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To Jack and Lana - this would not have been possible without you.

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ABSTRACT

According to The Pew Research Center (Jurkowitz et al., 2020), the US is becoming more divided based on political affiliation, religion, race, lifestyle preferences and economic status. If students are not exposed to different cultures, it may be difficult for them to understand other cultures and perspectives. Rosenblatt (1946) preached that literature could be a bridge to help students understand the world and broaden their empathetic responses to different perspectives. Loban (1956) contended that "Through literature, understanding and sensitivity can be increased, not only of other people but of the reader's own self" (p. 77).

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of just two short stories by nonwhite authors on the racial social sensitivity of students at a Midwestern, rural, predominantly white, two-year, community college. Data included observations of students during class discussions, students' written reflections, and personal interviews.

Findings indicated that students' racial social sensitivity was marginally enhanced through the inclusion of only two short stories by nonwhite authors. The difficulties and delicacy of addressing student attitudes towards race and culture are discussed, as well as implications for using literature, classroom discussions, and reflective writing in curriculum.

Keywords: social sensitivity, multicultural literature, community college, rural

Chapter 1

Introduction

Heightened rhetoric from the 2016 presidential election threw gasoline onto the smoldering fire of prejudice and hate, in the name of nationalism, and elicited fear for many Americans (Chokshi, 2018). Data from pre- and post-election surveys showed a newly-elected Trump accelerated a realignment in the electorate around race, across several measures of intolerance, and that this platform actually helped him get elected as the most powerful person in the most powerful country on earth (McElwee & McDaniel, 2017).

The border wall was a signature issue in the Trump campaign. Though it was sharply opposed by many Americans, Trump wanted to reduce the number of immigrants coming to the United States (Holland, 2018). Although two federal judges ruled that the Trump administration used flawed legal reasoning when it decided to end the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (Redden, 2018), Immigration and Customs Enforcement began arresting undocumented immigrants who had committed no crimes beyond their presence in America. Federal arrests of undocumented immigrants with no criminal record more than tripled in the first 14 months of Trump's administration (Leonard, 2018). Shortly after taking office, Trump changed the approach, allowing ICE agents to pick up any undocumented immigrants they encountered (Gomez & Kaplan, 2018).

The push for demonizing immigrants was not the only recent time minorities feared for their safety in the United States. Dixson (2018) writes,

> The death of Michael Brown and the ensuing protests in the summer of 2015 in Ferguson, Missouri…sparked a national discourse on the quality and value of Black life in the United States. The subsequent murders of John Crawford and Tamir Rice in Dayton and

> Cleveland, Ohio; Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York; Sandra Bland in Waller County, Texas; Rekia Boyd in Chicago, Illinois; and a tragically long and growing list of unarmed Black men and women who were murdered by police during routine traffic stops or unnecessary interactions, gave rise to the now popular Twitter hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM), that has since grown into a national movement with chapters in a number of cities across the United States. (pp. 231-232)

By 2018, growing tension between African Americans and police had reached a boiling point in many cities around the country (Smith, D., 2018). Despite the deaths of innocent African Americans, a Harvard poll found that 57% of voters, a majority of whom were white, had a negative view of Black Lives Matter (Williams, 2017). Movements like All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter began to spring up, almost as a defensive mechanism (Smith, D., 2018).

The nationalistic, political rebranding of xenophobia and "othering" that began as a fringe Trump campaign promise was later actualized in white extremist rallies in cities like Charlottesville, VA and Newnan, GA (Fortin, 2018). According to Ozimek (2016), "Lower educated people and ethnocentric people are more negative about immigration and about non-European immigrants specifically…the level of immigration opposition, and of underlying racist and xenophobic beliefs, is affected by both the economy and the national political discourse" (para. 10). Dixon supports the belief that education, or lack thereof, plays a major role in discrimination towards the minority. Dixon (2018) believes that,

> The way that the educational establishment has attempted to translate the universal desire for human equality…ends up being a simplistic rendering of cultural groups, their histories, perspectives and customs. Most of what appears in the official curriculum of public schools fail to adequately, if at all, represent…the struggles by several historically

marginalized groups, both separately and in coalition, to participate as full members of America's democracy (pp. 235-236).

Statement of the Problem

I have witnessed firsthand the racial intolerance on a predominantly white, two-year, rural college campus, which traditionally enrolls lower socio-economic students. In one of my freshman composition II classes recently, we read a piece that dealt with America's racial bias against African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans in the mid-1700s. I led a discussion on the relevance of the historical bias to race in the United States today. This class consisted of thirty freshmen students, twenty-eight Caucasian males and females, one African American female, and one Native American female. When I asked about the relevance, I heard answers that were socially insensitive. One Caucasian male answered, "If they (African Americans) want to act like criminals, then they should be treated like criminals." A female Caucasian replied, "If they (African Americans) would just stop talking about slavery, it would go away and wouldn't be such a big deal."

As a professor that strives to promote social sensitivity, I allowed the students to speak their minds, but tried to steer the discussion towards understanding why their answers could be construed as socially insensitive. I brought up systemic racism through US law and incarceration rates of African Americans. I asked the female student if she, as a woman, had ever felt discriminated against. She said she didn't like that men were paid more than women. I replied, "You know, if women would just stop talking about the wage gap in the United States, it would go away and wouldn't be such a big deal." She looked sheepishly at me and acknowledged how

the two points were similar. By placing her in another person's position, she was able to see a different perspective.

Reading through the subsequent reflective papers students wrote about racial bias in the 1700s, I detected an opportunity to discuss empathy and the value of learning other perspectives. Bringing multicultural literature into the classroom had an effect in this one moment in this one class, which led me to the topic of my research study.

Purpose of the Study

In most families in the United States, higher education is seen as the next logical step in the education process for a student who graduates from high school. In 1960, about 45 percent of high school graduates attended college. By 1998, more than 65 percent did—a figure that has remained fairly stable for 20 years, topping out at 70 percent in 2009 (Norris, 2014). In 2018, 19.9 million students were enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs across the United States (The National Center for Education Statistics). Because so many Americans enroll in two-year and four-year schools of higher education, these institutions can have a powerful influence on the hearts and minds of students. With the understanding of other people and cultures, a student's worldview can expand, possibly along with their social sensitivity (Astin, 1993). Since rural communities, especially in Oklahoma, are predominantly white (Brown & Harlin, 2018), students in a rural high school may rarely encounter non-white students. Studies show that whites' racial identities can be significantly influenced if they have had little to no interaction with people of color, especially blacks (McKinney, 2013).

According to Oklahoma Workforce Data (2014), the most popular occupations for rural residents include farmers, ranchers, and manual laborers, such as construction or field workers.

The socio-economic status for most residents in rural Oklahoma falls below the poverty line (Overall, 2016). In recent decades, the rural US has seen the loss of manufacturing and agricultural jobs and an increase in service-sector jobs (State Employment and Unemployment Summary, 2020). Rural areas often have fewer and less diverse employment opportunities, which means that rural residents may be more likely to have multiple, low-paying jobs with fewer benefits (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Slama, 2004).

Community colleges in the United States play a critical role in education because they serve as the primary choice for higher education for underserved populations (Pico, 2018; Freeman, 2007; Shaw & London, 2001). In the United States, 59% of community colleges are rural and they enroll 38% of all community college students (Teachers College Record, 2017). While rural colleges offer critical education, training, and social/cultural benefits to communities, they often have smaller budgets and rely more heavily on local and state appropriations (Roessler et al., 2006).

Many students in rural colleges come to schools in the vicinity of the college and they may still be contributing on the family farms and ranches while going to school (Pico, 2018). Rural students are less likely to have college-educated parents (Provasnik et al., 2007) and may perceive of college as having little practical use in their preparation for adulthood (McGranahan, 1994). Due to low property taxes and a less dense population, less money is available to fund schools, so rural areas tend to have higher dropout rates, produce lower test scores, and see fewer students matriculating from high school to college (Krupnick, 2018; Roscigno & Crowle, 2001). With fewer employment opportunities, many rural students face greater financial constraints than their more urban counterparts, and these constraints appear to lower college enrollment and attainment (Byun, Meece & Irvin, 2012). In rural areas of the United States where proximity and

affordability are the most critical factors to a student's consideration of postsecondary education, the community college is often the only choice for low-income students (Roessler et al., 2006).

Such factors may put students from rural areas at a disadvantage when considering higher education. Adelman (2002) found that "high school graduates from rural areas/small towns and poor students from those areas, in particular, are at the greatest hindrance in terms of opportunity to learn, and consistently evidence the lowest rates of college going" (p. 57). The college-going rates of rural students lag behind those of suburban and urban students: in 2016, only 29% of rural 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in colleges or universities, compared to 48% of those living in cities or suburbs (Krupnick & Marcus, 2017). The gap of the college-going rates is likely due, in part, to rural students' lower educational opportunities (Camera, 2018). These lower aspirations might be tied to the dilemma for many rural students of choosing to remain in their rural home and continue to work in jobs that do not require a college degree, or to leave for an education that will take them away from friends and family (Hu, 2003).

For many first-generation students, "going to college can be an eventual point of departure, one that both prompts and hastens movement into some 'other' culture" (London, 1992, p. 6). A sense of cultural distance could hinder rural students because pursuing college signifies a break from the family (Slama, 2004). Home provides a sense of place and is also likely to influence their identity (Hoffman, 2016). Because being away from home can be challenging, rural two-year colleges can assist students in exploring new identities and ideas. "Civic engagement allows curricula and community to merge; these activities provide authentic learning experiences that address issues facing the community by connecting them with lessons taught in the classroom" (Hoffman, 2016, p. 93). Educating the whole student through civic

engagement and exposure to new ways of looking at the world are opportunities for rural two-year colleges (Kim, 2018).

Oklahoma two-year community colleges have open enrollment and admit most applicants, from 16-year-old high school students to 60-year-old retirees (Chugh, Ledger, & Shields, 2017; Bryant, 2001). Nationally, most two-year colleges are interested in cultivating an on-campus culture focused on inclusion, equity and diversity (Smith, 2018). At Allen State College, the mission statement says, "Allen State College empowers people for academic success, personal development, and lifelong learning" (About, 2018).

According to Quinlan (2012), an institution of higher education has an obligation to educate the whole student and should not limit itself to educating students for particular disciplines or trades. According to Franz (2016), socially engaged scholarship should be integrated as much as possible across an institution's mission to more holistically and effectively expand current thinking and practices. A holistic approach to higher learning has become popular in countries around the world as well (Shih, Hsu, & Ye, 2018; Damsa & Jornet, 2016; Shandruk & Shatrova, 2015).

While attending a two-year college or four-year university, a student encounters numerous styles of teaching and curriculum and learns about various aspects of the world and society (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). In a seminal book on civic responsibility in higher education, Ehrlich (2000) wrote,

> Many people believe that the role of higher education is to develop a student's civil engagement by working to make a difference in the civic life of communities, and to develop the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make a difference in society. (p. 121)

According to Colby (2003), higher education's goal is to move students along a route that provides them with the understanding and skills they will need to meet the challenges of engaged citizenship, including a moral commitment and a sense of personal responsibility, which includes having a sense of moral emotions, including empathy and concern for others.. As engaged citizens, students interact in their daily lives with numerous groups of people with diverse ethnicities, genders, and socio-economic classes.

Significance of the Study

By bringing in culturally relevant, multicultural literature, students learn to understand and appreciate other people and their values (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Such an appreciation, in turn, may lead to a student's increased social sensitivity (Myers, 2017).

A freshman level literature class can be used to make students aware of perspectives of "the other" (Palincsar, 1998). Freshman college students are still forming personal identities and making daily decisions that will shape the rest of their lives (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). Classroom discussions can have an influential effect on student opinions, concerns, and perspectives (Ozmet, 2018). If a teacher can expertly lead a dialogue, then links can be made to political and social contexts and thoughtful interpretation (Palincsar, 1998). A discussion is rarely enough for a transformation of ideas and beliefs; it takes reflection for a student to begin to understand (Jordi, 2011).

Self-reflective writing is a powerful tool in the cognitive process of learning (Garrison & Akyol, 2015). A reflection can take numerous ideas from a student's readings and discussions and "encourage an integration of varied and often disconnected aspects of our human experience

and consciousness" (Jordi, 2011, p. 182). An individual cannot fully develop empathy and sensitivity until they can relate another person's life experiences to their own (Loban, 1954).

Empathy is "a form of social behavior in which one person achieves an intelligent and emotional understanding of another person" (Loban, 1954, p. 5). However, merely perceiving the other person's state of mind is not enough to constitute sensitivity. "A favorable feeling for the other person is all important" (p. 5). Sensitivity for someone who sees the world differently can bridge the divide of social and political differences and allow for civil discourse to begin.

When students are taught about the hardships and struggles of diverse groups, it is possible they could increase their understanding and sympathy for those groups (Sumner et al., 2017; Malewitz & Pacheco, 2016). Addington writes, "when adult learners talk about literature in a student-directed experience, a deeper understanding of the text is evident" (2001, p. 242). Louise Rosenblatt (1982) classified a response to literature as either aesthetic or efferent; the efferent stance as reading in order to take information away for future use, and the aesthetic stance as reading to experience or be immersed in the text while reading. When explaining the aesthetic response, Rosenblatt (1982) states,

> In aesthetic reading, we respond to the very story or poem that we are evoking during the transaction with the text…we draw on our reservoir of past experience with people and the world…we lend our sensations, our emotions, our sense of being alive, to the new experience which, we feel, corresponds to the text. We participate in the story, we identify with the characters, we share their conflicts and their feelings. (p. 271)

Through an aesthetic response, perhaps literature can help students understand and gain sensitivity toward social groups outside of their own race in the college classroom setting.

Researcher

In a qualitative study, the researcher needs to adopt a disciplined subjectivity and describe relevant aspects of self, including possible biases and assumptions, expectations, and experiences that might compromise the ability to conduct accurate research (Greenbank, 2003; Borman, LeCompte, & Goetz, 1986). Growing up in a middle-class, suburban environment, most people in my peer group looked like me and shared my approach to religion and lifestyle.

I acknowledge the paradox of a middle-class, white male studying racial social sensitivity through teaching multicultural literature. I know that I have a lot to learn about Native American culture and African American culture, and someone of color may have seemed more authentic in teaching students multicultural literature. At Allen State College, every member of the English faculty is white, so I was not able to observe a person of color leading classes. I am married to an Asian-American woman, and although that doesn't make me culturally aware by default, seeing the world through her eyes has allowed me to see areas of privilege that I might not previously have recognized.

My hometown and schooling experiences also differ from most students at Allen State College because many of them grew up in small rural towns. I grew up in a suburb of a city and had almost 900 students in my graduating class, whereas most Allen State students grew up in rural towns with a small graduating class. My professional experience in teaching has occurred mostly in urban and suburban communities, and I come from a family where one parent has a master's degree, and everyone was expected to graduate from a four-year university. Many Allen State College students are first-generation college students and come from families that operate farms and businesses that have been family-run for generations. The expectation for many students from rural areas is to return to the family farm or business after college, so

anything more than a two-year associate's degree may be viewed as pointless from their family's perspective (Krupnick & Marcus, 2017).

Research Question

The purpose of this research was to study how a brief exposure to multicultural stories might affect social sensitivity among rural two-year community college students, if at all. The research question was: How does the inclusion of two multicultural stories into a Composition II class affect the social sensitivity of students at a rural, predominantly white community college?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Theoretical framework

Denzin (2016) defines symbolic interactionism as a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective in sociology that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals to understand the operation of society from the bottom up. The theory was created by George Herbert Mead, who was interested in how people create individual identities and contribute to society. Mead believed that humans constantly engage in mindful action where they manipulate symbols and negotiate the meaning of situations, and each person has many selves that vary upon the social interaction in which one is involved (Mead, 1934). He believed these selves constantly change through interactions with others.

Carter and Fuller (2016) point out that, although Mead created the theory of symbolic interactionism, Herbert Blumer, is recognized for taking the theory mainstream. They suggest Blumer's brand of symbolic interactionism has been the most influential in sociology; most interactionism scholarship is aligned to some degree with his vision.

Snow (2001) states,

> When confronted with the challenge of articulating the core premises of symbolic interactionism, scholars generally refer, almost in the fashion of liturgical recitation, to Herbert Blumer's conceptual distillation of the perspective into four core principles. (p. 367)

Blumer's four core principles are:

> (1) individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them;
>
> (2) interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects (persons), as well as situations, must be defined or categorized based on individual meanings;
>
> (3) meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society;
>
> (4) meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction with others. (Blumer, 1969)

The objects Blumer refers to could be physical, such as a book or a house; social, such as family or friends; or abstract, such as moral principles or ideas.

Salvini (2019) asserts symbolic interactionism is not one theory, but a broad landscape of approaches. Scholars have applied symbolic interactionism to a variety of sociological subfields, as well as cultural studies and postmodernism, while others have applied interactionism themes to study addiction, qualitative research methodologies, sickness and health, experiences in the workplace, and education (Molana & Adams, 2019; Hashash, Abouchedid, & Abourjeily, 2018; Johnson, Kelch, & Johnson, 2017; Adler-Nissen, 2016; Carter & Fuller, 2016; Miles, 2014). Denzin (2016) adds,

> At the methodological level, interactionists employ a variety of interpretative, qualitative approaches, including autoethnographies, narratives of the self, structural, articulative, semiotic and practical ethnographies, grounded theory, the biographical, life history method, performance and feminist ethnographies, more traditional interviewing and

> participant observation practices, creative interviewing, the interpretative practices hinted at by Blumer, conversation analysis, ethnographic and laboratory searches for generic principles of social life, and historical studies of civilizational processes. (p. 84)

"Symbolic interactionism is founded on a psychological theory of the self because humans form meaning as a result of their own experiences. These experiences are not random or unrelated" (Adler-Nissen, 2016, p. 30). Chenitz and Swanson (1986) clarify that conceptualizing human behavior within the context of symbolic interactionism helps explain the behavior in relation to the social circumstances, rules, laws, and conditions that govern the shared meanings of objects and affect human behavior and can be applied to a group of any size, whether it is two people or more, communities, or society as a whole. Hashash, Abouchedid, and Abourjeily (2018) found contemporary symbolic interactionists emphasize the reflexive, gendered, situated nature of human experience. They examine the place of language and multiple meanings in interactional contexts from the perspective of the actors, or people, involved. Carter and Fuller (2016) believe instead of addressing how common social institutions define and impact individuals, symbolic interactionists shift their attention to the interpretation of subjective viewpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspective. "Every individual is a practical social agent, but human agents are constrained by structural rules, by material resources, and by the structural processes connected to class, gender, race, ethnicity, nation and community" (Denzin, 2016, p. 82).

According to Konecki (2019), when using symbolic interactionism, we give meanings to objects during social interactions (or self-interaction) and interpret their utility. "Symbolic interactionism is deeply engaged with power, theoretically and empirically, and explores the negotiation of social order as a complex interactive" (Adler-Nissen, 2016, p. 34). Snow (2001)

states the politics of representation is basic to the study of experience: how a thing is represented involves a struggle over power and meaning. He believes that, while social scientists have traditionally privileged experience itself, it is now understood that no life, no experience can be lived outside of some system of representation. Charon (2009) wrote, "…human beings are now to be understood as social, interactional, and symbolic by their very nature. Those who see only the physical, who measure only that which is directly observable, miss the whole essence of the human being" (p. 35). Aksan et al., (2009) assert elements such as social roles, traditional structures, rules, laws, purposes, etc. provide raw material to the individuals for forming definitions. Symbolic interaction stresses social interaction, debate of definitions, and taking emphatic role between people (Konecki, 2019).

There are certain criticisms directed towards symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework. Korgen and White (2008) state one of these criticisms is that symbolic interactionism is largely deprived of a real social vision. In other words, symbolic interactionism doesn't "perceive any social reality beyond the one that humans create with their interpretations, and for that reason, it denies explaining society on a more general level" (p. 92). Snow (2001) claims the theory also overlooks most human emotions and only considers social structure to a limited extent. "The first implies that symbolic interaction is not completely psychological, and the latter implies that symbolic interaction is not completely sociological" (p. 368). When speaking of the criticisms, Denzin (2016) states,

> Interactionists are often criticized for not doing what other people think they should do, like doing macro-studies of power structures, or not having clearly defined concepts and terms, or being overly cognitive, or having emergent theories, or being ahistorical and astructural. Too often these criticisms reflect either a failure to understand what the

> interactionist agenda is, or the fact that the critics have not read what interactionists have written. (p. 83)

Symbolic interactionism has been used to research different aspects of education like music education (van Rhyn, 2016; Monk, 2013), bilingual education (Wang, 2016), trilingual education (Alsheikh, 2018) and to study Shakespeare (Landa, 2005). The observation and use of discussions between participants have been used in symbolic interactionism research to study students' perspectives about school (Hashash, Abouchedid, & Abourjelly, 2018) and student activism on Christian college campuses (Cole, 2014).

Sosa et al., (2016) researched literary argumentation through symbolic interaction with students at a predominantly white Midwestern high school. They gave their students literature to read, asked them to use rhetorical devices (e.g., symbolism, theme, irony) to interpret the literature, had whole class discussions to determine student learning, and gave a pre/post essay. They found that students who symbolically interacted with each other during the discussions were able to understand the literature better through an improved post essay, compared to their pre essay. By developing their understanding of the literature together, students were able to learn from each other through symbolic interaction with the literature and each other. Fluck (1983) argues that literature provides a unique possibility and advantage in the spectrum of possible symbolic actions within a culture. Fluck (1983) goes on to say,

> It is a basic characteristic of human communication, whether literary or nonliterary, that the communicative act can be regarded as a symbol through which the individual seeks to come to terms with reality. If communication in general may be classified as symbolic action, literary communication as a distinct form of symbolic expression might be

conceived with its own potential for modifying and redefining, for unfolding and testing cultural perceptions (p. 363).

Methodology for the Literature Review

To review literature about racial social sensitivity, I searched a university's numerous library databases and e-reference materials. The specific electronic journals and book resources were found through EBSCOhost, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), and Google Scholar. I did not set a limit to the date range for the search, hoping to find both seminal and recent relevant research. All pertinent descriptors were used in conjunction with social sensitivity and literature (*racial social sensitivity, racial, social sensitivity, literature, prose, fiction, non-fiction, stories, reading, interpretation, understanding, higher education*, among others) and I spider-webbed using citations from other books and articles. A concerted effort was made to find every available study related to literature and social sensitivity. The research consisted of journal articles and books that were qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods. I chose to omit master's theses, unpublished reports, un-refereed articles, and conference presentations, instead relying on research that had been peer-reviewed.

When reviewing the literature concerning social sensitivity, much of it was found in databases in the social sciences, particularly psychology and sociology, and involved children and adolescents. The concept of social sensitivity as it applies to this educational study are subject to the same principles of demonstration and analysis that operate within the physical sciences (Comte, 2009; Ostrow, 1990). The selected research focused on teaching multicultural literature with the age range of students from elementary school to higher education.

Because my research focused on students in a rural, two-year community college, I also specifically searched for articles, books, studies that pertained to rural, two-year community college students.

Rural Definition and Culture

Ratcliffe et al., (2016) wrote that starting with the 1950 Census, the Census Bureau began implementing criteria which consistently defined urbanized areas with a population of 50,000 or more. The Census Bureau defined rural as all population, housing, and territory not included within an urbanized area or urban cluster. Cromartie and Bucholtz (2008) distinguish *rural* from *urban* places and point out that "researchers and policymakers employ a dizzying array of definitions" (p. 29). They consider that the use of multiple definitions reflects the reality that rural and urban are multidimensional concepts and that making clear-cut distinctions between the two is difficult. Definitions of Rural can be based on administrative, land-use, or economic concepts, exhibiting considerable variation in socioeconomic characteristics and well-being of the measured population (2008). Ulrich-Schad and Duncan (2018) found around 60 million Americans lived in rural areas in 2010, 19.3 percent of the population. Twenty years earlier, in 1990, nearly the same number lived in rural areas, yet they made up about 25 percent of the population. From such data it is obvious that the US is becoming more metropolitan over time.

