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Leigh Erin Schlecht   March 29, 2019

Is Someone Sitting Here?
The Race-Space Dynamic in Emory's African American Studies Classrooms

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Abstract

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This paper questions some white students' assumption that Black students do not want them enrolling or participating in African American studies (AAS) classes at Emory University. Utilizing qualitative data from Black and white undergraduates at Emory, this research articulates the reactions of and responses to white students suddenly being in the minority of an AAS classroom at a predominantly white institution (PWI), as well as Black students' experiences in majority-white spaces. My analysis applies DuBois' theory of double consciousness and social identity theory to recognize the nuanced, but ultimately positive views of white students enrolled in AAS classes, as well as the stereotype threat and lack of representation experienced by Black students enrolled at PWIs. This thesis argues for the AAS classroom as a safe space primarily for Black students, allowing a discussion of the definition of "safe space" and how Black students' expectations of the AAS classes differ from their impressions of majority-white academic and extracurricular environments on Emory's campus. This research also articulates Black students' concern that white students are unaware of the amount of space their presence occupies within AAS classes. Black students' stories of their own experiences of tokenization and feeling as though white students don't understand them ground this argument that white students need to consciously develop their racial identities. Structuring Black and white interview responses in conversation, this thesis concludes by arguing that AAS courses both allow for white students to critically reflect upon their racial identities and for Black students to feel recognized and valued in a PWI that overwhelmingly centers majority-white experiences.

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I hope this paper can do your words justice.

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Introduction

The first thing I did was put on hoop earrings. I second-guessed myself all the way to the classroom, wondering if it was cultural appropriation. *But they're just earrings! But Timberlands are just shoes. Calm down, Leigh, they're just earrings.*

I was the only white woman in the room. For the first time in my academic career, I wondered if I belonged in the space. I shrugged myself down onto a seat in the corner of the room and opened my laptop, trying to make myself look busy. I didn't know anyone else there, and the room was full. The goal was to remain calm; I tried to tell myself that *I could belong here; this is just another class. I could belong here.*

But I knew that I didn't. Throughout the first class, I only spoke to say, "here," when the professor called attendance. I did not correct him when he mispronounced my name. The next few classes weren't much better. The course material focused on "Politics of Hip-Hop," and while I appreciated the music and did all the readings, I felt terrified that if I raised my hand in class, I would accidentally say something wrong, racist, or otherwise offensive. Just the thought of doing so made my palms sweat.

Even though I stayed silent, I wasn't comfortable until I walked outside of the classroom. I had an identity at Emory that was more than just "white," and I never questioned it, until then. I realized that I entered Emory, and indeed moved through all of my previous education, with "the expectation of a certain level of comfort and social safety within the classroom." (Winans 259). My discomfort in the African American Studies (AAS) classroom was not the result of any atmosphere that the professor or other students created. I projected my own insecurities onto the experience and allowed them to taint it. "Politics of Hip-Hop" demonstrated to me how little I knew of the larger world in which I

live. Though my white experience forms the dominant narrative—the norm—for many people, even non-white people, I felt I was doing them and myself a disservice by remaining comfortable within that narrative.

Until that course, I went about my days without giving much, if any, thought to experiences that were not my own. Suddenly, those realities confronted me in the classroom, and I realized how much work I had left to do. I enrolled in several more AAS classes, and while I still felt uncomfortable, that discomfort lessened as the weeks went by. I consciously set new goals for myself. I would raise my hand three times, or I would answer two questions, regardless of how many times I had to raise my hand. I made small talk with my classmates and even developed a close friendship. After a few weeks into my next AAS course, my insecurities faded as I gained confidence and made friends. Although I built relationships or earned trust in one AAS class, for example, that trust would not translate to another classroom with different students enrolled because "a personal exemption earned in one setting does not generalize to a new setting" (Steele 171). This pattern holds for white students who already took at least one class in AAS: they may not automatically be comfortable in a second course in the department. As a white student surveyed reported, "I [was] assumed not to know much" (white female, age 18). This phenomenon repeated itself every semester. I felt I needed to prove myself to my new professor, my new classmates, in a way that I wasn't compelled to do in classes outside of AAS. As my consciousness of being white in that departmental setting extended beyond just one classroom, I wondered why, or if any other white students felt the same way. So I turned to books.

Unfortunately, the literature on white students who take AAS classes is minimal, at best. In over three years of searching, I found one article: "Why Not Take a Black Studies Class?" in the *Atlantic*. It wasn't scholarly, but it spoke to my experiences. The author, Conor Friedersdorf, posed the titular survey question to a random sampling of undergraduates at public and private institutions. Suddenly, I saw that my experiences in AAS weren't unique. One white student surveyed observed, "there were times when I felt uncomfortable realizing things about myself, but I used that discomfort to grow" (Friedersdorf 5). Ditto. Another white respondent noted, "I made mistakes in classroom discussions and was respectfully called out. To engage with the material, I had to try to combine critical thinking with humility and empathy, a practice that is foundational to a good liberal education. White students might not have to develop this practice unless they're themselves the minority in the classroom, or are otherwise confronted by their racial and cultural backgrounds in an academic setting" (Friedersdorf 12–13).

I could not agree more. My experiences within AAS classes, and when spending time with the friends I made in those courses, were the only instances where I felt compelled to be conscious of my racial identity. For the first time, my white privilege was a disadvantage, not an advantage. I found that my privilege no longer operated as successfully, or as unconsciously, when I was not in the majority. In fact, I was ashamed that I lived for so long without being aware of how much easier my whiteness made things. I probably still am not fully aware.

Regardless, reading Friedersdorf's article allowed me to understand that the imagined atmosphere of an AAS class intimidates many white students, not just me. His respondents reported that they expected to be treated differently, and negatively, because

of their outsider status. Friedersdorf argues, though, that such an experience is unlikely due to Black students' respect for other students' willingness to a) step outside their comfort zone, and b) demonstrate an openness about another culture that has not received much interest from white students or scholars. However, he did not actually interview Black students. Rather, he grounded his analysis in the discovery that "among white students who actually took ethnic studies classes, a few reported being treated as if they didn't belong by other students while many reported being welcomed" (Friedersdorf 7). That made me curious.

I wondered how Black students enrolled in AAS classes feel about the white students who enroll in those courses. Was there a difference, I asked myself, between a white student who sits quietly and absorbs information versus a white student who actively participates? Were other people even thinking about these questions? I wasn't sure. Rather than immediately asking Black students to clue me in, I began by asking white students about their own experiences within AAS. Friedersdorf's article was my first indication that white students were consciously processing their experiences in AAS, but would that be true for other white students at Emory, specifically?

White Discomfort in AAS Classrooms

I wondered if white students, aside from myself, were interested in taking AAS classes, and what factors influenced their decision to enroll. When I asked Julia, a white woman, about her decision not to take AAS classes even though her undergraduate honors thesis focused on the intersections of race and media perception, she responded that she "definitely considered it a bunch of times ... I was nervous that the students would be, like,

'what are you doing here?'" (Julia[1])[2]. She clarified that she thought she would be "encroaching on territory," a concern that Santiago, a student who identifies as Latinx, agreed with wholeheartedly (Julia). Santiago was more optimistic about white and non-Black students taking courses within Emory's AAS department, even though he cautioned against those students occupying too much space, as

> the presence of white students and non-Black people of color can both de-center the Black experience as well as contribute to it. It is up to the professor to ensure that Black students are centered, and that they are able to critically analyze their culture without whiplash or disrespect from white students and non-Black students of color. I think white students can contribute to the experiences or learning in the class by examining and providing insight on how racism and anti-Blackness is rationalized ... Even though this insight is important, I still believe it's important for white students not to center their own experiences in the class, but be respectful of the space designed primarily for Black students. (Santiago)

The other white students I interviewed were very conscious of this as well.

Even for students like Shaina and Kat, both of whom were white women who did not actively participate in their AAS classes, "the vibe I got was people didn't feel like I belonged there" (Kat). A Black student interviewed for this research observed that "I don't think other people, white students, always feel," as if AAS classes are a safe space for them (Desmond). However, white student perception of Black hostility does not equal action on the part of the Black students. Studies comparing white students enrolled in historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs) to Black students in PWIs

> suggest that Black students [actually] have an increased challenge with equity and condescension on [PWIs] stemming from prejudiced attitudes and behaviors on the part of other students, professors and university staff.

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[1] Throughout this research, the name of each student interviewee has been changed to a pseudonym of their choosing.

[2] In each interview, students peppered their responses with filler language such as "like," "um," "you know," "right," and "well." For clarity, I excised that language from each interview transcript in order to present more legible narratives. Aside from standardizing punctuation and capitalization, I did not further alter any quotes from surveys or interviews.

> Conversely, the limited research regarding White students enrolled in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) suggests that Whites as minorities have experienced a generally open and friendly environment (Elam, 1978; Hall & Closson, 2005; Libarkin, 1984) with supportive faculty relationships (Hall & Closson) and have not been subjected to overt acts of racism (Nixon & Henry, 1992). (Closson & Henry 517)

This finding directly contradicts each of my white interviewee's expectation that Black students will be hostile to their presence in AAS classes, though this comparison between white students in HBCUs and Black students attending PWIs isn't fully comparable, as "white students who attended HBCUs experienced less racism than Black students at PWIs" (Simmons 31). Similarly, white students can take comfort in the fact that although some "white students held preconceived notions that the [AAS] climate would be negative, their perceptions were not borne out" (Closson & Henry 518–519).

When I asked Kat to explain why she felt out of place, she quickly clarified by saying, "No one was mean to me in that class. No one discriminated against me. I just felt like I was different." Shaina concurred, agreeing, "You can't blend in as much." Curious to see if Shaina could relate to my experiences, I shared with her how I wore hoop earrings to the first day of my first AAS course, and asked if she was conscious of how she dressed on the days when her AAS seminar meets. She paused, and then revealed that she would think twice before "wearing Nike Air Force Ones or something like that. Is that acceptable? Because I'm white, is that cultural appropriation?" (Shaina)

She offered a second example as well, saying she owns a bag that "has an image of a Black woman with an afro … I'm cautious to wear that to that class because it does have a Black woman on it. I don't know what people would think of that" (Shaina). Inwardly, I wondered what led Shaina to buy that bag. As a freshman at Emory, she is taking her first

AAS course. Perhaps after this class she might think differently about wearing an image of a Black woman, especially given the long history of white possession of Black bodies.

I posited the same question to Kat, but she was not very conscious of her appearance in her AAS class, other than the fact that "I felt white" (Kat). Both courses Kat took in AAS were cross-listed with Anthropology, her major. Her first class, "Foundations of Development," had a majority-white enrollment. Her second course in the department was on "Blackness and the Politics of Race and Space." In that classroom space, Kat "was a white student in a class, in a class that was about Black people, and understanding Black people, and for Black people" (Kat). She reported that she often felt "uncomfortable because sometimes we would talk about the horrific things that white people have done and that is [long pause], that is my race" (Kat).

White students' feelings of discomfort in AAS classes does not just stem from discussions about white people as oppressors. Though I discuss this point in more detail in the results section, here I offer a few other reasons why white students feel uncomfortable in AAS classes, namely that "there might be "little things that I'm not picking up on that people might judge me for" (Shaina). Shaina struggled to verbalize what exactly she might be judged for, but then shared that in her AAS course, she is one of four white students. She wondered aloud what would happen if she were the only white student in an AAS class, and thought she would actually be *less* worried about judgment from Black students. She thought she would "feel more comfortable in that space because it's not white kids asking dumb questions and that's how I'm seen" (Shaina). There, she would have greater control over her perception, since she would not be compared to or equated with other, perhaps

more problematic, white students in the AAS course. If that were the case, I asked, would Shaina be willing to take more classes in the AAS department? She immediately said yes.

Mia, a Black student majoring in AAS, remembered one white student telling her that she took classes within the AAS department so she could gain a deeper understanding of what it felt like to be in the minority. Kat echoed a similar sentiment, saying, "It's okay to be uncomfortable. [In that class] I was thinking that's how Black students feel all the time." But for Mia, three hours a week is not enough to capture that feeling, as there is a significant difference between feeling marginalized in a classroom and in one's entire lived environment.

Dr. Michelle Gordon, the AAS director of undergraduate studies, found the fact that white students feel uncomfortable taking such classes to be a condition of white privilege and a manifestation of an academic system that is simply not diverse enough. Scholar Amy Winans studies the development of white racial identities within minority-white spaces, and finds that "the perception of safety and innocence and the narratives that support this perception become easier to explore when we directly address students' own positionality, especially racially and historically" (Winans 258). That white students are often becoming aware of their identity contingencies in AAS classes indicates that other majority-white courses are not doing enough to problematize dominant, frequently white narratives.

Yet passively enrolling in classes that satisfies a "diversity requirement" is not enough, either. "Students may enter these interactions with the general goals of not wanting to offend anyone, and getting through an interracial interaction as quickly as possible" (Byrd 290). White students have the option to walk out of the classroom and never think about these challenges again. They can choose to move solely within white

spaces without much difficulty, if they so desire. However, this decision often has disastrous consequences of white students' prejudice, and people of color's experiences of that prejudice:

> White students with more ingroup closeness at the end of college had higher levels of white students' exiting prejudice in all three models. Thus, white students who readily identified with other whites, and the structured category of "white," had higher levels of prejudice toward Blacks and Hispanics and Latinos, and racial resentment at the end of college. (Byrd 287)

Though I intentionally challenged myself, and my privilege, by enrolling in AAS classes, I recognize that in this endeavor, again, I am in the minority. Yet, as evidenced by my conversations with Julia, Kat, and Shaina, other white students actively consider these issues.

Those experiences fostered my interest this project, wherein I explore the contrasting experiences of Black and white students in an AAS classroom, as compared to courses whose enrollment proportionately corresponds to Emory's cultural composition. This can be challenging especially when "we center that one white experience in the midst of all these Black experiences, in the one place where it was supposed to be the other way around" (Mia). Of course, it would be almost impossible to state that only students of a certain demographic should take courses within certain department. Mia clarified that she did not want to completely deter white students from taking classes in the AAS department, but also acknowledged, "it's always preferable [to have Black-only classrooms], but that's not how the world works" (Mia).

Unpacking the nuances implicit in this contention, I found two separate assertions deserving of further consideration, the first being that AAS courses should be safe spaces for Black students. The second realization emerged gradually through my conversation

with Mia—white students would be well served to learn the content taught in AAS classes, but without introducing violence into that space. Further conversations with friends, interviewees, and my thesis advisors allowed those concerns to develop into the research questions that guide this thesis:

1. Do white students need to learn the content taught in AAS?
2. Should AAS classrooms be safe spaces for Black students?
3. How do Black students view white students' presence in the AAS classroom in a PWI?

Aside from Friedersdorf's article about white students in AAS classes, no research has been conducted on this topic, though it has been called for. My thesis responds to Closson & Henry's observation that "We know that teaching about race is not easy. We know this primarily from accounts of teaching about race on historically White campuses. We know less about the dynamics when African Americans predominate in the classroom and Whites are in the minority" (Closson & Henry 16). Closson & Henry's article summarizes why diversity among historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) isn't a larger area of study yet and argues that it should be. Here I extrapolate their argument to white students enrolled in AAS courses at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

In the conclusion of Closson & Henry's article, they note that

much of the effort to understand the effects of racial differences in general have centered on those who are the minority in the larger American population, i.e., African Americans, the Spanish-speaking, and Asians. There are far fewer studies that consider the experiences of the majority when they become the minority and interestingly many of these were done in the 1970s and 1980s—Hall and Closson (2005) is the most recent. (Closson & Henry 17)

With this thesis, I offer the first addition to this research on majority populations in the minority, in almost 15 years. This study aims to articulate the challenges of white student enrollment in Emory's AAS classrooms—my interviews demonstrate undergraduates are

thinking about this, but not necessarily discussing it.

As a researcher, I view my role as to learn from my interviewees and then say, "I've talked to all of these people; I've learned all of these things. Let me direct that feedback to the institutions and groups that may not be comfortable asking Black students these questions directly." Before I continue with this research, though, I must address my own positionality. In presenting the words and ideas of a sample of Emory's Black students, I am decidedly not trying to speak for an experience that isn't mine. However, I attempt to communicate their feelings as closely as possible in the hope that by presenting these Black and white perspectives in conversation, this research prompts a wider discussion on Emory's campus.

Drawing from ethnographic research, interviews, and questionnaires distributed to students enrolled in AAS, my honors thesis articulates Black students' perceptions of white students taking Emory's AAS classes. I explore the implications of white student participation on how Black students perceive them, and then Black student expectations of the AAS department. Through in-depth interviews, I polled students for their working definitions of the term "safe space," and apply their definitions to AAS classrooms.

Many other topics relating to race and interracial interactions, as well as varying conceptions of the Black experience, arose from my conversations with Black and white interviewees. I discuss these findings in the results and conclusion sections of this paper. Ultimately, I conclude that while white student enrollment in AAS classes is both unavoidable and beneficial for white students, white students should enter into those spaces cautiously, thoughtfully, and intentionally. In closing, this thesis offers advice—from Black students, for white students—about ways in which white students should respect or

engage with the already limited number of Black spaces on Emory's campus. Though catalyzed by my own experiences within AAS courses, this research officially began with my ethnographic observation of two AAS classes.

Ethnographic Research

I began my qualitative research in the same place I conceptualized my research questions: sitting quietly in an AAS class. However, my experiences as a student and a researcher were markedly different. Though the course topics varied, my experiences as a student in the AAS classroom differed markedly from other departments. I had to ask, was it me? I firmly believe the answer is yes. My reaction to being in the minority manifested in that initial discomfort, that perceived otherness. It was not my reaction to how my classmates treated me, but rather, how I thought I should feel in that situation.

Using my experience, I began reading, trying to find scholarship on why I might be experiencing these stressors, and *only* in AAS classes. Finally, I hit upon a term that encapsulated my experience: stereotype threat. Briefly defined, stereotype threat manifests in

> externalization of negative stereotypes—expecting to be judged invidiously by majority group members on the basis of a stereotypical belief in minority intellectual inferiority—[which] increases the performance burden experienced by individual minority group members and that this extra psychological burn, in turn, lowers grade performance. (Owens & Massey 163)

Claude Steele, a sociologist most recently connected with the University of California Berkeley, writes about the concept of stereotype threat as a predictor of student under-performance in his book *Whistling Vivaldi*. As I read through Steele's book, I recognized my own behaviors in his case studies. In my first AAS elective, I was the only white woman in class; I quickly became conscious of my "otherness." In this course, "Politics of Hip-Hop" with Professor Larry Jackson, I was not the outspoken, insightful student that I am in other

classrooms. Instead, I became quiet, reserved, and very self-conscious. I was constantly aware of the fact that because of my race I was perceived differently.

I found strong parallels between my own discomfort and Steele's discussion of Ted, the one white student enrolled in a political science course focusing on African American issues at the University of Michigan. Steele reports that Ted experienced symptoms of stereotype threat including, but not limited to, anxiety, self-consciousness, and second-guessing of his ideas. His heart would beat faster when participating in class, which happened much less frequently than when Ted participated in other classes that were majority-white. These experiences closely mirrored my own, and those of Kat and Shaina described in the introduction, but the three of us had never been able to label them as anything more than our own nervousness or poor performance. However, the physical reactions, even the "heart racing" that one survey respondent reported, are emblematic of a much larger phenomena (white female, age 18).

Steele describes our symptoms, physical and emotional, as identity contingencies, "conditions you have to deal with in a setting in order to function in it. And identity contingencies are contingencies that are special to you because you have a given social identity," (Steele 68). In an AAS classroom, a contingency could be that a white student is nervous to raise their hand in class for fear of mistakenly saying something that could be interpreted as racist, or that a Black student is asked to speak about a universal "Black" experience rather than their own experiences. As a larger construct, people of color most frequently experience stereotype threat.[3]

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[3] See Steele & Aronson (1995); Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley (1999); Blascovich, Spencer, & Quinn (2001); and Aronson, Fried, & Good (2002).

