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Students Talk About Gender and Race Within the Classroom

Amanda Lucock
Ursinus College, amlucock@gmail.com

Adviser: Dr. Sheryl Goodman

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Abstract:

This study attempts to gain a better understanding of students' experiences and perceptions of conversations about gender and race in the classroom. Specifically, this study focuses on issues and concerns that arise in the course of talking about gender and race. There were over 20 hours of classes observed, eight one-on-one in-depth interviews, and over three hours of recorded classroom conversations. Through my analysis, I found that students used several devices, including storytelling and attacking, to speak about these taboo issues within the classroom.

Introduction

> I feel like it's also tough because like we spend so much time, with everything, especially with race, talking about how certain parties had no room to talk. So the point that you're taking an entire group of people and saying like, you can't speak for us, you can't speak for this group you can only speak for yourselves, creates this weird boundary. How can I talk about how I'm feeling? Because how am I supposed to do that because I don't fit the description. *Lisa, white female student, Fall 2014 diversity course*

Over the past three decades, academics and advocates have completed substantial research about racism and sexism within society. Since these issues find a foundation in the society in which we live, it seems that research that furthers our understanding of their manifestation is extremely relevant. We live in a society that stresses that we are in a post-racist and post-sexist era and blatant forms of racism and sexism have become, for the most part, a social taboo within our culture. However, underlying forms of racism and sexism still pervade our society. Because of this and what is happening in society today, there is widespread agreement amongst scholars that we need to talk about these issues. However, as Lisa, a white female student, suggests, these are "tough" subjects to talk about. She also contends that here are a lot of "weird boundaries" and groups that need to be identified in these conversations. According to Harris (2003), the classroom has been identified as an "appropriate" place for students to think critically about issues such as gender and race. These findings and Lisa's suggestions show that talking about gender and race is important yet difficult. Studying how students talk about these issues can help us understand the different perspectives, the tensions, and conflicting views about this talk and how to best engage in it.

My study is an attempt to understand how students talk about sex, gender and race in the classroom. Research that focuses on talk about sex, gender, and race can have both academic and practical applications. In this research, sex refers to a biological category and is generally defined in dichotomous terms (male/female). Gender refers to socially constructed ideas about masculinity and femininity; ideas about gender shape how men and women are expected to think and behave. From an academic standpoint, this type of study can examine ways in which racism and sexism are enacted in speech within the classroom. Talk about these issues can also create an environment where students generate knowledge about themselves and their society. Furthermore it can help students overcome their fear of speaking about taboo topics and can lead students to be ambassadors of change outside of the classroom. My project is an ethnographic study to fully examine how college students talk about gender and race. More specifically, I plan to examine students' perceptions of and attitudes towards this talk, what students' experiences are like engaging in these discussions, and student resistance when speaking about these matters.

First, I will describe the literature reviewed on the topics of gender and race. Then I will describe the ethnographic method used for this study and any ethical dilemmas that resulted from this method of study. I will then describe my findings related to attacking, sharing experiences, and comparisons between conversations about gender and race. In the conclusion I examine the implications of my findings, the limitations, and any future studies that could be done based on these findings.

Literature Review

Three lines of research were examined: research that describes how gender and racial identities are made relevant in discourse, research on the impact of diversity and diversity

courses in the undergraduate classroom and studies that examine the negotiation of tensions within the classroom.

The Relevance of Gender and Racial Identity in Class Participation and Discourse

Ample research has been done on the subject of student voice and participation in the classroom. Researchers such as Allan and Madden (2006), Bell and Golombisky (2004), and Howard and Henney (1998) concentrated their studies on *who* is speaking in the classroom. Allan and Madden's research compared students of various gender and racial backgrounds, focusing on their level of comfort speaking in the classroom and the frequency of their participation. According to research done by Howard and Henney, students who participate in class discussions learn more than students who do not participate. Their study gathered information about student participation and the reasons for student participation through nonparticipant observation, surveys, and interviews. They trained eight students to assist in the observation of sixteen social science research methods classes, with ten sessions of each course being observed over a sixteen week semester. Based on their research, they contend that instructors of diversity classes are eager for their students to participate in classroom discussions and hope to create an environment where all students feel comfortable speaking (p. 401). However, the classroom environment does not exist outside of the bounds of societal norms. Howard and Henney mention several examples in their research where female students felt discouraged from speaking due to perceived negative attitudes from their male peers. In these cases, the female students cited their discomfort as a reason for their lack of participation. In this case, their voices were silenced due to the intimidation of a dominant male presence.

Allan and Madden (2006) suggested that examining the speech of particular groups can lead to conclusions about classroom quality and climate. These authors were particularly

interested in sex difference in frequency of participation in post-secondary education classes. While research in the 1980's and early 1990's claimed a "chilly climate" for female students in the classroom (Hall and Sandler, 1982; Foster and Foster, 1994; Sadker and Sadker, 1994), data recorded in the late 1990's questioned that claim. Allan and Madden pulled from a study done by Serex and Townsend (1999) for their definition of a chilly climate: "a psychological climate in which students of one sex are valued differently and therefore treated differently than are students of the opposite sex" (p. 689). Several recent studies, such as Constantinople, Cornelius, and Gray (1998), have shown that the evidence of chilly climates for women in undergraduate and graduate studies is minimal, yet Allan and Madden questioned this.

In their study, Allan and Madden used both qualitative and quantitative research methods and these findings take into account the underlying, and often ignored gendered norms that are prevalent in both American culture and the classroom. Both components of their research are relevant and have different functions: while quantitative data showed how *much* a student participated, the qualitative data revealed a student's perception of his/her experiences in the classroom. If Allan and Madden did not know who was speaking less, they would not be able to analyze if there was a chilly climate or not. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative data are interdependent in the analysis of this study. Allan and Madden looked at male and female student speech to identify certain patterns or behaviors such as reinforcing stereotypes of women, questioning women's competence, men taking over leadership in small group activities, frequency of women speaking, or whether or not men dominate discussions. In this case, relevant information was found in the details of who was speaking and when that student was speaking. For example, in their research Allen and Madden found that women enrolled in predominantly male classes reported the most overt forms of discouragement by faculty (p. 695). While the

quantitative data did not necessarily show this, Allen and Madden found that many female students reported feelings of discomfort during interviews or open-ended questions. One female students reported that her male professor would, ""take their (male) comments over ours (female) toward the discussion; we'd say something, he'd just kind of pass [us] over. If a guy said something, he'd have to stop and discuss it" (p. 695). This type of finding provides insight into the perceptions and emotional responses of the students. Instead of just recording frequencies, Allen and Madden suggested that these methods may be useful when studying voices and silences as well.

While it is easy to try and disassociate the classroom from outside societal pressures, Fraser (1992) pointed out that "such bracketing usually works to the advantage of [the] dominant group in society and to the disadvantage of [the] subordinates" (p. 120) since students are speaking under the illusion that power differences are neutralized within the classroom. If the idea of power is ignored in classroom conversations, the subordinate group is unable to speak about their disadvantages and the students are under the assumption that everyone has had the same setbacks. When one group of students is speaking and dominating discussion in the classroom, Donadey (2002) suggested that changes need to occur in order to attempt to have an equitable classroom environment. While Donadey asserts that it is impossible to create such an environment given the inequitable society in which we live, she contends that it is especially problematic when one group of students dominates discussions because it presents a very limited opinion and hinders students' ability to learn about the opinions of students who are different from themselves. Donadey further observes that some students refused to question their racist assumptions and still dominated discussion without realizing what they were doing. This illusion

of power-indifference that the advantaged group in society has can be detrimental to the voice of disadvantaged students.

In American society, voice is generally equated with action and silence is associated with being powerless. Bell and Golombisky (2004), draw on their experiences as instructors and share their observations on how women use their voices or silences as a reaction to different situations in the classroom. The initial theory presented is that women, in particular young women, face a battle between having a voice and keeping silent. Bell and Golombisky assert that there were moments during teaching where classroom dynamics divided men and women in ways that affirmed women as subordinates. Bell and Golombisky argued, "voice and silence are better understood as performative strategies announcing cultural expectations for the feminine, for race, for ethnicity, for labor, and for hegemonic masculinity" (p. 295). In other words, the decisions female students make to speak or remain silent in the classroom can reflect their understanding of the way they should perform their culturally expected gender and/or racial/ethnic roles.

Bell and Golombisky found that a large majority of women in their classrooms employ the "Good Girl" persona, referring to women in their classes who strive to be perfect. These women conform to the cultural pressure to be the ideal girl, who is always nice and who contains her feelings of anger or contempt. Despite the American ideal of white femininity, Bell and Golombisky were hesitant to mark race in referring to the "Good Girl" since they have seen women of color "enact the Good Girl" in their classrooms (p. 297). They see the classroom as an important site for changing the minds of these women, and showing that they do not need to follow this mold. According to Bell and Golombisky, there was an explosion of work about gender and schooling released in the beginning of the 1990s, all of which had common themes: "White girls begin to silence themselves at adolescence, girls of color are caught in class and

racial binds that make them invisible and unwelcome in the classroom, and the education system reinforces this decline" (297). They assert that flaunting female intellect risks social isolation and that verbal combat is uncomfortable. In their essay, Bell and Golombisky stress that they are not exempt from these societal norms; their claims about gender and racial issues may be scrutinized and labeled as stereotypical or perhaps even discriminative. Despite these worries, they write that avoiding the conversation about race and gender relinquishes their own right to have a voice (p. 321).

While examining the voices and silences, it is nearly impossible to ignore the impact that both race and gender have on students in the classroom. Bell and Golombisky devote a portion of their essay to look at the role black women have in the classroom. The authors explain that these women have historically been excluded from both the feminist movement because of white women's racist tendencies and the civil rights movement because of black men's sexism. (p. 304). According to Bell and Golombisky, black female students have either been ignored or labeled as bossy and assertive. If they are labeled as bossy or assertive, then they are praised for confident social skills instead of academic achievement. In Bell and Golombisky's essay, it was observed that the black women asserted themselves in the classroom by "talking like a Black woman" and sharing their ideological positions about their identity as a black woman with others. The researchers recognize this to be a danger because society has placed these young black women in a place where they need to explain themselves to white people in order for the white people to understand them (p. 311). Explanation is generally needed when speaking about topics that are not considered to be the norm; in this case, society has labeled the black women as "outsiders" who need to explain themselves, even in the classroom. White students do not feel the need to explain themselves since society has been structured to cater to their opinions and

lifestyle. Bell and Golombisky's goal when observing black women in the classroom was to learn how to celebrate their voice, since as white teachers they have the power to direct attention to or away from race and ethnicity (p. 295). However, one of the most important things that the authors stressed in this study is that race and gender work together. That is, students are not free from the ties of race when they enter into a discussion about gender and vice versa. A person does not identify as his/her gender for one moment and as his/her race in another. Instead, these identities build upon one another to create one's identity (p. 307).

The study of the connection between gender and language has spanned the past 40 years, with many attempts to characterize male and female speech styles in a variety of situations. These characterizations include women's tendency to utilize an "inferior" style of speech (Lakoff, 1975), to defining male's speech as being more dominant (Fishman, 1983). The concept of female inferiority in speech has been linked to the culture in which girls are taught to act and speak like a woman. Lakoff asserts that there is double bind between the way society tells women to act and the way a strong, independent adult should act. She asserts, "It will be found that the overall effect of 'women's language' is this: it submerges a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself…[and] by treating her as an object…but never a serious person with individual views" (p. 48). Basically Lakoff's assertion is that as women speak the way they are taught, they begin to become weak and submissive. They become the way they sound when they speak.

The body of scholarship pertaining to gender voice and relevance has been expanded upon by further research done by Maltz and Borker (1983). Maltz and Borker have argued that while men and women have different speech styles of communication, they are equal and should be valued in their individual contexts. Their research on cross-sex communication identifies

cultural rules that each gender learns in childhood that affect their communication. Their overall conclusion was that men and women employ different conversational strategies in adulthood due to these rules learned in childhood; therefore there are some cultural miscommunications between the two genders.

Researchers such as Stokoe (1998) and Freed and Greenwood (1996) asserted that the assumption that there will be gender differences in communication styles have biased researchers' findings and the analysis of data. Stokoe found that while women are generally viewed as speaking in a cooperative way, men tend to interact in a competitive manner. In particular, Stokoe argued that women's communication styles are undervalued in almost every context (p. 218). Past research has reinforced the belief that there are specific sex speech styles that would occur with or without societal influence. The problem with developing a study that analyzed sex differences in communication is that it sets researchers up to be biased when analyzing data. In other words, it is easy to blame all the differences in communication on naturally occurring sex differences in communication; however, Stokoe and Freed and Greenwood believe that this mindset has the potential to manipulate the researchers' analysis of data.

Instead, Stokoe (1998) and Freed and Greenwood (1996) suggest that sex and gender can only be confirmed as relevant when participants in their studies make gender relevant in speech. As Freed and Greenwood pointed out, many stereotypes presented about male and female speech have resulted from a limited amount of data on cross-sex conversation. Stokoe's study was done from the participants' point of view, rather than the analyst's. She chose to do this in order to examine if and how people orient themselves to different social divisions. Stokoe's research was not an attempt to define gender differences in speech, nor was it an attempt to describe the social

interaction styles of men or women. Instead, her research was an analysis of the way students make gender relevant in their conversations. To do this, small groups of college students were videotaped in seminars and the videotapes were then transcribed. Discursive and ethnomethodological strategies were used to analyze the data in order for gender to be explored at the micro-level of interaction (p. 217).

This type of research is difficult to complete without associating certain socially constructed gendered stereotypes to the conversations of students. That is to say, while analysts should not assume that gender is the reason for any speech differences, gender stereotypes stress that gender *is* the reason for speech differences. However by looking at what students themselves find most important, analysts can find what topics are relevant to explore. For example, in her essay Stokoe included an example of students' conversation that showed how they tried to maintain their gender identities while speaking. In the excerpt, a male and three female students are talking about singing, and the male student referred to a group of female singers as "girls." After a pause, he quickly corrected himself, and corrected himself by referring to them as "women." Stokoe suggested that this may have been because he was speaking to a group of females and did not want to offend them. The word "girl" could have been perceived as a more derogatory term and this correction showed that the male speaker, by labeling these females as "women", placed them at a higher level. The male speaker made gender relevant by making the self-correction. Stokoe ~~et al.~~ referred to this as a "reformulation" since he stops himself after he says "girl". Gender was made to be relevant here by the self-correction when labeling the women with whom he spoke.

Freed and Greenwood also focused on how gender is occasioned in social interaction. This was an attempt to separate their study from the structural categories of gender that are so

prevalent. Their data was collected from eight recorded conversations, approximately 35 minutes long, between eight different pairs of students. All students recorded were white, between the ages of 18-28, and had a previously existing friendship; there were four male pairs and four female pairs. Each pair was recorded while talking about the difference in nature between male friendships and female friendships. Freed and Greenwood found that in same sex interaction, there was still a difference between the two participants in the use of hedging, questions, and declaratives. They concluded that this was potentially due to difference in personal communication styles, since gender obviously was not a differentiating factor. They found the similarities between male-male and female-female conversations to be more striking than the differences. In other words, same sex conversations showed more similarities. They also suggested that prior research that pointed to these factors as proof of gender power differences may have incorrectly associated them with gender. Freed and Greenwood stated,

> These data demonstrate that a gendered conversational style cannot be defined by counting individual linguistic forms without regard to situated context: the context itself, the task undertaken, the topic, and the other discourse variables may be responsible for the forms that occur (21).

 They proposed that perhaps gender was not the determining factor in the way that people spoke. Instead, if gender was pertinent in conversation it was because it was *made* relevant. Freed and Greenwood hoped that their research would motivate future researchers toward a more nuanced analysis of gender and its interaction with linguistics.