Kurtzleben (2016) observed rural residents of the US have traditionally committed to small government and have long favored conservative Republican candidates. Wilson (2017) notes that Donald Trump received 62% of the rural vote, more than any other Republican candidate in modern times. When profiling rural voters in America, Davis (2016) wrote, "people

vote their culture, their church, their family, their neighborhood. Politics today is about creating, maintaining and expressing social identity" (para. 3).

Despite the prevalence of conservatism, DeKeseredy, Muzzatti, and Donnermeyer (2014) note the nearly 60 million citizens who claim *rural* as a description of the location of their home represent a diverse array of backgrounds. Rural communities constitute a culture, or at least a variety of subcultures in America.

"The rural US is largely comprised of long-time residents who feel important ties to a place, deeply value family and community, and value knowing and working with fellow community members to address local issues" (Ulrich-Schad & Duncan, 2018, p. 69). Slama (2004) asserts that, as with cultures derived from ethnic and racial differences, people from rural America fall along a continuum of acculturation to mainstream culture, the degree to which they adhere to characteristically rural values, traditions, and customs. According to Wagenfeld (2003), rural residents typically display values of self-reliance, conservatism, a distrust of outsiders, religion, work orientation, emphasis on family, individualism, and fatalism.

When looking at the differences, Slama (2004) emphasizes that rural areas are not homogeneous; their traditions and customs vary from small town to small town, as well from farm to town. Wuthnow (2018) believes the discourse around rural America manages to overlap substantially with central concerns of multiculturalism. He clarifies that, at their root, rural residents and multiculturalists share similar concerns with cultural preservation, identity, and recognition. Patten (2019) writes:

> It is unclear whether to label rural Americans as a minority or a majority. Rural Americans are in the minority nationally, but form local majorities in some areas, and

> exercise a fair amount of influence over national political outcomes. What does seem apparent is that many rural Americans use a vocabulary familiar from multiculturalism to describe the challenges they face. They partly define their identity with reference to their local community, but at the same time, they feel that their way of life is beleaguered by economic, technological, and demographic forces outside of their control. And they feel that their fellow urban citizens fail to understand or acknowledge the value of their way of life. (p. 148)

Cramer (2016) points out that a rural–urban divide that includes, not just economic differences, but also 'cultural' differences, different values and attitudes about what matters, is growing.

Rural Americans face prejudice within society as many groups do. Ballengee-Morris (2000) writes whether called a "Hillbilly," "Redneck," or any similar pejorative, people who live in rural areas of America are often portrayed as lazy, stupid, racist, sloppy, violent, moonshining, tobacco spitting, barefoot, and incestuous. DeKeseredy, Muzzatti, and Donnermeyer (2014) find that media often frame rural residents with horrific depictions. Films like Texas Chainsaw Massacre portray men as dumb and pornify women as sexual objects with large breasts, curvaceous hips, and skimpy, frayed denim short-shorts. Howley (2009) states that rural people and rural communities have always served as the standard of backwardness for the entire industrializing world. He compares the prejudice of rural residents to the prejudice placed on people of color by writing,

> Whereas people with darker skins feel the immediate outrage of being judged inferior on the basis of superficialities, the affront to rural people is based on the fundamentals of bourgeois economic and cultural power that are recognized as the way the world rightly is by the supposed necessities of contemporary society. (p. 540)

In her article “Hillybilly: An Image of a Culture,” Ballengee-Morris (2000) shares several examples of how rural adults and children have been dismissed as having no culture by people outside of the rural community. She explains that American rural culture and art forms became stereotyped immediately after the Civil War when developers came into the region. She believes the stereotype is still internalized today by educational systems.

Multiculturalism

Banks (1989) defined multiculturalism as:

> A philosophical position and movement that deems that the gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of a pluralistic society should be reflected in all of the institutionalized structures of educational institutions, including the staff, the norms, the values, the curriculum, and the student body. (p. 11)

Multicultural education provides educators with a platform for working with diverse school populations and achieving justice within societies marked by inequalities based on language, gender, socioeconomic status, or religion (Banks, 2004). Cultural awareness begins with knowledge of cultural diversity, respect, and the general recognition that ethnic groups may have different perceptions and values (Evans & Gunn, 2011). Cross et al., (1989) identify five basic skill areas for multicultural teaching:

- knowing and accepting of individual differences;
- being self-aware;
- awareness of the wide array of difference;
- knowing the students backgrounds; and
- adaptation of skills.

Some believe that cultural awareness in the curriculum has not advanced enough to actually help. Irizarry (2007) argues that culturally relevant pedagogy needs to expand its understanding of culture from a static, singular vision (e.g., African American culture, Latino culture) to one that can account for the hybrid identities of urban youth, identities shaped by globalized migrations and exchanges of culture that transcend physical markers of difference. Banks (2004) believes the emergence of multiple and overlapping identities involving ethnicity, gender, religion, and transnationalism has further complicated the concept of diversity and multicultural education and effected how teachers address the needs of children from a widening cultural spectrum.

By establishing a fair and inclusive curriculum, the mainstream-centric perspectives that are only viewed as significant by the mainstream society can be avoided (Banks, 1988). Gay (2000) asserts that diversity benefits every student in the classroom by drawing upon the students' background and culture, which will validate what they bring to academic contexts. When discussing multicultural literature, Gates & Mark (2006) state,

> Children are provided with either a mirror that reflects a cultural experience familiar to them or a window that offers a view of a cultural experience that is not their own. In both analogies, cultural experiences are validated and broadened for young people. (p. 29)

Recent studies have found that culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly the use of multicultural literature, can help student academic development (Myers, 2017; Banks, 2016; Richards, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

According to Kymlicka (2010), multiculturalism is as old as humanity and respect for diversity was a familiar feature of some empires throughout history. Song (2008) writes that the

core of multiculturalism, in the context of Western liberal democratic societies, is the protection of spaces in which minorities can be treated as equals to enjoy, express, and preserve their cultures against a state oriented to the concerns of the majority. Glazer (1997) points out that multiculturalism has been used as an umbrella term to characterize the moral and political claims of a wide range of marginalized groups, including African Americans, women, LGBT people, and people with disabilities.

"Multiculturalism is about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion" (Kymlicka, 2010, p. 102). Gutmann (2003) contends multiculturalism invokes conceptions of identity politics, the politics of difference, and the politics of recognition, all of which share a commitment to revaluing disrespected identities and changing dominant patterns of representation and communication that marginalize certain groups. Song (2016) and other proponents of multiculturalism (Banks, 2004) reject the ideal of the melting pot in which members of minority groups are expected to assimilate into the dominant culture. Instead, "multiculturalist movements have aimed to aid *citizenisation* by not suppressing the differential claims but to filter and frame them through the language of human rights, civil liberties and democratic accountability" (Kymlicka, 2010 p. 100).

Kymlicka (2010) found that, from the 1970s to mid-1990s, there was a clear trend across Western democracies towards an increased recognition and accommodation of diversity through a range of multiculturalist policies and minority rights. "For several decades now in the United States, multiculturalism has been a focus of both political action and academic scholarship" (Patten, 2019, p. 1).

Gooding-Williams (1998) claims recognition in the context of multicultural education are demands, not just for recognition of aspects of a group's actual culture (e.g. African American art and literature), but also for acknowledgment of the history of group subordination and its concomitant experience.

Kymlicka (2010) contends that since the mid-1990s, multiculturalism has seen a backlash in Western democracies. Kukathas (2003) argues that by granting cultural groups special protections, the state risks undermining individual rights of association. According to Kymlicka (2010), there are no group rights, only individual rights. States should not pursue "cultural integration" or "cultural engineering" but rather a "politics of indifference" toward minority groups (p. 15).

According to Song (2016), theories of multiculturalism are premised on an essentialist view of culture because cultures are not distinct, self-contained wholes; they have long influenced one another through war, imperialism, trade, and migration. McLaren et al. (2001) found multiculturalism in schools typically takes familiar cultural markers such as cuisine, music and clothing, and treats them as authentic cultural practices. Kymlicka (2010) refers to this form of multiculturalism as potentially dangerous and misleading for three reasons:

1) Multiculturalism can lead to avoidance of talking about customs that are not traditionally practiced; there is a tendency to choose safely inoffensive practices as the focus of multicultural celebrations – such as cuisine or music. Bissoondath (1994) called this the "trivialisation" or "Disneyfying" of cultural difference.

2) Multiculturalism can encourage a conception of groups as hermetically sealed and static, each reproducing its own distinct authentic practices, thereby potentially reinforcing perceptions of minorities as eternally Other.

> 3) Multiculturalism can end up reinforcing power inequalities and cultural restrictions within minority groups. In deciding which traditions are authentic and how to interpret and display them, the state generally consults the traditional elites within the group – typically older men. (p. 99)

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that the problem with misguided multicultural curriculum is that it reduces race and ethnicities to superficial renderings of foods, songs, folktales, and dances and purports a political ideology of tolerance among differences while ignoring the tensions which exist within those differences. A "major goal of multicultural curriculum should be to help all students develop more positive attitudes towards different cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious groups" and "to transform the school so that students from diverse cultural ethnic groups will experience an equal opportunity to learn in school" (Banks, 1997, pp. 203-204).

Multicultural Literature

According to Iwai (2017), "Multicultural literature is defined as books that describe people and events about countries and cultures other than the dominant ones" (p. 186). Multicultural literature incorporates a variety of perspectives from diverse ethnic and cultural groups (Richards, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Keith, 2010). Banks (2016) suggests the reading of multicultural literature begins the process of envisioning the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

Ho-Kyung, Seong Woo, and JuSung (2015) found that instructors can influence students' academic growth either positively or negatively based upon expectations of student performance, particularly if an instructor's expectations comes from cultural prejudice or lack of cultural understanding. By not adding multicultural literature to the curriculum, educators may inhibit

their student's ability to view the world as it really is (Futterman, 2015). Sadker & Sadker (2007) refer to the situation when diverse groups are not included as "the null curriculum" and claim that students consequently lower their opinions about groups not represented. When literature presents only white, middle-class characters as role models, students may come to see these representations as "the norm" and view everyone else, potentially including themselves, as "other."

According to Agosto (2007), reading materials that embrace students' cultural backgrounds can lead to increased self-esteem and greater receptiveness to learning. Wilfong (2007) describes the excitement students feel when they find a text that reflects who they are: "it is a mirror for their life, and it is validating" (p. 1). Stories that align with students' personal experiences can also be motivating in fostering interest in reading (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2009). Hefflin (2001) points out that "when readers do not encounter characters who are like them, reading is likely to be frustrating rather than pleasurable" (p. 810).

Through literature, teachers and students can engage in conversations about identity, meaningfully connect life experiences to texts, and interrogate stereotypes and social inequities (Gunn, Bennett, & Morton, 2013; Souto-Manning, 2009). Multicultural literature can expose students to a variety of cultures and provide a risk-free classroom environment for candid dialogue about race, social class, and social justice (Colby & Lyon, 2004).

McCullough (2013) states that "culturally relevant literature has the potential for students to make connections between their lived world and the world of the text to develop their interpretations by using their lived experiences to mediate the comprehension process" (p. 421). Hughes-Hassell (2013) used multicultural literature to bridge the racial and class-based isolation

that prevents the sharing of experiences across racial, ethnic, class, and cultural lines and found reading diverse texts can help students with identity development. Hughes-Hassell (2013) states,

> Multicultural literature is a form of counter-storytelling, with an emphasis on how counter-stories challenge the stereotypes often held by the dominant culture, gives voice to marginalized youth, and presents the complexity of racial and ethnic identify formation. (p. 212)

When teachers give students opportunities to teach, discuss, and reflect on multicultural literature, the acuity of students' discourses may be enhanced (Szecsi et al., 2010, p. 47).

Interpreting Literature

An important aspect of studying literature is to interpret the author's intention and potential meanings of the text. Ali (1993) defines literature interpretation as when "the readers reflect on the significance of events and behaviors in the text. Their reflections lead to generalizations and evaluations of the characters and theme of the story" (p. 290). Literary interpretation involves extracting multiple meanings, generating ideas, and abstracting messages beyond the story world (Vipond & Hunt, 1984). Lee et al., (2016) break down literary interpretation by explaining,

> Reading and interpreting complex literature involves at least two domains: knowledge of the social world represented in the texts as well as the customs, values, motivation, and personality traits of typical and atypical characters; and knowledge of the rules of significance operating within particular literary genres and particular literary traditions. (p. 167)

Teaching students the skill of literary interpretation can be difficult if the student lacks confidence in their reading ability or has no previous experience with interpretation. Much of the research refers to two types of student readers: novices and experts. Peskin (1998) wrote that the novices "were consumed by the task of building up a representation of the subject matter, whereas the experts could focus on higher level interpretations" (p. 243). Graves and Fredikesen (1991) find that novice literary readers process authentic literary stories to better understand potential mechanisms, making it hard for novices to move beyond the text into interpretation. Thus, they claim, it is important for teachers to teach interpretation so novice readers can experience the true meaning of the text.

Sometimes literature teachers focus heavily on the act of interpretation, the processes, and the meaning of the interpretation instead of allowing students to freely think about the literature. "The objective is not to abandon what students know—how to talk about the product of their reading—but to use that to move them more comfortably to learning about process" (Buchanan, 2016, p. 84). One way to do this is to connect the literature to the student personally and ask students to explain that connection.

"A reader's response, which takes into account the students' personal response to a text, allows literature to be relevant to the students' life, and makes it possible for multiple interpretations to be accepted rather than just one correct interpretation" (Ali 1993, p. 289). Analyzing the story, characters, and theme for a greater meaning rather than just what happens in the story and encouraging the consideration of students' life experience can help to interpret the literary works (Gang, 2015).

Another method to practice interpretation is to ask students to provide evidence for their claims. "The validity of any particular interpretation is based on the reasoning that connects

evidence from the text to interpretive claims about its meaning (Lee et al., 2016). A third practice might be to isolate a specific passage and have novice students connect that to their own experiences. Rabinowitz (1998) wrote that to understand the greater message of the story, a reader must first decide "what to attend to" and then decide "how to attend to it" (p. 76).

In general, research supports that a teacher should not fixate on one particular interpretation for the literature but allow for many interpretations based on substantiated student claims (Reynolds & Rush, 2017). "Teachers should never lecture on what the right interpretation should be because there is no such thing as a right interpretation" (Ali 1993, p. 291). Reynolds and Rush (2017) postulate that, in interpretation, there is not a true or false version, but there are "more appropriate and less appropriate interpretations based on the discussions and normal discourses" (p. 203). Reynold and Rush point out an important aspect of literature interpretation; that communal discussion can foster deeper comprehension.

In lessons about literary works, discussions might replace traditional textual analysis, making students re-organize and re-construct the meaning of the literary work through the sharing of information and critical reflection in the learning community to develop their creative thinking (Gang, 2015). Gang (2015) writes,

> The interpretation and discussion of English literary issues should be flexible, multiple, transforming, and open-ended. Teachers should encourage students to raise their own opinions, not to believe in blindly the answers from the specialists or teaching materials, and not to copy from the internet without active thinking by themselves. (p. 109)

Gang offers a blueprint for quality instruction in any classroom, and when taught correctly, interpretation of literature can have a powerful effect on the reader.

Reading multicultural literature and interpreting the literature through a group discussion can open dialogue between students and allow for new thinking about the situations discussed. Lee (1995) explains,

> When texts contain scripts for culturally specific events and social interactions where inferences must be constructed, readers tend to draw on their prior social knowledge to build interpretations. Thus, general reading strategies, task specific strategies for interpreting literature, and prior social and cultural knowledge combine in crucial ways to support problem solving in this complex domain of interpreting literary texts. (p. 611)

From Lee's perspective, literature and its interpretation are important for schools with students who do not encounter much diversity or need to see the viewpoints of those from other cultures and races.

Social Sensitivity

Stravynski et al. (1995) authored a study entitled *Social sensitivity: A shared feature of all phobias* where they defined *social sensitivity* "as a cluster of interpersonal fears and sensitivities" (p. 344) and described social sensitivity specifically as "one of three fundamental fears (in addition to fear of injury and of anxiety)" (p. 344). Other research in psychology has emphasized the link between social sensitivity and fear (Reiss, 1991; Alden & Phillips, 1990; Arrindell et al., 1990; Arrindell, Emmelkamp & Van der Ende, 1984).

According to Bender et al., (2012), social sensitivity is "the personal ability to perceive, understand, and respect the feelings and viewpoints of others" (p. 403). For purposes of this study, this second definition: "the personal ability to perceive, understand, and respect the feelings and viewpoints of others" will be the operational meaning of *social sensitivity*.

Social sensitivity is important because it allows people of different races and cultures to empathize with other peoples' experiences. "Civilization and empathy are inseparable; all lasting and just social cooperation requires this quality of human understanding which we term empathy" (Loban, 1954, p. 4).

Ostrow combines Dewey's view of self-actualization, "meaning is a prerequisite for knowing" (Dewey, 1965, p. 18) with sociological factors of human existence to define his sensitivity as "a preparedness for a social world, and in this way, establishes the very foundation for knowing its significance" (Ostrow, 1990, p. 19). Ostrow (1990) concludes that sensitivity towards others within a society is to know the significance of others within that society, and that sensitivity to others should be an aim of society.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) studied social sensitivity as an element of emotional intelligence and identified characteristics of socially sensitive people which include: the ability to be aware of other people's feelings, to be open and label positive and negative experiences, to enhance moods of other people, to attend to emotional growth, to accept others for who they are, and to be social problem solvers. They found people with a higher emotional intelligence had a higher social sensitivity and were able to understand and work with others better than those with a lower emotional intelligence.

After studying students in special education classes, Greenspan (1981) devised a theoretical taxonomy of social competences. Greenspan believes social sensitivity is a part of a person's social awareness, specifically the act of role-taking and social inference. Greenspan (1981) views social sensitivity as related to an ancillary model of personal and intellectual competence. Rotheberg (1968) studied children and their social sensitivity in relation to their social development and interaction with other children. She finds that intelligence may be an

important factor in the development of social sensitivity as children who tested higher in her study scholastically were the same ones who tested higher on her social sensitivity score. Her research shows that socially sensitive students tend to be older, more intelligent, better socially adjusted, and less susceptible to momentary stress.

Several studies examined social sensitivity with peer groups. Woolley, et al. (2010) studied how social sensitivity links to the collective intelligence of a group. They find a direct correlation between the two. The higher the social sensitivity score of the group, the better the group works together to produce quality work. Garton and Harvey (2006) studied social sensitivity to understand the link between sensitivity and learning in children. Through their research they find "high sensitivity children were more likely to produce language that agreed with their partner and exhibited problem-solving gains" (p. 8). Children with low-ability who are paired with a high socially sensitive child tend to see larger gains in their learning. They also find "interpersonal skills, specifically social sensitivity in terms of recognizing the needs of others, are linked to cognitive change achieved through collaborative learning" (p. 8). Bender, et al. (2012) examined how social sensitivity played a part within the group dynamic of college student collaboration, specifically within class group-work. Bender et al. claim that social sensitivity is a key component in predicting the performance of teams that carry out major projects. The research showed the performance of groups working together was positively affected by greater social sensitivity. Bender et al. (2012) posit that schools should consider social sensitivity as critical, and that social sensitivity should be explicitly taught in schools.

Loban was concerned with how the study of literature might foster respect for human dignity and contribute to the social and cultural life of a democracy (University of California, 2011). The goal of Loban's seminal monograph, *Social Sensitivity among Adolescents,* was "to

discriminate between adolescents who are highly sensitive to the feelings of other people and those adolescents whose sensitivity to the feelings of others is demonstrably low" (1953, p. 102). Loban learns that socially sensitive adolescents were more concerned about behavior with peers and were more aware of their limitations than adolescents who were not socially sensitive.

Loban (1953) finds socio-economic status to be an important factor in males; those with low social sensitivity tended to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds. He thinks it "possible to suppress tendencies toward sympathy and to adopt an attitude of 'everyman for himself'" among poor students (p. 109). Loban (1953) discovers that highly sensitive adolescent children tend to be: healthy girls, independent, popular, well-read, and mentally stable. Loban notes,

> This research it is hoped will have value in the development of a study of human relations and in the education of tolerant, sensitive citizens. Underlying the problems of inter-racial and intercultural strife with which the public schools deal, lies the basic problem of social insight and sympathetic awareness of the feelings and thoughts of other minds. (p. 111)

Loban followed this research with a second study to see if literature played a part in influencing social sensitivity.

In 1954, Loban wrote *Literature and Social Sensitivity,* a study which "focuses on one carefully selected aspect, the response of adolescents to literature involving values based on the concept of human dignity" (p. 3). He was interested in examining the responses of adolescents of both high and low sensitivity. Loban writes, "Literature can open the awareness of a reader to wider and deeper perceptions and organizations of experience. Literature can lift that reader above the petty or narrow concerns that usually consume his time" (p. 54). Loban (1954)

describes the need for sensitivity and sympathy within society and believes that literature can be the tool to help students develop these characteristics.

Loban first selected students who identified as either high or low social sensitivity. Once selected, the students read ten short stories and were asked to respond to them. Loban writes that,

> these stories had been carefully chosen for the poignancy of their appeal to a reader's feelings of sympathy; the nearness of the story characters to the subjects' age; the combination of literary skill and emotional power; and the balance of boy and girl characters. (p. 10)

After the stories were read, the teacher led a discussion to get the student's immediate reactions. Students were also given a questionnaire to get their responses if they agreed with selected statements that ranged from highly socially sensitive to extremely socially insensitive. From the data, Loban was able to construct some inferences with regard to literature's role in helping develop social sensitivity. Loban breaks his findings into four categories.

1) *Literature*: He surmises that literature taught in schools presenting human values should increase, and that several units every year needed to be about the values of social sensitivity.
2) *Classroom Procedure*: He advocates that literature teachers need to develop techniques of classroom discussion emphasizing more than just what happened in the story. Teachers who give background of the story before reading and who emphasize that behavior may have motivations that are not readily apparent on the surface help students ponder the possibility of multiple perspectives.

3) *Total Curriculum*: The curriculum must work towards human understanding. Teachers should bring speakers from the community to show traits of human behavior and understanding. In addition, teachers should recognize and bring to light instances of prejudice and insensitivity.

4) *Evaluation*: standards and goals should include the development of social sensitivity.

Loban (1954) concludes by saying,

> The educational problem is at heart the problem of helping adolescents select from their culture all good, constructive values and all striving toward wholeness and of helping them to subdue or convert those tendencies that are destructive, negative, wasteful or smugly contented. (p. 35)

Loban's recommendation, especially concerning the destructive attitudes and tendencies towards race, seems especially pertinent today.

Racial Sensitivity

Many scholars (Worthington et al., 2008; McDowell, 2003; Vera and Speight, 2003; Laszloffy & Hardy, 2000; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000) agree that racial sensitivity involves understanding people and cultures and acknowledging their privileges and persecutions.

According to Gushue and Constantine (2007), the role of race in the development of racial sensitivity may be a function of a person's general resistance to acknowledging their social positions of privilege, and their privileged experiences also ensure the ongoing oppression of those outside of their group. White Americans are more likely to lack awareness of their racial privilege, and the ways in which the benefits they so often enjoy, which maintains the gaps

between themselves and minorities; even if White Americans recognize their racial privilege, some do not confront and discuss it through curriculum and classroom discussion (Neville, Worthington & Spanierman, 2001). When interviewed about their experiences of racism within their university, students of color often reported feeling oppressed when a lack of attention was paid to racial issues (McDowell, 2004).

A crucial foundation to racial sensitivity is racial awareness; a person's "ability to recognize that race exists and that it shapes reality in inequitable and unjust ways" (Laszloffy & Hardy, 2000, p. 36). To be racially aware is to acknowledge the fact that real life is not always just or does not always offer merit-based rewards to people of all races (Neville et al., 2000). Many higher education institutions teach about diversity in broad strokes and do not focus on inequalities within the society, rather choosing to focus on the idea that all colors are the same, often promulgated through an orientation class or through required reading for freshmen (Nesbitt et al., 1994).