Describing an experiment where Black students and women were reminded of their race or gender prior to taking a math exam, "stereotype threat dampened down activity in the part of the brain we use to do mathematics and increased activity in the part of the brain associated with vigilance to one's social context and to emotion" (Steele 125). As such, each group under-performed when compared to Black and female students who were not reminded of identity contingencies that hold negative stereotypes associated with intellectual performance.

Explorations of stereotype threat in the classroom have many applications. For example, white students who comprise the minority of a classroom are automatically reminded of their race, and the identity contingency that accompanies it—that white people are often assumed to be racist. Rather than accidentally confirm that stereotype, white students will often remain silent in majority non-white classrooms. In a 2005 study conducted by Amy Winans, a white undergraduate admitted "apologetically, 'I would rather be known for having no opinion than [for] having a bad one,'" (Winans 260). As Steele points out in his book *Whistling Vivaldi*, "virtually everyone cares about some intellectual behaviors—speaking well to teachers or in class, for example—and stereotype threat [such as accidentally saying something racist] should affect these behaviors…" (footnote, Steele 62). As a white student enrolled in an AAS course, I would often "fear being reduced to that stereotype" (Steele 64). This worry was especially salient because of another student in the course: Chad.

A frequent participant in discussions, Chad referred to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. disrespectfully as "MLKJ" and made several racist, sexist comments each day. Because of his comments, my friend Mia, a Black student in that class, was very vocal about her dislike of

Chad. Inwardly, I wondered if her feelings could be extrapolated to me, as a result of our shared whiteness. Given that I was acutely aware of my race in each AAS class, our discussions about Chad always made me self-conscious. But I wasn't alone. In Steele's investigations of stereotype threat in university classrooms, he found that "for those who identify with the domain to which the stereotype is relevant, this predicament can be self-threatening," (Steele 164). In this case, the domain was our AAS class; within that space, frequent discussions about oppressive white people and the concept of white hegemony occurred. The stereotype of white people as racist was, therefore, in play. And I watched it materialize in Chad. This led me to wonder if, given that I am also white, Black students would generalize their frustrations with Chad to include me.

Yet as a researcher in the AAS classroom, my experience was quite different. In Emory University's Spring 2019 semester I conducted ethnographic research in two AAS classes—"Intro. to AAS" and an upper-level class, "Survey of Af-Am Lit. Since 1900." The professor for both courses, Dr. Michelle Gordon, is a member of my thesis committee and granted me permission to observe her classes. I sat in on discussions during the first two class meetings after Emory's Add/Drop/Swap period ended, so that the other students would think that I was a last-minute addition to the class. In the introductory class, I was one of two white students in the room, though I was one of 10 in the upper-level course. Surprisingly, I was not self-conscious in either space. Though my role in the classroom was no longer that of a student, I assumed the other students would view me as one. Thus, I expected that I would still feel nervous about being there because Black students might still be judging my presence, assuming that I was another white addition to what they expected to be a Black space.

The African American literature class met prior to "Intro. to AAS" and was markedly more diverse, so at first I attributed my comfort to the fact that I was in the majority. Ten white students were in the lecture hall, compared to nine Black, one Asian, three Latinx, and two Middle Eastern students. Roughly half of the Black students sat in the front row of the lecture hall; the others sat in the back two rows. Interestingly, all of the white students save one sat in an aisle seat, or next to a student in an aisle seat.

To me, this seating arrangement visually indicated the white students' discomfort with the space, given their close positions to exits. The white students also sat distinctly separate from the Black students. Alone or in groups of two to three, the white students clustered near the edges of the middle rows of the lecture hall—in front of them and behind them sat Black students, but white students (during either of my class visits) never sat next to them.

The classes began with 30-minute lectures by Dr. Gordon, which were interspersed with a few questions to students about definitions. During her presentations, one Black and one white (Jewish) woman would nod in agreement. After the lecture and some brief announcements, Dr. Gordon would ask her students for their impressions of the reading material. When white students participated in class, one female Black student consistently turned to look at them, but when Black students participated in the class discussion, two to four Black students would make eye contact with the speaker. They would do so even when a student was sitting behind them, turning in their seats to give the participant their full attention.

In both class sessions that I attended, Black students participated more frequently than any other group, with an average of 11.5 comments made by the group of Black

students per class session. Comparatively, white students participated a total of seven times per class, while the group of students of other racial backgrounds participated eight times total per class—of those average eight times, five comments belonged to the same female Indian student. Five white students never raised their hands in either class meeting.

The course content itself may explain some of the white students' hesitation to participate, as a Black student raised the question of white women's historical complicity in racially motivated lynchings (the students were reading Ida B. Wells). This prompted one white student to raise her hand high, twice, during the Black student's comment, but no Black students turned to look at the white student when she responded, even though she agreed with the Black student's assessment.

When no student responded to the white student's comment, Dr. Gordon asked that white female to read a quote from the reading, which advocated for lynching "a thousand times a week if necessary." The remainder of the class discussion, informally led by Black students, rather than the professor, presented white women in opposition to African American women. This thread continued during my second visit to the class, as a Black student introduced the idea that white people don't have to "check how others are perceiving them." She referred to DuBois' theory of "double consciousness," which argues that African Americans are "gifted with second-sight," as they have developed "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (DuBois 3).

A large number of scholars apply the theory of double consciousness to Black students in predominantly white classrooms, and to Black professors at PWIs. In my own research, I employ the theory of double consciousness as a lens through which to assess

white students' self-consciousness in AAS classes, and Black students' experience of stereotype threat in classes offered by other departments.

While this upper-level AAS course contained a majority of white students, there was only one white undergraduate enrolled in Dr. Gordon's "Intro to AAS" class. He sat in the back right corner of the room; I sat in the back left corner. Both of us arrived roughly five minutes early to the class, and as the seats filled up around us, the chairs on either side of us were the last to be filled. Given that I was seated in the same row as the other white student, I could not directly observe him, but my vantage point was such that I could see the body language and facial expressions of almost every other student (20 students total).

The majority of these students were first-years in the college, which may partially explain the low levels of participation within the class. On both of my observation days, the professor, Dr. Gordon, lectured for roughly 20 minutes at the beginning of the class, and would then open up the discussion to students. Student participation would consistently be followed by several minutes of lecture from the professor, which might also explain the low participation. That stated, my measure of student participation is how often each student raised his or her hand. Within this class of 16 Black, one white, one Asian, one Latinx and one Indian student, the Black students participated (on average) 15.5 times total per session, while the one white student participated three times. His average participation was therefore triple the amount that any Black student would contribute, on average.

The content of these responses, and student reactions to them, differed dramatically. For example, when a Black student contributed, four to seven students would turn to look at that participant. When the white male student interjected—he did not raise his hand for two of his three comments—two girls sitting near me looked at each other and

smirked. Not one student looked at the white student while he was participating, though students often made eye contact with each other while he talked. In contrast, these students often nodded and turned their head when Dr. Gordon or a classmate of color participated.

Granted, the white student's participation differed markedly than other comments offered by the Black and other non-white students. For example, Dr. Gordon asked the class to define the term "Jim Crow." The white student raised his hand and offered an example without being called upon. His definition was accurate, and Dr. Gordon began to expand on it when the same white student interrupted her explanation to correct her use of the terms "de jure" and "de facto." At this interjection, two Black students sitting in the front row audibly snorted and leaned back in their chairs.

Later in the class, Dr. Gordon showed a two-minute video clip. Before she pressed play, the white student loudly said the word, "Lights," probably to indicate that someone should turn the lights off. Dr. Gordon had not asked the students to do so. At the white student's statement, the other students looked around at each other, raising their eyebrows in surprise at his command.

As the other white student in these classrooms, I was regularly surprised by the fact that I felt comfortable there, especially since my presence could be perceived negatively given my whiteness. Though I was only in those spaces for a total of 2.5 hours per class, my experiences were much less stressful than AAS courses I actually enrolled in, since there was no pressure to participate. As a researcher, I also held more power than the students because I was there to observe them, not engage with them. This awareness affected my level of comfort in those spaces, as I experienced a much greater degree of control over my

behavior within the space than a white student, for example, who fears being called on out of the blue.

That said, the experiences of a white student being in the minority for three hours a week cannot directly parallel the experiences of a Black student who is in the minority for most, if not all, of their undergraduate coursework. And they cannot "un-enroll" from their Blackness. Stereotype threat for those students also extends beyond the classroom and into all facets of their social and academic life.

For that reason, this study explores multiple variables that effect Black students' experience at Emory University, a Southern PWI. Students' pre-college socialization, college socialization, and racial identity are all significant factors into how Black students valorize the AAS classroom, and white students' place within it. To operationalize these variables, I designed IRB-approved interview schedules and questionnaires to collect closed- and open-ended responses to questions testing each of my three independent variables.

Methods

This study utilizes a mixed-method approach with an emphasis on qualitative data. As previously discussed, I began my research with an ethnographic piece. In January 2019, I sat in on two AAS courses, for two class meetings each, during the third week of classes in the semester. I selected seminar courses to attend, rather than lecture-based classes, so that I could better observe student participation. The purpose of this research component was to observe white student behavior, and Black students' response to them, at an early stage in the semester, when white students would not yet have established a rapport with the Black students in the course (if they ever achieved one). During each class meeting, I sat in the back of the classroom and took notes by hand, such that my typing would not distract the class. I did not participate in either class in any way.

In my notes, I recorded the racial makeup of each course and how often each student participated. I also recorded other behaviors such as how loudly a student spoke, body language, especially posture, and whether a student asked or answered a question. Furthermore, I noted how the other students responded to each student's participation. Did they nod their heads? Did only certain demographics of students indicate agreement? Did the other students lean forward or away from the participant? Did another student respond to that participant's comment? I include my observations in the ethnographic research section of this paper.

In presenting this research, I structure my findings as a narrative, rather than (for the most part) a set of charts and data points. Essentially, I aim to humanize this research as much as possible, in order to present student perspectives as a dialogue with each other,

a conversation happening on the page that I hope will one day move into other, more physical spaces.

To begin this conversation, I limited my population sample to Black and white undergraduates on Emory's campus. Though survey respondents identified as African American/Black, white, mixed race, Asian, and Latinx, I only interviewed Black and white students. The intention behind limiting this study to solely Black and white students is to avoid the possibility of confounding variables, though several responses to my open-ended survey questions suggest that students of other racial backgrounds hold equally nuanced expectations of the AAS classroom. While the racial makeup of Emory's AAS classrooms is not limited to Black and white students, I limited the number of racial identities being studied a) to control the scope of this research, and b) because white students carry with them the identity contingency of historical oppression of people of color, a subject explicitly discussed in many AAS courses. In short, white people as a group are most frequently criticized within these spaces "because, well, [they] have done the most" (Mia).

With my population thus clearly defined, I began to recruit participants. Data collection occurred during Emory's spring 2019 semester across a three-month period between January and March. In total, 26 students completed the in-depth questionnaire. At first, I intended to recruit students through Facebook, but only seven individuals responded to those recruitment posts. Those students completed a screening survey that asked about their enrollment in AAS classes (see Appendix A). Of those seven respondents who responded to the survey, six agreed to be contacted for an in-depth interview. Three respondents were white; two identified as African American and two reported other racial identities that were not being studied.

In order to better describe my process, I use the recruitment of one Black student as a case study, I offer my interactions with Desmond, a Black student majoring in AAS, as representative of my revised recruitment process. Desmond's AAS class was the first course I presented to about my research. I emailed each professor teaching a course under AAS in the Spring 2019 semester, asking them to distribute my questionnaire to their students, and offering to present my research to their classes. I was previously a student of the professor teaching Desmond's course, and she graciously offered to vouch for me to her students. We walked over to her class together, and on the way I gave her more context about my research. She introduced me to her students, who composed the only all-Black classroom I presented to.

In brief, I explained that my research, supported by Dr. Gordon in the AAS department, was in response to feedback on students' course evaluation forms about the AAS classroom as a safe space for Black students. I said Dr. Gordon asked me to help her further explore this topic, as my undergraduate honors thesis in the Institute for the Liberal Arts (ILA) was on classrooms as safe spaces. Incidentally, this classroom formed the only group to which I did not directly address my whiteness. The elephant in the room was that I, a white student, was asking to conduct research on Black students—aside from their professors vouching for me or if we'd been in classes together, there was no reason for Black students to be receptive to my request for more information.

Yet Desmond filled out the questionnaire I distributed and indicated he would be interested in being interviewed. The time to complete the survey, on average, was 5 to 10 minutes (see Appendix B). The questionnaire includes general demographic questions and asks about class participation; if respondents indicated their racial identity was Black or

mixed-race ("Black & Other"), they were also prompted to complete the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS). CRIS asks students to respond to claims on a 7-point scale, indicating the degree to which they agree with each statement. Sample statements include: "I sometimes struggle with negative feelings about being Black" and "White people should be destroyed." 26 students total, across nine classes, participated in the survey component. Each interviewee except one also completed the questionnaire—if students were not currently enrolled in an AAS class, I asked them to answer the survey with their impressions of AAS classes they took in previous semesters.

Interview participants are all Emory undergraduate students (and one graduate student) who identify as African American or white and have taken at least one course either in the AAS department or cross-listed with it. Two were males who self-identify as Black, African American, or white, and 10 were women who self-identify as Black, African American, or white. One woman, Marly, identified as biracial—her mother is white and her father is Black.

Of the 14 students interviewed, I did not know four. I knew five in passing from classes, though we had never interacted outside of the course, and five were students I interacted with regularly outside of academic settings. I knew Desmond from one previous AAS course, though we had never spoken to each other before. Our conversation, like all the others except one, took place in a private study room in the Woodruff Library. The interview was semi-structured, following an interview schedule (see Appendix C for Black students and Appendix D for white students) adapted as necessary to allow interviewees to expand on earlier points or address subjects that emerged from the conversation. General topics included students' family backgrounds, their Black and white friends growing up,

and their extracurricular involvement. Completing the interview and questionnaire took between 35 and 95 minutes depending on the level of detail in people's responses, follow-up questions, and participant time limitations.

This sample is not meant to be generalizable because I could not contact every undergraduate African American, Black, or white student at Emory. In total. there are 487 Black students enrolled at Emory (67.15% female). Furthermore, I did not speak with any white men about their experiences in AAS classrooms, though I do speak *about* specific white men in this research. Additionally, I was only able to speak to two Black men during data collection; they comprise 14.28% of my respondents, but 32.85% of the Black undergraduate population. While I am not comfortable generalizing about any group's experiences, I reiterate here that my findings about Black male experiences at Emory are specific to these individuals and should not be extrapolated further. Indirectly, Desmond presaged this limitation when discussing his own research. When Desmond was interviewing Black student athletes about their experiences at a PWI, Black members of his own sports team, "the sport that is predominantly Black (though not at Emory), they were really, really … they're really, really careful in how they spoke about [their experiences], even to me."

After our conversation, I asked Desmond (and each other interviewee) if he would be comfortable suggesting other people I should talk to about my research. He suggested, among other students, Becky, who in turn suggested I talk to others. This snowball sampling approach assisted my recruitment in one significant way. Each interviewee (except one, who didn't know the person she nominated well) told me that I could use their name as a referral when I reached out to their nominees. This indicated to me that the

participants I interviewed felt comfortable vouching for my project in this small way. This generosity on their part lent a needed legitimacy to my research, as I am sure I would have fewer respondents without this sampling approach.

Given that I am a white interviewer, I remain conscious of the fact that I am an outsider to most of the subjects and experiences described by Black interviewees. Yet I am the one presenting this research. In doing so, I made every attempt to remove myself from the argument, in order to allow my respondents to quite literally speak for themselves. As I transcribed each interview, I took extreme care not to misrepresent these students, who trusted me with their time and insights.

I limited my sample to Emory University because of time, resources, and the fact that Emory University founded the Southeast's first degree-granting Department of Black Studies (the department's name when founded in 1971). Thus, the department maintains a longer history of instruction and student involvement than many other predominantly white peer or local institutions. Given that I study at Emory University and am more familiar with this department than Black Studies at any other university, this proximity and familiarity allows me to perform a more nuanced analysis of the classroom. That said, sociologist William Byrd argues for the reconsideration of PWIs as

> elite historically white colleges and universities (HWCUs) ... Considering these colleges and universities as predominately white institutions (PWIs) only describes the demographic characteristics of these institutions and ignores the racial character and histories. Viewing these colleges and universities as elite HWCUs, we can understand the cross-race interactions and study results of the students on these campuses as influenced by particular histories, symbols, and climates that privilege white students over racial-ethnic minority students. (Byrd 288)

While I fully agree with Byrd's assessment, I intentionally use the PWI acronym within this research, as each Black student interviewed, as well as one white student, used this

description to characterize Emory. Regardless, the underlying legacies of racism, slavery, and hegemony associated with all PWIs, and Emory specifically, will be addressed more thoroughly in the "Is Emory racially diverse?" section of my results chapter.

That chapter, as well as the conclusion chapter that follows, elaborate on the key variables I measured in both questionnaires and interviews: the participant's pre-college socialization, college socialization, and racial identity. I developed these instruments in order to address four discrete, yet related, hypotheses:

H1: If Black students strongly identify as Black, they are more likely to have a negative attitude towards white students in Emory's AAS classrooms.

H2: If Black students frequently socialized with white students in high school, they are more likely to have a positive attitude towards white students in Emory's AAS classrooms.

H3: If white students participate heavily in AAS classes, Black students are more likely to have a negative attitude towards them.

H4: If Black students are members of multicultural groups at Emory, they are more likely to have a negative attitude towards white students in Emory's AAS classrooms.

To test these hypotheses, I draw upon the qualitative responses from surveys and interviews, and ground my analysis in the social-psychological theories of double-consciousness and social identity.

Double Consciousness & Social Identity

A variety of sociological theories anticipate these hypotheses. Leon Festinger (1954), an American social psychologist introduced social comparison theory, which was quickly followed by the theory of social exchange (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Walster, Walster, & Berscheid (1978) responded with equity theory and Tajfel & Turner (1986) with social identity. Each of these theories supports the contention that "social stigma has negative effects on self-esteem" (Crocker & Major 610). A key tenet of social identity theory, which, combined with DuBois' double consciousness, are the theories driving my research, states that "Positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups" (Tajfel 284). These comparisons lead groups

> to attempt to differentiate themselves from each other (Tajfel, 1978a; Turner, 1975b). There are at least three classes of variables that should influence intergroup differentiation in concrete social situations. First, individuals must have internalized their group membership as an aspect of their self-concept: they must be subjectively identified with the relevant in-group. It is not enough that the others define them as a group, although consensual definitions by others can become, in the long run, one of the most powerful causal factors determining a group's self-definition. Second, the social situation must be such as to allow for intergroup comparisons that enable the selection and evaluation of the relevant relational attributes. (Tajfel 284)

To test my hypotheses, and explore in greater depth the racial dynamics caused by white students' presence in AAS classrooms, I employ social identity theory to evaluate my variables (pre-college socialization, college socialization, and racial identity). Generally, social identity theory equates social categorization as a form of cognitive classification, a mental algorithm that allows users to quickly draw conclusions about people or things based on patterns. When used for social comparison, "positive distinction" means that

individuals have a tendency to exaggerate differences between themselves and others. According to the theory, people will categorize themselves within a group, their "in-group," through which they gain a sense of belonging. In-group members, once they identify with a group, distance themselves from groups seemingly without those shared beliefs. The results include conformity to in-group norms, stereotypical thinking, ethnocentrism, or in-group favoritism, all easily applied to perceptions of race. Intergroup contact theory builds upon the construction of in-groups and out-groups to explore how, or if, "a person's level of prejudice toward an outgroup will reduce in size through interactions with members of an outgroup under certain key conditions" (Byrd 266).

