

Chapman University

Chapman University Digital Commons

English (MA) Theses

Dissertations and Theses

Spring 5-2020

Student Disposition Towards Discussing Race in the Classroom

Natalie Salagean

Chapman University, salag100@chapman.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/english_theses



Part of the [Other Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Salagean, Natalie. *Student Disposition Towards Discussing Race in the Classroom*. 2020. Chapman University, MA Thesis. *Chapman University Digital Commons*, <https://doi.org/10.36837/chapman.000147>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations and Theses at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in English (MA) Theses by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

Student Disposition Towards Discussing

Race in the Classroom

A Thesis by

Natalie Salagean

Chapman University

Orange, CA

Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English

May 2020

Committee in charge:

Ian Barnard, Ph.D., Chair

Lilia Monzó, Ph.D.

Jan Osborn, Ph.D.



CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

WILKINSON COLLEGE OF ARTS,
HUMANITIES, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Department of English

The thesis of Natalie Salagean is approved.

Ian Barnard

Ian Barnard, Ph.D., Chair

Lilia Monzó

Lilia Monzó, Ph.D.

Jan M. Osborn

Jan Osborn, Ph.D.

May 2020

Student Disposition Towards Discussing

Race in the Classroom

Copyright © 2020

by Natalie Salagean

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Ian Barnard, as well as the rest of my committee, Dr. Jan Osborn and Dr. Lilia Monzó, for their support and encouragement throughout the entire process of completing this thesis. I'd also like to thank Morgan Reid-Davidson and Dr. Brian Glaser for their enthusiasm in the classroom that inspired my interest into researching teaching practices and rhetoric. I also would like to thank my students from English 103: Writing Across Borders for their amazing work and insight, who made that first semester teaching such a joy.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Diana and Elisei Salagean. *Esto es para ustedes.*

ABSTRACT

Student Disposition Towards

Discussing Race

by Natalie Salagean

Discussions of race in the classroom have always been fraught. How do we broach such sensitive topics? How do we create an environment in which students feel both safe and comfortable discussing race on both a personal level and at a systemic scale? How does a student's race factor into the conversation? And how does the instructor's race factor in as well, or in conjunction with a student's racial identity? As a Latina educator of color, I designed a research study which examined the impact my own race and ethnicity held in the classroom, and additionally how intersecting factors such as class and gender contribute to classroom dynamics. In this study, students were given surveys which gauged their interest and comfort level in discussing race and their own racial identities. Reflections based on readings in the class, which tackle race dynamics within the Black Lives Matter movement and border crossings, were utilized to examine students' engagement with discussing race and their willingness to engage with their own racial identities as an audience. This study focused on three students of different racial backgrounds— a self-identified male white student, a self-identified male student of color that is not Latinx, and a self-identified female Latina student of color. This study examined the impact a student's race and ethnicity had on their level of comfort and engagement with discussing race and ethnicity in the classroom, and furthermore, how having a nonwhite Latina professor affected these students' engagements specifically.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
ABSTRACT.....	V
LIST OF FIGURES	VII
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Literature Review.....	3
1.2 Methodology	10
2 RESULTS	15
2.1 Observation Results	15
2.2 Trends	21
2.2.1 Gender.....	22
2.2.2 Class.....	23
2.2.3 Ethnicity.....	25
2.3 Analysis of Observation Results.....	27
2.3.1 Race and Ethnicity	27
2.3.2 Gender and Class	31
2.4 Graphic Data Based on Survey Results	39
3 CONCLUSION	45
3.1 Opportunities.....	48
WORKS CITED.....	50
APPENDICES.....	52

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1 Level of Interest Discussing Racial/Ethnic Identity.....	40
Figure 2 Level of Comfort Discussing Racial/Ethnic Identity	42
Figure 3 How Important is Racial/Ethnic Identity.....	43
Figure 4 Do Minority Students Feel More Comfortable When an Educator is the Same Racial/Ethnic Identity as Them?	44

1 Introduction

Discussions on race can be among the most difficult and polarizing to have in the classroom and the racial makeup of the students present can greatly influence the conversation. How do students view their own racial identities in relation to curriculum that explicitly explores race? And how does the instructor's race further influence the matter when contrasted with a student's racial identity? This research project examines how students' self-identified racial and ethnic identity, interacts with their level of interest, comfort, and engagement in discussing issues of race within the classroom and explores whether there is any notable influence that an instructor's race can bear on these results. Furthermore, this project examines how class and gender intersect with race and ethnicity, and how these identities contribute to the behaviors of the students when discussing race in the classroom.

As a Latina student of color, I can count on one hand the number of Latinx instructors I have had who were not teaching Spanish language courses. In retrospect, the issue was never that personally important, or even that identifiable, until my senior year of high school, when the topics of debate for my AP Government class suddenly became race sensitive. We were instructed to debate the topics of what was called "illegal immigration" (I refrain from the notion of denoting an entire group of people as "illegal immigrants" or "illegals", due to the dehumanizing nature of doing so and the United States' settler colonial status) and Affirmative Action. It was at this moment that I realized I felt alienated from a teacher with whom I had previously felt so close towards.

My white classmates and white teacher were discussing these issues as though they were without bias, as though this was a simple exercise of academia. How could we be discussing these issues as though they were abstract, as though there were not several students, including myself, who were seemingly the target of what we were discussing? As I sat and listened to classmates spew hateful rhetoric about “anchor babies” and their college acceptances being “taken away” from them, I realized that my presence as a brown-skinned Latina in the classroom was disrupting the supposed neutrality of a largely white classroom, led by a white educator.

As I became an educator myself, studying both Early Childhood Education and pedagogy for higher education, so many of the conversations revolving around race within the classroom centered on white teachers talking about race with white students. I sought to expand on the few resources I had read which engaged with how educators of color interact with both white and students of color, and specifically how the dynamics of a classroom can shift when there are students of color who share a racial and ethnic background with their instructor.

1.1 Literature Review

Many studies on race within the classroom center on two facets: one, the resistance of white students and/or faculty to critique structures of whiteness, and two, the benefits of acknowledging racial dynamics for students and instructors of color. While I agree that it is important to untangle the layers of shame, denial, and oftentimes anger, associated with whites engaging with race within the classroom (and frankly, outside of the classroom as well), I believe that there has been inadequate research on the nuances of the multicultural classroom, one that is not simply presented as a binary of white instructor and white students versus everyone who is nonwhite, or rather, students and educators of color.

An important facet of the discussion of multicultural classrooms is understanding the way that gender comes into play as well. The difficulties female professors of color face cannot solely be attributed to their race when research trends indicate that their femininity, or perceived lack of conventional femininity, are contributing factors. In, ““Reclaiming Our Time”: Women of Color Faculty and Radical Self-Care in the Academy,” Nicol and Yee explore the intersection of their identities and how that influences their practice; “Teaching with the intersectional epistemology of antiracism and feminism means that we choose to educate our students about the structural barriers in our communities, institutions, and society that prevent people of color, women, and multiple marginalized populations from equally accessing opportunity and realizing their full potential” (150). As described in this quote, antiracism, classism and feminism come hand in hand, as dismantling either without acknowledging the other would only be a detriment, since they are inextricably connected.

Quantifying the importance of feminism in the classroom can prove difficult, however. Basow and Silberg's article, "Student Evaluations of College Professors: Are Female and Male Professors Rated Differently?," argues that there are small differences that are noted when research is done on how female professors are evaluated, though there is undoubtedly a wealth of lived experiences from female professors to speak to the reality that they are oftentimes more harshly judged than their predominantly male peers. Because the quantifying measures have so many variables and there is so little student information available ready to give greater depth to the results, "the subtle effect of sex bias may be hard to discern" (313), which is one the key reasons I chose to focus on three particular students in this research project – though the raw data itself reveals fascinating trends, it is through the close examination of a students' work and classroom experience that reveals not only how they feel regarding issues like race, gender, and class, but in many cases why.

One of the key texts I used as a basis for my research came from Alemán and Gaytán's "It Doesn't Speak to Me': understanding student of color resistance to critical race pedagogy," which broke down many preconceived notions on how students of color are expected to operate within the classroom in regards to discussion of race. By closely examining critical race pedagogy in practice, they reiterated some familiar findings, which is that white students "often feel uncomfortable or deny its relevance" (130). But what about students of color? Are they automatically comfortable, are they aligned with discussions of race because they are viewed as "raced", unlike their white peers? As discussed in Alemán and Gaytán's work, their research breaks down how and why some students of color can be resistant to critical race pedagogy, which is largely due to theories of discomfort, assimilation and, like their white peers, denial of the importance of race.

This brings us to the complicated notion of allyship, as discussed by Twigg in “Last Verse Same as the First? On Racial Justice and “Covering” Allyship in Compositionist Identities”, where they examine how allyship, whether you’re part of the majority or you’re marginalized, can be enacted as a means to protect oneself, although it contributes to perpetuating a harmful status quo. Essentially, this demonstrates how the discomfort and resistance felt towards truly grappling with race, on a societal and personal level, as explored by Alemán and Gaytán, can manifest even once we have evolved to supposed “allies”. Having a marginalized identity or posturing as an antiracist means very little if the behaviors we model within the classroom do not uphold the tenets of antiracist theory. Twigg argues, “In order to imagine effective antiracist approaches, white compositionists must undertake not a one-time inventory of our ‘racial position and privilege’ but an ongoing examination of the ways in which continue to show up” (27). Though there is an emphasis on whiteness in this statement, Twigg reveals how they too had attempted to “pass” as heteronormative at one point and relates this experience to the duty of all educators to meaningfully engage with antiracist practices.

To hone in more specifically on educators of color, and their unique experiences in the classroom, I turned to Closson, Bowman, and Merriweather’s work in “Toward a Race Pedagogy for Black Faculty”, which explored not only the nuances to be found within Black faculty’s experiences, but faculty of color en masse. They succinctly surmise one of my biggest qualms with being an educator of color:

Though the experiences of faculty of color are not monolithic, as Perry et al.’s empirical research will show, faculty of color must be deliberate in every aspect of their praxis to be effective while maintaining their sanity. However, few scholars

have directed scholarship toward helping these faculty develop a pedagogy of teaching race. (83)

They explore the difficulty of educators of color who are often not respected within the classroom, are seen as less credible, or are so rare in their appearance that their very presence as an instructor can be a cause for discomfort.

Research that speaks specifically to the Latina experience includes “The Hidden Costs of Serving Our Community: Women Faculty of Color, Racist Sexism, and False Security in a Hispanic-Serving Institution”, written by B.A.L.. Their research spoke to both my personal experience and elaborated further on the dynamics that occur within the classroom when professors and students share the same marginalized identity. It may seem that there would be only positive outcomes from the underrepresented finding one another in traditionally white institutions, B.A.L. explains how the shared cultural background and other factors, like sexism, can still come into play to create less than positive experiences. B.A.L.’s work within this article also revealed the desire for representation not from a student point of view, but from the faculty’s:

For example, Latinx faculty, and especially Latinas, disproportionately constituted the lowest and most vulnerable ranks of the professoriate—adjuncts and three-year lecturers, most of who bore the brunt of the teaching burden with a five course per semester load. A recent series of climate surveys, though limited to the STEM and adjacent fields, underscored a general insensitivity to race and gender issues, revealing disturbing patterns in the experiences of women of color at the institution. More than any other group, Latina faculty expressed the desire to see

more people like them in positions of leadership at the institution, suggesting acute awareness of the concentration of women of color in the lowest ranks of the university. (B.A.L. 184)

This article examines the difficulties Latinas face whilst navigating higher academia and demonstrates how simply having Latina students in the classroom and even working in the institutions themselves cannot alone be answer enough to decades worth of systemic inequality. B.A.L. speaks specifically to the greater culture of the institutions in which these Latina women work and how that affects both their workplace environment and their classroom environments, which I identified with through my similar experience conducting research within the culture of Chapman University and how it is situated in Orange County.

