

## **RACISM IN THE CLASSROOM AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENT ACADEMIC CHOICES**

Jenna Castillo, Chase Koob, Abby Olson, Maria Jacquelyn Quispe  
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### **Executive Summary**

In the fall of 2017, the Sociology/Anthropology 371 students conducted research on racism and racialized microaggressions in St. Olaf classrooms and curriculum. We sent an anonymous online survey to 2,844 students, about 11 weeks into the semester, receiving 718 responses, a 25.32 response rate. Our sample reflects many demographics of the student body, and it matches the general rule of thumb for a sample of a population of approximately 3,000.

Prior studies have found that the cumulative effects of racialized microaggressions on college campuses harm the emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of students of color and hinder their academic and social lives. However, little prior research examines the relationship between a college's curriculum and the presence of racial microaggressions. Our research focuses on four key questions: 1) In students' views, to what extent and in what ways does the curriculum include racially diverse voices and perspectives? 2) To what extent are racially diverse perspectives integrated vs. tokenized in the curriculum? 3) Which students participate in classroom discussions of racially diverse works or of issues of racism in the classroom? 4) How does the absence of racially diverse perspectives affect students' academic choices?

The most important results of our research include:

- The vast majority of respondents, 90.4% (497), reported having participated in at least “a few” or more discussions of race or racism in their classes. However, 9.6% (53) reported “never or almost never” actively participating doing so.
- 58.8% of respondents (324) report “never or almost never” feeling expected to participate in these discussions more than other students. However, 70.3% (274) of white students “never or almost never” feel this compared to 23.4% (25) of students of color. Moreover, 26.2% (28) of students of color feel expected to participate more than other students in “all or almost all” classroom discussions of race and racism.
- Nearly 20% of respondents report that they felt shut down from participating in *at least* “some of the discussions” of race or racism in the classroom.
- 40% of respondents reported that different aspects of diversity in the classroom have “never or almost never” affected their registration choices. Additionally, almost 10% reported that they “didn't or didn't want to register for a class” 5 times or more because they didn't believe the professor was adequately equipped to address microaggressions.

Based on our research, we offer four recommendations to St. Olaf College:

1. Based on the impact of the race and training of professors on students' registration decisions, we suggest that the college hire more faculty of color.
2. Based on our findings regarding student participation in discussions, we recommend that all professors provide anonymous feedback forms for students to respond to at multiple points in the semester, regarding course content, its presentation, and class discussions.

3. Based on the findings outlined previously and as a more proactive effort, the college should establish a required first-year seminar in which students study and explore issues of identity, power, privilege, intersectionality, and contextualized history, as well as the role of intersectionality in diversity.
4. Based on all of our findings, the institution as a whole should redefine what diversity means to the college and how it is used in the college's policies, programs, and promotional materials. The language of diversity used by the college neglects intersectionality and its impacts on individuals and the community.

## Review of Literature

Racism and racially-motivated microaggressions in college classrooms are the subject of a growing body of research and investigation. Research has focused on a number of topic areas, such as defining and naming various types of racially-motivated microaggressions (Minikel-Lacocque 2013; Sue et al. 2007), the reactions and responses of students of color to racially-motivated microaggressions (Harper 2013), and the impacts of these microaggressions on the academic and social lives of students of color (Museus and Park 2015; Henry and Tator 1994). However, this body of research includes limited study of the relationship between a college's curriculum and the presence or absence of racially-motivated microaggressions in its classrooms.

Previous research exploring the relationship between racism and curriculum has examined the problematic nature of Eurocentric curricula (Dhillon et al. 2015, Fishman and McCarthy 2006; Henry and Tator 1994), faculty use of racist pedagogies in the classroom (Delpit 1988; Dhillon et al. 2015, Fishman and McCarthy 2006; Harper 2012), and the failure to address positionality in the classroom and in course materials (Fishman and McCarthy 2006; Harper 2013).

### *Eurocentric Curricula*

Eurocentrism is a crucial aspect of racism within college curricula. A Eurocentric, or Western-focused education, is characterized by giving preference to white scholars and their works, the exclusion scholars of color or inclusion in tokenizing ways, and the omission or ignorance of diverse socio-historical perspectives. In order to examine curricula in this light, fundamental questions must be posed: "What constitutes knowledge? Whose knowledge is being taught? Why is it being taught in this particular way?" (Henry and Tator 1994:6). These questions seek to address problematic and exclusionary practices within Western-focused academia. Using Sue et al.'s categories of racial microaggressions, this defines the exclusion of racially and ethnically diverse voices in college curricula as a form of environmental microinvalidation (Sue et al. 2007; cited in Minikel-Lacocque 2013) in which "verbal comments or behaviors exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a personal of color" (436).

Examples of Eurocentrism in college curricula include minimizing the effects of imperialism and colonization, giving authority to Western scholars while diminishing non-white scholars to "different" perspective, mis-naming courses in ways that marginalize the influences of the non-white world, and a lack of courses designed to explore issues of racial and ethnic identity. The silencing and marginalization of diverse voices acts as a covert form of racism, in which institutions constantly undermine and undervalue the

self-esteem and self-image of students of color by perpetuating a culture that denies their thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences (Henry and Tator 1994: 7). However, in some instances, the inclusion of diverse perspectives in course syllabi is done in a “tokenizing” manner, in which racially and ethnically diverse writings are not appropriately integrated or balanced within the course. Stephen Fishman, a white professor at a large predominantly white university, attempted to incorporate multicultural voices into his introductory philosophy course, but upon critical reflection, found that simply adding on works by multicultural authors was insufficient in dismantling the white bias of his course (Fishman and McCarthy 2005). The example posed by Fishman and McCarthy demonstrate that Eurocentric curricula exist both at the interpersonal and institutional level; it is the responsibility of the professor to integrate diverse perspectives into course syllabi and promote productive discussions, as well as it is the institution’s responsibility to provide an inclusive range of academic options for students of all identities.

### *Racist Practice and Pedagogy*

Throughout the literature, studies surrounding racist practice and pedagogy serve both as guiding principles and as cautionary tales for educators. This study will define racist practices as both overt forms of racially-motivated assaults/microaggressions enacted by the professor within a classroom setting and as more covert forms, such as silencing the perspectives of students of color or adhering to claims of objectivity and neutrality as a professor. In contrast, pedagogy in our study will refer more directly to the instructional teaching and strategies that allow learning to take place, the focus here being curriculum formation. Racist pedagogy is thus understood as teaching instruction that serves white students better and more fully than students of color.

Examples of racist practices and pedagogies examined in the literature include minimizing and ignoring racially-motivated microaggressions when they occur, failing to acknowledge power and positionality within the classroom (Fishman and McCarthy 2006; Delpit 1988), excluding scholars of color from syllabi (Delpit 1988), including scholars of color in tokenizing ways (Fishman and McCarthy 2006), affirming color blind rhetoric (Harper 2012), or by allowing color-muteness (Harper 2012). These practices and pedagogies foster learning environments that excuse rather than minimize racism.

In many cases, professors are often unaware that they are actively engaging in racist practices or pedagogies. Fishman and McCarthy exemplify this in their study in which Fishman, a white male Philosophy professor, attempted to make multicultural voices central to curricula and encourage students to talk about their personal experiences with racism, but found he was not equipped with the appropriate language or understanding to navigate discussions of race, and he failed to acknowledge the ways in which his own positions of power influenced his practices and pedagogies (Fishman and McCarthy 2006). Lisa Delpit describes the ways in which education continues to be centered on and designed for the “implied majority” of white, middle-class learners. She calls this the “culture of power,” and explains that white, middle-class norms are deeply embedded within the U.S. educational system, and thus shape how teachers are trained, how student standards of assessment are created, and how academic success is defined (Delpit 1988). Educators that do not address or attempt to counteract, and actively participate in promoting the culture of power are engaging in racist practices and pedagogies. Simultaneously, according to Delpit, those with the power are also those least aware of its presence and function, contributing to the continuation of unacceptable behavior from white professors.

Rather than engaging uncritically with the culture of power, educators should instead use “transformative pedagogy”--an irreversible shift away from the dominant hegemonic worldview towards “increasing awareness, consciousness, and emancipatory knowledge” (Dhillon 2015). Thus, transformative pedagogy represents teaching and instructional strategies that pursue the acquisition of transformative knowledge. Although unintentional and unaware, professors engaging in racist practice and pedagogy are not absolved of responsibility. To this point, much of the literature minimizes professor responsibility to educate all students well and to take ownership over implicit and explicit racism within the classroom. While self-reflexivity is emphasized (Fishman and McCarthy 2006) and transformative knowledge is encouraged (Dhillon 2015), there is limited discussion of practical strategies to employ these concepts, which is of critical importance to this paper’s research.