As a foundational social psychological theory over much of the last theory, research conducted within contact theory generally "found various forms of interaction between group members reduces prejudice" (Byrd 265). Four conditions, established by American psychologist Gordon Allport, must be extant, though, before the reduction of prejudice might begin. Imagine a conversation between a Black person and a white person, initiated with the intention of reducing the white person's prejudice. For the conversation to be productive, Allport establishes that "*equal status* must exist between the members of different groups during the interaction" (emphasis in original, Byrd 266). The two must also share a common goal—in this case, to reduce prejudice. Then, inter-group cooperation must occur. Again, the conversation between members of separate racial groups indicates this cooperation. The final condition for Allport's contact theory requires that inter-group contact must be societally acceptable.

While active engagement across difference theoretically sounds positive, scholars propose various challenges to intergroup contact theory, which essentializes race and may contribute to

> negative outcomes for members of both groups (Richeson & Trawalter, 2005; Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005) … White individuals experience more negative outcomes when concerned about appearing prejudiced (Shelton, 2003), whereas Black individuals experience more negative outcomes when concerned about their partner's prejudice (Shelton & Richeson, 2006a) (Babbitt & Sommers 1233).

Depending on the type and quality of interaction between different racial groups, Allport proposes, "this contact is associated with reduced prejudice" (Allport [1954] 1979). However, the theory fails to clearly specify the amount or quality of contact needed to do so. It also neglects participant self-selection; prejudiced people, especially members of dominant social groups, often avoid interacting with those they are prejudiced against. Furthermore, contact theory avoids discussing the potential trauma experienced by participants, even as they work to alleviate it through contact. Following African American scholar W.E.B. DuBois' theory of double consciousness, Black and white intergroup contact participants will necessarily perceive these interactions, and the interactions' success, very differently.

Modern sociological theories of racial and ethnic relations began in the late 19th century—one of the first race theorists was W.E.B. DuBois, who wrote about "double consciousness" in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*. This social-psychological theory argues that African Americans are "gifted with second-sight," as they have developed "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (DuBois 3). Within a racial context, DuBois then introduces "the Veil" as a concept of the alteration of social perception, imagined as the darker veil of skin color. Though not a physical object, DuBois writes that

the Veil demarcates a barrier between Blackness, and how whites perceive that Blackness—two different social perceptions.

DuBois observes that Black people see through the Veil, thereby understanding white perceptions of Blackness, but Black people cannot cross over or *become* white. Conversely, whites cannot see through the Veil and remain generally unaware of its existence. Their conception of Blackness, though inaccurate, stays unchallenged by Black people's actual experiences of their own Blackness. This theory of the Veil lends itself to DuBois' idea of "double consciousness," wherein Black people see themselves through the lens of the "other," in this case whites. In this way, Black people maintain their own self-concepts, but also understand how others (whites) perceive them. Even if Black people comprehend white understandings of them, Black people, DuBois argues, do not necessarily agree with those white perspectives. For DuBois, though, this double consciousness becomes a problem when Black people cannot fully see themselves outside of how whites define them. And white definitions abound—in history, literature, and especially the classroom.

In the essay "Black, Female, and Academic," celebrated Black feminist scholar bell hooks addresses the challenges of being a Black female scholar in predominantly white academic spaces. She distinguishes between white supremacy and racism by saying, "Many of my white academic colleagues express a longing to live and work in more diverse settings, to have Black people as colleagues, but this does not mean that they have unlearned white-supremacist thinking" (hooks 98). She writes that white academics remain comfortable observing their Black counterparts succeed, and support them in doing so, but still feel superior. hooks draws a parallel between faculty meetings and classroom

settings when she writes, "my critiques of systems of domination risked being viewed as expressions of personal anger" (hooks 99). My research directly applies this observation to Black students in classrooms that white students also occupy. How do Black students critique a system that directly implicates them without seeming angry or resentful? Are white students wrong to notice or address those analyses?

Based on her own teaching experience, hooks observes, "white students respond with naïve amazement that Black people critically assess white people from a standpoint where 'whiteness' is the privileged signifier" (hooks 339). When this analysis occurs in a classroom with white students enrolled, Pam, a Black woman at Emory, warns that "it will sound like a critique directly at you, but it's more of a critique on the American system overall because white-as-the-majority has been the tier at the top … [so] the people who would identify with that then see it as coming for them." In these instances, the stereotype threat of whiteness becomes even more prevalent in the classroom for white students. Henri Tajfel, co-founder of social identity theory, posits that "in-groups do not compare themselves with every cognitively available out-group: the out-group must be perceived as a relevant comparison group" (284). In the AAS classroom, relevant opportunities for comparison abound. Students of every racial background, upon walking into the space, must immediately reconcile their potential difference with the person sitting next to them.

White students in AAS classes, though, present a unique case study. Social identity theory distinguishes between out-groups and stigmatized out-groups, naming stigmatized out-groups as "relative to the dominant group in a culture or society, whereas an outgroup is defined by reference to any particular ingroup, regardless of which group holds the dominant position in the social hierarchy" (Crocker & Major 610). In the contemporary

United States, non-white skin color automatically signals stigmatized out-group membership. When white people form the minority race in a space, they become an out-group, but are not automatically stigmatized. In AAS classrooms, though, I argue that white students *are* stigmatized, given frequent classroom discussions of white hegemonic practice and racial domination, both subjects that immediately remind all students of white privilege. In her advice to white students about how they should engage with AAS classrooms and perceived criticism, then, Pam recommends white students remember that "there will probably be times that you'll feel attacked and [you] just have to realize that these are really sensitive topics and some of the students are very close to these situations."

In any department, studying theory, history, or literature often involves a distance between the learner and the subject material. But in AAS courses, Black students, some for the first time, engage with histories that they relate to directly. This powerful, often emotional experience might happen for white students in other courses, in other departments. Yet white history generally suggests dominance, pride, and conquest—when people of color receive mention, the paragraphs read as short, cursory, and generalized. Until the college level, those narratives rarely face strong challenges, nor do they often present the accomplishments of people of color. White students, who rarely experience their own history in a non-celebratory way, may take for granted Black students' revelatory experience of correcting, reclaiming, and engaging with Black history and culture in AAS. Within AAS classrooms, then, white students "might feel really removed from [the topics], but for some people, this is their reality" (Pam). The Black interviewees and survey respondents value the strength of that engagement, and the development of a positive perspective on a frequently denigrated racial identity.

Results[4]

Questionnaire participants consist of 26 undergraduates at Emory University (69.2% female, n = 18) from different ethnic backgrounds ranging in age from 18 to 22 years (M = 19.4). Participants report their ethnic background as: African American/Black (n = 13 [52%], 69.2% female); Asian (n = 3 [12%], 33.33% female); Latinx (n = 2 [8%], 50% female); Multiracial (n = 2 [8%], 100% female); and White (n = 5 [20%], 100% female). One participant, an 18-year old male, did not provide his racial identity. Two respondents (7.7% of respondents, 100% male) major in AAS. Both of these respondents identify as Black.

Interview participants consist of 13 undergraduates and one graduate student at Emory University (84.6% female, n = 11) from different ethnic backgrounds ranging in age from 18 to 22 years (M = 20.4). One Black female, a graduate student, is 26; her age is not factored into this mean. Five interview respondents did not complete the questionnaire, though I gathered general demographic data during each interview. Participants, including interviewees who did not complete the questionnaire, reported their ethnic-racial groups as follows: Black (n = 9 [52%], 77.77% female); Latinx (n = 1 [7.14%], 100% male); Multiracial (n = 1 [7.14%], 100% female); and White (n = 3 [20%], 100% female). Four respondents (30.77% of respondents, 50% female) major or double major in AAS. Each of these respondents identifies as Black.

The above demographic information constructs a more quantitative picture of my participants, whose hometowns range from Connecticut to Texas to California. One commonality between my respondents, though, was that I recruited them all from AAS

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[4] The quotes included throughout this section, and my thesis more broadly, were selected as the most pertinent examples of the phenomena described below. Each interview transcript, available upon request, contains a plethora of quotes that could easily be substituted to support these claims.

courses. Of the nine Black students interviewed, I expected that, because they each took at least one AAS, their Afrocentricity, as measured by the Cross Racial Identity Scale, would be higher than average ($M = 4$). Extrapolating from this hypothesis, I also posited that Black students with higher Afrocentricity scores would view white students in AAS courses less positively, as the Black students are presumably more conscious of the myriad ways in which white oppression was enacted on Black bodies over the past several centuries.

H1: If *Black students strongly identify as Black, they are more likely to have a negative attitude towards white students in Emory's AAS classrooms.*

To measure the strength of respondents' Afrocentricity, I employed the Cross Racial Identity Scale, a subscale of which measures this variable. Coded as IA, the four Black men and eight Black women who answered each of the six questions on the subscale have an average Afrocentricity of 4.53 on a scale of 1 (not Afrocentric) to 7 (very Afrocentric). Respondents BM3 and BM5 both major in AAS, which may contribute to their above-average scores. Interestingly, BM5 scores the highest on PSH (Self-Hatred) and IEAW (Anti-Whiteness) as well. Crocker and Major, psychologists who study the correlation between social stigma and self-esteem, observe, "one may hold one's social group or category in low esteem, yet have high feelings of personal self-worth" (Crocker & Major 610). Based on BM5's scores, I wonder if it is possible to hold one's social group in high esteem, yet maintain very low feelings of personal self-worth.

Regardless, I intentionally structured the questionnaire so that Black respondents would be directed to the CRIS form after indicating their ethic background. The one respondent who identifies as "Multiracial (Black & Other)" was also directed to CRIS, but she answered very few questions on the form, which did not require participants to answer questions before moving to the next section.

Once these respondents became conscious of their racial identities by filling out CRIS, they became more vulnerable to stereotype threat when answering questions in Section 2 of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). This section, which only Black and Multiracial (Black & Other) respondents were directed to, asks participants to indicate their attitudes towards white students who enroll in AAS classes. Primed, on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) respondents indicated the degree to which they

agreed with the following statements:

1. White people should be able to take classes in the AAS department.
2. White people should be able to take this class.
3. This class would be better if there were no white students enrolled.
4. Classes in this department without white students enrolled are different than AAS classes with white students enrolled.
5. White people should not be able to contribute their opinions in this class's discussions.

Each respondent, regardless of their Afrocentricity, either agreed or strongly agreed with Statement 1 (see Table 2, Appendix E). Similarly, only one student responded "neutral" to Statement 2; the rest either agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 3, Appendix E). The same respondent is "neutral" to Statement 3, while all other participants either disagree or strongly agree (see Table 4, Appendix E). Eight respondents agreed with Statement 4; only one disagreed and one participant did not answer this question, but responded to all other statements (see Table 5, Appendix E). Two respondents strongly agreed with Statement 5, while the rest were neutral or disagreed (see Table 6, Appendix E). While all respondents agreed that white students should be able to take classes in AAS, only one of 13 was ambivalent about their enrollment in that respondent's specific course. All other participants, regardless of their Afrocentricity scores, agreed that white students should be able to enroll.

BF2 and BF9 (who scored 4.6 and 3.6 on Afrocentricity, respectively) both felt white students should not contribute their opinions in AAS discussions, but this statement did not measure whether they felt white students should *never* participate in AAS classes, for example by giving fact-based answers from assigned readings.

As such, I was unable to determine a correlation between Black respondents' Afrocentricity scores and their opinions on white students enrolled in AAS classes.

However, the open-ended survey questions did reveal interesting correlations between Black students' Afrocentricity and their *own* participation in AAS classes.

How do you feel when participating in this class? If you do not actively participate, why?

Survey responses to this open-ended question varied significantly. As expected, white students reported varying levels of discomfort when participating, though they did not specify if they participate when called upon or by volunteering. One white female feels "slightly uncomfortable, but not at all judged" when talking in class (age 19). Another believes that "more so in this class than other classes, my classmates have a higher level of understanding, and it is intimidating to participate because I think I will sound less intelligent" (white female, age 20). A few Black students, especially those ages 18 and 19, agree with her. While one Black respondent felt "good, seen," when participating in class, others were less confident (Black female, age 20 [BF5]). A younger Black female, age 18, first stated that she views the AAS classroom as a safe space. However, she does not

> participate in this class as much as I do in most other classes, perhaps because I have not always been comfortable with my black identity, and, in many ways, I feel like I am still learning about that part of myself … I often feel more comfortable listening than sharing my own ideas. (Black female, age 18 [BF2])

A student one year older, also enrolled in her first AAS class, reveals that discussion topics "are topics that I can relate to because of my race, but not something I am well equipped to articulate. I am getting better, but I don't want to voice incomplete thoughts" (Black female, age 19 [BF9]). A Black male in the same class year feels more confident "offering my opinion and insight because I am African American" (Black male, age 18 [BM1]).

Interestingly, these varying levels of comfort with participation in AAS classes negatively correlate to the respective students' CRIS score, specifically their Afrocentricity. BM1, more confident speaking in class, scored 4.2 out of seven; the average for all participants was 4.53. BF9, the most confident woman when describing her own participation, scored 3.6. In contrast, BF2 and BF5 scored higher on Afrocentricity, 4.6 and 5, respectively, but evaluated their participation more self-consciously. Perhaps the more comfortable one grows in their Afrocentric identity, the easier it becomes to admit a lack of knowledge about certain topics.

H2: *If Black students frequently socialized with white students in high school, they are more likely to have a positive attitude towards white students in Emory's AAS classrooms.*

This hypothesis proved true, but for different reasons than I expected, as my approach was too simplistic. I expected that Black students with white high school friends would be more open to white college students in AAS classes, simply because of their previous positive experiences with white students. However, unless the Black student already enjoyed an existing outside relationship with a white student enrolled in an AAS course, this reason for their support of white enrollment does not hold. Rather, Black students with white friends from high school often report feeling "exhausted" or "frustrated" by having to explain things to their white friends and other white classmates. This suggests to me that these Black students view white student enrollment in AAS classes positively because later, those white students might not rely so heavily on their Black peers to explain things to them.

The narrative I present in the following section supports this hypothesis. Surprised to find that most of my Black interviewees did not recall explicit conversations about race with their families, I fully expected that white interviewees also lacked those discussions about race (they did). As such, I argue that, since no one talks to white children about race *and* their experience of whiteness is not racialized—if they move in majority-white spaces—they lack an understanding of otherness, and even more so a familiarity with it. Black interviewees gained this knowledge not through family conversations, but through experience. I reiterate here that while the anecdotes they share offer interesting parallels, they are not indicative of a universal Black experience. However, the lack of racial diversity in the media and on college campuses, including at Emory, does not automatically construct

a multifaceted experience for Black students, as it does for white undergraduates.[5] Black students interviewed frequently report feeling called upon to speak for groups bigger than their own person, both by white peers and non-AAS professors.

Each of these points independently signals the need for Black students to have their own majority-Black spaces on campus, where these pervasive issues are hopefully less prevalent. Combined, these findings indicate an urgent need for safe spaces for Black students at PWIs. At the end of this section, my interviewees and I define what safe spaces look like for Emory undergraduates, both in and outside of the classroom. The challenge then becomes: do these spaces exist for Black students outside of interactions with their friends and families?

Did your family ever explicitly talk to you about race?

I was surprised to find that the answer to this question was often "no." Though my white parents never spoke to me about race, mine or anyone else's, we are not members of a stigmatized out-group. In conversation with Black students, I expected to hear about memories of very specific conversations on race, though I could not imagine what those conversations sounded like. So I asked.

Becky is an only child from a single-parent household and "definitely had a lot of conversations about what it means to be a Black woman." She recalls her mother warning her about "moving into these spaces where anytime that you say something people are gonna think that you're angry; anytime that you come in here not smiling, people assume that you're angry at them; and you could literally have never met them a day in your life"

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[5] Black students comprise 7.98% of Emory's undergraduate population, compared to 14% of the United States population (DeNicola, 2010 US Census).

(Becky). These conversations helped Becky navigate her predominantly white magnet school. Mary, a Black woman from near Washington, D.C., wished her parents had similar discussions with her. She recognizes that neither of her parents attended PWIs growing up, and so maybe they couldn't relate. But they didn't explicitly talk about race with her, and "they should have, because of where I went to school … I was dealing with a lot of my own isolation" at the PWIs she attended (Mary).

Rather than specific conversations about Blackness, several students I interviewed learned more about their family's experiences with race through stories and anecdotes. Gwendolyn and her family are from Chicago, and her mother attended a PWI, Iowa Sate, "which was an event for her. … So she's moving into her room and her roommate was white and started screaming saying, 'there's a nigger in my room.' This was in the eighties." Though Gwendolyn's mother didn't have white friends until college, Gwendolyn's best friend growing up was white. She recalls her grandmother's reaction to when this white friend would sleep over; "my grandma would be like, 'you need more Black friends,' because of what happened to my aunt. She was a kid in the 80s. When her white friends realized that she was Black, they dropped her. My grandma thought that was going to happen to me and she was actually surprised that my friend wanted to stay [friends] with me" (Gwendolyn). Gwendolyn's grandmother grew up in the Jim Crow era, and does not know her exact birthdate. Like many other interviewee's parents and grandparents, she was alive during segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Pam, a Black woman from rural Mississippi, grew up with a father who "was born in the fifties, … so that does effect views on racial differences" (Pam). Though she characterizes her father as a relatively quiet man, "My dad will say, 'oh yeah, I remember not being able to go into certain restaurants,'

but he never really talks a lot about what it was really like to grow up in 1950s, 60s, in Mississippi as a Black male" (Pam). Those stories might be too hard to share with his daughter.

For the first-generation African Americans I interviewed, their parents' perspectives on white people were very positive. Mark, a queer first-generation American with Ethiopian parents, started answering this question by saying, "my parents have really good views of white people." Though his father recently began sharing stories with Mark about his experiences with racism in America, "they've always been things of the past" (Mark). Eartha is the daughter of Nigerian immigrants, so "it was very much imbibed in [her] that we came to this country so that you could be successful, too. [air quotes] Please be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer."

Although families of most Black interviewees did not sit their children down to talk about race, the stories they shared and expectations they held, Becky recalls, were much different than what she assumed white parents expected of their children. Even though each Black interviewee reports having white friends in high school, their differences growing up add another degree of separation between Black and white students, all of whom often report feeling misunderstood by friends of different backgrounds.

Do you ever feel like white students don't understand you?

Though many of the students interviewed report that interactions with their white friends and peers felt uncomfortable in middle school and high school, they also recall that they lacked the language to explain why. As a young child, Eartha admits she "didn't have this knowledge or the ability to articulate myself and be like, 'no ma'am, I think that you're

being discriminatory right now because of a history of oppression that's been put on my people'." Mary remembers that she wasn't "fully able to articulate it or understand it at the time, but I always felt a little bit different than everybody else." Several Black students offered stories about their interactions with close white friends or teammates from high school as demonstrative of this perceived difference:

> I had two good friends [at my first high school]. Both white women and yeah, we're not friends anymore after I switched high schools … it was just a lot of micro aggressions or just aggression that was toward me from them. I just didn't recognize it and it wasn't until I left and I looked back and said, "wow, this was not okay." And when I speak to [them] again and we interact … these same things come up. Nothing about the interaction has changed except how I view the interaction. —Mark

> I was on the basketball team, but they would never play me. And I wasn't selected to be on volleyball because my last name wasn't Dutch … [the Black coaches] were scared for me. They were like, "you're going to hate it. They're going to hate you," because that was their experience in the 80s.
> —Gwendolyn

> I distinctly remember being with two girls in one of their dorm rooms and they were talking about how they thought that one of the Black guys was really cute, but they wouldn't be able to date him because their parents won't allow it. They're like, "oh yeah, no, my dad would never, my dad would go crazy if I dated a Black guy." They were white. —Pam

> Nick was probably my best friend at [high] school, honestly, but he was a white kid. His dad was a lawyer. I remember my family didn't pay … the water bill, gas bill, something like that. And we had all cold water. And so, because this wasn't a new thing, we would just take cold water and then boil it on the stove and then that was how you use to bathe. Then [for] the next person, you would drain it and that person would do the same thing until everybody was clean. I remember telling Nick that story and he was like, "dude, you're kidding." He thought I was making it up. I was like, first of all, why would I make up a story about poverty for you? —Desmond

After sharing their stories, many Black students would then qualify their experiences by saying that they didn't realize how problematic those interactions were at the time. Pam remembers thinking to herself, "this [doesn't] make too much sense to me right now and it might make me feel a little uncomfortable," but she didn't fully "understand why until I

learned more later on in life." Becky, the interviewee who reports having the most conversations with her family, namely her mother, about race knew from "an early age I knew that something was different in how I got to navigate spaces," even though she couldn't always articulate the reason.

