

WATCH YOUR MOUTH:
SWEARING AND CREDIBILITY IN THE CLASSROOM

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Communication.

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ABSTRACT

Swearing and credibility are directly related, as credibility is the perception of an individual derived from their verbal and nonverbal communication. Credibility has a fundamental impact in the realm of education, as the more credible an instructor is perceived to be, the higher students score in cognitive learning. When an instructor demonstrates the three elements of credibility – high expertise, trustworthiness and caring – students report that they learned more. Swearing is a unique category of language in that it can reflect a broad range of emotions in both the speaker and the audience. The same words can reflect or elicit joy, passion, anger, frustration and humor. Through a series of three focus groups, this research examines how those words can positively or negatively influence students' perceived credibility of their instructors. It specifically reflects that the context and intent of the swear words have a more significant impact on the perceived credibility of the instructor than the words themselves.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Shit happens,” was the phrase philosophy professor Daniel Petersen used to introduce his classes to the idea of free will and determinism. But that seemingly innocuous phrase became an apt descriptor of Petersen’s own situation after a complaint was raised in 2017 stating that professors “have no right to use profanity in the classroom.” Petersen taught philosophy courses for 21 years at Hawaii Community College and the University of Hawaii at Hilo and described his use of profanity as a way to make students sit up and think a bit. His sprinkling of four-letter words throughout his lectures was not without careful consideration. But that single complaint, which described profanity as a lack of respect for students, led to backlash from the college and the eventual resignation of Petersen. He refused to change his teaching style, stating that he believed in his heart he had done nothing wrong (Chen, 2017).

Just a year later, Howard Finkelstein of Brookdale Community College in New Jersey received national news coverage after being recorded swearing at a student during a discussion about sexual harassment. Finkelstein is seen in the video saying “fuck your life” to the student in response to a question (Ernst, 2018). The video brought attention to the debate about whether or not professors and lecturers should be allowed to use swear words in the classroom, and students, faculty and other instructors weighed in with their opinions. Academic freedom expert John Wilson said that professors should be at liberty to say provocative things, as it can be a useful teaching technique to grab the attention of students. Contradicting a student is not inherently unprofessional, even if it utilizes aggressive language (Study International Staff, 2018). While

the news broadened the platform of discussions surrounding profanity in the classroom, the debate of whether it should or should not be done has never reached a consensus.

Some have argued that profanity demonstrates a lack of respect to students. Emily George, a student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, believed that the use of profanity “illustrates that my instructors do not perceive students as more intelligent than to use words that spoil verbal language” (2017). This behavior can also lead to informality in the classroom, as students may feel encouraged to address professors with the same level of language. Yet others believe that swearing in the classroom makes a professor seem like “more of a person,” as it gives the impression that they are relaxed and more authentic. At the same time, a gratuitous use of profanity may backfire and undermine the instructor’s credibility (Twait, 2004). Some instructors have weighed in with their own opinions, including Jordan Schneider, an instructor at The City University in New York. Schneider believes that the use of profanity by a professor “dispels the notion that obscenity is the tool of the inept, the uneducated, and the poor.” He states that it can humanize the overwhelming experience of pursuing a degree by becoming a subtle act of rebellion, yet profanity can only be utilized if the teacher has demonstrated confidence and competence of the subject matter, as it removes the natural formal authority of the classroom (Schneider, 2016). It is unlikely that the debate of whether profanity should or should not be used in the classroom from a moral point of view will ever be resolved. But the question of whether profanity in the classroom can affect students’ learning outcomes has the potential to be explored through academic research.

Swearing and credibility are directly related, as credibility is the perception of an individual derived from their verbal and nonverbal communication. But relatively scarce research has been done on the intersection of the use of profanity and the perception of

credibility in the field of education. Maria Brann, a professor at the University of Kentucky, found that credibility is one of the most important attributes a college instructor needs. If a student does not believe an instructor to be credible, they will discount the teachings presented and fail to receive the benefits that higher education is intended to provide. Instructors with high credibility demonstrate many of the effective communication behaviors in instruction, including argumentativeness, immediacy, assertiveness and responsiveness. These behaviors have numerous positive effects on a student's learning experience, as they report higher motivation and both affective and cognitive learning. They feel more understood by instructors, evaluate them more positively and communicate with their instructors with higher frequency, both in and out of the classroom (2005). The following study will begin to explore the impact of profanity on instructor's credibility in the higher education environment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Credibility

As is the case with many of the “taboo” words used throughout this study, there is more than one opinion on how credibility can be defined. It can be built on the characteristics of a combination of traits, including trustworthiness, expertise, dynamism, intelligence, character and goodwill (Kouzes & Posner, 2011; DeGroot, Young, & VanSlette, 2015). Regardless of how it is developed, credibility is commonly accepted to be the quality of being believed or trusted (Kouzes & Posner, 2011; Wager, 2014). As the American Heritage Dictionary puts it, credibility means that a source is authentic, dependable and reliable (2000). Characters who possess credibility garner respect from those around them, which feeds trust, which in turn develops additional credibility (Wager, 2014).

The importance of credibility in the professional world is found repeatedly. Constituents and employees look for credibility in their leaders, judging their competence and integrity as standards by which they make choices. This can impact consumer behavior, market performance and employee buy-in (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). But the importance of credibility extends beyond the realm of corporate work and has a fundamental impact in the realm of education as well. The more credible an instructor is perceived to be, the higher students score in cognitive learning (DeGroot et al, 2015; Martin et al, 1997; McCroskey et al, 2004). These perceptions are based primarily on a teacher’s verbal and nonverbal communication with the students. When an instructor demonstrates high expertise in a topic and is able to effectively communicate that expertise to students, they are viewed as competent. If they are also able to demonstrate that they

can be trusted, they are viewed as having positive character, and if they are simultaneously able to communicate to their students that they care for their wellbeing, students report that they learned more from the instructors. The evaluation of caring as a component of credibility is derivative of Aristotle's discussion of goodwill in public speaking (Martin, Mottet, & Chesebro, 1997). These three elements, competence, character and caring, sometimes referred to as intelligence, character and goodwill, comprise ethos, the credibility of a subject, which directly influences the impact of a message. As McCroskey found, "no message is received independently from its source" (1999).

As a person's presentation of themselves is heavily related to their perceived credibility, formality was long considered necessary to establishing and developing it. Formal settings were thought of as professional and the professional world demanded a higher level of education, lending to the believability of a source. As Smith summarized, dressing too informally or demonstrating unprofessional manners is a form of casual behavior. These seemingly harmless behaviors can lower an individual's credibility in the eyes of those around them. Smith acknowledges that society as a whole is becoming less formal, with professional dress standards decreasing and more colloquial language being used with supervisors, but the perception of credibility is still moderately tied to the presentation of formality (Smith, 1998). These findings were echoed in Collier's research into the effects of bad grammar on credibility. As good grammar is fundamental to effective communication, it is seen as a sign of professional credibility. A lack of ability to execute well-composed information sends a message of poor education and low intellect, leading to lower credibility (Collier, 2015).

Informality can thus be perceived as a lack of competence or caring, but dress and grammar are far from the only ways this can be impacted. Konig's study on aggressive language

and credibility is one of the few that comes close to examining the relationship between profanity and credibility. Aggressive language, while not necessarily profanity, includes personal attacks and uncivil language, often taking the form of sarcasm, teasing or cynicism (König & Jucks, 2019). The results of the study are significant and provide a foundation for further exploration in a few directions. The aggressive language measured throughout the study resulted in lower message credibility ratings, lower subjective comprehension, and lower expertise and integrity ratings. The more aggressive the speaker was, the less likely the audience was to see them as a credible source. Even if they find the message compatible with their own beliefs, the delivery will lead them to believe that the source is not trustworthy. The element of the study that could lead to further exploration is that of manipulation – whether participants believed they had been deceived or lied to – which has tie-ins to instructor perception. The participants in the study ranked both speakers using aggressive language and positive language as being more manipulative and less sincere than those using neutral language. Instructors who use overly positive language can be perceived as insincere, or inauthentic leading to a lack of credibility among students. This was reflected in DeGroot’s exploration of social media use and instructor credibility. The instructors who were self-disclosive and authentic in both how they presented themselves inside and outside of the classroom were perceived as having high immediacy, which led to increased credibility in the eyes of the students (2015). Instructor credibility is therefore enhanced by authenticity and neutral language, and damaged by overly aggressive or overly positive language, as it leads students to feel manipulated.