Teachers can promote racial awareness through the integration of "issues of diversity into their work" (Vera and Speight, 2003, p. 253). Through reading, discussing and reflecting upon multicultural literature in class, students can interpret the meaning of the literature and achieve a higher level of racial sensitivity and awareness (Banks, 2016).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Delgado & Stefanic (2017) define Critical Race Theory, or CRT, as a theoretical and interpretive construct that examines the appearance of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression. Ladson-Billings (1998) states the beliefs, practices, and institutions that necessitated the inception of CRT precede the creation of the United States of America. She

contends they are imbedded in the tenets of the Constitution that define the federal relationships that permeate various aspect of daily life. According to Tate (1997), critical race theory acknowledges the historical racial hierarchy where Whites have been positioned above People of Color as substantiated in the law. Thus, CRT "serves as a framework to challenge and dismantle prevailing notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality" (Howard & Navarro, 2016, p. 258). In adopting this approach, CRT researchers are "a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 2). "These scholars attempt to understand how victims of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and how they can represent themselves to counter prejudice within its social, economic, and historical context" (Purdue University, para. 4).

Ladson-Billings (1998) writes that, in the mid-1970s, Derek Bell and Alan Freeman emerged as ushers of this uniquely critical approach to interpret the legal and social, impact of race within the contexts of everyday experience. As Delgado and Stefancic (2013) explain in their introduction to the third edition of *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*,

> Our social world, with its rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather, we construct with words, stories and silence. But we need not acquiesce in arrangements that are unfair and one-sided. By writing and speaking against them, we may hope to contribute to a better, fairer world." (p. 3)

One of the ways CRT challenges and dismantles prevailing notions of race is through a counter-narrative. Jennings and Lynn (2005) state the purpose of constructing an alternative narrative is to bring to the forefront voices that have been excluded from the master narrative. Berry and Candis (2013) add,

> The narratives, stories, and actions of the survivors intertwine to provide a clear account of the past that includes the triumphs and offenses that comprise the American voice hidden within the institutions, norms, and biases that have been established by the ruling class. CRT attributes the formation of that class to the ideology of race and the role it plays as a factor in socioeconomic context. (p. 48)

Matsuda et al., (1993) notes that there is no single unchanging statement of the core tenets and perspectives of CRT, but most authoritative commentaries identify a similar set of characteristics, assumptions, and approaches. "The first approach is that racism is endemic to American life" (Berry & Candis, 2013, p. 56). Critical race theorists argue that racism often remains hidden beneath a veneer of normality, and it is only the more crude and obvious forms of racism that are seen as problematic by most people. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) state,

> Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture. Formal equal opportunity - rules and laws that insist on treating blacks and Whites (for example) alike - can thus remedy only the more extreme and shocking forms of injustice, the ones that do stand out. It can do little about the business-as-usual forms of racism that people of color confront every day. (p. 16)

Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2010) suggest another attribute of CRT: that race is socially constructed. "Race is not inherent within itself or a person, but the meaning of race is constructed, perpetuated, and reinforced in the social world" (Collins, 2004, p. 536). Stanfield (1999) adds race is a mythology that has been created for purposes of control and power and economic exploitation.

Ladson-Billings (1998) states a third characteristic central to CRT as challenging ahistorical interpretations of events. Katznelson (2005) gives an example of ahistoricism as the

argument that affirmative action unfairly advantages racially minoritized people, ignoring hundreds of years of privileging Whites.

According to Lynn and Parker (2006), CRT questions values of objectivity, neutrality colorblindness, and meritocracy common in dominant discourse. Tate (1997) claims people have different experiences of oppression in society related to their perceived, affiliated racial group. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) write that critical race theory works toward eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression.

"CRT offers voices and perspectives to provide avenues of story-telling by which the testimony of previously marginalized students can describe the impact that "race" as a construct has had on their life experience" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2437). Delgado claims "story-telling" constitutes an integral and invaluable part of historical and current legal evidence gathering and findings of fact in the higher education desegregation cases. The federal courts and the white European American majority should be interested in these stories because, as Delgado (1989) asserts, "it is only through listening that the conviction of seeing the world only one way can be challenged, and one can acquire the ability to see the world through others' eyes (p. 2439).

Ladson-Billings and Tate argue that race is "under-theorized, not understudied" (Milner & Laughter, 2014, p. 346). Ladson-Billings (1998) sees CRT as a way to disrupt unexamined beliefs and to ask critical questions about institutional practices that create inequities for people of color. Miller and Harris (2018) write that CRT also promotes the idea that people of color are not empty vessels. As Dixson and Rousseau (2005) explain, "adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it" (p. 23).

Berry and Candis (2013) believe the literature in educational research related to CRT has gained tremendous momentum in recent decades due to the growing plight of disenfranchised students in America's schools. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) assert that race juxtaposed with economic status (property ownership) has worked to define the reality for the benefactors and victims of racial paradigms. Schooling provides the opportunity to define and perpetuate ideals that maintain the social order. Property ownership and its integrated relationship with schooling help normalize race and racism in the social order (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012; Berry, 2009; Lipton & Oakes, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Cultural Blindness/Color Blindness

An aspect of CRT is the idea of cultural blindness and color blindness (also known as Color-Blind Racial Attitudes, or CoBRAs). Ford (2014) explains that viewing different racial or cultural groups as the same contributes to culture blindness, also known as color blindness (Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, & Powers-Costello, 2011). This means that when people "only see people," they are using the universal level to avoid the group level (including race). On the other hand, pointing out that "we are all different" is using the individual level to justify color-blindness (Sue et al., 2007). Others have referred to color blindness as culturally insensitive and as denying race, denying experience and demanding acculturation (Sue & Sue, 2013; Neville, Yeung, Todd, Spanierman, & Reed, 2011).

Several scholars suggest that those who endorse cultural blindness tend to have a lower awareness of issues related to diversity (Wang, Castro, & Cunningham, 2014; Neville et al, 2013; Burkard & Knox, 2004; Neville et al., 2000). Herczog (2012) discusses how cultural blindness occurs when teachers select content assuming that all materials will meet all students'

needs equally. Ignoring privileges and disadvantage related to cultural difference has been common practice for some time in education according to Wang, Castro, and Cunningham (2014). In being colorblind, teachers feel it is "far better to not 'see' race, to stress that you see everyone the 'same'" rather than be labeled a racist (Flintoff, 2018, p. 212). Wang et al. (2014) found that CoBRAs could help explain why some teachers have less cultural sensitivity when working with students from racial and ethnic minority groups.

How college students assess and respond to campus climate is also influenced by Color-Blind Racial Attitudes. Poteat and Spanierman (2012) find that color-blind racial ideology predicts higher levels of racist ideology and racial bias in college students. Lewis, Neville, and Spanierman (2012) suggest that high levels of color-blindness predicts reduced levels of social justice attitudes on campus. Worthington et al. (2008) establish that higher levels of color-blindness projects a positive rating of overall campus climate, suggesting that those who approve CoBRAs at a higher level will be less likely to identify hostile situations when they exist.

Poteat and Spanierman (2012) recommend addressing CoBRAs with college students as a way of decreasing racist attitudes. Lewis, Neville, and Spanierman (2012) find that campus diversity involvement can predict changes in social justice attitudes and contribute to decreases in color-blind racial ideology. Neville et al. (2014) report on a longitudinal study of college students and CoBRAs that show a general decrease in CoBRAs as time in college increases. The decrease in CoBRAs was greater for students who enrolled in courses specifically addressing diversity.

Whiteness/White Privilege

Critical Race Theory also looks at how Whiteness impacts other races. White Matias et al., (2014) define whiteness as a social construction that embraces white culture, ideology, racialization, expressions and experiences, epistemology, emotions, and behaviors. Leonardo (2000) adds that, although not exclusively, whiteness has historically stratified and partitioned the world according to skin color or the modern sense of race as the politics of pigmentation. "As a collection of everyday strategies, whiteness is characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 132).

Wise (2008) explains that Whiteness is not about one's own physical or biological make-up but is a result of being the prevailing culture. Wise, a white male, applied the following analogy about the invisibleness of Whiteness: "Privilege, to us, is like water to the fish, invisible precisely because we cannot imagine life without it" (as cited in Henfield & Washington, 2012, p. 150). According to McIntosh (1988), "Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon, I realized that since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of white privilege which was similarly denied and protected" (p. 1). According to Matias (2013), a whiteness mindset can foster "concrete systemic racism that renders all the privileges that accompany white skin as not just normal, but invisible" (p. 73).

Dwyer and Jones (2000) assert that whiteness is often fragmentary to maintain its invisibility, its unmarked status. It must by necessity mistake the world as non-relational or partitioned, which allows the white psyche to speak of slavery as long ago, rather than as a legacy which lives today. Leonardo (2000) clarifies,

> Since confronting their own privilege would mean Whites engage in a thorough historical understanding of 'how they came to be' in a position of power, most whites resist such an undertaking and instead focus on individual merit, exceptionalism, or hard work. The costs are real because it means whites would have to acknowledge their unearned privileges and disinvest in them. Whites have a lot to lose, not just something to gain by forsaking whiteness. (p. 37)

DiAngelo (2011) names the resistance to loss of power as "White Fragility," a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive behaviors. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate White racial equilibrium by pressuring those who caused the disequilibrium (usually People of Color) to retreat. An example of this would be the formation of #AllLivesMatter after #BlackLivesMatter formed to protest the shooting of an African American teenager by White police officers. Gallagher et al., (2018) posit #AllLivesMatter was a counter-protest hashtag whose content argued that equal attention should have been given to all lives regardless of race.

Matias (2012) gives other examples of Whiteness common in American society as constant remarks of "where are you really from?" "Do you speak English?" or "You're so articulate," which she says can be racially fatiguing to navigate. She explains that the English-only movement is a Western-centric curricula that represents white identity politics of anti-immigrant nativism with phrases like "go back home if you don't like it." Leonardo (2000) explains,

> When discussing the effects of racism within any given nation, the common refrain of "Well, why don't just go back to their country if they're not happy here?" (fill the blank with an ethnic or racial group) exposes several faulty assumptions.

> One, it assumes that people who voice opposition to white racism do not belong in the nation they seek to improve by ridding it of racism.
>
> Two, it frames the issue of racism as the problem or realm of non-whites who are dissatisfied with their lot in life rather than a concern for the humanity of all people, including whites.
>
> Three, as Du Bois (1989) articulated, whiteness is a global phenomenon, and there is very little space on the globe unaffected or unpartitioned by white power.
>
> Four, it assumes white ownership of racialized territories; whites rarely tell other whites to go back to Europe. (p. 33)

Miller and Harris (2018) regard Whiteness as a critical point of departure in educational pedagogy. Howard and Navarro (2016) report that, as the U.S. population diversifies, educators have remained consistently white and female, accounting for 80% of the teaching force. "Critical forms of multiculturalism have made significant progress in globalizing education (i.e. representing non-white cultures), but whiteness still remains at the center of many national curricula or culture" (Leonardo, 2000, p. 35). Educators, often white, normalize their dispositions under the mechanisms of whiteness-at-work (Yoon, 2012), color blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva & Embrick, 2006), and denial (Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005) such that they do not even recognize that they will be susceptible to dominant racial ideologies of whiteness (Picower, 2009).

Miller and Harris (2018) suggest a CRT lens could allow educators to explore their behaviors and better understand how to dismantle white supremacist thinking. They believe recognizing oneself as white and admitting to white privilege, but not understanding the complexity of those privileges, are erroneously understood as enough to engage in anti-racism

within social justice education. "For a genuine anti-racist approach, emotional investment of race, one that allows white teacher candidates to delve in their own discomforts about their role in racism, must be re-understood from the perspective of the Black imagination" (Matias, et al., 2014, p. 301). Leonardo (2002) believes a complementary goal is to dismantle race without suggesting to students of color that their racial experiences are not valid or real. He cautions however, it necessitates a problematization of race at the conceptual level because there is a difference between suggesting that race, as a concept, is not real and affirming students' racialized and lived experiences as real.

Criticism of CRT

Pyle (1999) criticizes CRT as an unprincipled, divisive and ultimately unhelpful attack on the liberal tradition in America by failing to offer replacements for liberalism's core values. Instead CRT embraces postmodern ideals that reject, not unify. He believes that the process, the CRT theorists' "racialist, blame-game rhetoric does much to alienate potentially helpful whites" (p. 790).

Dennis Hayes (2013), a professor of education at the University of Derby in Debry, Great Britain, argues,

> The critical race theory perspective is devious. First, racism is held to be endemic in society, and a catalogue of examples is used to prove this, while counter-examples are ignored. Second, racism is declared to be complex – so complex, in fact, that any clear views on the subject are dismissed as white or liberal prejudice. Third, refuge is taken in relativism, and the 'theory' is declared to be a perspective that is both academic and a political or social-justice project. (para. 6)

Some scholars claim that the notion of whiteness and white privilege is racist. Gillborn (2015) claims by focusing on racist inequity and challenging a colorblind narrative that sees only millions of individuals engaged in meritocratic competition, critical race theory (CRT) is itself racist. Hayes (2013) adds,

> For all its supposed academic credentials, critical race theory boils down to one simple claim: 'If you are white you are racist!' …Critical race theorists will dismiss my claim as absurd, but that is because they avoid saying what they really think. The fact that their basic, shared assumption is never stated, that is, if you are white you are racist, allows their views to be promoted... (para 3-4)

Peter Wood (2012) wrote in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that CRT is a grievance ideology because the central idea of white racism in the American legal system has been shown false because of items such as the 14th Amendment, the Voting Rights Acts and Brown v. Board of Education. Farber and Sherry (1998) believe CRT is latently anti-Semitic because theorists are particularly concerned about the underrepresentation of blacks and Hispanics in American law faculties and overlook people of Jewish decent.

Farber and Sherry (1998) also point out that the research in critical race theory uses unreliable and unverifiable data. The stories might portray atypical data, or the stories might lack integrity and not relate to the broader issues of legal doctrine, standards, evidence, or analysis. Parker (2003) points out that critics maintain that the narrative style of presenting evidence serves to stifle discussion rather than encourage it because it promotes defensiveness among white European Americans who are not guilty of discrimination and prejudice. He thinks CRT elevates the rhetoric about race to argumentative levels, and it confuses narrative with scholarship. Posner (1997) adds:

Rather than marshal logical arguments and empirical data, critical race theorists tell stories — fictional, science-fictional, quasi-fictional, autobiographical, anecdotal— designed to expose the pervasive and debilitating racism of America today. By repudiating reasoned argumentation, the storytellers reinforce stereotypes about the intellectual capacities of nonwhites. (p. 42)

Chapter 3

Methodology

Case Study

Yin's (2009) two-part definition of a case study focuses on the scope, process, and methodological characteristics, emphasizing the nature of inquiry as being empirical, and the importance of context to the case. On the other hand, Stake (2005) takes a more flexible stance, and while concerned with rigor in the processes, maintains a focus on what is studied (the case) rather than how it is studied (the method). Merriam (2009) includes what is studied and the products of the research when defining case study as: "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system to gain understanding of a situation, where the process of inquiry rather than outcome of the research is of interest to the investigator" (p. 40).

According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), case studies, in their true essence, explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions.

Merriam (2009) states that many researchers attribute the origins of case study research to studies undertaken in anthropology and social sciences in the early twentieth century when lengthy, detailed ethnographic studies of individuals and cultures were conducted using this design. Simmons (2009) writes that sociologists and anthropologists investigated people's lives, experiences, and how they understood the social and cultural context of their world, with the aim of gaining insight into how individuals interpreted and attributed meaning to their experiences and constructed their worlds. Creswell (2014) points out that case study research has grown in sophistication and is viewed as a valid form of inquiry to explore a broad scope of complex

issues, particularly when human behavior and social interactions are central to understanding topics of interest. Yin (2009) adds that case studies are simple in theory, yet complex in nature, in that the planning, preparation and execution of case study research has developed to a point where the continued application of the methodology across a number of professions, particularly education, health, and social sciences, has provided a unique platform for credible research endeavors.

Yin, Stake, and Merriam are considered the experts in case study research (Heck, 2006), but each have their idiosyncrasies. Yin (2009) defines three categories of case studies: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Exploratory case studies explore any phenomenon in the data which serves as a point of interest to the researcher. Descriptive case studies set to describe the natural phenomena which occur within the data in question. And explanatory case studies examine the data closely both at a surface and deep level in order to explain the phenomena in the data.

Stake (2005) proposes three different categories intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. In an intrinsic case study, a researcher examines the case for its own sake. In an instrumental case study, the researcher selects a small group of subjects in order to examine a certain pattern of behavior. In a collective case study, the researcher coordinates data from several different sources, such as schools or individuals. Stake (2005) writes that, unlike intrinsic case studies which set to solve the specific problems of an individual case, instrumental and collective case studies may allow for the generalization of findings to a bigger population.

Merriam (1998) writes that case studies have three categories as well: particularistic, heuristic, and descriptive. Particularistic relates to the specific focus of the case, a heuristic case

study is able to shed light on the phenomenon, and a descriptive case study is complete and very literal in its reporting of the findings of the research.

This study will follow Merriam's model, which provides a highly accessible approach to case study research that was organized and thorough. Merriam (1998) believes that "while case studies can be very quantitative and can test theory, in education they are more likely to be qualitative" (p. 19). Merriam (1998) maintains that the "the case is a unit, entity, or phenomenon with defined boundaries that the researcher can demarcate or "fence in" (p. 27).

This case study has the defined boundary of two Composition II classes at Allen State College located in a Midwestern state. According to Merriam (1998), the case study does not claim any specific data collection methods, but "focuses on holistic description and explanation" (p. 29). Within this focus, this case study can be further defined as heuristic (Merriam, 1998) since it will shed light on the phenomenon. The phenomenon was to study if the brief exposure to literature by nonwhite authors, along with class discussions and reflective writing, might have any impact on student perceptions of racial social sensitivity.

Merriam (1998) supports the theoretical framework as the definition of the research problem and suggests sampling of people may be purposeful sampling. Convenience sampling (Merriam, 2016, p. 98) was chosen for this study because I taught English at Allen State College. This allowed me access to Composition II classes, quality instructors to lead the discussion, and a rural setting with a predominantly white enrollment. Merriam (1998) suggests four stances that the observer might take: complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. I was a complete observer in the study and had no participation in the classroom reading, discussions, or written reflections. Finally, Merriam (2016) suggests that "symbolic interactionism is important for informing interpretative or qualitative research" (p. 9).

Merriam (1998) notes that interviews are the most common source of data in case study research and that observations are important, but highly subjective data source whose use must be carefully considered. In Yin's (2009) view, rigorous data collection follows carefully articulated steps: the use of multiple sources of evidence, the creation of a case study database, and the maintenance of a chain of evidence. Yin (2009) believes the use of multiple sources of data enables the researcher to cover a broader range of issues, and to develop converging lines of inquiry by the process of triangulation. For Stake (2005), multiple sources and methods of data collection and analysis can be used, however, interviews and observations are the preferred and dominant data collection method. Stake (2005) asserts by seeking understanding and meaning, the researcher is positioned with participants as a partner in the discovery and generation of knowledge, where both direct interpretations, and categorical or thematic grouping of findings are used.

Case studies have a number of advantages as opposed to other forms of research. Yin (2009) writes the examination of the data is most often conducted within the context of its use, that is, within the situation in which the activity takes place. This means research and observations can take place in a classroom while students are working instead of transplanting them to an unfamiliar location. Merriam (2009) reveals another advantage to case studies is that they can be used for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data due to the variations in terms of intrinsic, instrumental, and collective approaches to case studies. Stake (2005) gives a third advantage: the detailed qualitative accounts often produced in case studies not only help to explore or describe the data in real-life environment, but also help to explain the complexities of real life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research.

Creswell (2014) writes that critics of the case study method believe that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings. Stake (2005) states that some researchers dismiss case study research as useful only as an exploratory tool, yet researchers continue to use the case study research method with success in carefully planned and crafted studies of real-life situations, issues, and problems. Yin (2009) explains another complaint of case studies is they are often labelled as being too long, difficult to conduct, and producing a massive amount of documentation. Yin (2009) believes the danger comes when the data are not managed and organized systematically. As Heck (2006) wrote, it is the "appropriate application of an approach to a particular problem, rather than the approach itself, that enables judgments to be made about a study's…merit, and its value to the field" (p. 373).

This study sought to understand students' racial social sensitivity within the bounded system of a Composition II class at a predominately white, rural two-year community college. Students were studied within the context of their classroom setting and read two stories by non-white authors, discussed the societal and personal relevance, reflected on the experience through writing, and participated in personal interviews to triangulate the data. In studying these students, the goal is to ascertain if brief exposure to literature by nonwhite authors might have any impact on their perceptions about race.

Constructionism

Constructionism posits that "knowledge is constructed from human interaction with the world and other humans in a social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). As an educational theory, constructionism advocates student-centered, discovery learning and an acknowledgement of the

effects of social factors on knowledge and experience (Alesandrini & Larson, 2002). Learning "happens especially felicitously in a context where the learner is consciously engaged in constructing as a public entity" (Harel & Papert, 1991, p. 196). Constructionism is neither objective nor subjective (Crotty, 1998), so the experiences of each student can vary.

Research Question

The purpose of this research was to explore how literature, discussion, and written reflection might affect racial social sensitivity for students in a rural two-year, predominantly white community college. The specific research question that shaped the study was: How does the inclusion of two multicultural stories into a Composition II class affect the social sensitivity of students at a rural, predominantly white community college?

Study Setting

The study was conducted at Allen State (a pseudonym), a rural two-year community college in the Midwest. The city of Allen has a population of approximately 7,200 people: 66% white, 20% American Indian, 5% Hispanic, 5% African American, and 4% other. It is more than 45 miles from Allen to any settlement with a population of 50,000 or more. The median household income in Allen is $34,904, approximately $13,000 under the average income for the state, and almost $30,000 less than the median household income in the United States ("U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts," 2018).

According to the Institutional Statistics for Spring 2017, Allen State College had a total enrollment of 1509 students, 524 males and 985 females. 1028 (68.1%) of those students were under 20 years old, with the next largest age range 20-29 years old with 249 (9.0%) students.