The Black students interviewed all report instances where they felt like white students didn't understand them, either. Gwendolyn, a Black woman from Chicago, remembers an instance in her high school, which many Trump supporters attended, where "this boy drove in with, with a Confederate flag on his truck and was confused why the Dean ran outside and was like, 'you have to take it off'." Even after a meeting with the administration, it seemed, the student did not understand why the flag was offensive to some of his classmates. For Gwendolyn and other Black students interviewed, the need to explain problematic interactions to their white friends grows exhausting. For this reason, Eartha says, "most of my really, really close friends are Black because there's less explaining I would have to do." Without these shared experiences, Mary and Eartha often experience a distance between themselves and their white friends. "When I'm with people who are not Black. I, I feel the distance because there *is* a distance" (Eartha). Eartha also feels this distance from Black students, however. As she entered Advanced Placement coursework in high school, her classes became progressively whiter. She qualifies this by saying,

> I don't think it was particularly because the Black kids were less smart, but they just didn't have people pushing them in that direction. A lot of Black kids are taught like being smart or being eloquent or having ideas is not something that you can do. So if somebody is trying to do that as a Black person, they're trying to act white. (Eartha)

As these examples demonstrate, racialized experiences form identity contingencies, which are understood and assumed simply from a shared cultural, in this case racial, context. Given that "peer group cultures can have a powerful effect on students' academic identities," if the group demeans acting "white" or views academic success as conformity, academically successful Black students may feel ostracized from their Black peers (Datnow & Cooper 193). "Segregation between … who hung out with who … that was just how it was.," Desmond said. "In the cafeteria at lunch or in classrooms or sports teams." Take the example of where to sit in a racially mixed cafeteria:

> The white student knows, for example, that if he sits with the Black students he could be judged in unsavory ways—as trying too hard to be cool, as being inauthentic perhaps, as being racially insensitive, and so on. He could worry that he'd get a frosty reception, that he'd say something that would be taken the wrong way, that he'd miss cultural references. The Black student … knows that if he sits with the white students, other Black students could see him as disloyal, as wanting to be white perhaps. (Steele 68–69)

Steele continues by saying, "To explain the lunchroom's racial segregation, one needn't postulate even an iota of group prejudice on the part of any student in the room. Its segregation could arise solely to avoid the bad contingencies of these two group identities in that place" (69).

This distance may be less emotionally draining than constant explaining, for Black students, though. Even when reviewing a problematic interaction with a white friend, nothing guarantees that the friend will respond well or actively learn from the conversation. At times, the conversation instead turns to how badly the white person feels *for* their Black friend. "When people take the experience you're talking about and make it about them and how bad they feel, it's weird" and unproductive (Eartha). So how do Black students critique a system that their white counterparts benefit from, without seeming like

they are criticizing their white classmates, or unsupportive of their presence in AAS classes? One strategy for students, at least in these interviews, was to direct their criticisms away from specific individuals and towards Emory University as an institution.

Would you describe Emory as racially diverse?

Of the 14 students interviewed, only two students, both Black first-years, consider Emory to be racial diverse. Each of these respondents qualifies their responses, though, with the terms "isolating" and "segregated." Mary, a Black first-year who attended PWIs growing up, considers Emory "fairly diverse. It could be better, of course. I don't want to use the word 'segregated,' because that's a fairly strong word, but I feel like even though there are … different racial groups on campus, there are times when people are sort of isolated within their groups." Another first-year observes even more diversity, reporting that her friends "all come from different backgrounds and different areas of the world" (Marly). The white students surveyed also hold markedly positive views of their own undergraduate experiences. Within my own experience, I find that white students often have far fewer criticisms of the university than students of color. These disparate views of campus life reconcile after "greater interaction with diverse people and ideas, [which] served to decrease the gap in views of the campus climate frequently found between students of color and White students" (Milem 12).

Students of color, in interviews and open-ended survey questions, encourage me to look at these statistics—where in the world was the "diversity" coming from, they ask. "There is a big [international] Asian population. I do not think that Emory serves Black Americans. I think there's 16 Black men in the grade below me, sophomores, something

like that.[6] Emory's failing Black men in high school, either [by] not reaching out to them or they're not accepting them" (Kat). Kat, a white woman from a high school she describes as significantly more diverse than Emory, was not the only student to indicate that Emory "meets its quotas" from international students. Becky, a Black senior from Texas who grew up with Black and Latinx neighbors, finds that "Emory likes to call itself racially diverse, but really they just go get the people from outside of the States and bump the numbers up."

I emailed four Emory administrators to ask for the number of African American students currently enrolled in each class, broken down by gender. Two did not respond and one asked me when I would need the data sets, "ideally and at the latest," because he would need to "wrangle some numbers" to generate that information. In more ways than one, this lack of information about Black students on campus is "just a snapshot of what the world really is like" (Pam). Pam consciously decided not to enroll in an HBCU for this reason. She entered Emory recognizing its lack of diversity, but confident in her sense of self. She feels "like as far as HBCUs go, they're for students who kind of want a strong Black community and a better sense of what Blackness is … but I feel like I have that already" (Pam). Had she wanted to gain a sense of Blackness, Pam added, she would not have gone to Emory.

Pam describes her Emory friend group as very diverse, but others feel invisible to the rest of the Emory community. One survey respondent

> can tell that non black students are completely unaware and separated from the black students on campus. Students are almost totally separated by racial groups and the groups do not interact. An example of this is non-black people in the library will treat me as if I am not there, not acknowledge [me] at all. This is minor, but after repeated times of being ignored it is tiring and frustrating. (Black female, age 19)

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[6] There are 42 Black male sophomores (6.2%) enrolled at Emory University in the spring of 2019, out of 677 male sophomores total (DeNicola).

In dining halls and other extracurricular spaces, the segregation continues. Marly, a first-year biracial (Black and white) student, observes "the Black students … all sitting together or walking on campus … then the international students, the Asian students will hang out together and then kids from Connecticut will hang out together." Her observations, echoed by several other Black and white students in both interviews and surveys, mirror findings from sociologists who study undergraduate campus cultures. Sociologist William Byrd "found white students to be the most isolated group on college campuses. They mostly interact with other whites and are the least likely to interact across racial-ethnic lines" (Byrd 269).

> Gwendolyn confirms Byrd's analysis, saying,
>
> It's obvious in Emory's community that white students or even just non-Black students can live their life and not think a day about Black people. And Black students have to think all the time, 'what does this professor think about me? What [about] this person in front of me? What does this person in Kaldi's think about me right now? How am I being perceived?"

This double-consciousness can be constant, especially considering that, aside from Native Americans and multi-racial students, African Americans comprise the smallest ethnic group on Emory's campus, 7.98% specifically (DeNicola). Desmond finds this to be a larger issue—"Black people don't go to school here. Emory doesn't let in Black people.[7] And that's the issue. It's not that too many white people are signing up for AfAm classes."

While Emory's admissions practices are beyond the scope of my research, the consequences of those actions are not. Given that Emory's Black community contains so few people, "some issues within the Black community can get silenced because you're like, well, if I get upset with this person, … there's only two of us [at Emory]. So, what am I going

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[7] Though I do not have statistics on the last four years of admitted students, Emory does let *some* black students enroll. See the methods section for data on Emory's Black student population.

to do? I'm not going to have any Black people to talk to" (Becky). This feeling of isolation extends beyond extracurriculars and into classrooms. On my questionnaire, I ask, "Have you ever felt isolated on campus? If so, in what settings?" One Black female responds, "Yes, every time I walk into a classroom that is 99.99% white/asian but that's like, every class at Emory" (Black female, age 21). "Every new semester" for Gwendolyn becomes "another challenge. You have to re-prove yourself."

These experiences of isolation and segregation within friend groups, extracurriculars, and classroom settings, were universally mentioned. The anecdotes struck me, specifically Gwendolyn's feeling of invisibility, even though she describes her friend group as one of the most diverse of my respondents, both in high school and at Emory. Inwardly, I wondered if, because of Gwendolyn's larger exposure to white students, she also experiences a higher level of micro-aggressions or tokenization than respondents with majority-Black friends.

Have you ever felt compelled to speak for an experience larger than your own?

Though I expected each Black student to answer affirmatively, a few Black interviewees surprised themselves by saying no. Mary, a first-year student in her second semester, relates that "actually, [seven-second pause] no. Now that I'm thinking about it, because there have been a fair amount of students of color [in each of my classes], it's not like I've had to hold the whole weight." When I asked Gwendolyn, another second-semester first-year, the same question she says, "No, not at all." "Does that surprise you?" I asked. "Yes," she answers, "Because it was that way in high school." Given that both students are still in their first year at Emory, at first I wondered if their experiences with tokenization

(or lack thereof) could be attributed to their enrollment in mostly general education requirements, which all Emory students are required to take, thus making the presence of several students of color in each class more likely.

Mark's self-assessment, though, challenges this hypothesis, as he completed most of his required courses during the 2018-2019 academic year, his last at Emory. Within those courses, Mark "noticed that I've been the only Black student in these classes. And I feel tokenized, not in a way that's valuable [where I'm adding new perspectives], but just ostracized in the sense that I raised my hand and say, 'are we considering this? Are we considering that?' So I felt lonely in these classes." Compared to the six Black students who report frequent experiences of tokenization, Mark's seem to occur later in his academic career than the other students.

Desmond, another Black senior, remembers that in each of his first-year courses outside of the AAS department, "every class I walked into felt heavy." He had difficulty elaborating on this sensation, but confirms, "I've definitely felt out of place. In discussions I felt like my, my personal experience was not at all being considered or the resounding energy of the room was just not, not the, not the frequency I was operating on" (Desmond). A double major in a social science and AAS, Desmond reports this feeling in several of his sociology courses, but also in Emory's Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGS). "A lot of the tropes you hear about Black feminism versus just feminism, I felt like those came to bear in those classes more times than once. They were not intersectional. There were things said in the classes that I just felt like Black women in particular were left out" of (Desmond). Though I never took a class in the WGS department,

this surprises me given that the foundational feminist literature I am most familiar with from undergraduate assigned readings are bell hooks and Audre Lorde.

Eartha, a Black woman and third-year student, often feels physically, as well as mentally distant from her classmates. She notices that when she walks into a space, she "can feel the discomfort that my presence in the room, during certain moments, puts on other people" (Eartha). Expanding on this experience, Eartha describes a common thought process that occurs to her in predominantly white classrooms:

> I find myself maybe five to six times a day going, okay, maybe I shouldn't speak up right now cause I don't want to be the loud Black person, but I have something to say and this is school, so I should just talk. I talk. Now people are grimacing at me. Maybe I shouldn't have said anything. Now I just missed the next question 'cause I was thinking about [that]. So there's a lot of performance anxiety and self-policing—am I doing too much? Am I doing enough? (Eartha)

Coupled with some professors' seeming expectations that Black students "talk all the time [when] I couldn't be further from the demographic," this dichotomy must be incredibly straining (Mia). Remarkably similar to my own experiences as a white student within AAS, though on a much higher level, Eartha's narration of class participation signals the fatigue that many Black students report feeling at the end of the day. These extra mental processes, coupled with the pressure of high academic standards, offer another example of stereotype threat in action for Emory's Black undergraduates.

And the experience feels constant. Mia observes that this cognitive drain "happens in most, I won't say all, but most situations in which we have to deal with people of other races and sometimes even people within our own race, because not everybody has the same background." As a Black student, Mia related what, for her, was a common experience

where a professor tokenized her in a course, but also peppered her with questions about a topic with which Mia did not identify:

> I'm in a class right now about religion, sex, HIV and Black men. The teacher is a white man, and the other teacher is a white woman. Within this class there are three Black people: another woman, a man, and myself. In this class, I am constantly tokenized. *Constantly tokenized.* And it's exhausting. I don't want to walk into class and have to answer a bunch of questions where you're going to make me the ambassador of Black people, especially since I am not a man, and I don't have HIV. I couldn't be further from the demographic. It's frustrating. It's really frustrating. (Mia)

While feeling uncomfortable in a course is something no student should have to undergo, it is in fact the lived experience for many African American students.

The experience of marginalization for Black students and white students is markedly different. For many Black students, the feeling of tokenization extends across their course list, and bleeds into other facets of their college experience as well. For the few white students who do choose to learn about African American history and culture at the college level, they suddenly face an environment in which, as white people, they are in the minority. White students interviewed for this piece reported being uncomfortable with their new positionality, while Black students frequently experience being the only, or one of a few people of color, in many if not all of their classes; only one Black student, Mark, actively mentions being friends with white students he knows from class.

Blackness is not *monolithic.*

Within majority-white classrooms, as established in the previous section, professors often call upon Black students to speak about experiences larger than their own. The problem is, "I don't have the one singular Black experience" (Gwendolyn). When Black students become expected to serve as educators about their "Black experience," people

often forget that there might be more than one, just as people experience whiteness differently, as well. Yet from a sociological perspective, Bourke finds that

> assumptions are made on the part of White students in that Black students are assumed to be experts about their race and culture. These assumptions highlight the extent to which the diversity of a particular culture is ignored, and that all individuals of a particular race are assumed to be like all other members of that particular race. (Bourke 130)

Though we already discussed tokenization when I asked Black students if they ever had to speak for experiences larger than their own, so many students report feeling generalized within Emory's Black community as well that I felt this facet of the conversation merits its own section.

Several Black interviewees, in expressing their own experiences of Blackness, referenced the Black GroupMe, a group-chat between all undergraduate members of Emory's Black community. In Spring 2019, a debate among Black students on the GroupMe revolves around "struggling with [the assumption of] shared experiences right now, at least within the diaspora, because people come from very different backgrounds" (Gwendolyn). Within the GroupMe, students are discussing the idea of creating a "Descendants of American Chattel Slavery" club, which polarizes many members of the group. Surprised by the pushback, other GroupMe members pushed back, and the conflict escalated. At the time of my last interview, based on Becky's mention of the Black GroupMe, the conflict remains unresolved. Pam, for one, muted the GroupMe notifications on her phone. Of the Black GroupMe, she says, "the only thing that unites us is us all being Black, but we're not all the same, so we're not going to all think the same" (Pam).

Cornel West, a prominent Black philosopher, social critic, author, and public intellectual, agrees. While he acknowledges that Black Americans are

subject to White supremacist abuse. This common condition is stretched too far when viewed in a homogenizing way that overlooks how racist treatment vastly differs owing to class, gender, sexual orientation, nation, region, hue, and age. (West 103)

Speaking more specifically about Emory's Black community, Gwendolyn says, "we think we're so similar. And then what were surprised and upset when we find out we're different." Eartha, a first-generation American with Nigerian parents was surprised to discover this as well. Having moved from Los Angeles, she "got to Georgia and [there] you were Black or you're white and if you were Black you weren't African" (Eartha). The nuances of her identity felt lost on her peers, both Black and white. When describing her high school experiences, specifically, Eartha places herself "in multiple realms. I was other 'cause among the Nigerian people I was too Americanized. And then among the American people I was too foreign. And, and then among the Black Americans I acted white. And then among the white people I acted to Black. So it's just perpetual non-belonging." For this reason, Eartha hesitated to attend an HBCU. She wonders if she would feel othered there as well, noting that "I didn't feel other until I was made other" (Eartha). In our conversation, she reveals that "I dislike that the older I've gotten, when I'm with other Black people, I can sometimes feel or, or [hear] verbally expressed that I'm not among" (Eartha). In social groups and classrooms, expectations on Black students may be higher, but for different reasons.

In majority-white classrooms, the Black students interviewed often feel tokenized or isolated. In AAS classrooms, some feel expected to know too much. Clara, a Black teacher's assistant for English and AAS classes, acknowledges that pedagogically, "we expect so much from the people of color in the classes that we don't give them the same opportunity to learn" (Clara). From his experience in over 10 AAS classes, Mark learned "to be very precise

with my language, whereas in [majority-white] classes, I know … most of what I say will be taken seriously or won't be questioned." In response, I expressed that being careful about how you speak, in any context, sounds positive, but Mark quickly clarifies that his "experience is different because people are almost waiting. … People have called me out, saying 'you're an Ethiopian. You have privilege; you're like this,' or 'you're light skinned' … They're waiting for you to live up to what they perceive your phenotype to be."

As a first-year student with multiple generations of family members in the United States, Mary experiences some discomfort in AAS classes, but for different reasons than Mark. In our conversation, she references a question on the Cross Racial Identity Scale that asks respondents to indicate, on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree), their agreement to specific statements coded into several different categories, one of which was "self-hatred." Though not the specific phrasing used, Mary recalls

> Something that was on the questionnaire was not feeling Black enough. I don't want to get judgment because I say something that makes me perceived in a certain way that makes me feel, "Oh, well I'm just not as steeped in my culture as everybody else." So that's a different uncomfortability [sic] but it's more self-imposed than it is by the environment. (Mary)

Mary's statement caused me to wonder, what would "Black enough" look like? Do Black students also mistakenly subscribe to the idea that there is one idealized Black experience? Is there a standard Black experience people aspire to, perhaps based on white constructions or expectations of Black identities? I don't know the answer, as my instruments did not thoroughly explore this question. However, there were several Black experiences common to the students I surveyed, namely their participation in majority-Black extracurriculars.

When you arrived at Emory, did you consciously seek out majority-Black spaces on campus?

Immediately, Becky responds, **"**Wherever the Black people are, that's where I needed to be." Gwendolyn, a first-year Black student whose best friend since fourth grade is white, recalls her first few days on Emory's campus as approaching "all the Black people I could find, and I was like, 'Hey, what's up?' And now we're all friends and it seems like everyone else did that too. ... That's shocked me here, that it was so, so, so segregated. Like if I'm looking for my friends at the DUC, I just look for the brown people."

Other Black students report being directed into majority-Black spaces by older friends or mentors who were actively involved in Emory's Black community. Desmond remembers reaching out to a student from his high school, two years older than him, who also attended Emory. When he arrived on campus, "she introduced me to a few clubs: the Black Student Union (EBSU) space ... the Black Student Alliance (BSA), Brothers and Sisters in Christ (BASIC). But that was really how I, I found out about the Black community here. She encouraged me to take some similar AfAm courses" (Desmond).

Among the Black students interviewed, EBSU, BSA, the NAACP, and BASIC were their four most common extracurricular involvements. Two Black women also participate in Divine Nine Greek organizations, and two Black and one white woman host shows on WMRE, Emory's radio station. Though the questionnaire does not ask about participation in majority-white extracurriculars, it does ask, "How many ethnic organizations do you belong to?" Of the 14 Black students surveyed, 10 participate in at least one (see Appendix E). The average number of multi-cultural activities in which Black students surveyed participate is 1.8. Bourke, who researches a different Southern university (though

unnamed, most likely LSU), finds in his interviews that "Very few Black students spoke about being involved in campus activities outside of student organizations whose memberships are typically made up of Black students" (Bourke 131). Desmond, a student-athlete as well as a member of four Black organizations, differentiates between his extracurriculars and his majority-white sports team by observing, "you can actively see that people, the most of the people around you aren't experiencing the school the same way that you are."

Unique among the Black students interviewed, Eartha sometimes finds herself "in a room full of 50 other people and I'll feel very alone. But that's usually when I'm with Republicans or people who don't care about art or politics and I don't know what to talk about. But at Emory it usually happens when I'm with a bunch of other Black people." Eartha observes not feeling a kinship with her Black peers aside from skin color, which bothers her. Other students feel incredibly strong connections to majority-Black extracurriculars and academic topics. Pam, though she admits to those connections and does her homework in the EBSU space, consciously decided not to take an AAS class. When I asked why, she responds that "I'm always avoided AAS classes because, it's a painful history. Especially because my family is descended from slaves." She feels too close to the subject to engage it objectively, and decidedly does not "want to sit in class and get upset every day after learning about all these things that have happened" (Pam). However, she is very clear that she has a strong conception of her own Blackness; she simply does not view AAS classes as the most productive place to affirm it.