Though I seek to decenter whiteness in my work, I feel that it is disingenuous to not engage with the scholarship that does exist, and with the conventions that are in practice which largely center whiteness not only in the classroom, but within American society. I utilized the research on Black faculty, on students of color resistance to critical race pedagogy, and of the conceit of allyship to tackle this very notion of whiteness being considered the norm and the standard for an educator.

In Mazzei's "Desiring silence: gender, race and pedagogy in education", they write that "whiteness as a descriptor for whites often goes unnamed" (659), which has been the issue at hand: in the scholarship, there's been an overemphasis of how white teachers can effectively teach white students about nonwhites. This creates a system in which students of color are effectively either used to being taught by white educators, sometimes perpetually uncomfortable by the lack of representation, while white students become so comfortable with white educators

that a nonwhite educator becomes unsettling for them, someone whose opinions regarding race should not be valued as highly as a white educator.

Kisimoto and Mwangi explore the way that white educators have become a sort of “neutral basis” that white students have come to expect within the classroom. In “Critiquing the Rhetoric of “Safety” in Feminist Pedagogy: Women of Color Offering an Account of Ourselves” they speak to the unique experience that women of color face in higher academia, which is that our very identities seem at odds with our positions:

[F]aculty of color, particularly women of color, often feel the need to defend and justify ourselves and are often under pressure to disclose our personal lives.

Because the classes we teach that deal with race, class, and gender are met with student resistance as they feel they are “forced to take these classes” to fulfill graduation requirements, and because the issues we discuss challenge their white privilege, their belief in meritocracy, and their comfort zones, the pressure to disclose our personal lives in the classroom becomes inevitable... students often see the class as perpetuating the professor’s personal agenda rather than dealing with racial and gender issues as legitimate objects of study. It is within this racial and political context that, as women faculty of color, we find ourselves having to justify our presence in the classroom. The way we define ourselves becomes a very political issue in class and literally makes or breaks our teaching environment and endeavors. (91)

Kishimoto and Mwangi in particular comment on the way the identity of someone of color can become an issue for white students in the classroom, as they see the racial identity of their

nonwhite professors as “biased” as opposed to the “neutral” identity of whiteness. With white professors, there is little to no pressure to “reveal” their backgrounds, as though it is something kept secret, let alone interact with their identity within the classroom in explicit terms. With nonwhite professors, there is a pressure to disclose and/or address their race whenever they speak to issues of race within the classroom, as though it is expected or necessary.

1.2 Methodology

In preparation for teaching my first-year composition course as a GTA, I designed lesson plans and assignments which sought to engage students with the concepts of borders, both figurative and literal. One of the most prominent borders the class discussed, a common thread through many of the assignments, was the pervasiveness of racial identity as a border that exists in a figurative sense, if race is to be considered a social construct, but manifests in both literal and often tangible ways, with the U.S./Mexico border as an example. As a brown-skinned Latina professor of Mexican descent, I chose to explicitly engage with the concepts like institutionalized racism, police brutality, dehumanizing rhetoric, and sought to gauge whether or not my presence as a nonwhite professor discussing topics that revolve around race would have any influence on white students, non-Latinx students of color, and Latinx students of color by any discernible means.

After gaining IRB approval and the consent of my students to use their information confidentially, I began collecting data from surveys distributed in class, experiences in the classroom and from student work that was submitted. I drew data from online discussion board posts that were done in responses to texts and media used for the course, such as *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine and *The Line Becomes a River* by Francisco Cantú, and Beyoncé's 2016 Superbowl performance and music video for the song "Formation". I also used students' memoirs about their experiences with borders, both literal and figurative, and literary inquiry papers written about Rankine's or Cantú's work.

The discussion posts were generally more informal, and the students were encouraged to be emotionally honest within their responses. They were given the space to dislike a piece, an

author, an assignment, and were permitted to focus their responses less on the piece itself and more on whatever the piece brought up for them, whether it be connections to other media or personal experiences.

Additionally, students were administered two surveys in class. Although my research focused on three students specifically, which I will explain in length below, I chose to administer survey materials to all students so I could have both the option of selecting carefully who I would observe, and so I could use the data from the class as a whole in order to identify any patterns and to contrast my findings from the students I closely observed. The two surveys were completed one at a time, across two days, and the students had fifteen minutes to complete them each. They were administered in the final fifteen minutes of class, and I was not present in the classroom while they were completed. The surveys were also numbered according to their seating arrangements, so that students did not have to write their names onto their surveys, but so that I could identify them later according to the key I had created.

The first survey asked students to self-identify their “race and/or ethnicity” as a short written response, and questions which gauged their comfort and interest in discussing race/ethnicity from a scale of (1) Very Comfortable/Interested to (4) Very Uncomfortable/Uninterested. Students were also asked how important their identity was to them, on a similar (1) to (4) scale, and to briefly explain why in a written response. I chose to include a (1) to (4) scale to avoid students simply circling down the middle for each response, and I chose to let students fill out their self-identified race as opposed to circling from a predetermined list.

In my own experiences, I always found it difficult when posed with the question of race/ethnicity: while I am biracial, coming from a nonwhite Mexican mother and a white

Romanian father, I found myself having to identify as a “white Latino/a”. I personally prefer to identify as Latina, and nonwhite at that, as I believe in identifying in what my lived experience has afforded me; my nonwhite skin and features have meant that I am nonwhite, despite my biracial heritage. By allowing students the space to self-identify with written answers, I found several who identified outside of what would have been expected with a traditional given selection.

At a later date, students were given a list of interview questions to answer with short written responses, which included: How would you describe your relationship with your race/ethnicity? What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in the classroom specifically? How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is a different race/ethnicity than you? How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is the same race/ethnicity as you? Again, these questions were short-form written responses, in order to allow the students to bring in whatever information they deemed important and to expand on whatever could not have been explained through the simple (1) to (4) rankings given in the prior survey. As I will describe in the Results, Analysis, and Conclusion sections of this paper, these interview questions provided some of the most valuable information in this study.

While data was garnered from the entire class (fourteen students) in order to examine trends and for future research purposes, I chose to focus specifically on the answers of three students: one white student, one non-Latinx student of color, and one Latinx student of color. The reasons for these selections was so that I could not only examine the traditional binary of white versus nonwhite, but with the added element of an ethnic identity similar to myself. My reasoning for

this selection was to examine if my presence as a Latina professor of color would make any impact on my findings when contrasting non-Latinx students of color and Latinx students of color. While I expected some solidarity from students of color, to perhaps be more open and willing to discuss their experiences with their racial identities, I expected an even deeper connection with my Latinx students of color, since we would be from the same racial background.

I purposely chose students whose answers offered variety. Many of my non-Latinx students of color (who were mostly women) had very similar answers to the Latina student of color that I selected. There were only two self-identified Latinx students, specifically both Latina, so I chose the student who, like myself, had brown skin as opposed to lighter skin, in order to see if these similarities would affect the results. Many of the women in my class offered very detailed and nuanced answers to their questions, which seemed to echo one another, while the men had either more apathetic or almost combative answers to some of the questions. When I say combative, I mean their answers were often very short, curt, or dismissive.

Regarding my background specifically, I did not hide that I was Latina (Mexican), but I did not tell the students anything that branched past that, including that I'm biracial, and that my father is white. I thought there was no point in trying to deny my Latina heritage since I'm visibly nonwhite and usually, and accurately, presumed to be of Mexican heritage. However, I waited until the end of the semester to tell my students that I myself identify as first generation, that my Mexican mother was considered an "illegal" at one point, after being deported and climbing the border wall near Tijuana into the United States, and that my father was a refugee from Romania. I chose to reveal this information at the end of the semester in order to avoid perceived bias from

my students, who may not have been as comfortable discussing immigration (with *The Line Becomes a River*) or the refugee crisis (Wilson Shire's "Home") if they knew my personal connection to the issue. Once I revealed this information, the students were directed to post brief responses to my identity and background in a discussion board during our final session. The responses of the three students I observed can be found in Appendix F.

2 Results

This section examines the results of the three individual students I closely observed, which includes their survey answers, their classroom behaviors, and their work written for class, and includes charts based on survey answers from the entire class. Though this project is focused on three students, I chose to include the charts that gathered information from the surveys to note trends from the class as a whole, which will be discussed in the Trends section later, and to contrast the findings from the three students I observed with the trends identified from the entire class. For those three students, their survey answers, written responses, and excerpts from their writing for class assignments, can be found in the appendix.

First, I will present the results from the three students I closely observed, and then will examine the trends from the entire class. Afterwards, I will analyze the results of the three students and contrast them to the trends identified earlier and will complete this section with graphic data based on the survey results from the entire class. The three students will be referred to as Dwayne, a white male student, Sam, an Indian male student, and Mary, a Latina student.

2.1 Observation Results

In their survey answers, Dwayne noted that most of his educators have also been white, and that when it came to discussing race in the classroom, the race of the educator made no difference on their comfort level. Additionally, Dwayne said that when it came to their relationship with their racial identity, that they don't "really think about it/interact with it often". This statement applied

to the bulk of this students' work, as they never directly inserted their own personal experiences with racial identity/racism into any of their pieces.

When asked to reflect on Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue", Dwayne wrote not about interacting with those who speak other languages or an examination of what it means to have a racial marker such as an accent be used as a justification for discrimination, but about physical ailments. While ableism is a worthy parallel to racism in some regards, I found this quote telling, "like Amy Tan as a child, I felt embarrassed about certain aspects of my parents". This is one instance of many where Dwayne was indirectly talking about race, while never using explicit terms like "Asian", "white", or "racism". Dwayne doesn't state that Amy Tan was embarrassed of the racism she and her family had to deal with because her mother was not a native English speaker, nor does he explicitly state that he was embarrassed of his father being physically disabled. Dwayne was embarrassed about "certain aspects", meaning their father's physical disabilities, but there's never a notion to compare racism to ableism and/or disabilities, which is what the reflection was about, albeit implicitly.

Additionally, Dwayne, when writing about Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*, a text that explicitly discusses anti-Blackness and racism from the perspective of a black woman, never used the words "white", "black", or "racism", instead using vague euphemisms by talking about scenarios that cause "discomfort" and how "these people" have certain "preconceptions" that affect people like the narrator, Claudia Rankine. We can see this in an excerpt from their essay, where a white real estate agent behaves in a discriminatory way towards Rankine, but is oddly kind to her white friend:

While first meeting the real estate agent, the narrator describes her as holding some discomfort right off the bat. Without much conversation between the two, the real estate agent already possesses an awkward attitude about even ever having an appointment with her. Phrases such as “couldn’t even fathom” only exacerbated the discomfort the narrator felt. This ineptness additionally worsens when the agent recurrently reassures her friend that she feels extremely relaxed around her, yet never expresses that same notion of comfort towards you. This discrepancy in reactions from the real estate agent seemingly points to a perspective of racial discomfort. Furthermore, the tension and uneasy feelings the narrator possesses only becomes poorer when the narrator’s friend fails to question who or what could possibly make her feel uncomfortable in an arranged appointment. Understandably, Rankine does not want to create a scene, ultimately reflected in her failure to speak up or question the real estate agent’s attitude’s. Appealing to the readers emotions, Rankine effectively uses pathos by vividly describing the hidden biases possessed by the real estate agent.