### *Positionality in the Classroom*

Even within the literature, positionality is a factor within research on race and racism within college campuses that is often avoided. Addressing positionality requires that the subject reflect on their own conditions (i.e. privilege, socio-economic status, personal histories, power dynamics, etc) within specific situations or contexts in which they find themselves. The absence of addressing positionality has negative effects and can lead to the perpetuation of institutional racism, doubting the validity of research and negative pedagogical practices.

In many studies of race and racism, researchers’ findings for why students of racial minorities tend to take gap years or to drop out are attributed to these students’ individual needs, rather than institutional and environmental factors within the campus (Harper 2012). This is due to an oversight by researchers of the positionality of students and faculty on their respective campuses, specifically of power dynamics. For example, a reason for a student to drop out of college may not be their extra part-time jobs, rather the racist campus environment (Harper 2012). Harper’s argument is that these researchers end up, unintentionally, diminishing the effect of institutional racism and its power within campuses. The employment of these findings within course curricula could distract students’ understandings of racism as personal rather than institutional.

Other times, researchers even fail to address their own positionality as professors in positions of power. In her research of students of color at a predominantly white university, Julie Minikel-Lacocque chose to interview incoming first year students during the summer before they began their first semester and throughout their freshman year of college (Minikel-Lacocque 2010). While she asked for students’ feedback on her observations from their one-on-one interview sessions, in her article, she does not adequately address her positionality as a white woman, nor her position of power as a professor. Had she taken her positionality into consideration, she may have considered a different methodology that would have given her findings more validity. Unlike Minikel-Lacocque, Harper dedicated much of his article to addressing his positionality as he approached his research, providing a stage from which the reader can view his findings more objectively (Harper 2012).

Often, professors do not address their own positionality in the classroom and assume their expertise in classroom discussions surrounding race and racism can be drawn from their experience as a professor alone. When Fishman failed to understand a student’s comment in class, he assumed the student did not understand the author’s point, and

disregarded their opinion by ignoring their experiences and placing value on the literature alone (Fishman and McCarthy 2006). He did this throughout the course; for example, by drawing discussions back to the texts and not allowing experiences to serve as evidence of racism. While he failed to recognize how his positionality affected the ways he led his class, upon critical reflection after the course, he was able to better understand how he could have and should have addressed these issues. As Fishman notes, his catering toward white students' level of comfort in the classroom demonstrates his inability to acknowledge his own privilege, nor his ability to encourage white students in the classroom to acknowledge theirs.

### *Searching for Similar Face*

As Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) reap the benefits of the "diversity" students of color bring to colleges and universities, students of color suffer from lower retention rates due to the lack of support and sense of "social connectedness" they feel towards their campuses (Costen et al. 2012). In other words, the literature demonstrates that PWI's often bring in students of color, but fail to support these students or ensure they feel as encouraged and connected as their white peers.

Social connectedness is the sense that one feels they belong to a group through close social relationships along with the feeling of "being valued, needed, and considered important by other people or groups, and fitting in with others" (Costen et al. 2012). Social connectedness and a sense of belonging are associated with students' academic motivation and successfully graduating from institutions. Literature focused on this research topic includes many students of color at Predominantly White Institutions sharing their experiences. Understanding these experiences is crucial to furthering study surrounding why students of color do not feel socially connected or have a sense of belonging in their college environments, and also to provide ways in which colleges and universities can improve in offering the same support and encouragement that is afforded to white students.

Here and elsewhere, Costen et al. argues that students of color do not feel socially connected or have a sense of belonging on campus due to the "differential treatment and stereotyping by fellow students, faculty members, campus police, teaching assistants, administrators, and staff" towards students of color (Costen et al. 2012). Literature shows that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are more supportive for diverse student populations than Predominantly White Institutions (PWI's), primarily due to the fact that white professors do not share the lived experiences of students of color and many PWIs lack representation within the student body, faculty, and staff necessary to create a supportive environment for students of color. Additionally, white professors tend to not have leveled expectations for students of color in comparison for their expectations for white students. (McCoy et al. 2017). In McCoy's article focusing on STEM students of color at PWIs, many students shared the experience of feeling as if faculty members from the STEM department were trying to "weed them out" through discouraging, condescending, and unwelcoming conversations and interactions. This varies greatly from the experience of STEM departments at HBCUs, where students reported the opposite, feeling encouraged and well socialized with their peers.

The experience of being "a fly in the buttermilk," or being the only member of a certain race in a class, is an uncomfortable and alienating experience for students of color, and leads to feelings of exclusion from the community as a whole. Students who shared this

experience also stated that they feared if they did not act “perfectly,” their whole race’s opportunity to succeed in education would be at stake (Harper 2013). This pressure placed on students of color is an added stress combined with the normal course load a white student faces. Similar to this, in Museus-Park’s article, Asian American students expressed disappointment and a feeling of disconnectedness to the class and their peers. During group work, students of color reported being the last to find a partner and often had to ask to join a group (Museus-Park 2015).

During these instances, many students seek out support from other sources on campus, usually faculty and staff of color at PWIs. The McCoy et al. says, “students from historically underrepresented groups (women, Black, and Hispanic/Latino) valued the socialization benefits of their interactions with a research mentor in particular” (McCoy et al. 2015). Yet, the support and understanding that is not provided by white faculty is then forced upon faculty and staff of color at the institution, taxing not only the students who have to go out of their department to find someone who understands their experiences, but also adding additional burden to the faculty of color who must support, mentor, and advise more students than are in their classes or departments.

A sense of connectedness to the university and individual programs, the depth and quality of relationships with faculty and the presence of faculty of color all contribute to the success and ultimate general wellness of students of color at PWIs. This study will examine the ways in which social connectedness and sense of belonging affects course selection, course enrollment, and academic choices such as major and learning communities

Our research seeks to expand on prior research by investigating the presence or absence of racially diverse perspectives within course syllabi and classroom discussions in order to better understand how the St. Olaf College curriculum minimizes or maximizes the opportunity for racially-motivated microaggressions to occur. Further, it inquires how students of color and white students’ positionality affect their participation in discussions of race and racism and their academic choices in terms of registration at St. Olaf College.

## **Methods**

Our team conducted research for our course, SOAN371: Foundations of Social Science Research, during the fall semester of 2017 at St. Olaf College, a small liberal arts college in Minnesota with a student population of about 3,000. We conducted our study together with other teams of students taking this course, and the teams’ overall research focused on racism and racially motivated microaggressions in the classrooms and curriculum on our campus. Our team focused on racialized microaggressions that manifest through the curriculum, which we define as course material, course syllabi and classroom discussions.

To begin, we conducted a focus group with seven students who were juniors and seniors. Our questions asked about students’ opinions on the incorporation of racially diverse voices within course materials and their observations and opinions on how professors handle discussions regarding issues of racism. We asked these questions because they addressed our research questions and focused on an area of the shared research topic that other teams were not addressing. The focus group helped us identify relevant questions that made sense to students and that they could answer and consider

other topics that manifested themselves organically during the focus group discussion. The responses from the focus group that intersected with the scholarly literature on our topic informed our survey questions.

We used a web-based survey to collect our data because it provided anonymity to our respondents while allowing us easy access to the population of students on our campus. Our survey questions were included as a part of a larger survey on racial and often unconscious microaggressions in classrooms on our campus. The entire survey included checklist questions, Likert scale questions, multiple choice questions, and open-ended questions.

### *Variables*

The dependent variables used in our research focus on topics surrounding discussions of race and racism in classrooms the inclusion of scholars and artists of color in course materials, participation in discussions, and the impacts of related factors on students' choices about registering for classes.

To examine discussions about race in the classroom and the inclusion of scholars of color in the syllabi, we asked questions about the number of students' courses that include substantial discussion about race and racism and about the racial identity of the authors and artists included in course material, and about the inclusion of scholars/artists of color and whether those works were "balanced" within course material. We provided response categories ranging from 0 courses to 4 or more courses. We also asked about participation in discussions about race and racism, including level of participation, feeling expected to participate, and feeling "shut down" from participating, with five response categories ranging from "in none or almost none" of the discussions to "in all or almost all" of them. We asked about the drivers of discussions about race and racism, such as professors or students and course materials versus outside events, using the same response options from "none or almost none" to "all or almost all." In order to gain data on how racism in the classroom affects student academic choices we asked about the thought process of students while registering for a class in consideration of the race of the professor, race of the students, and the material that will be studied in the class. We measured these topics for our dependent variables, the resulting level of racially motivated microaggressions within the classroom, by using response categories ranging from "never" to "5 or more times" to study the number of current courses a student is taking where a certain action occurred and the frequency of specific occurrences in classrooms and discussions.