Mark, however, engages more closely with Black topics in classrooms, rather than extracurriculars—Critical Race Theory in particular resonates strongly with him. Though

he joined Residence Life and Emory's NAACP chapter, Mark no longer participates in either. When he declared an AAS major, "the reason I went into it was just by happen-, just by necessity or convenience. But when I look back now, I had a mission of, I think this body, this field of work needs to be built on" (Mark).

As the field of AAS grows, and as opportunities for Black students on Emory's campus develop, Gwendolyn posits that more Black students will be able to picture themselves at Emory. With the development of more safe spaces for Black students, they might grow more connected to the university, especially students coming from majority-white high schools. Several times throughout our conversation, Gwendolyn reiterates the benefits of these spaces: "If you can feel like you can belong somewhere, then you will come."

How would you define the term "safe space"?

Mary is confident in her definition. As she offers her interpretation, I recognize the only instance where Mary does not use filler language. Upright in her chair, she describes safe spaces as "a place where people feel comfortable sharing and being their true selves, without fear of repercussion or backlash" (Mary). "Conservative [or] liberal," added Gwendolyn. She imagines a place "where you take into consideration people's differences and just try not to discriminate or make anyone feel uncomfortable for the opinions that they have" (Gwendolyn).

Desmond reiterated several times that "it's important to have safe spaces because you always have to walk around with your guard up" at PWIs.

> In a classroom you're, you're there to share your ideas and feeling like those
> ideas won't just be shot down as soon as they come out of your mouth is

important to getting them out and just building your confidence and believing that you're here for a reason, which you have to say has some kind of merit. (Desmond)

Within several students' definitions, the terms "keep your guard up" and "who's going to come for you" appear multiple times, regardless of any distinction between classroom and extracurricular safe spaces. For many, "the safe space really isn't, it's not the space itself, but the people around you" (Pam).

Several students provide their own positive definitions of safe spaces, but also address critical media portrayals of the term. Gwendolyn attended a majority-white high school she describes as "extremely conservative … So 'safe space' there has this horrible connotation with whiny liberals." Eartha offers another, if somewhat more extreme description of safe spaces:

I'm caricaturing, [but people can be] very dismissive and [say] the whole, "when I was 18, I paid for college by myself and fought in the war," and it's like, "yeah, but now you have PTSD and college costs $50,000 more." … I don't see safe spaces like something worth being made fun of. It's just supposed to be: here's a conducive environment for you to exist for a little while. (Eartha)

Other students offer critical definitions of safe spaces that they actively attempt to reconcile in conversation. Mark and Pam both hesitate to accept the idea of a classroom as a safe space, for very similar reasons. Pam expresses concerns that "as long as, everyone has their own opinions and want their opinions to be heard and to be right, there's really no room to be in a safe space if there's always confrontation." Mark, unsure if safe spaces exist at all, would need

to know the people very intimately and what, who they are and what they stand for. So I think it's impossible for me to walk into a pre-organized safe space or an academic setting because I don't know who is in the classroom. I don't know who wants to come for me. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what your values are. (Mark)

For Kat, "If a safe space means everyone is comfortable, that can't really exist."

In Kat's high school, "safe space" was not "in the realm of politically correct [terms]," but she also admits to not knowing the actual definition. Kat "can never remember if safe space is supposed to be a good thing in that you can talk and then someone could be like, 'oh no, I don't want to hear that' or if it's supposed to be a place where you don't talk about those things because it's the safe space." The Black students interviewed for this research do not offer either of those definitions, but instead suggest, albeit in different ways, that safe spaces provide opportunities for difficult but respectful conversations in environments free from micro-aggressions or social stigmas. Eartha hopes for a safe space that will "encourage one another to be better."

When I asked Shaina, a white first-year student what a safe space means to her, she answered the question but goes on to say, "The AAS class should be a safe spaces for Black students" (Shaina). In the following section, Black students elaborate on similar sentiments and describe how white student enrollment in AAS classrooms influences those classrooms' status as safe spaces.

H3: *If white students participate heavily in AAS classes, Black students are more likely to have a negative attitude towards them.*

First, I asked Black student interviewees to consider whether they felt white students should be allowed to *enroll* in AAS classes. Frankly, I was surprised when each respondent said yes. Based on my own experiences of discomfort in AAS classes, I automatically assumed that I wouldn't be wanted there. However, there is a marked difference between sitting down in an AAS classroom and monopolizing that space. Within this section, I argue that white students should a) consider AAS classes as one way to become conscious of their racial identity, but b) remember that the space is not their own. Deliberately structured around Black experiences, white students should not view AAS classrooms as opportunities to interject their own preconceived assumptions. My conversations with Black student interviewees, though not my survey results, support this assertion.

Though my survey asks Black students if they feel white students should be able to participate in AAS classroom discussions, I do not differentiate between types of participation (see Table 5, Appendix E). As such, based on the surveys alone, I cannot determine the veracity of my hypothesis. However, my interviews with Black students establish that if white students participate more than Black students, fail to ground their comments in facts, or do ground them in their own experiences, then Black students more frequently view white participation negatively. In part, Black students explain their reasoning by describing AAS courses as safe spaces, where the Black experience, not the white, should center class discussions.

Do you view the AAS classroom as a safe space? For whom?

Before answering this question, Desmond describes the difference between AAS classrooms and majority-white courses, given his experience as a Black student: "walking in to an AfAm class is usually remarkably different from any other class that you're going to walk into. That sense of levity, which you get when you're in that environment, there's a lot to be said about that." Other Black interviewees experience the AAS classroom in very similar ways—for Mary, "it makes [her] feel seen." For Gwendolyn, "There's something about it that I understand even though I don't have the words to say it." Mia summarizes several other Black students' thoughts by revealing that "a lot of Black students take AfAm classes and ended up being AfAm majors because the teachers in the AfAm department understand what we're going through."

Twelve of the 14 students interviewed view the AAS classroom as a safe space, and primarily for Black students. AAS classrooms, Mia finds, "are the one place on campus where it's not a predominantly white space, and you don't have to worry about being tokenized and you don't have to worry about watching what you say in fear of being attacked by other students." Mia's assessment reflects not only the general perspective of Black interviewees, but also of

> *Inside Higher Ed*'s annual survey of provosts, [which asks] about the relative comfort levels of different groups of students in the classroom. In [the 2019] survey 93 percent of provosts said that white students "generally feel welcome in classrooms on my campus." The figure fell to 62 percent when asked about minority students. (Jaschik 4)

Within my own survey instrument, I ask students how they feel perceived by white faculty, staff, and administrators on campus. 92% of Black respondents chose the "neutral" option, and 8% (one respondent) feels positively viewed. Comparatively, 41.67% feel positively

viewed by Black faculty, staff, and administrations. As such, Mia's evaluation that "if you have the opportunity for a safe space, you often want to keep that very secure and very close to you" rings especially true for Emory's Black students.

Drawing examples from previous AAS courses that felt like safe spaces, Desmond recalls entering "Larry Jackson's 'Intro to AfAm' freshman fall and being like, 'wow, this is different.' I've never ever walked into the classroom and seen a Black instructor and all Black classmates for the most part." Compared with my own experiences in Dr. Jackson's classroom one semester later, I feel confident in saying that Chad surely was not enrolled in Desmond's class. In Desmond's experience with Dr. Jackson, and in AAS courses more broadly, "I just felt like what I was bringing to the table added to the narrative rather than counteracted it." Not every student agrees, though. Referencing conflicts within the black GroupMe, Pam finds that "within our community, we don't have safe spaces." She and Mark are the only Black interviewees who do not believe safe spaces exist for Black students at Emory.

Other interviewees remain unsure. Mary wonders if any classroom can be a safe space. She acknowledges "that's a goal for a classroom; I don't know if it's always achieved" (Mary). One survey respondent feels similarly hesitant to label AAS classrooms as safe spaces for Black students "because our trauma is often on display and being scrutinized under the microscope of an academic lens" (Black female, age 21). Pam references exactly this phenomenon in explaining why she intentionally chose never to enroll in an AAS class. A white female survey respondent worries that "too much focus on creating a safe space could be damaging to the discomfort necessary in learning" (white female, age 19). Another respondent, though, finds that within AAS classrooms, the safe space should be a "priority

for Black Students [with] no room for white tears" (Black female, age 20). All but two respondents explicitly state that courses in AAS should be, first and foremost, safe spaces for Black students, even if the class is cross-listed. However, classes listed in multiple departments bring with them myriad challenges when white students enter into what students of color expect to be a safe space. For Mary, who enters the AAS classroom "with the expectation of it being a safe space, if it weren't, it might be even more of a blow."

However, a safe space does not necessarily mean that students will not experience discomfort. This feeling, though, should stem from academic discussions around complex concepts, rather than a students' mere presence in the classroom. White students, as I have learned, benefit greatly from becoming conscious of their own racial identity as a result of AAS classes. For Black students, AAS classrooms and PWI classrooms more generally should be safe spaces. Namely, Black students should feel valued, appreciated, and recognized for the contributions they make—as individuals, not as ambassadors—to the course.

Should white students be able to take AAS classes?

On the interview questionnaire, 100% of Black respondents either agree or strongly agree (see Table 2, Appendix E). However, their thoughts on white student participation in AAS courses, both in interviews and questionnaires, are more nuanced (see below, and Tables 3 & 4, Appendix E). Clara often teaches English literature courses cross-listed with AAS, and views this intersection as an advantage. "It's good to have the diversity," she says, "but I do see the other side of it where sometimes we just want a safe space" (Clara). Mia provides an example from a course Clara co-taught in 2015, where a white student

dominated the conversation and the "class ended up turning into something completely different, because we had people who, like [Clara] said, weren't there to learn, but were there to just interject, just to use their privilege and try and take over the space."

Unfortunately, Mia knows this experience to be common, and explains "that's why [black students] side-eye white people being in AfAm classes." A white survey respondent notices this reaction from Black students to her presence in an AAS course. When asked, "Do you feel you are treated differently in this course as a result of your skin color?" she responds, "Not ever by my professor, only at times by peers who seem to have an exclusive ethnic camaraderie" (white female, age 19). Mark reveals that this exclusivity, often perceived by white students, actually manifests in some courses. In one AAS class, Mark relates that "we have a group chat and the one white student isn't in the group chat. That for me represents other students' views on white students in the classroom." While Mark adds that he is considering adding the white student to the group chat, he hasn't done so yet. As a follow-up question, I asked if he believes white students should be allowed to take AAS classes. His response: "It's difficult for me to say, 'let's carve a space in this classroom that's only for us,' when the curriculum essentially does that" (Mark).

When I asked Kat if white students should be allowed to take AAS she said yes, adding, "It should be mandatory. Maybe not necessarily an AAS class, but some sort of combination between that and intro to sexuality studies or something that is making us [think] about other people." Several students, though, dissect the interview question even further, saying that white students should be allowed to enroll in AAS, but the course would only be a safe space if students were still majority-Black. Shaina, a white first-year student enrolled in an AAS freshman seminar says of her class, "it's good that there's more

Black kids than white kids in a class. If it was all white kids and then two Black kids, you'd

not necessarily feel as able to speak of your, your experiences." Once several white students

enroll in an AAS class, for Desmond at least, "the room may feel like less of a safe space ...

you might think, 'okay, there are white people in here. Maybe I need to comport myself a

certain way, a way that you wouldn't naturally do like in EBSU'." For Desmond, though,

when there are several white students in an AAS course, he isn't upset at the white

students for wanting to engage more with the course material. Rather, "the way I always

look at it is just that, they're taking the AfAm studies class intentionally, so their, their

head's not going to be somewhere totally different from where mine is" (Desmond). At the

same time, however, Desmond

> feel[s] kind of weird when I walk in and there are too many white students
> in the class. ... the first day [of one AAS course] was a bad attendance day. So
> we had six or seven Black kids and seven or eight white kids. And I was, I
> was mad that there were no Black kids there.

Similarly, several Black students interviewed appreciate that white students demonstrate

an interest in AAS. As feminist post-colonial scholar Gloria Anzaldúa writes of non-white

history, "we need to know the history of their struggle and they need to know ours" (108).

Mary agrees, rationalizing that if white students were excluded from AAS courses, this "just

promotes ignorance and doesn't solve the issues that we're talking about on a day-to-day

basis."

As a thought experiment, though, Eartha, Marly, and Becky each agreed that they

would enjoy participating in an all-Black classroom. Becky adds that for Black students who

work or are otherwise unable to engage with majority-Black extracurriculars, "it would be

pretty unique and awesome for them to be able to access that in academics when they

might not have time for everything else." Marly believes it would be "beneficial" for all

Black students and Eartha, especially, would "like to see what that'd be like, especially at this level."

Dr. Michelle Gordon, Emory's Department of African American Studies' director of undergraduate studies and an advisor on this thesis, challenges this assessment. When I asked for her thoughts last year on if white students should be able to enroll in AAS classes, she informed me: "that is a ridiculous question. American education should be in the service of democracy and building a better society. That is not going to happen by marginalizing some other group instead of the traditionally marginalized groups" (Gordon). I presented her with my findings from Black students that I'd interviewed across campus, many of whom noted that AAS classes provided them with a safe space on campus. Dr. Gordon is "very glad to hear that students feel that AAS courses are a safe space on campus, but it is disappointing … that those courses feel like safe spaces in ways that are unique to Emory's campus and culture." She countered my question about white student enrollment in the department by stating that "the point of diversity programs is to work against marginalizing people based on identity and identity politics," even though "it has been very striking to me how few white students take these Black studies classes" (Gordon).

For some students, though, not having white students in a classroom serves as an advantage. Clara recognized both the positives and negatives of classrooms that solely teach African American students, though any Emory undergraduate could have enrolled in the course. She valued the fact that students are "able to speak … freely because [they're] with people who 'get it,' which is very rare. But that's when you have to figure out, how do we make this more than a venting session and also be productive?" (Clara).

Mia pushed back on this thought, characterizing the AAS department as "the only [academic] place on campus that's not a predominantly white space." Dr. Gordon hypothesized that the absence of white students in these classrooms may stem from the feeling that "even for people who are used to [being around people of color], it makes them nervous to be outnumbered." This may be a hard fact to alter, especially since white students interviewed perceived themselves as unwelcome in many Black spaces, not just the AAS classroom.

How do you feel about white students participating in AAS classes?

Clara, a graduate student in the English department and a teacher's assistant in classes cross-listed with AAS, finds that once more than "a few" white students enter a classroom, the course no longer serves as "a place where Black students can come and talk about their issues or their thoughts." The high level of diversity within these classes surprises Clara, especially since she arrived at Emory after earning her bachelor's degree at an HBCU. She did not expect "to see so many people who are not of color who not only take the class, but engage in the dialogue" (Clara). She does note, however, that those conversations could be problematic, as white students "sometimes speak with a tone that is not of an outsider, yet … their perspective is that of an outsider" (Clara).

Shaina, a white student currently enrolled in her first AAS class, reports being very self-conscious of her own participation in that classroom for that reason—when her professor asks opinion-based questions, Shaina doesn't participate unless called upon because "it's not my place." Kat agreed. Drawing from her experience in a course on Black spaces, she "definitely felt like it was not my place and I was there to learn and I was not

there to tell them how to experience, or how I've experienced, Blackness" (Kat). Both Kat and Shaina, when asked about specific instances where they would be comfortable participating in class, feel more comfortable answering fact-based questions. If the question signals an easily identifiable right or wrong answer, or an answer that could be grounded in the class's readings, they are both more willing to answer questions, but would still only do so if called on. Given that many AAS courses are discussion-based, Black students observed that their white classmates "definitely participate less in class. And that's understandable" (Gwendolyn).

Having interviewed both Kat and Shaina before interviewing several of the Black students quoted in this research, I posed a new question to Black students that was not on my original interview schedule: "How would you feel about white students bringing up experiences that are not their own, but that are specifically from people of color, in a class?" I wanted to suggest that the student would be drawing from other theorists to ground an analysis, but would not be giving an answer based solely on their own (read: white) opinions and experiences. Mark, who, of the interviewees is one of the most supportive of white students' participation in AAS classes, responds that if white participants were to casually interject "about Black death and just throw it out, very simply, about violence, I would be a bit upset about that. How we can talk about violence so easily? Whereas if it's about Cornel West talking about socialism or something, or like his experience in Ethiopia, then that's completely different" (Mark). At this point in our conversation, Mark paused for over ten seconds, and then shared that he "recently encountered this feeling of, for lack of a better word, sadness. I get disappointed whenever I see white students who know more about AAS or what's supposed to represent me than I do." He clarified that he is not upset

at white students for taking it upon themselves to learn more about Black experiences, thinkers, and histories, but rather that he wishes he had more of that same knowledge.

However, there is a difference between having knowledge and having opinions. In an article in the Dickinson College student newspaper that recently went viral, Leda Fisher, a Black undergraduate, writes forcefully against "an endless line of white boys waiting to share their opinions on the state of feminism in America, whether the LGBTQ+ population finally has enough rights, the merits of capitalism, etc. The list of what white boys think they are qualified to talk about is endless" (1). Fisher's language and opinions are striking in their honesty, but do not reflect the sentiments that Black respondents shared with me. This is not to say that they don't hold those beliefs; rather, they may have been more cautious about sharing them with me, a white interviewer.

When professors ask questions about Black experiences, though, the Black students interviewed are very hesitant to support white student engagement in those conversations. In her article, Fisher is very clear about "how frustrating it is to be forced to listen to a white boy explain his take on the Black experience in the Obama-era" (Fisher 1). When describing his AAS experiences at Emory, Desmond finds it "weird to come into a class and have somebody who does not identify as that … talk his head off because this is where you feel like we would get a chance to speak our piece." Shaina names her distance from Black experiences as one reason why her participation is "a little bit less in this [AAS] class."

Every student interviewed except one considers AAS an opportunity for white students to sit back, rather than speak up, especially when AAS professors ask opinion-based questions about Black experiences. Marly, a biracial first-year student at Emory, says "if [white students] believe in equality for everyone, I don't see why they shouldn't be

giving their input on the matter because everyone in that class is on the same wavelength and doesn't treat anyone with disrespect just because of their skin color." However, Mary's response reflects the general expectation of the other Black students interviewed: "I'm putting more expectation on white students."

For several Black respondents, white students are assumed and expected to feel uncomfortable in AAS classrooms. Becky views herself as "a big proponent of white people feeling uncomfortable … in the classroom, … because that means they're learning and figuring stuff out and growing in understanding their privilege." Clara recognizes that for white students, "the conversations can be weird, but sometimes you need that uncomfortable, that uncomfortability [sic] in the classroom to work things out. But when there's a lack of respect, that's when it gets weird—not just weird but disrespectful." When I ask Black respondents what this disrespect might look like, several interviewees add that when white students center their own experiences in AAS classes, those contributions are inconsiderate at best.

Desmond, for example, "start[s] to feel a certain way when a white student is monopolizing the conversation in a, in a AfAm class—I feel that way, in any class but particularly in those." Advocating for intentionality, Mark allows that "if they're like mindful of how often they're speaking and what they're raising, I believe they can speak just as often as I can." Compared to his peers, though, Mark's assessment of white participation is decidedly the most permissive, though he does qualify that "If you're always bring up the same issue … always tying in simply your narrative, that's taking up a lot of space" (Mark). For Desmond, the most frequent instance of this occurs when "white students [say] 'well, not all white people are this way.' And yeah, you're absolutely right,

not all people like that, but we're telling you what our experiences are."