Here, “racial discomfort”, “attitude” and “hidden biases” are the closest we get to explicitly naming the racism that the narrator is faced with in her day to day life as a black woman, but Dwayne never describes the racial dynamic explicitly, so we are thus examining race in his essay without any named races.

Dwayne marked on their survey that they were “Somewhat comfortable” discussing race/ethnicity, although both “Very comfortable” and “Somewhat uncomfortable” had been selected and then crossed out. This suggests, just like the student’s writing, that they in fact struggle with discussing race.

Sam, a student of color, also had mostly white educators and attended the same high school as Dwayne. In the survey, they wrote that in their relationship to their race, they were proud but not “attached” to their identity. In every assignment that required the student to engage with their personal experiences, the student never mentioned or included their experiences as it related to their racial identity, at least not explicitly, which will be explained below through one of their written responses. Dwayne also said that having a teacher of a different race discuss racial issues “doesn’t bother” them, and that having one of the same race would “feel the same”. As for how they feel about race in day-to-day interactions, they noted that they “don’t necessarily encounter a lot of things that deal [with] race specifically”.

When Sam wrote about Tan’s “Mother Tongue”, though they did not bring up their nonwhite status directly, they did speak on their personal experience to the matter:

After reading Amy Tan’s "Mother Tongue", I felt very connected to the point she was trying to get across to the reader: there is no one type of correct English...Lastly, Tan talked about how the way immigrants speak is classified as "broken" or limited is not an accurate way of describing speech. On my mom's side, my grandmother knows about 8 different languages, but struggles with fluently speaking English. She speaks, as "Mother Tongue" describes it, broken English. Like Tan, my grandmother's English may not seem like a real language to a stranger, but I can basically decipher everything she says. It's not like she doesn't know what to say, she just has trouble getting the information out and relaying it to someone else.

Sam selected that they were “Very comfortable” discussing race/ethnicity, although when it came to level of interest, they were “Somewhat uninterested”. I believe this reflection accurately reflects that they are somewhat uninterested in discussing race – though he did not mention his race explicitly, which he had self-identified as Indian, the information he provided in this reflection aligns with the nonwhite experience of Tan. This would be an instance where Sam brings up what they feel is relevant, meaning that he understands this aspect of the nonwhite experience, and so he speaks to what he identifies as a common trait, but he does not wish to or care to expand further on the nuances that frequently come along with not only being a non-native English speaker, but a nonwhite non-native English speaker.

The Latina student of color, Mary, wrote that from Kindergarten through Eighth Grade, she had Latinx educators every year except for one. She also wrote that their early education was largely Black and Latinx. Mary wrote that when race is brought up in a predominantly white classroom, they sometimes “feel uncomfortable”. When taught by an educator of a different race about racial issues, she wrote that if they are a “person of color” she feels comfortable, but “if they are white I feel uncomfortable”. When the educator is her same race, she wrote that she felt “super comfortable and comforted”.

Mary not only wrote about racism that she personally witnessed and/or experienced, she spoke explicitly about being nonwhite, and frequently utilized explicit terms such as *brown*, *black*, *white*, *racism*. Additionally, Mary was able to critique structures as a whole, as evidenced by their response to Tan’s “Mother Tongue”:

Coming from a Spanish speaking home, I can relate to Amy, because I also had to help my mom out...American society tends to be very critical of one’s English

speaking skills. In addition, people with accents are also criticized. The more proficient one is in the English language, the more intelligent we think they are.

While this echoed Sam's response, which indirectly addresses race, this statement differs slightly as it begins to hint at structures of racism, by indicating trends of how people are regarded and treated based on their mastery of English, which in turn demonstrates that Mary is both more comfortable and potentially more interested in discussing issues like race.

Mary was also unique in her memoir assignment, when she engaged with her experience of switching from a predominantly black and brown school to a largely white school, and the new racial dynamics that she experienced both within the white institution, and with her old nonwhite friends. While Sam spoke of a trip to India to visit his grandmother within his memoir, again, there were no direct mentions and/or analysis of racial dynamics within his piece. With Dwayne, there was a focus on contrasting physical abilities, and this time mental abilities, in their memoir, with no acknowledgement of race whatsoever.

It should also be noted that both Dwayne and Sam attended self-identified mostly white schools, including their shared private high school, in the Bay area of Northern California, while Mary specifically stated that she had attended public schools that were predominantly black and Latinx in an area near Compton, California, before attending a predominantly white, private high school, where she said as a "low-income" student, she was contrasted the white students who paid "full tuition".

While Dwayne and Sam never explicitly self-identify as belonging to a specific class, it stands to argue that they appear to have grown up in a more affluent area than Mary. Both Dwayne and

Sam attended the same high school, which was described by Sam as “a private high school” with “facilities [that] were above average, and unlimited resources available all the time”. As Dwayne and Sam are both men, and Mary is a woman, the men’s understanding of racial divides could have been assuaged by both their status as men within a higher socioeconomic bracket in a safer, higher income area than Mary, who grew up near Compton in Los Angeles.

Additionally, the in-class behaviors of Dwayne and Sam served to contrast Mary, as Mary participated more frequently in class discussion, particularly pertaining to issues such as race or class. For example, when discussing an exhibit in the library that explored the U.S./Mexico border, Mary came and spoke to me one-on-one about her feelings regarding the exhibit. However, this behavior, which will be discussed in the later Gender and Trends sections, seemed more closely linked to her gender, as Dwayne and Sam, similar to the majority of their male classmates, seemed less engaged with in-class discussions.

2.2 Trends

Though this research primarily focuses on three students I closely observed, in order to provide an in depth analysis of those individual students’ experiences, I examined trends I noticed from the results of the class as a whole to better understand the dynamics of this classroom which informed our discussions of race and ethnicity. In this section, I will categorize the trends by gender, class, and ethnicity, and reveal the observation and research methods used to draw these conclusions. Since none of these classifications can be fully examined without acknowledging the presence of the others, there will be slight overlap in the analysis of each individual trend. Again, while the individual trends will be more closely examined in later sections of this paper

regarding the three students I observed, this section serves to analyze the trends of the entire class population observed.

2.2.1 Gender

What seemed most surprising, across the board, was that the female students were the ones that wrote explicitly and clearly about race, and almost consistently, wrote more detailed and nuanced answers in their surveys and interview questions. The depth and the explicitness of their answers made it seem as though the female students were both more willing, interested, and comfortable in discussing race and ethnicity than their male counterparts. However, in class discussions within the classroom, as opposed to online discussion boards, there were male students who were both passionate and explicit when discussing issues of race/ethnicity, which poses the question as to why these male students were so brief and vague in their written responses as opposed to their oral responses.

One of the few surveys completed by a male student that used full sentences (compared to most of the male responses that used one word or brief phrases) and provided reasons or explanations for their feelings regarding race (in response to questions such as “What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in day to day life?”), still refrained from naming their own racial/ethnic identity specifically, or even acknowledging and naming explicitly other racial/ethnic dynamics. In comparison, several surveys completed by females named their own racial/ethnic identities explicitly, and acknowledged the dynamics that they were exposed to (in regards to questions such as “What are your experiences of race/ethnicity being brought up in the classroom specifically?”) by naming that they had many white teachers, experience with Latinx or Asian educators, and/or the presence of black classmates.

There were also several male students who had difficulty engaging with pieces that discussed race in their written responses. Several male students would either shift the conversation from race to some other kind of parallel (like physical disability) in order to understand the racism that people of color face, or instead would talk “around” the issue— like the male student who wrote an entire paper on Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen*, which explicitly discusses blackness and whiteness, without ever using the words “white” or “black”. These students would answer on surveys that they were “somewhat comfortable” to “very comfortable” discussing race/ethnicity, yet their assignments and responses seemed to reflect an unwillingness to engage with the topics in a deep or explicit way.

I am curious if this could have been due to the ratio of male to female students in the class, since there were more female students than males. Perhaps if there was a more even ratio in the class, the results would have shifted slightly, although I feel the trend would have still been significant enough to have been noted, as in the following sections there will be more occurrences in which the responses between male and female responses vary significantly in terms of length and level of engagement, as it accounts of class background and ethnic background.

2.2.2 Class

Among the students of color, those who came from more affluent neighborhoods and schools seemed to be less invested in discussing issues of race and ethnicity in the classroom. For instance, students of color who self-disclosed through surveys and in class interactions that they had attended private schools in affluent areas would note how they either “felt bored” by the topic of race/ethnicity being discussed as opposed to “real issues”, or viewed it as something “[not] super important”.

However, the student who noted that she felt as though race was not important to discuss demonstrated the interesting nuances found between the male and female responses, even when accounting for being educated in a more affluent area. Though this student was not interested in discussing race/ethnicity, she was engaged with the question in a self-reflective way by surmising “I know my discomfort stems from my difficult relation [with] my ethnicity”, which was later expanded on in a later survey answer where she wrote “I think that my race [and] ethnic identity does not define me nor is it an important part of my life despite ideas of society”. So while this student insisted her race was not important, and that her racial/ethnic identity was “Somewhat unimportant” to her own sense of self, her answers still demonstrated a deeper level of engagement.

For contrast, students who self-admittedly came from lower income areas (or poverty, grappling with issues such as homelessness) were those who, both within their classroom assignments and their surveys, explicitly engaged with issues of race and ethnicity and ranked them as important. One student who had gone from lower income grade schools to a predominately white private high school noted the differences between the two both within her surveys and memoir assignments for the course, noting how she had been surrounded by Latinx and black students in her old schools, and how with white educators she “feels uncomfortable” to discuss issues of race/ethnicity, since she herself identifies as a nonwhite Latinx. Another Latina student who also attended school in lower income areas ranked “Very interested” and “Very important” for the questions “How would you rank your level of interest discussing race/ethnicity?” and “How important is your racial/ethnic identity to you?”, and specifically stated in her responses “My family has faced a lot of adversity for me to be where I am today and that makes me extremely proud to be Mexican”.

Again, the intersections of the issues and the way the responses seemed to have been affected create an interesting dynamic in the surveys. One male student, who wrote rather short and uninvested answers (describing his relationship to his Korean identity as “meh”), would arguably have followed along with the trend of male responses, regardless of racial/ethnic identity; however, this student also spoke of their relationship to identifying as lower income, and in their survey was more explicit than students of color who came from higher income backgrounds. For instance, this student wrote in response to the question, “What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in day to day life?”, “Not sure...I do conclude that my roommates act [the] way they do because they are white”. So while this students’ responses followed along the pattern of male answers which were generally short and uninterested in discussing issues of race/ethnicity in the classroom, it was still more explicit in naming whiteness, which was a recurrent element missing in white students’ responses and in students of color who attended private schools in affluent areas.