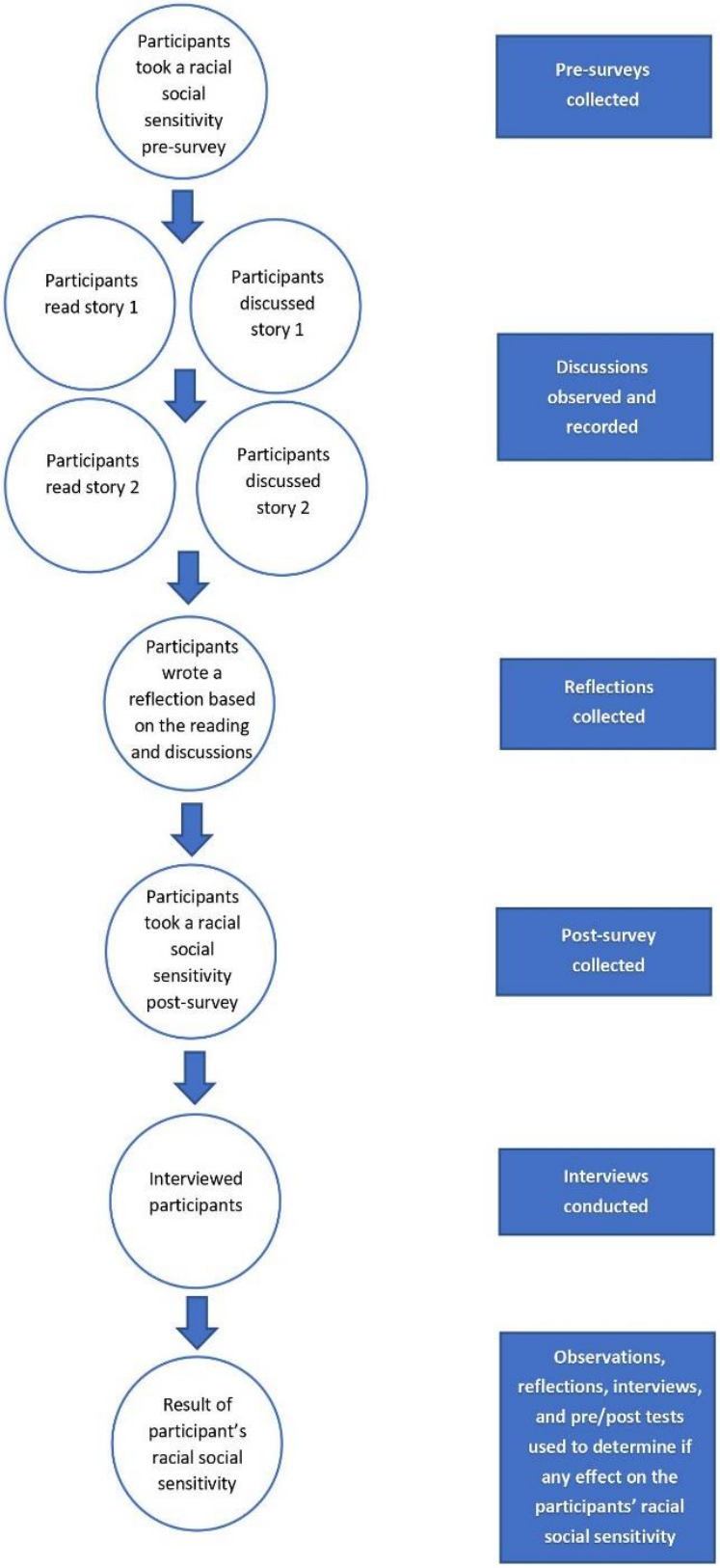
The ethnicity of the Allen State College students breaks down similarly to the city of Allen with 965 white students (63.9%), 357 American Indian students (23.4%), 89 African American students (5.9%), 48 Hispanic/Latinx students (3.2%), and several races comprising the last 3.3%.

The largest group of majors at Allen State College were non-degree seeking - 347 (23%). Liberal studies had the next highest enrollment with 235 students (15.6%). Students unsure of their major, but working towards an associate's degree were typically put into the liberal studies program. Nursing and health sciences had the third and fourth highest enrollments, with 180 students (11.9%) and 176 students (11.7%), respectively. Business had 131 students (8.7%).

1115 students (74% of Allen State College's enrollment) came from the city of Allen and nine of the surrounding towns less than 30 miles away. 394 students (the remaining 26% of the enrollment) came from 141 other communities, mostly from in-state ("Institutional Statistics Spring 2017").

In-state tuition at Allen State College was approximately $7,000 a year; $14,000 if the student chose to live on campus ("Tuition and Fee Schedule," 2018).

Figure 1 Research Design



Research design

Can literature, discussion, and reflective writing affect students' social sensitivity? Students read two works of literature that explored life and experiences from non-white perspectives - "On the Road" by Langston Hughes (Appendix A) and "The Flood" by Joy Harjo (Appendix B).

Langston Hughes is a male African American writer, and his work continues to be widely recognized as a voice of the Harlem Renaissance, a literary movement that helped to shape the narrative of African Americans in the United States in the early to mid-20th century. Joy Harjo is a female Native American writer from Oklahoma who uses an oral style of melodic storytelling accompanied by vivid imagery ("Joy Harjo," 2018).

The study utilized classwork typical of a Composition II class in a community college--literature, discussion, and reflective writing. As a starting reference of the student's attitudes towards racial social sensitivity, a survey questionnaire was given to participants in two Composition II classes taught by Professor Johnson, a senior professor of the Allen State College's English faculty. Professor Johnson (a pseudonym) agreed to integrate "On the Road" and "The Flood" into her curriculum in two of her classes and observation of class interactions. She has taught in the English and humanities department at Allen State College for 17 years. Over the course of her career at Allen State, she has taught Composition I, Composition II, American Literature, World Literature, Creative Writing, Introduction to Poetry, and Fundamentals of English. Professor Johnson has two master's degrees, one in poetry and another in creative writing, and her bachelor's degree is in English literature. Her work has been published 28 times in journals and books, and she has published two books of her own work. I met with the professor to discuss the stories, gave her all information she needed for the lessons,

and went over the protocol. Both stories would not be taught at the same time in the classes to increase the likelihood of meaningful discussion and responses about each story and author. Her role in the research was to conduct class as she normally would, and my role was to observe her classes.

On the first day of the research in each of the two classes being observed, I explained the study, answered questions, and handed out consent forms for the students to sign. For the students who chose to participate, I then gave out a pre-study survey. Training Our Campuses Against Racism (TOCAR), a well-vetted survey, was used to assess student perceptions of racial issues in their community, school, and in the United States (more on TOCAR in the "Sources of Data" section below). Once completed, Professor Johnson gave a brief background on Langston Hughes, since "On the Road" was the first story taught in the class. This background was designed to give students an overall idea of the author and his contributions to the literary world. This first class took the 50-minute allotment to complete. Students were then given "On the Road" to read on their own, along with a set of 15 discussion questions (appendix C) to complete outside of class and bring to the next class. The discussion questions focused less on recounting specific events of the story than on subsequent interpretation of events. Professor Johnson used these questions as starting points to begin the classroom discussion.

On the second day of research, as articulated in the protocol, Professor Johnson conducted a discussion of "On the Road" and purposefully steered students towards attempting to uncover the meaning of the text and how it related to them. The discussion of the story took the full 50-minutes of class. At the end of class, students were given "The Flood," along with a set of 15 discussion questions (appendix D) to complete and bring to the next class.

The third day of the study consisted of Professor Johnson giving the class a brief background on Joy Harjo, and then discussing "The Flood." Following the protocol, Professor Johnson again purposefully steered students towards attempting to uncover the meaning of the text and how it related to them. At the conclusion of the 50-minute class, a reflection assignment about both stories (appendix E) was given to the students to complete outside of class and bring to the next class meeting. The entirety of each class was recorded and later transcribed.

On the fourth day of the study, I collected the reflections from the participants and gave a post-study TOCAR survey to assess student perspectives after reading, discussing, and writing about the stories. The post-study TOCAR survey was the same as the pre-study survey to measure any changes in the students' answers from before the study to after the study. Students completed the survey in class and handed them in. That concluded my observation of Professor Johnson's class for the study.

Once the reflections were turned in, I combined students' written reflections with their oral statements from class discussions. Then, I performed a content analysis of each student's complied contributions (oral and written).

After all data had been gathered, I issued an open invitation to members of both classes for an hour-long follow-up interview. No incentive or reward was offered.

Four students, two from each class, volunteered. I used the compilations of contributions to get to know each interviewee and to prepare for the interview. The interviews, which lasted an hour, explored interviewee views of literature, race, and society. The interviews were the final data collected for the research.

Participants

Participants were freshman college students enrolled in a Composition II class at a two-year rural college in Midwestern state. The participants were male and female, ranging in age from 18 years-old to 39 years-old, and with ethnic, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds reflective of the local area. Students from the Composition II class were asked to volunteer for the research study. The writing and discussion of any student only who did not wish to participate were not included. Of the 40 students eligible to participate, four students declined to take part in the study, and three students were absent from class the first day of the study, so 33 students ended up participating in the study. Those asked to participate in the study were given no promise of monetary compensation or extra credit.

Table 1 Sources of Data

Data source	Timing within the study	Date
Pre-questionnaire survey	Students were given the survey before the study began to get a baseline of their social sensitivity. Students were given "On the Road" and discussion questions to read and complete outside of class to prepare for a class-long discussion	February 7, 2018
Discussion	Students discussed "On the Road." At the conclusion of class students were given "The Flood" and discussion questions to read and complete outside of class to prepare for a class-long discussion.	February 9, 2018
	Students discussed "The Flood." Students were given a reflection assignment to complete outside of class.	February 12, 2018
Reflection	Students handed in their reflections based on their feelings and experiences about the stories, discussions, and anything else they wanted to write about.	February 26, 2018
Post-questionnaire survey	Students were given the survey after reflections were turned in so they could express any changes in their social sensitivity.	February 26, 2018
Interviews	Four students, who volunteered for the interviews, met with me. I met once with each of student to conduct an hour-long interview.	February 28 – April 24, 2018

Sources of Data

Data collection consisted of a pre- and post-questionnaire survey, group discussions held in class about the literature, written reflections about the stories, and interviews with four students from the Composition II class. With this many data points, triangulation of the data was needed. Methodological triangulation is a type of study design in which multiple sources of data are integrated, which has proven useful for producing a comprehensive evaluation of the data

(Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2014; Kimchi, Polivka, & Stevenson, 1991). A fundamental assumption of this approach is that each of the multiple sources of data could give a slightly different picture of the phenomenon; therefore, each is considered individually but then combined for a comprehensive view; for example, both qualitative and quantitative feedback from participants, as well as more direct measures, like pre- and post-test measures. (Hargis et al., 2013; Ramaekers et al., 2012).

A primary source of data came from the pre-questionnaire survey given to the students before reading the two stories and the post-questionnaire survey given to them after the readings, discussions, and written reflections. The delivery method of the survey was important, and I considered several different types before deciding on a group administered questionnaire. Due to the relatively small sample size of participants, the group-administered survey was chosen ("Written Surveys," 2018).

When constructing the surveys, I carefully worded the questions concerning the participants' perceptions of race. I wanted a questionnaire that students would find easy to read and answer. For assistance with the questionnaire, I read several surveys based on racial perceptions. Harvard uses a questionnaire on Implicit Bias (Kurdi et al., 2019), but since this research project was not about a person's Implicit Bias, I felt that it did not meet the study's standards.

Many colleges and universities in the United States have diversity offices on campus that conduct questionnaires more suited to identifying racism on campus. By looking at how campuses across the United States approach race with their students, I found a well-respected program named Training Our Campuses Against Racism (TOCAR) (Anicha, Bilen-Green, & Burnett, 2018). TOCAR was commissioned in 2001 on the campus of North Dakota State

University to provide a continuum of introductory, intermediate, and advanced antiracist education and organizing events (Anicha, Bilen-Green, & Burnett, 2018). As part of their antiracism efforts, TOCAR developed a survey that measures the participants' attitudes about race and the racial climate of the campus and surrounding community. The adoption of TOCAR by colleges and universities to understand student perspectives on race and how perceptions of race affects campus has been widespread ("TOCAR Report - Minnesota State University Moorhead"; "Austin Community College Assessment and Evaluation"; "Wellesley Public Schools Score Analysis & Racial Climate Survey", 2018).

Organizations such as World Trust Educational Services (a non-profit organization that addresses a company, organization, or community's needs when dealing with racial equity), MP Associates (a national consulting firm that addresses structural racism), the Center for Assessment and Policy Development (a non-profit organization that assists organizations and communities with pressing social issues), and the Kingston Bay Group (a firm specializing in supporting minorities through school and workplace development) have also utilized TOCAR. The TOCAR survey has been repeatedly administered to assess racial social sensitivity and has been found to be reliable and valid (Racial Equity Tools, 2020).

TOCAR consists of 22 closed ended questions written either dichotomously (A or B/True or False) or as a measurement (rating low to high).

An invaluable data source was the class discussions of literature. The discussions showed how students symbolically interacted with the literature and with each other over meaning. I observed the social aspect of the discussion in a class setting to see if the interaction changed the minds of participants in relation to meaning, or racial undertones that might be perceived through the stories. Discussions were audio recorded and transcribed. Originally, I

planned to video record the discussions to study any physical symbolic interaction between the students, but due to the impossibility of removing non-participants from the video, the Institutional Review Board required audio only. As an observer, I took field notes to capture nonverbal interaction that the audio recording would not capture, and to add more detail to the discussions. The discussions served as a springboard for interviews with participants later.

Reflective writings provided a rich set of data. I analyzed responses based on themes in writing to see if literature or the discussions had any effect on social sensitivity. Reflective writing also provided information to shape the interviews conducted later.

The last data source was interviews with participants. Seidman (2006) explains, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). Interviews were conducted in a person-to-person, one-hour, three-part, semi-structured format as per the guidelines of Seidman. For each participant, I wanted to find out about their 1) background and previous experiences, 2) perspectives on class, and 3) reflections concerning how their perspectives might have changed (or not changed).

Open-ended questions were designed to allow participants to give a full account of their experiences. When conversation ventured from the class to other topics, such as current events or stories about the participants' job or family, I allowed the digression, and gently and indirectly attempted to get the participant "back on track." While a set of questions was created, emphasis was placed on establishing a rapport with the interviewee and letting the interviewee dictate the direction of the conversation. The interviews were held on the campus cafeteria or coffee shop. The goal was for participants to feel comfortable, as long as the environment was quiet enough to have a conversation. Each interview lasted an hour or so and was digitally audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

Denzin & Lincoln (2011) define a qualitative research as "a study that examines things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (p. 3). I analyzed phenomena (discussions, reflections, and interviews) separately to find themes that emerged (Shank, 2002). I used a general qualitative thematic analysis, as proposed by Morse (1994), through four stages of cognitive analysis: the comprehension stage, the synthesizing stage, the theorizing stage, and the recontextualization stage (p. 25).

The comprehension stage consisted of data collection of the surveys, reflection paper, audio of the group discussions, and interviews. After the collection, I moved into the synthesizing stage, which required me to describe typical patterns, behaviors, or responses of the group (Morse, 1994). To synthesize the data, I transcribed the interview and discussion audio to Microsoft Word documents and color-coded each according to the type of data. I color-coded reflection papers using the same process. I found patterns in each of the data sources separately. This inductive process of coding sought to find patterns to see if those patterns could give insight into the experiences of participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The reflections, group discussions, and interviews were placed into sections based on segments, or patterns, found in the data. From these sections, I coded information in detailed description. The information was coded using a line-by-line, open coding approach, which separated the topics discussed into different categories relevant to the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 119). Once data had been coded into categories, I analyzed overall patterns, specifically using pattern coding to try to find themes. The theorizing stage allowed me to make sense of the data and put the information into the context of the research question. That led to the last stage

of analysis, the recontextualization stage, where I used data to generalize conclusions based on the findings (Morse, 1994).

Usually, the constructed meaning of a reading will be based on interactions in class, a student's life experiences, socio-economic background, and a student's momentary disposition (Wiseman, 2011). When students construct their reality within social interactions, they place symbolic meaning to interactions.

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals to understand the operation of society from the bottom up (Carter & Fuller, 2016; Denzin, 2016). For this study, I am using Herbert Blumer's core principles of symbolic interactionism to interpret the data. Blumer believed that individuals act based on the meanings that objects have within a particular cultural and social context that emerge from interactions (Blumer, 1969). For this study, I examined the responses of students in two composition classes to stories penned by authors of color. From their in-class responses and through their writing, I wanted to know how they were symbolically interacting with each other as well as with the literary work (Blumer, 1969). Below follows an actual transcript of a class discussion and how I perceived of symbolic interactionism being operationalized in the classroom.

When the instructor asked a question in class such as, "What could the doors represent in the story?" A student spoke up and said,

> I kind of looked like the church door was being broken down. It's kind of like breaking down the doors of, like, society and government. And it was like, once that's broken

down, you can start new, and then you can go from there and make changes from there. It's not just the church being broken down.

Another student a few rows back leaned forward and said,

I kind of thought it was talking about the door that was slammed in his face by the reverend. And so, I thought the doors were more like, they're a closed opportunity. Because the reverend could have used that opportunity, to use a witness to Sergeant or invite him in, you know, and do the things a reverend is kinda expected to do, and he didn't do that. He just slammed a door in his face, so I took it more like a closed opportunity.

The instructor added, "To that idea of expectations, Sergeant had an expectation out of the church, right? That he could get in there. How does that relate to anything you've seen or read?"

Another student waved her hand frantically and said,

You expect the church to help you. If you need something, you expect to be able to fall back on them, but like in 'Letters from Birmingham Jail,' King wasn't able to do that because most of his fellow clergymen were against it.

At this point students were looking around the room and discussing the topic with each other to construct the proper response to the question. One student spoke up and said, "yeah, I also feel like when he said, 'I'm gonna break down this door,' he was taking about society and breaking down the door. You know, missed opportunities, for other people."

The student sitting beside him looked at him while he was speaking and then looked to the instructor and said, "Yeah, I kind of take him breaking down a church door as a way of saying, I'm not gonna take it anymore. If you're not gonna help me, then I'll help myself."

Then an African American student who had been quiet and motionless for the entire discussion spoke up and said,

> I see the door at the reverend's house as the symbol of the separation between white characters and black characters. He had a chance to invite him in. He's supposed to be a man of God, a reverend. Kind of hypocritical for him to leave him out on the doorstep because he was black.

Through a framework of symbolic interactionism, I viewed the above discussion as students continuously reconstituting their perceptions of the representation of the doors from symbols of societal repression to tools of racial discrimination. Students evolved their thinking about the symbolism of the doors collectively and without any prompting from the instructor.

Critical Race Theory as a Lens

According to Banks and Banks (1997), racism is deeply embedded within U.S. society, so it can be difficult to recognize and address. Delgado & Stefancic (2012) suggest that critical race theory (CRT) can be a useful tool for analyzing racialized experiences. According to Solorzano and Ornelas (2002),

> CRT represents a paradigm shift in discourse about race and racism in education... [It] seeks to identify, analyze, and transform the structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom (p. 219).

Critical race theory can be used to challenge traditional paradigms, methods, and texts and reveal the way that social constructs affect communities of color and historically

marginalized populations (Lee, 2018; Yosso, 2005). It would be difficult to study how white students respond to literature from authors of color without acknowledging race as an issue. Although most students at the college were white, CRT was used as an interpretive framework for student responses.

An actual transcript from a class follows to demonstrate how CRT influenced my interpretation of a class discussion.

The instructor posed the question, "Do you think African American writers should be covered more in class?" The question was met with silence and looks around the room by the predominantly White students.

The instructor called on a student and he answered, "I don't think skin color should necessarily be a deciding factory in curriculum."

Another white student spoke up and said, "I think that that type of thinking in itself spreads and separates people."

The instructor acknowledged his comment with "okay." Then a third white student sat up more confidently and said,

> Just thinking that skin color shouldn't determine, like, what should be read or written about. Literature is wonderful because it doesn't have a color. It has emotion, soul, imagination and, if it is good enough, it will last, inspiring each other forever regardless.

A fourth white student nodded throughout the previous comment and then eagerly added, "Writing shouldn't be taught solely on skin color. Like, we have different college courses, you know, at different schools for specifically that. But I don't think it should be taught just because of skin color."

The instructor then addressed that student,

> Okay, so, usually in high school, we're given this cannon. We're given this idea of someone you have to know like Shakespeare. This is someone you have to know. All of those people tend to be white. So, being a white man, do you think that whenever we look at literature, it's either literature, or it's black literature, or it's Hispanic literature? Just literature is usually known as white. Whenever we look at movies, it's a movie. Or, if it's a predominately black cast, that's a black movie, or it's a Hispanic movie. The normal movie or literature as a whole is
>
> mainly white.

The white student responded with, "I think that's ridiculous."

The white students who responded had classified good literature as colorless and genderless. When confronted with the fact that most canonical literature is from white males, the student dismissed the fact as irrelevant. By dismissing the skin color of the author, the student was demonstrating the concept of colorblindness. In this manner, CRT helped with the interpretation of student responses to literature and their verbal interactions with each other.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is considered an instrument of the data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). For this study, I observed the Composition II class, but did not lead or participate in discussions. I wanted the class to be comparable to any other Composition II to yield authentic responses to the survey, discussions, and writing.

To examine the data openly, I was ever cognizant of my own biases. I kept a research journal to analyze my own subjectivities, power, and positionality. I recorded my thoughts and reservations after each step (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Milner, 2007; Merriam, et al., 2001).

Trustworthiness of the Study

DiAngelo (2018) explained explains that a problem with studying racism that it is typically defined as an individual who holds conscious dislike of people based on race, and intentionally seeks to be hostile to them. By that definition, virtually all white people are exempt from racism (DiAngelo, 2018). If participants believed this to be their definition of racism, then their racial social sensitivity might rank high only because they did not openly discriminate against people of color.

Harris (1993) said that the conflation of Whiteness with the exclusive rights to freedom, to the enjoyment of certain privileges, and to the ability to draw advantage from these rights has made many white people defensive when questioned about race. To avoid participants from intentionally giving socially sensitive answers, or answers they thought I wanted to hear, the multicultural literature remained the focus of discussion and written reflections. Since this study focused on students' social sensitivity to race, I asked the instructor to directly and indirectly pose questions related to race during class discussions of the literature.

I conducted many practice interviews before engaging students in the actual study. I framed questions in an open-ended fashion to allow participants to talk freely. The study was conducted with a Composition II class that I did not teach, so students knew that their comments would have no bearing on grades. I had methods, questions, and papers reviewed by professors with expertise in research methodologies and interview techniques.

Ethical Issues

The research was examined by the Institutional Review Board to ensure the safety of the participants. I used two different consent forms; one form for the group discussion for permission to record student oral interaction and a second consent form for interviewees. The consent forms assured students of privacy. Pseudonyms were used. No compensation or monetary value for participation was offered to the participants.

Chapter 4

Introduction

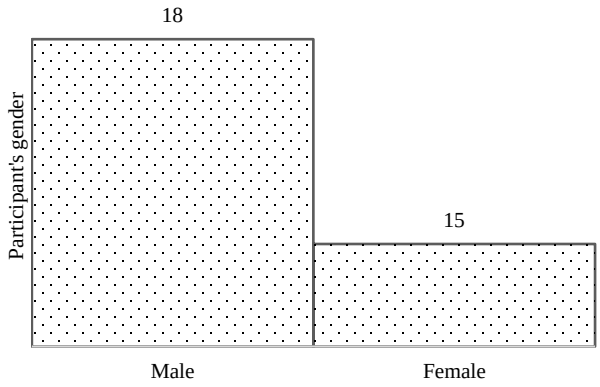
The purpose of this case study was to explore if a brief exposure to multicultural literature, with in-class discussions and written reflections about the literature, could influence the racial social sensitivity of students attending a rural, predominantly white two-year college. Students who are socially sensitive will have "the personal ability to perceive, understand, and respect the feelings and viewpoints of others" (Bender et al., 2012, p. 403). Those who are more socially sensitive may have a better likelihood to successfully interact with diverse groups of people, which may benefit them in life and the workplace (Ellwood & Abrams, 2018; Ostrow, 1990). This chapter presents the findings obtained from pre- and post-surveys, in-class discussions, written reflections, and interviews from students enrolled at a Midwestern rural two-year community college.

Through a thick description of findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001), a better understanding of the study and the participants' range of experiences can be attained. To report the results, each data point will be explained in the order it was collected to show emerging themes as students encountered multicultural literature (as shown in Figure 1).