White students' discussions of Black experiences also polarize Black respondents. Though almost every Black interviewee agrees that white devaluation of Black experiences diminish the safe space of AAS classrooms, Eartha pushes this a step farther to warn white participants about how to best demonstrate their empathy. Her "only caveat is that some people take that time to feel really guilty. ... That's not helpful. Learning ... about this history is helpful [but] how are you going to put that into your daily life or vote or talk to people a little bit differently moving forward" (Eartha). Learning about this history and engaging with it, though, does not always signal the need for white participation.

Though only two of my respondents, in interviews or surveys, indicated that white students should be prohibited from participating in AAS classes (see Table 5, Appendix E), Desmond shares a story from his "Power of Black Self-Love" class wherein a Black student made explicit her thoughts on white participation. Given the topic of the course, she "raised their hand and [said], 'I don't think the white students should talk',"(Desmond). To him, though, "that's outrageous." While "there was some pushback [on her comment], people resonated with that" (Desmond). In Leda Fisher's op-ed, she agrees with the unnamed woman in "Black Self-Love" and posits "should white boys still be allowed to share their 'opinions'? Should we be forced to listen? ... I'm gonna go with a hell no" (1).

Black interviewees' opinions on levels of white student engagement grew increasingly more critical as we transitioned from enrollment in AAS classes, to their participation in them, to engagement with other aspects of Black undergraduate life. When discussing white student participation in multicultural organizations at Emory, support for white student interest dramatically lessens.

H4: *If Black students are members of multicultural groups at Emory, they are more likely to have a negative attitude towards white students in Emory's AAS classrooms.*

This hypothesis proved true, though not because of the correlation implied within the sentence. The statement as written above fails to account for the fact that Black students interviewed hold very different expectations of majority-Black extracurriculars than they do AAS classrooms. For Desmond, "extracurriculars that have been centered around Black life are different from the educational parts of classrooms." While, as established under Hypothesis 3, Black students generally view white student enrollment in AAS courses positively or neutrally, most Black interviewees perceive white student engagement in multicultural organizations negatively, regardless of whether or not the Black respondent participates in those organizations.

Below, I argue that white students who enter into majority-Black spaces on Emory's campus bring with them, intentionally or not, a white privilege and a metaphorical gaze that permeate the space, automatically endangering Black students' security within environments that are supposed to be exclusively their own. To substantiate this claim, I begin by surveying Black students' involvement in majority-white extracurriculars, which exemplify the type of discomfort they need time removed from, and can access in non-white student groups.

"Every day, you're not seeing me": Black student engagement in majority-white environments

Though my online questionnaire does not ask respondents about their total extracurricular involvement (a limitation of this study), Black interviewees elaborate on their nonacademic commitments and experiences of Emory. Within majority-white spaces on campus, or, more accurately, on campus, several Black interviewees feel both invisible

and uncomfortable. Similar to a Black survey respondent's experiences in the Emory libraries, Gwendolyn notices "if you are walking into the library—honestly, this is sad—but if they're not within your racial group, people just don't even look at you." She experiences this feeling not just in the library, but also in other communal spaces on campus, such as the first-year dining hall. "People get very close to me in the DUCling and it irritates me so badly. 'Why is your tray touching my back?' Because there's no awareness of me. People slam the door in my face … they won't hold it open" (Gwendolyn). She qualifies her experience, saying that from the outside looking in "It doesn't seem that big of a deal. Like, 'oh they didn't hold the door,' but [she pauses between the next three words] every single day, you're not seeing me" (Gwendolyn).

In other spaces on campus, Black interviewees report feeling too conspicuous. Two Black respondents host radio shows through WMRE, Emory's on-campus radio station, which throws parties for its hosts several times per semester. Earlier this spring, Mary

> felt sort of uncomfortable because I was one, the only Black person in the space. I was like, 'Wait, should I be here?' Eventually as the party went on, I started to feel more comfortable. [Though] there's always a certain level of uncomfortability [sic], but I've always been able to navigate spaces like that. (Mary)

In response, I asked Mary if there was another space on campus where she felt more safe. She responded "I feel more safe in the BSA house than I do at WMRE, but I don't necessarily feel unsafe at WMRE. Just *less* safe."

When I asked Mark about his participation in majority-white extracurriculars at Emory, he characterized these spaces as "non-Black." Even though the organizations do not specifically state, "No Blacks allowed," structurally they feel exclusionary and lack a sense of "shared cultural ownership. White interests were thought to be privileged over others,

which many racial/ethnic minorities viewed as inconsistent with institutional claims of inclusiveness" (Harper & Hurtado 18). By way of example, Mark suggests "the slow food campaign, [which doesn't] necessarily deal with material violence or material inequities." Speaking about majority-white extracurriculars more broadly, Gwendolyn notices that, "not to say that any of the clubs are racist, but they shy away from individual experiences and trauma." She finds that majority-white efforts to build inclusivity often center their group identities around white experiences. "It's hard to build unity," Gwendolyn says, "if you don't recognize people."

Another unexpected non-Black space on campus is, surprisingly, an Emory sports team. For two semesters, Desmond was the only Black athlete on the team. Feeling "like the odd man out," Desmond articulates the challenges of being a Black student representing a majority-white university, especially when other Black students actively take stances against the administration:

> [Protesting] says so many things about you ... to your coach or to the administration or ESPN. Coaches don't like players that that stir the pot. So yeah, I've definitely felt the conflict between being an athlete, being on this team, and then also just being a Black student. Not being a Black student in BSA, or whatever, but just being a Black student in general. (Desmond)

Desmond adds that all the white players on his team are members of a specific PanHellenic fraternity, which exacerbates the disconnect he feels with his teammates. He would never rush that frat, or any other. Gwendolyn, a first-year student, notices the "separation [between Black and white students] is extremely magnified in Greek life." From first-year housing to fraternity housing, students need only walk about three minutes each way—but for Black students, entering those spaces is still both challenging and off-putting. Gwendolyn's Black friends "tell me they will try to go to an Eagle Row party in a white frat

and [the brothers will] be looking at them funny, like, 'why are you here?'" For Gwendolyn and her friends, this represents one of few instances where "They [don't] ignore you completely." White student participation in majority-Black events, on the other hand, is almost impossible to ignore.

How do you feel about white students participating in multicultural groups on campus?

Responses to this question are perhaps the most varied among Black students. Respondents frequently disagree on acceptable roles, if any, for white students to hold within multicultural or majority-Black organizations. Pam wonders aloud, "If the person has good intentions and they're allies and they're helping, why can't they be [involved]?" She provides the example of a well-known white senior on campus, who several other Black students mention in their interviews. Pam advocates for his inclusion in majority-Black organizations because "personally he does more for the Black community than I do. He definitely deserves to be in this space."

Other Black interviewees unequivocally disagree. Distinguishing between AAS classrooms and multicultural organizations, Desmond feels "anybody can study the history of African Americans in the United States—the Black Student Union, everybody can't be Black." He extends this feeling to the Divine Nine, historically Black fraternities and sororities, to which the white man mentioned by Pam also belongs. I asked Desmond what he thought of this man's involvement, since he spoke positively of him when talking about white participation in AAS classes. On this issue, though, Desmond feels "Black frats should only be Black students … Alphas, we have a few … Hispanic and, and white Alphas [but in

D9 frats] I've always thought that the, the shared experience of Black people was the most important."

Though they did not make such direct distinctions between classrooms and extracurriculars, other Black students interviewed echoed Desmond's sentiments. Becky, for example, also brought up the white Alpha. Not speaking about him specifically, but about white involvement in majority-Black organizations as a whole, she finds that "anytime you introduce a white person, the white gaze comes with them … the real version and true self of Black people will never be able to fully be if a white gaze is attached to it" (Becky).

In small doses, some Black interviewees are more comfortable with white student involvement—as a general body member. All Black students but one clarified that white students should not hold leadership roles in multicultural organizations. Mark was the most specific about his expectations, saying

> The 13 Black demands that were proposed or re-proposed in 2015 would not have happened, if it weren't for an all-Black space or a nonwhite space. I also want to define nonwhite as not, 'we're not allowing white people in this space or they can't help in any capacity.' It's solely regarding the leadership and who makes the decisions and who's able to. So for me it is important for me to have these spaces cause I want to know who will represent me.

Kelsey Blackwell, not an Emory student, makes a similar point in a journal article for *The Arrow.* She argues, "Black people need their own spaces. We need places in which we can gather and be free from the mainstream stereotypes and marginalization that permeate every other societal space we occupy" (Blackwell 2). As Becky notes, once white people enter those spaces, their gaze comes with them, even if unintentionally. While expected and analyzed within AAS classrooms, constantly withstanding the gaze becomes exhausting.

Maintaining a double consciousness throughout the day would be hard enough; Black students, like all others, deserve safe spaces free from these mental burdens or any others.

Conclusion

As I navigated these interviews and attempted to distill students' main points into arguments, I constantly reminded myself of my research questions:

1. Do white students need to learn the content taught in AAS?
2. How do Black students view white students' presence in the AAS classroom in a PWI?
3. Should AAS classrooms be safe spaces for Black students?

However, through my conversations over the last few months, those research questions shifted. Responding to the insights I gained from student interviews and survey responses, I amended my questions to reflect the more pressing issues that reasserted themselves in each conversation:

1. Where is the best place for white students to learn about Black experiences and develop their identity as allies?
2. How do Black students view white students' presence in the AAS classroom in a PWI?
3. How can AAS classrooms best be a safe space for Black students, specifically?

While this thesis offers incomplete answers to each question, below I detail my generalized impressions to catalyze more conversation about each of these key issues.

Each Black interviewee recognizes the value of white students learning the content taught in Emory's AAS department. They view AAS classroom spaces as opportunities for white students to challenge their privilege and gain insight into experiences to which they might otherwise be oblivious. Several Black interviewees also express that while white student enrollment in AAS classes noticeably alters the course dynamic, Black students also benefit when whites learn this material. Mark views white engagement with AAS as

> an opportunity for them to improve, for them to be more informed and make
> a better judgment. But most of it is, I want to hear the logic that you have to
> say and I want to try and understand it in some way. 'Cause it, I'm going to,

> I'm going to encounter this someday and I don't want to reply with nervous
> laughter.

By providing white students with the opportunity to explain their assumptions and be gently corrected, Mark hopes this will alleviate some of the prejudice or ignorance he might otherwise experience from them later in life. And when many conversations "talk about race without ever actually mentioning the term," AAS courses offer opportunities for white students to engage with uncomfortable topics head on (Kat). When they do participate, this allows Black students to "understand where they're coming from or what their logics are … [if not] we can't overcome this [oppression]" (Mark).

In this way, Black students gain perspective on white experiences and opinions in classroom discussions that, while they might be problematic, are also productive. For Gwendolyn, those debates are opportunities to hear "what [white students are] thinking and so I would like for them to voice their opinions and hear what they have to say." Given the visible separation between the different undergraduate racial groups observed by each interviewee, the AAS classroom offers a rare space at Emory for the exchange of such information.

These findings suggest that allowing white students into AAS classes does not automatically change the value that Black, or white students, can gain from these spaces. While no other sociological study confirms this, the students I interviewed are explicit that the AAS class's status as a safe space did not dramatically change with the enrollment of only a few white students. Though not directly comparable, scholars have explored a similar phenomenon—how white students on campus effect HBCUs:

> the mere presence of White students does not disrupt the maintenance
> and/or continuance of this uniquely nuanced reality. As the example of West
> Virginia State College indicates, an HBCU can maintain its traditional cultural

> identity despite significant enrollment increases by White or other students. What remains unclear is the proportion of … students at which the cultural context begins to shift. (Brown 275)

Similarly, Black interviewees agree that once white students establish a critical mass (though they did not provide specific numbers) in AAS classes, the class's status as a safe space also shifts. However, Black students also recognize an added benefit of white enrollment within these courses.

Namely, AAS classrooms alleviate some of the white expectation that Black people educate whites about their condition. When applying contact theory as a strategy for diminishing prejudice, white students asking for supposedly "educational" interactions with people of color open up the requirement that Black students educate white students, thereby exposing those student-educators to more discrimination. Dr. Brian Bourke, who writes extensively on social justice issues facing PWIs, lists "Black students as educators" as one of the most frequent expectations of Black undergraduates studying at PWIs (Bourke 128). In studying the roles that Black students are often asked to play, Bourke finds that

> Black students at SSU [Southern State University] routinely faced expectations to play the educator for their White counterparts. The educational role of Black students takes two dominant forms: being expected to act as spokesperson for their race, and to explain the myriad ways in which they are different from the norm of Whiteness. (Bourke 130)

Each Black interviewee reiterates a similar sentiment when introducing the idea of Black people as educators. They find that "it's not the duty of oppressed people to educate their oppressors … It's exhausting having to teach you all why this is offensive, why this is racist" (Desmond). Within the AAS classroom, though, white students have as much right to education as any other student. The department offers courses specifically *about* Black experiences, and professors are paid to answer students' questions—relieving that burden

from Black students. As Becky, a Black woman double-majoring in AAS and a social science, notes, "it's very mentally exhausting to me going to Emory and being a Black student period. But then to have to come into [majority white spaces] and then again explain yourself ... it can become very difficult." She expresses relief that in the AAS classroom, the expectation to educate about non-white experiences is deferred from her onto her professor, who "is literally paid to do this work, paid to teach you" (Becky). No Black student should feel obligated to transform their life into a series of teachable moments for white listeners. An AAS course, though, can offer insight into these experiences—a main goal of any academic department—and intercept many of the demands that some white students might otherwise make of their Black peers.

While most Black interviewees agreed that white students should be allowed to take AAS classes, as they should be allowed to enroll in any department, several respondents view white enrollment in AAS as unavoidable. As a thought experiment, most interviewees could not imagine that an AAS course restricting enrollment exclusively to Black students would automatically be a more productive space. Three respondents—Becky, Eartha, and Marly—all find the concept intriguing, but cannot imagine that Emory University would support such an endeavor. Furthermore, they each struggle to concretize how that space would be constructed. To clarify, though, this does not mean that Black students do not enjoy or appreciate courses where the students enrolled all *happen to be* Black. Dr. Wallace-Sanders' Spring 2019 senior seminar is one example of an all-Black course; her students, two of whom I interviewed, agree that the course "feels different" than other classes they've taken, even within the AAS department.

To establish how best to ensure that AAS classrooms are safe spaces for Black students, to the extent that they can be, I turn to this study's interviewees, who suggest to white students how they might best engage with AAS courses and content:

Do you have any advice for white students about how best to participate in these spaces?

In responding to this question, each Black interviewee includes the word "listen" in their answer. While I parse out the nuances of their statements within this section, the overwhelming response to my query is that AAS classrooms allow white students to engage by absorbing knowledge and challenging their previously established beliefs. Desmond's advice best encapsulates the overall sentiment of what the Black interviewees hope for in their white classmates—that they "listen to comprehend rather than listening to respond or to contradict." Mary qualifies that her advice to "Be respectful, and a listener," does not mean that she never wants a white student to participate in AAS class discussions. Rather, she advises that white students enter the space "understanding your position and understanding your privilege" (Mary).

Aside from being an active listener, the three key pieces of advice that emerge from my conversations with Black students revolve around white students occupying space, privileging their experiences, and their intentionality when participating. Though white students do occupy physical space in a course, Black students use "taking up space" to refer to how white students often ground their participation in their own experiences, which are not the focal point of AAS classes. Mark elucidates this by asking white students, "Are you tying this again back to your experience consistently? ... That's a bad thing because your only point of reference is yourself. Whereas if you read more often you can tie it back to

other experiences that you've learned about. Cause we are inundated in a predominantly white curriculum in school" (Mark).

Because of the prominence of white experiences in PWI curriculum, AAS courses offer rare opportunities to position Black experiences at the forefront of a discussion.

> Black students feel as though Black studies classes are safe spaces or places where their experiences should be privileged. So for you to come in as, as the hegemon-er, as part of the oppressive force, and to try to dominate and monopolize the conversations the way you do out there in the actual [world], that's gonna piss people off. (Desmond)

This is not to say that white students should not participate in AAS classes. Rather, "if you show some growth and you unlearn some of the things that society has taught you, that's great, too" (Mia). One way in which white students successfully demonstrate this growth can be through centering their participation on texts, analysis of readings, and asking questions. Gwendolyn vocalizes her understanding of why white students might be uncomfortable participating, but adds that engagement is better than silence, simply because Gwendolyn wonders, "what are they thinking right now?" Eartha offers one example of when participation would be preferable to white silence in a classroom:

> In some other classes maybe with less sensitive material, if you give a comment that wasn't particularly useful or insightful, then it's … whatever. But, perfect example, there's a [white] girl that sits in one of the farthest back rows [in my AAS class] … always on her phone, always texting. She doesn't open her book, she doesn't bring any notes and she usually leaves before class ends. And I've been tempted the past few classes to go, "Hey, uh, not to bother your texting but can you pay attention for the next hour and 15 minutes? Because my aunt, my ancestors and maybe my future children would really appreciate it." (Eartha)

Eartha views intentional white engagement with course material as beneficial not only for those students, but for future interactions those white students might have with people of color. At another point in our conversation, she again mentions the girl on her phone, pointing out why it's so important for white students to engage with AAS course material.

Imagining a future where the girl seated behind her raises a child, Eartha hopes that "if she talks to that kid about Ida B. Wells, about Red Summer, that kid might not bully a Black kid like me."

African American bloggers writing about the need for white engagement with Black subject matter echo similar sentiments. Leda Fisher, her *Dickinsonian* op-ed, urges white students to "critically examine where your viewpoints come from, read a text that challenges you without looking for reasons to dismiss it, and maybe try listening" (1). For many white students, their first AAS class could be the first time they spend any length of time with people of color. On PWI campuses, remaining in the majority is easy for white students. But as Kelsey Blackwell, a biracial blogger with an MS in Magazine Journalism, writes, "if your community is mostly white, it is not by accident. Do your work, get real, look at the places you've been avoiding. Ask another white person the question you've been unsure about asking" (11). Another time to ask that question could be an AAS classroom.

Ultimately, the advice Black students offer to their white classmates revolves around respect. Though building trust can be difficult within any classroom, in AAS courses trust becomes especially important. Eartha, after sharing several examples of successful and unsuccessful white engagement in AAS classes, compels white students to "believe the experiences people are being vulnerable enough to share with you." This means, pay attention in class; you may not hear such stories told anywhere else on this majority-white campus. This means, don't respond to someone's very personal story with your own tangential anecdote. This means, engage with that person, asking questions rather than criticizing their position. This means, participate by actively listening, rather than appropriating that limited classroom time to interject your own experiences.

What are some examples of successful strategies professors have used to create a safe space within their classrooms?

Grounding their observations in examples from professors, who most often teach within the AAS department, the Black students interviewed characterize safe spaces as constructed by professors who a) set a clear tone for their course, b) correct problematic statements, and c) actively establish a kinship with their students.

Several students mention that on the first day of class with Dr. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, the students "reviewed values of the class: forgiveness or privacy and confidentiality, or different variations of forgiveness. So not carrying over what's said in the class into your social life or ostracizing others" (Mark). Mark reiterates that this activity occurs throughout the semester in Dr. Wallace-Sanders' classes. She continually helps students better articulate their thoughts, a pedagogical strategy observed not only by Mark but by Becky, Shaina, and Desmond, as well.

Clara, a graduate student TA, works with her professors to establish "the tone to take, how you work out [any difficult] situations, these dialogues, with one another so that they can be productive and not just rifts" between students or professors. Especially in instances where white students appear unaware of a problematic commentary they offer, professors maintain several approaches to treating students fairly and authoritatively. Interestingly though, the scholarship on safe spaces for classroom discussions of race revolves around creating those environments for *white* students, even when they endanger that safe atmosphere. Chavella Pittman, a sociology professor who researches multicultural education, writes extensively about this topic, specifically how African American professors respond to classroom racial stressors prompted by white students. Surveying different

professors at Midwestern PWIs, Pittman's article presents strategies for handling such situations.