2.2.3 Ethnicity

As noted earlier in the Results, the surveys revealed trends among the white students as to how they viewed (or perhaps wanted to be viewed) their interest levels of discussing race and ethnicity within the classroom. Every self-identified white student marked on their surveys that they either felt “Very interested” or “somewhat interested” discussing issues of race/ethnicity in the classroom, whilst it was the students of color whose answers ranged from “Very interested” to “Very uninterested”. I wonder if this could be reflective that it could be considered rude or socially unconscious for white students to mark that they are uninterested in discussing issues of race/ethnicity within the classroom, whilst for students of color, because they feel as though they are inherently connected to the issues (which white students are as well, just perhaps they don’t

view it as such) that they feel more comfortable marking that they feel levels of disinterest in discussing the topic.

Another interesting trend in the surveys was self-identified white students across the board selected, in response to the question, “How important is your racial/ethnic identity to you?”, either “Somewhat important” or “Somewhat unimportant”. For students of color, more than half selected that their racial/ethnic identity was “Very important”. Though their answers spanned the gamut, since students of color also selected “Somewhat unimportant” or “Very unimportant”, the responses aligned with explanations in the surveys. Many students were proud of their ethnic heritage, proud to be representative of a unique or diverse perspective, or alternatively, wrestled with discomfort in their identity or wished to be seen as “more than” their identity.

This question also positions white students to make a difficult choice in selecting their answer, since socially, having pride in the white race/ethnic heritage is associated with White Power movements and other white supremacist dialogues. One white student wrote an explanation in her survey that though she is white, “my dad is Israeli, so Middle Eastern, but he counts as white too so white”, and later in her response to the question “How would you describe your relationship with your race/ethnicity?” explained her lineage, writing, “Even though I would count myself as diverse, my mom is white and my dad is Israeli (white) and part Indian. However my dad’s side (mom) doesn’t identify as Indian. So I am not sure”. This students’ responses revealed that when it comes to students who have ethnic backgrounds that are heterogenous, that they can often struggle with what they should “technically” write down in answer to the survey, and with what lies in their lineage.

Another student self-identified as bi-racial, without any other specification, and wrote in response to the question “How would you describe your relationship with your race/ethnicity?” that they have a “good relationship, but it’s hard sometimes” because she would often be told “you’re only half it’s not the same”. Again, the examples of how students’ grappled with biracial and heterogenous backgrounds reveals the division between the responses between men, whereas the female students who had these background wrote more thorough answers, the one male student who was biracial listed their relationship to the self-identified ethnic identity of “Wasian” (a portmanteau of white and Asian) as “non existent”, and their feelings towards discussing the matter as an issues that they “couldn’t care less [about]”.

2.3 Analysis of Observation Results

Much like the way I presented the trends observed from the class as a whole, this section will specifically engage with those trends with an emphasis on the three students observed, Dwayne, Sam, and Mary, and examining how these students either conformed or defied the trends observed.

2.3.1 Race and Ethnicity

Dwayne answered on their surveys that he was comfortable discussing race, and that regarding his relationship to his own identity, that he didn’t “really think about it/interact with it often”. This information stands to both confirm and contradict the nondescript way Dwayne analyzed Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric*. He wrote a three-page essay on a text which very specifically and explicitly discusses whiteness, blackness, racism, Jim Crow laws and slavery, without ever acknowledging whiteness or blackness or racism.

Additionally, one of the unique features of Rankine's work is the utilization of the second-person "you", which forces the reader to insert themselves within the framework of the interactions, which largely revolve around incidents of racism, such as day-to-day microaggression or cases of police brutality. We spoke of this use of "you" within *Citizen* several times within the class, and students were also encouraged to use their personal experiences as a means of engaging with text; Dwayne did neither, meaning that he was unable or unwilling to address the whiteness of the characters in the text, the overarching critique of whiteness the text had made, or to his own experience as a white person who interacts with those who are nonwhite. This speaks to Mazzei's point of how whiteness is so frequently unnamed or seen as unraced, and to the discomfort that white students frequently experience when discussing race within the classroom.

Dwayne did not critique whiteness or the identity of whiteness and how it is juxtaposed, and derives power from, the oppression of people of color, and specifically black people. Rather, he avoided the words "white" and "black" and did not use them even once within the paper. Instead of naming the man in one vignette as white, perhaps acting in a racist manner towards a black person, the narrator, Dwayne would use phrases like "the man's ignorance" or "the mistakes the man committed". I think this shows the contradiction and confirmation of the student's survey answers: a comfort in discussing race would perhaps indicate a comfort of using words like racism, white, or black, but a lack of interaction with your identity as a white person would clarify why there is a hesitation in doing so.

The inability, or perhaps unwillingness, to explicitly name the characters in the book as white, black, or racist, reflects the his answer to the survey question, "How comfortable do you feel discussing race/ethnicity?". Dwayne had marked both "Very comfortable" and "Somewhat

uncomfortable” and crossed out both before settling on “Somewhat comfortable”. I believe this indicates his conflicting feelings towards wanting to appear comfortable discussing race, contemplating perhaps acknowledging that they are uncomfortable doing so, until they decided on saying that they are “Somewhat comfortable”. When given feedback on the lack of racial engagement within their paper, Dwayne was aware of the oversight, which leads me to believe that he was most likely actively choosing not to explicitly name race out of discomfort or caution.

Furthermore, Dwayne and Sam grew up within the Silicon Valley Northern California area, which has a higher socioeconomic status than the area where Mary student is from, which is an area near Compton, California, which Mary has identified as lower income and with a largely black and Latinx population. As noted in the Results section, I believe that the assumed higher affluence of Dwayne and Sam, in addition to their status as men, afforded them enough class and male privilege that allowed them to not have much engagement with racial dynamics in their day to day lives, whilst the self-identified low-income status and womanhood of Mary did the opposite, it heightened her understanding of racial dynamics and notions of privilege.

Sam sat in the middle between the others. Whilst they shared some of the same apathy and disinterest towards discussing race, as expressed in their survey answers, they were more explicit than Dwayne although not as nuanced as Mary. In their paper on *Citizen*, he wrote that “[m]ost people have no idea how it feels to be targeted because of your skin color”. I wonder – is “most people” a euphemism for whiteness? Are they tiptoeing around the subject just as Dwayne had? Or do they mean “most people” in, honestly, the sense of most people, and they consider themselves to have never been targeted because of their own dark skin color? Or if they had, do

they not feel comfortable sharing or disclosing that information? If I had been of a similar racial background, would this paper have had a more personal touch? As explored by Alemán and Gaytán in their paper, Sam could be an example of one who is resistant to critical race pedagogy and in denial of the way their race has affected their life.

Sam also does not name whiteness specifically, rather referring to either “police” or “America” as the perpetrators of racism, though they do address that it is black folk who are suffering the brunt of racism. This stands to contrast Mary, who in their critique of racist institutions and society, lists either the “white reader or ignorant reader” as the subjects who need to engage with these issues.

Mary was blatant and explicit about race when writing about *Citizen*. Take, for example, this opening paragraph:

Citizen: An American Lyric by Claudia Rankine is a response to racism Black Americans face daily in modern-day America. From microaggressions to police brutality and hate crimes, Rankine highlights the faults in our justice system that is failing the black community in receiving fair treatment in society. With an accusatory tone and a collection of lived experiences, she argues that marginalized groups, especially Black folks, are not seen as “citizens” in their own country.

There is a confidence within these first few lines, and clearly Mary is comfortable not only discussing race, as stated in her survey, but also comfortable utilizing the explicit verbiage necessary in order to thoroughly engage the topic. As stated in Mary’s survey, her grade level education, and her neighborhood, consisted of a primarily black and brown community, before

she had the opportunity to attend a private, although largely white, high school. This shift in cultural zones, from one which is largely made up of people like themselves, people of color and of lower income status to another which is white and wealthy, seems to have informed her ability to engage with race.

It stands to argue that Mary simply had to be cognizant of and engaged with racial dynamics, for their socioeconomic status meant that society had engaged her, as evidenced through the revelations made in her memoir piece. Additionally, Mary said that she had a “secure relationship” with her racial identity; in her survey answers, there was no circling and then crossing out selections, which could signify distress or confusion over which answer she should not only circle, but commit to.

2.3.2 Gender and Class

In this section, in order to examine the differences between the three students observed, I will be critiquing excerpts of each students’ work in response to the same prompt respectively, starting with an informal discussion board post, to their first lengthy assignment, which was their memoir piece, and finally ending with their Literary Inquiry assignment, which was a more traditional analytical paper engaging with one single primary source. I chose these three different assignments to critique since they were each completed weeks apart, which allows for an analysis of growth (or lack thereof) in the students’ work, and because the three assignments all had varied prompts and standards for execution, to allow for more variance in the responses. Specifically, I will be noting the differences between their responses and analyzing them through the lens of gender and class.

The first selection of work I'll be examining is a discussion board reflection post made after in-class reading and discussion of Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue". The reflections are open in terms of content, where the students are encouraged to write informally, as the reflections can be their honest initial response to the text itself or something that the text inspired them to consider.

The first excerpt I'll examine comes from Dwayne, a self-identified White male:

While letting ideas for this reflection essay marinate in my head over the last couple days, I experienced difficulty relating to it. I couldn't really find a direct connection from Tan's story to my life, until I thought about my dad's accident...See, like Amy Tan as a child, I felt embarrassed about certain aspects of my parents, but as I have grown up, I realize that under my Dad's scars are greater stories of perseverance and strength.

Tan's story discusses the nuances of growing up with a parent whose native language is not English, who many deemed, including Tan herself at points, as speaking "broken" English. I found it interesting that despite Dwayne having grown up in the Bay area, which is racially diverse, that he claimed to have had no "direct connection" to what it means to navigate as a nonnative English speaker. Perhaps he had not considered, or was not yet comfortable, analyzing or reflecting his experiences as someone interacting with another who was not a native English speaker, for fear that any judgments he would have revealed would have seemed improper. Additionally, Tan's text explicitly discusses race and ethnicity, and this response makes no mention of it at all.

The second excerpt I'll examine comes from Sam, a self-identified nonwhite Indian male:

After reading Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue", I felt very connected to the point she was trying to get across to the reader: there is no one type of correct English...Lastly, Tan talked about how the way immigrants speak is classified as "broken" or limited is not an accurate way of describing speech. On my mom's side, my grandmother knows about 8 different languages, but struggles with fluently speaking English. She speaks, as "Mother Tongue" describes it, broken English. Like Tan, my grandmother's English may not seem like a real language to a stranger, but I can basically decipher everything she says. It's not like she doesn't know what to say, she just has trouble getting the information out and relaying it to someone else.

Sam, though not naming their own race specifically, engaged with both the racial aspect of the piece (discussing Tan's theory of why Asians go into STEM in another part of the response) and the very concept of "proper" English, which was discussed in class, where I discussed how expectations of "proper" English can be conceived as harmful to immigrants, to ESL speakers, and to those who speak other dialects, like AAVE. Lastly, he was able to find a direct connection to the piece, by relating Tan's mother to their own grandmother's multilingual experience.