Our independent variables included race/ethnicity, gender, graduation year, and student major. We used open-ended questions for race/ethnicity, gender, and major, and we listed specific years and "other" for graduation year.

At the end of our survey, we asked students to report their race/ethnicity, gender identity, international or domestic student status, class year, major(s), concentration(s), and program(s). We also asked students to report how many classes they were enrolled in at the time they completed the survey.

For our study, we aimed to achieve both face validity and content validity. To achieve face validity we had all of our survey questions reviewed by our professor to ensure that our indicators measure the intended constructs. To obtain content validity, we carefully crafted our questions so that all facets of our variables were fully conceptualized and

operationalized. To ensure reliability of our survey, we created clear and straightforward questions based on single concepts for respondents to answer without distracting confusion. We constructed our levels of measurements for each question asked and, due to the complexity of our research topic, we made sure to cover all dimensions and aspects of our research questions. Along with all of this, we pilot-tested our survey with our research methods class of 28 students before finalizing the survey and sending it to students.

### *Sampling*

Our target population was the St. Olaf student body enrolled on campus during the 2017 fall semester, approximately 3,000 students. Given the importance and relevance of our research topic to all the students, our sampling frame and target population were essentially identical except that we excluded students on study-abroad programs and students in SOAN371, leaving a total of 2,844 students. We invited those students to participate in our research, and 718 of them completed the survey. Thus, our response rate was 25.3%.

Of the 636 respondents who identified their race/ethnicity, 0.5% (3) identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, 9.0% (57) as Asian or Asian American, 1.7% (11) as Black or African American, 3.1% (20) as Latinx or Hispanic, 5.8% (37) as Multicultural, 0.2% (1) as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 5.7% (36) as International, and 74% (471) as White or Caucasian. However, the low percentages of those who identified as non-white highlights a larger problem within the institution. Because there is disproportionately low representation of individual non-white racial/ethnic groups, analysis required us to combine all students of color into a single category in order to test for statistical significance between race/ethnicity and our main variables. Of the 718 total respondents, 600 fit into the student of color/white student binary, with 78.5% (471) identifying as white and 21.5% (129) identifying as students of color. For this analysis, respondents who identified as international students were coded as non-applicable in the grouped race/ethnicity variable. Therefore, in all bivariate results in which race/ethnicity is cross-referenced, international students are excluded from the results. We acknowledge that this is a problematic limitation of our research and a result of coding limitations.

In all, 652 respondents answered our question on gender identity. Of those, 65.5% (427) identified as female, 31.9% (208) as male, 2.2% (14) as non-binary, and 0.5% (3) as transgender. As with race and ethnicity, we faced a similar problem with coding our gender variable. Due to the limiting categories, respondents' gender identities could be misinterpreted or missing. For the purpose of this research and statistical significance, we used the binary categories of gender (female/male).

Of the 661 respondents who identified their class year, 21.8% (144) were seniors, 23.1% (153) were juniors, 27.7% (183) were sophomores, 27.4% (181) were first years, and 0.01% (5) listed other.

A total of 702 students who reported their major(s), which we coded these into separate categories: 1st major (identified alphabetically), 2nd major, and 3rd major (see Appendix B for these). Among the 702 major-identifying, 35.0% (245) were Natural Science and Math majors, 21.5% (151) were Social Science majors, 22.5% (128) were Fine Arts majors, 16.7% (117) were Humanities majors.



### *Ethics*

Our research adhered to the main principles of social science research ethics. The cover letter sent to the entire survey population included information about the research, its purpose, the researchers, and the research sponsor, the To Include is To Excel Mellon grant. The informed consent statement provided information on the expected duration of the survey, any risks or discomfort associated with participation, a guarantee of privacy and anonymity, voluntary nature of participation, information on the benefits associated with participation and the research as a whole, and an offer to provide a summary of findings (Neuman 2012). It informed recipients that answering survey questions constituted consent (a common practice). Participant identities remained private throughout the data collection and analysis stages, as no names or contact information were requested. We agreed that if demographic information revealed a participant's identity, we would keep it confidential. Due to the nature of the research, the survey questions may have been threatening to some participants. A threatening question is defined as a type of survey question where respondents are likely to be untruthful in their response because it may reflect badly upon them or simply because they feel their true response would not be desired (Neuman 2012). Because we asked participants to respond with their experiences of racism and racial microaggressions during their time at St. Olaf, the questions may have evoked anxiety, guilt, embarrassment, or negative memories. During the planning and implementation stages, we attempted to minimize the undesirable consequences to participants, but we are aware that the nature of the survey questions may have elicited negative memories or emotions.

To the best of our abilities we used high methodological standards and strived for accuracy in our results. Despite being student researchers, we used the highest levels of skill and care available to us throughout all stages of our research.

## **Results**

Our survey questions yielded interesting results concerning the relationships between different aspects of racism in the classroom and student academic choices. The results we chose to focus on in this paper are those regarding racial and ethnic inclusion in the curriculum, participation level in classroom discussions on race, perception of professor pedagogy, the circumstances that drive discussions of race in the classroom, and the different factors influencing student's registration decisions.

### *Racial and Ethnic Inclusion*

Our analysis of data from respondents answering these questions show that relatively high percentages of students reported that these items occurred in none of their courses this semester. As Table 1 shows 33.2% (220) reported taking zero courses that include substantial conversations, 18.4% (112) reported zero of their courses included materials from scholars or artists of color, 37.6% reported that zero of their courses balanced works by scholars and artists of color and white scholars and artists within the course materials, and 34.4% reported that in zero of their courses did the professor or class discuss an author's or artist's racial identity in relation to their work. Results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Univariate Analysis of Racial and Ethnic Inclusion within Classes this Semester

	0 courses	1 course	2 courses	3 courses	4 or more courses	Valid Total of Respondents
The course includes substantial discussion about race and racism	33.2% 220	<b>34.5%</b> 229	21.6% 143	7.5% 50	3.2% 21	663
The course includes materials from scholars or artists of color	18.4% 112	29.3% 178	<b>32.7%</b> 199	12.8% 78	6.7% 41	608
Works by scholars and artists of color and works by white scholars and artists are balanced within the course material	<b>37.6%</b> 219	31.6% 184	19.4% 113	6.9% 40	4.6% 27	583
The professor or class discusses an author's or artist's racial identity in relation to their work	34.4% 220	<b>40.2%</b> 257	18.6% 119	4.5% 29	2.3% 15	640

#### *Tokenization*

To better understand students' perspectives on whether or not they believed racially diverse perspectives were integrated within the curriculum versus their tokenization we asked respondents to answer in how many of their classes this semester they believed that "works by scholars or artists of color and works by white scholars or artists are balanced within the course material". This question was posed in a Likert scale where respondents could answer "0 courses", "1 course", "2 courses", "3 courses", and "4 or more courses". Of the total respondents, 81% chose to answer this survey question. Our univariate analysis showed that of the 583 respondents that answered this question, 37.6% (219) claimed that this applied to none of their courses, 51% (297) of respondents answered this for 1 or 2 courses, and 11.5% (67) of respondents claimed that this was so in 3 or more courses.

Through a bivariate analysis, we wanted to see if there was a significant difference between the experiences of students of color and white students in regards to their perception of the inclusion of racially diverse voices in their courses this semester. Unfortunately, we were not able to include international students' responses in an analysis of this data, as there were limitations to the coding of international students. After running a chi-square test, we did not find any statistically significant data.

Next, we wanted to see in which departments students felt there was a balanced integration of scholars or artists of color within the course material. As the cell counts were low, we grouped majors into five categories and ran the bivariate analysis with the following five categories of majors: “Interdisciplinary and General Studies or not”, “Humanities or not”, “Fine Arts or not”, “NSM [Natural Science Majors] or not”, and “Social Sciences or not”. We found that the majors categorized under “Interdisciplinary and General Studies or not”, “Social Sciences or not” and “NSM [Natural Science Majors] or not” had a p value of less than 0.05, making them statistically significant.

#### *Discussion Drivers and Pedagogy*

We asked respondents, “In how many of your classes does your professor initiate the discussion (rather than students)?” and offered response categories from “in none or almost none of the discussions” to “in all or almost all of the discussions” (See Table 2).

Using univariate analysis, the responses were similar across the five response categories. We also asked respondents, in their classroom experiences, what drives discussions of race and racism in the classroom (i.e. recent outside events, course materials, student experiences)? Of our respondents, 84.4% (461) reported that at least “some” of the discussions are driven by course material, (summing the results from “in some,” “in most,” and “in all or almost all of the discussions”) and only 4.6% (25) reported that course material “never or almost never” drove discussion of race or racism. Conversely, 17.2% (94) of respondents reported that recent events “never or almost never” drove class discussions of race or racism in their classes. Lastly, in regards to professor pedagogy, we asked respondents, how often do “your professors guide the discussion in productive ways (such as by using appropriate language and skills to facilitate discussion)?” Of the respondents who answered this question, 67.5% (370) reported that their professor productively guides discussions of race and racism in most, almost all, or all of the discussions. However, 4.7% (29) reported that their professor “never or almost never” productively guided these discussions.