> African American faculty had five distinct classroom coping strategies or overt ways to immediately handle the racial stressors in the classrooms: (a) focus on a teaching or learning goal; (b) create a safe space for White students, c) use anticipatory action, (d) use assertive action to establish authority, and (e) display nonreactive questioning of students; assumptions. (Pittman 70)

Another faculty member's "strategy for racially problematic White students was to protect them from their fellow classmates, which he did by stating something very radical or conservative so that the White student's comment did not seem as out of place" (Pittman 71). "Tara," a Black female professor at a Midwestern PWI stated that "the White students who come into my class … they don't feel shut down" (Pittman 71). She creates a safe space for white students within her classroom, even though those same students may disrupt that environment.

Several Black interviewees within my own research, though, emphasize that AAS classrooms should be safe spaces, first and foremost, for Black students. They also prefer a more direct approach to creating than environment than those discussed in the previous paragraph. Eartha appreciates "Whenever professors [say] 'this is a safe space, I'm not going to condone this, this, this, I encourage this, this, this.' It really changes … what the room can be and it's delightful." She offers the example of Dr. Dawn Peterson, a history professor at Emory who explicitly states at the beginning of her courses,

> "this isn't a place for white people to cry and be sad about slavery. We're going to think critically about our primary text and talk and engage. Anybody who wants to share personal experiences feel free, as long as they're conducive to the conversation" … [that] environment was engendered where it was okay to talk about race and the point wasn't to make Black kids feel like they had to talk or not talk, but it was certainly clear the room was made for us to exist and to meander in a way that was compassionate and understanding. (Eartha)

Gwendolyn and Kat also both mention professors who create safe spaces for students outside of AAS by representing racially diverse course content and authors on their syllabi. For Gwendolyn, a Black first-year student, she not only feels recognized within the classroom space, but "the [white] students seem to respond to it."

Similarly, professors who make their students feel seen, and develop a "kinship" with their classes, allow students to feel safer within those classrooms (Mary). Marly appreciates that Dr. Gordon "talks about her experiences, too, which is also quite enlightening for other people to realize that it's not just them." By finding ways to relate to students while simultaneously maintaining professional relationships, Black students find role models and mentors in academia—professionals who can relate to their experiences and struggles at PWIs. For several Black interviewees, this mutual understanding significantly contributes to generating a safe space for them in academic settings.

Is there anything you would like Black students to understand about your experience within the department?

No.

When I posed this question to the white students interviewed, their reaction was unanimous: "they get that enough here" (Shaina). While Shaina generally gives somewhat lengthy answers to my questions, she shook her head after this statement and was ready for the next question.

Kat elaborates only slightly, adding "it's not really their responsibility to take that upon themselves," to legitimize white students being in the classroom. She reflects on one experience within her first AAS class, though, as one that other white students could benefit

from. During the first day of that course, her professor asked each student to introduce themselves and their reason for enrolling in the course. Kat felt grateful that she could offer other students some insight into her presence within the class about Black spaces. She recalls saying to the class, "I have no knowledge about this topic. And I'm really just here to learn from you guys and I appreciate you letting me be here to do that" (Kat).

In my own experiences within AAS courses, an opportunity to so clearly explain my intentionality behind enrolling is rarely offered. Kat recognizes this too, and advises white students "if that opportunity presents itself to say, 'I'm here to learn and not to judge or to impose my beliefs,' that's important."

How would you define the term "ally"?

Mia began this part of our conversation by clarifying that "allyship isn't something you can claim. It's one of those things that's placed on you." She feels similarly about the term "activist." When I followed up, asking how someone can earn this title, Mia urges, "we want you to teach the other people that either thought, or think like you used to think, or the ones that aren't even trying to hear it. Because we can't take on everybody by ourselves. We can only take care of ourselves."

Throughout our conversation, Mia stresses that this engagement must be intentional. Kelsey Blackwell writes in an article for *The Arrow*, "If you're white, you have a choice about whether or not you engage in uncomfortable conversations about race, and you have a choice about how much you feel the racial inequities of our society" (4). Many white people choose not to engage with these issues, because they do not affect them directly. For example, Gwendolyn's high school class of 110 included 20 Black students and

"five or 10 [white students who] were extreme [racists]. And the rest were apathetic. They, they weren't neutral. I want to say neutral in a negative way where it's not, like, 'that is wrong.' It's, like, 'that doesn't affect me'."

This ambivalence, which the Black students who address it universally interpret negatively, demonstrates an apathy and narcissism exclusive to white privilege. The choice not to think about racial issues indicates that they don't directly affect that person. Yet when in-groups ignore the needs of out-groups, major problems will never be resolved. As Eartha states, "if it were up to Black people to fix racism, we would have done it by now." Given the need for white people to work towards this issue, ambivalence is harmful. For Mia, when white people "are confronted with reality and then you choose not to do anything about it, that's what makes us the most mad." Kat, a white woman, agrees, saying that "if we leave Black students or people of color to educate themselves about their own history, and if we're not a part of that and learning alongside them or learning from them, then we're not lifting them up."

I agree with Kat's sentiment, but want to push it further. If white people are not actively learning about and then wielding their privilege for the betterment of communities they don't belong to, they not only fail to lift Black people up, but they take advantage of a system that pushes Black people further down. For this reason, white allies (or those who want to be them) should "worry about your own community first" (Mia). Teach others "how to unlearn anti-Blackness" (Mia).

One striking observation from Kelsey Blackwell's writing adds to this conversation in a way I previously failed to consider. Addressing white readers, Blackwell writes, "You don't need people of color in the room for every conversation about race in order to come

to realizations about racism. You can do this work yourself and be liberated by it" (10). At first this statement concerned me. How could "this work" be accomplished without white people speaking *for* Black people? What if white people say something wrong? Are they less legitimate or compelling speakers because they don't have an experience of Blackness? While these concerns still stand, scholarship indicates that white people don't need to be taught by Black people in order to reduce their prejudice. Rather, they need to develop a race-based form of identity. William Byrd, when testing contact theory on PWI campuses, found that

> Overall, white students' levels of racial prejudice decreased from college entrance to completion, but interracial contact during college did not significantly influence their levels of prejudice. A race-related form of social identity was the most consistently significant factor to [reduce] white students' racial prejudice. (Byrd 266)

AAS classes offer one such place to develop this race-based form of social identity. These spaces provide opportunities for "people to sit and think critically about how they're being complicit and other people's oppression and try to be better. And when they fail, keep trying" (Eartha). Through such critical engagement with Blackness and, by extension, what it therefore means to be white, white students can begin to form self-concepts of whiteness and, eventually, allyship.

Beverly Tatum, a psychologist who studies teenage racial identity development, also discusses the idea of white people developing identities for themselves as allies. To begin this process, white individuals must move out of the stage where "little attention [is] paid to significance of one's group membership" (Tatum 279). After this stage follows the disintegration of indifference, reintegration as part of a larger racially conscious group, pseudo-independence, immersion, and finally, autonomy. Tatum concludes her essay with

a message reiterated by several Black students interviewed: "white students should not be led to believe that the role of the ally is to 'help' victims of racism. The role of the ally is to speak up against systems of oppression, and to challenge other whites to do the same" (Tatum 287). In this way, I encourage white students to address issues of race within their own communities first, and to avoid speaking over, or for, voices of color.

For well-intentioned white students, the previous paragraphs are particularly instructive, especially for those who consider themselves to be allies of Emory's Black community. As Julia points out, "there's a difference between trying to lead a movement and trying to help support a movement." When white supporters privilege themselves into spaces, many students of color I interviewed often felt as though their "allies" are occupying space that someone else, with a closer lived experience to the movement, could utilize. For Julia, she tries "to balance working towards being an ally versus taking it too far. That's my biggest concern in general with anything having to do with the Black community or any other community that [isn't] my own." Clara, a Black graduate student, is also optimistic about the idea of ally-ship, though she cautions that some students claiming to be allies may join a class or a movement simply to perpetuate their own racist ideas. "It's good to see that there are genuine allies," Clara notes. "At the same time, it's disturbing to see the same violence perpetuated in the space, even though you see the people who you're hurting around you."

In her experience as a teacher's assistant, Clara employs a positive example of one white male student who she feels others could use as a model of appropriate behavior. This student "didn't try to use his privilege to drown out the class as others did. Even though there was an expertise, there was still an openness" (Clara). Mia, who is involved in several

Black organizations on campus, also welcomes the idea of white students who are genuinely interested in aiding Black causes. She cautions, though, that it takes more work for white students to be allowed into such Black spaces. "If you turn out to be one of the least problematic people, it's fine. You can cultivate a relationship, but it takes a bit to get there. There's a lot of distrust within a lot of the Black students here" (Mia).

But many white students are also hoping to help right those wrongs. For those with good intentions, Mia asks me to remind readers, as I previously noted, "that ally-ship isn't something you can claim. It's one of those things that's placed on you." I respond by asking her how someone could earn that title, rather than assuming the designation just because they believe, for example, that Black lives matter. To that end, Mia advises white activists to:

> Worry about your own community first. Until you can teach your own community how to unlearn anti-Blackness, don't come in when I'm working with someone to do something. … We want you to teach the other people who think like you used to think. We can't take on everybody by ourselves; we can only take care of ourselves.

Many of the interviewees end their conversations with me on a lighter note, however, and voice their appreciation for the diverse, though limited, demonstrations of support that the Black community receives from students who do not identify as people of color. Mia acknowledges, "nobody's perfect. It's a process. We're not shaming you for not knowing." She encourages white students to make Black friends, to check their privilege, and to recognize that demonstrating an interest, though it can be uncomfortable at times, will help a person grow as an individual. Clara and Dr. Gordon echo this sentiment, as both appreciate the diversity within their classrooms.

The importance of the classroom setting of this research cannot be overstated, for two reasons. Within the literature on majority groups experiencing minority status, "although we do not deny the importance of studying the university as a whole sociologically, we argue that the classroom merits separate study" (Atkinson et al. 234). For white students interested in learning more about Black experiences and constructing identities for themselves as allies, the classroom becomes just as significant because it is one space where someone is actually paid to teach about these experiences. In this way, educators alleviate white undergraduates' expectations that Black students educate them about their experiences (Bourke). Furthermore, enrollment in AAS classes allows for white students to develop their racial identities, something noticeably lacking on undergraduate campuses and in college curriculums.

Study Limitations

While the interviews and questionnaires catalyzed meaningful conversations and introduce significant points I initially failed to consider, this study also contains several limitations. At the beginning of this project, I intended to explore white students' experience of the AAS classroom, but that focus shifted almost immediately. Now, my study also incorporates considerations of how Black students' experiences of the AAS classroom change when white students enroll. Emory's campus offers very few spaces for Black and white students to interact and speak meaningfully about the race-related challenges Emory faces. Rarely discussed, but with a significant impact (as shown by these interviews), white student enrollment in AAS classes comprises one of these issues. Given the limited

opportunities for cross-racial dialogue surrounding this topic, my thesis attempts to create such a space.

Unfortunately, not everyone participates in the conversation on these pages. Of the 14 students interviewed for this thesis, only two are Black men. None are white men. The survey demographics distributed similarly (10 Black women, four Black men, five white women, zero white men, three men and three women whose races were not being studied, and one who did not identify); limited male participation with both instruments means that I feel uncomfortable extrapolating their perspectives as emblematic of Emory's larger Black or white male communities.

Additionally, when presenting my research to classes and during interviews, I needed to address the elephant in the room. Namely, I'm white. This racial difference probably contributes to the low response rates to my calls for interviews and surveys. I already had personal connections to 10 of the 14 interviewees, and two others viewed my in-class presentations. Regardless, I began this research cognizant of this limitation and followed up with each interviewee nomination to generate a more personal connection to the respondents who I did not know.

A large number of studies explore the consequences of a racial match between interviewers and their interviewees. P.J. Rhodes, a sociologist studying race-of-interviewer effects, questions the idea of a "single truth," that is, whether a subject's race determines if he or she will have anything in common with the interviewer, or subsequently feel comfortable sharing information with them. Earlier research assumes that:

> Black people's mistrust of white people in general will, therefore, be extended to the white researcher or interviewer, preventing access or, if access is obtained, distorting the quality of communication which ensues. The analysis assumes a single "truth" which can be tapped through

> respondents' accounts and that the accounts given to a white interviewer will be a distortion of that "truth." ... It is erroneous to assume that a qualitative difference necessarily implies that one type of account is intrinsically superior to another. (Rhodes 548)

While some argue that this racial match prompts more honesty from the respondent, "race is not the only relevant social signifier. In the United States, where racial affiliation is such a salient basis for sociopolitical identity, 'insiderness' is still constituted by other factors ['age, class, accent, education, national origins, region, as well as sexuality'] which may render race of secondary consequence" (Twine 9). Even without a recognized insider perspective, Rhodes found that in one interview setting where white interviewers conversed with Black respondents, "several confided that they would not have a similar discussion with a Black person. People treated me to information which they would have assumed was the taken-for-granted knowledge of an insider" (Rhodes 552). Within my own conversations, I found this latter statement to be true.

Once Black students agreed to be interviewed, I believe that as a white interviewer, I received more thorough responses than a Black student might offer a Black interviewer. For example, Black students explained their opinions of conversations on the Black GroupMe to me; were I Black, they might have assumed that I automatically understood their perspectives on those GroupMe conversations, even if that wasn't necessarily the case. My perceived lack of insider perspective into the Black community leads me to believe that students were more explicit about things that they would not have felt compelled to clarify for a Black interviewer.

Furthermore, given that I research behaviors in a semi-formal and decidedly structured setting, e.g., the classroom, even if Black students are more formal in their interview responses, as research prior to Rhodes would suggest they might behave when

speaking to someone not of their race, this attitude may also be reflective of, or more closely correlate to, their displayed reactions to white student participation in AAS classrooms.[8]

At the end of each interview, I ask participants if they would like to add anything that I failed to ask about, or if "you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this project." This offered an opening to discuss my racial background when it did not arise naturally in conversation. Five students of the 14 interviewed chose to do so. Perhaps because we knew each other well outside of the classroom, Mark communicated his concerns about my research very explicitly. He "worrie[s] about where it will end up and who will use it and how will it be used. So I'm just not sure what it will be used for and that's why I'm worried" (Mark). I explained the goals of my research, which prompted a follow-up questions: "What's your interest or your impetus" in conducting this research (Mark)? The only student to express concerns about my research, Mark surely is not the only student to have them, as indicated by low response rates. However, other feedback that interviewees offered me assuaged some of my concerns about being a white researcher actively studying Black subjects.

Though careful to maintain that I am not wholly unproblematic, Mia shared that "you are one of the *least* problematic white people I know." I responded, saying, "I'm sure I've said things, though. I'm sure I've done things that are." She said yes. "And that's okay. That doesn't mean that you're a terrible person. It doesn't mean you can't be considered an ally. It just means you still have learning to do. And really we all have learning to do" (Mia). Other students, including Pam, added her appreciation that white people seem to want to

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[8] See also Douglas (1971); Schuman & Converse (1971); Laslett & Rapoport (1975); and Graham 1983.

know more about the topics we addressed in conversation, because "this is an issue that a lot of students do talk about."

With Eartha, our conversation concluded with a discussion of empathy. Talking about the distinctions between sympathy and empathy, I draw on several definitions to explain how a person could be sympathetic but not empathetic, and vice versa. "As Lauren Berlant puts it, 'compassion is a term denoting privilege: the sufferer is over there,' and the observer has the power to either help or turn away" (Davis 8). Conversely, "true empathy can involve recognition of both sameness and difference, particularly differential access to power" (Davis 9). This latter definition elucidates one of the benefits I view AAS classes as offering to white students, specifically. Discussions of race or privilege remain incomplete without considerations of power, a fact I learned in my own AAS classes. Apparently, Eartha could see this, as she concluded our interview by reflecting on our conversation as being

> very reassuring and helpful because you seem incredibly unfazed, but not unconcerned. But you just listened and believed me for an hour and 15 minutes. So where did you learn how to do that and how do you, and how do you care? ... A lot of people feel very comfortable being indifferent. (Eartha)

I hope this thesis reaches those people. As a first-year student entering into the AAS classroom, a space clearly not my own, I wanted to know how I was being seen. I worried that I imposed into the space; though I grew from each classroom experience, I did not want my development to be at the expense of someone else's, someone who needed that space more than me. Though I overcame my own self-consciousness and became, as Mary says, "comfortable with that uncomfortability [sic]," with this project, I want to ensure that I, and by extent other white students in AAS classrooms, aren't doing harm.

Based on the Black students' responses to my interview questions, specifically "What do you think white students should know when entering AAS classrooms?" hopefully, white students can understand that their role within AAS should be passive and receptive, not domineering. I hope this research allows white students who take AAS classes to have a better understanding of what's expected of them.

By extension, this research has value for more than just white students. Aside from Friedersdorf, I could locate no scholar who explored how white students experience the AAS classroom, nor any about how Black students feel about white students being there. This research also contributes to the literature about black students' experiences at PWIs, as well as the growing literature surrounding the experiences of racial majorities when they find themselves in the minority. These topics are ones that Emory students often think about, but rarely discuss. In several interviews, student expressed that the topics discussed in this thesis are ones they thought about before, but never shared with anyone. As many students also note, I find Emory a very segregated university. It is my hope that by starting to ask these questions, my research will prompt more conversations (and scholarly research) surrounding these topics among students and faculty at Emory and in academia at large.

I advise readers to conduct their own research on these topics, as the perspectives represented here are certainly not indicative of all Black students at Emory. There exists a plurality of opinions on such issues; it is our job as academics to explore them all, and to enumerate the richness of extent perspectives. But we should not just approach a community from a theoretical viewpoint or as a series of data points, for "it's a culture; it's not just a subject" (Clara).

Having studied AAS as a subject, though, the findings from this research consistently surprised me. As a white undergraduate at Emory, my experiences on campus are markedly different from my Black peers and friends, often in ways that I did not conceive of prior to beginning this research project. However, while the findings reported here amazed me, the amount of overlap between the sentiments of each Black interviewee indicates that my conclusions would probably not surprise them, nor most Black students at PWIs. In fact, the incredible amount of overlap between interviews means that unconvinced readers may find it harder to be disbelieving, as this paper could be fully rewritten with new quotes that substantiate the same arguments.

And so, gentle reader, here I present issues facing a significant, though underrepresented, portion of the Emory undergraduate community. The concerns described within this research emblematize a larger issue facing Black undergraduates at PWIs across the United States. The paucity of research on their experience, specifically within the AAS classroom, demonstrates a lack of sincere engagement from non-Black administrators and academics. My thesis offers a first step towards rectifying this dearth of scholarship, but it should catalyze more.

Appendix

Appendix A: Facebook Screening Survey

The pre-interview screening survey can be found at this link:
https://goo.gl/forms/IhwluJG4bqORpRYf2

The survey has been reproduced below:

Please fill out this brief form to determine if you qualify to participate in this research study.

Are you an undergraduate student at Emory University?
1. Yes
2. No

Are you between the ages of 18 and 22?
1. Yes
2. No

Have you taken or are you currently enrolled in a course in Emory's Department of African American Studies (AAS)? If your course is cross-listed with AAS, please answer yes.
1. Yes
2. No

Please specify your identity (check as many as apply).
  White
  Hispanic or Latino
  Black or African American
  Native American or American Indian
  Asian / Pacific Islander
  Other:

Please specify your gender identity.
1. Female
2. Male
3. Non-binary

If you consent to be contacted to participate in an interview, please enter your email address below:

_____

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Title: Undergraduate Honors Thesis: The Race-Space Dynamic in Emory's African American Studies Classrooms
Primary Investigator: Peter Wakefield, Ph.D.
Co-investigator: Leigh Schlecht

This survey is for my senior honors thesis in Emory's interdisciplinary department, under the direction of Dr. Peter Wakefield, also in the ILA. I'm asking people to think about their experiences in and outside of the classroom, both before and during their time at Emory. This survey should take you roughly five to ten minutes in total to complete. Please remember that you can decline to answer any question on this survey. All of your responses will be confidential; any publication or presentation of this research will remove any identifying information. At the end of this study, I will destroy any personally identifiable information. This study has no risks associated with it, but there are also no direct benefits to you, other than helping further knowledge on this topic. On the last page of the consent form you can find my contact information, should you need it or if you consent to be contacted for an interview.