The Impact of Diverse Classrooms and Diversity Classes on Student Attitudes and Awareness

Many studies have shown that interaction between students of different backgrounds and

diversity courses (e.g. courses on gender/race) have benefited student learning at the undergraduate level. Studies show that interaction with students of different backgrounds has educational and personal benefits for students (Chang, 1999; Chang, Denson, Saenz, Misa, 2006). Further research has found that students who enroll in diversity classes will undoubtedly have their sociopolitical views challenged in some way (Probst, 2003; Harper and Yeung, 2013, Cole and Zhou, 2014).

Findings such as these have led many scholars to understand the importance of diversity education beyond the confines of the classroom. Chang (1999) found that students who interact with a more diverse group of students reported a high level of satisfaction with their institution and with their social self-identity. Furthermore, Chang found that students' intellectual self-concept was positively associated with discussing issues about race and ethnicity. These benefits were attributed to both diversity courses and to interaction with a more diverse student body within and outside of the classroom.

In a more recent study, Chang, Denson, Saenz and Misa (2006) attempted to understand how students benefit, if at all, from being in a more diverse classroom. While this study does not address the impact of diversity courses on students, the interaction with peers from a diverse range of backgrounds can be seen as a more indirect approach to educating students. The authors assert:

> because of the persistent power of race to shape life experiences, racial and ethnic compositional diversity can create a rich and complex social and learning environment that can subsequently be applied as an educational tool to promote students' learning and development (p. 432).

This study specifically examined the frequency of cross-racial interaction at the individual student level and institutional level after four years of undergraduate education. Research first addressed individually reported student levels of cross-racial interaction and compared those findings with the individual's openness to diversity, cognitive development, and self-confidence. The latter portion of the study focused on how students who attended institutions with varying levels of cross-racial interaction compared on measures of openness to diversity, cognitive development, and self-confidence.

Data for this study was drawn from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), which is based in Los Angeles, California. The sample surveyed consisted of over 19,000 students from over 227 four-year institutions. Two surveys were given to students; the first was conducted during the students' freshman year in 1994 and the second was conducted during their senior year in 1998. Students were surveyed about a variety of topics in order to test the social, personal, and affective benefits of diversity education. The social variable was labeled as openness to diversity, the level of comfort students had in interaction with the personal variable referred to students' cognitive development, and the affective variable was measured by students' self-confidence. The 1998 follow-up survey also asked students questions to examine these areas, and it invited students to reflect on how various college experiences had changed or affected them (p. 435).

The findings from this study showed that cross-racial interaction among students significantly and positively affected students' openness to diversity, cognitive development, and self-confidence (p. 435). These findings remained positive and significant even after the authors controlled for differences in students' background, institutions and student body characteristics.

As they asserted, "diversity-related benefits are far ranging, spanning from benefits to individual students and the institutions in which they enroll, to private enterprise, the economy, and the broader society" (Chang et. al., p. 431). Individual benefits could include increased individual awareness and a greater understanding of others and the self. Chang, Denson, Saenz and Misa contend that institutional benefits span from a greater sense of community to a richer expression of diversity on campus, which may increase the interest of potential students. These benefits can then be expanded into life after college as students apply what they have learned in their occupations and social lives.

There is also a large body of scholarship written about the educational benefits diversity courses can have on students' attitudes and social awareness. Overall, diversity courses have been positively associated with increased cultural knowledge and understanding (Probst, 2003), the ability to interact with people from different backgrounds (Harper and Yeung, 2013), and gains in critical thinking (Cole and Zhou, 2014).

There is also a large body of scholarship that examines the benefits these courses on gender and sexuality can have on students (Stake, Sevelius, Hanly, 2008; Davis, 2010). Research done by Stake, Sevelius, and Hanly (2008) focused on how different ethnic groups in the American classroom experienced and reacted to a women and gender studies course. The overall conclusion of this study was that nearly all students (men and women, regardless of race) had a greater awareness of sexism at the close of the classes. They observed 12 different classes in the Women and Gender Studies field (WGS) and of those students, 519 were women and 142 were men. Stake, Sevelius and Hanly asked students at the end of the semester to report their level of awareness of sexism and also to report how greatly their awareness of sexism had changed as result of the class. Since students came into these classes with differing initial levels of

awareness about sexism, Stake, Sevelius and Hanly included two different types of measures of gender attitudes in their surveys; however both are associated with a feminist perspective on gender issues. The first measure was awareness of sexism and the negative impact of gendered societal structures and the second measure was openness to and appreciation of diverse lifestyles (p. 192). By creating different forms of measurements, Stake, Sevelius and Hanly attempted to eliminate the problem that could have been created when trying to compare students that came in with differing levels of awareness and openness. For example, if one student entered the classroom with a greater level of awareness about these issues than another student, that student would not be directly compared to the student with no former knowledge about the issues. Using these two scales, Stake, Sevelius and Hanly found that students' level of awareness positively increased due to their involvement in a gender and women's studies course.

In their study, Stake, Sevelius and Hanly (2008) found that developing positive classroom relationships among students and instructors also could serve as a way for constructive growth to occur. These relationships among students of different races and genders helped the students better understand one another. Students that reported higher quality relationships with peers and the instructor of the course also reported more positive reactions and attitudes towards the course. Relationships with peers that students viewed as positive served to enhance their ability to be open to different ideas and opinions. The development of these positive relationships created feelings of empowerment and furthered attitude change among students.

While diversity courses promote positive growth in students, the progression through these courses is generally marked with intense personal conflicts and emotional doubt. In a reflective essay on pedagogical practices used in the women and gender studies classroom, Davis (2010) wrote, "it is not uncommon for students to resist when coursework asks them to

relinquish imperialist desires of learning and to confront epistemological relationships of power in which they are privileged agents" (p. 137). In other words, it was hard for students to realize that they played a part in a racist and sexist society and to see themselves as people of privilege. Davis shared an example to illustrate this, drawing on experiences she had with students while teaching. At the university where Davis taught, there was a South Asian professor who was teaching a class entitled, "Women in World Cultures." Upon attending the class, several students came to visit Davis in her office and shared their discontent with the fact that an Asian teacher was criticizing the United States. As Davis asserted, "The emotional register of these doubts expressed the extent to which the methodological displacements effected by transnational feminist studies interrupt imperialist ways of knowing" (p. 138). This assertion is exemplified through several of her students, who dissolved into tears and shared that they had previously been sure that the United States was the best country in the world, but after this class they were unsure. Re-constructing "known" assumptions, or beliefs that students consider to be factual, can be difficult for students and uncomfortable. Scholars like Davis who study the subjects of sex, gender, and race believe the benefits of the classes outweigh these feelings of discomfort. Indeed, the internal struggles that students face because of these courses generally provide opportunities for them to re-evaluate their personal views and enable them to increase their cultural awareness.

Issues Related to Whiteness in the Classroom

Many authors have focused on combating the resistance that arises as students, specifically male and white students, confront course concepts such as privilege during conversations on sex, gender, and race issues (Bell and Golombisky, 2004; Donadey, 2002; Helms, 1990; Johnson, J. R., Rich, M., & Cargile, C., 2008; Rich and Cargile, 2004; Tatum,

1992). In order to understand the methods and approaches presented by researchers to overcome resistance, it is important to understand what resistance is. In a diversity class, the general goal of the instructor is to open the eyes of students to the structural sexism and racism that is prevalent within society. Since many students have not been exposed to this type of learning before, they may resist any uncomfortable thoughts or ideas that are presented in the classroom. If they resist speaking about uncomfortable topics such as race or gender, then these classes will not be productive.

One method used to combat resistance in the classroom is the direct challenging of students who assert racist ideas. While many researchers write about the issue of racist voices in the classroom, Donadey (2002) and Johnson, Rich and Cargile (2008) suggest that students who assert racist ideas need to be directly challenged and silenced in the classroom. They feel that these students add "poisonous" voices to the classroom discussion and impede learning and future growth. Johnson, Rich and Cargile suggested that one way to deal with resistance is to directly address racism when white students perform "white supremacy" and deal with the responses (anger, guilt, denial) that will come from addressing it. They also explain that directly addressing racism can mean asking probing questions about racist topics or engaging in critical dialogues with students (Johnson et. Al., p. 114). According to Donadey, performing white supremacy means acting on emotionally-based, self-interested beliefs that are rationalized by supposedly logical arguments. In order to quell the racist voices, it is imperative for these teachers to define what constitutes a racist comment. Donadey formed a loose definition, stating that a student who reinforces "ideas of dominance" after learning about the structural racism in society is enacting racism. She refers to this type of student as a "reconstructed racist," since he/she refuses to question his/her racist assumptions (p. 88). After years teaching about sexism

and racism, Donadey states, "it is my responsibility as a teacher and especially as a white person in a racist society, to be proactive against racism and to always respond firmly to racist comments" (p. 86). Yet in the large body of scholarship written about student resistance, there does not seem to be an exact definition of what makes a comment or question racist. Perhaps this is because the thin line between racism and ignorance is inherently subjective.

Due to the subjective nature of defining a racist comment, Donadey (2002) provided examples of "racist" comments that have occurred in the classroom to help the reader understand her perspective. She described a situation she encountered while teaching a graduate feminist class that had very few women of color in it as one of the reasons she felt so strongly about silencing racist comments. Donadey was presented with a challenge: two black women in her classroom felt that their questions and remarks were refigured and then restated by other students in ways that silenced the issues they were trying to give voice to (p. 87). Both women sought her out in her office multiple times to express their feelings of repression and frustration. This situation, among others, made Donadey choose to stop students who refused to question their racist assumptions from dominating discussion in the classroom. She asserted that it is vital to stop speakers who consistently present racist views:

> We need to ask the question of whose freedom of speech is being protected…in
>
> practice the free speech argument is often invoked to guarantee the speech of the
>
> Dominant…It is important to always weigh the question of free speech against
>
> that of freedom from harassment (p. 89)

In this case, student resistance was presented as a matter that needed to be dealt with directly and swiftly. While Donadey did not give a definition of how she identified what counted as "consistently presenting racist views," it seems as though she determined what she believed

represented racist ideals. As a professional in the field of communication, Donadey felt that she has the responsibility to silence those who may ultimately damage growth in the classroom.

Another type of resistance within the classroom is caused by feelings of guilt or denial in white students. Johnson, Rich and Cargile (2008) suggested that white people "perform" whiteness by avoiding having conversations about power and privilege. They argued that white people do not want to engage in conversations about historical oppression or acknowledge social powers. However, Miller and Fellows (2007) contend that the societal systems which maintain the white-Dominant culture can be very subtle, and because of this, students are not aware of the privileges they are afforded. This makes it difficult to define one's own race, since many white students do not feel as though they have a racial identity. Miller and Fellows suggest that while feelings of guilt arise in many white students during diversity courses, students also feel disconnected from their guilt since they were not personally responsible for the actions of previous generations and years of institutionalized racism (pg. 60).

In many respects, the goal of these classes is to challenge social and political views that are woven into the fabric of society. These can be an obstacle when attempting to have meaningful discussion about race in the classroom. Similar to Miller and Fellow's findings, Fishman (2005) found that in order to have meaningful discussions about race in his Introduction to Philosophy course, he needed to provide a framework for his students about the history of U.S. race relations and dialogue. Fishman was aware that race still shapes opportunities and experiences in American society, and college students are not exempt from participating in this historically racist system. By providing his students with the historical context of race relations in the United States, Fishman found that he could engage in more meaningful discussions about the present state of American society. Fishman suggests that having knowledge about the history

of racial oppression can help students feel more comfortable when engaging in conversations about the present day racial struggles that occur. Fishman uses the past to help students understand present day dilemmas.

There are several theories that focus on the development of white racial identities within the classroom; these stages are generally identified by the changes in students' resistance to speaking about race relations in the classroom. In Helms (1990) theory, she states that white people move through stages of racial identity development, one of which includes feelings of guilt as a white person becomes more aware of her/his own racism. Not all students enter the classroom with the same level of understanding about racism. Cabrera and Nora (2004) found that black students, compared to white students, had greater awareness about racial discrimination. Interestingly, many researchers have found that while students of color identify with their race, white students do not identify with being white because it is invisible to them (Bell and Golombisky, 2004; Miller and Fellows, 2007; Orbe, Groscurth, Jefferies, and Prater, 2007). Bell and Golombisky described an exercise in which students wrote a description of themselves that would allow someone they had never met to recognize them at an airport. In every case in which a person of color wrote a response, he/she included his/her gender and race. The white students never included that they were white, displaying how whiteness can be invisible. The goal of this exercise was to make whiteness visible so that students could recognize the privileged norms that are associated with it.

Orbe, Groscurth, Jefferies, and Prater (2007) also addressed the challenges and concerns instructors have when they point out whiteness to students in their classrooms. While the authors did not identify solutions to these challenges, they did try to explain why they exist. In regards to the issue to disengagement when speaking about whiteness, they asserted that many white

students sought validation for their behaviors and focused on gaining support from the instructor for a non-racist identity (Orbe et. al., 40). Furthermore, they suggested that perhaps students lack of knowledge is not theory-based, but instead experiential. When white students have not socialized or engaged with others of a different race, it makes it difficult for them to understand their own privilege.

Furthermore, Simpson's (2007) and Miller and Harris's (2005) studies suggest that denying that society is structurally racist and sexist can cause resistance in the classroom. Essentially students believe that they have no personal prejudices and therefore racism is not a problem that they are concerned about – that is, they see racism as a personal problem rather than a systemic or structural issue. Many students, mainly white students, initially deny the fact that they have any personal prejudices. Simpson asserted that in the classroom, the performance of whiteness denies the significance of race and can undermine the power of racism. In other words, when white students refuse to acknowledge their own privilege, it renders them unable to acknowledge that minorities experience adverse effects due to their race. This also allows white students to disassociate their privilege from their whiteness, which leaves them free from any notion of responsibility in matters of race. While they understand that other people are prejudiced, they cannot recognize their own prejudices. Simpson argued, "In the classroom, individuals who perform whiteness hope that their assertions of the material and social absences of raciality…will act to repel and diffuse any possible contact with racial content" (p. 248). By performing whiteness, students are negating the existence of racism within their own world which in turn deepens the ideologies already in place.

Many white students also resist conversations about race within the classroom by failing to acknowledge that black students have different experiences. Miller and Harris (2005) contend

that in classes where the topic of class discussion was white privilege, white students frequently communicated the message that "everyone is the same". Contrastingly, black students would communicate the message that "we're different"; the two different messages would switch back and forth throughout discussions. The white students' message that "everyone is the same" is a form of resistance to the discussion of race because it discredits the black students' experiences and struggles. To assert that black and white students are "all the same" means that the white students would have had to experience the same setbacks that black students face. This is not the case and therefore is counterproductive in a discussion about white privilege. Obviously, the idea that there are differences in the way people are treated within society is not something that white students are eager to accept; however it is a reality that needs to be faced.

As stated above, white students tend to be the ones resisting change within the classroom. One form is the resistance to the discussion of race and gender, since they are "taboo" topics. While initial discomfort when speaking about certain subjects is normal and even expected, long-term defiance in the classroom can cause problems. In diversity classes, student resistance can range from blatant racism (Rich & Cargile, 2004), to rejecting the voice of others (Fishman & McCarthy, 2005), to openly refuting the importance of racism and student involvement in it (Johnson et al., 2008). Racism in the classroom takes place when white students are confronted with the reality of racism and continually refute its presence. This can lead to the rejection of their peers' thoughts or opinions and can reconfirm students' own beliefs of white supremacy. When this occurs, students may dismiss the importance of discussions about racism and cease to participate in discussion about racism. These are all forms of resistance that take place in the classroom.

