATIVE BARRIERS

Funding

As the previous section argues, the dominant oppositional rhetoric towards a statewide ethnic studies curriculum is flawed, and serves as an excuse to cover the real barrier to AB 101's passing: funding. Not necessarily that there are not funds available for a statewide ethnic studies curriculum, but that those in power do not see the necessity to spend money on a program that they may have a lot of misconceptions about.

The Department of Finance testified in opposition to AB 101 during the Assembly Appropriations hearing. In their testimony they stated, "Department of Finance is opposed to this bill because it creates Prop 98 general fund costs of up to 1.1 million dollars over a three year period to develop a curriculum framework and establish a new advisory committee."

Budget funding played a significant role in shaping how the bill was amended from its original form. As Lara explains, "It had everything to do with the budget amount of money originally that it was going to cost, and that's why it got whittled down to what it is, and it has to do with certain legislature and certain people who currently have control of our cannon not wanting to include other things. So I'm talking Tolarkson's office, people in Jerry Brown's office, who don't have a background and don't understand what ethnic studies really is. That's what I think is the issue."

Racial Implications

What is clear from this analysis is that funding, or lack there of, is a significant barrier to passing any type of ethnic studies curriculum, whether mandated or not. However, is funding the only barrier to passage? And what does the state's unwillingness

to fund the creation of a statewide ethnic studies curriculum imply? How is a narrative of race present or excluded from this dialogue?

Arizona's opposition to ethnic studies differed greatly from the rhetoric present in California. Like California, Arizona has high levels of immigration and thus, a high percentage of Latino students in the public school system. In the 2013-2014 school year 44 percent of all students in the Arizona public school system were Hispanic^{xxvii}. With the aim of making a culturally relevant curriculum for the large population of Mexican-American students, Tucson Unified School District created a district wide ethnic studies program in the form of a Mexican American Studies Department.

However, in 2010 Arizona governor, Jan Brewer, signed Arizona House Bill 2281 banning courses which "encourage the overthrow of US government; promote resentment towards a particular group based on race, ethnicity or gender; and have limited admissions based on race and ethnicity."^{xxviii} Arizona's State Superintendent of Schools, Tom Horne argued ethnic studies, "promotes 'ethnic chauvinism' and racial resentment toward Whites while segregating students by race."^{xxix} After passing, the law effectively ended the Mexican-American Studies Department in Tucson Unified School District. The community fought against the bill, in support of the Mexican-American Studies Department. Protesting, testifying, and bringing increased attention to the issue.

The opposition to ethnic studies in Arizona clearly reflected nativist sentiments, which Gerald Neuman defines as, "Intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., 'un-American') connections" that sees the members of the minority as "the enemies of a distinctively American way."^{xxx} Given California's progressive political climate, the nativist framing that was utilized as a point of ethnic

studies opposition in Arizona, was not present in California's debate. As Christine Sleeter states, "I think there is a lot of White fear of being in the minority and I think that fear has more expression in Arizona than it has in California, and I think that California is a blue state and Arizona is a red state, that seems to be important. They are different political climates." However, despite the differences between the political climates in Arizona and California, both states still effectively halted the progress of ethnic studies. While most political opposition in California has been grounded in arguments of finance and utility, it is still crucial to analyze their racial implications.

One issue with the way in which the debate is centered in California regarding ethnic studies curriculum, is the notion that ethnic studies is something that is additive, or separate from the existing curriculum. The addition of ethnic studies is referred to as an extra, like a topping put on the "classic" vanilla ice cream. The problem with this framing is that it views the vanilla ice cream as the base, a base that cannot be changed, even when 75 percent of customers would really prefer another flavor.

White, Eurocentric curriculum is still viewed as the norm. The great authors are still White: Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Jack London, Henry Miller. The figures students learn about in history are still primarily White: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, the Wright Brothers, Benjamin Franklin, Christopher Columbus, and Babe Ruth.

When interviewing Camille Giglio of California Right to Life Inc., the only interest group to oppose AB 101, she stated that her group opposed the creation of an ethnic studies curriculum because students should be learning about "Americans." This is

the same nativist perspective that drove the anti-ethnic studies legislation in Arizona, but is a rhetoric that has not been relevant in the debate within California.

Even by stating the need for an “ethnic studies” curriculum, whiteness is placed as the norm in California. Both the nativist arguments in Arizona, and in California on behalf of the California Right to Life, imply that people of color are not a part of the “American Experience.” Framing the need for more “ethnic studies” also implies a certain “otherness” that still views people of color as an addition to a White, Eurocentric society. This is not to say that the opposition to AB 101 is based on nativist ideology, but it does question the ways in which unrecognized racial biases have placed the inclusion of people of color within school curriculum’s as an unnecessary, or extra task. As Christine Sleeter argues,

“What I would like is more people to recognize that what we’re talking about here is not the addition of a little bit of this and a little bit of that to what we already have. It really requires a fundamental rethinking of what we already have in a diverse society where White people are no longer the majority and increasingly no longer in charge, what does it make sense for young people to be learning in a way that they are going to be able to constructively work with each other and see themselves as a part of the state and the country, and that is not a tiny question.”