#### *Participation Level*

Our univariate analysis showed that 90.4% (497) of respondents said they participate actively in at least a few or more of discussions about race or racism. However, 9.6% (53) of respondents reported never actively participating in these discussions. Additionally, 21.1% (116) of respondents said they participate in all or almost all of these discussions. We then calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing the amount of classes in which students actively participate in discussions of race and racism for students of color and white students and found a significant relationship ( $X^2(294)=23.12, p<.05$ ). Of our respondents, 32.7% (35) of students of color actively participate in all or almost all of the discussions of race or racism. For white students, 17.2% (67) actively participate in all or almost all of the discussions. Conversely, of our respondents, 15.9% (17) of students of color reported never actively participating in any discussions of race or racism. Of white students, 7.7% (30) said they never actively participate in these discussions.

We also asked respondents if they feel the expectation to participate more than other students. 58.8% (324) of students report “never or almost never” feeling expected to participate more than other students during these discussions. However, when this is broken down by race and ethnicity using a chi-square test of independence, we found that 70.3% (274) of white students never feel expected to participate more than others

compared to 23.4% (25) of students of color. Of our respondents that identify as students of color, 26.2% (28) feel expected to participate more than other students in “all or almost all of the discussions” of race and racism in the classroom, and 18.7% (20) in “most of the discussions.” Nearly half of the respondents of color feel expected to participate in the majority (all, almost all, and most) of classroom discussions of race, compared to only 7.7% (30) white students.

Additionally, we asked students how often they “feel shut down from participating” when discussions of race and racism occur in their classes. 57.1% (314) of respondents report “never or almost never” feeling shut down from participating in discussions of race or racism in the classroom, compared to 9.5% (52) of respondents say they feel shut down in “most”, “almost all or all” discussions. We used bivariate analysis, calculating a chi-square test of independence comparing the amount of classes in which students feel shut down from participating discussions during race and racism for students of color and white students ( $\chi^2(294)=23.12, p>.05$ ). Although there is not a statistically significant relationship between feeling shut down in discussions of race and racism and race and ethnicity, the univariate results show that almost 10% of our respondents feel shut down in these discussions.

Table 2. Univariate Analysis of Student Participation, Pedagogy, and Classroom Discussion (matrix of item 3<sup>refer to Appendix A</sup>)

	In none or almost none of the discussions	In a few	In some	In most	In all or almost all	Valid Total of Respondents
<b>Comfort Level</b>						
You participate actively	9.6% 53	16.4% 90	<b>27.3%</b> 150	25.6% 141	21.1% 116	550
You feel expected to participate more than most other students in the class	<b>58.8%</b> 324	15.1% 83	9.8% 54	7.8% 43	8.5% 47	551
You feel shut down from participating	<b>57.1%</b> 314	23.3% 128	10.2% 56	3.1% 17	6.4% 35	550
<b>Pedagogy</b>						

Your professors initiate the discussion (rather than students)	4.7% 26	18.4% 101	<b>31.1%</b> 171	28.6% 157	17.1% 94	549
Your professors guide the discussion in productive ways (such as by using appropriate language and skills to facilitate discussion)	4.7% 26	10.0% 55	17.7% 97	<b>37.2%</b> 204	30.3% 166	548
<b><i>What drives discussion?</i></b>						
The discussion is driven by course material	4.6% 25	11.0% 60	24.4% 133	<b>31.5%</b> 172	28.6% 156	546
The discussion is driven by recent events (such as events on campus, in the news, or in students' lives)	17.2% 94	22.6% 124	<b>34.7%</b> 190	17.7% 97	7.8% 43	548

### *Registration Decisions*

In order to address how experiences of racism in the classroom affects students' academic choices we asked respondents to answer how many times they either decided to register or not register (or want to register or not want to register) for a class due to certain circumstances. Our univariate analysis showed that 51.0% (337) of students responded they "never or almost never" registered or wanted to register for a class because they believed it would include racially diverse perspectives. Comparatively, 72.0% (476) of students responded they "never or almost never" didn't register or didn't want to register for a class because it would include mainly Eurocentric perspectives. Of our respondents, 32.8% (227) said they have registered or wanted to register for a class because they believed it would include racially diverse students at least once and 30.6% (202) said they have registered or wanted to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color at least once. When the decision to register or the desire to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color was cross-tabulated with race and ethnicity, we found that 43.7% (56) of students of color responded they had experienced this at least once while only 27.2% (126) of white students responded they had experienced this at least once. When asked whether

students didn't register or didn't want to register for a class because the professor was not equipped to address microaggressions 80.3% (530) respondents said that this "never or almost never" influenced their decision. However, our bivariate analysis shows that students of color and white students experience this at different proportions. 28.9% (37) of students of color responded they had experienced this at least once while only 16.2% (75) of white students have experienced this at least once.

To further quantify the effects of racism on students' academic choices, we created an index (refer to Appendix B) of the matrix in survey item 5 (refer to Appendix A). The index showed that 40.6% (267) of respondents reported a score of 0 meaning they responded "never or almost never" to all five items in the matrix. We conducted a Mann-Whitney U test to compare the mean score of students of color with the mean score of white students using the index of students' academic choices, and found a significant difference between the two groups. The mean score for students of color was significantly higher (m place=4.83) than the mean score of white students (m place=2.51,  $p < .05$ ). We calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing the frequency of the decision to register or want to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color for students of color and white students, and found a significant interaction ( $X^2(3) = 39.98, p < .05$ ). We also calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing the frequency of the decision to not register or not want to register for a class because the professor was not equipped to address microaggressions for students of color and white students, and found a significant interaction ( $X^2(3) = 22.30, p < .05$ ).

We were also interested to know if other factors besides race and ethnicity influence an individual's academic choices. We calculated a Spearman rho correlation coefficient for the relationship between graduation year and the index of student academic choices and found a small positive correlation ( $r(1) = .212, p < .05$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. We also calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing the frequency of the varying levels of academic choice (using the index) for majors (first major alphabetically), and found no significant interaction ( $X^2(851) = 822.186, p > .05$ ).

Table 3. Univariate Analysis of Student Registration Decisions (matrix of item 5<sup>refer to Appendix A</sup>)

	Never	1-2 times	3-4 times	5 or more times	Valid Total of Respondents
Registered or wanted to register for a class because you believed it would include racially diverse students	<b>67.2%</b> 444	22.4% 148	7.0% 46	3.5% 23	661

Registered or wanted to register for a class because you believed it would include racially diverse perspectives	<b>51.0%</b> 337	30.6% 202	13.5% 89	5.0% 33	661
Registered or wanted to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color	<b>69.4%</b> 458	20.5% 135	7.4% 49	2.7% 18	660
Didn't register or didn't want to register for a class because the professor was not equipped to address microaggressions	<b>80.3%</b> 530	13.3% 88	3.5% 23	2.9% 19	660
Didn't register or didn't want to register for a class because it would include only Eurocentric perspectives	<b>72.0%</b> 476	16.8% 111	6.7% 44	4.5% 30	661

### Discussion and Qualitative Results

We will now use both the quantitative results presented above and additional qualitative comments to discuss our central research questions.

*Research Question 1: In students' views, to what extent and in what ways does the curriculum include racially diverse voices and perspectives?*

Our research results showed that over a third of students stated they are currently taking zero classes that include substantial conversation about race. This means that a great portion of the St. Olaf student population are finishing this semester without having to think deeply about their identity, race, and racism and have effective dialogue about it within an academic atmosphere. This lack of conversation could be due to the high

percentage of white faculty at St. Olaf, a Predominately White Institution (PWI). White faculty, lacking the lived experience of faculty of color, face difficulties having these conversations of race and racism and may not see the importance of leading the discussion in their classrooms (Costen et al 2012). This does not mean, however, that faculty and staff of color at PWIs should carry the burden of facilitating valuable conversations about race. It is the responsibility of all professors to engage in these important conversations in an appropriate and valuable way.

While a third of students responded that two of their current courses include authors or artists of color within the curriculum, a substantial amount stated that there is not a balance between white scholars and scholars of colors within the materials. This means that students are exposed to authors and writers of color in only half of their courses, and of these there is not a balance between the representation of white scholars and scholars of color. This imbalance implies that scholars or artists of color are not given as much importance or value as white scholars, making a great deal of classrooms at St. Olaf microaggressive atmospheres.