When the topics of race and oppression are addressed in a classroom, especially a racially diverse classroom, there are going to be high tensions. The aforementioned forms of resistance are the reason that instructors of diversity classes stress the importance of combating resistance; they hope to begin eliminating prejudices that cause injustice. Scholars who have taught diversity courses at the collegiate level revealed similar strategies to combat resistance within the classroom, including the creation of a "safe space" and challenging students with racist ideologies. Tatum (1992) and Donadey (2002) both suggest creating a "safe space" for students to share opinions and questions about racism and sexism. They do this by providing a list of guidelines for useful cross-cultural student interaction, rules that allow students to feel respected and safe in a sometimes tense environment. While Donadey stresses the importance of a safe space for students in order to minimize resistance in the classroom, Tatum provides a list of helpful guidelines that she sets in place in all of her diversity classrooms. When creating a safe space in the classroom, defining frequently used vocabulary is important. One of these highly used words is "racism," which she defined as "a system of advantage based on race [that] is a pervasive aspect of U.S. socialization" (Tatum, p. 3). It is virtually impossible to live in the United States and not be exposed to some sort of racism. This also means that since we are all affected by racism, we all hold some misconceptions about different groups marginalized by racism. Another frequently used word in the diversity classroom is "prejudice," which Tatum defined as a "preconceived judgment or opinion, often based on limited information" (p. 3). Tatum clearly differentiates between these two words which so often are used interchangeably by students. According to Tatum,

> A distinction must be made between the negative racial attitudes held by
>
> individuals of color and White individuals, because it is only the attitudes of the

Whites that routinely carry with them the social power inherent in the systematic

cultural reinforcement and institutionalization of those racial prejudices (p. 3).

Clearly this distinction does not mean that the prejudice of students of color is okay, as both are

problematic. However, it is important to understand that there is a power divide between the two

groups and the more powerful group is the white community. Making definitions such as these

clear to students from the beginning of a class may help ease tension and confusion when

speaking. In this way, the students in the class will all be able to use words such as "racism" and

"prejudice" and have the same definition as their peers. Easing tensions is one way to begin

eliminating students' resistance in the classroom, as discomfort generally precedes resistance.

In addition, the instructor of a class should identify and make clear any assumptions that

should be held while having conversations about race and gender. Tatum suggests that making

these assumptions clear to the students can help create a "safe space" in the classroom. For

example, one of these assumptions is that children cannot be blamed for learning what they were

taught. In Tatum's classroom, she stressed that while everyone may be at different places in their

lives, it is also assumed that everyone has room to change and grow. This may ease the minds of

some students who perhaps have not been raised in a very diverse environment and therefore are

not exposed to any of the information they are being presented with. Tatum contends that as

adults, when we realize we have been misinformed, we have the responsibility to pursue accurate

information and to then act accordingly (p. 4).

While other researchers did not specifically state that the classroom should be made into

a safe space for students, several findings showed that when teachers felt more comfortable

engaging in uncomfortable conversations, then students were more willing to share (Howard and

Henney, 1998; Johnson et al., 2008; Stake, 2008). Johnson, Rich and Cargil explained that many

professors are fearful to teach about racism because of the volatile conversations that emerge; however, they believe that teachers must be diligent in their work and address these challenges. They suggest that this helps students move through personal anxiety about the matter of racism (p. 114). Addressing these challenges also creates an environment where students feel more comfortable with their peers, and speaking about these issues is less difficult. Instead of presenting set guidelines for the classroom, researchers such as Donadey (2002), Johnson, Rich and Cargil, and Stake stressed that the instructor of the class just needs to act as a model to the students and appear comfortable when speaking about these issues.

The research on talking about gender and race in the classroom, shows that these courses empower many students to think outside the bounds of societal conventions. The structural norms of American society pervade the classroom, leading to an even greater need for conversations about gender and race to take place in the classroom. As described above, students make gender relevant in their speech in order to maintain a politically correct "face" in certain settings yet gender norms continue to discourage female students from participating in class discussions as frequently as male students. With respect to race, this literature review has shown that the dominant group in the discussion sometimes silences the voices of the subordinate group. Additionally, there is substantial research that finds methods to reduce student resistance in the classroom. However, while it is easy to stress that white students need to deconstruct their performance of whiteness, it is difficult for students to develop a white identity that breaks the societal norms that stress white-privilege and entitlement. Miller and Fellows (2007) notes that, "the question of what actions to take to create a positive white identity remains notably unaddressed in much whiteness pedagogy" (p. 61). While there is a large body of scholarship pertaining to the resistance of white students to diversity education, there is not much work on

whiteness that suggests specific ways in which students can reconstruct their own identities. I consider the limitations of this research and propose an ethnographic study to fully examine how college students respond to conversations about these societal constructions and how this translates into their speech within the classroom. My project looks at the ways that students discuss both sex and race in the classroom and examines how students navigate and perceive these difficult conversations while looking to create positive identities.

Methods

The ethnographic method has evolved over the years. According to Wolcott (1999), in 1909, British anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown defined ethnography as "descriptive accounts of non-literate peoples" and began to bridge the gap between social anthropology and ethnography in his search for cultural universalities (Wolcott, p. 13). Wolcott further explained that many researchers during this time period were hesitant to label ethnography as a method, and instead referred to it as a type of research (Wolcott, p. 41). About forty years later, American ethnographers began to study "other cultures" that were not necessarily illiterate peoples. Today, ethnography has progressed from a study of foreign and remote peoples to a method used to study any cultural group, including a researcher's own community or perhaps even him/herself.

The general goal of ethnography is to find distinct features of a culture and to attempt to understand things from the perspective of a member of that culture. These distinct features reveal how the members of the culture understand things. Despite modern scholarly recognition of ethnography as a method, some researchers still do not accurately distinguish the difference between "doing ethnography" and "using ethnographic techniques". The latter phrase refers to researchers who view ethnography simply as participant observation research, qualitative research, or on-site research. According to Wolcott, "The set of activities common to all these

[aforementioned] approaches emphasizes the field methods or fieldwork techniques employed in data gathering, not on how data subsequently are organized, analyzed, or reported" (p. 43). In other words, ethnography is more than just a way to collect data; it is also a mindset or way of analyzing the procured information about a culture.

This study is a focused ethnography; it specifically focuses on how students talk and their perspectives on the issues of gender and race. If this study were a general ethnography, it would focus on every feature of the classroom culture, but this would be too broad a lens. However, a focused ethnography is an attempt to understand how students talk about these issues from the perspective of a member of the culture. This method can be used to reveal students' perspectives as they engaged in discussions in class. The goal of this study is to show how students saw things and how they struggled with speaking during these conversations about gender and race. For these reasons, ethnography is the correct method to use for this study.

One way that these aforementioned features of a culture can be revealed is through interviews and questions. Each culture has a different definition of what friendly interaction looks like and therefore it is imperative that the ethnographer adopts certain local interactional characteristics to conduct successful interviews. For example, while Spradley was conducting an ethnographic study of British Columbian culture, he observed that friends sat together in long periods of silence. Spradley states, "Although difficult, I learned to sit in silence and to converse more slowly" (45). He attributes this learned local style of interaction as a reason for his success when interviewing members of this culture.

In this study, as an ethnographer and a peer to the student participants, I had to identify the correct way to interact with interviewees during an interview. If I could be seen as part of the culture of the class, it seemed that I would have a better understanding of the way students

perceived the conversations about gender and race. When an ethnographer enters a culture, people are already responding to unasked questions through their everyday actions. It is the ethnographer's jobs to figure out what those questions are; the things that "go without saying" because people assume everyone "knows that." In order to do this, I had to develop questions that would accurately capture the classroom culture. Spradley suggests three different main ways researchers can learn what questions they need to ask. First, ethnographers can record questions that members of the culture ask other members of the culture in their everyday life. In this study, that could mean recording questions that students ask other students in class. Repeatedly asked questions can highlight if a specific idea or theory is important to the students. Secondly, the ethnographer can inquire about questions that members of the culture ask in their culture. More specific to this study, this could mean asking students why they asked certain questions in class. Their explanation could provide insight into how they perceive the discussions in class. Lastly, the ethnographer can simply ask participants of a culture to elaborate on a specific part of their culture and then base questions on what is said. This also happened spontaneously during several interviews that were conducted. These three suggestions were all helpful in developing interview questions for this study.

While questions are essential in ethnographic research, there are some parts of a culture that cannot be unveiled through direct questions. Many times, participants in a culture are unaware of their own "cultural rules" and therefore they are not able to relay them to a researcher in an interview. In Philipsen's (1975) ethnographic study of Teamsterville, located near the south side of Chicago, he interacted with and observed participants in the Teamsterville culture in order to figure out what participants assumed to be "known". Through his interactions with participants in this culture, Philipsen found that manliness and the ability to present oneself "like

a man" was a cultural value that seemed to be shared by the members of the Teamsterville community (p. 13). He conveys that he discovered this value and other values that "go without saying" in the culture when his behavior or actions differed from the natives. Philipsen contends, "Native reactions to out-of-role behavior are instructive because they bring into sharp focus role expectations which have been violated" (p. 14). Like Spradley, Philipsen stresses the importance of finding ways to uncover the behavioral norms and assumptions that shape the way people act in a specific culture. While navigating reactions to rule violations is one technique that Philipsen used in his ethnographic study, he warns that solely using this technique can create a distorted view of a culture. Utilizing a variation of different techniques, like those both Spradley and Philipsen present, can create a more holistic study of cultural patterns. The ethnographic method provides researchers with a wide array of tools to examine and analyze the inner workings of a culture. In this study, I used the ethnographic method to examine students' speech in the class. Clearly, examining students' reactions to "rule violations" and developing clear and thoughtful interview questions helped to uncover the culture of speaking within this class.

Since a researcher's thoughts and choices are based upon experience, it seems implicit that the researcher's environment affects the decision of what culture to study. As an undergraduate college student at Ursinus College, I found myself interested in the way my peers talk about gender and race. According to Wolcott (1999), "There is a remarkable correspondence between what ethnographers choose to study and where they happen to find themselves" (p. 15). As a member of the Ursinus College community, I wanted to complete an ethnographic study of a "micro-culture" within the larger culture of this four-year undergraduate institution.

This study focused on the culture of an undergraduate class whose purpose was to discuss gender and race issues. The study attempts to find the implicit rules or norms that developed in

this class. It also attempts to identify the shared understandings and sets of shared perspectives and struggles students had as they talked about gender and race twice a week for one academic semester. The age range of participants was from 18 to approximately 22 years of age, as all participants in the class were undergraduate students. The inclusion criteria were only that students who were a part of the study must have been enrolled in a course on gender and race taught in fall of 2014. There were 22 students in the class. Six students were male and sixteen were female. Three students identified as black. Fourteen students identified as white. Four students identified as mixed race. Of the mixed race students, two students had a black father and a white mother. One student had a mother who was "half-black" and a white father. The other student identified as mixed race and was a mix of two South American countries. There was also one Indian student in the class.

Before the data collection process began, I completed the National Institute of Health web-based training course entitled "Protecting Human Research Participants". This training course educates students on the importance of protecting participants who agree to participate in research studies. It went over standard procedures that should be taken in order to ensure the participants' safety: physically, socially, mentally, and economically. After this course was finished I was able to complete the Institutional Review Board (IRB) forms. According to Ursinus College, "The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) is the body charged with overseeing all research involving human subjects conducted under the auspices of Ursinus College by its faculty, students, or staff" (IRB). All researchers who intend to observe human participants are required to submit a Protocol Form, an Informed Consent Form, and any interview questions that will be used in the study prior to its start (See appendix A).

My primary method of collecting data was through observation/participation in the classroom. This data collection process took place over the period of the fall 2014 semester in a diversity class where students discussed the issues of gender and race. There were a total of 26 classes observed; each class was one hour and fifteen minutes in length. Three of these 26 classes were recorded and portions were transcribed. In-class observations were supplemented with interviews outside of the classroom (see appendix B). I conducted eight interviews with students who volunteered to share their thoughts on their experiences in the classroom. Interviews lasted between ten and fifteen minutes, and were recorded. The aforementioned interview questions were developed after I had spent time in the class, observing and interacting with the students. These questions included, but were not limited to: questions about students' perceptions of the two different topics being discussed, questions about students' comfort level speaking in the class, and questions about memorable discussions in the class.

While my role for this study is that of a researcher, I also balanced the role of a full-time student at Ursinus College. As a Media and Communication Studies major, I have spent over three years taking classes in the department. I am a peer to the students whom I am studying and could be in (or have been) classes with these students. As part of my study, I attended all of the classes of the diversity class that I observed, but was not enrolled in the course. This gave me the ability to examine how my experience as a "participant" was and was not like that of the other students. My experience as a participant was similar to the other students in many ways. First, I was present in every class except for one. While I was not required to be there to get credits for taking the class, I had to be there in order to complete my study. We all needed to be present in order to learn and participate. Secondly, the discussions that happened in the class caused us all to have emotional and intellectual reactions. While I did not translate these

reactions into my field notes, I felt as though I was learning new concepts and ideas every day. This again allowed me to feel connected to the other students in the classroom.

However, there were several differences between my experience being a participant and the experience of the rest of the student participants. One major difference is that I was not receiving a grade for the work that I produced in the class. In fact, I did not have to complete any of the assignments that the other students had to complete. For example, nearly every week the students would write a one to two page essay about their reactions to class discussions or readings. These essays would be handed into the instructor of the course. I did not have to complete these essays since I was not enrolled in the course; however I sometimes felt that my lack of a reflection hindered my ability to participate in the following class. I was more focused on the content of what others were saying than on my own personal reflections. Furthermore, due to my lack of enrollment in the class, I did not get a grade for participation. My main purpose for being in the classroom was to record field notes. Since the class was almost entirely discussion based, I had to plan when I could interject my thoughts into the discussion. Since I was not receiving a grade for participation, I felt less pressured to do so.

However this question of whether or not to participate created an ethical dilemma. As a participant observer, I knew that the other students would be aware of my level of participation. I have opinions and am used to sharing them; however, I knew that if I shared my opinions, the other students would be attentive to what my opinions were. I was there to listen to what they were saying and I did not want them to censor what they said based on what they perceived my "stance" to be. Furthermore, I wanted the students to be open and share their opinions with me in one-on-one interviews. I was afraid that if I shared too many of my opinions, the students would not tell me opinions that differed from my own. As I will explain later, the students in the class

were very afraid of "being attacked" for their opinions and I did not want them to be nervous

sharing their true feelings in interviews. However, by not participating frequently, I realize that

students could feel that I was distant and aloof. I did not want that to be the case either.

Therefore, I chose to participate occasionally in an attempt to normalize my presence in the class

without being overly opinionated.

In most studies there are difficulties encountered with the collection and recording of

data, and this study was no exception. As a participant-observer in the classroom, I frequently

was confronted with the dilemma of *when* to speak. As a researcher, I did not want to interrupt

the normal flow of classroom discussion and was afraid my voice would remind students that

they were being observed. However, I knew that being completely silent ostracized me from the

students in the classroom, and therefore I had to add my voice to the conversation at times that I

deemed to be appropriate. Being active in the culture enhanced my ability to connect with

students and gave me access to information that I otherwise would not have had access to.

In every ethnographic study, the researcher is drawn to a certain type of setting and

certain type of people. Prior experiences, historical time frames, and current dispositions all

guide the questions that are asked about a culture and opinions that are formed. No researcher is

without bias or societal influence. At the start of my study I questioned how I could present an

undistorted image of the classroom culture. Could I ever fully capture the entire culture of the

classroom and relay it in writing? This posed a dilemma; was one person able to accurately

capture the attitudes and characteristics that make a culture unique? Wolcott (1999) contends

that, "there is no way we can totally capture the lifeway of another person or group of people,

any more than we could ever satisfactorily convey to another all that constitutes our own

persona" (p. 16). I reconciled this dilemma through the understanding that while my study will

never be perfect, it is an attempt to understand students' experiences and perceptions of conversations about gender and race within this culture. Flaws, when recognized, do not negate the validity of an entire study but instead point to future areas of improvement.