Given the current statutory limits placed on authorities bodies such as the IQC, who have been given the responsibility to form curriculum, often the commission’s only options are additive changes. As Dr. Brian Muller states, “there are other laws that have been passed regarding various content pieces, and those have had to be included because

statute requires them to be included. But as far as being able to seriously go back and overhaul things and create new courses, those are not really things that can be done within this particular iteration of the framework.” Muller stated that, while public comments regarding the *Draft History-Social Science Framework* were read and archived, only very specific suggestions would be able to be added at this point, given the IQC’s ability to make changes. He acknowledged that this additive approach to including a wider representation of people of color within the curriculum would be insufficient, stating, “What I would love to see is that the legislature, once we’re done with this revision, immediately funds another revision so that we can actually include and incorporate all those pieces. To accommodate that kind of course work.”

As noted earlier, one of the biggest barriers for the IQC is that they must base revisions off of an outdated set of content standards. As seen with the content standards in California, math and science standards were last updated in 2013, while social science standards have not been updated since 1998. Imagine if the math curriculum left out multiplication and fractions. Student performance would be negatively impacted for the rest of their math career, and the state would promptly fix that gap in the curriculum to ensure that students would no longer fall increasingly behind in that subject area. The mistake would be dealt with right away. Not including the extensive histories of people of color within California history, and United States history as a whole, creates a gap in children’s education, especially students of color that permeates through the rest of their academic performances.

Our society is still in a place where people have been so conditioned by the White, Eurocentric, dominant norm, that it is hard for even the most educated politicians to see how overtly flawed and problematic the current curriculum is, and by doing so, stating that there is not enough money or necessity for ethnic studies programs, the state is still conveying the notion that the histories of students of color are lesser than White America. While not as overt as in Arizona, California's unwillingness to treat these issues as a necessity has the same result as Arizona in silencing the narratives and histories of students of color within the state.

III. NECESSARY SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

What then are the political and social conditions necessary for a statewide ethnic studies curriculum to pass? "Political conditions" refers to variables related to the political process: The makeup of the state legislature, politician's political attitudes, interest group support, the budget, election climate, etc. "Social conditions" refers to social attitudes amongst the general population, in media, in terms of passage of ballot initiatives and local measures. Social conditions simply describe what the dominant position of the public is at any given moment. Social and political conditions are interconnected, which is why it is crucial to understand how the interplay of such conditions can push forward legislation such as AB 101.

Expansion of Local Programs

First, ethnic studies programs need to become a more widely accepted norm rather than an isolated phenomenon. Right now, the White, Eurocentric curriculum is

seen as the norm, and is therefore rarely questioned. As local efforts to include ethnic studies programs increase, so will the public's perception as ethnic studies as a norm. The importance of the interplay of both local and state legislative efforts is crucial in terms of creating the social conditions under which a legislative attempt at a statewide curriculum could feasibly pass. As Lara states, "the goal is to create the conditions, by targeting the local level, where there is an overwhelming support for this, where they don't just have the choice anymore."

Lara gave the example of SB 270 (Padilla), which was signed into law September 2014. The bill created a plastic bag ban across the state of California. Prior to the passage of the bill, 137 counties and local ordinances throughout California had adopted ordinances banning plastic bags, including San Francisco, San Jose, Long Beach, and Los Angeles^{xxxii}. Again, the local control argument could be made. With so many local governments passing legislation similar to SB 270, why spend the 2-4 million dollars on a statewide program? Like ethnic studies, it would have been unlikely that every local government would implement a plastic bag ban. State legislation was needed to ensure that the policy reached every region of the state.

Local ordinances increased the feasibility of SB 270 passing by creating a social climate that was supportive of the concept of a plastic bag ban, and saw its necessity. As Lara states, "City by city started passing bans on plastic bags, and little by little that resistance to it, and now we have a statewide ban that is coming soon. Why is that? Because the localities continued to moved in this direction. So that's our plan too, to continue moving local district to local district in that direction until we win the debate."

Lara uses the example of AB 60 (Alejo), which enabled undocumented immigrants to apply for Driver's licenses in California. Gil Cedillo pushed legislation for the creation of driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants. During his time in the California State Legislature, he introduced the bill nine times. "They used to make fun of him and they used to call him 'One Bill Gil' because he always pushed the same bill 'drivers license, drivers licenses, drivers licenses' but when he got termed out, Alejo took over the bill and the conditions were finally right, the bill passed, we have drivers license now" Lara states.