The last excerpt responding to Amy Tan's story is Mary, a self-identified nonwhite, Latinx female:

Coming from a Spanish speaking home, I can relate to Amy, because I also had to help my mom out. Since Spanish is her first language, I sometimes have to help her with spelling certain words in English or saying certain phrases. Other than

that, her verbal skills are really good and in turn, is able to get great service because of it. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case with Amy's mom. American society tends to be very critical of one's English speaking skills. In addition, people with accents are also criticized. The more proficient one is in the English language, the more intelligent we think they are. I personally believe that if you're able to speak and understand more than 1 language, that should be a marker of intelligence itself.

Similar to Sam, Mary was able to relate to the experience directly as she too had multilingual speakers in the home. However, Mary took her analysis one step deeper, by engaging with the judgements that are made of nonnative English speakers by society as a whole, by explicitly countering the notion that speaking "broken" English is a sign of being uneducated or unintelligent.

Though these three initial responses seem to offer little in the way of observations of trends concerning gender and class, I believe they provide context for the later passages we'll examine, as they demonstrate a trend in terms of depth of analysis for the female student, Mary, as opposed to the male students Dwayne and Sam, which interestingly enough, also fall along class lines as well, which I'll analyze further in these next three excerpts.

The next three excerpts are in response to their memoir assignment, in which the students were asked to write about a border in their life they had at one time dealt with and negotiated. Dwayne wrote about a week during one summer in which they worked as counselor in a camp for children with muscular dystrophy:

Typically, during the year, I would usually be stressed about school-related issues, sports, or college essay writing, but I came to realize I do not have to think twice about my ability necessary to complete everyday functions. I took for granted my everyday life and abilities that previously I had zero awareness of.

The piece meaningfully engaged with the concept of ableism, for both intellectual and physical disabilities, despite never explicitly using the words “ableist” or even “discriminatory”. I point this out because the inability to explicitly name concepts like ableism or racism become a trend in the rest of Dwayne’s work, which we’ll see in the Literary Inquiry assignment as well. In order to fully examine this excerpt, we’ll actually move onto the next one, by Sam:

There were a lot of pros about going to a private high school. There was no dress code, the facilities were above average, and unlimited resources available all the time. One thing that wasn’t so great, though, was the mandatory community service required at the end of every semester...Community service was just another thing that had to be checked off my long list of things to do as a highschooler. My interactions with the people in need had no impact on me because I could not see the bigger picture. I failed to understand that I was actually working on improving these people's lives in some way, not just trying to get a ticket to prom. This, however, all changed the summer of my sophomore year.

I want to analyze these pieces together, despite Dwayne being white and Sam being a student of color, because these two students actually attended the same high school in the Bay area. Pieced together from their writing and conversations in class, these students came from more affluent areas and, as noted above, attended schools that were “above average” with “unlimited

resources”. In Sam’s memoir, they discuss a summer in which they flew to India and saw their grandmother open a house which sheltered the local homeless in the area, and how this inspired them to also engage with their community through random acts of kindness. Both pieces are framed from being in a position in which life’s biggest concerns was education, and how they took their everyday life, free from these greater stresses like home insecurity or disability, for granted. Additionally, race is never mentioned in either of these pieces, despite both pieces discussing different types of social disenfranchisement.

Mary, however, explicitly engages with race, in addition to class disparity:

Exposure to crime by the metro station and gang members participating in drive-by shootings at a young age, or remembering the protocol for a lockdown like your life depends on it, are not the best conditions for an educational environment. I wanted to leave Watts and I wanted a change...[Y.E.S.] works to help bright students of low-income communities get into private high schools and later guide them with college counseling and other resources. If it wasn’t through Y.E.S, I would have never heard about independent schools and how applying was even an option for me...Being Latina and coming from a low-income family, I felt all odds were against me when even thinking about entering a predominantly white, and expensive institution. Yet here I was, trying to find my space and learning to deal with some microaggressions along the way.

This piece wrestles with concepts like what it means to be “white-washed” if, as a brown person, you are suddenly surrounded by mostly white faces, as well as class issues like gang and gun violence. Mary demonstrates a trend of naming issues explicitly, as she does above by using

terms like “low-income”, “Latina” and “microaggressions”, and which she continues to do in her Literary Inquiry assignment below.

Mary, being a Latina, followed the trend of the class a whole where the female students were more specific in general with all of their writing, as well as being more engaged in the classroom environment itself, where Dwayne and #2 largely followed the trend of male students using more vague language, and lacking depth of engagement or the ability to explicitly name concepts.

Mary also follows the trends of students who self-identified as low-income, or as having dealt with income precarity at some point in their life, also being more explicit in both their discussions on class but also on race, regardless of their own racial background.

Lastly, I’ll examine the three students Literary Inquiry paper, which was written on Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric*, in response to the prompt: This inquiry will require you to analyze the rhetorical strategies used within the text, the intended audience of the text, and what the text does and/or doesn’t say about the concept of borders. The following excerpts are all pulled from the conclusions of their papers, to analyze the way the students have synthesized their essays.

Dwayne continues with the trend as established from the beginning of their work, which is the inability to name and/or engage with racism explicitly, writing:

In conclusion, all these scenarios Rankine depicts on their own do not cause a severe amount of discomfort. However, as situations similar to these become more and more apparent and frequent, it begins to raise numerous questions regarding the intent and preconceptions these people hold. Additionally, Rankine effectively

communicates her discomfort through these excerpts, specifically aided by her use of the rhetorical strategies, ethos and pathos.

Interestingly, Dwayne explicitly names the rhetorical strategies I discussed in class and in the prompt. But what is truly fascinating is that this text, which entirely revolves around issues like police brutality, white supremacy, and Black Lives Matter, is discussed by Dwayne without ever mentioning the words race, racism, black, or white. Euphemisms like “these people” and “discomfort” are used as stand-ins for racial identifiers and words like “racist”.

Sam engages with the text more in depth, though his conclusion is lacking:

Through her use of ethos, pathos and discussion on racial borders, Claudia Rankine is able to successfully convince her audience that racism still exists today, and will inherently always be a part of this country if changes do not occur.

While he does engage with whiteness and blackness explicitly throughout the bulk of his essay, I found it interesting that in his conclusion, which should serve to make one final statement or argument, or bring together several arguments, this one highlights, much like Dwayne, rhetorical strategies by name. However, because this essay engaged with race in depth and even mentions racism in the conclusion, it demonstrates either more willingness, comfort, or both, in explicitly discussing race.

This brings us to Mary’s final paragraph, which continues to demonstrate the trend of specificity and explicitness in her writing:

Through *Citizen: An American Lyric*, Claudia Rankine argues that Black people can't take part in the privileges of citizenship in a country where they are criminalized for being black. From microaggressions in the workplace, therapist appointments, or the tennis court, to aggressions through police brutality and hate crimes, Rankine creates an accusatory tone that does not sugarcoat the raw, ugly, truth of the racism so prevalent in America today.

As opposed to Sam, who used vague language in their conclusion to discuss the “changes [that need] to occur”, this conclusion specifically names the issue: blackness being criminalized in this country and being denied the “privileges of citizenship”. Ironically, the rhetorical strategy that Mary examined in her essay was not explicitly listed as it was by Dwayne or #2, but rather slipped into her larger statement, in regard to Rankine’s “accusatory tone” that conveys her message.

2.4 Graphic Data Based on Survey Results

Similar to the Trends subsection earlier in this chapter, the following figures are based on data gathered from the entire class, which will demonstrate further how these trends were observed. Each figure will represent all of the responses' collected from the surveys that were distributed to the class, which asked students to rank their level of interest and comfort in discussing race, as well as how important their racial/ethnic identity is to them, and whether or not they feel more comfortable with an educator who shares their racial/ethnic identity. After each figure, there will be a brief analysis of the numbers recorded and their possible causes and implications.

Figure 1 represents the answers selected in response to the question “How would you rank your level of interest discussing race/ethnicity?” with a double bar graph, split across white students

and nonwhite students, in order to categorize the level of interest across white and nonwhite identities. On this question, and all other non-written response questions, students were given options ranked from (1) to (4), with (1) representing a higher level of interest/comfort/importance and (4) representing a lower level of interest/comfort/importance.

How would you rank your level of interest discussing race/ethnicity?

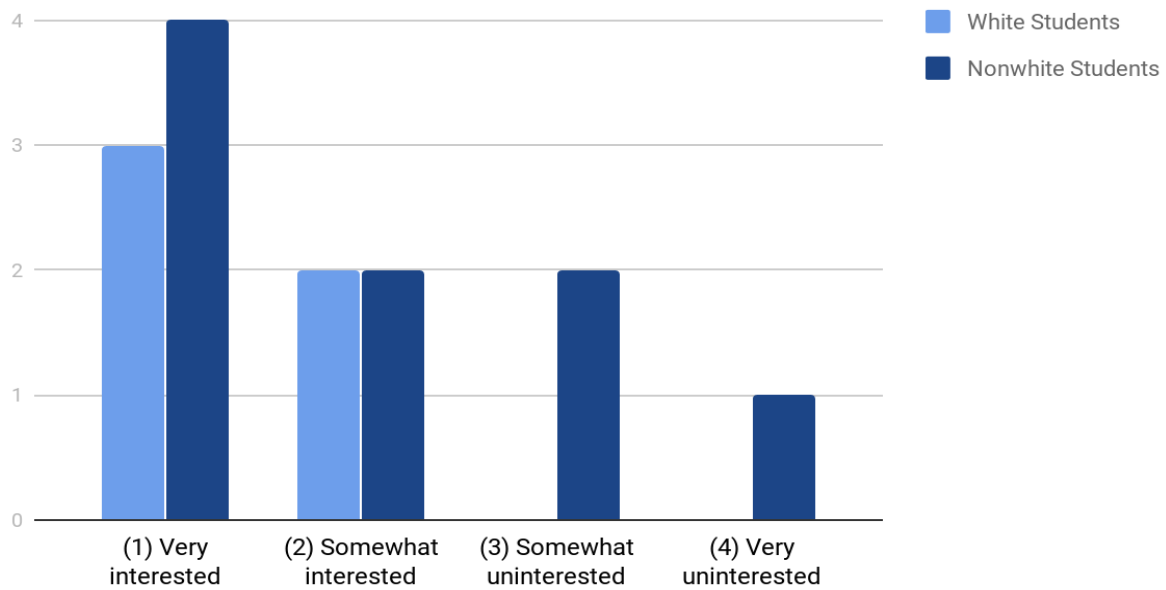


Figure 1

While all the white students felt either “Very interested” or “Somewhat interested” in discussing race/ethnicity, only nonwhite students marked that they were either “Somewhat uninterested” or “Very uninterested”. When contrasting this particular answer with the rest of that particular students’ survey answers, these were students who either felt that race was brought up in lieu of “real issues”, who had “non-existent” relationships to their nonwhite identities, or who had “difficult relationship[s] w/[their] ethnicity”. When reading these students' essay answers in depth, it reflected attitudes of apathy, of annoyance at the pervasiveness of the issue, and

conflicted feelings of identity and having their race gate kept by both whites and members of their same race. However, even students of color who marked some levels of disinterest still discussed the issues with depth and nuance in these short form answers, so while they may feel disinterested or even negatively towards discussing the issue, they demonstrated a deeper level of engagement than some of their white peers.