Swearing

Not all dirty words are created equal, and as such there is some difficulty in understanding which ones can and cannot be used in certain settings. Timothy Jay, a leading researcher on the topic of dirty words, found that there are numerous categories which dirty words can fall into. Each has its own unique place and is derived from specific evolutions of language (Jay T. , 1992). Many individuals refer to cursing, or cussing, as an overall term to describe harsh language, and swearing and profanity are similarly used as broad descriptors by the common person (Bergen, 2016). But while these terms are interchangeable in day-to-day speech, it is important to differentiate between them as they often result in different levels of offensiveness. There are several categories under which specific swear words fall, and additional categories that encompass more of the intent behind the words than the individual words themselves. The categories with specific words include curse words, profanities, obscenities, slang, slurs and scatology. Cursing is meant to invoke harm on someone through speech. It's commonly derived from religious words, such as "goddamn you" or "go to hell," but it can use nonreligious language as well, such as "eat shit." The speaker is effectively cursing the recipient and wishing them ill will (Jay, 1992, p. 1). Profanity is abusing religious terms, or treating them with irreverence, but not with the goal to denigrate them. It's operating outside the customs of a religious belief, exclaiming, for example, "Jesus Christ, I'm hungry." The speaker's intent is not to denigrate the name of Jesus Christ, but merely treat it as an expletive (Jay, 1992, p. 3). An obscenity is meant to be repulsive to the senses and is typically sexual in nature. This is a popular category and includes "fuck," the most frequently recorded dirty word in public use. Slang, though constantly changing, has defined words within groups that are derived to increase ease of communication. They may not always fall into the common understanding of a dirty

word, but they are seen as highly informal and nonstandard vocabulary. While slang is used within a group and signifies a sense of belonging, a slur is the informal language used outside of a group to describe it. Slurs are disparaging with intent to cause distress to the recipient. The challenge with defining slurs and monitoring their use is that they are often adopted by the group and used as terms of endearment or humor. Even when they are repossessed, members outside of the group are unable to use them in the “in-group” understanding of the terms. Scatology is the final category that dirty words can be grouped under and includes terms relating to excrement or scatology. This is another category of heavily trafficked words, including “shit,” “piss” and “crap” (Jay T. , 1992).

The categories of dirty words that encompass the intent of words beyond their linguistic definition include blasphemy, vulgarity, taboo and epithets. Blasphemy, unlike the category of profanity above, is a direct attack on religious language. It is more the act of degradation itself than an entire category of words. For example, saying “screw the pope” would be blasphemy, but “screw” and “pope” are not in and of themselves blasphemous terms (Jay, 1992, p. 3). Taboo words are marked thus in an effort to preserve social cohesion and comprise an ever-changing list that fluctuates from situation to situation. They are deemed taboo by authorities at an individual or institutional level on the assumption that some form of harm will come to the speaker, listener or society if the words are spoken, though the nature of that harm is not clearly defined (Jay, 2009). Taboo words often start as a euphemism replacing another word that is already considered to be taboo. For example, the term “prostitute” started as a euphemism for “whore,” which was taboo to use in social settings. Through negative association, “prostitute” gradually moved into the same realm as “whore,” and was considered taboo in and of itself. Then the euphemism “hooker” was used to replace “prostitute” and the euphemism-taboo cycle

continued (Jay, 1992, p. 14). Bergen makes note that a taboo is meant to reinforce social norms. The definition of the word is not what violates social norms, it is the negative association the word carries that makes it a problem. The best example is parents who will discuss “poo” with their children, but wash their mouths out if they happen to utter “shit” in the same context (Bergen, 2016, p. 9). The history of taboo words ties directly into the category of vulgarity; language that lacks cultivation and is used by the undereducated. While upper-class individuals might use a euphemism in place of a taboo word, the common person who used taboo words would be considered vulgar. However, vulgarity is not merely another term for taboo language. It also encompasses many scatological words, such as “snot” and “piss.” The use of scatology was vulgar in that it was unacceptable in society, though it could become in-group language of the common person. Epithets encompass all the various categories of dirty words and tie significantly in to the when and why of use. They are disparaging, forceful outbursts of emotional language. Epithets are what come to mind when considering the use of dirty words as individual statements. It’s the utterance of frustration in hitting a thumb with a nail and exclaiming “fuck!” Sometimes the epithet is directed at a specific target (the hammer) and other times it serves merely as a tool to reduce anger in the exclamer (Jay, 1992, p. 7).

Despite the category of language dirty words fall under, very few are used as a swear word in its denotative definition. Scholars note that the context of utterance is everything. As Jay states, “Dirty words are influenced by context more than any other type of language in modern English” (1992, p. 13). The context involves the physical location, social event, relationship of the individuals and the intent behind the words (1992, p.12). Consider the many applications of “son of a bitch.” When hurled at someone in anger there is little doubt it is intended in its harshest sense, but it can also be used as a term of endearment – a head-shaking, quietly uttered

“you son of bitch” after someone solves a tough problem. It is the intent behind the expression in these situations that gives the word its connotative meaning. When what is commonly seen as a swear word is used within its denotative context, it suddenly loses its punch. When using “ass” to refer to the donkey or “cock” to a rooster, the speaker is not typically seeking to denigrate the animals. The words by themselves are not harmful. When used repeatedly in a denotative context, some words will lose their taboo completely. Jay describes the rarity of hearing the word “condom” in public prior to the AIDS epidemic and increase of sex education in schools. The increased usage of the term desensitized its impact, moving it into the realm of everyday language (p. 14).

The uniqueness of swearing lies in its ability to elicit a broad range of emotions. It can be used to express pain or cause it in others, to demonstrate frustration, anger or contempt, emphasize a situation or express joy and delight through humor (Bergen, 2016). Given the many contexts a swear word can apply to, it’s difficult to nail down which words are acceptable in which social contexts. Indeed, as Bergen notes, even the FCC, who are responsible for monitoring language in the media, do not have a list of any sort referencing which words are unacceptable for public use (p. 10). Instead, they ban profanity, which is defined by them as “language so grossly offensive to members of the public who actually hear it as to amount to a nuisance” (Federal Communications Commission). But even offensiveness is subjective. Janshewitz illustrates this by examining the difference in offensiveness, one’s own point of view of inappropriateness, and tabooeness, the perceived inappropriateness of the word in society (2008). Participants in the study rated the tabooeness of the word higher than the offensiveness of the word. They believed it was more unacceptable in society than they themselves believed it to be. Bergen further demonstrated that the offensiveness of a word is highly subjective to

individual experience. In several surveys from different countries, he found that four consistent categories could be determined by where they fell most often on the scale of offensiveness. The most offensive terms were slurs – the words that can only be intended to denigrate individuals based on their group membership. Second most offensive are those words which have to do with sex and sexual acts. Next he finds words that describe bodily functions, and last on the scale of offensiveness are words that include religious or sacred context (Bergen, 2016).

A number of studies have been done on the influence of swearing on persuasiveness and credibility, but they offer contradictory opinions on whether that influence is positive or negative, leading to the understanding that context is a major variable in the outcomes of the studies. A 1973 study had students listen to tape recorded interviews with a variance of religious, excretory or sexual profanities versus interviews free of any profanity. Findings of the study indicated that profanity, regardless of the type, had a negative effect on the perceived credibility of the source (Bostrom, Baseheart, & Rossiter, 1973). In 1980, a study revealed that counselors who used profanity were perceived as less trustworthy and less competent than those who did not (Paradise, Cohl, & Zweig, 1980). A study in 1989 asked participants to compare two interviews in a magazine, one containing obscene language as used by the subject and the other with obscenities removed. The outcomes of the study revealed that obscenity led to the perception of reduced competence, trustworthiness, sociability, pleasantness and politeness of the subject (Hamilton, 1989). In contrast, a 2005 study showed that swearing increased credibility and trustworthiness even when participants believed swearwords were a sign of deceit (Rassin & van der Heijden, 2005). In 2006, a study found that swearing in the context of a persuasive argument had no impact on perceived speaker credibility (Scherer & Sagarin, 2006). And a 2014 study looking at the effect of profanity within blog posts written by politicians found that the use of

profanity increased the perception of informality and in turn improved the perception of the source, though the impression was not measured specifically for credibility (Cavazza & Guidetti, 2014). It was also found throughout several studies that the gender of the source had an influence on the resulting perception when the source used profanity. Female sources who used profanity had a greater influence on attitude change of the participants and were more positively perceived than their male counterparts. However, the difference in participant gender was not significant (Bostrom, Baseheart, & Rossiter, 1973; Paradise, Cohl, & Zweig, 1980; Cavazza & Guidetti, 2014).

Scherer and Sagarin, who conducted research on the effects of obscenity on persuasion, suggest that time has led society to a more tolerant and relaxed stance toward swearing, citing the alternate reactions to the use of “damn” in the 1939 production of *Gone With the Wind* to that of Vice President Dick Cheney telling a senator to “go fuck yourself” on the senate floor in 2004. The first resulted in a \$5,000 fine, while the second didn’t even require a public apology (2006). This pattern of changing perceptions toward swear words and the impact they have on source credibility suggests that it is an ever-changing and therefore ever-relevant field of study. The differences in situations studied also indicate that context leads to different results in how swearing is perceived by an audience. As instructor’s credibility has a significant influence on the success of a student in the realm of education, this opens a highly relevant context of study that has not yet been explored. Given the variance in situational results, a study toward understanding how instructor credibility is influenced by swearing is necessary to learn whether it promotes a more effective learning environment. This qualitative, exploratory study into student perception of instructor credibility as it relates to the use of swear words in the

educational setting will open the door for further exploration and quantitative analysis of the direct influence swearing has on educational outcomes.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research is to understand how swearwords affect the perceived credibility of instructors in the context of higher education. Understanding this effect will allow college and university instructors to have a better context for how and when swear words can serve to complement versus undermine their teaching.