And finally, if there are courses with artists and scholars of color, more than forty percent of students state that only one of their courses discuss the racial identity of the author or artist in relation to their work. From our survey responses, it is evident that these conversations are lacking at St. Olaf. Classes need to be having these conversations and it is the responsibility of the professor to effectively lead them. Faculty and staff of color are often taxed with being the ones to have these conversations of connecting an academic area to race, whereas it should be every professors role to point out racism within the academic environment (McCoy et al 2015). There is an opportunity to address the lack of recognition of scholars and artists of color in every academic area, but it is simply not being taken.

Our results, overall, show that there is a lack of scholars and artists of color within the curriculum, lack of recognition for the identities of scholars and artists of color, and lack of substantial discussion on the topics of race and racism. To improve, we suggest hiring more faculty of color to match the growing number of students of color on campus and to include multiple points throughout each semester for students to provide anonymous feedback about their concerns in the classroom. We will elaborate on these specific recommendations later on in the paper.

*Research Question 2: To what extent are racially diverse perspectives integrated versus tokenized in the curriculum?*

When looking to understand students' perspectives on whether or not racially diverse perspectives are integrated versus tokenized in the curriculum, we found a variety of responses. Many times, works by racially diverse scholars are used as examples within a class's curriculum, rather than as part of the core materials. This can lead to "othering" and can provide a biased view of what is defined as the norm and racially diverse perspectives are thus portrayed as deviants and as interesting but not crucial to understanding. This presentation diminishes the impact that authors of color have on society and this is inherently communicated to students by not placing them at an equal standard as other scholarly works.

Going about answering this research question was a challenge for our team, as we wanted to gain the information without asking our respondents directly, which could have skewed our data. So, we asked respondents to answer in how many of their classes this



semester they believed that “Works by scholars or artists of color and works by white scholars or artists are balanced within the course material”. However, we acknowledge that tokenization is encompassed by much more than an equal presence within the course syllabi and the classroom discussions.

Our results indicate that almost 40% of students believe that works by scholars of color and those by white scholars are not balanced within the curriculum. Another 31% felt that this was incorporated in one of their classes this semester. If we combine these two numbers, we can see that about 70% of the respondents felt that voices of scholars of color and white scholars were either not balanced within the curriculum of any of their courses or in only one of their courses this semester. This is already indicative that students find their courses lacking in educating them on perspectives from racially diverse authors.

However, students know that these conversations are important. One of our respondents who identified as a biology major said that “In reading research papers, we focus almost exclusively on the research and rarely on the author, so I'm usually unaware of the author's race. In my genetics we did discuss Henrietta Lacks and other instances of minority groups being mistreated by science.” In addition to showing us that perspectives from racially diverse authors are important, this shows us that STEM fields are not exempt from incorporating these conversations within their courses, as is often assumed. Likewise, respondents also pointed out that departments commonly thought to be the best at facilitating discussions surrounding race or racism are also flawed. As one respondent pointed out, “As a SO/AN major, I don't think all the professors in my department do enough to talk about race and student comfort in the classroom...” Responses like these indicate that all departments can improve in their incorporation of not only works by racially diverse authors but also they can incorporate more discussions surrounding race and racism.

In addition, about 20% of respondents chose not to answer this question. It is possible that they either do not realize that this is an issue or may see it as a non-issue. But, this is also explicitly countered by some respondents, and one respondent stated that many classes offered may be seen as diverse but that they “allow for diversity ‘shopping’--that is, seeing the products of a “diverse” author as being important only insofar as they are produced by someone whom we choose to classify as diverse.” Without using the term “tokenization” which we have chosen to use for this conversation, this student verbalized the complexity that comes with including diverse voices and perspectives within curriculum, indicating the need for a more nuanced understanding of the impacts of their inclusion. It goes beyond “checking a box”; it points to the complexity of intersectional identities and that it is important that they are woven into the course material to be able to create inclusive classroom environments.

*Research Question 3: Which students participate in classroom discussions of racially diverse works or of issues of racism in the classroom?*

When considering student participation in classroom discussions of race and racism, it is important to forefront the college's mission statement, “to create an inclusive community,” of students learning and growing together. An inclusive community is one in which all students feel supported and engaged during difficult discussions. However, this is not currently the case at St. Olaf College. Our data reveals that 10% of respondents never or almost never actively participated in discussions of race or racism in their classes this semester. Our quantitative research is limited in its ability to understand why

white students disproportionately choose not to actively participate and feel shut down from participating during discussions of race or racism in their classes. However, we argue that it is in part due to white students' limited understanding of the ways in which explicit and implicit racism is enacted in daily life. White students' deep fear of saying something wrong or offensive in front of their classmates further limits the possibility of having productive discussions of race and racism in the classroom. If St. Olaf College seeks to "create an inclusive community," it must work towards creating classrooms in which students have both the opportunity to discuss issues of race and racism, and feel a sense of personal investment or a desire to engage in these discussions meaningfully.

Our data also demonstrates that while 70% of students rarely feel expected to participate more than others during discussions of race or racism, students of color disproportionately feel expected to participate and contribute more than their classmates. As outlined in our literature review and in our focus group, the expectation students of color feel to participate and "teach" other students about issues of race or racism fosters a toxic learning environment. This manifests itself in professors calling on students of color to share personal experiences or give their perspective, white students remaining silent when discussions of race arise, and students looking at or gesturing towards students of color during these discussions. One respondent said, "I've noticed that discussions on race are almost always catered to the white students on campus. It is frustrating that students of color are always forced to explain their worldview to white students, but if we don't, no one else will." The expectation to contribute more and inform others places undue stress on students of color, but also places them in a position in which if they do not stand up and address racial/ethnic issues in class, oftentimes no one else will. Rather than allowing students of color to continue to occupy tokenized, burdensome positions of authority on issues of race, we should be working towards a more equal distribution of the weight of confronting racism. In any case, the expectation to participate more, to provide their classmates with knowledge, and to "teach" is not acceptable for students that are also themselves paying to learn and take classes at St. Olaf.

Lastly, the number of respondents who reported feeling shut down during discussions of race and racism is evidence that classes are not currently doing enough to work towards creating an inclusive community. There should not be any discussions in which students feel shut down, excluded, or isolated from based on their racial identity or their basis of knowledge. Furthermore, due to limits within our data, we did not find a statistically significant relationship between students of color and white students feeling shut down during discussions of race and racism in class. More research and exploration needs to be done to investigate and appropriately address this issue. As one respondent said:

"The 45 minute diversity.edu activity was a step in the right direction, but it wasn't nearly enough. It also only discussed microaggressions, which are not the only form of racism, and if I remember correctly it didn't even discuss racism itself. A bare minimum should be an in-person class rather than an online activity. I think that there should be a required, dialogue based course that involves the diversity.edu material in addition to a more extensive education on race and racism. It could even be expanded to teach and discuss other human rights issues including women's and gender issues and current events."

This quote highlights concerns and suggestions that multiple students addressed in their qualitative responses, and led to the formation of our third recommendation: St. Olaf College should establish a required first-year seminar course to objectively educate students on the United States' history of institutional racism and the role intersectionality plays in diversity. We will elaborate on this in the Recommendations section of the paper.

*Research Question 4: How does the absence of racially diverse perspectives affect students' academic choices?*

In order to conceptualize this question we focused our survey questions on circumstances of covert racism within the classroom or curriculum and asked our respondents to report how many times this affected their registration decisions ("never," "1-2 times," "3-4 times," or "5 or more times"). The circumstances we chose to address were the perception of the racial makeup of peers in the class, the belief that the course would include materials from racially diverse scholars and/or artists, the racial identity of the professor, the perception of the professor's ability to address microaggressions, and the belief that the course would include mainly materials from Western, white scholars and/or artists.

When asked about the inclusion or exclusion of racially diverse perspectives within their class materials, over half of our respondents reported they "never or almost never" registered or wanted to register for a class because they believed it would include racially diverse perspectives while almost three fourths of respondents reported they "never or almost never" didn't register or didn't want to register for a class because it include mainly Eurocentric perspectives. These results highlight that a majority of students do not take into consideration the inclusion or exclusion of diverse perspectives when choosing classes. Two possible explanations for this are students are not conscious that certain courses are failing to address issues of Eurocentrism within the syllabi and that the exclusion of diverse works nullify the experiential reality of persons of color. The second reason is that students are aware but unsympathetic to this reality. Although it is the professor's responsibility to engage diverse voices and perspectives within their coursework, this problem also exists on an institutional level. As one respondent reported, "I dropped the Great Conversation program this year because I felt it was limiting my learning to white men in the Western tradition." To rectify this, current classes can be reorganized to expand beyond the Eurocentric model and more classes that focus on issues of identity and intersectionality can be established to provide course options across departments that engage in the presentation and discussion of diverse perspectives. We recommend the college establish a first-year seminar course in which students will learn skills and language necessary to discuss issues of identity at the beginning of their four years on the Hill. This recommendation will be further expanded on in the Recommendations section of this paper.