Another traditional ethical dilemma in ethnography is whether to do overt or covert research. In my case, this was less of a dilemma because I had to be there in order to be a participant observer in the class. Therefore, covert research was not really an option. Clearly, I would be completing overt research.

Another dilemma was whether or not to use the discussions that I had with students outside of class in my research. While this ethnography was on the way students speak within the class, there were several students who talked to me about their experiences in the class outside of class time. As a student, I frequently would encounter students from this class around campus. Several times, students approached me and shared their thoughts about the class or about my role in the class with me. On all accounts, these encounters were positive; however, I did not know whether I should use them in my paper. These students technically shared their thoughts "off the record" and therefore I was not sure if it would be ethical to use what they said in my data. There were also several students with whom I was friendly before the class began who talked to me about their experiences in the class and their perceptions of the conversations and the instructor. Once again, they told me these things because of our relationship as friends and I felt that it might be unethical to use this in my paper.

Ultimately I did not use many of these quotes from the conversations that were "off record". However, there were several conversations that were relevant. In these cases, I contacted these students and asked them if we could ask them a few questions about what they said off record in the paper. There were two different female students who had said something

out of class that directly related to their experience in the class. I thought that it would be helpful to use their thoughts and therefore I directly asked if I could use this information. In this way, I navigated through this ethical dilemma.

After collecting the data for my study, I had to choose how to analyze and present my findings. There are several ways of writing and presenting ethnographic research; I chose to do a thematic discourse analysis. In other words, I used discourse analysis strategies to identify themes within ~~the~~ students' discourse about gender and race. Discourse analysis is the idea that the ethnographer studies language "in use." According to Gee (2010), discourse analysis is examining how people speak about aspects of our world in a relative context. For example, if someone says, "Sorry, I can't run today cause I don't have shoes," it does not mean that they literally do not own any shoes. Instead, one can infer that they do not have a pair of athletic shoes with them at the moment (p. 59).

This example of the word shoe can be expanded further to show how every cultural group or social group has a different "explanatory theory" about what the word shoe means and what a shoe is used for. While some groups look as a shoe as a type of fashion, others see it as a necessity to protect the foot. Gee asserts that these ideas and theories that people associate with words, "are rooted in the practices of socioculturally defined groups of people" (60). This means that in addition to having situated meanings, words also are associated with a discourse model (where discourse is referring to "specific socially and culturally distinctive identities people can take on in society)" (61). While words can be distinct to certain groups, different topics or ideas can be overarching and many people or groups can relate to them in a similar manner. This is tied to the meaning of a word, since a word holds much more value and context than we may realize.

Discourse models can also reveal conflicts on an individual and group level; what individuals say and how they act can be completely different, and more powerful groups in society can influence other groups to speak a certain way. Researcher Claudia Strauss (1992) examined how Rhode Island working-class men were influenced by the "American success" model of discourse. When the men talked about their lives and work, they accepted the American discourse model of success stating things such as, "I believe if you put an effort into anything, you can get ahead…If I want to succeed, I'll succeed." (p. 202) Clearly, their discourse model is one that alludes to the "American dream" of success. However, many of these men did not act on the model of success that they spoke about. They did not seek out promotions or sacrifice family time for career advancement; instead, they judged themselves based on this model and felt that they fell short. These men have defined their lives based on this discourse model, which fits the behaviors of other groups in society, yet does not fit their own lifestyles. Strauss found that these men judged themselves based on this model and it lowered their self-esteem. These men acted and spoke in two completely different ways which could reveal that they were indeed influenced to speak this way by a more influential group within society.

While I did not attempt to identify the discourse model/s that the students used in this class, I was interested in students' perceptions of the conversations and in revealing if there was a dichotomy between what students said in class and how they metacommunicated about the conversations; that is, how students talk about the way they talk. I chose to incorporate several aspects of discourse analysis into my thematic analysis of my data. I was interested in identifying what the students viewed to be problematic or troubling when speaking about these issues. This proved to be a very useful and interesting way to analyze my data.

<center>**Analysis**</center>

Attacking

  In this class students were very concerned about their image. Students feared that other students would see them in an undesirable way or criticize them. They did not want to be vulnerable or expose themselves to potential "attacks" or criticisms that they saw as having personal implications or image implications. The term that students used for this criticism is "being attacked." Attacking, in this class, seemed to be the direct verbal criticism of another person's or group's assertions or beliefs. It seems that there are several different ways that attacking was used and each way functioned differently within this class. Students had conflicting views on how to navigate discussions when attacking occurred and why attacking happened. Through this, it was clear that "attacks" were perceived differently by different students.

  While there were many different situations in which students interpreted the actions of one of their peers as an attack, there were two specific occasions in class in which most students felt that someone was "attacked." One of these cases involved a student being "attacked" and the other was an author being "attacked." These situations can help characterize what constitutes an "attack" from the students' perspective since it seems there was a general consensus. Many students felt that one student was attacked during a conversation about the way women dress. During this conversation, Tom, a mixed race male, made a comment in which he referred to women that dress "slutty," and the females in the class began making comments such as "ohh god" and "he shouldn't have said that" under their breath. Immediately after Tom finished speaking, many of the female students in the class responded. Kyleigh, a non-white female, stated, "She is dressing like that for herself." (Fieldnotes). The females in the class voiced their

agreement. Leah, a white female, then asked, "Um excuse me, I have a question. Are you saying that girls are dressing slutty or…?" (Fieldnotes) Leah was cut off by several other females in the class that began to shout "Oooh" and Leah's question faded out. Becky, a white female student, waited for the noise to die down and then asked, "Can you define for me, what is slutty?" (Fieldnotes). Jake responded, "I think we have a pretty good idea of what constitutes as slutty." (Fieldnotes). Kyleigh and Becky both responded loudly, "Well I don't! And how do you get to judge that?" (Fieldnotes) Many girls in the class again began to make loud noises and Kyleigh states, "I can't believe he said that." (Fieldnotes). Clearly, these female students were agitated by Tom's remark and several of them "ganged up" on Tom to rebut his comment.

After this in-class situation occurred, students' reflections on it made it clear that they viewed the responses to Tom's comment as "attacks." In the following class, students shared that they felt Tom had been attacked that day. Meggie, a white female student, shared, "I'm just saying, I don't want everyone to jump down my throat like they did when Tom said the word 'slut." (Fieldnotes, p 11) Meggie had interpreted the responses to Tom's comments as attacks, and she was then afraid to say certain things and have the same thing happened to her. While she did not say what constituted that event as an attack, it is clear that she interpreted it as one. Katie, a white female student, also interpreted the situation as an attack. She shared, "[during] our discussion of like the dressing, women dressing…it's one where like everybody attacked Tom." (Interview) Like Meggie, Katie felt that "everyone" had attacked Tom. Perhaps this shows that a greater number of people disagreeing with a single person is one example of an attack. Interestingly, Tom was asked if he felt he was attacked or upset, he answered, "No, I wasn't upset. I was more overwhelmed." (Fieldnotes, p 11) Evidently, while several students thought Tom was attacked, he did not feel attacked, or at least, he did not admit to this. This situation

helps to show the complexity of attacking as it was perceived and discussed by students in this class.

However, students ~~did~~ not only attacked one another over the semester, they also repeatedly attacked several authors of class readings. One author whom many students attacked was Ellis, a female author who wrote an auto-ethnography about her experience in an interracial relationship as a teenager in the sixties. As a teen, she had been in a short relationship with a black male named Jesse. During the class discussion on the day the reading was initially discussed, several students attacked Ellis and her auto-ethnography. When asked by Dr. Lenz how she felt about the text, Rachel, a white female student, responded, "I hated it. She is so self-centered. Oh of course when the Dad comes in and is shooting she is like, where is Jesse? Like shut up! He's running for his life and oh of course the white girl is the most important thing in the whole situation. I'm like shut up! She's so annoying." (Fieldnotes, p 35) Another white female student, Becky, shared, "[Ellis] says how she understands a bit of how it must feel to be black. Like no! I wrote WTF next to that. You don't know, you will never know!" (Fieldnotes, p 35) This spurred another white female student, Leah, to chime in, "I just really don't like that [Ellis] talked about Jesse. The way she talked about him was so de-humanizing. She was attracted to him because he was exotic…I didn't like it at all." (Fieldnotes, p 36) Nate, a black male student, shared, "This was like Huckleberry fin. I don't know. It was weird, I didn't like it." (Fieldnotes, p 36) Lastly, Margo, a mixed race female student bluntly stated, "I want to beat her ass" (Fieldnotes, p 36). All of these students immediately had visceral emotional responses to the text and they shared it with the class.

Students viewed an attack as a critical, overtly emotional response to something. In a meta-discussion about the readings, several students analyzed their tendency to attack authors

and texts that they read for the class. Many of the students that had attacked Ellis in the aforementioned class then reflected on their reasons for attacking her. Students suggested that they attacked Ellis for several different reasons. One reason that students attacked Ellis was because they did not like her experience. Nate, a black male student, shared:

> So after the class that we talked about Ellis I sat back and was like, why am I so mad at her? I was like, this is her experience and I was like maybe I should be taking something else away from it than like what I expected to take away from it. Like that's why I responded that way. I was trying to like act like…we need to try to figure out what we're trying to take from things like there's value in like everything that we read. (Final Exam Discussion)

Clearly, Nate felt that he and many of his classmates had attacked Ellis during the previous classes. After reflection, he questioned why he was "mad" at the author. He realized that perhaps instead of attacking, he should be trying to find "the value" in the readings. While Nate originally did not like Ellis and her ethnography, time away from the text gave him the opportunity to think more critically and push the emotional response aside. Nate's response prompted other students to share why they attacked Elis during the previous class. Leah suggested that students were attacking the experiences that Ellis had in order to avoid attacking the experience that someone in the class had. Leah shared:

> Like Nate said, I don't know why I was, I still don't know why I am so angry about [Ellis'] experience but I also think that a lot of people identified with her and I know that I even, like at some point used to think that. And I think by working through what she said or did that we thought was wrong it kind of um attacked the issue without attacking someone in the class. So like even though we talked about not wanting to hide behind

things, people could hide behind that and not feel uncomfortable but still be educated on

it. (Final Exam Discussion)

Interestingly, Leah said that said she herself "used to think" like Ellis. Perhaps attacking the author was a way for students to distance themselves from the beliefs they had previously held. However after working through Ellis' experiences and having time to reflect, Leah also felt that she had been too harsh and perhaps was wrong in "attacking" Ellis' ethnography. It seems that Leah felt her "anger" and discomfort qualified her response to the Ellis text as an attack.

Lastly, Lisa, a white female student, shared why she felt discontent with the class the day they discussed Ellis. While she did not attack Elis, she felt that many of her classmates had been overly harsh. Her experience highlights another example of attacking or being highly critical of another as a way to deal with one's own discomfort. She stated,

I was like pretty unimpressed by the way we handled the Ellis article. Because there were

so many things, ethnography wise, that you need to be like very honest and vulnerable.

Like if this is her experience that's fine and that's the way it is. And I feel like a lot of

times in this class we got so worked up about like racial issues that are happening right

now that we forgot how different they were back then. We were like attacking [authors]

like they were experiencing these things at the same time. Like obviously she is writing it

because she thinks it's important and she realizes that something needs to be done about

the reaction that she had. So like there were certain times that we did sort-of lose track of

having like an intelligent conversation that could have happened because we were so

worked up about wanting to attack everybody because we were uncomfortable (Final

Exam Discussion)

Lisa suggested that it was unfair to attack Ellis because this was an auto-ethnography that was written during a different time period. In an auto-ethnography the author has to be "vulnerable" and open. Lisa felt that the class did not take this into consideration when they attacked Ellis' experiences, suggesting that her peers took Ellis' experiences out of context. It seems the consensus among Nate, Leah, and Lisa was that the class spoke too soon and reacted without thinking about the reasons behind their actions.

Different Interpretations of Attacks

Providing a single definition of "attacking" was problematic because each student had a different idea of what "being attacked" looked like. There were several times during the class when a student did not realize his/her actions were perceived as attacks. Many times individual students felt attacked by indirect statements made by other students in the class. In a meta-discussion about attacking, a female mixed-race student, Luna, shared that she had felt personally attacked during a conversation about race. She felt that as a mixed-race student, she was attacked for her views because she did not fit into a single racial category. She felt that she was attacked during a discussion about "who had the right" to use the "N" word. During the conversation, Derek, a black male, shared that it bothered him when white/partly-black people who are friends with black people think they have the right to use the "N" word. Luna felt that during that conversation, she was being attacking because she was only "a little bit black". When she shared that she had felt attacked for being a mixed-race student in the class, she did not specifically call out Derek for making her feel attacked. However, in a later written response, Luna wrote that this was the situation that had made her so upset. After Luna shared that she felt attacked, Margo, another mixed race female student, responded,

I know I don't look at you and think, oh, that's a white girl what does she know? I really

don't think that anyone in the class felt that way because we're all in the same position as

you. Like we spoke as humans, cause we're humans. And I don't think anyone looked at

you, I just wanted to let you know, like I don't look at you and I don't think anyone else

does either just think of you as a white girl. (Final exam discussion)

This elicited an emotional response from Luna who began to break down in tears. She asked the

class to come back to her to speak because she was emotional about the situation. Luna believed

that she was attacked, while many of the other students in the class did not think that it had been

intended as an attack. This situation also highlights the complexity of these "attacks" and how

students had conflicting views on how their words functioned within a controversial

conversation.

The conflicting perspectives on what is means to "attack" were evident in another

situation as well. In a class discussion about exclusivity and privilege, one of the black male

students, Nate, shared that he did not like Greek life in college because it made members think

they were better than non-members. He stated, "My mom and sister are [in a sorority]. They

speak really uppity and I think, 'who are you?' I never joined because of that." (Fieldnotes, p 19)

When asked if he was referring to all Greek life, he responded, "I could be talking about all

Greek. I mean if the shoe fits. I've seen it everywhere. The whole idea of separation."

(Fieldnotes, p 20) While this was a criticism of Greek life, one female white student in the class

seemed to take it as a personal attack. Right after Nate said this, Emily had a shocked look on her

face, and Margo said, "what ticked you off?" Emily responded, "It was what Nate was saying

about sororities…It makes my mouth want to drop down." (Fieldnotes, p 20) Clearly Emily, a

sorority member, interpreted his comment as an attack. In this situation, it did not seem that Nate

thought he was directly attacking anyone personally. Once again, students had different interpretations of what attacking looked like.

These different interpretations of attacking could be seen in yet another situation during a discussion about race. When the students talked about differences in black women's and white women's styles of communication, one feature of "black women talk" was highlighted; the common use of the word "girl" by black women. One white female student, Grace, shared a personal experience of a time where a black woman had called her "girl." She shared,

> I was waiting in line for a club and a black girl was like, 'oh girl you about to freeze your toosh off.' And I was like, okay, I wasn't expecting that. I thought she was gunna come at me or something. I wouldn't have never been to her, like 'girl, you're freezing your ass off' (Fieldnotes, p 14)

However, after she told the story, Margo, a mixed race female, seemed agitated and fired questions back at Grace. Margo asked, "Why do you think that she was gunna come at you? What went through your mind that made you think that she was gunna kick your ass? I mean I wasn't there, so I don't know." (Fieldnotes, p 14) Margo seemed annoyed with Grace's assertion that she felt the black woman was going to "come at her." In fact, Grace reported that she thought Margo felt attacked by her story. However, Grace replied, "She stepped forward to me and used her hands, and I was taken back. If a white woman did the same thing, I would have thought the same thing." (Fieldnotes, p 14) After Grace shared this, the topic changed and no one else addressed this topic. Margo was visibly tense; however, she did not continue to question Grace. To further complicate the matter, Grace interpreted Margo's questioning as an attack, despite the fact that she did not convey this to the class or get visibly upset. In a later interview, Grace shared,

My immediate reaction was that I saw Margo defending the black girl because she took my story personally. She reacted the same way the other black girl did in my story. I felt uncomfortable in the same way as I did in the story when the other black girl made that comment. I felt a pang of anxiety and did feel like it was an attack, but I understood why it was happening. I think I was showing my lack of experience with black people and Margo's reaction was an attempt to teach me something. I just wished the whole conversation could be over. (Grace Interview)

Clearly, this one example of attacking was much more complex than it seemed. Both Margo and Grace felt attacked, however Grace felt that she was supposed to learn from Margo's questioning. Although Grace was not exactly sure what Margo was attempting to convey, perhaps Margo was showing that the way Grace reacted to the other woman's comment was problematic. In this example, attacking was interpreted in several ways further showing the complexity of the issue of attacking within the classroom.