1. How significant of an impact does an instructors' word choice have on their perceived credibility as judged by their students?
2. Are there some categories of swear words that have a more significant perceived negative impact to an instructor's credibility than others?
3. Are there some categories of swear words that have a more significant perceived positive impact to an instructor's credibility?
4. Does a student's gender impact their perception of swearing used in a classroom setting?

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

The research for this study was conducted through the use of focus groups. Participants for the groups were current students attending Wichita State University in the Spring 2020 semester, and were recruited for the groups through instructors and university newsletters. Three focus groups were conducted, each seeking the greatest range in age and experience in order to introduce a variety of attitudes and beliefs into the conversation among participants. The groups ranged from six to nine participants each.

The participants were asked to fill out a brief demographic survey prior to participating in the focus group. [See Appendix A for demographic survey.] The survey asked for age, grade level in college, gender, and whether or not they were an international student. International students were dismissed from the study, as the variables of cultural acceptance and social norms were not included in the research questions this study aimed to explore. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 55. The grade levels of the participants ranged from freshmen to graduate students, with a total of 13 females, nine males, and two non-binary students.

The focus groups were designed to explore students' attitudes toward swearing and their perceptions of the use of swearing by peers and instructors. The conversation followed a predetermined set of questions [See Appendix B for focus group questions] guided by a facilitator, allowing for alternate lines of questioning to flow from the direction of the conversation. The questions began by exploring the participants' personal use of swearing, along with what situations they would and would not choose to swear in. This was followed with questions about how they believed they were perceived when they do swear. The conversation

then moved to their attitude and experience with instructors using swear words in the classroom. After establishing that overall perception, they were asked if it was influenced by the type of swear word being used. The participants discussed the use of the six categories of swear words: cursing, profanity, obscenities, slang, slurs and scatology. Participants were encouraged to comment on the responses of other participants, and ask follow-up questions to further the discussion. To wrap up the focus group, participants were asked about their attitude toward the use of swear words in the classroom if other students were uncomfortable, as well as how they believed the swear words affected the overall attitude of the class.

These focus groups were transcribed [See Appendices C, D, & E for transcripts] and reviewed through thematic analysis to provide insight toward how the use of swear words in a classroom is perceived by the students.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Participant Background and Swearing Use

The participants' personal use of swearing had little variance across the groups. Each individual stated that they use swearing in their personal lives, though there was a difference in the frequency of that use and the situational awareness among them. This section will explore the backgrounds of the participants and their general attitudes toward swearing.

The first focus group had the greatest range in age, with one returning adult participant who was 55-years-old. Each of the nine participants in this group volunteered that they frequently used swear words in their day-to-day lives. Some of them described it as a natural aspect of their language, which was influenced and shaped by their associations growing up. The oldest participant had a different background than the rest, growing up in a rural setting and working on a farm. "Out on the farm, that's just something that you do. You were raised up with it. Your grandparents did it, your daddy did it, I do it. That's just the way it is," said M55. While some of the participants expressed learning to swear from family members, other participants described their family as individuals that they avoid swearing around. "I have a filter," said M19, "so if I'm around my family or whatever, I won't, because they don't like that. And I respect that." Only two participants stated that they do their best to avoid swearing, F19(A) and M20. Though they personally didn't use it to a great degree, neither one had a concern with swearing as used by others. Curiously, F19(A) admitted that she tried to avoid it because she didn't want to be taken less seriously. However, she didn't take those around her less seriously if they were to use swear words in their personal language.

The appeal toward swearing was described by the participants as an emotional or expressive tool. This fell on both the negative and positive ends of the emotional spectrum. It was described as a tool to express anger or frustration, and also a tool to express passion, excitement or comfortability. “If I probably incorporated in like more than one or two cuss words in a sentence, they’re gonna probably know that I am a little bit more mad about a situation, or just have strong feelings toward it,” said F20. She continued that sometimes it can be used to build camaraderie, “I think that it actually brings a lot more laughs sometimes when there is a curse word included in it.”

The group did express several deterrents toward swearing, describing a necessary situational awareness to when they considered it appropriate or not to use those specific words. For some, those situations were around family, work settings, or church. Another prominent factor toward perceived acceptability of swearing was the age of the other individuals present. If young children were present, the participants agreed that they would filter their language to avoid swearwords. Similarly, all of the participants aside from M55 described the same filter in place for older individuals. “I think it’s just being in front of an older person. I wouldn’t normally cuss in front of someone older just because it’s out of respect,” said F19(C). The themes of respect and comfortability were the primary deterrents toward swearing, and these are the perceptions that would influence whether or not participants implemented a filter.

The second focus group also drew on associations from family as having a large influence on their own attitudes toward swearing. This group introduced the theme of religion as having an influence on their choices to swear as well. One participant, M18(A), only started swearing after entering the college atmosphere. He described his family as being very religious, so swearing was a taboo thing until he stepped away from the environment he grew up in.

Another participant, N25, agreed that they would not curse around family because it would upset them. They had a similar background, and the distress would be due to religious reasons.

Alternately, participant F18 grew up with swearing as a part of normal conversation, influenced by her family's military background. The primary adults in her life regularly swore, so it was a natural element of speech for her. While M18(B) did not reference his family as having that influence on his language, he said that he picked it up from the people he associates with. "It's standard in the industry that I work in, and just like what I want to do. I'm around it all the time, so I picked it up."

Participants in this group felt that the appeal to swearing was that it can be used to enhance conversation and express a variety of emotions, similarly to the first group. It was described as enhancing to stories, or emphasizing friendship. N25 described this as an emotional expression, like saying "it's really fucking good," when the emphasis is needed. F19 believed it was a connector to close friends. Describing relationships with those she had known for a significant portion of her life. She thought it would emphasize the depth of that relationship that they had the comfortability to use language with each other that they didn't grow up using. F18 agreed that swear words could be used with close friends as a sort of friendly nickname, because she would never use the same kind of language with a mere acquaintance. This was reiterated by M19, who said swearing with people was a way to demonstrate he was comfortable around them. All of the participants were in agreement that they used swearing in conversation, and believed their peers maintained a positive perception of them despite that use.

However, though they did not have a problem with swearing and were frequent users of it, they believed that there were many deterrents to swearing, and an overall negative perception by the public of those who choose to swear. They mentioned the workplace as a situation where

swearing would be taboo. This stemmed from a number of reasons. F18 was told when she was growing up that swearing could make her seem unladylike, and thought that respect of others was a significant reason to refrain from swearing. Others believed that it was unprofessional to swear, and using language like that in front of supervisors or customers would harm their perception of you. This idea of professionalism carried into the classroom setting as well, and M18(B) said it would lead him to refrain from swearing in that setting. M19 was more likely to refrain based off of his perception of the other person. If they seemed like someone who would swear themselves, he was more likely to engage. The idea of power dynamics was brought up in this group as well. The person in control of a situation (boss, teacher, parent) is the one who sets the tone for whether or not swearing is acceptable. N25 also expressed the idea of using swearing to bridge the power-dynamic. For example, in a classroom where the instructor does engage in swearing, it can help the class have a more relaxed atmosphere. They acknowledged though that being in control of that power-dynamic can have a negative influence if students are not comfortable hearing that language. N25 also mentioned that they avoid swearing in some situations because of a hesitancy to reinforce stereotypes. "I feel like my race and my gender intersect. I don't want to be seen as that 'angry black woman.'" F19 agreed that race stereotypes sometimes led her to refrain from swearing. She saw hispanic culture on television as often using language to represent gangsters or unprofessional individuals, and did not want to be associated with that perception.

The third focus group reiterated many of the ideas that were presented in the first two groups. They brought up the influences that their family and education had on their likelihood to swear. Though many of them were raised in families that didn't swear, they recognized that now, that perception has shifted. As F20 said, "My parents did not want me to swear. And now that

I'm like old and grown and live away from them, they don't care as much." F19 agreed, saying that as they've gotten older, that dynamic has shifted. It was briefly mentioned that some of them saw college as being an excuse for their increased use of swear words, but that was not explored further in the conversation.

The appeal to using swear words in this group was broad, and there was a heavy focus on the use of them as expletives. F18(A) said she frequently used them in scenarios of dropping something or accidentally hurting herself, but didn't use them habitually in other language. Several participants mentioned the escalated use of them in video games or competitive scenarios, citing both their own use and that of their friends and significant others. As M18 said, "It's flying when I'm playing games...I feel like that's the type of community where it just happens a lot and it's just well known." This group also discussed the use of swear words as enhancing familiarity. They were more likely to swear around people they are comfortable with and have good relationships with. "I swear all the time with my close friends because it shows I'm comfortable with you," said F19. Participant F18(B) echoed that sentiment, saying that she swears with her family because that's what they grew up doing, and it signals comfort.