Another aspect of the classroom environment and curriculum that affects student academic choices is professor pedagogy. Pedagogy includes not only the materials presented but the ways in which the class is facilitated. We found that approximately 10% of our respondents reported the decision to not register or not want to register "5 or more times" for a class because they believed the professor was not adequately equipped to address issues of race and/or ethnicity. When we cross-referenced this data with race and ethnicity, we found that 8% of these respondents were students of color. This shows that students, and disproportionately students of color, are taking the professor's perceived ability to address microaggressions and other issues of race and

ethnicity into consideration when choosing classes. Professors from across departments, as well as other faculty and staff, can gain from improved diversity and racial sensitivity training in order to adequately address issues of identity in the classroom and campus environment. We recommend that professors provide multiple points throughout the semester for students to provide anonymous feedback regarding course content, how it is presented and facilitated, and the ways in which students are interacting in the classroom environment. This would encourage improvements in the classroom as the course progresses and active measures can be taken, rather than as a reactive measure after the course has ended. This recommendation will be elaborated on in the Recommendations section of this paper.

The final aspect of the classroom environment and its effects on student academic choices we investigated was the racial makeup of peers in the class and the racial identity of the professor. Our results showed that students of color reported deciding to register or want to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color and because they believed it would include racially diverse students more frequently than white students. This shows that students of color often seek out similar faces within their academic environment. Literature shows that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are more supportive for diverse student populations than Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), primarily due to the fact that white professors do not share the lived experiences of students of color and many PWIs lack representation within the student body and faculty in order to create a supportive environment. One respondent shared their experience with racial diversity within their peers in the classroom: "Many of my numbers are low because there are so few people of color in any of my classes--there is usually at most one person of color in my classes, and this is a symptom I'm sure of the larger institutional racism and the prioritizing of middle class white students." The lack of representation of people of color among the faculty and student body creates a limited community in which students of color feel supported and understood. We recommend the college hire more faculty of color to match the growing number of students of color that the college brings to campus each year. We will expand on this recommendation in the section below.

## **Recommendations**

Our result have led us to certain recommendations to the College. These recommendations were mentioned within our Discussion section, and are elaborated on below:

Our first recommendation is that St. Olaf College should hire more faculty of color to match the growing number of students of color that are enrolled at St. Olaf each year. This connects to one of the goals from the mission statement of the College, to bring people from diverse backgrounds and experiences together in mutual respect. An increase of faculty of color at St. Olaf will lessen the responsibility of support and mentorship the current number of faculty of color face. Furthermore, it has the potential to mirror the number of current students of color, thereby providing more representation for these students and widening their support network on campus. This recommendation does not, however, disregard the College's immediate responsibility to equip faculty with the language and understanding necessary to support students of color as equitably as white students. Though we cannot deny that there is an issue with the solution of only faculty of color being able to address the issues that students of color face - faculty who

are white should also have the language and ability to address these issues, as well - this does not dismiss the immediate need for more faculty of color on the St. Olaf campus.

Our second recommendation is that St. Olaf should encourage professors to include multiple points throughout the semester for students to provide anonymous feedback regarding course content, its presentation, and student concerns in the classroom. Our data prove that microaggressions occur within classroom environments by professors and students alike. While a reporting system does exist, a tool with which students can provide direct and anonymous feedback to professors not only allows for active measures to be taken as the course goes on, but can communicate to students that the classroom environment and their personal experiences are important. These would not replace end-of-semester classroom evaluation forms, but would complement them.

Our third recommendation is that St. Olaf College establish a required first-year seminar to objectively educate students on the United States' history of institutional racism and the role intersectionality plays in diversity. Our quantitative research is limited in its ability to understand why white students disproportionately choose not to actively participate and feel shut down from participating during discussions of race or racism in their classes. However, we argue that it is in part due to white students' limited understanding of the ways in which explicit and implicit racism is enacted in daily life. Our data also show that white students' lack of engagement with discussions of race and racism also stems from deep fear of saying something wrong or offensive in front of their classmates, further limiting the possibility of having productive discussions of race and racism in the classroom.

This can be seen in our survey responses. One respondent said, "White people are still scared of speaking about [race], they always try to avoid the subject. To me that's a type of racism." We agree that choosing not to participate in discussions of race or racism is an enactment of white privilege and white supremacy. By establishing a first year seminar course, St. Olaf College would equip first year students with the appropriate language and skills to engage in these discussions rather than avoid them. If we can train and equip students from their first year, it would hopefully reduce the expectation and obligation students of color feel to "teach" their classmates and professors about issues of race and racism. Rather than allowing students of color to continue to occupy tokenized positions of authority on issues of race, we should be working towards a more equal distribution of the weight and burden of confronting racism. As a liberal arts college, St. Olaf should strive to equip young people for a life of meaningful work after graduation. But, if we continue to allow students to leave St. Olaf without a realistic, nuanced understanding of racial identity and racism, we fail to prepare students for the world. By establishing a required first year seminar course, St. Olaf would support first year students in building relationships with people of different backgrounds, empower them to identify and challenge racism and microaggressions when they occur, and lay a firm foundation for discussing issues of race, racism, and intersectional identity throughout the rest of their college experience. A first year seminar, similar to models at other colleges and universities, would demonstrate St. Olaf College's commitment to their mission of creating an "inclusive community" on the Hill.

We see this as an important and essential step in confronting and combating the polarized views held by our respondents, and the campus community at large. Both our quantitative and qualitative data confirm that many students do not believe

microaggressions or institutional racism is a problem on this campus. For example, one respondent, echoing similar comments, said “I have literally never seen an instance of racism, “institutional racism,” or microaggressions on this campus.” Considering the events of last spring on campus, the work of The Collective For Change on the Hill, and the political climate of the country in general, St. Olaf College cannot continue to allow ignorance and privilege to minimize the experiences and reality of students of color on campus. In order to be an “inclusive community,” all students should feel that their learning environment supports, acknowledges, and validates their lived experiences. A campus in which the existence and reality for some students is dismissed, ignored, and invalidated is not inclusive. A first-year seminar course would be, for many students, the first time they learn and discuss issues of race, racism, and intersectionality. Through a seminar integrating academia and personal identity, and led by a capable professor, St. Olaf College could work towards proactively addressing issues of race and racism early in students’ academic career and reassert its commitment to inclusion.

Our fourth and final recommendation is that St. Olaf College should work on reconceptualizing what diversity means and how it is used in the college’s policies, programs, and promotional materials. The word diversity, by definition, includes all aspects of diversity including sex, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, nationality, and many others. However, the term is used as a “filler” by the institution to the extent where it acknowledges that there is a presence of diverse students on campus, but does not address the many other facets of diversity beyond racial or ethnic diversity. Thus, the language of diversity used in the context of campus minimizes the intersectional nature of true diversity and its impacts on individuals and the community. While this recommendation is inspired by the need to acknowledge and adhere to the identities of racially and ethnically diverse students, it also encourages an assessment of the way other forms of diversity are overlooked on our campus. By reconceptualizing the term and not leaving it open to interpretation, and addressing the many specific forms of diversity that exist on our campus, St. Olaf College can work on tackling inclusivity for all identities on campus.

As a student respondent stated:

I believe that St. Olaf, as a whole, needs to admit that there is a racism problem on this campus. That is the first step- Not forming a committee to decide whether or not there is racism, or if racism is experienced by students, and not repeating the school's inclusion and diversity initiatives over and over again through PDA, who at this point feels like just a talking head for the administration, and a scapegoat for the rest of the college's failure to provide a safe environment for their students. There is racism on this campus. It's explicit, it's pervasive, it's personal, it's institutional.

## **Conclusion**

As student researchers, we attempted to conduct this research as adequately and ethically as possible. However, we acknowledge that there were limitations and issues with this research that we hope to address in this section. In order to distinguish our project from past research we hope to be as transparent in our methods and limitations as possible.

The most prominent limitation to this research was attempting to tackle such an important and relevant topic within the confines of a course designed to teach students research techniques. The short timeframe of the course being only a semester, the disjointed focus between the topic of racism in St. Olaf classrooms and the students goals to learn quantitative research methods, and the professor's lack of experience and training on the topic of race in college environments all contributed to the rise of complications and concerns throughout the research process. Although this course has successfully completed research in its "client-based" model for the college before, neither the students nor the professor were prepared to sufficiently address this topic. Both the students and professor were personally invested in the topic, which made the research more difficult to complete within the confines of the course.