Like Undocumented Drivers Licenses or Plastic Bag Bans, ethnic studies will only find success at the state level after it has been sufficiently engrained across the state at the local level. As Muller states, "If you have universal support for something across major districts throughout the school district, that's only going to enhance the cause." So, in addition to pushing statewide legislation, local programs and processes must also be pushed forward, and ideally, these programs will become so common that they will become more widely accepted as the norm.

Increased Depth of Research

In addition to creating a statewide backing of the bill, politically, it is necessary to have quantifiable data that shows the financial and results oriented data that will motivate those in power, White men who have little background or incentive to push such a piece of legislation forward, to act on this bill. Proponents of ethnic studies claim that the effects will permeate throughout all aspects of student performance, and therefore, will

actually save the state money in the long term. As Jose Lara states, “It is our belief that ethnic studies will help improve graduation rates, will help improve academic standing, even in STEM classes. When students believe in themselves and see themselves as important enough to learn they do well, not only in their ethnic studies courses, but that academic identity that ethnic studies helps create, carries on into other classes as well.” However, as the implementation of ethnic studies curriculum at the local level is a fairly recent movement, long-term academic and economic research on the impact of such a curriculum is lacking. Most of the research done is qualitative, and is therefore difficult to cite when making an economic argument in favor of the bill.

An improved body of research behind ethnic studies programs will serve in improving both the political and social conditions necessary for a statewide program to be passed in the legislature. For one, more data could more clearly support the argument that ethnic studies courses will show significant improvement of student academic performance across fields. Additionally, as more studies are done highlighting the strengths of ethnic studies curricula, the public is more likely to become supportive of local measures that will aid in the movement for a statewide measure. As Sleeter argues, “Overall, it would be helpful for the development and growth of ethnic studies K-12 teaching to see research that documents the strengths and challenges of this beautiful struggle to educate youth in the historical and current day realities of communities of color.”^{xxxii} However, a larger research base will require time, as no ethnic studies program at the local level has been around for more than a year, making data on its effectiveness difficult to acquire.

Conclusion

Acquiring a greater collection of research and changing societal norms through pushing forward local ethnic studies movements, will take time. Creating a curriculum that is relevant and reflective of an increasingly diverse student population after operating under a White dominant narrative for so long is no small feat. It will not happen overnight, but there are steps towards that goal that are completely feasible given the current social and political climate. The goal does not have to be made in one step, and assuming that small steps may negate the progress towards the ultimate step of rethinking the entire narrative and context within schools, discredits the forward momentum that will ultimately lead to large-scale change. As Sleeter states, “I am okay personally with movement being slower than you might like, but at least it is still forward.” When asked if it would be better to pass AB 101 in a weaker form compared to its original version, Jose Lara answered, “We would have seen it has a first step. If this bill would have passed it would have been a tremendous victory, we would’ve been able to say ‘Okay, we’re one step closer.’ To our ultimate goal, which is to make ethnic studies an A-G requirement, and also to push for more inclusion of ethnic studies into the mainstream curriculum at the same time.”

In the future, as local movements increase, research regarding the effects of such programs becomes increasingly robust, and dominant norms are weakened, California will be in the position to move closer to creating a curriculum that does reflect the histories and cultures of the student population. Ultimately, the goal would be a state mandated ethnic studies requirement, and the recognition of ethnic studies Courses as an A-G required course, which may seem like a large feat given the failure of AB 101,

whose final version did not even include a requirement clause. However, the social and political climate is changing, as Muller argues, “I know for certain, if you generate an academically rigorous course, which ethnic studies should be by design, they should be clear and robust, that ultimately the UC system should be able to accommodate reviewing them and applying appropriate labeling to them, and at the very least, they would meet the G (elective) requirement, and ultimately that there would be some courses that would meet the D (social studies) requirement.”

California has historically been seen as a political model of progressive legislation. California has lead the way in granting immigrants rights, providing undocumented immigrants driver’s licenses, access to higher education and healthcare. California was the first state to desegregate public schools when the California State Supreme Court ruled that all “Mexican schools” were unconstitutional in the court case *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947)^{xxxiii}. Given California’s position as a national leader on cutting edge policies and the diverse ethnic and cultural makeup of the state, California is in a unique position to develop the first statewide mandated ethnic studies curriculum, serving as a model for the rest of the nation. However, it will not happen in one step or one policy, and it will take a major realization of what and who our state values before the government will be willing to commit to creating an educational system that is both a mirror and a window for the state’s increasingly diverse student body.

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