Participant identifiers

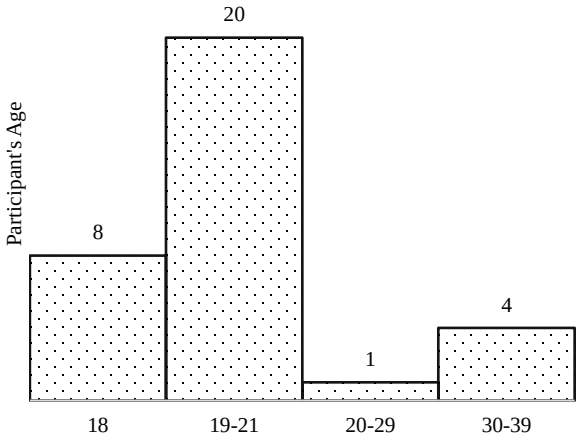
The 33 participants who took the survey identified as 18 males, 15 females (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1



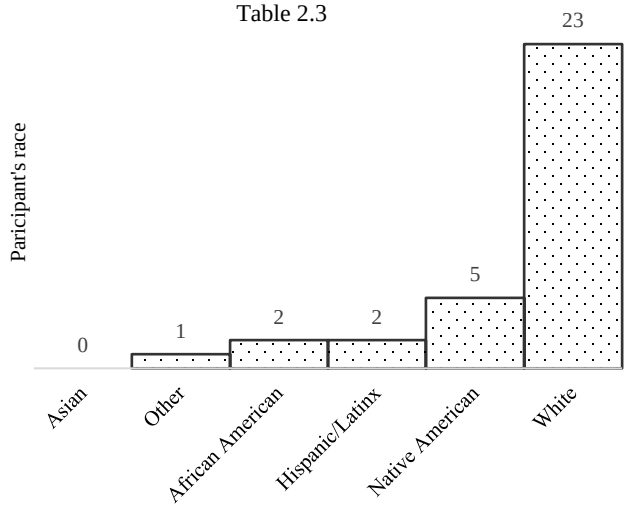
Ages ranged from 18 to 39 years old; twenty participants were age 19-21 (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2



Students identified as five different races, with white being the largest group at 23 participants (70%). Native American was the second largest group at five students (15%), African American and Hispanic/Latinx each had two participants (6%), and one student identified as "other" (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3



"The Flood" and "On the Road" synopses

To better understand the discussion, reflection, and interview data gathered for the study, knowing about each of the stories would be beneficial for a contextual understanding of the student responses.

"On the Road" is about an African-American vagrant named Sargeant in the Midwest in 1934 looking for some food and a place to sleep on a cold, snowy night. When he finds that the relief shelter is full, he tries to find refuge at a church. The white reverend of the church turns him away, and Sargeant tries to break down the door of a church. White police officers come, beat him, but Sargeant knocks down the doors and the church falls. As Sargeant is walking away, he notices Christ is walking beside him. In conversation with Sargeant, Christ thanks him for freeing him from hanging on the wall. Sargeant invites Christ to sleep in the hobo jungle, but he tells Sargeant he's on his way to Kansas City. As Sargeant jumps a train to leave town, several policemen are on the car hitting him. Sargeant wakes up in a jail cell and realizes talking

with Christ had been a dream – white police officers had knocked him out and arrested him when he tried to get in the church.

Hughes's story is funny, heartbreaking, and timely. It looks at how African Americans have dealt with racism, while still struggling to find basic necessities of work, food, and shelter. The story also looks at several aspects of life that were difficult for African Americans in 1934 by humanizing the struggles, such as how African Americans were viewed by religion, police, and the white patriarchy.

"The Flood" is about a sixteen-year-old Creek girl as she recounts the myth of a water monster who takes the form of a handsome warrior and seduces a young woman. The woman leaves her family and becomes his wife to live with him at the bottom of the lake. A modern Creek girl is then introduced in the story. She meets a man by the lake and has sex with him after being seduced. She imagines that she is a part of the water monster myth. Her parents, embarrassed by her actions and to cover their shame, arrange her to be married to an older man in the tribe. Rejecting the arrangement, she disappears and is later found drowned in the lake. Older tribal members believe that the watersnake punished the girl for disobeying her parents. Others believe that the girl accidentally drowned when she drove into the lake after consuming a six-pack of beer. The narrator offers a third opinion - that the girl's depressing life on the reservation clashed with her Native American heritage. The cultural conflict led her to commit suicide.

Harjo's story examines cultural beliefs and pressures of life growing up on a reservation. The poem/story is told from the female's perspective as an adult returning to the place where she grew up. It is a haunting and intense account of how a Native American girl dealt with the pressures of familial and cultural pressures to conform. The people in the story have lost their

connection with the natural world by adopting the values of modern Western society. The story explores the disillusionment of returning home, and the inability to recognize it anymore.

Data Source One

Pre-survey questionnaire

Students in two Composition II classes were asked to voluntarily participate in the research study by taking a pre-survey questionnaire. This survey established a baseline for views of race in society and students' social sensitivity. Of the 40 students eligible to participate, four students declined to take part and three students were absent from class the first day of the study. So, 33 students took the pre-survey questionnaire on February 7, 2018. The survey, based on the TOCAR survey of campus racial climate, asked questions about student backgrounds, their personal views of race, and their perceptions of how race functions within society and government. The complete results of the pre-study TOCAR survey can be found in Appendix F.

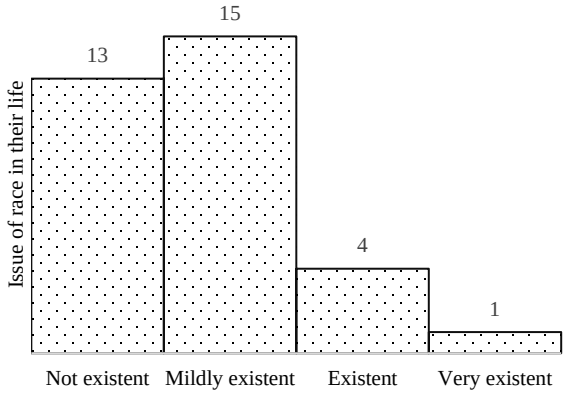
Personal Views of Race

Approximately half of the questions on the pre- and post-survey asked participants their personal views of race to understand their perspectives. Questions 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15 focused on how they interpreted race within their lives. Three of the questions attempted to gauge individual racial social sensitivity: questions 2, 10, and 15.

Question two of the survey asked the participants, "How big of an issue is race in your life?" 13 of the 33 respondents, or 39%, answered that the issue of race was non-existent in their lives, and 15 of the 33, or 45%, answered that the issues of race was only mildly existent. Only

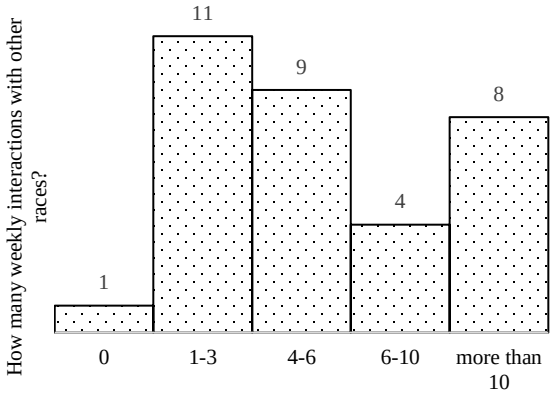
four participants, 15%, acknowledged that the issue of race was a factor; only one person found race to be “very existent” in their lives. (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1



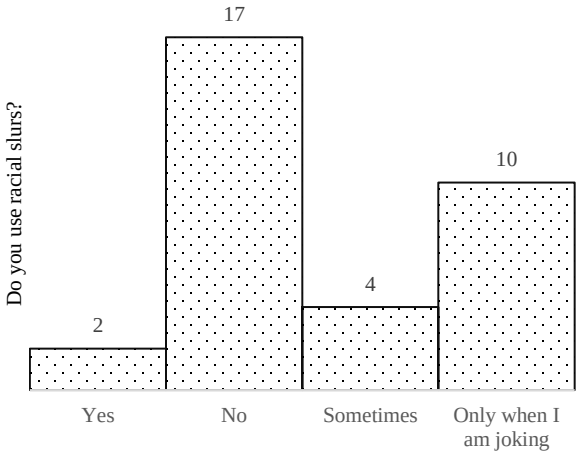
Question ten asked, “How many family/friends/acquaintances from other races or cultures do you interact with on a weekly basis?” Most students had few interactions with other races or cultures. Twenty-one students (63%) had between zero and six weekly interactions. A minority of students (eight, or 37%) claimed to have had frequent interactions with other races or cultures, which translates into more than ten weekly interactions. (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2



The third question designed to assess participants' perceived racial social sensitivity was question 15: "Do you use racial slurs?" While 17 of the 33 students said that they did not use racial slurs (52%), 16 students, 48%, admitted that they used racial slurs at least some of the time (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

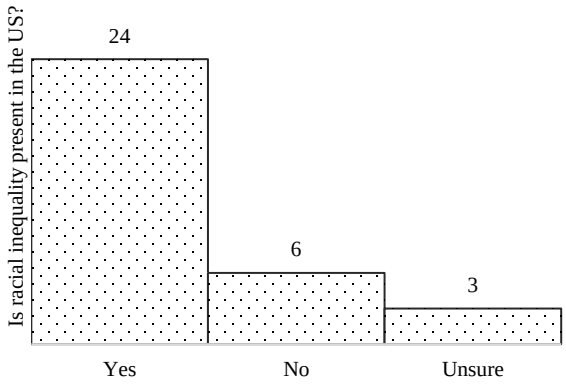


Race within society and government

Questions about race within society and government assessed participants' views of race, in the United States; those specific questions were: 1, 3, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 19. Of those questions, questions 1, 3, and 17 pertained to how participants viewed race within society.

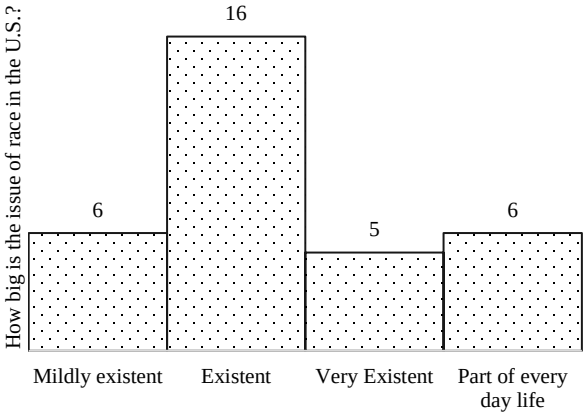
Question one asked, "Do you feel that racial inequality is still present in the United States today?" Twenty-four participants (73%) answered yes, while six participants (18%) answered no, and three participants (9%) answered that they were unsure (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1



Question three asked participants, "How big of an issue is racism in the United States?" Almost half of the students (49%) acknowledged that race was still an issue. Six students (18%) replied that racism was mildly existent; five answered that it was very existent (15%), and six (18%) students said that racism was an everyday part of life (Table 4.2). Participants had an option to answer, "not existent," but zero students chose this option.

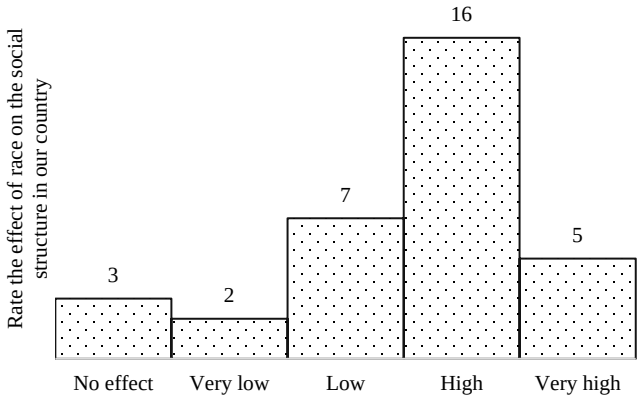
Table 4.2



Another question that will be used to identify the participants' racial social sensitivity was question 17, which said, "Rate the effect of racial differences on the social structure in our country." 16 of the 33 respondents (49%) answered that the effect of race was high on the social

structure of the U.S., while five students (15%) answered very high. Conversely, three students (9%) answered that there was no effect of race on the social structure, two participants (6%) answered there was a very low effect, and seven students (21%) said that race had a low effect on social structure (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3



Discussion

The racial demographics of the participants in the pre-survey are similar to the racial percentages of Allen State College's overall enrollment with whites being in the majority, Native Americans having the second highest population, with African American and Hispanic/Latinx students at lower enrollment numbers. These numbers mirror the overall demographics of the rural community of Allen, as well. The racial demographics of the participants in this study lend credibility to the research that the classes studied are a sufficient sample of the racial enrollment of Allen State College, and the town where the school is located.

The one demographic that is not consistent with the college's enrollment is the ratio of male and female students. Table 1.1 shows that female students outnumber the males almost two

to one at Allen State College, but in these two composition classes, the males slightly outnumbered the females.

The pre-surveys gave some insight into the participants and how they viewed race. The first sub-set of questions focused on their personal views of race. With the question, "How big of an issue is race in your life," almost 85% of students claimed that race was not or an issue or only mildly present in their lives.

The next question asked, "How many family/friends/acquaintances from other races or cultures do you interact with on a weekly basis," and 63% reported six or less interactions with other races or cultures per week.

However, about half of participants (48%) admitted to using racial slurs (question 15).

The second subset of questions focused on race within society and government. The answers to question 1 revealed that 73% of the participants believed that racial inequality was present in the US today. On the surface, this seems to be a socially sensitive answer, seemingly contradictory to the finding that half of the students admitted to using racial slurs.

Question 3 asked, "How big of an issue is race in the US?" Eighty-two percent of the participants believed the issue of race is existent, very existent, or part of everyday life.

The last question about race within society and government asked the participants to rate the effect of race on the social structure in the US. Sixty-four percent answered that the effect was high or very high, which would seem to denote social sensitivity, while 36% responded that race had little, very little, or no effect on the social structure. In other words, 12 of the 33 participants believed that people of color and white people have the same opportunities in the US.

Data Source Two

Classroom Discussions

Discussions of the literature took place within one class period on February 9, 2018, for "The Flood," and February 12, 2018, for "On the Road" within two separate Composition II classes. Over four hours of student discussions were audio recorded with 326 student responses during the discussions. I spent approximately 50 hours transcribing and coding the student responses searching for themes that emerged. During discussions of "On the Road" and "The Flood," a few students offered strong push back against multicultural literature, but most students were either quiet or openly receptive.

Initial and Occasional Resistance to the Literature

Although most of discussions were positive about race and multicultural literature, some students made comments that could be considered racially insensitive. When discussing "The Flood," Sam, a white, male student, assumed a theme of domestic violence because of what he had heard about Native Americans. He said,

> I think her background has something to do with what she wrote about. With the author being Native American, because all of the bad stuff that happens in Native American families, I kinda put it together that she was talking about domestic violence.

Rita, a white student, assumed that she didn't understand the story based on Native American culture. She said,

> I didn't really understand the story because I don't really know a lot about Native American stuff. I know they have a lot of weird myths and things they believe. Like when the dad dipped the daughter in the water, I guess that's like a Native American ritual they do or something.

Darla, a traditional, white student, inquired why the Native American girl would believe in a myth about a water monster. When asked to clarify what she meant, she simplified it by asking, "Myths like that are obviously not real. It seems silly that she would believe that. Why can't she believe in Christianity?"

When discussing "On the Road", Calvin, a white, freshman student, interpreted the story based on his worldview. Instead of seeing Sargeant as the protagonist of the story, he viewed the reverend as the protagonist. He said,

> I think the story is not actually about Sargeant. I gathered that the story was about the reverend who turned away a homeless man in the snow. That led the man to be arrested and beaten for trying to break into the church.

The overt racial overtones of the story escaped Calvin, and from his comment, he did not infer the arrest had anything to do with race but happened because Sargeant tried to break into a church.

Some students, when referring to "On the Road," said that the racism wasn't a big problem in society today, like it was during the time of the story.

Trenton, a white, traditional student, disclosed,

> I feel like we've come a long way from the way we used to be and how they used to do things. I don't think that racism is that big of a deal anymore, at least the way it used to be.

Certain students became quite defensive when discussions evolved into frank discussion of race and racism today. Billy, a white, traditional student, said of the readings, "I didn't like 'On the Road.' The entire story is biased and stereotypes all white people as bad people. I mean, am I supposed to feel bad because I'm white?"

Ralph, a white student, suggested that white people can't point out when someone of color does something bad because they're called racists. He said,

> I saw something that said, 'Black man, unarmed shoots someone.' How was he unarmed? (laughs) It was during the whole Ferguson thing, so they don't want to be criticized for being racist or something. It's almost like people are against the one race right now. It's like if a black man shot a cop, it wouldn't be on the news. It wouldn't really be talked about. But if it's a white man or cop shooting a black man, then it's all over the place.

Travis, a white student in a different class from Ralph, used the discussion on racism to similarly point out,

> If a white guy shoots a black guy, then that's bad, and it's publicized online and on TV. But if a black guy shoots a white guy, the shoe's on the other foot. If you try to publicize that, then people are like, 'oh well, you're just being racist.'

Mason, another white student, and Travis's friend he was sitting next to, then answered him,

> Yeah. I mean, just like during the whole Ferguson thing, whenever all the riots were going down. We heard about all the white people beating the black guys. But you heard nothing about, except for just a day, about seven black guys beating this old white man with hammers, and that was just talked about for a day. But nothing about it after that. No one wanted to talk about it, and people posting about it got criticized heavily saying that they were racist, but I don't see the point they were saying. An old white man got beat. That's bad. Just saying.

Another topic that was discussed throughout both discussions was how the media makes the problem of racism worse by baiting both sides for ratings. Logan, a white student, lamented,

> The media just wants ratings. If you see something that catches the eye, like this black kid getting beaten by cops, that's gonna catch your eye. Once people click the story or tune in, then a whole bunch of media people can sell stories about that.

Ethan, a white student, scorned the media for making everything worse. He added,

> As soon as something happens, it's automatically deemed a crime if it is white or black, black or white, Latino, black, Indian, whatever, it's automatically in the news, like it's propaganda. It's cast as a hate crime before any judgement has been ruled.

While some comments were disarming, their unexpurgated content indicates that many students felt as if they could genuinely share their personal feelings during discussions. Some of those feelings were racially socially sensitive; others were not, but in general, students let each other speak without interrupting or talking over each other.

Positive Experiences through Reading Multicultural Literature

Many of the participants commented on how they could relate to the characters in the two stories, and the situations they found themselves in. Students related the stories to their own lives and to historical and current events as well.

Several students spoke about how "The Flood" related to their Native American heritage. In the story, a girl leaves the reservation only to return as a woman and not recognize where she grew up. Jacob, a Native American student, related this to the Native American culture dying off. He explained,

> That's kinda bad because by the time, me or Sammy has kids, by that time, our culture could be dead. Like nothing to carry it on. Most people nowadays, of this generation don't even know the stories or language or anything about their tribe or where they are from.

The protagonist in "The Flood" was not welcomed back openly by those in her tribe. Cameron, a female student, saw that as relating to a disconnect between tribal elders and younger people. She told the class,

> Since I'm Native American, I feel like there's a disconnect between Native Americans in our culture and all the people that do traditional things. There's not anything for me to go off of. Because there's no elder to tell me how I'm supposed to be traditional. There's just a disconnect now from her and her culture.

The girl in "The Flood" was also shamed, and almost exiled from her family, for being sexually active with an older man, which it could be interpreted she was taken advantage of.

Sarah, a white student, identified with the character's pain and shared that it upset her. She confided in the class saying,

> It upset me because I'm a victim of sexual assault. When the grandmother wanted to write her off as a person who gave into sexual desires, she didn't have a choice when he forced himself on her. That stuck with me because I have been through that, it made me upset and angry.

Lana, a non-traditional, white student, revealed that she saw herself in the girl in "The Flood." She said,

> I really understood her, especially where she's looking at herself and doesn't recognize herself. I really understand what it's like to go from being an innocent child, to all of a sudden, one day have this heavy mantle of reality and modern life and adulthood just thrown on your shoulders. And nobody around understands your point of view, and you feel like there's nobody who can help you with the burden you got. You just have to run away like she did.

Kayla, a white student, even joked about her relation to the character in "The Flood" by saying, "Want to hear the parallel to my own life? I've also gotten drunk and swam naked in a lake."

"On the Road" allowed several students to bring in their own historical knowledge and relate the events of the story to current events in society. Stephen, a white male student, recommended that,

> African American writing should be covered more in classes because it tells more than documentary stories about slavery and inequality. You can relate to it more. And there's

an element of realness and sadness because you're listening to someone talk about their experience of being turned away from a place, or fear walking down the street. Because of your color you can actually be hated or beaten, and people will look the other way.

Several students related "On the Road" to current levels of racism in the United States. Jack, a non-traditional, white student, said,

> This story is very relevant today. It involves racism and religion and how it negatively affects people. The world still has places with religious wars where they use religion against people. And America still has racism because people are still ignorant like they were in story.

A theme that reoccurred throughout the discussions was the positive aspects of reading multicultural literature in class. In one interaction with the instructor, a white student, Cory, offered a rationale that supports reading multicultural literature.

> Cory: I think we should diversify what's taught to kind of not be so narrow minded on certain topics and issues.
>
> Professor Johnson: Why is that important?
>
> Cory: To diversify.
>
> Professor Johnson: But *why* is that important?
>
> Cory: Because we don't…we're only going to have views like what is taught.
>
> Professor Johnson: And why would that be? I'm playing devil's advocate here. (laughs) What do we gain or what do we lose if we don't study other diverse voices?
>
> Cory: We lose that culture. It's like we're trying to change their culture into our culture.

A similar sentiment came up in the second class when Eva, a white student, claimed,

> Schools should teach more Native American literature to see the different views and writing styles, and to help more students who are fascinated with the culture understand it. Schools should teach everyone who doesn't know anything about Native American culture, so it will keep the ideas alive and try to preserve them.

Other students divulged that they were not familiar with African American or Native American culture, so reading stories like these would help them appreciate other cultures.

Tisha, an African American student, said she would like to read more African American literature. She revealed,

> Reading African American literature will help me understand African American culture because I don't really know anything about it. Even though I am African American, I was raised in a white home. And I think it helps me understand how they were treated and how it became such a struggle.

Students also relayed a benefit of reading multicultural literature is the exposure to other ideas that can expand their worldview. Colton, a white male student, asserted, "I think the more things you're exposed to help you get a bigger world view. And the bigger your whole view is, the easier it is to take incoming information and process it."

In the Composition II classes at Allen State College, the instructors focus on literary devices during the first weeks of the semester; the devices covered are up to the instructor, but examples of what they teach would be symbolism, imagery, tone, etc. Students were able to use literary devices to assist in understanding the meaning of the stories. Symbolism seemed to be a

prevalent literary device used for interpretation. "On the Road" had many symbols throughout the story that students related to race. In the beginning of the story, the protagonist, Sargeant, tried to enter a locked church to get out of the snow. David, a white freshman student, insinuated of this scene,

> In the beginning, he didn't really pay attention to the snow. It was on him, and he felt it. When the door slammed, he started to feel the weight of the snow. I took it how the whites were so mean to him, so the snow represented the pain that they were inflicting. The snow can be so cold and so wet, and it hurts. The people are doing the same thing.

Jacob, in the same class, then added,

> Yeah. The reverend didn't see the pain Sargeant was feeling, so he shut the door in the snow. But the snow was on Sargeant. He felt it, he had to carry it. He felt the snow, and it hurts if you're out there too long. I think it represented what the white people were putting on him, like how someone packs snow on something.

Doors, another piece of symbolism in "On the Road," were observed by numerous students. Several remarked that the closed doors represented separation of privilege between white and black characters. Luis, a Latinx, male student commented,

> The white reverend shut the door on Sargeant, who was black, and kept him separated from what the church goers experienced regularly. That could show how the reverend was keeping Sargeant from having the same privileges the as congregation. I saw the symbolism of a white man not allowing a black man to have the same privileges as the rest of the white population.

Glen, a Native American student, saw the door being shut on Sargeant as a hypocritical rejection based on race.

> I see the door at the reverend's house as a symbol of the separation between white characters and black characters. The reverend had a chance to invite him in. He's supposed to be a man of God, a reverend; it's hypocrisy for him to leave someone out on the doorstep just because he was black.

Other students saw the act of Sargeant breaking the church doors as breaking down the barriers African Americans faced in society and the government. Kelly, a white, female student who had been quiet for most of the discussion, spoke up and said, "I feel like when he said, 'I'm gonna break down this door,' he was talking about society and breaking down the door of missed opportunities for him and other people due to their skin color." Adding to that thought, Ryan, a white, non-traditional student, responded,

> I looked at it like what was being broken down. It's like breaking down the doors of society, but also government. And once that's broken down, you can start new, and then you can go from there and make changes from there. It's not just the church doors being broken down in the story.

Bryan, a white, male student, affirmed their interpretations by adding, "Not just the doors at the church, but at the jail too. They all could represent the barriers that Sargeant has to knock down because of his race."