This group reiterated several of the previously mentioned reasons for avoiding swear words as well, highlighting professionalism and respect as concepts that would deter them. Many of them operated under the perception that older generations grew up in a world where swearing was extremely taboo, and they believed most older individuals think that you shouldn't swear. A few mentioned that they filter their language around older generations as a sign of respect. This is something they expected from individuals younger than them as well. Despite the relatively young age of the group, several of them mentioned that they are uncomfortable if they hear younger people swearing. They briefly brought up the subject of perceived intelligence as a

deterrent, but didn't seem to believe it was a significant one. "Personally, when I hear other people swear, if they do it a lot, I think...they give an impression that they're uneducated," said F18(B). "At the same time, I swear a lot. And I don't like to think of myself as uneducated."

Perception of Swearing in the Classroom

When asked to discuss their perception of teachers who use swear words in the classroom, the participants were unanimous in that it would not make them feel uncomfortable. Some of them mentioned that it would take them by surprise the first few times they heard it, because it wasn't something they had grown up accustomed to. "You're raised in middle school, preschool, high school, but you know, the teachers are not allowed to swear. So anytime I hear a professor...I'm just, like, astounded by it," said F19(C). Others were used to hearing instructors swear in the classroom setting. "I was in a small high school...so we have that relationship where they feel comfortable...it's just normal for me to hear," said F19(D).

There were several mentions among participants of the collective class reaction when a swear word "slips out unexpectedly," that some students will force a reaction, or giggle, while others don't have a reaction at all. As participant M19(A) in the second focus group put it, "it's like 'look what the grownup said.'" Participant F19 in the second focus group noticed that some instructors would use it as an emphasis on things that were important to remember. The swear word effectively makes the subject stand out to the students, so they're more likely to pay attention to it. Other participants did not notice this, possibly because they were more accustomed to instructors swearing.

Participants also believed that the use of swear words by an instructor helped to remove formality challenges in the classroom. "It almost feels like a barrier is broken down...you're

more on an equal playing field, so to speak,” said M19 in the first focus group. “It opens the dialogue in a more comfortable manner.” In the same group, F20 agreed. She said that she would start thinking about how they interact with the world outside of the classroom setting, giving them dimension beyond just that of an instructor. F19(A) said that the same behavior would make her gain respect for the instructor, because it would show that they don’t put on a filter for their teaching life that they don’t apply in their everyday life. It humanizes them, while also bringing authenticity to their teaching. “It’s very humanizing...to hear actual expression in the words they use instead of just dry lecture,” said M19(A). In the third focus group, F20 thought that using swear words was often an indication that the instructor is talking about something they’re truly passionate about. “If you’re going to swear when you’re trying to teach us something that you’re passionate about, you can do it. I don’t see an issue with it personally.” In the same group, F18(A) said that she thinks ‘thank fucking God,’ when she hears an instructor swear, because it makes the class more chill and the instructor more relatable. F18(B) agreed, saying that everyone needs at least one instructor like that because it makes the class less formal, and in turn can encourage discussion and education because you get the sense they understand. “I could cry in her class and she’d probably give me a hug and it’d be fine...she knows life happens and that’s it.” Similarly, in the second focus group, participant M18(B) felt more comfortable in the classroom and liked the instructor more. “I want to go to class because...it’s not going to be boring.”

Some participants didn’t mind if an instructor swore, because their position as the authority in the classroom meant they could behave as they liked. “I respect my professors as if they were my bosses,” said M55. “When I go into that room, I’m in an office. That’s the boss.” F20 agreed, “I definitely see them as more like the boss, or the parent in the room right then. It’s

kinda like what they say goes.” One participant in the second focus group did believe that it affected the professionalism of the room negatively. “As a teacher, they should act professional...they might have students who don’t approve of it,” said M19. Despite this perception, he said that he didn’t mind when he heard swear words from his instructors.

Swearing Classification

After describing their backgrounds, attitudes, and personal perception toward instructors who use swear words in the classroom, the discussion of the focus groups got more specific. Participants were asked to consider how they would perceive their instructors in terms of credibility, professionalism and education if they were to use swear words that fell into each of the six categories of swearing: cursing, profanity, obscenities, slang, slurs and scatology.

Cursing

The examples given for the category of cursing were “go to hell” and “goddammit.” Participants felt that these were more attacking than a typical curse word, which would change their perception of the instructor. One participant said that it would seem childish for an instructor to tell someone to go to hell, but they didn’t have a problem with the words themselves. “It’s not necessarily the swear word,” said M19 in the first focus group. “It’s the intent behind it.” The directed nature of this category would influence their likelihood of paying attention in the class. “If an instructor does that...I would get impacted the whole semester,” said N22. “I’m less motivated to actually do well in the class.”

Context was a huge factor in this, and M20 believed that if it was directed at someone, it would affect their perceived credibility of the instructor. F20 expressed that if an instructor used it in the context of a story, i.e. “I told that person they could go to hell,” her perception would be

based off of whether she believed the person was deserving of it or not. If she agreed, it probably wouldn't bother her. Whereas if she disagreed with the instructor's point of view, she would change her perception of them. This changed perception would likely result in a decreased participation in the conversation on her part. This was echoed by M18(A) in the second focus group, who said that using that language when referencing someone else would show bias, and that could skew their perception in a lot of different ways.

The second focus group was significantly focused on the religious connotation of those curses. Many of them had a religious background, and thought there were few things more insulting than telling someone to go to hell. For F18 it wasn't necessarily the words, but more the recognition that instructors need to be conscientious of a variety of religions. "For teachers who even say "God bless you," some people can get offended by that. I think that should be left out." The third focus group brought up the same opinions, saying that growing up in Catholic schools, many of them were taught that there were few insults worse than telling someone to go to hell. They believed it would come across as very aggressive, and would likely discredit the instructor. "If they drop a pen and say 'goddammit,' sure. But thinking about the other people who would be in that room on the end of "go to hell," that's...crossing over a line of being able to swear into aggression" said F20. Participant M18 agreed that it makes the instructor seem unprofessional and creates a more hostile environment in the classroom.

Profanities

The category of profanity is also primarily religious language, but the difference from cursing is that it is not specifically directed at someone or something. The examples given for profanity were "Jesus Christ" and "damn." Though the participants echoed the sentiment that it could offend religious individuals, they didn't have a problem with them being used in the

classroom. Several of them brought up the concern with being raised not to “take God’s name in vain,” but they didn’t necessarily recognize it as a swear word. Members of the second focus group discussed the use of profanities in the positive sense, saying they had often heard them used as an exclamation of excitement. “The way that I was taught is that as long as it’s in a good way, like ‘Oh Jesus, it’s a miracle,’ it’s fine,” said M18(A).

The third focus group saw this category as common expletives, and even those who were religious said that they used them fairly often. Though they brought up the need for instructors to be conscientious toward the different perspectives and backgrounds they could have in the class, they also mentioned that they wouldn’t notice it as much in use. Participant F20 grew up believing that saying “oh my god” was scandalous, “but now I just don’t care. I guess I’m desensitized to it. I hear a lot, and I say it, too, sometimes.”

Obscenities

The category of obscenities created little concern for the participants. The example word given was “fuck,” and most of the participants thought that as long as it was used as an expletive, not a curse (i.e. “fuck you”), it was not a concern, and would actually serve to humanize the instructor. M20 in the first focus group disagreed with the majority, saying that he would question the professionalism of the teacher. He was the only participant who viewed the classroom through the lens of a professional workplace, saying that in the workplace it is typically not acceptable to swear. When pressed by other participants, he did not have a specific reason he believed it demonstrated unprofessionalism besides his background. “I went to a small private school, and the district wasn’t accepting of that.” F20 did agree that it could be unprofessional in the workplace if it seemed uncalled for, but didn’t see the issue with using it in conversation.

The second group did not find obscenities offensive or unprofessional. F18 said she wouldn't even flinch if she heard an instructor use it, because it is such a normal part of conversation for her. The only deterrent would be if the instructor used it with too much frequency, as it would become annoying. Upon further discussion, the group agreed that it was the excessive swearing that comes off as annoying, rather than the category of obscenities themselves. M18(B) felt that obscenities would spice up the conversation in the classroom, not serve as a deterrent.

The opinion of the third focus group was that it is a more commonly accepted category of word in the world today, and that it is one they commonly heard in classrooms. "I've had a lot of math teachers especially who say the word "fuck" all the time. They'll be like 'the expo marker ran out, fuck' or 'I mad a mistake in a problem, fuck.'...I don't really care," said F19. The group also brought up the importance of frequency in how they perceive it. "I think it's fine as a sort of stress reliever," said F18(A). "But if you treat it like a personality trait, you should probably calm it down."