How to Navigate Discussions with Attacking

While the aforementioned situations help to portray what attacking "looked like" in this class, there seem to be three main stances that students took when they participated in discussions in which they thought somebody might get attacked. When navigating difficult discussions about gender and race, students chose one of the following options: to remain silent in fear of their peers "attacking," to voice fears about speaking while acknowledging that they wanted to learn, or to promise their peers that they would not personally attack anyone during a conversation. The strategy that a student employed depended on his/her own background and beliefs in the context of the discussion taking place. In addition, the strategies that were

employed by students were situational and were dependent on how connected students were to a particular topic.

The strategy to remain silent during discussions about gender and race was employed by many students during the semester. This strategy was used as a defensive mechanism during discussions. Students who kept silent felt that they were protected from the possibility of being attacked. Furthermore, the topic of discussions affected whether ~~the~~ students chose to speak or be silent. According to several of the male students in the class, they felt uncomfortable voicing their opinions in discussions about gender because they feared their female peers would attack them. During one class the students held a meta-discussion on a previous class where they discussed "slut shaming" and rape. This was the class in which the female students responded intensely to Tom's use of the word "slutty" to refer to how a female student was dressed. During the meta-discussion a few days later, one black male student, Derek, was asked to reflect on his feelings during the discussion that day. He stated, "There were a lot of things that I wanted to say on that day but I didn't say it because I didn't want others to jump down my throat." (Fieldnotes, p 12) While he does not state the specific reason he did not want "others" to attack his opinion, it could be that he did not want to deal with defending his ideas to a large group of people. In an interview with Derek he stated, "I don't want to be that one person who just gets, you know, shat on... as a guy in a class that's pretty much bashing the rest of guys I feel uncomfortable to say something" (Derek Interview). In order to avoid being attacked, Derek stayed silent and withheld his views.

Similarly, Bob, a white male student felt that silence was the best option during many discussions about gender and race. In a one-on-one interview with Bob he said,

I don't feel like completely comfortable sharing what I think cause I mean I, I know if I say like completely what I think some people will disagree with me. And I just don't feel like it's not even worth saying like one thing and then having people jump down my throat…I feel like if you say something even if it seems, like I guess it depends on how you're saying it, but people's perception of you might change." (Bob Interview)

In this case Bob's main concern was with other's perception of him changing. The fear of what others thought of him kept him from sharing opinions that he thought may be controversial.

In one class discussion students addressed several factors that contributed to or hindered students' participation in class. Bob suggested that the fear of being judged and the number of people that attend a university might affect a student's decision to speak about topics such as gender and race. Bob shared this opinion with the class: "Everybody knows each other or has seen each other before. Here, if you say the wrong thing then people judge you and then it spreads around campus and then everyone has this image of you" (Fieldnotes, p 25). In his opinion, the fear of being attacked and having his peers' opinion of him change kept him from participating in certain discussions.

When some students felt that they disagreed with the dominant view, they chose to be silent. However, it was not only males who felt they had to keep silent to avoid being attacked in conversations about gender or race. Many students chose to be silent when they felt like they were in the minority. One white female student, Katie, gave an example of a time she did not participate in a conversation because she had views that were in opposition to the majority of other students who were participating in the discussion about "slut-shaming" and how women should dress. In an interview after that class discussion, Katie shared:

Probably when we were talking about clothing and women and what are their intentions. I definitely had some stuff to say that I didn't say that day…I was like, I don't know, people were jumping down people's throats and I knew I wasn't about to like say something that I knew would disagree with what the majority was saying. (Katie Interview)

The fear of having the majority of other students disagree with her opinion kept Katie from speaking her mind. She chose silence instead of potentially "being attacked."

Other students felt that the classroom cultivated an environment for these types of discussions and asserted that is was better to say something and learn than to keep silent. Tom, a mixed-race male, said that he felt that participating in class discussions was worth the risk of being "attacked." Tom explained that instead of feeling upset, he felt that he learned a lot from participating on the day he got "attacked." He stated,

I like hearing women's side of things because it helps me, kind of see it, especially that day I got attacked. That was a day for me that really made me see it another way. If this is a class full of guys, they would have all agreed. When the girls all freaked out, it was a signal for me to try and look at it from another lens. (Tom Interview)

Tom's definition of a "freak out" seemed to refer to the majority of female students directly attacking his viewpoint. However, instead of being silenced, this was a "signal" to Tom to reconsider his ideas and try and understand the perspective of the woman that responded so strongly to what he said Later in an interview, he reflected,

There have definitely been times where I've been thinking things through and I've been like, oh man, I probably shouldn't say those things…like the one instance you probably

know, when I said the slut thing…When in doubt, I'll usually say it just because…I feel

like that like, you know, is the best way to learn. (Interview)

While Tom previously said that he did not feel like he was attacked, everyone in the class talked

about it as "the day Tom got attacked" and so he also adopted this way of referring to it. This

quote shows that while he refers to this situation as an attack, he did not appear to be upset about

being attacked. Even when he reflected on his decision to speak he felt that he made the right

decision because he learned from participating. This proved to be yet another way that students

chose to navigate difficult conversations about gender and race, even when they potentially could

be attacked when they participated.

Due to the fear of being attacked for their opinions, in some situations students chose to

voice their fears about speaking to their peers. These students shared that they wanted to

participate because they wanted to learn, even when they knew their opinions did not match up

with other students in the class. During one class, students were saying that they wished people

would speak more. One white female student, Rachel, shared that she knew her views were

sometimes "ignorant" and therefore she was afraid that she might be attacked for sharing her

thoughts. In the same class discussion she confessed to her peers: "I want to be able to

understand and I have opinions but I'm scared to say them because people will jump down your

throat" (Fieldnotes). This seemed to be a creative strategy that allowed Rachel to speak, while

perhaps eliminating potential attacks. During an interview, Rachel shared a situation where she

used this strategy to ask an uncomfortable question. The class was speaking about race and the

question arose concerning whether or not "reverse-racism" existed. Rachel addressed her

classmates:

This is the kind of question that I am afraid to ask. So the whole thing where it is okay to have television stations like BET for black people and black groups, but if white people were to have all white groups it would be really racist. Why? Is that because like white people are the dominant group so they can't the discriminated against?" (Fieldnotes, p 29)

Clearly, Rachel understood that her question could have been controversial because she stated that it was a question she was "afraid to ask." However, by acknowledging her own ignorance on the subject, the responses to her question were not viewed as attacks. Perhaps this was because she emphasized that she asked the question because of her desire to learn. Margo, a mixed race female student, answered Rachel's question by saying, "I think that's exactly why. Because they are the dominant group and everyone else is a minority so they don't need that." (Fieldnotes, p 29) This answer was not seen as an attack by Rachel. However if Rachel simply stated this question, the class may have seen her in a more negative light. When asked in an interview about the situation, Rachel shared,

Obviously I don't want to be seen as [ignorant]…I guess when I said the thing about like BET and how is that okay? But I feel like the reaction was okay and people knew that I just wanted to learn and were understanding and explained it fine, I didn't feel attacked" (Interview).

Even though she was scared of the possibility of being attacked, she voiced her concerns to the class and the class responded to her questions in a way that did not make her feel attacked. Here, Rachel chose the opportunity to learn as being more important that her fear of being attacked.

Other students also felt that voicing their fears was the best strategy to employ in this class. While there were both male and female students who felt that silence was the best strategy

to avoid being attacked in discussions about gender, several white students had similar feelings during discussions on race. During a class discussion, Meggie, a white female student, voiced reasons for remaining silent when the class spoke about racial issues. She states, "I mean I think big or small school, you still worry about being called a racist. That's like one of the worst things that you can be called because then you're like discriminant against a whole group of people. With race, I don't feel comfortable talking about it really. When we talked about gender, I was the oppressed gender if you will. But now I don't know really what to say." (Fieldnotes, p 25) In this situation, being called a racist by another classmate is considered an attack. However, the fear of being called a racist has not kept Meggie from participating in conversations about race; instead she participates as a member of the "dominant" group. This clearly has made the experience of talking about race more challenging, but Meggie frequently shared opinions such as these and asked questions during conversations about race. Meggie's reference to the "oppressed" group seems to imply that those who have membership in this group have more of a right to say what they think. In other words, they have less fear of being attacked for their opinions. According to Miller and Harris, this reversal of regular classroom hierarchy is common in classes where diversity issues are discussed. In these classes, the minorities are the experts because they have experienced what being the minority is like and therefore their reflections on their own experience cannot be wrong (Miller and Harris, 2005).

This idea of the "oppressed group" seems to imply that those who do the attacking are those who are members of that group. In conversations about race, the black and mixed-race students were the "oppressed group." However, in conversations about sex and gender, the females were the "oppressed group." Since this "oppressed group" changed depending on the discussion, the strategies that each student employed in class conversations changed as a result.

Derek, a black male student, shared how his role in the class changed drastically depending on the topic of the conversation. In an interview he stated, "With race I don't want to say that I really learned anything because the way the conversations went and certain opinions that were shared, albeit really controversial or really dumb, I kind of expected it." (Interview) This example supports Miller and Harris' idea that members of minority groups are the experts in discussions about race. Derek did not think he learned anything from the discussions, and he felt that he was able to pass judgement on the opinions of other students that spoke. However Derek's role was different when the class spoke about gender issues; the roles reversed and he was no longer a member of the "oppressed group." In an interview he said,

> I finally understand what it feels like to be a white person in a class talking about race. Because like as a guy in a class that's pretty much bashing the rest of guys I feel uncomfortable to say something. I don't understand what women are going through, how can I understand it? I've never been through all of the things that they've been through. And I just don't feel comfortable trying to add my input because I just don't know.
>
> (Derek Interview)

In discussions about gender, Derek felt that he was a member of the dominant group and therefore he could not "comfortably" share his thoughts. He likened himself to a white person in discussions about race, saying that he "understands" how that feels now. The group of students who were able to speak without fear of being attacked evidently changed based on the topic being discussed.

While some students utilized strategies to avoid attacking, other students chose to focus on eliminating one of the byproducts of attacking, silence. Many students wanted other students to risk saying what they really thought and not be afraid of being attacked. Students attempted to

eliminate the problem of silence by voicing their opinion that more students should speak regardless of their fears. While the former strategies seem to be more defensive strategies, this is an offensive strategy used by students in the class. There were several occasions when this occurred is discussions about race. Kyleigh, a female non-white student in the class, actively voiced her opinion that everyone in the class should speak regardless of the fear that they may be attacked. The conversation took place during the beginning of class, when several of the students in the class were sharing how they did not feel like being involved in the discussion that day. Margo, a mixed race female in the class, began the discussion by saying, "I mean someone else can talk, but I don't feel like arguing today." (Fieldnotes, p 28) Another white female student, Becky, shared the same sentiments saying, "I'm not in a place emotionally where I can argue. I'm just not there." (Fieldnotes, p 28) Kyleigh responded, "I mean, I still think you should be able to talk about it even if [people] get emotional and angry. You just need to be able to say it and discuss it." (Fieldnotes, p 29) Kyleigh wanted students to risk saying what they thought because that was the only way they could all learn from the discussions. Later, in the final exam discussion, Kyleigh addressed her peers saying, "Take an active stance on something and actually talk about like what the problem is, how like what the implications of it is" (Final exam discussion). This is an example of Kyleigh telling other students that she wants them to take a stand and defend it out loud in front of everyone. She did not directly address the students' fear of being attacked, but instead focused on eliminating the silence that is derived from fear.

Another approach that students took to discourage the silence that resulted from fear was to actively promise their peers that they would not attack anyone during a conversation. This strategy was an attempt to eliminate the problem of attacking altogether. The idea is that when students didn't have to fear being attacked, everyone could participate and therefore everyone

could learn. One black male student in the class, Derek, actively employed this strategy to help his peers overcome their fear of speaking about race. While Kyleigh contended that students would not learn if they remained silent, Derek actively promised not to attack his peers. In a class discussion, one white female, Rachel, shared her fear about being attacked for her views on race. She stated, "I have opinions but I'm scared to say them because people will jump down [my] throat." (Fieldnotes, p 26) Derek responded,

> I think that thinking like that defeats the purpose of this class. You're expected to contribute to that atmosphere. If you're not doing that, you're holding back the class and yourself. I'll make a pledge right now that I won't call anyone here racist. I want to have those discussions and have things said that are borderline racist so we can discuss them.
> (Fieldnotes, p 26)

He felt that being silent hindered the whole class and that students should be "expected" to contribute to discussions. However, he clearly realized that there was a fear of being labeled a racist in conversations about race. As was mentioned in the previous section, the "oppressed groups" held the power to share their opinions and attack the opinions of the "dominant group." This quote shows how Derek exercised his power as a member of an "oppressed group" and promised not to attack others during conversations about race. This strategy was used to alleviate the fear of being attacked for students who might otherwise remain silent.

Clearly, students in this class were very concerned about the possibility of being attacked. They did not want to be vulnerable or expose themselves to potential "attacks" or criticisms. There were several situations that students viewed as "attacks": disagreement by multiple parties of an individual opinion, direct verbal criticism of an opinion, and critique of a group that an individual identifies with (such as gender, race, or a Greek organization). There were three

strategies that students used to navigate discussions where attacking occurred: to remain silent in fear of their peers "attacking," to voice fears about speaking while acknowledging that they wanted to learn, or to promise their peers that they would not personally attack anyone during a conversation. All of these strategies were used through discussions about gender and race in this class.

Sharing Experiences

One device used frequently during class discussions about gender and race was the sharing of personal and impersonal experiences. During conversations about the effectiveness of storytelling and sharing experiences, it was clear that students had conflicting views on the function of this device. Typically the shared experiences took the form of reporting some happening that occurred to the student or a friend of the student, sometimes with an evaluation attached. This evaluation served to assess the experience. While these occasionally took the form of stories, the majority were not true stories. However, many students referred to these shared experiences as "stories" in their talk. Due to the complicated nature of sharing experiences, it seemed to serve multiple purposes in the class: shared experiences were used to prove or disprove a particular belief or theory or as proof of a particular identity, they were used as a shield, and they also were used to emotionally connect with peers and promote understanding. Some students shared experiences or stories that served multiple functions. An exploration of these experiences and stories and how they worked can shed light on the culture of the class and student concerns when talking about gender and race.