Many of the participants commented on the imagery in "The Flood." They thought, even though the imagery and style were unusual compared to the stories they had previously read, the

vivid imagery stuck out and helped relate many of the meanings. Lana, a white, non-traditional student remarked,

She used descriptive words like 'the lightning storm in the fiery body' to create a mental picture to feel more real to the reader because she wanted to escape reality a lot. So, by making it more real, it's not fictional. It's the real situation.

Simon, a male student from the same class, then commented,

I agree that the imagery made it seem more real in certain parts. When her family was described, I could see a tired family, weathered by life and constant hardships. I'm not Native American, but I can easily see that in my own family.

The understanding of literary devices and the author's use of those devices to tell a story were key in students' comprehension.

Discussion

When discussing "The Flood," a white male in the discussion assumed a stereotype of an abusive Native American family in the story, even though it was not specifically articulated by the author. Not only was his demeanor closed off with folded arms and talking into his chest, he didn't make eye contact with the instructor when talking.

Another white student spoke poorly about Native American culture, though she admitted she didn't understand it. When speaking, she meekly offered her opinion, but another white student eagerly sat up and stared at the student, smiling, and added a comment about how the girl in the story should just believe in Christianity.

While discussing "On the Road," several racially insensitive comments concerning African Americans were made. As with the negative statements about "The Flood," the initial remarks were not freely given, but once they were said, particular students who agreed with the sentiments sat up, were more attentive, and emboldened to share their similar views.

One white student said that racism wasn't an issue today like it was back when the story was written over 80 years ago.

Several white students became defensive when discussing race. One student said that the story was biased to make white people look bad, while he shook his head and assumed a rigid posture. Another white student sat up and, with a defiant tone in his voice, said that if white people said anything about African Americans, they were automatically racists. Several other white male students excitedly spoke up after this; one sitting at attention in his seat and another almost standing up. They both concurred with the previous statement and blamed the media for racializing incidents to get ratings and stir up trouble.

The liveliness of interactions made it obvious that the students' connection with literature could be powerful. During the discussions for both stories, many students shared that reading Native American literature, African American literature, or literature from any culture, especially one they are not familiar with, was helpful for understanding that culture.

At Allen State College, an integral piece of the Composition II curriculum centers around teaching argumentation in writing. During discussions many students displayed knowledge of literary devices and expertly analyzed elements of the stories. In general, students seemed much more comfortable discussing literary devices than aspects of race or culture.

Data Source Three

Student Reflections

After the participants read and discussed both short stories, they were asked to reflect upon the literature. Students were given a prompt to anonymously reflect upon both short stories and write at least a paragraph of thoughts concerning them. They were told that no specific answer was wanted or required, just their thoughts about the two stories read and discussed in class. I was careful when writing the prompt to not lead the students to discuss race specifically but to allow them to talk about whatever they wanted with the two stories. I wanted to see if the topic of race came up in their reflections, and if the stories had had any effect on their view of race or social sensitivity.

The reflection assignments were given to the students after the February 12, 2018, discussion. They were asked to turn it in within two weeks to give them enough time to consider the stories and ensuing discussion. Thirty-six reflections were turned in February 26, 2018. On average, students wrote approximately 150 words per reflection, which were then coded thematically.

Exposure to Cultures and Different Perspectives

An overwhelming theme that continuously occurred in the reflections centered around the students observing cultures outside of their own and relating to those cultures. These ideas were mentioned more than any other by the students.

Most students appreciated how multicultural literature allowed them to see aspects of cultures they were not previous familiar with. A student wrote, "One thing that intrigued me about both stories was the perspectives that minority authors could bring to the table. I learned a lot about Native American and African American cultures that I didn't previously know. I really liked that."

Another student commented that reading both short stories was helpful because they gave "insight on a culture different than our own," while a different student added,

> Both 'On the Road' and 'The Flood' were stories that I had never read before. In fact, I wasn't exposed to anything like this in high school. I wish I was exposed to this kind of literature earlier because it helps me see through the eyes of a different culture. I think it's really interesting to do that.

The exposure to other cultures can also build empathy toward those cultures. One student wrote,

> The most important thing to walk away from both of these stories with is the message they carry of wrong doings to cultures that should never be repeated. If we don't learn from experiences like these, we will keep doing it over and over.

Another reflection shared that, "It was interesting to see what it was like being discriminated. I've never had someone stop me from doing something because of my race and I see how helpless I would be if they did."

More than just building empathy, these stories seemed to spark an interest in reading works by other African American or Native American authors. A participant wrote, "This type of literature was different from anything I have read before. I would like to read more of it."

Another participant said, “I feel like I understand a different culture better when I read about them. Not just in textbooks and things, but stories like these that take me on a journey.”

A different participant added,

> These authors have a different tone to their writings that is enjoyable to read after reading work by authors that are white for the most part. I would enjoy reading more work by different populations and races in the future. I wish more classes used them.

Students shared that both stories allowed them to know what it was like to be discriminated against due to their culture, either from society or from their own culture.

One reflection conveyed, “Both stories make people think about what others go through due to their culture.”

An additional reflection mirrored the empathetic response, albeit in an insensitive way, by writing,

> ‘On the Road’ is more of what I would like to read because of what it shows. By reading it, you got to realize how awful colored people were treated, which isn’t fair because most colored people I know are the kindest people you will meet.

By reading the literature, students shared in reflections that the events in the story made current events more relevant. Many of the comments dealt with the racism faced by Sargeant in “On the Road.”

A student, wrote that the story “shows that many of the events that happened back then are still happening today.”

Another student said the story, “put in perspective the current problem with racism,” while a similar reflection explained that the story, “really opened my eyes to a lot of stuff going on right now.”

“The Flood” was also mentioned when relating the stories to the current day when a student shared how “Indian culture is slowly fading away and more schools need to teach Indian culture.”

Increased Learning Through Discussions and Literature

Students who participated in the classroom discussions about the literature seemed to enjoy the discussions and found them helpful, according to the reflections. Multiple comments spoke of how discussing the literature with other students allowed them to grasp the context of the story and see different intentions the authors might have had when writing them.

One student declared,

> I liked hearing everyone’s perspectives on both of the stories. I have never really sat down and analyzed a story with an entire class like that, but it helped me to understand what the story really meant and how other people saw it differently.

A comparable reflection echoed that opinion by stating,

> I could understand it better when we talked about it in class. I liked how everyone could have got something different from what another student got out of it. If we didn’t share that in class, we wouldn’t have seen that side of the story.

A third student said,

> I feel like the story of 'The Flood' was hard to dissect by myself because I didn't understand all of it. Though, with a group of people sharing their thoughts and ideas, the story becomes clearer as we put the pieces together.

As stated previously, imagery and symbolism were mentioned as being helpful to students. A reflection mentioned that, "Both stories were full of imagery and symbolism to make readers feel what they were saying in the story."

Echoing that sentiment, a student wrote that they enjoyed the imagery and symbolism in "The Flood." They said, "I would enjoy reading more stories with this much imagery. I would like to try to write stories in this form."

One reflection explained that the literary devices aided Langston Hughes's writing. It said,

> The imagery, symbolism, themes and other devices Langston Hughes used to write the story helped paint a clear picture of the social injustice that plagued African Americans. That type of writing makes it easier to put yourself in someone else's shoes when you can see something like the symbolism in the writing.

Discussion

With the reflections, students submitted writings on their feelings of the two stories and the discussions. Not a negative comment was ever mentioned during the reflections concerning the quality of the stories or the fact that the authors were nonwhite.

Many students expressed an appreciation for observing cultures outside of their own, and the perspective that multicultural literature gives them when read and discussed in class. They also reflected upon the empathy that was built through reading what other cultures had gone through like segregation, racism, and living on a reservation. Several students wrote that they would like to read more about other cultures due to this experience.

Most of the reflections stated the discussions of the literature clarified the meaning of the stories through shared knowledge. By working through the stories with the instructor and the other students, a clearer understanding of the material was achieved.

They also wrote that literary devices gave them insight into the meaning of the stories and possible explanations of the authors' intent.

Data Source Four

Post-survey Questionnaire

After the two multicultural stories were read, discussed in class, and the participants reflected on the experience, a post survey was given. The same survey was administered for both the pre-survey and post-survey to observe changes that might have occurred from the reading of the multicultural literature, class discussions, and written reflections. The complete results of the post-survey TOCAR can be found in Appendix G.

The following results analyzed the demographics of the 33 participants, and their answers to questions 1, 2, 3, 10, 15, and 17, as was analyzed in the pre-survey data.

Participant Identifiers

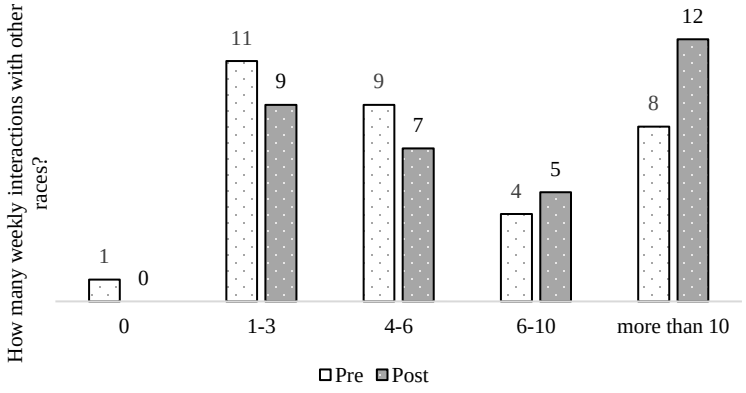
The demographics of the participants remained the same from the pre-survey, with 23 white students (70%), five Native American students (15%), African American and Hispanic/Latinx both had two students represented (6%), and one student identified as "other." The age range of the participants remained the same, from 18 to 39, with 19-21 having the largest sample at 20 students. Lastly, the males outnumbered the females, 18 to 15.

Changes in Perspectives

Personal Views of Race

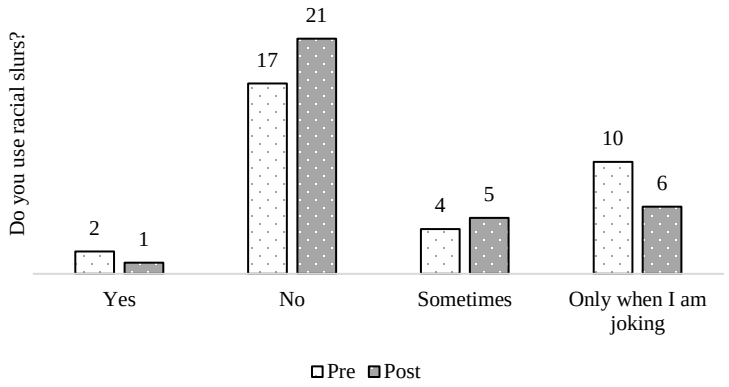
Question ten asked, "How many family/friends/acquaintances from other races or cultures do you interact with on a weekly basis?" 16 of the 33 students (48%) answered six or less weekly interactions with another race. 12 students (33%) responded that they had more than ten weekly interactions with another race (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1



Question 15 asked the participants, “Do you use racial slurs?” Of the 33 students surveyed, 21 (64%) said no, while 12 students (33%) admitted to using them, even if they were joking (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

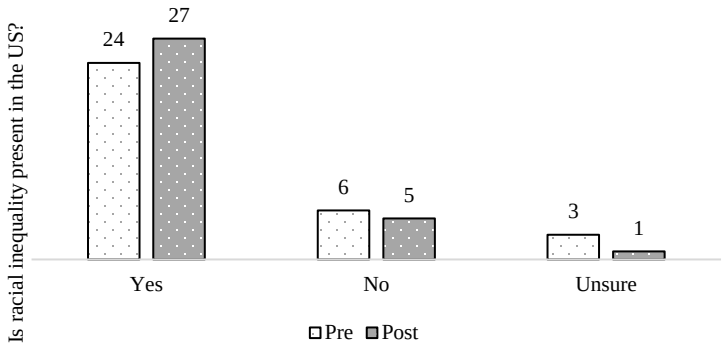


Race within Society and Government

The second set of questions that were examined in the pre-survey questionnaire focused on participants’ views of race, as it related to their society and the U.S. government. Those same questions were examined through the post-survey questionnaire data.

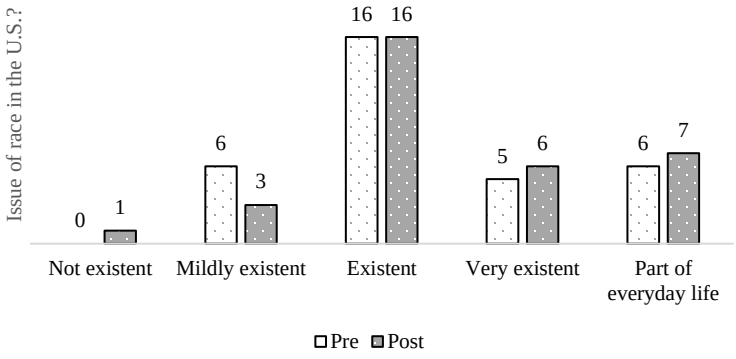
Question one of the survey asked the participants, “Do you feel that racial inequality is still present in the United States today?” 27 of the 33 students answered yes (82%), five students answered no (15%) and one student (3%) answered that they were unsure (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1



Question three of the survey asked the participants: "How big of an issue is racism in the United States?" 16 of the 33 participants (48%) answered "existent," three students (9%) answered mildly existent, six students (18%) answered very existent, and seven students (21%) said that race is part of everyday life, and one student (3%) answered that race is not existent as an issue in the United States (Table 6.2).

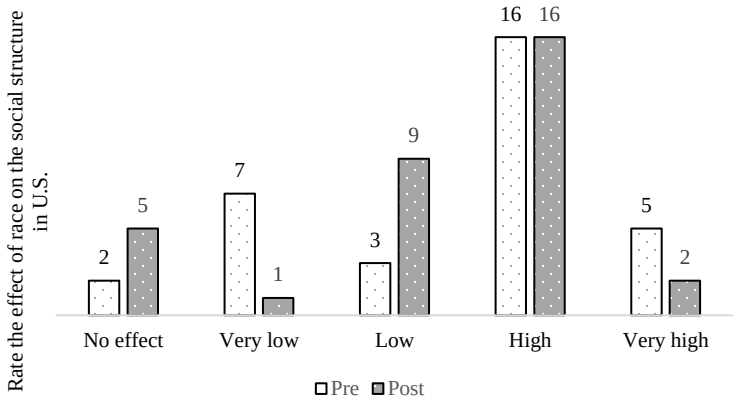
Table 6.2



Question 17 asked the students, "Rate the effect of racial differences on the social structure in our country." 16 of the 33 students (48%) answered that the effect of race on the U.S. social structure was high, another two students (6%) answered that the effect was very high.

Of the remaining students, nine (27%) answered low, one (3%) answered very low, and five (14%) said that race had no effect on the social structure in our country (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3



Discussion

The post-survey was administered after students read two multicultural stories, engaged in lengthy class discussions, and wrote a reflection on the experience. Question two of the survey asked, "How big of an issue is race in your life?" The number of students who claimed that race was either nonexistent or mildly existent in their lives, actually increased by two in the post-survey.

To question ten, "How many family/friends/acquaintances from other races or cultures do you interact with on a weekly basis," About half (16 of 33 students, or 48%) answered six or less weekly interactions with another race; a decrease of 15% from the pre-survey. 17 students (52%) said that they had six or more weekly interactions; an increase of 16%. 12 students (33%) responded that they had more than ten weekly interactions with another race; an increase of four

students from the pre-survey (12%). On the pre-survey, one student responded they had zero interactions with people from other races, but no one chose this option on the post-survey.

Question fifteen asked, "Do you use racial slurs?" 36% of the participants admitted to the use of racial slurs compared to 48% in the pre-survey.

For the question, "Do you feel that racial inequality is still present in the United States today," three more participants answered yes, students who answered no decreased by one, and two of the students who answered "unsure" changed their answer.

Question three of the survey asked: "How big of an issue is racism in the United States?" The number of participants who answered "existent" stayed steady at 16, the answer of "very existent" and "part of everyday life" both increased by one.

For the question, "Rate the effect of racial differences on the social structure in our country," 18 of the 33 students (55%) recognized race plays a part of the economic structure and social structure in the U.S. More students answered that race had no effect (five) on the post-survey questionnaire than the pre-survey questionnaire (three). Fifteen students, an increase of 9%, believed that race does not affect social structure.

Data Source Five

Student Interviews

The interviews were conducted with volunteers after the class discussions and personal reflections to assess their thoughts of the multicultural literature and how it was approached in their class. Four students volunteered to interview, two males, Jack and Alex, and two females,

Melissa and Lana. The interviews were held between February 28, 2018, and April 24, 2018, to accommodate the students' schedules. Each interview was approximately one hour and elicited 135 responses from all four participants. Approximately 20 hours were spent transcribing and coding the data thematically.

All four of the interviewees were white, and since most of the participants in the study were white, I felt having all white interviewees was appropriate because the study focused on the effects of multicultural literature on racial social sensitivity. The participants were not from the cultural backgrounds of the literature read in class, so analyzing their responses to the literature and discussions might offer a sample of sentiment. The data from the interviews have been categorized into themes to be consistent with the reporting of the other data points.

Multicultural Learning Expands a Person's Worldview

The students interviewed all shared how multicultural learning assists people to understand other people and cultures. Melissa said learning about other cultures "opens you up to more possibilities" and "the more educated you are, then you're going to apply that to how you think, and [how] you perceive other things…" Jack showed this actual behavior when he read "On the Road." He disclosed,

> I wanted to learn more about who was in this movement. Who were these guys? And I think then I really understood Langston Hughes's writing more because all the crap that these African Americans went through, that America, that the United States, went through. I felt like I could perceive a little bit better what he was saying. I understood his struggle a little bit more.

Alex felt that multicultural literature "just opens you up to different styles of writing, different cultures and everything, and it kinda makes you more open to everything at some point."

Lana conveyed a story about a student in a different class who wanted to talk politics but didn't have any exposure to cultures outside of his own. She said that he made of fool of himself by not trying to see the perspectives of other cultures. She added,

> It's got to be challenging to be a minority in a classroom, on campuses, and anywhere in this state, or anywhere in this region. I mean it's got to be really interesting because people will just say something, and they don't even think about it. And they don't even think what they say is offensive. But being exposed to other cultures and people, I think, helps you think about what you say and helps you think a different way.

She then gave a warning for closed-minded students who were not open to learning about other cultures. She mused they would have culture shock when they, "in reality, they get out in the real world because they're going find out real quick they aren't the only types of people of thinking out there." People who do not have an expanded worldview will find it difficult to interact with other cultures in our society today.

Other Cultures Not Taught Enough

The students who interviewed believed that education should be more focused on learning about other cultures because it helps people understand those cultures better, particularly Native American culture. With "The Flood," the participants discussed the differing beliefs of Native Americans and how the literature educated them on certain traditions.

Jack explained,

> I would say that I have a little bit more respect for Native Americans. I didn't know anything about Native Americans before I came here. My own ignorance might be because it wasn't taught at my high school, besides, that they were hunters, gatherers, and they lived on plateaus.

Alex's remarks mirrored those comments. He thought his high school education seemed whitewashed concerning Native American culture. When asked what he meant, he revealed,

> Some of the ways that we're taught and the information that we're taught don't seem to include anything other than white history. We never learned anything, even like in our Native American history class, we really never learned anything culture-wise, outside of the stereotypical stuff.

Lana enjoyed reading "The Flood" because she was able to learn about the culture through the writing. She appreciated learning about "some of the things that they viewed spiritually," though she acknowledged that some of it could be confusing due to their beliefs, like any foreign religion.

Literature Relates to Personal and Historical Experiences

A reoccurring theme in the interviews dealt with how they were able to relate to the literature, either personally or through the events that took place in the story. Melissa felt a particular connection to the girl in "The Flood" and the circumstances she faced.

Melissa confided,

> I connected with her because the family just neglected her. Like, 'okay, we need to get rid of you. You're a problem because (pauses). My step dad wasn't the best person to get along with, and I basically spent my entire life trying to make him proud and happy. But I just never was good enough, so it just seemed like I connected with her, and that no matter what either one of us did, our families just didn't really understand.

The students interviewed connected to the pain that Sargeant, the African American in "On the Road," went through and were able to relate that to the suffering that African Americans suffered throughout America's history.

Alex explained how Hughes's writing conveyed what African Americans went through. He recounted,

> His writing was saying "This is me that's being treated like this." This is how African Americans were treated, and this is how they're still being treated now. I imagine how they're feeling, so helps people connect more, understand what others have gone through, and what they're still going through.

Jack felt that "On the Road" allowed readers to sympathize with African Americans and put the audience in another culture's place. He said,

> Hearing their story, through their eyes, and finding out what has made them that way. That we can connect on a similar level because you can sympathize or understand those feelings even more. You can put yourself in that person's shoes.

He added later in the interview, “I feel like I understand the story and what Langston Hughes was trying to say better now, and I can tie it to emotion better now too. I feel grateful that I’ve learned it.”

Classroom Discussions Allow for Multiple Voices

The students interviewed enjoyed the discussions in class and felt the discussions allowed for more people to be speak and to be heard. Melissa liked how the discussion format in class got more of people involved. She believed the discussions helped to make the class feel like one community, all there with the purpose of learning.

Lana also thought the discussions were an important aspect of the class. She recounted,

> One of the things that I liked when we had our discussion in class was that people got to talk about how they felt, which in our class is not that diverse. I think there’s only like three native kids, and the one black girl. And so, getting to hear from their perspective is valuable for me and for everyone else in the class.

Lana expounded on her thoughts of hearing other perspectives by adding, “…the post-reading discussions were really important just for exposure to other spheres of thought – getting people’s give and take. I just don’t think there’s enough of that.”

Jack wondered why the discussion format isn’t used in more college classes. He expressed how much he liked the discussions in class and wished it would take place more often. He explained, “I thoroughly enjoyed hearing other people’s point of views; the people that

thought differently than I did. Maybe they know something that I don't." He later added to those thoughts by saying,

> Sometimes hearing other perspectives opens you up to different interpretations entirely, and then it just makes for an all-around interpretation. It really makes for a better experience with a story too, if you have someone you can talk to about it with.

Alex shared the same sentiment about the helpful nature of discussion to see other people's opinions of the story. He proclaimed,

> When you hear someone else's opinion of the story, and you go 'OH YEAH! Yeah, I see that! That makes sense now!' I think it helps you understand the story to not just see your side. Discussions help you get all the different ways of understanding something.

Discussion

No negative comments were shared during the interviews about the study or people of color. The interview data supported the data from the reflections that shared an appreciation for multicultural literature and class discussions.

The interviewees believed that being exposed to multicultural literature in class allows students to view the world in a transformed, better way that would lead to an increased empathy for other cultures.

They also expressed that education in the state doesn't focus on other cultures enough, both in secondary schools and higher education. Even though Allen State College is in a town

and county both named for a Native American tribe, the students specifically pointed out that Native American culture was underrepresented in their education.

The students' interviews revealed how they were able to relate both personally and historically to what the characters were going through in the stories. The familial experiences of the girl in "The Flood" connected a female student to a strained father-daughter dynamic. Both male students said that "On the Road" allowed them to see what African Americans went through in the United States and understand the historical context in a more complex manner.

Lastly, the students expressed gratitude for hearing multiple voices and opinions in the discussions. Even though participants in the discussions didn't express the same feelings, the students interviewed believed being able to have a platform to talk and listen was incredibly important. One student shared that he wished more college classes would have discussions to enhance learning and from different perspectives.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings

Overview of Study

This study explored the influence of two stories written by authors of color, discussion, and reflective writing on the racial social sensitivity of predominately white college students at a rural, Midwestern, two-year college. The study examined responses to literature to find if the racial social sensitivity of students was affected.

Although the pre- and post-surveys only revealed minor increases in social sensitivity, students showed appreciation for learning about other cultures through reading multicultural literature and having the opportunity to discuss texts in class. Most participants expressed how reading about other races and their struggles informed current events in the United States and gave them more insight into how people of other races are affected by prejudice.