Slang

The category of slang was seen as unacceptable across all of the focus groups. The example words given for this category were "slut" and "bastard." The participants said these were not ok to use within the classroom context, and the use of them would make the participants lose respect for that instructor. "I know we are in a different society right now to where those words just really aren't accepted," said F20. This was reiterated by F19(C), because those words are specifically intended to direct at someone. "Talking down about someone else is what lowers the respect level," said M19. The second focus group expressed that while the use of those words may not affect their perceived credibility of the instructor, they would be more judgemental of

what the instructor had to say. “It would be, like, not that they’re less educated, but everything they’re saying is tainted by that bias...you’re an educated person because you’re standing in front of me, teaching me, but I probably need to question it,” said N25. Because those words themselves are disrespectful toward individuals, they would then lose respect for the instructor.

It was brought up that these words can be discussed in the educational and historical context, and that would be an ok situation to voice them. However, even if they were being spoken as a way to inform, the groups still thought it would be uncomfortable. “I study women’s studies where it would be applicable, and I still don’t think it has to be used,” said F20 in the third focus group. “Both of those words have deeply misogynistic meanings...that is where I would draw the line with professionalism because both of those terms, what they mean is so degrading toward the person you’re saying it about.”

Slurs

The category of slurs was described to the participants as “gender slurs or racial slurs.” Each group was immediately turned off to the category. The first thing said in focus group three was “I would walk out and report,” from F18(B). The other groups had similar reactions, saying they would struggle not to walk out of the class, and that there is absolutely no use for those words in the classroom. “For me, it definitely cuts off the conversation a little bit right there...at the end of the day, a whole lot of respect has gone,” said F20.

This category would have a direct effect on the participants’ perceived credibility of the instructor. They would be led to believe that the instructor would favor certain races or genders, and may grade within the class based off of that bias. Many said they wouldn’t want to listen to anything else the instructor had to say, or they would believe they would get less help within the

classroom based on their race or gender. “The second that you say it...I lose all respect for you and for your education,” said F18.

Though they mentioned that slang could be used if it was for educational purposes, they did not feel the same way about slurs. They thought it showed a great deal of insensitivity and lack of awareness. Some of the participants said they would immediately send an email to report the language, even if they weren’t the kind of person who would normally spend time filling out a review for a professor. M18(B) said “It’s not ‘oh, I’m going to look at the professor differently.’ To me, it’s more along the lines of ‘they’re going to be fired.’”

Scatology

The final category is that of scatology, and the example words given to the participants were “shit” and “piss.” Many of the participants said they barely viewed these as swear words, and they likely wouldn’t think twice if they were used by an instructor. They described them as common “not too terrible words,” “small words,” and “lower-class words.” Participant F18(B) in the third focus group said that “...shit is such a collective word...and pissed off is such an expression of emotion. I wouldn’t be surprised if I’ve heard a teacher saying ‘I’m pissed off at you guys because of this.’ ...I don’t feel like as many people are fazed by it, even people who are very offended by language.”

Context and Empathy

There were two central themes consistent across the three focus groups – context and empathy. Repeatedly over the course of the hour, each group would mention the importance of knowing the context of how the swear words were being used. “Context is everything,” said F20. Participant F18(B) stated the same, “It’s what we’ve been saying the entire hour, it’s all about

context.” The majority of that context came from whether or not the swear words were used as an expletive, expressing emotion whether that be negative or positive, or if they were being directed at someone.

This tied directly into the participants’ tendency toward empathy. This was first brought up when the participants discussed their own use of swearing. They described testing the waters with minor swear words like “crap” or “hell,” as M19(B) said, “if they react like ‘that’s weird,’ I won’t after that cause I don’t want to make the person uncomfortable.” F20 said the same thing, “It is a little bit about knowing the setting and your comfortability around your peers.” M18(A) in the second focus group said that he would only use swear words “as long as I understand they’re comfortable with cussing.” M18(B) in the same group said that he judges that comfortability based off the vibe that someone else gives. He believed that you can often tell if someone will be uncomfortable, and know to avoid swear words in those situations. M19(A) in the third focus group brought up that someone else’s discomfort would influence their own feelings. “You feel uncomfortable for making them uncomfortable,” he said.

The groups also discussed how they would perceive an instructor if other students in the class were uncomfortable with swearing, despite their personal feelings toward it. Their responses continued to emphasize their empathy toward others. They said if it was clear that students in the class were uncomfortable, it would discredit the teacher to continue swearing. Another aspect of this can be tied into the participants immediate negative reaction toward slang and slurs. Even the participants who would not be on the receiving end of most racial or sexist slurs had a huge issue with them, saying they should never be used because of the distress it could cause someone.

Frequency

There were two notable tie ins to frequency of use as well. The first was that frequency of use has a way of diminishing the impact of the words. This frequency is in a societal context. If the words are becoming more common in society, they were less likely to be noticed in the classroom, or considered as taboo by the students. The other aspect of frequency is in the context of one individual. If the swear word becomes a crutch word, it will begin to stand out to the students, causing annoyance and potentially leading to the perception of a lesser education. “People will take notice of that a lot more and then it would definitely lower the professionalism, because crutch words typically aren’t used in a professional environment,” said M18(A).

Gender Impact

While the influence of an instructor’s gender was not a primary focus of this study, it was brought up in the focus groups and briefly discussed. The majority of the participants believed that the gender of their instructor would have no impact on the participant’s perception of them if they were to use swear words, saying that they cared more about what was said and what was meant than who actually said it. A few did admit that it may be something to take into consideration. N25 said that they hesitated to say it had no impact, because it likely subliminally did. F18 agreed, saying that it was the message that swearing is “unladylike” that might subconsciously influence her perception. She said “I actually like when a female curses, it’s like ‘power to you, sister.’” But she acknowledged that could be influenced by the idea that the women are breaking the “rules” by swearing.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS

The student body of a university is made up of a variety of different backgrounds and experiences, and it is those very things that influence how students interact with their communities and instructors. Rural and urban, religious and non-religious, military and civilian, old and young – all study alongside each other and use their individual worldviews to shape their perception of instructors. While their backgrounds lead them to believe different things, this study reveals a common understanding and perception that the act of swearing in a classroom by an instructor does not automatically discredit their professionalism or education. It is most often not the swear word itself that will cause a negative perception from the class. Rather, the intent behind the use of the swear word is what will shift perception, whether that shift be positive or negative.

There are some categories of swear words whose use can lead to a more positive perception of the instructor. These include profanities, obscenities and scatology. The students who participated in these focus groups believed that these words, when not intended to cause someone distress, could serve to dissolve tension in the room and humanize the instructor. The positive implications of this meant that students felt more comfortable in that classroom, were more excited to engage and participate, and more likely to attend class. They saw the use of these swear words as a way of leveling the playing field, lessening the divide between student and teacher. The relatability of the instructor was increased by using these words, though it is worth noting that they can be overused. The overuse of the words led to annoyance, and served more as a distraction than a learning aid.

While those three categories of swear words could be used to positively influence the perception of the instructor, the other three categories of swear words, cursing, slurs, and slang, had a negative influence on that perception. While cursing could occasionally be excused, the fact that it is typically directed toward someone or something caused the students to question its use at all. They found that category to be overall too aggressive for use in the classroom. Slurs and slang were never excused for use, and if an instructor were to use them, the students believed it would negatively impact the instructor's credibility. Students would not only question the intelligence and emotional IQ of the instructor, but they would be less likely to voice their opinions, less likely to show up to class, and more likely to write a negative review of the instructor.

The gender of the students did not have a significant influence on whether or not the use of swear words in the classroom positively or negatively impacted their perception of the instructor. Across the board, students were more influenced by their personal background than by their own gender. This had ties to the religious affiliations of their family, as well as their race. While those who were raised in a religious environment said they were no less likely to use swear words than the rest, they did acknowledge that the use of swear words often stood out to them more distinctly if they had been raised to avoid them. One thing that did seem to be influenced by a participant's gender was whether their perception of an instructor who swore was impacted by the gender of the instructor. The males in the group quickly answered that instructor's gender had no impact on their perception at all. One admitted the use of swear words by a female instructor may take him off guard, but that it would not influence what he thought about her. The female participants, on the other hand, believed that while the instructor's gender should not have an influence on how they were perceived, there is a societal belief that swearing

is “unladylike.” This was manifest in their perception that they secretly cheered when a female instructor swore, emphasizing the idea that it was out of the ordinary.

In order for an instructor to use swear words to their benefit, they have to be conscious of the attitude of the class and the context the words are being used in. If they ever use swear words in an attacking manner, or direct them as a descriptor of someone, they will likely lose credibility in the eyes of the students. If they use them to emphasize what they are saying or represent their passion, they can have a positive influence on their perceived credibility. The use of swear words by the instructor should be in line with how they behave in their lives outside of the classroom. If an instructor “forces” a swear word, some of the participants believed it gave the perception that the instructor was trying too hard, and it seemed out of place. While it wouldn’t negatively influence their perception, it wouldn’t garner any positive sentiment either. The use of swear words should be authentic, or it will not have the desired positive effect of humanizing the instructor and creating a more comfortable environment in the classroom.