Experiences as Proof

During class discussions about gender and race, many students shared personal experiences as "proof" of their views. Some experiences provided evidence that a theory or a

certain generalization related to gender and/or race was true or false. Others functioned to establish a certain image or to create anti-racist or anti-sexist credibility. In one class, the students were discussing how society teaches women to be submissive and men to be dominant. Dr. Lenz asked the students in the class if they would stop to ask for directions if they were lost while driving. The question stemmed from Tannen's (1990) theory from her book entitled *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. The theory suggested that there are gender differences in communication, and specifically that in interactions, men tend to orient to the question, "who is one down, who is one up?" while women orient to the question, "are we close or are we distant?" According to Tannen, men would be less likely to stop and ask for directions because it would put them in a "one down" position, and it would put the person they were asking in a "one up" position. Several white female students began answering the question with personal experiences that they felt supported the theory. Lisa shared,

I used to have a boyfriend who would do that. Eventually if we were really lost he would stop and ask [for directions] but act like I needed the directions and say, 'Oh my girlfriend didn't know how to get to…' Really? They're just too proud. (Fieldnotes, p 2)

Grace, another white female student, reacted to Lisa's experience and shared, "That is 100% true. My dad has gotten into multiple fights with my mom because he won't stop to ask for help" (Fieldnotes, p 1) Becky, another white female student, added her experience as additional proof that the theory is correct. She shared,

My friend and I were looking for a bus stop and this man sent us in the totally wrong direction. Then we asked a woman, and she said we went in the totally wrong direction. She told us where to go. Even though the woman was right, she wasn't super confident. But the guy that said something that was wrong was super confident. (Fieldnotes, p 2)

In this case, the fact that the man would rather give her wrong directions instead of admitting that he did not know where the bus stop was suggested that he might have been trying to avoid putting himself in a one-down position. By pretending to know, he maintained a superior position. Each of the above experiences was shared independently and served as a piece of evidence to support the theory. The fact that none of the students elaborated any further after presenting their experiences demonstrates that the shared experiences functioned as examples that proved the theory.

However, other experiences that served as proof were not as straight forward and highlighted new considerations while still proving a theory to be true. During the same class mentioned above, the students discussed some of the prevalent gender stereotypes in society. One stereotype was that women cannot perform jobs that are typically done by males. Rachel, a white female student shared an experience to add to this discussion. Rachel's experience seems to be used as proof that while all stereotypes are not accurate, there are some that are true. She shared:

> I had to put air in my tires and I stopped at a gas station and they sent out a woman. I was
> like, oh god I wish it was a man. And then felt awful for thinking it because she filled
> them up fine. So I was all proud of my gender. But then I got home and my Dad goes,
> "Rachel! Who filled up your tires? There's like 50lbs of air in them! That's way too
> much". And then I was like, damn she did it wrong. And it was just ironic. Because I
> thought she'd do it wrong, then I thought she did it right, but she did it wrong.
> (Fieldnotes, p 2)

While Rachel originally stereotyped the woman filling up her tires, she then felt guilty about judging her. Rachel raised issues about her expectations regarding these stereotypes and how she

felt when she thought the stereotype was defied. Many times people buy into stereotypes even though they know they are stereotypes. They feel guilty for doing this; however, when the stereotypes are defied they are happy and relieved. However, her experience ultimately functions to prove that this stereotype was true; leading her to feel the whole situation was "ironic."

During a meta-conversation about the use of sharing experiences in conversations about race during the final exam discussion, students explained why they felt this technique was used to provide evidence of a claim. While students did not agree on whether or not sharing experiences and storytelling were effective, there seemed to be a shared consensus that they were both used to provide proof. During the conversation, students spoke about why stories specifically could be used as a vehicle for providing evidence when speaking about racial issues. Several of the white students felt that they needed to draw on the experiences of their friends of different races in order to contribute to the conversation. Lisa, a white female student, shared, "I couldn't use examples from my own life, I had to use examples that I had witnessed through my friends because like how else was I going to present like the argument?" (Final Exam Discussion) Here, Lisa shared that she had used her friends' experiences as evidence to support her claims. In a previous class discussion in which the students spoke about the use of code switching, Lisa had shared an experience she had with her black male friend. She stated,

> One of my best friends growing up was black. The way my friends would talk about him, he was an honorary white kid, and it always made me very uncomfortable. But then one time we went to his friend's home town [that was black] and he spoke differently to them. And I asked him why he did that and he said that's how he was connecting with them. (Fieldnotes, p 7)

As Lisa explained during the final exam, she shared this experience in order to have something credible to share. In the experience, her black male friend code switches when he speaks to other black friends. Instead of stating, "I know that code switching happens," Lisa shared an experience as a way to support the theory in a credible way. This helped Lisa share her opinions and gave "examples" or evidence that supported her claims.

There were other students who provided someone else's experience as evidence to support what they thought about the validity of the theory. Grace, a white female student, shared a personal experience during the conversation about code switching to prove that this did occur. During the discussion she shared:

> There was a boy that transferred to my high school and he was half black, but he was raised by white parents. He was adopted. And he talked very white and then like all of our friends were white so he was integrated into this white environment. He was very refined and like talked like us….public school is very segregated from private school so when we were at like basketball games or something he would like talk to his friends from the public school that he used to go to school with and I noticed…even the body language was different. And it was just talking differently and using different words that I had never heard him use in my high school. But he was the only black person to transfer to my high school." (Fieldnotes, p 7)

Here, it seems that Grace shared this experience because it was a way she could relate to the conversation and prove the theory to be true. As she stated, "he was the only black person" in her high school, which indicated that she had little "evidence" to draw from. When she refers to "his friends" from his old school, she does not state that they are black friends; the class is meant to infer that they are black due to his code switch. This example that Grace shares demonstrates that

the theory is true in the sense that code-switching is part of the experience of African Americans. However, sharing this experience allowed her to participate in the conversation, despite her self-acknowledged lack of experience interacting with black peers.

Another reason that students presented their own experiences as proof was to demonstrate why a theory was true. Derek, a black male student in the class, responded to Grace's story with his own personal experience in order to elaborate on *why* this aforementioned theory is true. Based on his experiences, he suggested that the pressure he felt to fit in is what leads to code-switching. He shared,

> I don't know, this might be something that we do intentionally because especially coming from a neighborhood that there aren't that many white people there you don't know how to act like yourself because you already know that you're probably not gunna fit in with what is there. So you kind of have to switch it up and talk the same way that they're gunna talk because you want them to understand you. You don't want to feel like a dummy. (Fieldnotes, p 7)

Derek's explanation supports the claims about code switching. His reference to "switching it up" and talking the "same way they're gunna talk" show that he has personally experienced this, and he suggests a reason that it occurs.

Another student also shared a personal experience to prove that this theory was true. Tony, a black male student, shared a personal experience that he connected to code switching. While Derek's experience provided evidence as to why code switching happens, Tony provided a more complex proof of the theory. He shared, "When I was growing up there was a [black] girl that left to go to private school but when she came back to football games, she was as cheerleader, people would be like you talk white. And it was like an insult." (Fieldnotes, p 8)

This seems to demonstrate that in addition to expectations that African Americans speak in the same dialect as white people when around white people, it also is expected that African Americans not speak like that when with members of the African American community. The fact that the black female was insulted by the other students when she did not code switch actually suggests that she *should* code switch. Interestingly, Tony does not make his point explicitly when he shared the story. The story suggested that the people that said "you talk white" thought the "norm" was that she should have switched back to the code used at the school she had left.

Experiences as Putting Forth an Image

Students also shared personal experiences to put forth a certain image. On these occasions, the experiences functioned to prove that the student was or was not a "certain way." Several white students used personal experiences to establish a non-racist identity in conversations about race. In other words, these were used to "prove" that a student was not racist. During the final exam, Jamie, a white female student, shared why she thought experiences were used in this way during conversations about race. She stated, "Maybe it was more in the beginning that we had to establish this credibility, like I'm not racist but…or this happened, or I actually have a lot of black friends or whatever. Or like anything like that" (Final exam discussion). During the discussion mentioned earlier about code switching, several students shared experiences that they prefaced with a reference to a "black friend." Lisa, a white female student who was mentioned earlier, prefaced her "story" or experience with, "One of my best friends growing up was black" (Fieldnotes, p 7). Miller and Harris (2005) asserted that students have the tendency to use phrases such as these to establish non-racist credibility, but in their study this was judged as ineffective by the students. During another class discussion, student spoke about whether they should use the word "black" or "African American." Martha, a white

female student, suggested that, based on her experience, it is hard to ask someone if they prefer "black" or "African American." She also shared that, regardless of their race, she views her black friends the same as her white friends. She stated, "I still see them the same way…a lot of my friends… my friends…who are like, like…it's hard to be like…what is your ethnicity? If you don't ask, then you're making assumptions." This provided a more complex example than the previous example because Martha did not explicitly state that she is talking about black friends. Instead, she said she sees "them the same way", and the listeners were supposed to infer that her friends are black. However, like Lisa, this was supposed to function to portray a non-racist image to the class. Martha did this by suggesting that she does not see a difference between her white and black friends. Furthermore, she does not call her friends "black" which attempted to show once again that she did not want to label them or perhaps be perceived as racist.

Several female students also used personal experiences to put forth an image of themselves as different from the "typical female." There were several times when there was a general consensus among students about what was considered typical in regards to the ways people behaved based on their gender and/or race; during these conversations several students used their own experiences to differentiate themselves from what they perceived to be the "norm." The sharing of these experiences seemed to function to prove that a theory or stereotype was not true of the individual sharing the experiences. Clara, a white female student, frequently shared experiences that served to demonstrate that she was different from most women. During the conversation about the way women dress and "slut-shaming." The general agreement among students was that society "shames" females that sleep with multiple partners and calls them "sluts." Nate, a black male student, shared, "I think that guys call girls sluts that act the way boys do. So if a girl comes in and is like, I would fuck him and him, well people would be like, damn

she's a slut. But she's acting like guys do" (Fieldnotes, p 5). Nate is implying that the girl is not acting like a girl should and this is why she is called a "slut;" because it is okay for a boy to act this way but not for a girl. While he is not condoning the name calling, he is explaining that this is the way boys think. After Nate shared this, Clara shared an experience that she felt presented a counter example of this point to the class. She argues that a girl can do and say what Nate says they cannot do; a girl can act "like a boy" and not be called a "slut." Clara uses herself to demonstrate this and show that she can talk like that, like a boy, and not be viewed in that way. She stated,

> I think [being slutty] is more of a demeanor and the way you act. If there's a girl who has only slept with one guy but dresses slutty and flirts with everyone, people still may call her a slut. But there could be a girl that sleeps with thirty guys but wears church dresses and no one would ever know or call her a slut…If I hang out with my guy friends and I'm like, dude I got laid last night, they're like, awesome…I think it's like if you [act] in a slutty way. Like if you're going around biting your lip and pulling your shirt down, that's slutty." (Fieldnotes, p 6)

This experience functioned to present a different view of Clara from the norm. She clearly thinks that if a girl sleeps with multiple partners and does not "act slutty" then the girl will not necessarily be labeled as a "slut." Her reference to her "guy friends" as "dude" seems to separate her from the girls that are "acting in a slutty way" because "dude" is a term that males use to address other males. Therefore, this shows that when Clara interacts with her "guy friends" she sees herself as one of the boys. Moreover, this experience suggested that her guy friends see her as different from the stereotype that the class was discussing. She suggests that the "guys" do not judge her, and by putting herself in the experience, she shows herself to be someone who can

brag about having sex "like a guy" without being viewed negatively. The experience seems to be used to show the class that not all women who sleep with multiple partners are viewed negatively; she is presenting an image of a female who can "act like a male" in this particular situation.

Personal experiences were also used by Clara to present an image of an "atypical" female. On a different day, the students were discussing Fishman's (1978) study which describes the strategies used by men and women in interaction. Fishman asserts that there is an unequal distribution of work in cross-sex interaction; women do more of the work in conversation while men control and benefit most from it. Several females in the class began to share stories and experiences about times where they felt they had to do more work to carry a conversation with men. Clara then shared, "It seems like women have more of a problem with silence in the first place. Like if I'm sitting around with guys playing videogames and girls come in, they've got to talk and not have silence." (Fieldnotes, p. 17) Again, this experience functions to set Clara apart from the rest of the females. She is suggesting that women care more about having conversation in the first place whereas men actually may not want to have conversation. She is showing that she is different from the women in the study because she is content sitting and playing the videogames and does not need to be having a conversation at all. In contrast, the "girls" who "come in" feel the need to talk because they do not like silence. She associates herself with the males in her experience and simultaneously disassociates herself from the "women" and "girls" that she mentions.

There were several more examples of female students sharing experiences that served to differentiate themselves from the "typical" female. During a class discussion about Maltz and Borker's cultural study of male-female miscommunication, Clara once again presented an image

of herself as "different" from typical females. Maltz and Borker's study suggests that men and women grow up in two separate sociolinguistic subcultures. One component of the theory stated that young male play-groups tend to vary in age and that boys' games were more competitive than girls' games. Students began to share memories and experiences from their childhood centered on how male and females interact at a young age. One white female student, Lisa, shared an experience that supported the theory: "I've noticed when babysitting that girls have a problem playing with younger girls, and they're like a year and a half different. They are like, 'how dare that younger girl talk to me like that.' But boys just don't care." (Fieldnotes, p 18) Clara responded,

> I know in my playground, boys played the football on the top and I played with them. And then the girls played but were more one-on-one competitive with each other. One girl would teach the other girls gymnastics and they would compare themselves personally, not just with performance. (Fieldnotes, p 18)

Here Clara embeds herself in the story, as someone playing with the boys rather than with the girls. This example is a bit more complex as it was used to in two ways: it was used to disprove the aforementioned theory and to portray Clara as a girl that fits in with the boys. Clara's experience disproves the theory because she is showing that both girls and boys are competitive, which shows a common trend across both "cultures." However, she also shows that she was competitive and liked to play the boys' games, which puts forth that idea that she was able to integrate herself into this "boys" culture. The experience showed that she was different from the "norm" as a young girl. Presenting a certain image and using an experience as "proof" were all active ways that students used this device.

Emily, a white female student, also shared her experiences in order to show that she was different from the females described in the theories and studies that were discussed in class. During one class, the students were discussing Lakoff's (1970) theory that women are taught to use a language that makes them sound and ultimately become weak, submissive, and deficient. There are several features of women's talk that Lakoff identified, one of which is specialized vocabulary. In other words, women use terms that men do not use to speak and to describe things. One example of specialized vocabulary is color language. The class discussed how women may be more detail oriented than men and have a more expansive "color vocabulary" (Fieldnotes, p. 4). During this conversation, Emily shared an experience that she had with the class that accomplished two things: she showed a different image of herself that was not in line with the women that Lakoff described and also used her experience as proof that this theory was not true. Emily shared, "maybe I'm just manly, but I mean my roommate is stylish and says all these different words for colors for things. I don't even know those. Blue is blue and red is red to me. We all understand what the color is, but we don't need an exact description" (Fieldnotes, p 4). This example shows that this feature of women's talk that Lakoff identified in her theory did not apply to Emily. In this way, she is attempting to perhaps disprove the generalizability of the theory. However, she does concede that her roommate "says these different words for colors" which shows that her roommate does use this feature described in Lakoff's theory. Emily describes her roommate as "stylish" and she claims that she might just be "manly," however it seems that she is content with being different from the women that "fit into" this theory. Like Clara, Emily does not want to be categorized into a description of what women are like. Both Clara and Emily used their experiences to present images of themselves that contrasted with the generalized images of women that the class discussed.

Using Experiences as a Shield

Another function that sharing experiences served was to provide a shield for students when they spoke about sensitive issues like gender and race. This was a more defensive strategy used by students. Sharing experiences and telling stories served to protect face, to avoid agency, and to enable them to bring up sensitive issues.