This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings as they relate to multicultural literature, discussion, reflective writing, and the overall effect of these factors on students' racial social sensitivity. The chapter concludes with limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Discussion of Findings

While teaching at Allen State College, I had amazing students who were dedicated to their learning and respectful of those around them in class. My prior teaching experience had been in urban schools, both in high school and higher education, with racially diverse students, so the predominately white population took me a little time to get used to. One of my favorite

aspects of teaching college courses is exposing students to diverse perspectives and new material. It was during one of my classes when the impetus for this study began.

After a racially insensitive comment occurred during a literary discussion, I paused the lesson and tried to understand where the student was coming from. Through the impending conversation with the class, I heard many more racially insensitive comments from students I had thought were respectful people. Were these comments a sign of a more overt racism that hid below the surface of these good, respectful students? I wanted to study this phenomenon at the school to see if racial insensitivity were an anomaly or widespread at Allen State.

After pondering the pre-survey questionnaires at length, the evidence indicated that those students were not outliers. Sixty four percent of the students in just two classes had less than 6 interactions weekly with someone outside of their race; about half openly admitted to using racial slurs. These percentages revealed startling levels of racial social insensitivity and seemed to confirm racism as "an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 16).

On the other hand, about three in four students acknowledged racial inequality was a fact of life in the United States. But how can students acknowledge the struggle faced by people of color while admitting to racial slurs and avoiding contact with other races? To answer the research question, "How does the inclusion of two multicultural stories into a Composition II class affect the social sensitivity of students at a rural community college?" it is necessary to consider split the concept of racial sensitivity into two admittedly overlapping components: personal and social.

Personal Racial Sensitivity

The predominantly white students at Allen State demonstrated a low racial social sensitivity in their personal lives ("making racial slurs and jokes among friends"). The white, rural participants seemed to know that race mattered, but racial sensitivity seemed irrelevant as they had limited interactions with people of color. Such a social/person divide would seem to confirm Frankenberg's (1993) notion of Whiteness as an "unwillingness to name the contours of racism…the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group" (p. 132). Dwyer and Jones (2000) writes about a fragmentary mindset as an aspect of Whiteness, which mistakes the world as non-relational and partitioned.

When reading "On the Road," about a poor, African American man who suffered several tragedies at the hands of white townspeople, most students were actively involved in a lively discussion. However, a small group of students were quiet and, from their folded arms and shaking "no" head movements, I wrote in my notes that they seemed uneasy. After a few minutes, one student spoke up in defense of whites, men, and Christian beliefs, and attacked the media as biased. During class discussions, several white students responded to what they considered personal attacks with racially insensitive comments.

One white student demonstrated that he didn't really understand diversity, or the point Langston Hughes was trying to make with "On the Road." He misinterpreted the story to think the antagonist, the white reverend, who shut the African American man out in the snow, was the protagonist of the story. He said,

> I think the story is not actually about Sargeant. I gathered that the story was about the reverend who turned away a homeless man in the snow. That led the man to be arrested and beaten for trying to break into the church.

This student was demonstrating his colorblindness to the story. Instead of seeing what a white man did to an African American man, he didn't see any color; just only saw a reverend and a homeless man. His color blindness denied race, but also denied the experience (Sue & Sue, 2013).

Another white student said that racism wasn't an issue today like it was back when the story was written over 80 years ago. He commented,

> I feel like we've come a long way from the way we used to be and how they used to do things. I don't think that racism is that big of a deal anymore, at least the way it used to be.

About white privilege, Matias (2013) writes, "This mindset…produces concrete systemic racism that renders all the privileges that accompany white skin as not just normal, but invisible" (p. 73). Many Allen State students seemed to think that, because they did not experience racial discrimination directly themselves, it did not exist.

One student disliked "On the Road" because "the entire story is biased and stereotypes all white people as bad people. I mean, am I supposed to feel bad because I'm white?" Leonardo (2000) notes the difficulty of white people confronting their own privilege: "The costs are real because it means whites would have to acknowledge their unearned privileges and disinvest in them. Whites have a lot to lose…" (p. 37). Such comments seem to confirm DiAngelo's (2011) notion of White Fragility, in which even a minimum amount of racial stress is intolerable, trigger a range of defensive behaviors.

While discussing "The Flood," a white female shared,

> I didn't really understand the story because I don't really know a lot about Native American stuff. I know they have a lot of weird myths and things they believe. Like

when the dad dipped the daughter in the water, I guess that's like a Native American ritual they do or something.

When speaking about Native American beliefs, a white student asked, "Myths like that are obviously not real. It seems silly that she would believe that. Why can't she believe in Christianity?" These students did not attempt to show "the personal ability to perceive, understand, and respect the feelings and viewpoints of others" (Bender et al., 2012, p. 403), thus they were reinforcing the data from the pre-study survey.

Social Racial Sensitivity

Most comments during class discussions were favorable towards other cultures, and, during the interviews, several passionate students said they would like to see more multicultural literature in their classes because it opened new worlds and experiences to them. The students symbolically interacted with the literature by placing themselves into the lives of people they were not necessarily familiar. A white female said "On the Road" provided an alternative look at the need for civil rights in the United States; one that students could not necessarily get in their history class. A white male during class suggested that "The Flood" shared a "valuable perspective of American life" that few people have an insight into.

The discussions reminded me, even with the occasional racially insensitive comments, that most students wanted to hear what others had to say. Openness seemed to give a legitimacy to the discussions and students' comments and students seemed to grow in community as they spoke about how they interpreted the stories, but also what they learned about other cultures.

Instead of being embarrassed to admit they didn't understand part of the story, many students pointed out the aspects they were unclear about and tried to work through the information with the instructor's minimal guidance. Sparse racially insensitive comments were made by students during the second story discussed, "The Flood."

However, the lack of racially insensitive remarks may have been more a vestige of the establishment of a community of students, the majority of whom professed positive feelings about the stories and the diverse perspectives of the characters. Over time, in other words, students who had offered insensitive remarks began to defer to emerging social norms, one of which was racial tolerance.

Stereotypes can be just as damaging for white, rural students in the United States, as it is for people of color. We cannot expect students who have never been exposed to people of other races to automatically embrace diversity. The power represented by racially tolerant social norms could have a negative effect on those who have never had an opportunity to experience diversity. While a few students displayed some qualities of racial insensitivity, those students still listened respectfully to other perspectives in the class and actively participated in the discussions and reflections. The emerging social norm that I saw within the classroom, paired with the data, indicated most students did not fit into the pre-existing stereotypes of white, rural students and showed little evidence of a monolithic white perspective at Allen State College.

I acknowledge the brief two-week time frame of reading two multicultural stories and discussing them is not enough time or material to truly change a person's worldview. But if the participants who were originally emboldened to say racially insensitive comments during discussion felt writing anything negative about race was wrong, then they may have begun to possibly develop "the ability to see the world through Others' eyes" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2439). At

least, they understood that discounting the possible prejudice encountered by nonwhites was not a socially acceptable act in class. Indeed, in the written reflections, no student wrote disparagingly about race, the nonwhite authors of the stories, or their racially sensitive classmates.

The data from the post-study survey confirm the emergence of a new social norm that appeared during discussions. After only a few weeks, students on the post survey claimed to suddenly be having more interactions with nonwhite peers, an increase of almost 50% (16% + 33%). Students also recorded a 12% decrease in using racial slurs. Three additional students answered that racial inequality is present in the U.S. today, which brought the total up to 83%, as compared to 73% on the pre-surveys. These small gains seem more likely to demonstrate acceptance of a new social norm than personal transformation.

Implications

A Small Commitment May Lead to Big Results

The purpose of this study was to evaluate possible effects of two multicultural stories on the social sensitivity of students in a rural, two-year community college. A student's beliefs are largely based on the values they were taught as a child, and the environment around them (Cowell & Decety, 2015). Students in higher education are often exposed to new concepts and people who expand their previous worldview (Murray et al., 2015). By learning about people from other cultures, and listening to the views of classmates, students can possibly expand their understanding of the world.

This study took only two stories from authors of color and placed them in a Composition II curriculum. Findings showed that even a brief exposure to different perspectives through literature could affect students' racial social sensitivity. Using multicultural literature and teaching about diverse cultures can play a role in bringing at least an awareness of the value of racial social sensitivity to campus (Bauman, 2018; Bauer-Wolf, 2017).

Understanding the needs of diverse students is even more important if the instructor is white. In America, most of the teaching force comes from White middle-class backgrounds (Howard and Navarro, 2016). Many teachers feel either unprepared to work with changing student demographics or unwilling to do so (Watson, 2012). Banks (2016) recommends that all teachers should acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to work effectively with racially, ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse students. The use of multicultural literature in an instructor's curriculum could be an effective resource to increase both the instructor's and students' social sensitivities.

Discussions Can Help Establish Social Norms

Akman & Alagöz (2018) found discussions to be a powerful tool for increasing metacognition and empathy in students, especially when discussing controversial topics. They state,

> Students' discussion on controversial issues can be valuable in terms of constructing moral and civil opinions and…they develop important attitudes and communication skills such as listening carefully, responding empathetically, persuasive speaking and easily collaborating with others in the group. (pp. 12,14)

One of the challenges of classroom discussion is including everyone, especially students who might be racially insensitive. Professors need to make room for discussions to allow students to freely speak their minds. Student discussions can foster both deeper and more expansive understanding. When students discuss texts they have read, "discussion widens the scope of any individual's understanding of a text by building into that understanding the interpretations and life experiences of others" (Parker & Hess, 2001, p. 275). Discussions can be a useful classroom instrument to facilitate a student's learning through one another's perspectives, as opposed to just the instructor's perspective.

Social Interaction May Help Cultivate Self-Understanding

College students are still forming personal identities and making decisions that will shape the rest of their lives (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). Students who read and ponder multicultural literary works, and thereby consider diverse perspectives, may learn more about their place in society and how to interact with others in society. Adler-Nissen (2016) writes that symbolic interactionism explains how humans form new meaning as a result of their own experiences. Discussions can provide a venue for students to work out new ideas and to symbolically interact with not only the literature, but with other students.

In this study, an African American student commented that she learned information about her heritage, about which she previously knew little. She claimed that her perception of self as an African American woman was elevated through the integration of multicultural literature and classroom discussion. Such a confession would seem to confirm Banks's (2016) point that

multicultural literature can promote a higher level of awareness among students who might otherwise have limited exposure to differing perspectives on the world.

The social interaction with the teacher can also affect a student's self-understanding. A conversation in the study between Cory, a white student, and the professor showed how a teacher can guide a student's understanding. In the discussion for "On the Road," he made a broad statement about the value of diversity. When pressed by Professor Johnson, he was able to verbally work out that diversity is needed in school curriculum or else that culture could be lost. Ozmet (2018) believes that classroom interaction through discussions can have an influential effect on student perspectives, if, as Palinscar (1998) points out, a teacher can expertly lead the dialogue to political and social contexts and thoughtful interpretation.

Reflective Writing May Open New Avenues of Learning

Reflection as a classroom device for learning is nothing new in educational curriculum and pedagogy. Reflection is a key component in Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive development (Tarman & Kuran, 2015; Forehand, 2010; Bloom, 1956) and a core aspect of a constructionist's approach to teaching and learning, specifically a student-centered pedagogy (Taylor & Medina, 2013). As defined by Lew and Schmidt (2011):

> Reflections are processes that a learner undergoes to look back on his past learning experiences and what he did to enable learning to occur, and the exploration of connections between the knowledge that was taught and the learner's own ideas about them. (p. 530)

Written reflections can aid students in examining their own positionality within society, which may lead to an increased empathy for others (Bender et al., 2012, p. 403). “Civilization and empathy are inseparable; all lasting and just social cooperation requires this quality of human understanding which we term empathy” (Loban, 1954, p. 4).

Limitations

Qualitative research is limited by the nature of self-reported data which may be difficult to independently verify. In the surveys, written reflections, interviews, and even class discussions, it is difficult to know when a student’s personal beliefs about race are being expressed vs. when a student is simply complying with established social norms. This distinction is difficult to unravel, especially with a complex issue, such as race.

A second limitation of a qualitative study is the number of participants who contributed. Although approximately 33 students were involved, the generalizability of the data is restricted to the individuals participating in the study. This case study was not meant to generalize all students in rural, predominantly white, two-year colleges.

The characteristics of participants also limit the study. As Brown and Harlin (2018) note, because rural areas are predominately white, students at Allen State may have had limited opportunities to interact with nonwhite populations. Results might certainly have been different if the study had been done in an urban area with nonwhite students.

The researcher could also be considered a limitation to the study. As a white male writing about race and multicultural literature, another researcher from a different racial background may have interpreted events differently.

Future Research

This study investigated the racial social sensitivity of rural, predominantly white two-year college students. Research concerning the racial social sensitivity of urban two-year college students might well present dramatically different results. Any differences in data might give insight into racial biases of rural versus urban communities, and help educators understand those biases.

A brief look at the lives and attitudes of students does not give a full picture of who they are and the development of their racial social sensitivity over time. This study could be extended over several semesters or years to chart students' attitudes longitudinally. If students were surveyed and interviewed in intervals of every year or every five years, it might yield results that could inform exactly how long it might take to substantially alter a student's personal beliefs about race.

This study focused on college students in the 21st century, but the inspiration comes from a study that researched the social sensitivity of students in the 1950s. An intriguing study might be to construct a study, and then replicate it, with modifications in the literature, for each level of education to see how racial social sensitivity might be affected by age, education level, and socioeconomic status.

Although racial social sensitivity in America's rural college students is important, it is not the sole aspect of social sensitivity. Further research could study social sensitivities around gender, LBGTQ, social class, and religion.

Conclusion

The need for empathy and racial social sensitivity seems paramount for a democracy that is irrevocably multicultural. Teachers, and the courses they teach, hold considerable power in shaping the attitudes of students. For students in some rural areas of the United States, the world shown to them through literature might be their only glimpse at other perspectives and people.

Teaching racial social sensitivity should not be just one lesson in February in honor of Black History Month, but a conscious, continuous effort. An exposure to different perspectives may not change a student's personal beliefs in an instant, but even a little awareness may help forge a new social norm for race and culture. Perhaps awareness is where the fight against a plague of ignorance and prejudice begins.

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Appendices

Appendix A: “On the Road” by Langston Hughes

On the Road
By Langston Hughes

He was not interested in snow. When he got off the freight, one early evening during the depression, Sargeant never even noticed the snow. But he must have felt it seeping down his neck, cold, wet, sopping in his shoes. But if you had asked him, he wouldn't have known it was snowing. Sargeant didn't see the snow, not even under the bright lights of the main street, falling white and flaky against the night. He was too hungry, too sleepy, too tired.

The Reverend Mr. Dorset, however, saw the snow when he switched on his porch light, opened the front door of his parsonage, and found standing therebefore him a big black man with snow on his face, a human piece of night with snow on his face-obviously unemployed.

Said the Reverend Mr. Dorset before Sargeant even realized he'd opened his mouth: "I'm sorry. No! Go right on down this street four blocks and turn to your left, walk up seven and you'll see the Relief Shelter. I'm sorry. No!" He shut the door Sargeant wanted to tell the holy man that he had already been to the Relief Shelter, been to hundreds of relief shelters during the depression years, the beds were always gone and supper was over, the place was full, and they drew the color line anyhow. But the minister said, "No," and shut the door. Evidently he didn't want to hear about it. And he had a door to shut.

The big black man turned away. And even yet he didn't see the snow, walking right into it. Maybe he sensed it, cold, wet, sticking to his jaws, wet on his black hands, sopping in his shoes. He stopped and stood on the sidewalk hunched over-hungry, sleepy, cold-looking up and down. Then he looked right where he was-in front of a church! Of course! A church! Sure, right next to a parsonage, certainly a church.

It had two doors.

Broad white steps in the night all snowy white. Two high arched doors with slender stone pillars on either side. And way up, a round lacy window with a stone crucifix in the middle and Christ on the crucifix in stone. All this was pale in the street lights, solid and stony pale in the snow. Sargeant blinked. When he looked up, the snow fell into his eyes. For the first time that night he saw the snow. He shook his head. He shook the snow from his coat sleeves, felt hungry, felt lost, felt not lost, felt cold. He walked up the steps of the church. He knocked at the door. No answer. He tried the handle. Locked. He put his shoulder against the door and his long black body slanted like a ramrod. He pushed. With loud rhythmic grunts, like the grunts in a chaingang song, he pushed against the door.

"I'm tired ... Huh! ... Hongry ... Uh! ... I'm sleepy ... Huh! I'm cold ... I got to sleep somewheres," Sargeant said. "This here is a church, ain't it? Well, uh!"

He pushed against the door.

Suddenly, with an undue cracking and screaking, the door began to give way to the tall black Negro who pushed ferociously against it.

By now two or three white people had stopped in the street, and Sargeant was vaguely aware of some of them yelling at him concerning the door. Three or four more came running, yelling at him.

"Hey!" they said. "Hey!"

"Uh-huh," answered the big tall Negro, "I know it's a white folks' church, but I got to sleep somewhere." He gave another lunge at the door. "Huh!" And the door broke open.

But just when the door gave way, two white cops arrived in a car, ran up the steps with their clubs, and grabbed Sargeant. But Sargeant for once had no intention of being pulled or pushed away from the door.

Sargeant grabbed, but not for anything so weak as a broken door. He grabbed for one of the tall stone pillars beside the door, grabbed at it and caught it. And held it. The cops pulled Sargeant pulled. Most of the people in the street got behind the cops and helped them pull.

"A big black unemployed Negro holding onto our church!" thought the people. "The idea!" The cops began to beat Sargeant over the head, and nobody protested. But he held on.

And then the church fell down.

Gradually, the big stone front of the church fell down, the walls and the rafters, the crucifix and the Christ. Then the whole thing fell down, covering the cops and the people with bricks and stones and debris. The whole church fell down in the snow.

Sargeant got out from under the church and went walking on up the street with the stone pillar on his shoulder. He was under the impression that he had buried the parsonage and the Reverend Mr. Dorset who said, "No!" So he laughed, and threw the pillar six blocks up the street and went on.

Sargeant thought he was alone, but listening to the crunch, crunch, crunch on the snow of his own footsteps, he heard other footsteps, too, doubling his own. He looked around, and there was Christ walking along beside him, the same Christ that had been on the cross on the church-still stone with a rough stone surface, walking along beside him just like he was broken off the cross when the church fell down.

"Well, I'll be dogged," said Sargeant. "This here's the first time I ever seed you off the cross."

"Yes," said Christ, crunching his feet in the snow. "You had to pull the church down to get me off the cross."

"You glad?" said Sargeant. "I sure am," said Christ.

They both laughed.

"I'm a hell of a fellow, ain't I?" said Sargeant. "Done pulled the church down!" "You did a good job," said Christ. "They have kept me nailed on a cross for nearly two thousand years."

"Whee-ee-e!" said Sargeant. "I know you are glad to get off." "I sure am," said Christ.

They walked on in the snow. Sargeant looked at the man of stone. "And you have been up there two thousand years?" "I sure have," Christ said.

"Well, if I had a little cash," said Sargeant, "I'd show you around a bit."
"I been around," said Christ.

"Yeah, but that was a long time ago."

"All the same." said Christ, "I've been around."

They walked on in the snow until they came to the railroad yards. Sargeant was tired, sweating and tired.

"Where you goin'?" Sargeant said, stopping by the tracks. He looked at Christ.

Sargeant said, "I'm just a bum on the road. How about you? Where you goin'?" "God knows " Christ said, "but I'm leavin' here."

They saw the red and green lights of the railroad yard half veiled by the snow that fell out of the night. Away down the track they saw a fire in a hobo jungle.

"I can go there and sleep," Sargeant said. "You can?"

"Sure," said Sargeant. "That place ain't got no doors."

Outside the town, along the tracks, there were barren trees and bushes below the embankment, snow-gray in the dark. And down among the trees and bushes there were makeshift houses made out of boxes and tin and old pieces of wood and canvas. You couldn't see them in the dark, but you knew they were there if you'd ever been on the road, if you had ever lived with the homeless and hungry in a depression.

"I'm side-tracking," Sargeant said. "I'm tired."

"I'm gonna make it on to Kansas City," said Christ. "O.K.," Sargeant said. "So long!"

He went down into the hobo jungle and found himself a place to sleep. He never did see Christ no more. About 6:00 A.M. a freight came by. Sargeant scrambled out of the jungle with a dozen or so more hobos and ran along the track, grabbing at the freight. It was dawn, early dawn, cold and gray.

"Wonder where Christ is by now?" Sargeant thought. "He musta gone on way on down the road. He didn't sleep in this jungle."

Sargeant grabbed the train and started to pull himself up into a moving coal car, over the edge of a wheeling coal car. But strangely enough, the car was full of cops. The nearest cop rapped Sargeant soundly across the knuckles with his night stick. Wham! Rapped his big black hands for clinging to the top of the car. Wham! But Sargeant did not turn loose. He clung on and tried to pull himself into the car. He hollered at the top of his voice, "Damn it, lemme in this car!"

"Shut up," barked the cop. "You crazy coon!" He rapped Sargeant across the knuckles and punched him in the stomach. "You ain't out in no jungle now. This ain't no train. You in jail."

Wham! across his bare black fingers clinging to the bars of his cell. Wham! between the steel bars low down against his shins.

Suddenly Sargeant realized that he really was in jail. He wasn't on no train. The blood of the night before had dried on his face, his head hurt terribly, and a cop outside in the corridor was hitting him across the knuckles for holding onto the door, yelling and shaking the cell door.

"They musta took me to jail for breaking down the door last night," Sargeant thought, "that church door."

Sargeant went over and sat on a wooden bench against the cold stone wall. He was emptier than ever. His clothes were wet, clammy cold wet, and shoes sloppy with snow water. It was just about dawn. There he was, locked up behind a cell door, nursing his bruised fingers.

The bruised fingers were his, but not the door. Not the club but the fingers.

"You wait," mumbled Sargeant, black against the jail wall. "I'm gonna break down this door, too."

"Shut up-or I'll paste you one," said the cop.

"I'm gonna break down this door," yelled Sargeant as he stood up in his cell. Then he must have been talking to himself because he said, "I wonder where Christ's gone? I wonder.. if he's gone to Kansas City?"

Appendix B: "The Flood" by Joy Harjo

The Flood
By Joy Harjo

It had been years since I'd seen the watermonster, the snake who lived at the bottom of the lake. He had disappeared in the age of reason, as a mystery that never happened.

For in the muggy lake was the girl I could have been at sixteen, wrested from the torment of exaggerated fools, one version anyway, though the story at the surface would say car accident, or drowning while drinking, all of it eventually accidental.

This story is not an accident, nor is the existence of the watersnake in the memory of the people as they carried the burden of the myth from Alabama to Oklahoma. Each reluctant step pounded memory into the broken heart and no one will ever forget it.

When I walk the stairway of water into the abyss, I return as the wife of the watermonster, in a blanket of time decorated with swatches of cloth and feathers from our favorite clothes.

The stories of the battles of the watersnake are forever ongoing, and those stories soaked into my blood since infancy like deer gravy, so how could I resist the watersnake, who appeared as the most -handsome man in the tribe, or any band whose visits I'd been -witness to since childhood?

This had been going on for centuries: the first time he appeared I carried my baby sister on my back as I went to get water. She laughed at a woodpecker flitting like a small sun above us and before I could deter the symbol we were in it.

My body was already on fire with the explosion of womanhood as if I were flint, hot stone, and when he stepped out of the water he was the first myth I had ever seen uncovered. I had surprised him in a human moment. I looked aside but I could not discount what I had seen.

My baby sister's cry pinched reality, the woodpecker a warning of a disjuncture in the brimming sky, and then a man who was not a man but a myth.

What I had seen there were no words for except in the sacred -language of the most holy recounting, so when I ran back to the -village, drenched in salt, how could I explain the water jar left empty by the river to my mother who deciphered my burning lips as shame?