Going out of their way to ensure the comfort of the students is one way to mitigate the risk of using swear words. Participants of the focus groups had experience with instructors who took the time to point out they used swear words in their vernacular. They requested students to let them know privately if this was a concern or would cause distress in any way. The initiative of the instructor to ensure students were comfortable in the classroom took the responsibility off of them to “test the waters.” If students were uncomfortable, but did not voice that, the participants thought it was still acceptable for the instructor to speak in that manner.

CHAPTER 7

LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

The goal of this research was to begin understanding how swear words affect the credibility of instructors in the classroom setting. While it provided insight into how students perceive their instructors when swear words are used, there were several limitations to be addressed in further research. The first was the limited convenience sampling. The participants of this study were all sourced from a mid-sized midwestern university. While the demographic question of where they were originally from was not asked, many revealed through the course of the focus group discussion that they had grown up in the surrounding area. In future studies, it would be beneficial to look at the views of students at multiple universities in both urban and rural locations to further explore how background influences their perception of swear words.

This study also used mixed focus groups, with students of multiple grade levels participating in each one. Future studies should attempt to segment out undergraduates, graduate students, and non-traditional (returning adult) students, to see whether increased experience in the university or professional settings has more of an influence on how they interact with swear words as it relates to credibility and professionalism.

While no participant expressly stated they had not experienced an instructor who swore, many of the questions were addressing hypothetical situations. For example, none of the students had experienced a teacher who used slurs in the college classroom. While they all had strong opinions about what they would think if they did, they were not speaking from a place of experience. Future studies should integrate staged or recorded scenarios for students to respond to, offering a variety of situations and levels of swear words to see what the impact on credibility

would be. The staged or recorded scenarios would also enable researchers to explore the use of tone, which was not a part of this study. Some of the participants mentioned that swear words could be used in a positive or negative context, but it would be difficult to understand how it was being used without hearing the tone and expression of the swearer.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to understand how swear words affect the perceived credibility of instructors in the context of higher education. Understanding this can provide college and university instructors with a better context for how and when swear words can serve to complement versus undermine their teaching. The use of swear words to attack, represent aggression, or demean an individual will lead to a negative perception of the credibility of the instructor. The participants in the study said they would be less likely to attend classes in which the teacher used aggressive or demeaning language, and they would not be inclined to participate in class discussions or reach out to the instructor for assistance. They would also hesitate to accept the accuracy of the information the instructor provided, assuming that the instructor's lack of empathy or social awareness meant they were "behind the times." These perceptions and the students' resulting actions and attitude would negatively impact their ability to learn in the classroom.

Alternately, the use of swear words to display passion or positive emotion, or to draw attention to a subject, can increase the relatability of the instructor and their perceived authenticity. This will lead students to feel more comfortable in the classroom, be more likely to engage in class discussions, and communicate with their instructor if they need help. These things can lead to an increase in perceived credibility of the instructor, and also aid in the educational success of the student. While the scope of this study was focused solely on the use of swear words in the classroom context, many of the participants related this to the realm of business. Professionalism and respect were two often cited reasons for why individuals might avoid swearing, yet they repeatedly said that context was everything. The results of this study

could be applied to many areas of interaction, providing guidance to individuals in any profession as to when it is and is not acceptable to use swear words, and how the use of them can influence perceived credibility. These learnings are useful for any individual relying on credibility to succeed in their role. From the minimum wage customer service representative to politicians in Washington, credibility is a widely sought after character trait. If swearing can be used to build camaraderie between peers and humanize individuals in positions of power, it would be remiss not to pay attention to the benefits of a well-placed swear word.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. What is your name (first & last)?
2. What is your email?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your standing in college (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate)?
6. Are you an international student?

APPENDIX B
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Explore the students' general attitude toward swearing.
 - a. Do you use swearing to express yourselves? Why or why not?
 - b. What is the appeal or deterrent to using swear words?
 - c. How do you believe your peers perceive you when you swear?
 - d. Are there situations that you would not swear in? Why or why not?
2. Explore the use of swearing in the classroom.
 - a. Do you use swear words while in class? Why or why not?
 - b. Would you be more or less likely to swear if the instructor were not present in the classroom?
3. Explore the participants' perception of instructors who swear.
 - a. What is your reaction when an instructor swears during a lecture?
 - b. Do swear words stand out to you in an instructor's language? Why?
 - c. How does the use of swear words influence your perception of the instructor?
 - i. There are several categories of swearing, what is your reaction to the use of curse words (goddamn it, go to hell)?
 - ii. There are several categories of swearing, what is your reaction to the use of profanity (Jesus Christ, damn)?
 - iii. There are several categories of swearing, what is your reaction to the use of obscenities (fuck)?

- iv. There are several categories of swearing, what is your reaction to the use of slang (bastard, slut)?
 - v. There are several categories of swearing, what is your reaction to the use of slurs (faggot, nigger)?
 - vi. There are several categories of swearing, what is your reaction to the use of scatology (shit, piss)?
- d. Do you believe instructors who swear are more personable and authentic? Why or why not?
 - e. Do you believe instructors who swear are less credible than those who use “proper” language? Why or why not?
 - f. How do you believe swear words affect the climate/attitude of the class?
 - g. Does the attitude of those around you (comfortable or uncomfortable) influence your own attitude toward an instructor who swears?

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTIONS: FOCUS GROUP 1

Facilitator: So, to get started, I'm curious about your general attitude towards swearing and your own personal use. Do you all use swearing to express yourselves and why or why not?

M55: Well, absolutely, I do.

Facilitator: Okay.

M55: It's just like drinking beer or smoking cigarettes, it's very natural to me.

Facilitator: That's great. Yeah.

F20: I think for me it just depends on the situation I'm in and when I'm around my friends, I feel like, um, sometimes a word will just like slip out. I definitely won't think twice about it at all.

And, um, if I'm around my family though, or like any kind of work setting, it's normally like that it doesn't slip out.

Facilitator: So, you have a filter. Okay.

F19(B): Same thing with me. I don't really swear much myself, but I do like, I've grown up with a lot of people swearing. I'm just used to like hearing it and especially with my boyfriend, he swears like every day, any hour. But just I guess the tone matters, like I don't know, if you're like really upset or you're really happy, it's just a good way to express it.

M55: Do we need to speak up since we're on audio?

Facilitator: It should pick you up but if you can project, that's great.

M20: I would say similar to those two. I try not to swear as much as possible, but I don't really have a problem with it and if I'm relating a story or quoting someone, I'll swear if necessary.

M19: It's pretty ingrained in how I speak. Obviously, I have a filter, so like if I'm around like my family or whatever, I won't because they don't like that. And I respect that, but for me personally, it's just, it's a part of how I speak. Just naturally.

M55: I come from the ag side of life and out on the farm, that's just something that you do. You were raised up with it. Your grandparents did it. Your daddy did it. I do it. That's just the way it is. We're German Lutherans and while we cuss at church once in a while, I mean, we don't think anything about it. Now, if you get around some religious fanatic that you know, just absolutely can't stand it, well, I respect him for that, but I'm always glad when he gets the hell out.

Facilitator: Alright. So, kind of to build off of that initial question, what is the appeal to swearing or the deterrent to swearing? Some of you have said you don't use it a lot, and some of you do use it a lot. So, what's the draw and what's the hold back.

M55: Temper. When your cow gets out or you had a breakdown in the field and you're 102 degrees out, your old Kemper blows up pretty much, and then you have a wrench and you bust your knuckles, you start with the cussing. Just the way it is.

F20: To piggyback off that, I did start a new job working as a support intern for tax and accounting, and I know that pretty much when we get a call in the morning, maybe someone from New York has been working on like this tax return for a long time. The cuss words are just kind of going to be flowing out and you just have to know in that situation, it's not necessarily at you, it's just more at the situation. So, in that case, it's kind of just in one ear and out the other. But it definitely can like take a little bit of a turn when those words are cussing at you as opposed to at the system or something like that.

M55: Yeah, I, yeah. I don't really have a problem with words. As long as I know that the person I'm talking to is just going to be a short deal. But I'm kind of like her. There are times that it does

kind of, Oh, for instance, somebody does something stupid just completely. I may say 'Oh, you dumb ass.' I may go that away and I expect it back, but if someone kind of goes, you know, 'you little piece of shit.' Yeah, we have a little problem there.

Facilitator: Any else have any feelings about the appeal of swearing? Use cases?

F19(A): I think that swearing, like I don't personally do it because I think it portrays myself as like, I dunno, there's something I'm not expressing correctly in a way. Like, I think that people don't take me as serious and like, I don't know, especially working, I don't think that, I don't know. I would not feel comfortable like swearing in front of my boss or like even my friends and stuff. I just don't want it to be portrayed as like not taken seriously. Does that make sense?

Facilitator: Yeah. That actually ties directly into my next question, which is how do you believe your peers perceive you when you swear?

M55: I'm the type of guy, I don't care. You come to my home or you're out at the ranch or a down here at the bar and you're going to come set at my table. That's the way it's gon' be. If not, hit the road, Jack. That's the way I work. I do that same thing with my girlfriends to. That's why I'm not married.