Additionally, discussions of ethics in relation to the topic of race and racism throughout the course were not carried out in a timely manner. This would have allowed for the distribution of the survey in a more conscientious way. As student researchers with limited knowledge of research ethics, we lacked a valuable understanding of all the ethical facets of this research topic.

Another limitation of our research was our focus on racism within the classroom. Several respondents shared that while they have seen microaggressions enacted in the classroom, they experience or witness more acts of racism outside of the classroom where students feel more open to share their opinions and beliefs. We recognize that life outside of the classroom is an important part of being a student at St. Olaf, however, we chose to focus on racism specifically within the classroom in order to address the institutional nature of racism embedded within our college's classrooms, curriculum, and academic design.

However, even with a full understanding of the limitations, this research is still valuable and meaningful in understanding different aspects of institutional racism at St. Olaf. We believe this research is a base to highlight areas where the college is failing to fulfill its mission and goals and to expand further on in order to provide knowledge of the racism embedded within our institution. Due to the fact that this research was completed by students that are living within this system and share these experiences, we believe this research provides nuanced knowledge of racialized microaggressions and recommendations for how the college can improve to include students of all backgrounds and identities.

The college is failing to fulfill aspects of its mission statement:

*"To be an inclusive community."* Excellence in the liberal arts is possible only when people of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and ideas come together in a spirit of mutual respect and inclusion. So we strive to be a place of welcome to all. This commitment is strengthened by our particular history. The founders of the college were immigrants from Norway who established a co-educational college long before that was commonplace. Their experience impels us to advance the ideal of a community where people of all backgrounds and identities belong.

Our survey results show that the classroom environment and curriculum are lacking in four distinct ways: 1) substantial discussion about race and racism with participation from all students, 2) materials from scholars or artists of color, 3) integration of scholars

of color in non-tokenizing ways, and 4) discussions surrounding an author's racial identity in relation to their work. Our data show that students of color disproportionately reported that classroom racism does affect their academic choices and learning. In order to address racism within the classroom and curriculum, we propose four recommendations:

1. St. Olaf College should hire more faculty of color to match the growing number of students of color that the college brings to campus each year.
2. St. Olaf College should encourage professors to include multiple points throughout the semester for students to provide anonymous feedback regarding course content, its presentation, and student concerns in the classroom.
3. St. Olaf College should establish a required first-year seminar course to objectively educate students on the United States' history of institutional racism and the role intersectionality plays in diversity.
4. St. Olaf College should work on refining what diversity means and how it is used in the college's policies, programs, and promotional materials. The language of diversity used in the context of campus minimizes the intersectional nature of true diversity and its impacts on individuals and the community.



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### Appendix A

1. How many courses are you taking this semester? Please count each class as "1," even those that are only .25 or .50 credits.
2. During this semester, in how many of your courses have the following things happened?

	0 courses	1 course	2 courses	3 courses	4 or more courses	I don't know
The courses includes substantial discussions about race and racism.						
The course includes materials from scholars or artists of color (readings, films, etc.).						
Works by scholars or artists of color and works by white scholars or artists are balanced within the course material.						
The professor or class discusses an author's or artist's racial identity in relation to their work.						

If you answered "0" to all of the items above, SKIP to question 5.

3. When discussions of race and ethnicity arise in your classes this semester, how often do the following things happen?

	In all or almost all of the discussions	In a few of the discussions	In some of the discussions	In most of the discussions	In none or almost none of the discussions
You participate actively					
You feel expected to participate more than most other students in the class					
You feel shut down from participating					
Your professors initiate the discussion (rather than students)					
Your professors guide the discussion in productive ways (such as by using appropriate language and skills to facilitate discussion)					
The discussion is driven by course material					
The discussion is driven by recent events (such as events on campus, in the news, or in students' lives)					

5. When choosing your classes at St. Olaf (this semester AND any time before that), how many times have you had these experiences?

	Never	1-2 times	3-4 times	5 or more times
Registered or wanted to register for a class because you believed it would include racially diverse students				
Registered or wanted to register for a class because you believed the course materials would include racially diverse scholars and/or artists				
Registered or wanted to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color				
Didn't register or didn't want to register for a class because you believed the professor was not adequately equipped to address racial/ethnic issues in class				
Didn't register or didn't want to register for a class because you believed the course materials would include only or mainly Western, white scholars and/or artists				

### Appendix B

Table 4. Race and Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
American India or Alaska Native	3	0.4%
Asian or Asian American	57	7.9%
Black or African American	11	1.5%
Latinx/Hispanic	20	2.8%
Multiracial/ethnic	37	5.2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.1%
NRA/International	36	5.0%
White/Caucasian	471	65.6%
Unknown	82	11.4%

Table 5. Race and Ethnicity (grouped categories)

	Frequency	Percent
Students of Color	129	18.0%
White Students	471	65.6%
Missing	118	16.4%

Table 6. Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Female	427	65.5%
Male	208	31.9%
Nonbinary	14	2.1%
Transgender	3	0.5%

Table 7. Graduation Year (planned)

	Frequency	Percent
2021	181	27.4%
2020	183	27.7%
2019	153	23.1%
2018	144	21.8%

Table 8. Major (for students with >1 major, this is the first one alphabetically)

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Economics	45	8.2%	American Studies	6	1.1%
Education	4	0.7%	Chinese	5	0.9%
Exercise Science	16	2.9%	Japanese	1	0.2%
Nursing	17	3.1%	Asian Studies	4	0.7%
Political Science	21	3.8%	Environmental Studies	14	2.5%
Social Work	12	2.2%	CIS/Individual Major	3	0.5%
Sociology/Anthropology	6	1.1%	Latin American Studies	2	0.4%
Biology	80	14.5%	Race and Ethnic Studies	5	0.9%
Chemistry	27	4.9%	Russian Language	1	0.2%
Computer Science	15	2.7%	Classics	6	1.1%
Mathematics	39	7.1%	Medieval Studies	3	0.5%
Physics	8	1.4%	English	37	6.7%
Psychology	50	9.1%	French	11	2.0%
Art/Art History	11	2.0%	German	1	0.2%
Dance	7	1.3%	History	12	2.2%
Music	51	9.2%	Norwegian	1	0.2%
Theater	8	1.4%	Philosophy	1	0.2%
Music Education	16	2.9%	Religion	3	0.5%
Spanish	3	0.5%			

Table 9. Second Major (for students with >1 major, this is the second one alphabetically)

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Economics	7	3.5%	Music Education	1	0.5%
Education	1	0.5%	Japanese	1	0.5
Exercise Science	1	0.5%	Environmental Studies	3	1.5
Nursing	1	0.5%	Latin American Studies	1	0.5
Political Science	19	9.5%	Race and Ethnic Studies	3	1.5
Social Work	3	1.5%	Russian Language	1	0.5
Sociology/Anthropology	6	3.0%	Women's and Gender Studies	5	2.5
Chemistry	3	1.5%	English	8	4.0
Computer Science	2	1.0%	French	4	2.0
Mathematics	14	7.0%	German	3	1.5
Physics	12	6.0%	History	7	3.5
Psychology	17	8.5%	Norwegian	1	0.5
Art/Art History	12	6.0%	Philosophy	8	4.0
Music	13	6.5%	Religion	12	6.0
Theater	11	5.5%	Spanish	18	9.0

Table 10. Third Major (for students with >1 major, this is the third one alphabetically)

	Frequency	Percent
Political Science	1	11.1%
Sociology/Anthropology	1	11.1%
Chemistry	1	11.1%
Japanese	1	11.1%
Race and Ethnic Studies	1	11.1%
Women's and Gender Studies	2	22.2%
Philosophy	1	11.1%
Religion	1	11.1%

Table 11. Index of Student Academic Choices

Score	Frequency	Percent
0	267	40.6%
1	83	12.6%
2	66	10.0%
3	63	9.6%
4	36	5.5%
5	30	4.6%
6	11	1.7%
7	16	2.4%
8	6	0.9%
9	15	2.3%
10	8	1.2%
11	12	1.8%
12	2	0.3%
13	7	1.1%
14	1	0.2%
15	7	1.1%
16	1	0.2%
17	7	1.1%
18	2	0.3%
19	8	1.2%
20	1	0.2%
21	2	0.3%
23	1	0.2%
25	5	0.8%

Index scoring respondents responses to each item in the matrix of item 5<sup>refer to Appendix A</sup>. Each response was scored as follows: “never”-0, “1-2 times”-1, “3-4 times”-3, “5 or more times”-5.

Table 12. Univariate Analysis of the number of courses students are currently taking that include substantial discussions of race and racism and balanced works from scholars and artists of color.