It could be that white students marked “Very interested” and “Somewhat interested” in order to seem color conscious and respectful, while the students of color who had issues with the matter felt more confident in voicing these concerns, since their status as students of color arguably protect them from the notion of being seen as insensitive regarding race.

The next graph, Figure 2, represents the level of comfort students reported in discussing race/ethnicity, again with a double bar graph to contrast white and nonwhite students.

How would you rank your level of comfort discussing race/ethnicity?

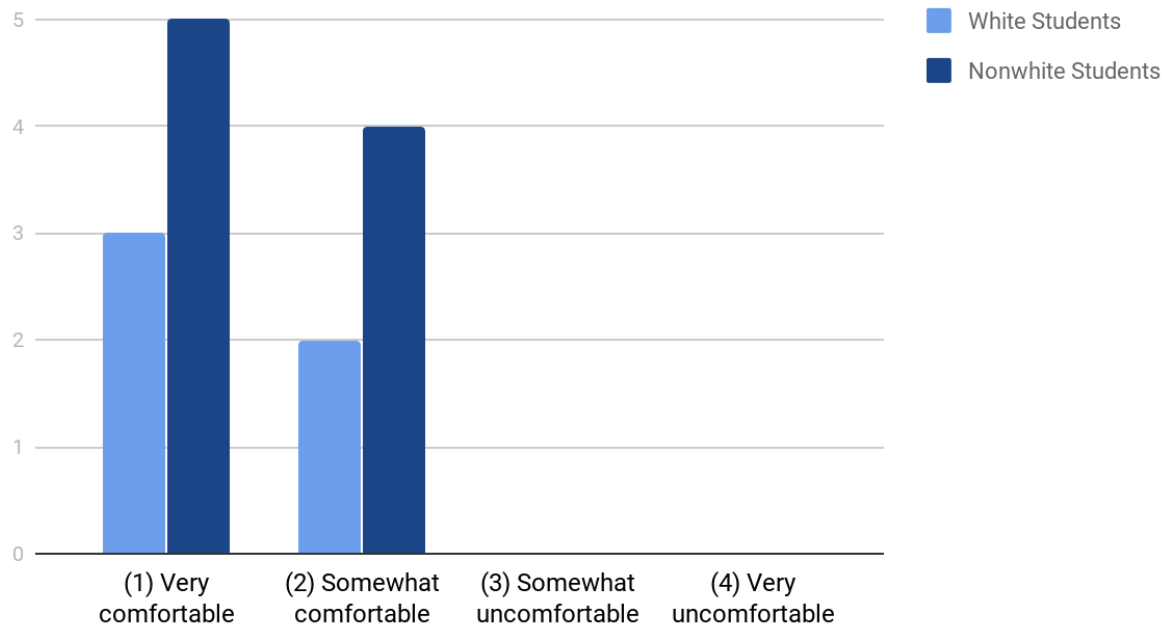


Figure 2

Every student, regardless of race, marked that they either felt “Very comfortable” or “Somewhat comfortable” discussing the topic of race/ethnicity. What I found interesting, however, was that the students who seemed to tiptoe around the topic of race the most, meaning that they either did not mention race explicitly, or instead used euphemisms in order to speak about it indirectly, were white. I wonder if it would be seen as a faux pas to admit to being uncomfortable discussing race/ethnicity, which would be why students who very clearly seemed uncomfortable discussing the topic instead opted to say that they were comfortable as opposed to uncomfortable.

The final graph, Figure 3, shows how white and nonwhite students viewed the level of importance their racial/ethnicity identity had for them personally.

How important is your racial/ethnic identity to you?

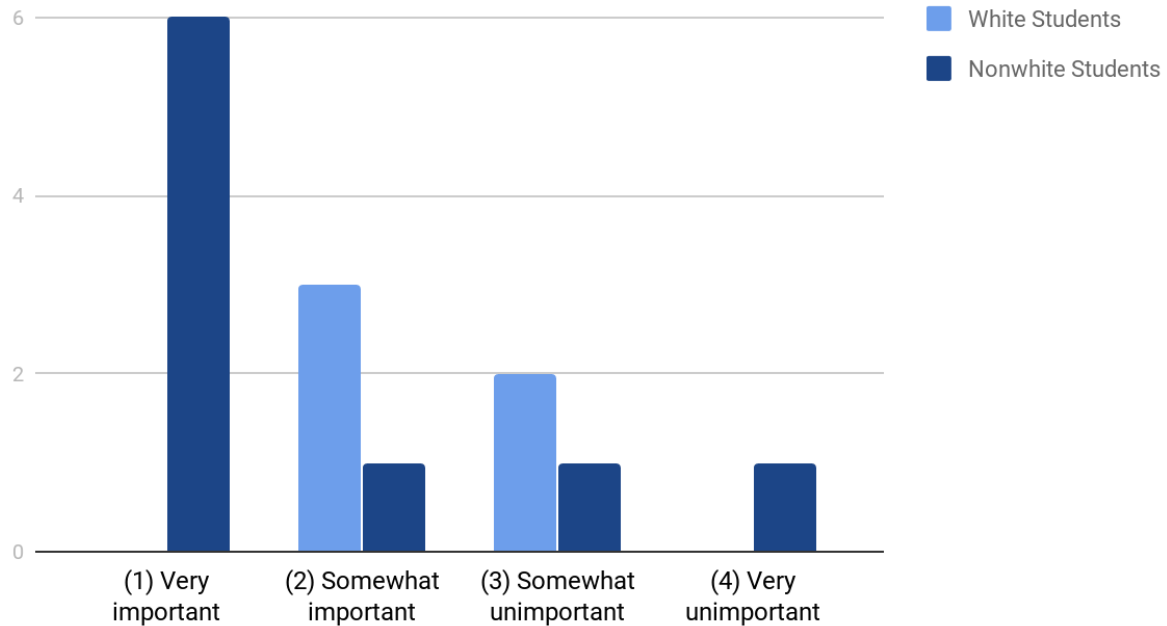


Figure 3

As expected, only students of color, and most students of color (67%) said that their racial/ethnic identity was “Very important” to them. For white students, this question put them in an odd position, as holding whiteness in high regard in terms of ethnic identity seems to align with messages of “white pride” and “white power”. I was not surprised by their middling answers, but I was surprised by the students of color who felt it was “Somewhat unimportant” or “Very unimportant”. Again, it was within the written short answers that it was revealed that these students either had no tether to the ethnic identity or felt that their ethnicity “does not define” them “despite ideas of society”.

This pie chart, Figure 4, represents only the answers of students of color in response to the question of whether they feel more comfortable when their educator shares their same

racial/ethnic identity. This question was a written response, which is why the answers are split between “Yes” and “No” as opposed to (1) through (4) ranking like the other survey questions.

DO MINORITY STUDENTS FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE WHEN AN EDUCATOR IS THE SAME RACE/ETHNICITY AS THEM?

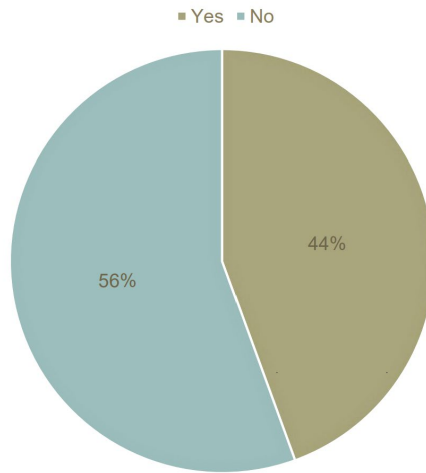


Figure 4

Generally, the answers were split down the middle for this question. Many students, both white and nonwhite, noted that it did not matter what race the teacher was, and instead cared whether or not the educator was inclusive and considerate. There were several students, however, who noted that they would feel “way more comfortable” if their educator was their same race.

Students who had stronger relationships to their racial identity and who felt it was important were more likely to state that they would feel more comfortable when an educator is their same race/ethnicity. Students who had no discernable relationship to their race or felt it was unimportant felt no difference in comfort level when it came to their educators’ race.

3 Conclusion

In some regards, the results aligned closely with what I was suspecting; in other facets, the results were surprising and unexpected. From what I had hypothesized, the two Latinx students ranked their level of comfort and interest discussing race/ethnicity, and level of importance relating to racial/ethnic identity as (1), signifying that they're very comfortable, very interested and very important, respectively. Of students who marked high interest in all three questions, 67% of those students were Latinx, higher than any other racial group, which makes me wonder if my presence had an impact.

What I did not expect, however, were the nonwhite students who considered their race either somewhat unimportant or very unimportant. In further reading of the interviews that those students filled out, there were nuances to be found; largely, their experiences with race, both in and out of classrooms, provided context as to why they felt it was unimportant. Either they felt too much attention was drawn to the matter, in lieu of discussing more “real” issues, or they did not see their race as a defining characteristic of themselves.

I also was not expecting that the entire class, regardless of race, felt either very comfortable or somewhat comfortable discussing race/ethnicity. I presumed that there would be a more even distribution in those responses. However, based on the actual engagement of race, specifically in assignments like the Literary Inquiry which demanded students analyze either *Citizen* or *The Line Becomes a River*, texts which explicitly engage with race, I suspect there were students who had marked they were comfortable though they were not, since it could be considered “wrong” or maybe even “embarrassing” to be uncomfortable discussing race.

I also had expected that every nonwhite student would feel more comfortable with an educator of their same race, and/or that they would have concerns when taught by white educators. In this regard, the opinions were divided, nearly down the middle. Several students wrote specifically that as long as the educators were respectful/inclusive, that their race did not matter, which seemed to be a diplomatic answer that was given mostly by women in the course, whilst men largely marked that it “didn’t matter”, without any caveat.

The real findings were not in the numerical rankings of comfort or interest, but rather in their work in the classroom that engaged with race directly, or their written responses to the essay questions, in which students shared opinions on either society at large that seems to have informed their personal relationships with their own race, or incidents in their past that have deeply impacted their views, and therefore their comfort and interest levels in discussing race within the classroom. It was within these surveys I saw students who had had educators of color and appreciated them deeply, students who feared white educators, and those whose one experience with an educator of their same nonwhite race was highly negative, specifically because that educator had higher expectations for someone who shared a racial identity.

Many of the students in the class, when asked directly in the survey questions, had fascinating and rich answers to their personal relationship to their race and their experiences in the education system. For those who did not, many demonstrated a lack of depth in understanding, or willingness to engage, with racial topics even when the assignments required them to do so, and despite claiming that they felt comfortable discussing race/ethnicity.

I believe there needs to be more studies which examine the way in which educators can influence the level of comfort of discussing race, the depth of engagement in said discussions, and the ways

in which we, as educators, can decenter whiteness when discussing race, since for so long it has been upheld as the standard convention for tackling the topic.

As it currently stands, even within this paper, whiteness is centered as all of those who are “nonwhite” are identified by the nature of their distance from whiteness, for this has been the barometer traditionally used in framing studies and arguments concerning race within American education. For my students, they perceived my status as “nonwhite” to be a “bias” which was managed or overcome when discussing topics regarding race, unaware of how these statements seek to not only center, but privilege and uphold whiteness as both the neutral and trustworthy opinion.