N22: I think it's just like, how my friends were raised and stuff. How like it can impact their perception of us when I cuss.

Facilitator: Okay. So, what do you think that perception is?

N22: Um, I think, I think my friends don't really care.

Facilitator: Okay.

N22: That's based on my friends.

F20: And I think for me, if I probably incorporated in like more than one or two cuss words in a sentence, they're gonna probably know that I am a little bit more like mad about a situation or

just have strong feelings towards it. But I do know that there's a difference between using a cuss word on social media and like actually in person.

Sometimes it's almost like on Twitter it's not going to be the same without that cuss word in it or without just like a certain use of a word. And so, I think that it actually brings a lot more laughs sometimes when there is like a curse word included in it.

So, it's kinda just a little bit different on that. But I know like as far as perspective or like how people are seeing me, if I use like multiple in a sentence. They're probably like, well, she really cares about the situation. Like let me tune in or hear the drama or something like that.

Facilitator: Yeah.

M20: I think a lot depends on who you're around and what age demographic they are. I definitely have friends where I can cuss every other word and they wouldn't bat an eye. But I also have friends that if I cuss, they would be like, 'is something wrong?' So, I think just depends on who I'm with.

Facilitator: So, kind of understanding those different social settings.

M55: I will say if I have younger kids around, like they're little kids, I'll tone words I use down. I may use the basic, uh, Oh, "hell," "damn," or something like that. But the F word or some other stronger words. I do try to watch that.

M19: Uh, for me personally, I don't know when it happened, it was sometime around maybe, maybe high school. Because I recognized that there is sort of, I guess a stigma around using swear words, and it might, to some people, portray you as being someone who doesn't know how to use the correct words, or maybe you have a limited vocabulary.

And I didn't subscribe to that notion. I didn't like that. And so, I tend to at least keep in my own life, let how I speak and how I carry myself, and all of that speak for itself. While that is still

integrated into my language, and so far for me personally, it's worked out. But I understand how I could be different across the board.

Facilitator: Great. A few of you mentioned some friends that you might not swear around. Are there situations that you wouldn't swear in? The educational setting or a professional setting or church, anything like that, where you automatically apply that filter to yourself?

M55: Yeah, if I'm at church, once again, I may have a small swear word, but I would watch the strong stuff. When I worked for the city, that was a deal that you, you were in a mixed environment all the time and they just rode you all the time. And so, you did kind of guard yourself and yeah, you did watch your language. And I did. But, uh, when I got out of those, I'm right back to where I was before.

F20: Yeah, I would have to say it's about comfortability a little bit too. I know like in my particular student organizations, like the Barton School Dean's Ambassadors, or Student Government, I'm definitely probably not gonna let a word ever slip out. But then just to be honest, like when I go to my black student union meetings, I can let one of those words slip out. So, it is a little bit about knowing the setting and your comfortability around your peers.

M55: That might be like in your setting, at Koch, you probably couldn't even do that or that would get you thrown out pretty quick and that would be respectable. I mean that would be fine.

Facilitator: So, what are some of the reasons that you might filter yourself in specific settings? Let's specifically apply this to the classroom. So, in an educational setting, why might you choose not to swear?

F19(A): I think the teacher or professor sets a tone. Like on one of the first days that I was here, one of my professors just said, 'shitshow,' like right off the bat. And it just kind of is with the comfortability thing, like when the teacher is cussing and stuff.

That kind of makes it okay for like the classroom to, or like for students to understand, Oh, it's fine. Like other teachers are very proper and you don't do any of that in front of them.

M55: Uh, for my, for the first public speaking class I got right up there in Kylie's room, the first thing I said was bullshit.

And, uh, I didn't think anything about it. I've never been to school. This is my first rodeo and, uh, didn't, uh. I could come out off the farm and I mean, that was my talk. I didn't even think about it. I said it. Nobody really said nothing. And then sometime later, Kylie said "now, just let everybody know. We don't really need to be cussing in here. But since then it's happened. The other students has happened. And my attitude is as long as you're not using strong language, there ain't nothing wrong with using simple words.

Facilitator: Yeah. [Participant], anything to add? You've been a little quiet.

F19(D): I don't know. I was just thinking, um, cause my professor wanted us to, he said it's ok for us to put cussing in our papers, like for our writing classes, because it's a way to express yourself. So, it just depends on the professor, like I said.

F19(C): I think it comes down to like respect. So, like it's not so much about being comfortable or like even if, cause my sociology teacher cusses all the time. So, I think it's just being in front of an older person. I wouldn't normally cuss in front of someone older just because it's out of respect. But like when I'm with my friends, it's completely different.

M55: To me, I don't see what the difference is cussing in a classroom and sitting there and talking about smoking grass, getting drunk or other such things. To me, it's all the same. You can talk about getting high. Legalizing marijuana or going out here and getting drunk. Well, you ought to be able to say a swear word.

Facilitator: Do you think that that's because you're older, so you have less of that filter of being around peers. That a lot of times, like F19(C) was saying, it can be hard to swear around people who are older than you. So, if you're in a class where primarily people are younger than you, I would imagine. Do you think that weighs in or do you think it's more your background on the ranch and farm?

M55: No not really, because I'm around young kids all the time that cuss more than I do.

Facilitator: Yeah. Okay. So, we kind of got into this a little bit, but what is your reaction when an instructor swears in the classroom? You mentioned yours a little with your sociology professor.

F19(C): Yeah. Um, I'm always just shook cause like, you know, you're raised in like middle school, preschool, high school, but you know, the teachers are not allowed to swear. So, it's like anytime I hear a professor or like even like a person in a professional setting cuss, I'm just like astounded by it. I was just, it's, I'm just used to not seeing them swear.

F19(D): It's pretty normal to me. Cause in high school, my teachers, some teachers did swear. And because like I was in a small high school, so it's called Kauffman and it's like very small. We're like close to our teachers, so we have that relationship where they feel comfortable, but we of course can't say it because of the respect thing. But yeah, it's just normal for me to hear.

F20: Yeah. I would also say that I'm not necessarily like too, like, shocked by it. I wouldn't really say I'm surprised either. When I have heard my teachers cuss it's typically like the S word or something like that. I really haven't heard too much more than the S word. But um, I know that, hold on. I just had my thought in my head now I don't have it.

Oh, I feel like sometimes a lot of the students force a reaction a little bit. Like they force a laugh out of it just to make it seem like they didn't necessarily hear that come out. And like me, I never

like force a laugh or it didn't make me like stand back either. I kind of just like sit there and like wait til the next sentence moves on. But I definitely feel like some of the other kids in the classroom like just want to make a giggle out there just so the teacher may feel like more comfortable that they had just said anything like that. So that's something that I had kind of observed from mine.

M19: For me personally, it almost feels like a barrier is broken down. Like it becomes, you're more on an equal playing field, so to speak. It doesn't feel like there's this huge gap in hierarchy, it becomes like, "we can talk." That's how it feels to me.

N22: I feel like it just depends on how they use a cuss word and stuff. If they like quote something from a blog or something like that and use a cuss word, then that's like perfectly fine stuff. But if they like use it and use the cuss word in a rhetorical way, they could like, you know, degrade their credibility and stuff.

M55: Me, I don't, I don't know what makes a difference if they cuss or if they drink beer or smoke cigarettes. That's their right. And, uh, first time that, uh, we had a high school party one time and, uh, being sponsored by some people and there was my high school teacher having a beer. Not a big deal.

Facilitator: You kind of mentioned the collective class giggle when someone swears. Have you all noticed that in the classroom? Why do you think that is?

M19: I think it's just, kind of a culture shock.

Facilitator: Okay. So, when you hear that swear word, and you know, the following giggle. Does that affect your perception of the instructor? You kind of talked about it "breaks down the barrier." Do you think that in any way it breaks down respect or credibility?

M19: For me personally, no, just because again, like I said, it feels like it opens the dialogue in a more comfortable manner. And I'm of the personal belief that in a classroom setting, obviously the main job there is for students to learn from the instructor. But I also believe that it should be a two-way street. So, where there's also learning happening from the instructor's perspective as well. Uh, and just having more of an open, comfortable dialogue, I feel like achieves that goal a little bit better.

F20: Yeah. To piggyback off that, I wouldn't say at all that I lose any kind of like respect or credibility. I do maybe start looking at them like in a little bit more personal light. Like I would start thinking about, Oh, like when they go home from work, like they are a laid-back person or like things are just, they do fun things or something like that. And so, I don't know if that like subconsciously translates though into like me losing respect. I wouldn't want to say it does, but I can see me not viewing them as like the smartest person on campus. Like all the knowledge and stuff and me just looking at them more as like, Oh, this is just like another person too. They just like know a lot more than me and like they go home and have a personal life.

That is a side I see from this. So, breaking down barriers a lot that, yeah, I don't know if that's like subconsciously maybe losing any respect, but I would hope it doesn't. Like that's not my intention to lose respect.

F19(A): I would say that makes me like gain more respect cause I wouldn't want someone who like cusses at home and then they like go into their teaching life and like just put a filter on and don't act like themselves.