Sharing personal experiences helped students to save face during the class. In the final exam discussion, Katie, a white female student, suggested, "People have a tendency where they want to save face, and that's totally normal and completely understandable, it's uncomfortable to not use [stories] as a shield" (Final exam discussion). During the discussion about code switching, which was previously mentioned, Leah, a white female student, began to speak about her experience by saying, "I was actually talking to my friend, my friend is black, not that it matters. Oh man, I shouldn't have said that. Well it matters to him but it doesn't matter… Okay well, so my friend…" (Fieldnotes, p. 7) In this situation, Leah corrects herself after she refers to her friend as black and then corrects herself again once she says "not that it matters". In this situation, Leah's experience adds to a conversation about code switching among the black community, something with which she as a white female has little to no experience. After being in a class that specifically focuses on race and racism, it seems that one of the students' biggest fears is being seen as a racist. While this example could function to prove that the theory about code switching is true, the focus on "correctly" introducing her friend to the class seems to suggest that Leah was more concerned with how she introduced the subject and how the class perceived her. After saying that her friend was a "black friend," she realized that she just made race an important factor in her story. Leah obviously thinks that pointing this out may be "taboo"

and therefore she corrects herself saying, "not that it matters." This self-correction suggests that she is attempting to save face by fixing her "mistake."

Sharing experiences can provide a more comfortable way to introduce a sensitive topic by allowing the student to avoid agency, or ownership of an opinion. Avoiding ownership of an opinion can protect a student from being viewed in a negative way. During a class discussion, the students spoke about protecting face and the idea that no one wants to be viewed as racist. Luna, a mixed race female, shared an experience that she had that countered this idea. She stated, "I don't agree…because when I was in high school people threw out their opinions and backed it up with like, 'oh, it's my opinion so you can't disagree with that.' I don't think they cared about being seen as racist." (Fieldnotes, p 25) Luna clearly felt that these students did not care about being seen as racist because they "threw out their opinions" and then told others that the opinions could not be wrong. This experience shows that the students in her high school class used their own experiences to protect themselves from the critique of other students. However, Luna also used her experience to avoid agency in her disagreement with the class's consensus that people do not want to be viewed as racist. This provided a shield because no one could deny Luna's own experiences. During the final exam discussion, Luna, suggested,

> Talking about race and gender is such a sensitive topic, I think you do have to use stories to even bring it up. No one's going to be like, well I think this is wrong and here's why. They're going to be like here is things that have happened to me, evidence that has happened to me, that has led me to feel this way. It's kind of weird to be like, this is how I feel. And that's it. (Final Exam Discussion)

Luna suggests that using "stories" allows a student to avoid taking a stance or asserting a controversial opinion as she states that "no one" is going to say that something is "wrong." Not

only does she suggest that students should not share opinions on sensitive issues, she asserts that "it's kind of weird." By using her own experiences to share an idea or opinion, Luna felt that she could avoid seeming "weird" in the eyes of their peers.

Similarly, if a student shared an experience about another person, the student could not be held responsible for the actions or opinions of another person. Emily, a white female student, acknowledged this when she stated, "I don't know if anyone noticed this, but a lot of us talk about our friends and what they say. But we don't talk about ourselves and our opinions and what we think. We're not taking ownership." (Final exam discussion) This highlights another reason why students share experiences when speaking about "taboo" topics. Avoiding ownership of an opinion can allow students to voice opinions that they otherwise may not know how to share. Perhaps another reason this strategy is used is that sharing experiences helped relieve the fear of being attacked. In the previous section on attacking, it was clear that the fear of being attacked was one of the students' main concerns. In this way sharing experiences through storytelling and attacking are linked, as the former helps to eliminate the latter.

Sharing Experiences to Promote Understanding and Empathy

Lastly, sharing experiences and telling stories were devices that students used to emotionally connect with peers and promote understanding. During several classes, students debated whether or not these strategies were an effective means of communicating about gender and race. While the class was divided on this issue, several students felt that sharing personal experiences or stories was powerful because they helped others empathize with the teller. Two experiences in particular that were shared seemed to resonate emotionally with the class. Emily, a white female student in the class, addressed two of her classmates who she felt had shared powerful stories that she had connected with. These two students, Derek, a black male student,

and Jamie, a white Jewish female student, had previously shared personal experiences about being attacked for their race and religion. During the class that they shared their experiences, Dr. Lenz read aloud written responses of students to the question "what is the difference between white and black women's talk?" One of the responses stated that white women sounded sophisticated and educated, while it labeled black women as having poor pronunciation, grammar, and generally sounding less intelligent. After hearing this response read aloud by Dr. Lenz, several students in the class made audible noises to express their disbelief. After listening to this response, Derek shared a personal experience about the first time he cried because of racial slur:

> It just made me think of this one situation that happened last year while I was at work. Um, one of my co-workers he was walking by and saying something to somebody's wife. And he is a short, blonde haired, blue eye guy. It made the lady's husband mad. So [the husband] started going after the guy and I tried to break it up. My friend said something to him as I'm taking him outside and he thought it was me. And he yells "oh shut up you're just a coon and that's why your people never make it anywhere." At that moment, that was the very first time I ever cried about anything that was said to me because that's the very first time that anything like that was ever said to me. And like, I don't know. Part of me was surprised and another part of me was like that's happened so many times to so many people before. And I just feel bad for his people, or his children, because he's got to live with that. (Fieldnotes, p. 9)

In sharing this experience, it seems that Derek tried to demonstrate the emotional toll this had on him. He stated that it was the "first time I ever cried about anything that was said to me," which emphasized to his classmates how hurtful this was. Sharing this experience with the class

allowed his peers to empathize with his emotions and perhaps served to demonstrate to other students that prejudice and racism are present day realities. After Derek shared his experience, Jamie followed with a story about a negative experience she had in middle school. She also seemed to appeal to her classmates' emotions and described what it felt like to be the victim of prejudice and hate. Jamie shared,

> I mean I'm obviously white, but I'm also Jewish and a lot of people knew that about me growing up. So one day I was walking down the hallway in middle school and this girl, who I hate to this very day, was walking behind me and she started, she was with one of her friends, and she started sniffing. Like she was smelling something. And she said this loud enough so I could hear, "wow it smells like the burning crematoriums, its smells like a burning oven." And I turned around and just looked, is it even worth saying something back? Like in whose mind is it ever okay to say something like that? Ever. That will stick with me for the rest of my life. (Fieldnotes, p. 9)

Here, Jamie uses the word "hate" at the beginning of her story which perhaps impelled listeners to wonder what caused the hatred. The emotions Jamie felt when recounting this event were clearly still strong. As she concluded, she stated that this will "stick with me for the rest of my life," suggesting once again the impact this had on her. Both Derek and Jamie shared their personal experiences to help the class understand the emotional impact of these events. As was mentioned previously, during the final exam discussion, Emily cited both of their experiences as ones that expressed emotion. She shared:

> Derek and Jamie when you guys had your stories about um being like singled out cause of your religion and your race, like those, that one day. Like I think about that all the time still. Like that's what you take home, what you hear, like your emotions just made the

stories so much more powerful. I think emotions really exemplify types of feelings and

like types of understanding that you can't get reading numbers…It's really powerful to

hear human stories and connect on an individual level. (Final exam discussion)

Emily showed just how "powerful" these shared experiences could be. If both Jamie's and

Derek's objective was to move students in an emotional way, they clearly succeeded. The

emotion in their stories functioned to connect with other students and promote a greater

understanding of the struggle they went through.

Sharing experiences also functioned to build trust among students. These experiences, in

which students shared their emotions and information about their background, helped build trust

among their peers, which in turn led to better communication. According to Becky, a white

female student, "We need honest communication and honest communication needs trust. And I

think that the idea of storytelling in a group builds trust between them. So it's like you know my

experiences…now we can relate to one another through a story." (Final Exam Discussion) It

seemed that the more students shared their own experiences or heard their peers share theirs, the

greater level of "trust" there was. As Becky stated, this trust helped the students relate to one

another and it seems students used sharing experiences as a tool to better communication in the

class.

Shared experiences and storytelling were clearly complicated devices used within this

class. They served multiple purposes in the class as shared experiences were used as proof, they

were used as to protect face, and they also were used to emotionally connect with peers and

promote trust. An examination of the uses of this device highlighted the culture of the class and

student concerns when speaking about gender and race.

Differences between conversations about gender and conversations about race

During the semester, students spoke about issues concerning gender and also issues concerning race. Clearly, this type of discourse is challenging for students. In both classroom discussions and outside interviews, students spoke about perceived differences between conversations about race and conversations about gender. These global comments of students' perceptions were generally not tied to a particular day or conversation. They served to highlight the differences between gender and race conversations. While students saw conversations about gender as different from conversations about race, they recognized that both have their challenges. From analyzing students' metacommunication about the discourse, it was clear that the metacommunication focused on more global level differences between discussions about race and gender.

Whereas the difference in views did not reflect difference in race among the students during conversations about race, the difference in views did reflect the difference of sexes in conversations about gender. In other words, students' views varied based on the students' gender in discussions about gender, but students' perspectives did not vary based on their race in conversations about race. In formal interviews students were asked how they felt the conversations about race differed from the conversations about gender. There were two main ways that students perceived these conversations about race; while some students felt that conversations about race were lively and that many students were engaged, others felt that these conversations were touchy and that students were timid. In an interview with Derek, a black male student, he stated, "there was always some type of lively dialogue once we started talking about race." (Interview) Derek characterizes the conversations as "lively," which seems to be a positive portrayal of the conversations. This also seems to suggest that multiple people were speaking and that Derek did not find the conversations to be dull. Other students also perceived

these conversations to be engaging and varied. Bob, a white male student, shared, "with um race, there's like a lot more, I don't know what the word is, I guess there's a lot different opinions. Like one person will say one thing and then someone else will kind of contradict them." (Interview) Here, Bob stressed that his major take-away from the conversations about race was the differences in opinions and the dialogue between students. Clearly, both Bob and Derek perceived these conversations as lively and engaging, despite their different racial backgrounds.

The second characterization of the class discussions on race was that they were uncomfortable and that the students were walking on egg-shells. Tom, a mixed-race male, shared that he felt the conversations about race were "touchy." He stated, "Everyone's kind of like tip-toeing around what they really want to say and they're afraid of offending someone in the class…Race is definitely more touchy for sure." (Interview) Similarly, Tony, a black male student, characterized the conversations about race, saying, "Race, like, if there's like minorities in a room probably they don't wanna like step on our toes. Like we mentioned in the class before, because they don't want to hurt anybody's feelings." (Interview) Here, "they" refers to white students in the class and "our" refers to the black or minority students in the class. This description of the conversations about race seems to also portray a group of students who were cautious when they spoke. These descriptions proved to be interesting because they show how during conversations about race, race did not seem to be a deciding variable in how a student perceived the conversations.

There also seemed to be two ways that students perceived conversations about gender; there was a correlation between the sex of the student and the way the student perceived conversations about gender. The general consensus among the male students was that, compared to conversations about race, students were more open and shared more opinions during

conversations about gender. However, the general consensus amongst female students was that the women were comfortable speaking, but the men did not participate. Emily, a white female student, stated, "I felt like with gender sure, we're all new in the class, and it was two sides, but guys didn't talk too much." (Final Exam Discussion) Emily pointed out that the conversations about gender took place in a "new" environment; however, her use of the word "sure" suggests that she did not think this validates the "guys'" lack of participation. She uses "sure" in the way that one could use the word "yea," as a way to point out that she understands the predicament of the students in the class because she is one. She understands that it was harder to speak at the beginning of class because everyone is new, however "but" signifies that she thinks the "guys" still should have participated more. During a one-on-one interview Rachel, a white female student, shared, "[gender] is something that I'm interested in and like I like that, but I felt like it was very one sided. We only have like six guys in the class and they weren't really talking that much." (Interview) Rachel also perceived the discussions about gender as being dominated by the females in the class. In class, Rachel shared, "The guys won't start talking until we talk about race." (Fieldnotes, p 11) She actively called out the "guys" in the class about their silence. This further emphasizes how comfortable Rachel was during these conversations about gender, which contrasts with her portrayal of the males as silent and possibly uncomfortable. While Emily and Rachel clearly thought that the men did not participate in conversations about gender, the males in the class did not acknowledge their lack of participation when they spoke about these conversations.

Despite the females' portrayal of a one-sided discussion during conversations about gender, the males in the class perceived the conversations to be "easier" than conversations about race. Although the males were the "dominant group" in the class during conversations about

gender, they found these discussions to be more comfortable than conversations about race. In three separate one-on-one interviews with male students, each student was asked how he felt gender conversations differed from conversations about race. Derek, a black male, shared, "I realize that people were more open and more ready to talk when we were talking about gender and women studies and that's probably because half of the class is women." (Interview) Derek did not explain how he personally experienced differences but gave a generalization about how the class reacted differently to conversations about gender. Bob, a white male, also stated, "I think kind of talking about gender, a lot of people agreed a lot more. Um, and I think people felt a lot more comfortable talking about gender." (Interview) While Bob generalizes, and says that "people" are more comfortable, however whether he includes himself in that group of people is unclear. While the question was meant to be interpreted as a personal question, it seems like Derek and Bob answered from the class's perspective. Bob clearly presented a class in which the conversations about gender were "easier" than conversations about race. In another interview, Tom, a mixed race male, said, "I think the gender conversations were a little bit more easier. Especially for the girls because we had a huge class full of girls so they loved to um chime in about you know their experiences as women." (Interview) Here, Tom specifies that the women felt especially comfortable; however the women's comfort seems to have positively affected the way the males in the class perceived talk about gender conversations. All three males shared an image of a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere during conversations about gender. However, all three males also answered the question in an impersonal manner. Derek, Bob, and Tom were all asked how the gender conversations differed from conversations about race, and they answered with how they felt "other people" or "girls" in the class acted during these conversations. This may show that the males really did not feel more comfortable but perceived

the class to be more comfortable since the majority of the class were females (who were comfortable). Perhaps these impersonal responses also resulted from the perceived lack of connection to the subject matter in conversations about gender.

Yet another difference in the way students viewed conversations about race and gender was the level of profoundness or "depth" of the conversation. While there were differences in how students viewed these conversations, it seems that most students felt that the conversations about race were more emotional, intense, and "real" than the conversations about gender. In an interview with Katie, a white female student, she shared,

> I think that at the end of the day conversations about race are more emotionally charged and people get more heated about what's said. I know we had some heated discussions about gender, but it was like one topic. I feel like every class can get heated with race and I kind of think it hits more close to home. I know that there was like women's oppression but that doesn't, that's not slavery. It always comes back to that, but that's sort of the defining factor. (Interview)

In short, it seems that Katie is saying that racism, and the roots of racism, caused more "heated" and "emotionally charged" conversations. She contends that gender-related issues are not as big of a problem as racial issues. She also seems to be suggesting that there were generally less arguments during conversations about gender. To further explain the difference in intensity of these sorts of conversations, Katie shared an example. She stated,

> One time we spent like a whole class talking about how women sometimes just want to vent and men want to offer up solutions. And we all had a story to share and talk about that and I feel like the majority of the class was spent on that, and it was like interesting, but nobody was getting heated. And then I don't know, I feel like we could have one

topic on like, I don't know, something with race, like is it okay to use the "N" word and

then like immediately that gets people like riled up (Interview).

Once again Katie emphasized the difference between the two topics by labeling gender as

"interesting" and race conversations as "heated." This reiterated her point that talking about race

is more intense than talking about gender.

Other students also found the conversations about gender to be less intense or perhaps

less serious. When Tom was asked about any differences between class discussions about gender

and those about race, he said, "The rape thing is kind of like a miscommunication between two

when racism is someone being labeled as something else. Like really nasty, like putting a label

on somebody… when everyone talked about gender everyone was…like comfortable talking

about it." (Interview) Part of this quote seemed to be referring to the two-culture model, which

critics argue could be used to justify date rape as miscommunication. Tom, a mixed race male

student, referenced this issue during an interview when he was asked about any differences

between class discussions of gender and those on race. Tom thought that he felt many gender

were largely due to miscommunication, while racism happened because people passed judgment

on one other. When Tom referred to "the rape thing," he seemed to be referring to the

conversation that occurred in that previous class. However, he felt that race issues were more

difficult to talk about because students felt like they might be labeled as a "racist" or some other

"nasty" label. Tom is saying that race issues are more uncomfortable to talk about compared to

gender issues because of the gravity of race issues. Like Katie, Tom's comments suggested that

talk about race is more serious and intense than talk about gender.