Instructions: If you identify as African, African American, or Black, please begin on this page. If you do not identify as African, African American, or Black, please begin on page 5.

Section I
Instructions: Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings, using the 7-point scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Base your responses on your opinion at the present time. To ensure that your answers can be used, please respond to the statements as written, and place your numerical response on the line provided to the left of each question.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree

_____ 1. As an African American, life in America is good for me.

_____ 2. I think of myself primarily as an American, and seldom as a member of a racial group.

_____ 3. Too many Blacks "glamorize" the drug trade and fail to see opportunities that don't involve crime.

_____ 4. I go through periods when I am down on myself because I am Black.

_____ 5. As a multiculturalist, I am connected to many groups (Latinx, Asian-American, White, Jewish, LGBTQ+, etc.).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree

_____ 6. I have a strong feeling of hatred and disdain for all White people.

_____ 7. I see and think about things from an Afrocentric perspective.

_____ 8. When I walk into a room, I always take note of the racial make-up of the people around me.

_____ 9. I am not so much a member of a racial group, as I am an American.

_____ 10. I sometimes struggle with negative feelings about being Black.

_____ 11. My relationship with God plays an important role in my life.

_____ 12. Blacks place more emphasis on having a good time than on hard work.

_____ 13. I believe that only those Black people who accept an Afrocentric perspective can truly solve the race problem in America.

_____ 14. I hate the White community and all that it represents.

_____ 15. When I have a chance to make a new friend, issues of race and ethnicity seldom play a role in who that person might be.

_____ 16. I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, which is inclusive of everyone (e.g., Latinx, Asian-American, White, Jewish, LGBTQ+, etc.).

_____ 17. When I look in the mirror at my Black image, sometimes I do not feel good about what I see.

_____ 18. If I had to put a label on my identity, it would be "American," and not African American.

_____ 19. When I read the newspaper or a magazine, I always look for articles and stories that deal with race and ethnic issues.

_____ 20. Many African Americans are too lazy to see opportunities that are right in front of them.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree

_____ 21. As far as I am concerned, affirmative action will be needed for a long time.

_____ 22. Black people cannot truly be free until our daily lives are guided by Afrocentric values and principles.

_____ 23. White people should be destroyed.

_____ 24. I embrace my own Black identity, but I also respect and celebrate the cultural identities of other groups (Latinx, Asian-American, White, Jewish, LGBTQ+, etc.).

_____ 25. Privately, I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.

_____ 26. If I had to put myself into categories, first I would say I am an American, and second I am a member of a racial group.

_____ 27. My feelings and thoughts about God are very important to me.

_____ 28. African Americans are too quick to turn to crime to solve their problems.

_____ 29. When I have a chance to decorate a room, I tend to select pictures, posters, or works of art that express strong racial-cultural themes.

_____ 30. I hate White people.

_____ 31. I respect the ideas that other Black people hold, but I believe that the best way to solve our problems is to think Afrocentrically.

_____ 32. When I vote in an election, the first thing I think about is the candidate's record on racial and cultural issues.

_____ 33. I believe it is important to have both a Black identity and a multicultural perspective, because this connects me to other groups (Latinx, Asian-American, White, Jewish, LGBTQ+, etc.).

_____ 34. I have developed an identity that stresses my experiences as an American more than my experiences as a member of a racial group.

_____ 35. During a typical week in my life, I think about racial and cultural issues many, many times.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	disagree	somewhat disagree	neither	somewhat agree	agree	strongly agree

_____ 36. Blacks place too much importance on racial protest and not enough on hard work and education.

_____ 37. Black people will never be free until we embrace an Afrocentric perspective.

_____ 38. My negative feelings toward White people are very intense.

_____ 39. I sometimes have negative feelings about being Black.

_____ 40. As a multiculturalist, it is important for me to be connected with individuals from all cultural backgrounds (Latinx, Asian-American, White, Jewish, LGBTQ+, etc.).

Section II
Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. White people should be able to take classes in the African American Studies department.
   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
2. White people should be able to take this class.
   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
3. This class would be better if there were no white students enrolled.
   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
4. Classes in this department without white students enrolled are different than African American Studies classes with white students enrolled.
   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
5. White people should not be able to contribute their opinions in this class's discussions.
   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

Section III
Instructions: Read each item and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings, using the 4-point scale below. There are no right or wrong answers. Base your responses on your opinion at the present time. To ensure that your answers can be used, please respond to the statements as written, and place your numerical response on the line provided to the left of each question.

In this course, about how often have you done the following (Circle One)[9]:

1. Asked questions in class or contributed to course discussions in other ways
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

2. Participated more in this class than classes in other depts.
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

3. Participated less in this class than classes in other depts.
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

4. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

5. Come to class without completing readings or assignments
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

6. Asked another student to help you understand course material
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

7. Explain course material to one or more students
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

8. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

9. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

10. Worked with classmates during class on course projects or assignments
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

11. Worked with classmates outside of class on course projects or assignments
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

12. Discussed grades or assignments with the instructor
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

13. Worked harder than usual to meet this instructor's standards or expectations
Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

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[9] Adapted from National Survey of Student Engagement 2017
(http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/survey_instruments/2017/NSSE17_Screenshot_US_English.pdf)

14. Had serious conversations **during** class with students of a different race or ethnicity

Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

15. Had serious conversations **outside** of class with students of a different race or ethnicity

Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

16. Had serious conversations **during** class with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

17. Had serious conversations **outside** of class with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values

Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Never

Section IV

1. How many white students are enrolled in this course? _____

2. If you have taken other African American Studies classes, how many white students, on average, were in those classes? _____

3. Do you think the African American Studies classroom should be a safe space? If so, for whom? _____

4. Do you think the African American Studies classroom, in general, is a safe space? If so, for whom? _____

Instructions: If you identify as White, please answer question #5. If you do not identify as White, please skip to question #6.

5. How do you feel when participating in this class? If you do not actively participate, why?
_____
_____
_____

6. How do you think you are perceived on campus (Circle One)[10]:
      a. By other students?   Negatively   Neutrally   Positively
      b. By White faculty, staff, and administrators?   Negatively   Neutrally   Positively

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[10] Questions 6-10 are taken from
https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=4515&context=dissertations

    c. By Black faculty, staff, and administrators?   Negatively   Neutrally   Positively

7. How do you think you are perceived in the classroom (Circle One):
    a. By other students?   Negatively   Neutrally   Positively
    b. By White faculty, staff, and administrators?   Negatively   Neutrally   Positively
    c. By Black faculty, staff, and administrators?   Negatively   Neutrally   Positively

8. How do you think you are perceived in this classroom (Circle One):
    a. By other students?   Negatively   Neutrally   Positively
    b. By your professor?   Negatively   Neutrally   Positively

9. Have you ever felt isolated on campus? If so, in what settings?
_____
_____
_____

10. Do you feel you are treated differently in this course as a result of your skin color? If so, please give an example. _____
_____
_____
_____

Section V
1. Please indicate your ethnic background by circling the answer that applies to you. Choose only one category.
    a. African-American
    b. Asian
    c. Hispanic / Latino
    d. Mixed _____ /_____
    e. Native American
    f. Other _____
    g. White

2. How old are you? _____

3. Sex:
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Other: _____

4. What is your major, or expected major, at Emory?
    Major: _____
    2nd Major, if applicable: _____

Minor, if applicable: _____

5. Including courses you are enrolled in this semester, how many African American Studies classes have you taken? _____

6. Where did you grow up? If multiple places, please state where you would tell someone you are from (town, state).
_____

7. How would you describe the place named above?
    Rural   Suburban   Urban   Other _____

8. What is the racial composition of the specific neighborhood you grew up in?
    Mostly Black   Mixed   Mostly White

9. How many ethnic organizations do you belong to? 0   1   2   3   4   5   5+
Please list those organizations: _____
_____

10. How would you describe your family's socioeconomic status?
Poor   Working Class   Middle Class   Upper Middle   Wealthy

11. How would you describe your current physical health?
Very Poor   Poor   Fair   Good   Very Good

12. How would you describe your current mental health?
Very Poor   Poor   Fair   Good   Very Good

Appendix C: Interview Schedule for Black Students

Title: Undergraduate Honors Thesis: The Race-Space Dynamic in Emory's African American Studies Classrooms
Primary Investigator: Peter Wakefield, Ph.D.
Co-investigator: Leigh Schlecht

This interview is for my senior honors thesis in Emory's interdisciplinary department, under the direction of Dr. Peter Wakefield, also in the ILA. I'm asking people to talk about their classroom and social experiences both before and during their time at Emory. The interview, and the questionnaire that follows, will take roughly an hour to an hour and a half in total to complete. During the interview, please give as much detail as possible. You can tell stories or give examples. With your permission, I'll be recording the interview. Please remember that you can decline to answer any question I ask you at any time. All of your responses will be confidential; any publication or presentation of this research will remove any identifying information collected during this conversation, and I will replace your name with a study number. At the end of this study, I will destroy any personally identifiable information. This study has no risks associated with it, but there are also no direct benefits to you, other than helping further knowledge on this topic. On the last page of your copy of the consent form you can find my contact information, should you need it. Are the conditions of this study acceptable to you, and do you consent to being interviewed?
  Do you have any questions before we get started?
  I am now going to start the audio recording. May I have your verbal consent to participate in this study?

Background
1. Please tell me a bit about your background—where you grew up, went to school.
   a. What was your neighborhood like?
   b. Was your neighborhood diverse, racially? What, in general, was the cultural composition?
      i. Were there white families living in the area?
      ii. Did you play with any of your white neighbors?
      iii. Did you have Black friends?
         1. Were your interactions with your white friends different than your Black friends?
      iv. Did your parents have any white friends?
         1. Did your parents ever talk to you about race? Do you feel comfortable sharing a story about those conversations?
         2. Does your family have any stories about good or bad white people? Do you feel comfortable sharing an example?
      v. Do you have any white relatives?
   c. Was your school diverse?
      i. Did you interact with or were you friends with any of the white students?

        ii.   Did you ever feel like the white students didn't understand you?

       iii.   Did the school offer any classes on Black history or culture?

            1.   Did you take those classes?

       iv.   Did any of your other classes cover Black history or culture?

College Experience

2. Why did you decide to come to Emory?
    a. Did you consider attending an HBCU?
    b. Did you seek out Black spaces or courses related to African American subjects at Emory?
    c. Did you expect Emory to be more, less, or about as racially diverse as it is? Why?
        i. What would you consider to be racially diverse? What wouldn't you?
    d. Did you expect Atlanta to be more, less, or about as racially diverse as it is? Why?
3. What is your major?
    a. Why did you choose that major?
    b. Sometimes we hear about Black students feeling like they're asked to speak for their entire racial group when they're the only Black student in the class (tokenization). Have you ever experienced that?
        i. Have you had similar experiences in African American studies (AAS) classrooms?
        ii. Have you heard the term "safe space"?
            1. If no, "safe space is defined as a place (as on a college campus) intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations[11]".
        iii. Do you recall AAS professors ever making explicit statements about their classroom as a safe space, or as a safe place for all students regardless of race?
    c. Why did you first decide to enroll in an AAS course?
        i. Did it feel different from courses you've taken in other departments? How so?
        ii. How many AAS classes have you taken?
        iii. Have there been white students in any of your AAS courses?
            1. How did you feel about their presence in the classroom?
            2. Did you notice if they participated more or less than other students in the class?
            3. Do you believe that white students should be able to take AAS classes? Why or why not?
                a. Do you think your professors would agree? Why or why not?
            4. Do you have any recommendations for white students about how they can be better participants in those spaces?

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[11] Definition taken from Merriam-Webster

a. Are there things they should be aware of that you don't think they are?
5. Are these feelings different from how you feel about Black students in the classroom?
iv. Do you view AAS classes as a safe space?
1. Do you think that they should be safe spaces?
4. What are your extracurriculars like at Emory?
a. Do you participate in any multicultural clubs or activities? Can you give me some examples?
i. Have your experiences in those clubs been different than any other academic or extracurricular activities you've participated in that are open to all ethnicities?
ii. How did you feel if a white person was participating in your multicultural club?
1. Do you believe that white students should be able to participate in those organizations? Why or why not?
iii. Do you view your multicultural club as a safe space on campus?
1. Would its status as a safe space change if white students were present?
b. Do you value having Black-only spaces on campus?
i. Should those spaces be specifically extracurricular or could they be classrooms as well?

Appendix D: Interview Schedule for White Students

Title: Undergraduate Honors Thesis: The Race-Space Dynamic in Emory's African American Studies Classrooms
Primary Investigator: Peter Wakefield, Ph.D.
Co-investigator: Leigh Schlecht

This interview is for my senior honors thesis in Emory's interdisciplinary department, under the direction of Dr. Peter Wakefield, also in the ILA. I'm asking people to talk about their classroom and social experiences both before and during their time at Emory. The interview, and the questionnaire that follows, will take roughly an hour to an hour and a half in total to complete. During the interview, please give as much detail as possible. You can tell stories or give examples. With your permission, I'll be recording the interview. Please remember that you can decline to answer any question I ask you at any time. All of your responses will be confidential; any publication or presentation of this research will remove any identifying information collected during this conversation, and I will replace your name with a study number. At the end of this study, I will destroy any personally identifiable information. This study has no risks associated with it, but there are also no direct benefits to you, other than helping further knowledge on this topic. On the last page of your copy of the consent form you can find my contact information, should you need it. Are the conditions of this study acceptable to you, and do you consent to being interviewed?
    Do you have any questions before we get started?
    I am now going to start the audio recording. May I have your verbal consent to participate in this study?

Background
1. Please tell me a bit about your background—where you grew up, went to school.
    a. What was your neighborhood like?
    b. Was your neighborhood diverse, racially? What, in general, was the cultural composition?
        i. Were there Black families living in the area?
        ii. Did you play with any of your Black neighbors?
        iii. Did you have Black friends?
            1. Were your interactions with your white friends different than your Black friends?
        iv. Did your parents have any Black friends?
            1. Did your parents ever talk to you about race? Do you feel comfortable sharing a story about those conversations?
        v. Do you have any Black relatives?
    c. Was your school diverse?
        i. Did you interact with or were you friends with any of the Black students?
        ii. Did the school offer any classes on Black history or culture?
            1. Did you take those classes?

   iii. Did any of your other classes cover Black history or culture?

College Experience
 2. Why did you decide to come to Emory?
   a. Did you expect Emory to be more, less, or about as racially diverse as it is? Why?
     i. What would you consider to be racially diverse? What wouldn't you?
   b. Did you expect Atlanta to be more, less, or about as racially diverse as it is? Why?
 3. What is your major?
   a. Why did you choose that major?
   b. Have you heard the term "safe space"?
     i. If no, "safe space is defined as a place (as on a college campus) intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations[12]".
     ii. Do you recall AAS professors ever making explicit statements about their classroom as a safe space, or as a safe place for all students regardless of race?
   c. Why did you first decide to enroll in an AAS course?
     i. Did it feel different from courses you've taken in other departments? How so?
     ii. Do you feel comfortable in the class?
       1. Where do you sit in the classroom? Is it different than where you would normally sit in other classes?
       2. Do you ever worry that you stand out too much in an AAS class?
       3. Are you conscious of how you dress on days when this class meets?
     iii. How many AAS classes have you taken?
     iv. Would you take another AAS class?
     v. Have there been other white students in any of your AAS courses?
       1. How do you feel when participating in this class, if you do?
       2. Do you or the other white students participate more or less than other students in the class?
         a. Has there ever been any discussion of using the n-word in class or when reading aloud?
       3. Do you believe that white students should be able to take AAS classes? Why or why not?
         a. Do you think your professors would agree? Why or why not?
       4. Do you have any recommendations for other white students about how they can be better participants in those spaces?
       5. Is there anything you want Black students to know about your experience in the AAS classroom?

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[12] Definition taken from Merriam-Webster

          vi. Do you view AAS classes as a safe space?
              1. Do you think that they should be safe spaces?

4. What are your extracurriculars like at Emory?
        i. Do you believe that white students should be able to participate in multicultural organizations? Why or why not?
    b. Do you see the value in having Black-only spaces on campus?
        i. Should those spaces be specifically extracurricular or could they be classrooms as well?

5. How do you define the term "ally"?
    a. Do you view yourself as an "ally"?

Appendix E: Tables

Table 1. Cross Racial Identity Scale scores.

	Age	# AAS Classes Taken	# Multicultural Extracurriculars	PA[13]	PM	PSH	IEAW	IA
BM1	18	2	1	2.4	2.2	1.4	1.2	4.2
BM2	19	1	6	1.6	1.2	1.4	1	5.8
BM3	21	15	4	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.6	5.2
BM4[14]	18							
BM5	21	10	1	1	2	6	6.2	6.6
BF1	22	1	2	4.6	3	2.4	2.2	4
BF2	18	1	2	2.4	1.2	4.8	1.2	4.6
BF3	19	1	0	3.4	2	1	1.4	4.6
BF4[15]	18	1	N/A					
BF5	20	1	1	1	2.6	2.2	2.6	5
BF6	18	3	0 but attends events	2.2	1.4	4	2.4	N/A
BF7	21	2	2	1	1.2	4.2	2.4	4.6
BF8	21	0	N/A	1.6	1	1	1	1.6
BF9	19	1	3	1.2	2	2.6	1.2	3.6
BF10	21	3	1	1	1	1	3.6	4.6

Table 2.

White people should be able to take classes in the African American Studies department.

14 responses

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[13] PA – Assimilation, PM – Mis-education, PSH - Self-Hatred, IEAW – Anti-White, IA - Afrocentricity
[14] Did not complete the rest of the survey.
[15] Did not complete CRIS.

Each Black student surveyed (14 total) responded to the first question ("White students should be able to take classes in the AAS department") but for the following three questions, the Black student who never took an AAS class did not respond, thus reducing the response rate from 14 to 13.

Table 3.

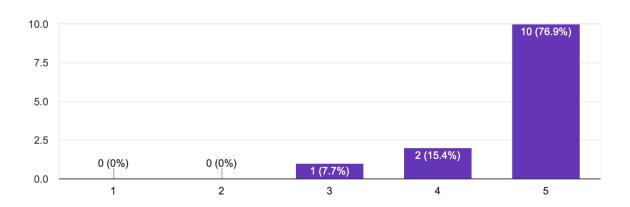### White people should be able to take this class.

13 responses

Table 4.

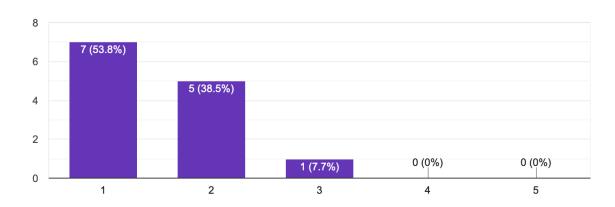### This class would be better if there were no white students enrolled.

13 responses

Table 5.

Classes in this department without white students enrolled are different than African American Studies classes with white students enrolled.
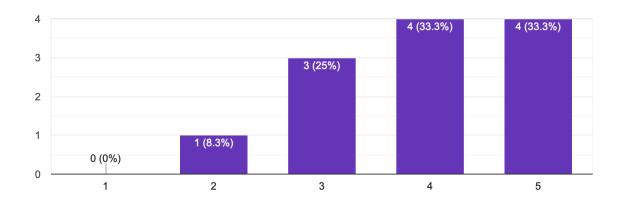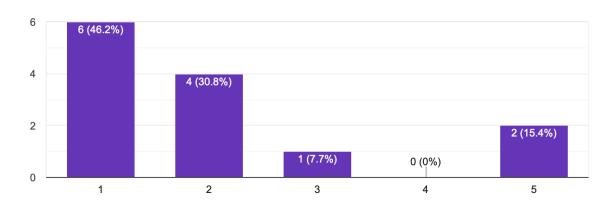
12 responses

Table 6.

White people should not be able to contribute their opinions in this class's discussions.

13 responses

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