	0 courses	1 course	2 courses	3 courses	4 or more courses	Valid Total of Respondents
The course includes substantial discussion about race and racism	33.2% 220	<b>34.5%</b> 229	21.6% 143	7.5% 50	3.2% 21	663
The course includes materials from scholars or artists of color	18.4% 112	29.3% 178	<b>32.7%</b> 199	12.8% 78	6.7% 41	608
Works by scholars and artists of color and works by white scholars and artists are balanced within the course material	<b>37.6%</b> 219	31.6% 184	19.4% 113	6.9% 40	4.6% 27	583
The professor or class discusses an author's or artist's racial identity in relation to their work	34.4% 220	<b>40.2%</b> 257	18.6% 119	4.5% 29	2.3% 15	640

Table 13. Cross-tabulation of race and ethnicity with the decision to register or want to register for a class because you believed it would include racially diverse students

		Students of Color	White Students
Never	Observed Count	64	336
	Expected Count	86.3	313.7
	Percentage	50.0%	72.3%
1-2 times	Observed Count	38	98
	Expected Count	29.4	106.6
	Percentage	29.7%	21.1%
3-4 times	Observed Count	17	23
	Expected Count	8.6	31.4
	Percentage	13.3%	4.9%
5 or more times	Observed Count	9	8
	Expected Count	3.7	13.3
	Percentage	7.0%	1.7%

The table shows that nearly three fourth of white students “never or almost never” take the racial identity of other students into account when decided to register or want to register for a class. Comparatively, 50% of students of color take the racial identity of other students into account in their registration decisions at least once. We calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing the frequency of the decision to register or want to register for a class because you believed it would include racially diverse students for students of color and white students, and found a significant interaction ( $\chi^2(3)=30.830, p<.05$ ).

Table 14. Cross-Tabulation of race and ethnicity and the decision to not register or not want to register for a class because the professor was not equipped to address microaggressions

		Students of Color	White Students
Never	Observed Count	91	389
	Expected Count	103.8	376.2
	Percentage	71.1%	81.1%
1-2 times	Observed Count	22	55
	Expected Count	16.6	60.4
	Percentage	17.2%	11.9%
3-4 times	Observed Count	5	15
	Expected Count	4.3	15.7
	Percentage	3.9%	3.2%
5 or more times	Observed Count	10	5
	Expected Count	3.2	11.8
	Percentage	7.8%	1.1%

The table shows that students of color experience the decision to not register or not want to register for a class because the professor was not equipped to address microaggressions more than white students. We calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing the frequency of the decision to not register or not want to register for a class because the professor was not equipped to address microaggressions for students of color and white students, and found a significant interaction ( $\chi^2(3)=22.30, p<.05$ ).

Table 15. Cross-tabulation of race and ethnicity with the decision to register or want to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color

		Students of Color	White Students
Never	Observed Count	72	338
	Expected Count	88.6	321.4
	Percentage	56.3%	72.8%
1-2 times	Observed Count	24	98
	Expected	26.4	95.6
	Percentage	18.8%	21.1%
3-4 times	Observed Count	23	21
	Expected Count	9.5	34.5
	Percentage	18.0%	4.5%
5 or more times	Observed Count	9	7
	Expected Count	3.5	12.5
	Percentage	7.0%	1.5%

The table shows that for the response categories 3-4 times and 5 or more times students of color responded that they have experienced the decision to register or want to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color more than white students. We calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing the frequency of the decision to register or want to register for a class because it was being taught by a professor of color for students of color and white students, and found a significant interaction ( $\chi^2(3)=39.98, p<.05$ ).



Table 16. Cross-tabulation of race and ethnicity and respondents reports of participating actively

		Students of Color	White Students
In none or almost none of the discussions	Observed Count	17	30
	Expected Count	10.1	36.9
	Percentage	15.9%	7.7%
In a few of the discussions	Observed Count	12	70
	Expected Count	17.7	64.3
	Percentage	11.2%	18.0%
In some of the discussions	Observed Count	25	113
	Expected Count	29.8	108.2
	Percentage	23.4%	29.0%
In most of the discussions	Observed Count	18	109
	Expected Count	27.4	99.6
	Percentage	16.8%	28.0%
In all or almost all of the discussions	Observed Count	35	67
	Expected Count	22	80.0
	Percentage	32.7%	17.2%

We calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing students of color and white students, and frequency of active participation in class discussions of race and racism, and found a significant interaction ( $X^2(4)=23.12, p=.000$ ).

Figure 1. Active Participation by Racial Identity

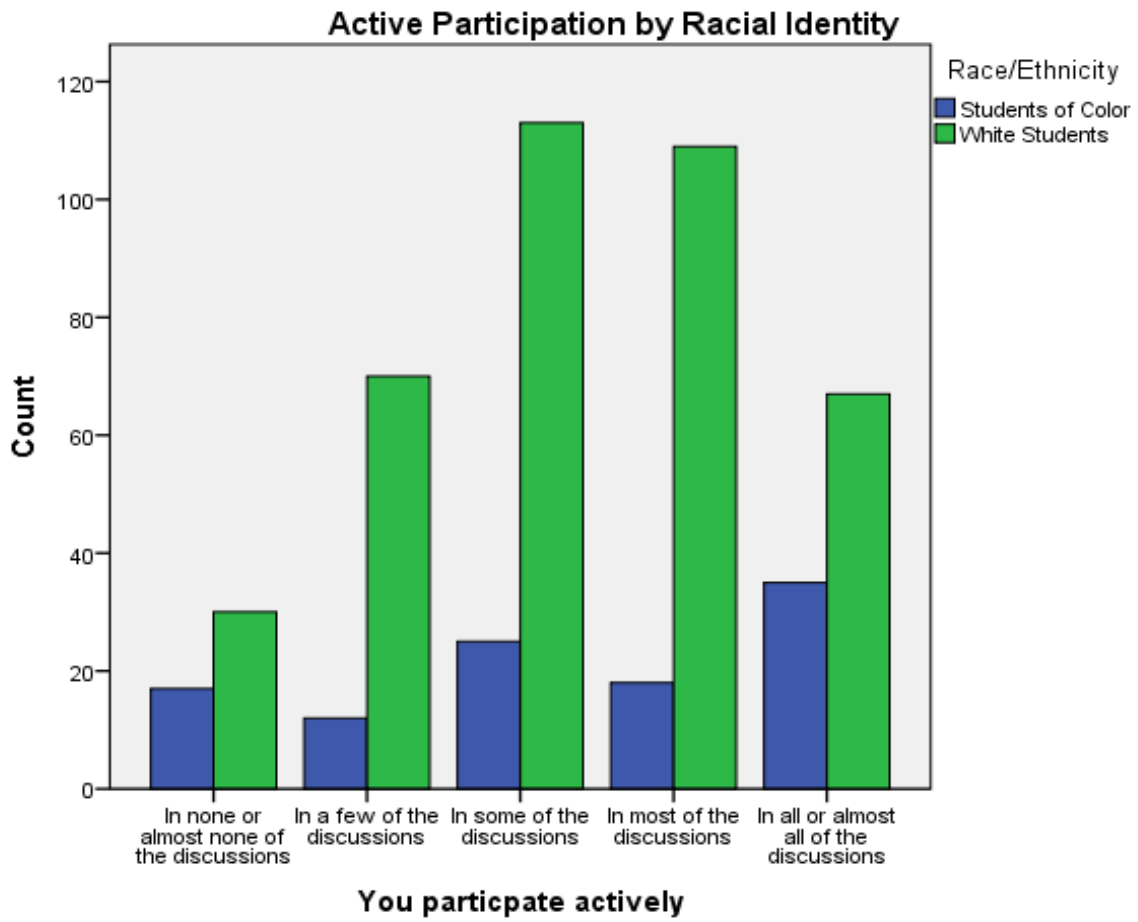


Table 16. Cross-tabulation of race and ethnicity with respondent reports of feeling expected to participate more than other students

		Students of Color	White Students
In none or almost none of the discussions	Observed Count	25	274
	Expected Count	64.4	234.6
	Percentage	23.4%	70.3%
In a few of the discussions	Observed Count	16	63
	Expected Count	17.0	62.0
	Percentage	15.0%	16.2%
In some of the discussions	Observed Count	18	23
	Expected Count	8.8	32.2
	Percentage	16.8%	5.9%
In most of the discussions	Observed Count	20	19
	Expected Count	8.4	30.6
	Percentage	18.7%	4.9%
In all or almost all of the discussions	Observed Count	28	11
	Expected Count	8.4	30.6
	Percentage	26.2%	2.8%

We calculated a chi-square test of independence comparing students of color and white students, and frequency of feeling expected to participate more than other students during class discussions of race and racism, and found a significant interaction ( $X^2(4)=127.675, p=.000$ ).

Figure 2. Feel Expected to Participate by Racial Identity