Conversations about race issues were also perceived to be more profound than gender

issues because of how "real" the discussion were. Rachel, a white female student, shared, "When

we're talking about race I feel like, like it's getting so real. Like I love it…I think like our discussions on race have been like more profound that our discussions on gender." (Rachel Interview) Clearly, Rachel felt that the conversations about race have real world applications that make them "real." For this reason, she perceived conversations about race to be more "profound" than gender. It seems that when students spoke about the differences between these two topics of conversation, the general consensus was that race issues are more serious and profound than gender issues.

Another difference highlighted through students' metacommunication was that while the students felt that they learned about gender, they felt that they actually got to experience how to engage in discussions about race. They read about different theories and discussed them during conversations about gender, yet they saw the conversations about race as a way to learn from each other. There was a qualitative difference in what students saw themselves doing in these discussions. According to Emily, a white female student, "It was more learning about gender than discussing it. But race, it was a discussion and it was engaging at a higher level." (Final Exam Discussion) While Emily did not further explain herself, she showed that she viewed "discussions" to be a symbol of "higher level" engagement. The conversations about race were once again shown to be "deeper" than conversations about gender, however for slightly different reasons. After Emily shared this, Derek, a black male student, stated, "The class structure allows for that because it brings together people who want to learn about gender and then different people that know about race." (Final Exam Discussion) This quote suggests that everyone can learn about gender, but only certain people "know" about race. Clearly, they see this as a major difference between the two topics. While Emily and Derek hinted at this difference between "learning" and "knowing," they never elaborated on what they meant by that. Perhaps their lack

of explanation shows that they noticed this difference and knew that it is important, however they did not know why. During a discussion about the importance of speaking about racial issues, Grace, a white female student, shared,

> Why should we talk about race in general? An initial goal is to identify that different races have different norms and styles which leads to different speech and conventions. And understanding this allows you to communicate with people at a higher level, such as a classroom dynamic.

Perhaps this quote can help explain both Emily's and Derek's perceived differences between learning and knowing. Grace explains that talking about race allows students to communicate with people of different races due to increased awareness and understanding of different styles of communication. Like Emily, Grace contends that this leads to communicating "at a higher level." While the students learned about gender, they learned how to communicate with students of a different race in the class. The students perceived this to be a more valuable learning experience than the "book knowledge" they learned during discussions about gender issues.

Conclusion

This study revealed students' use and understanding of several approaches to talk and perceptions of talk about gender and race. In this class students were very concerned with "being attacked." They did not want to be vulnerable or expose themselves to "attacks" or criticisms that they saw as having personal implications or image implications. It seemed that there were several different ways that attacking was used and there were conflicting views on how to navigate discussions when attacking occurred. The sharing of personal and impersonal experiences was also a device that was frequently used during conversations about gender and race. This device seemed to serve multiple purposes in the class: shared experiences were used as

proof that a belief or theory was either true or false or proof of a particular identity, they were used as a shield, and they also were used to emotionally connect with peers and promote understanding. Clearly, this type of discourse is challenging for students and they spoke about the challenges they faced speaking about both gender and race issues. This served to highlight the differences between gender and race conversations within this class.

While the results of this study seem to confirm several previous findings, the results also call into question some of the theories that were reviewed in the literature. Within the body of scholarship pertaining to this study, there were three lines of research examined: research that describes how gender and racial identities are made relevant in discourse, research on the impact of diversity and diversity courses in the undergraduate classroom and studies that examine the negotiation of tensions within the classroom. To the extent that research that is specific to the way that students talk about the issues of gender and race within the classroom is largely absent in the aforementioned studies, this study has quite interesting implications. Any attempts to theorize how identities are made relevant in discourse, if there are educational benefits of diversity courses, or how to negotiate tensions within the classroom should be broadened to include the way in which students themselves speak about the issues.

Within this study, it was clear that the students perceived each conversation to have "oppressed" and "dominant" participants, which seemingly fails to support Fraser's (1992) findings that students are speaking under the illusion that power differences are neutralized within the classroom. In this study, students perceived the societally "oppressed" group to be more comfortable speaking and as having a more "legitimate" right to share their experiences. In several interviews and class discussions, members of the "dominant" group shared that they felt uncomfortable sharing their opinions and sometimes did not speak at all. These findings support

Miller and Harris's (2005) study as they report similar results with respect to talk about race specifically in the class they studied. This suggests that perhaps power is perceived to be reversed from the societal norm within this class. Once again, this could be because the conversations in this class were about the societal injustices and dichotomies within our culture. Whereas if these students been observed in a different classroom environment, the findings would most likely be very different.

However, there are several practical ways that my findings could be used by other researchers to expand upon their studies. In Donadey's (2002) study she claims that when one group of students is speaking and dominating discussion in the classroom, changes need to occur in order to attempt to have an equitable classroom environment. It becomes problematic when one group of students dominates discussions because it presents a very limited opinion and hinders students' ability to learn about the opinions of students who are different from themselves. My study suggests that one group of students will dominate a discussion because the other group of students feel uncomfortable sharing their opinions. This was largely due to the fear of getting "attacked." However, in this class, students shared that they felt silence impeded learning and they wanted to have an "equitable classroom environment." Students used metacommunication to address these issues and this is a method that seems to be unaddressed in Donadey's study. Examining how students view the classroom environment and how they talk about fixing issues is one way of beginning to "make the changes" that Donadey is suggesting.

During the classes that the students discussed Lakoff's (1975) theory, it was clear that the females in the class initially strongly opposed this theory. They did not want to acknowledge that any part of this theory was true. Lakoff suggests that the concept of female inferiority in speech has been linked to the culture in which girls are taught to "act and speak" like a woman. Lakoff

asserts that there is double bind between the way society tells women to act and the way a strong, independent adult should act. She asserts, "It will be found that the overall effect of 'women's language' is this: it submerges a woman's personal identity, by denying her the means of expressing herself…[and] by treating her as an object…but never a serious person with individual views" (p. 48). Lakoff's assertion is that if women speak the way they are taught, they begin to become weak and submissive. While my study did not focus on evaluating the inferiority of female speech in the classroom, the females in the class did present certain traits or speech styles that seem to fit with Lakoff's theory. Overall, the female students seemed to preface opinions and share their fears of speaking more than the male students. While this did not make them seem completely "weak" or "submissive," it shows that perhaps they thought more about the effect their comments have on their classmates and on their image.

Clearly, the female students did not like that this theory suggested that they were "weak." However, as they continued to discuss the theory they began to connect some of their experiences or actions with features of Lakoff's theory. This shows that these female students do not want to be portrayed as "weak"; however, they realize that many women, including themselves, still embody some of the features of Lakoff's theory. They viewed this to be problematic. Perhaps this shows that if women are more consciously aware of the societal pressure to be submissive, they will be able to bring awareness to the issue and eventually combat this model of "how to be a woman."

This study of student discourse about gender and race also served to support the findings in Miller and Harris' (2005) study. They contend that in classes where the topic of class discussion was white privilege, white students frequently communicated the message that "everyone is the same." Contrastingly, black students would communicate the message that

"we're different"; the two different messages would switch back and forth throughout discussions.   In this study, the students did initially present this message during conversations about race. White students wanted to present a non-racist identity and they thought that conveying the message "everyone is the same" worked to establish said identity. However, after they discussed how this actually undermines the black students' experiences, they actively tried to acknowledge the differences and asked what could be done to change this. Once again, it seemed that students' metacommunication enabled them to identify the issues in the way that they talked and attempt to change their habits.

Several studies that were reviewed claimed that there was a "chilly climate" for females in the classroom; my study on the way that students speak about gender and race can reveal female students' attitudes towards their environment and their comfort level due to the way they talk about their experiences in the classroom. This can reveal whether this "chilly climate" theory held true in this class. Research in the 1980's and early 1990's claimed a "chilly climate" for female students in the classroom (Hall and Sandler, 1982; Foster and Foster, 1994; Sadker and Sadker, 1994), Allan and Madden (2006) suggested that examining the speech of particular groups can lead to conclusions about classroom quality and climate. They looked at male and female student speech to identify certain patterns or behaviors such as reinforcing stereotypes of women, questioning women's competence, men taking over leadership in small group activities, frequency of women speaking, or whether or not men dominate discussions. They concluded that the type of data that the aforementioned "chilly climate" researcher used to study a classroom would influence their results. They suggest that researchers who used qualitative data, class discussions and interviews, would conclude a chilly climate for women (p. 707). However, my study, which focuses on students' talk within the classroom, would suggest otherwise. Not only

did the female students participate frequently in both discussions about gender and race, they did not suggest that they felt silenced or uncomfortable due to the fact that they were female in a mixed gender class. Interestingly, it seems that the finding from Allan and Madden's study is slightly reversed in my study because it was the male students that were "outnumbered" and more uncomfortable during conversations about gender. Therefore, the male students perceived the climate to be more "chilly" than the female students. Perhaps the reason that the findings are different in my study compared to Allan and Madden's study is that I chose to study a classroom where students were speaking about diversity issues. The demographic is also different. Therefore, the female students may have felt that they were more connected to the topics being discussed and more comfortable sharing their experiences. However, it is clear that the female students in this class did not perceive the classroom climate to be "chilly" in the way that several past studies suggest.

While there are several theoretical implications of this study, these findings also have practical implications that could be expanded upon by researchers who are studying diversity issues in the classroom. Gender and race present real world issues and these findings show the ways that students react to and approach discussing the issues. Instructors teaching about diversity issues could also use these findings to help know the types of things that students struggle with and how they perceive these issues differently. This may be helpful to know in advance. While there are many studies that suggest ways to overcome resistance in the classroom or studies on how to create a "safe" environment, it is imperative that instructors are also aware of the ways in which the students speak about these issues. Students' metacommunication shows how they view their own talk within the class, which helps them work through their own views and issues. Students' ability to reflect and their level of insight into their own talk could also

signify the strength of a discussion. Furthermore, this study could be used by students who are interested in taking a class on diversity issues because they would be aware of several potential issues that they could struggle with during the discussions.

Several limitations can be noted in this study. First, this study focused on one class in a four-year institution which means that the results cannot be applied generally to any diversity classroom where these issues are discussed. There were more females than males in the class and the majority of students were white. Of the five students of a different race, they were predominantly black. Additionally, most of these students had relatively similar demographic information. Most of these students are well educated, middle to upper class students from the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. All of these factors limit the generalizability of these findings.

Another limitation is that as a student researcher, this was my first major study and my own experience is limited. I certainly progressed in my skills as an ethnographic researcher throughout the course of the study, yet this proved challenging at times because of my lack of experience. Another limitation in this study was my role as a white female and the impact this had in interaction with the students in the class, specifically in interviews. More than half of the interviews I conducted were with male students and three of the interviews that I conducted were with black or mixed race students. As a white female, I was considered part of the "oppressed" group in conversations about gender, but part of the "dominant" group during conversations about race. Therefore, when I asked the male interviewees questions about gender issues, they may have felt uncomfortable sharing how they truly felt in case it offended me or perhaps made me think "less" of them. On the other hand, when I asked the black and mixed race students about race issues, they may have felt uncomfortable talking about these issues one-on-one with a white female whom they did not personally know. This may have impacted the responses that the

interviewees gave to my questions. On a more personal level, I was more comfortable interviewing the female students because an instant bond was created since we were both in the "same boat." Across the board, the interviews with female students lasted longer than the interviews with male students which shows that both I and the female interviewees were most likely more comfortable during those interviews than during the interviews with the male interviewees.

Furthermore, this class specifically focused on the issues of gender and race which meant that students were consciously aware of the way that they were talking about the issues. For example, if this study observed how students talked about these issues in a history or politics class, the results may have varied. For example, a history class could focus on why these issues happened in the past or perhaps focus on the roots of the issues. In this class, the focus was on the way these issues affected society today and there was not a large focus on the past. Therefore, students were exposed to different content and ideas in this class which would clearly change the way they talked about the issues.

There are several future research studies that could be done as a result of the findings of this study. First, further studies could be done on the idea of "attacking" and sharing personal experiences within the classroom. While this study found that both of these approaches were used during conversations about gender and race, further studies could be done to test these approaches in other classes or perhaps outside of the classroom. This could be done by looking at how frequently these approaches were used as well as identifying correlations between the approaches. A quantitative study could be done to identify certain occasions when students used these approaches or whether their use is connected with particular topics. Second, further studies could be done to examine the impact of group membership on students' actions, friendships, and

other relationships. Third, as a peer to the students that I observed, I realized that the way they spoke in the classroom differed greatly from the way they spoke about these issues outside of the classroom. Interestingly, there did seem to be a number of students who did speak about these issues outside of the classroom. Perhaps an analytical study of how discussions within the classroom are translated into discussions outside of the classroom could be relevant and useful. Fourth, research could be done on metacommunication in the classroom. It would be interesting to find if students view metacommunication as a signifier for better conversations and perhaps investigate if it serves any other purposes. Lastly, while completing this study, I realized that I had never considered the way that I speak about gender and race. As a student and a soon-to-be graduate, I realize that an auto-ethnography about the ways in which I speak and think about gender and race issues could be an interesting supplement to this research. I hope to pursue further studies based on this research, whether it be an auto-ethnography or another study based on my findings.

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Appendix A
August 26, 2014
Consent Form
You are invited to participate in a study on the experiences of students talking about race and
gender in the classroom. You are being asked because you are a student in MCS/GWMS340,
which is a class centered on these topics. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions
you may have before agreeing to this study.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of students' experiences and
perceptions of these conversations. Specifically, this study will focus on issues and concerns that
arise in the course of talking about gender and race/ethnicity. If you agree to be in this study, we
will observe class discussions, occasionally using an audio recorder, and may ask you to
participate in one in-depth interview in which you will be asked about your own experiences in
class discussions. Interviews are expected to last approximately one hour each.

We do not anticipate any risks for you participating in this study, other than those encountered in
day-to-day life. Indirect benefits of your participation in this study include contributing to our
knowledge about the experiences of students who engage in conversations about issues related to
gender and race/ethnicity.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with
the College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting
any relationships.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may
publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Your
name and any names to which you refer will be changed. Interviews will be audio-taped and
transcribed. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access
to the records. Dr. Sheryl Lenz will keep the copies of written assignments and audio-tapes for 5
years, and then they will be destroyed.

Contacts and Questions: The researchers conducting this study are Amanda Lucock and Dr.
Sheryl Baratz Lenz. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you
may contact them at:

Amanda Lucock   (401) 575-2774
                     amlucock@ursinus.edu
                     MCS#958

Sheryl Lenz   (610) 409-3572
                     sLenz@ursinus.edu
                      Ritter Center 216-B

   Please sign below if you agree to the above terms:

_____
   Signature of Participant   Date

Appendix B

Interview Questions:

1. People take different approaches to talking about "hot topics" like race/gender.
   ➢ Can you describe approaches taken by different people in the class using specific examples?
2. This class focuses on both sex and gender and race and ethnicity. How would you compare the class discussions on each of the areas?
   ➢ Do you have any specific examples?

3. Describe the most memorable class discussion so far. What made it memorable to you?
4. What is the most intriguing or significant thing you have learned so far about gender/sex and communication and/or race/ethnicity and communication?
5. Do you feel like you can say what you think in the class? Why/why not?
   ➢ Can you give me an example of a time where you did?
   ➢ When you didn't?
6. Can you give me an example of a time when you felt uncomfortable sharing your thoughts?
   ➢ What made you uncomfortable?
   ➢ What did you do? Why?
   ➢ How did it work out? What did you learn? Specifics if possible.
7. Can you think of a time where you felt angry, upset, or annoyed with something in the class? Describe what happened and how you handled it.