Through self-reflective assignments, relevant and contemporary readings, and revealing my own cultural and racial identities, I was able to discover a wealth of information regarding the way my students understand race within themselves and society. While many had deep and strong relationships to their identity, and a complex understanding of race, there were those of all backgrounds who struggled in either engaging or articulating race. With a longer class session, or even with a secondary course, I wonder what more could not only be mined, but developed within these students, so that we can continue fostering these metacognitive skills in our relationship towards race, and begin on decentering whiteness in a meaningful way.

3.1 Opportunities

Originally, the surveys I had designed for the students to take identifying their relationship towards their race/ethnicity and comfort levels were meant to be dispersed twice; once at the beginning of the semester, and once towards the end, to see if any of the discussions and/or assignments done in class had any bearing on their answers. However, due to the time constraints of awaiting IRB approval, the surveys were only administered once. When I repeat this process in the future, I intend to administer the surveys twice so that I can see if there are any differences.

Furthermore, I wish I had explained one concept more specifically to my students when I revealed my own personal background and relationship with borders. When I told them of my family's background, how my mother is a Mexican immigrant who was at one point considered "illegal", whilst my father is a Romanian refugee, I explained some of my concerns and reasoning for divulging this information at the end of class rather than the beginning. I realized that when I stated that I was concerned that I could be interpreted as "biased" for revealing this information in the beginning of class, I wish I had expanded on that concept of "bias" in regards to discussions of race.

After I had explained my relationship with borders and had fully divulged my own racial and ethnic makeup, I asked students to write a brief response on the discussion board regarding my revelations. I had tried to keep it casual in this sense, with the prompt both in person and on the discussion board being "post your thoughts!", hoping that the openness would result in honesty. However, since I had mentioned the word "bias" towards the end of my explanation and listed it

as a concern, many students honed in on this word and either addressed it or even tried to assuage my concerns.

Furthermore, several students addressed me in the third person in the discussion board post which asked for their thoughts regarding my racial background, as though I were another character or member of the media which they were critiquing. I wonder if this is solely a sign of discomfort in writing something so direct to the professor, since students frequently write in elevated language in the simplest of emails regarding an absence, or if it could be indicative of discomfort in discussing someone's race directly? Based on the avoidance of race I saw in Dwayne's assignments, I believe it may be a possibility.

In my students' responses, there were comments regarding my bias and how it was either acceptable or understandable, or how well I succeeded in hiding my bias. However, I should have expanded - one of the purposes of this project, and honestly of my English 103 course, is to examine the fact that there is racial bias everywhere, however, we are so desensitized to whiteness as the neutral basis that we regard white educators teaching texts about race as unbiased, when truly they are as biased as an educator of color. This is something we need to reckon with and acknowledge in order to make strides in tailoring education and making it as inclusive as possible.

Works Cited

- Alemán, Sonya M., and Sarita Gaytán. “‘It Doesn’t Speak to Me’: Understanding Student of Color Resistance to Critical Race Pedagogy.” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, vol. 30, no. 2, Jan. 2017, pp. 128–146.
- B.A.L. “The Hidden Costs of Serving Our Community: Women Faculty of Color, Racist Sexism, and False Security in a Hispanic-Serving Institution.” *Feminist Teacher*, vol. 27, no. 2–3, 2017, p. 176. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.5406/femteacher.27.2-3.0176.
- Basow, Susan A., and Nancy T. Silberg. “Student Evaluations of College Professors: Are Female and Male Professors Rated Differently?” *Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 79, no. 3, Sept. 1987, pp. 308–314. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1037/0022-0663.79.3.308.
- Closson, Rosemary B., Bowman, Lorenzo, Merriweather, Lisa R. “Toward a Race Pedagogy for Black Faculty.” *Adult Learning*, vol. 25, no. 3, Aug. 2014, pp. 82–88.
- Kyoko Kishimoto, and Mumbi Mwangi. *Critiquing the Rhetoric of “Safety” in Feminist Pedagogy: Women of Color Offering an Account of Ourselves*. Vol. 19, no. 2, 2009, pp. 87–102. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1353/fr.0.0044.
- Mazzei, Lisa A. . “Desiring Silence: Gender, Race and Pedagogy in Education.” *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2011, p. 657.
- Murray-Johnson, Kayon; Ross-Gordon, Jovita. “‘Everything Is About Balance’: Graduate Education Faculty and the Navigation of Difficult Discourses on Race.” *Adult Education Quarterly*, vol. 68, no. 2, May 2018, pp. 137–156.

Nicol, Donna J., and Jennifer A. Yee. “‘Reclaiming Our Time’: Women of Color Faculty and Radical Self-Care in the Academy.” *Feminist Teacher*, vol. 27, no. 2-3, 2017, pp. 133–156. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/femteacher.27.2-3.0133. Accessed 11 Apr. 2020.

Twigg, Marnie. “Last Verse Same as the First? On Racial Justice and ‘Covering’ Allyship in Compositionist Identities.” *COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION*, vol. 71, no. 1, pp. 7–30.

Williams, Stacy A. S., and Adrain Conyers. “Race Pedagogy: Faculty Preparation Matters.” *Administrative Theory & Praxis (M.E. Sharpe)*, vol. 38, no. 4, Dec. 2016, pp. 234–250.

Appendix A.

A.1 Survey and Interview Questions Templates

SURVEY #1

- 1. How would you classify your race and/or ethnicity?**

- 2. How would you rank your level of comfort discussing race/ethnicity?**
(1) Very comfortable (2) Somewhat comfortable (3) Somewhat uncomfortable (4) Very uncomfortable

- 3. How would you rank your level of comfort discussing class?**
(1) Very comfortable (2) Somewhat comfortable (3) Somewhat uncomfortable (4) Very uncomfortable

- 4. How would you rank your level of interest discussing race/ethnicity?**
(1) Very interested (2) Somewhat interested (3) Somewhat uninterested (4) Very uninterested

- 5. How would you rank your level of interest discussing class?**
(1) Very interested (2) Somewhat interested (3) Somewhat uninterested (4) Very uninterested

- 6. How important is your racial/ethnic identity to you?**
(1) Very important (2) Somewhat important (3) Somewhat unimportant (4) Very unimportant

- 7. Based on your answer for Question #6, please explain below:**

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. How would you describe your relationship with your race/ethnicity?**
- 2. How do you feel when the topic of race/ethnicity is brought up in day to day life?**
- 3. How do you feel when the topic of race/ethnicity is brought up in the classroom specifically?**
- 4. What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in day to day life?**
- 5. What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in the classroom specifically?**
- 6. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been considered white?**

7. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been considered nonwhite?

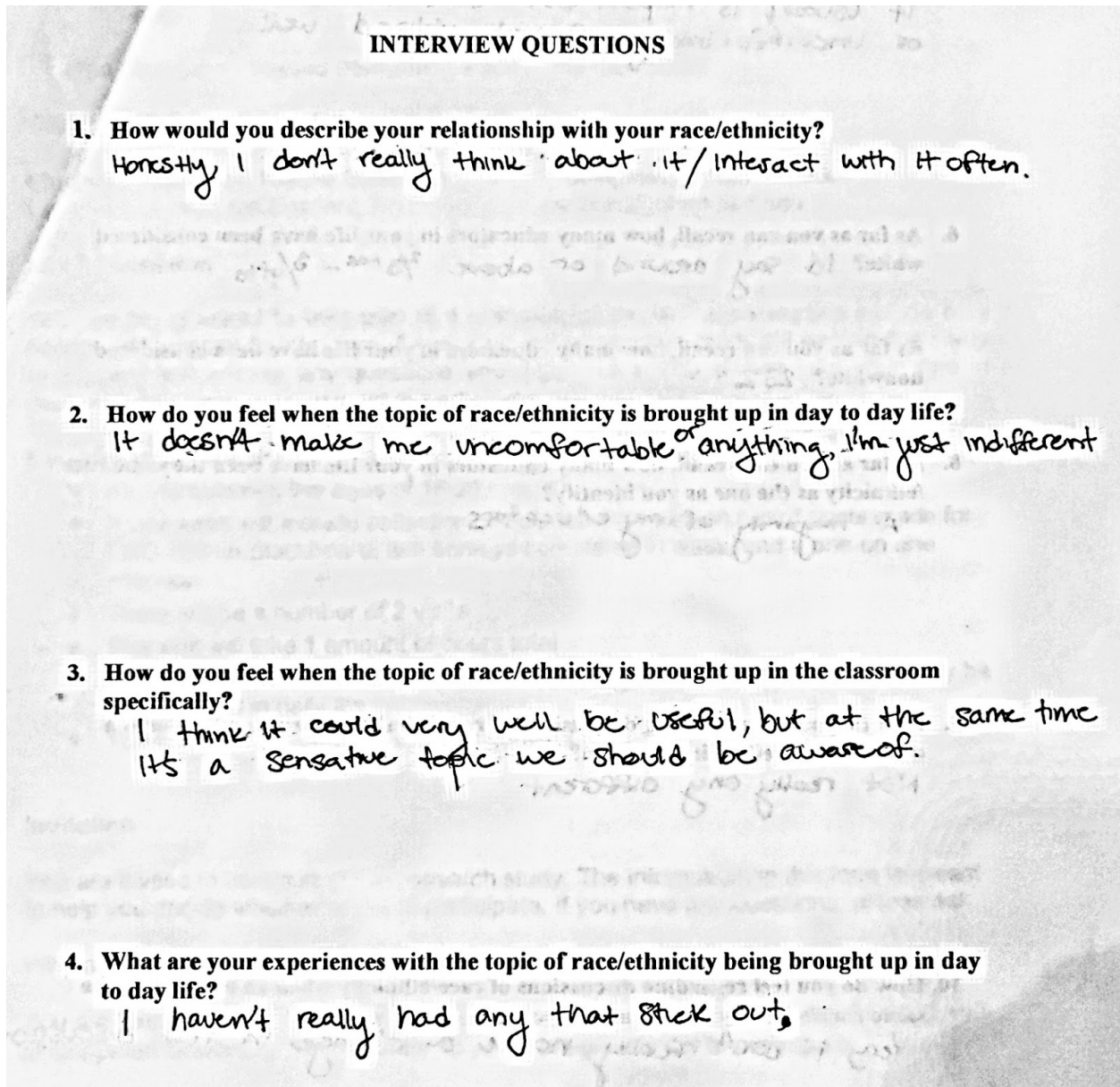
8. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been the same race /ethnicity as the one as you identify?

9. How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is a different race/ethnicity than you?

10. How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is the same race/ethnicity than you?

Appendix B.

B.1 Dwayne Interview Questions Responses





5. What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in the classroom specifically?
It usually is helpful but can cause ~~awkwardness~~ awkwardness or uncomfortably if not utilized well.

6. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been considered white? I'd say around or above $\frac{2}{3}$ rd - $\frac{3}{4}$ th

7. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been considered nonwhite? 25%

8. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been the same race/ethnicity as the one as you identify?
A majority of my educators

9. How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is a different race/ethnicity than you?
Not really any different

10. How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is the same race/ethnicity than you?
Yeah, I don't really notice a change in the discussion.

B.2 Sam Interview Questions Responses

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your relationship with your race/ethnicity?

I am proud of my race, but I'm not super attached and would not make any decisions based on it.

2. How do you feel when the topic of race/ethnicity is brought up in day to day life?

I honestly feel a bit bored because nowadays I feel like everything is about race, and we are not tackling real issues.