My imagination swallowed me like a mica sky, but I had seen the watermonster in the fight of lightning storms, breaking trees, -stirring up killing winds, and had lost my favorite brother to a spear of the sacred flame, so certainly I would know my beloved if he were hidden in the blushing skin of the suddenly vulnerable.

I was taken with a fever and nothing cured it until I dreamed my fiery body dipped in the river where it fed into the lake. My father carried me as if I were newborn, as if he were presenting me once more to the world, and when he dipped me I was quenched, -pronounced healed.

My parents immediately made plans to marry me to an important man who was years older but would provide me with everything I needed to survive in this world, a world I could no longer perceive, as I had been blinded with a ring of water when I was most in need of a drink by a snake who was not a snake, and how did he know my absolute secrets, those created at the brink of acquired -language?

When I disappeared, it was in a storm that destroyed the houses of my relatives; my baby sister was found sucking on her hand in the crook of an oak. And though it may have appeared otherwise, I did not go willingly. That night I had seen my face strung on the shell belt of my ancestors, and I was standing next to a man who could not look me in the eye.

The oldest woman in the tribe wanted to remember me as a symbol in the story of a girl who disobeyed, who gave in to her desires before marriage and was destroyed by the monster disguised as the seductive warrior.

Others saw the car I was driving as it drove into the lake early one morning, the time the carriers of tradition wake up, before the sun or the approach of woodpeckers, and found the emptied six-pack on the sandy shores of the lake.

The power of the victim is a power that will always be reckoned with, one way or the other. When the proverbial sixteen-year-old woman walked down to the lake within her were all sixteen-year-old women who had questioned their power from time immemorial.

Her imagination was larger than the small frame house at the north edge of town, with the broken cars surrounding it like a necklace of futility, larger than the town itself leaning into the lake. Nothing could stop it, just as no one could stop the bearing-down--thunderheads as they gathered overhead in the war of opposites.

Years later when she walked out of the lake and headed for town, no one recognized her, or themselves, in the drench of fire and rain. The watersnake was a story no one told anymore. They'd entered the drought that no one recognized as drought, the convenience store a signal of temporary amnesia.

I had gone out to get bread, eggs and the newspaper before -breakfast and hurried the cashier for my change as the crazy woman walked in, for I could not see myself as I had abandoned her some twenty years ago in a blue windbreaker at the edge of the man-made lake as everyone dove naked and drunk off the sheer cliff, as if we had nothing to live for, not then or ever.

It was beginning to rain in Oklahoma, the rain that would flood the world.

Appendix C: Discussion Questions for "On the Road"

Personal interpretation and academic discussions are important to recognize and understand different viewpoints about varied topics. The questions below will help to stimulate discussion about the literature you read and allow for diverse viewpoints and opinions. On this paper (or a separate paper, if you choose), please answer each of these questions honestly and openly and be prepared to discuss these answers in class.

1) What was this story about? Explain why you thought that?
   _____
   _____
   _____
2) What parts of this story stood out to you? Why?
   _____
   _____
   _____
3) What elements of literature analysis did you see the author use when writing this story?
   _____
   _____
   _____
4) Hughes often uses repetition and symbols in his writing. What symbols does he use and what do they represent?
   _____
   _____
   _____
5) Where are doors seen in the story? What could the doors represent?
   _____
   _____
   _____
6) At the beginning of the story, Sargeant can't see the snow until he is on the church's front steps, but the reverend could see the snow the whole time. What does the snow seem to represent?
   _____
   _____
   _____
7) What is Hughes's implication of how society sees Sargeant?
   _____
   _____
   _____

8) When the church falls, Christ is freed. What is Hughes implying about Christ or religion here? Explain**.**

_____
_____
_____

9) What does the story say about Hughes's views on racism & religion? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

10) Does this story still have social implications today? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

11) This short story is from an African American author. What do you think makes this a distinctively African American story? Explain**.**

_____
_____
_____

12) What does story tell you about African Americans in the US? Explain**.**

_____
_____
_____

13) What will you remember about this story?

_____
_____
_____

14) Do you think African American writing should be covered in more classes? Explain.

_____
_____
_____
_____

15) Would reading more literature like this help you understand African American culture? If not, what would be a better way to learn about/teach about African American culture? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

Appendix D: Discussion Questions for "The Flood"

Personal interpretation and academic discussions are important to recognize and understand different viewpoints about varied topics. The questions below will help to stimulate discussion about the literature you read and allow for diverse viewpoints and opinions. On this paper (or a separate paper, if you choose), please answer each of these questions honestly and openly and be prepared to discuss these answers in class.

1) What was this story about? Explain why you thought that?
   _____
   _____
   _____
2) What parts of this story stood out to you? Why?
   _____
   _____
   _____
3) Why does the girl not question the existence of the watersnake? What does that tell us about the author or her intentions of the story?
   _____
   _____
   _____
4) What elements of literature analysis did the author use when writing this story?
   _____
   _____
   _____
5) What was some distinctive imagery you saw in the story? Why would the author use that imagery specifically?
   _____
   _____
   _____
6) Did the story have a lyrical or musical quality to it? Why do you think this is?
   _____
   _____
   _____
7) What tone (emotion or feeling) does the story feel like it has?
   _____
   _____
   _____
8) Do you see any parallels to your own life experiences through this story? How?
   _____
   _____
   _____

9) How is this story different from others that you have read before?

_____
_____
_____

10) Was this story hard to understand? If so, what characteristics within the story made it hard to understand?

_____
_____
_____

11) This poem/short story is from a Native American author. What do you think makes this distinctively Native American?

_____
_____
_____

12) What does story tell you about Native Americans in Oklahoma?

_____
_____
_____

13) What will you remember about this story?

_____
_____
_____

14) Do you think Native American writing should be covered in more classes? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

15) Would reading more literature like this help you understand Native American culture? If not, what would be a better way to learn about/teach about Native American culture? Explain.

_____
_____
_____

Appendix E: "On the Road" and "The Flood" reflection

Reflect upon both "On the Road" by Langston Hughes and "The Flood" by Joy Harjo and write a paragraph about your thoughts on the stories. It can be about the specific stories, the meanings, your impressions of them, or anything you want to say about it. There is no specific answer that is wanted or required, just your thoughts about the two stories read and discussed in class. By turning in a paragraph, you will receive credit for its completion. Feel free to write on this paper, or on a separate piece of paper. If you have any questions, just ask.

Appendix F: TOCAR Pre-Survey Results

1) Do you feel that racial inequality is still present in the United States today?

A.	Yes	24
B.	No	6
C.	Unsure	3

2) How big of an issue is race in your life?

A.	Not existent	13
B.	Mildly existent	15
C.	Existent	4
D.	Very Existent	1
E.	Part of Everyday Life	0

3) How big of an issue is racism in the United States?

A.	Not existent	0
B.	Mildly existent	6
C.	Existent	16
D.	Very existent	5
E.	Part of Everyday Life	6

4) Have you ever been teased or made fun of because of your race?

A.	Yes	10
B.	No	23
C.	Unsure	0

5) Have you experienced discrimination because of your race?

A.	Yes	9
B.	No	24
C.	Unsure	0

6) Have you ever witnessed or been a part of an act of racism?

A.	Yes	14
B.	No	15
C.	Unsure	4

7) What would you do if you witnessed an act of racism?

A.	Say Something	28
B.	Watch	1
C.	Walk Away	4

8) Can minorities (races/cultures other than white) be racist?

A.	Yes	32
B.	No	1
C.	Unsure	0

9) Can Whites be racist?

A.	Yes	32
B.	No	1
C.	Unsure	0

10) How many family/friends/acquaintances from other races or cultures do you interact with on a weekly basis?

A.	0	1
B.	1-3	11
C.	4-6	9
D.	6-10	4
E.	more than 10	8

11) How comfortable do you feel when you are the only person of your race/culture in a room or group of people?

A.	Very uncomfortable	2
B.	Uncomfortable	5
C.	Comfortable	17
D.	Very comfortable	6
E.	I have never experienced this	3

12) Would you marry outside of your race?

A.	Yes	14
B.	No	6
C.	I would but my family wouldn't like it	3
D.	I never think about race in relationships	10

13) Are stereotypes true?

A.	Yes, stereotypes don't lie	2
B.	Well, there's truth to every stereotype	6
C.	A little	17
D.	Not really	8

14) Do you believe stereotypes play a role in racial inequality?

A.	Yes	26
B.	No	3
C.	Unsure	4

15) Do you use racial slurs?

A.	Yes	2
B.	No	17
C.	Sometimes	4
D.	Only when joking	10

16) Does the government provide enough protection from racial actions and punishment for them?

A.	Yes	6
B.	No	14
C.	Unsure	13

17) Rate the effect of racial differences on the social structure in our country.

A.	Very low	2
B.	Low	7
C.	No effect	3
D.	High	16
E.	Very High	5

18) Do you consider yourself to be knowledgeable on racial and ethical issues of our country's past and present?

A.	Yes	15
B.	No	2
C.	Moderately	16

19) Do you see the legal system as being fair towards all races and ethnicities?

A.	Yes	7
B.	No	16
C.	Somewhat	9
D.	Unsure	1

20) What is your gender?

A.	Male	18
B.	Female	15
C.	Other	0

21) What is your age?

A.	18	8
B.	19-21	20
C.	22-29	1
D.	30-39	4
E.	over 40	0

22) What is your ethnicity/race? (LEAVE BLANK IF YOU DON'T IDENTIFY WITH ANY OF THE BELOW)

A.	Asian	0
B.	African or African-American	2
C.	Hispanic or Latino/Latina	2
D.	Native American	5
E.	White	23
Left Blank		1

Appendix G: TOCAR Pre- and Post-Survey Results

1) Do you feel that racial inequality is still present in the United States today?

	Pre	Post
Yes	24	27
No	6	5
Unsure	3	1

2) How big of an issue is race in your life?

	Pre	Post
Not existent	13	17
Mildly existent	15	12
Existent	4	3
Very Existent	1	0
Part of everyday life	0	1

3) How big of an issue is racism in the United States?

	Pre	Post
Not existent	0	1
Mildly existent	6	3
Existent	16	16
Very existent	5	6
Part of everyday life	6	7

4) Have you ever been teased or made fun of because of your race?

	Pre	Post
Yes	11	10
No	25	23
Unsure	0	0

5) Have you experienced discrimination because of your race?

	Pre	Post
Yes	9	9
No	24	24
Unsure	0	0

6) Have you ever witnessed or been a part of an act of racism?

	Pre	Post
Yes	14	16
No	15	14
Unsure	4	3

7) What would you do if you witnessed an act of racism?

	Pre	Post
Say Something	28	30
Watch	1	0
Walk Away	4	3

8) Can minorities (races/cultures other than white) be racist?

	Pre	Post
Yes	32	32
No	1	0
Unsure	0	1

9) Can Whites be racist?

	Pre	Post
Yes	32	33
No	1	0
Unsure	0	0

10) How many family/friends/acquaintances from other races or cultures do you interact with on a weekly basis?

	Pre	Post
0	1	0
1-3	11	9
4-6	9	7
6-10	4	5
more than 10	8	12

11) How comfortable do you feel when you are the only person of your race/culture in a room or group of people?

	Pre	Post
Very uncomfortable	2	5
Uncomfortable	5	6
Comfortable	17	15
Very comfortable	6	4
I have never experienced this	3	3

12) Would you marry outside of your race?

	Pre	Post
Yes	14	19
No	6	2
I would but my family wouldn't like it	3	3
I never think about race in relationships	10	9

13) Are stereotypes true?

	Pre	Post
Yes stereotype don't lie	2	1
Well there's truth to every stereotype	6	6
A little	17	15
Not really	8	11

14) Do you believe stereotypes play a role in racial inequality?

	Pre	Post
Yes	26	28
No	3	3
Unsure	4	2

15) Do you use racial slurs?

	Pre	Post
Yes	2	1
No	17	21
Sometimes	4	5
Only when I am joking	10	6

16) Does the government provide enough protection from racial actions and punishment for them?

	Pre	Post
Yes	6	5
No	14	19
Unsure	13	9

17) Rate the effect of racial differences on the social structure in our country.

	Pre	Post
No effect	2	5
Very low	7	1
Low	3	9
High	16	16
Very high	5	2

18) Do you consider yourself to be knowledgeable on racial and ethical issues of our country's past and present?

	Pre	Post
Yes	16	17
No	2	2
Moderately	16	14

19) Do you see the legal system as being fair towards all races and ethnicities?

	Pre	Post
Yes	7	6
No	16	15
Somewhat	9	11
Unsure	1	1

20) What is your gender?

	Pre	Post
Male	18	18
Female	15	15
Other	0	0

21) What is your age?

	Pre	Post
18	8	8
19-21	20	20
22-29	1	1
30-39	4	4
Over 40	0	0

22) What is your ethnicity/race? (LEAVE BLANK IF YOU DON'T IDENTIFY WITH ANY OF THE BELOW)

	Pre	Post
Asian	0	0
Other (left blank)	1	1
African-American	2	2
Hispanic/Latino	2	2
Native American	5	5
White	23	23

Appendix H: Campus Climate Survey for SSC Students

As part of a process of identifying critical issues related to racial issues on our campus, I am asking you to complete this campus climate survey. This survey is being conducted by Seminole State College professor Justin Yates as part of a doctoral research project. I am interested in feedback about your experiences and perceptions of the SSC campus.

INSTRUCTIONS:
Please record your answers on this paper by circling the answer you identify/agree with. Please do not write your name on the survey. This is an anonymous survey. Your responses are confidential and will never be reported individually.

1) Do you feel that racial inequality is still present in the United States today?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Unsure

2) How big of an issue is race in your life?
    F. Not existent
    G. Mildly existent
    H. Existent
    I. Very Existent
    J. Part of Everyday Life

3) How big of an issue is racism in the United States?
    F. Not existent
    G. Mildly existent
    H. Existent
    I. Very existent
    J. Part of Everyday Life

4) Have you ever been teased or made fun of because of your race?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Unsure

5) Have you experienced discrimination because of your race?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Unsure

6) Have you ever witnessed or been a part of an act of racism?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Unsure

7) What would you do if you witnessed an act of racism?
    D. Say Something
    E. Watch
    F. Walk Away

8) Can minorities (races/cultures other than white) be racist?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Unsure

9) Can Whites be racist?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Unsure

10) How many family/friends/acquaintances from other races or cultures do you interact with on a weekly basis?
    F. 0
    G. 1-3
    H. 4-6
    I. 6-10
    J. more than 10

11) How comfortable do you feel when you are the only person of your race/culture in a room or group of people?
    F. Very uncomfortable
    G. Uncomfortable
    H. Comfortable
    I. Very comfortable
    J. I have never experienced this

12) Would you marry outside of your race?
    E. Yes
    F. No
    G. I would but my family wouldn't like it
    H. I never think about race in relationships

13) Are stereotypes true?
    E. Yes stereotypes don't lie
    F. Well there's truth to every stereotype
    G. A little
    H. Not really

14) Do you believe stereotypes play a role in racial inequality?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Unsure

15) Do you use racial slurs?
    E. Yes
    F. No
    G. Sometimes
    H. Only when I am joking

16) Does the government provide enough protection from racial actions and punishment for them?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Unsure

17) Rate the effect of racial differences on the social structure in our country.
    F. Very low
    G. Low
    H. No effect
    I. High
    J. Very High

18) Do you consider yourself to be knowledgeable on racial and ethical issues of our country's past and present?
    D. Yes
    E. No
    F. Moderately

19) Do you see the legal system as being fair towards all races and ethnicities?
    E. Yes
    F. No
    G. Somewhat
    H. Unsure

20) What is your gender?
    D. Male
    E. Female
    F. Other

21) What is your age?
    F. 18 or under
    G. 19-21
    H. 22-29
    I. 30-39
    J. over 40

22) What is your ethnicity/race? (LEAVE BLANK IF YOU DON'T IDENTIFY WITH ANY OF THE BELOW)
    F. Asian
    G. African or African-American
    H. Hispanic or Latino/Latina
    I. Native American
    J. White

Appendix I: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your home town. What was it like?
    a. Tell me about the school you went to. What was it like?
2. What types of people did you grow up around and interact with?
3. What diverse racial groups, if any, did you encounter on a daily basis?
4. What was your opinion of these racial groups?
5. What changes, if any, have you found in your opinions?
6. What changes have you seen, if any, in this view since being in college?
    a. What factors changed your opinion?
7. How do you feel about reading literature? Is it something you enjoy?
    a. Why or why not?
8. Did you read literature in high school, either as class assignments or on your own?
    a. Why or why not?
9. What methods do you utilize to understand a story's meaning?
10. Do you believe discussing a story with a group allows you to understand the material better?
    a. If so, what about the discussions help you?
11. Do you believe that hearing everyone's ideas about a story helps your understanding of the literature or hurts it?
    a. Why or why not?
12. Were there certain stories you liked more than others?
    a. If so, what made these stories more meaningful to you.
13. We read a story about a Native American girl leaving home and coming back later. Did you identify with any parts of the story?
    a. What parts? Why did you identify with it?
14. We also read a story about an African American man who tried to find shelter and was ultimately beaten and jailed. Did you identify with any parts of the story?
    a. What parts? Why did you identify with it?
15. How did you feel about the literature that was read in your Composition II class?
16. How useful is literature in conveying a message to the reader?
    a. What makes a story's message more memorable?
17. How did the stories from different racial backgrounds help you understand their culture?
18. Do you believe literature can change minds about a certain subject?
    a. Why or why not?
19. Do you feel like your overall perspective on Native Americans or African Americans changed by reading these stories and discussing them?
20. Do you think stories like these should be read in more classes?
    a. Why or why not?

Appendix J: Recruitment Scripts

In-Class Research Recruitment Script

As a student in Composition II at Seminole State College, you may be eligible to participate in a 1 hour research literature and discussion activity and a possible 1 hour interview. This research will consist of reading two pieces of literature and discussing them as a class. The discussions may be audio recorded, but students may not be required to participate in recorded research-related activities without signed consent. Names and identities will not be asked or required for this study. And all recordings will be destroyed once electronically transcribed.

Those who participate in the study will be contacted within a few weeks with an email asking for 5 to 10 volunteers to participant in a 1 hour interview about the literature and discussion

If you have further questions, please contact Lawrence Baines at (405) 325-3751, or lbaines@ou.edu, for more information.

Email Interview Recruitment Script

As a student in a Composition II class at Seminole State College this semester, you read and discussed two different stories concerning race. The second part of the research is to interview participants to understand how they felt about the stories and the discussion.

If you would like to participant in a 1 hour interview, please let me know. There will be no compensation for participation in the interview. The interview may be recorded, but your name and what you say will not be used to identify you. The interview recording will be destroyed after it is electronically transcribed.

If you have further questions, please contact me (405) 382-9258, or you can contact my advisor, Lawrence Baines at (405) 325-3751, or lbaines@ou.edu, for more information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Justin Yates

Appendix K: Signed Consent to Participate in Research

Would you like to be involved in research?

I am Justin Yates from the Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum department and I invite you to participate in my research project entitled Literature and Racial Social Sensitivity in Students at a Rural Two-Year Community College. This research is being conducted at Seminole State College. You were selected as a possible participant because you are enrolled in a Composition II class at Seminole State College. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Please read this document and contact me to ask any questions that you may have BEFORE agreeing to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? The purpose of this research is to discover if literature taught in a Composition II class in a rural two-year college can affect the students' social sensitivity toward diverse racial groups.

How many participants will be in this research? About 40 Composition II students will take part in this research.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this research, you will be observed during class discussion and you agree to provide your reading reflections. The selections and discussion are a normal aspect of the Composition II class.

How long will this take? Your participation will take approximately 1 hour for each story.

What are the risks and/or benefits if I participate? There are no risks and no benefits from being in this research.

Will I be compensated for participating? You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research.

Who will see my information? In research reports, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only approved researchers and the OU Institutional Review Board will have access to the records.

You have the right to access the research data that has been collected about you as a part of this research. However, you may not have access to this information until the entire research has completely finished and you consent to this temporary restriction.

Do I have to participate? No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any question and can stop participating at any time.

Will my identity be anonymous or confidential? Your name will not be retained or linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified. The data you provide will be destroyed unless you specifically agree for data retention or retention of contact information at the end of the research. Please check all of the options that you agree to:

I agree to being quoted directly. ___ Yes ___ No

I agree to have my name reported with quoted material. ___Yes ___ No

I agree for the researcher to use my data in future studies. ___Yes ___ No

Audio Recording of Research Activities To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty

I consent to audio recording. ___Yes ___ No

Will I be contacted again? The researcher would like to contact you again to recruit you into this research or to gather additional information.

_____ I give my permission for the researcher to contact me in the future.

_____ I do not wish to be contacted by the researcher again.

Who do I contact with questions, concerns or complaints? If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact my advisor, Lawrence Baines, at (405) 325-3752 or Lbaines@ou.edu.

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) or if you cannot reach the researcher(s).*You will be given a copy of this document for your records. By providing information to the researcher(s), I am agreeing to participate in this* research*.*

Participant Signature	Print Name	Date
Signature of Researcher Obtaining Consent	Print Name	Date

Appendix L: Signed Consent to Participate in Interviews

Would you like to be involved in research?

I am Justin Yates from the Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum department and I invite you to participate in my research project entitled Literature and Racial Social Sensitivity in Students at a Rural Two-Year Community College. This research is being conducted at Seminole State College. You were selected as a possible participant because you participated in a discussion of literature in a study during a Composition II class at Seminole State College. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study.

Please read this document and contact me to ask any questions that you may have BEFORE agreeing to take part in my research.

What is the purpose of this research? The purpose of this research is to discover if literature taught in a Composition II class in a rural two-year college can affect the students' social sensitivity toward diverse racial groups.

How many participants will be in this research? About approximately 5 Composition II students will take part in this research.

What will I be asked to do? If you agree to be in this research, you will be asked a series of questions concerning the literature and discussion of the literature in a Composition II class. You will also be asked to convey your personal feelings about race and how the literature effected your perception on race, if at all.

How long will this take? Your participation will take approximately 1 hour. Depending on your availability that could be 1 interview, or it could be broken into two 30-minute interviews.

What are the risks and/or benefits if I participate? There are no risks and no benefits from being in this research.

Will I be compensated for participating? You will not be reimbursed for your time and participation in this research.

Who will see my information? In research reports, there will be no information that will make it possible to identify you.

You have the right to access the research data that has been collected about you as a part of this research. However, you may not have access to this information until the entire research has completely finished and you consent to this temporary restriction.

Do I have to participate? No. If you do not participate, you will not be penalized or lose benefits or services unrelated to the research. If you decide to participate, you don't have to answer any question and can stop participating at any time.

Will my identity be anonymous or confidential? Your name will not be retained or linked with your responses unless you specifically agree to be identified. The data you provide will be destroyed unless you specifically agree for data retention or retention of contact information at the end of the research. Please check all of the options that you agree to:

I agree to being quoted directly. ___ Yes ___ No

I agree to have my name reported with quoted material. ___Yes ___ No

I agree for the researcher to use my data in future studies. ___Yes ___ No

Audio Recording of Research Activities To assist with accurate recording of your responses, interviews may be recorded on an audio recording device. You have the right to refuse to allow such recording without penalty

I consent to audio recording. ___Yes ___ No

Will I be contacted again? The researcher would like to contact you again to recruit you into this research or to gather additional information.

_____ I give my permission for the researcher to contact me in the future.

_____ I do not wish to be contacted by the researcher again.

Who do I contact with questions, concerns or complaints? If you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research or have experienced a research-related injury, contact me at (405) 382-9258 or j.yates@sscok.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Lawrence Baines, at (405) 325-3752 or Lbaines@ou.edu.

You can also contact the University of Oklahoma – Norman Campus Institutional Review Board (OU-NC IRB) at 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, concerns, or complaints about the research and wish to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) or if you cannot reach the researcher(s).

You will be given a copy of this document for your records. By providing information to the researcher(s), I am agreeing to participate in this research.

Participant Signature	Print Name	Date
Signature of Researcher Obtaining Consent	Print Name	Date