3. How do you feel when the topic of race/ethnicity is brought up in the classroom specifically?

It's not a bad thing, but it's pretty clear that whenever race is brought up, the class shifts the bias one way, not really allowing for good discussion, b/c if you don't agree, you look bad.

4. What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in day to day life?

Not much. I don't necessarily encounter a lot of things that deal w/ race specifically.

 UNIVERSITY

5. What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in the classroom specifically?

In highschool, I was practically forced to agree w/ all their opinions on race/ethnicity b/c my school was so clearly biased.

6. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been considered white?

65-75% of my teachers

7. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been considered nonwhite?

15%

8. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been the same race/ethnicity as the one as you identify?

5-10%

9. How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is a different race/ethnicity than you?

I feel perfectly comfortable, it doesn't bother me.

10. How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is the same race/ethnicity than you?

I feel the same.

B.3 Mary Interview Questions Responses

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your relationship with your race/ethnicity?

I have a secured relationship with my race/ethnicity

2. How do you feel when the topic of race/ethnicity is brought up in day to day life?

I feel comfortable when the issue of race/ethnicity is brought up in day to day life.

3. How do you feel when the topic of race/ethnicity is brought up in the classroom specifically?

When I'm in a predominately white classroom, sometimes I feel uncomfortable when the issue is brought up. Other times, I feel empowered

4. What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in day to day life?

I associate the Spanish language with race/ethnicity being brought up in ^{my} day to day life.



5. What are your experiences with the topic of race/ethnicity being brought up in classroom specifically?

Positive experiences when I was surrounded by a lot of Latinx & Black kids during K-8. I had a few negative experiences when I went to a predominately white high school

6. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been considered white? about 9

7. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been considered nonwhite?

I can't really think of a specific number, but many

8. As far as you can recall, how many educators in your life have been the same race /ethnicity as the one as you identify?

I spent K-8 in a predominately Latinx & Black school located in the city of Watts. Every year, except for one, my teacher was a Latina.

9. How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is a different race/ethnicity than you?

I feel comfortable if they are a person of color, but if they are white I feel uncomfortable.

10. How do you feel regarding discussions of race/ethnicity when an educator is the same race/ethnicity than you?

I feel super comfortable and comforted.

Appendix C.

C.1 Prompt for Discussion Board Responses

Short Reflective Essays (Total 20%) - due 9/9, 9/16, 10/7, 11/11

There will be short, reflective essays due after discussions of assigned reading/viewing, specified on the course calendar. These will be between 300-500 words, and the reflections may be as simple as your initial reaction to the assigned reading/viewing, or they can be contemplative, interrogative, analytical, etc. **Each short reflective essay will be worth 50 points**, amounting to a total of 200 points. Evaluation will be based on two key components - that it's clear that the material was read/watched, and that there is engagement with the piece. The essays are meant to be reflections, not summaries.

C.2 Prompt for Literary Inquiry Papers

Literary Inquiry (20%) - due 11/4 - optional revision due 11/29

Based on either our reading of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* or Francisco Cantú's *A Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border*, you will analyze the rhetorical concepts discussed throughout the semester in a 3 to 6 page paper, double spaced. This inquiry will require you to analyze the rhetorical strategies used within the text, the intended audience of the text, and what the text does and/or doesn't say about the concept of borders.

C.3 Prompt for Memoir Pieces

Memoir (20%) - due 9/30

You will write a memoir piece, ranging from 3 to 6 pages, double spaced. This piece should, in some way, deal with the concept of borders. This can be a physical, mental, or societal border. Your piece can be reactive to the topics we've covered in class and how they have impacted you, or they can be reflective on borders you've either witnessed or encountered previously. The piece should incorporate some of the conceptual and theoretical elements from our readings that we've discussed in class. The purpose of this assignment is to develop a sense of audience, genre, and to begin negotiating rhetorical strategies as you compose in different situations.

Appendix D.

D.1 Case Study Responses to Discussion Board on Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue"

D.1.1 Dwayne

While letting ideas for this reflection essay marinate in my head over the last couple days, I experienced difficulty relating to it. I couldn't really find a direct connection from Tan's story to my life, until I thought about my dad's accident.

D.1.2 Sam

Lastly, Tan talked about how the way immigrants speak is classified as "broken" or limited is not an accurate way of describing speech. On my mom's side, my grandmother knows about 8 different languages, but struggles with fluently speaking English. She speaks, as "Mother Tongue" describes it, broken English. Like Tan, my grandmother's English may not seem like a real language to a stranger, but I can basically decipher everything she says. It's not like she doesn't know what to say, she just has trouble getting the information out and relaying it to someone else.

D.1.3 Mary

Coming from a Spanish speaking home, I can relate to Amy, because I also had to help my mom out. Since Spanish is her first language, I sometimes have to help her with spelling certain words in English or saying certain phrases. Other than that, her verbal skills are really good and in turn, is able to get great service because of it. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case with Amy's mom.

American society tends to be very critical of one's English speaking skills. In addition, people with accents are also criticized. The more proficient one is in the English language, the more intelligent we think they are. I personally believe that if you're able to speak and understand more than 1 language, that should be a marker of intelligence itself.

D.2 Case Study Responses to Discussion Board on Warsan Shire's "Home"

D.2.1 Dwayne

The people who are often opposed to circumstances like these, I believe are often distanced from the actual event/situation and these insights raise awareness of the hardships immigrants and people seeking asylum face. The author provides examples of the terms and language people against immigration use and what comes to mind foremost is the current political administration and situation. Expressions like "build the wall" among others only further divide the groups making it easier for groups in power to dehumanize others, but lines in this poem almost make it impossible to do so.

D.2.2 Sam

Shire touches on the inherent racism that refugees have to deal with. The sad reality is that they are not welcome in places that do not like their skin color. And again, Shire uses the comparison of a "sick animal" to show how low these refugees are viewed in others eyes.

D.2.3 Mary

Shire's poem can be applied to today's border crisis under our current administration. When migrants with children cross over from Mexico to the U.S., a lot of backlash often ensues. Critics don't understand why a parent would bring a child on a dangerous journey through the border.

They see the parents as “reckless” and “irresponsible”, which gets used to further justify why they shouldn’t be in the U.S., to begin with. There are currently migrant children in concentration camps; the same argument is being applied: It’s the parent’s fault. If they didn’t cross over with their children, they wouldn’t be in this situation. Shire addresses this specific audience in Home when she says, “you have to understand, no one puts their child in a boat unless the water is safer than the land.” Although this specific line is referring to the Syrian refugee crisis, the idea is the same for the border crisis: Parents will only bring their child on a dangerous journey if they are certain that their homeland would be much more detrimental to the child’s wellbeing. For Mexican parents specifically, they think about “a better life” and “American Dream” their child can achieve in the land of opportunities, also known as America. So while critics view these parents as “irresponsible”, Shire’s response portrays them to be the exact opposite; such parents actually have the child’s best interests at heart, which is why they migrate in the first place.

Appendix E.

E.1 Case Study Excerpts from Literary Inquiry Papers and Memoirs

E.1.1 Dwayne

While first meeting the real estate agent, the narrator describes her as holding some discomfort right off the bat. Without much conversation between the two, the real estate agent already possesses an awkward attitude about even ever having an appointment with her. Phrases such as “couldn’t even fathom” only exacerbated the discomfort the narrator felt. This ineptness additionally worsens when the agent recurrently reassures her friend that she feels extremely relaxed around her, yet never expresses that same notion of comfort towards you. This discrepancy in reactions from the real estate agent seemingly points to a perspective of racial discomfort. Furthermore, the tension and uneasy feelings the narrator possesses only becomes poorer when the narrator’s friend fails to question who or what could possibly make her feel uncomfortable in an arranged appointment. Understandably, Rankine does not want to create a scene, ultimately reflected in her failure to speak up or question the real estate agent’s attitude’s. Appealing to the readers emotions, Rankine effectively uses pathos by vividly describing the hidden biases posed by the real estate agent.

E.1.2 Sam

Most people have no idea how it feels to be targeted because of your skin color, and Rankine is trying to introduce these different perspectives to further her argument. Additionally, Rankine uses ethos, as a way to make the audience question the morals of this country. If we can’t even

stop racism at the biggest stage, then there is no way of ridding it from this country ever.

Unfortunately, it is now normal in America for black people to be mistakenly arrested because of their skin color or become victims to police brutality. Rankine makes the argument that if the so-called “justice” system is making blatantly racist actions on a large scale, then America itself is inherently racist and still has racism present today.

E.1.3 Mary

In this excerpt (like many more throughout *Citizen*), the reader is immediately inserted into this scenario, without a choice, as a person of color. Now, they must reflect on this situation and think to themselves, “Do I fall into the people of color category where my achievements tend to be undermined because of my race/ethnicity or, have I ever been guilty of undermining others’ achievements because I believe their race is inferior to mine?” By displaying these scenarios in literary form, Rankine forces the American public to face the blatant racism that people of color, but specifically black folks, endure on a daily basis. Whether they like it or not, the white reader or ignorant reader is forced to take ownership of their words and actions that can be translated as racist aggressions.

E.2 Extended Excerpt from Mary Memoir

My high school consisted of predominantly white rich kids, and it was incredibly obvious.

The majority of them had enormous houses right on the beach and were paying full tuition at our school. There was a clear socioeconomic and racial divide between my few peers of color and white peers. This was noted since day one. Although there was never any animosity between us, there was definitely some sort of discomfort when this particular issue came up, because it

was never talked about. Thus, during my first couple of years here, I felt like I didn't belong. There was a clear cultural and racial border between me and my white peers. I believe the reason I felt like this at first, was because of how different my school experience was prior. I went to school with predominantly black and brown kids in a community that was predominantly Black and Latinx. Childhood friends even considered me "whitewashed" for attending the school I did. Most of them stayed near Watts while I had to travel at least 50 minutes to get to school each day. Little did they know, there was no way I would be considered anything close to "white" at my particular high school. Being Latina and coming from a low-income family, I felt all odds were against me when even thinking about entering a predominantly white, and expensive institution. Yet here I was, trying to find my space and learning to deal with some microaggressions along the way.

Appendix F.

F.1 Case Study Discussion Board Responses from Professor's Admission of Connection to Borders (Self-Identifying as daughter of a Mexican immigrant, who was once "illegal", and of a Romanian refugee, that came to the U.S. legally)

F.1.1 Dwayne

I think it was a good idea to tell us at the end of the semester because I think it ceased a lot of biases or preconceptions, however personally I don't think it made a difference. I definitely believe it would only further your credibility in teaching this class, but I understand the worry. In the end, this was definitely one of my most enjoyable English classes, especially since I typically struggle in them, but I found this class to be extremely enjoyable and redeeming.

F.1.2 Sam

I think it was a good idea giving your thoughts at the end of the semester because you knew all of us and felt comfortable enough connecting with us. I really liked the talk, and I definitely think it would resonate with students if they know you and already feel comfortable around you.

F.1.3 Mary

Thank you for sharing with us, Natalie. Since the topic of borders is something that is very important to you, I think it's really special that you're teaching a class about it. I love when teachers teach about subjects they are genuinely passionate about because then the learning experience is much more valuable and enjoyable to the class. I had a great experience in your class because of this and I'm so excited that you're teaching next semester!