So, like whenever they do cuss it kind of makes me feel like more open to them or like more comfortable to talk to them. Cause like I know they're being themselves.

F19(C): I kind of agree with that because I don't think that cussing should make someone less credible. I feel like it's just a way to express themselves.

Although I still wouldn't cuss at a professor or just say cuss words in their class, um, I do think that it kind of makes me realize. Oh, they're human too, you know. Not just, they're not just a professor that's always in this, you know, mood or anything like that.

Facilitator: Great. So, we actually already kind of talked about how words influence your perception of the instructor and humanizing them in a way. So, we're going to get into some categories of swear words. There are actually six categories of swear words within academia, which yes, there is academic research on swearing. It's awesome. But I'm curious if the different categories of swear words kind of carry a different weight to some of you, or if you recognize that within the classroom. So, we're going to talk through the six of them and discuss how you would react or how you would perceive the instructor and their credibility and your level of respect for them if they were to use this category of word.

The first one is the category of curse words. This would be, "goddamnit," or "go to hell." So kind of fairly typical, but more directed at someone.

M55: I've been told to go to hell a lot.

Facilitator: But specifically by an instructor. Think about how that affected your perception of the instructor.

M55: "Okay, dude."

M19: I feel like whenever a word is used to hurt someone else, it does change things. But not because it's a swear word, just because of the intent behind it. It would be the same as if someone were to say, if it's like, if it, if an instructor were to take, say to a student, "I hate you," I'd be like, "that seems a little childish." It'd be the same if they say, go to hell.

You know, for me it's not necessarily the swear word. It's the intent behind it.

M55: I usually always tell them to start digging. Okay.

N22: I mean, if an instructor does that, usually like, like, uh, I would get impacted the whole semester. Like if it was starting at the beginning of semester, I feel like. No, I'm less motivated to actually do well in the class.

M20: I think if it was directed at someone, I would definitely question their professionalism and I think it would affect their credibility if it was directed at someone.

F20: Yeah, I definitely want to look at the context of it. Like I know that there's been times where maybe a professor was talking about an experience where in my perception, like, that person was correct on how he felt on the situation. So he may have been like, "Oh well I told that person they can go to hell" and then the class would have done their giggle again.

But then when I look at the situation, then I feel like that person probably needed to be told to go to hell in that particular situation. So sometimes I definitely can relate and see where they're coming from. But then sometimes maybe like if a teacher were to bring up, like, their political stance and then follow it up with, "well, that person can go to hell." If they said that, then that would like change my aspect on it a little bit. So I guess it kind of is, like, if I agree with the situation that they are using it in.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts on curse words? All right. Okay. Let's move on to the second category, which is profanity. A lot of times this falls into the realm of religious swear words. For example, using an expletive like Jesus Christ, or damn. If a professor was to use those, how would it affect your perception of them in a classroom?

M19: Me personally, it doesn't matter. That's because I'm not a religious person, but I could see how someone could be turned off by that. It's just one of those areas where it's kinda like you

gotta tiptoe with it. Cause some people might, you know, it might actually be harmful to like how they feel in their beliefs, in their religion.

F19(C): I agree. For me personally, it's like they're not that heavy of a word. Compared to the other ones. So like, it's just the way that they're expressing themselves.

M55: How did they have that labeled?

Facilitator: It's a profanity.

F20: And I don't see it as bad using that kind of, uh, those kinds of terms. But I do know when I am in conversations, I feel like I hear a lot like, don't use God's name in vain. So that is something that will come up in a conversation if I just use like a normal curse word, like I won't feel bad about it.

But then when I think back because I had said something else, I'm like, okay, then I was maybe using someone's name in vain, then that does make me feel a little bit bad. So I definitely could see where that would affect other people and make them uncomfortable. So I would kind of, definitely stray away from that.

M55: I suppose if I was around a preacher or some highly religious fanatic, yeah, I probably wouldn't use Jesus Christ. I've used it all the time, but yeah, I probably wouldn't use it around them necessarily. But I've heard ministers use Jesus Christ or Christ Almighty.

Facilitator: Okay. Let's go to the next category of swearing, which is that of obscenities. This would be like the F word. So if a professor were to say, "fuck" in a classroom. How would that affect your perception of them?

M19: It's just using Fuck? Not like, fuck you?

Facilitator: Yeah. Not directed towards someone, that would actually move it to curse words.

M19: Yeah. Yeah, no, I mean, it's just a word at that point.

F19(B): I feel like they would just say it because, like by accident. If they like, stubbed a toe or something, you know, put on the wrong video when they're using your slideshow and then they don't realize it. You know, they hear it.

F19(D): I agree it wouldn't affect.

Facilitator: So do you think it would more humanize them than cause that divide?

F20: Yeah, I think it would more humanize them, but I also think that that's the one that they would be like, Oh, like I accidentally let that slip out a little bit. Like with other words, I don't think it's that bad, but I do think that there's a little bit more precaution they would want to take as a teacher with that word. So, um, but I don't think the students would think much of it. I wouldn't.

M55: I use it all the time.

M20: I would probably say the opposite, though. I would, again, I would question their professionalism. I just think regardless of the students' or the teachers' personal view of it, it's still being professional in the workplace and for whatever job you go for, usually you wouldn't swear. The teachers should be held to that same standard.

M19: And are we allowed to bounce off of him? Like. Just out of sheer curiosity. Uh, why do you think specifically swear words need to be avoided in a workplace environment? Like let's say that if your performance was still like top tier, how does swearing affect that?

M20: That's a good question and I don't even know if I have an answer to it. But it's just kind of how I was raised and I went to a small private school and the district wasn't accepting to that. Like with all of our sports teams, if you were caught swearing there was like, "go for a mile run, right now. Then we'll see you after practice for more." So it was just a lot of that wasn't accepted.

F20: And to kind of answer your question. I know at my new job at that tax accounting place, when the accountants call in and they're very frustrated and like firing off all the words, it's in one ear and out the other for me. But if I was the accountant calling in and the person on the phone wasn't able to figure out the issue and they start using cuss words at the point where I wasn't even using cuss words, then I definitely wouldn't be like, okay, like who am I speaking with right now? Like what is their experience level?

I would start to question certain things so I can see kind of how I wouldn't appreciate it in the workplace. But it wouldn't cause like too many like negative things. But just as a customer looking in and seeing that, I'd be like, yeah, I'm probably okay on using their software and stuff.

M55: No. In my experience cussing, I'll go tell you one thing. When you're working with customers, like I have. Your coworkers, they'll get over it. But I do still think if you're, if you're a customer, you shouldn't be using those words in front of your customers. They may use it. But, uh, I know one time that I had a customer who was a pain in the butt and I used a few words, I got in trouble for it. So I, I would watch it if you have a customer, but my coworkers, whatever.

Facilitator: So this is a really interesting kind of line of thought. So do you all think that there's some liberties in the field of education where you're not held to the same professional standards as you would be in other workplaces?

M19: Uh, not necessarily, just because I know for a lot of people, the, you know, stereotypical teachers are sort of held up on this pedestal of being a role model and someone to look up to.

And so I feel like that pressure alone is enough to create this feeling of "I need to maintain professionalism here."

M55: It's college. It's time to grow up. Uh, Hey, your professor's not God.

M19: Right, right, right, right. And me too, like I said it for me, it breaks down the barrier of that. I understand how that sort of has been ingrained in how we perceive those people, those positions.

F19(A): I would say in like a work setting, you're kind of a reflection of your company that you're working for. So if you're like cussing out customers and stuff all the time, you're probably going to lose your job. But like if you're at school, like college, we all pay to go to school. So it's kind of like you have more of a freedom to kind of do your own thing. Rather than like in a work setting, you kind of need to have a filter.

Facilitator: So in a way you, the students, are the customers of the institution. So when your instructors swear toward you, at you, in front of you, it's kind of the same give and take. But there seems to be a different perception of instructors in the way they're allowed to deal with you, the customer.

F19(A): Yeah. It just depends on the like words that you use and how they use it. Like the intention behind it. If they were to like specifically curse at me. I'd probably give them a bad review at the end of the year. If they just use it in their lectures, it's kind of a different story cause it's just like that's how they are.

Facilitator: Yeah.

F19(A): All right.

M55: I respect my professors as if they were my bosses, When I go into that room, I'm in an office. That's the boss. That's way it is. This is what he wants done well, okay, we'll do it. They want us to type this outline done. Ok, that's what you want, awesome.

F20: Yeah, I would agree with that too. Even though it is kind of set up to where I would be the customer, I definitely see them as more like the boss, the parent in the room right then. So it's

kinda like what they say goes, even if I am a little bit against it or not. Um, but yeah, in that sense, that's why I would kind of let it slide coming from a professor as opposed to going up to, like a job.

M55: I'll tell you what I couldn't believe, I couldn't believe when I came over here to Wichita State, they absolutely have a zero tobacco policy. Unbelievable. Zero alcohol too. You can't even have it in your dorm room. Yeah. I couldn't believe it. I'm the customer, I'm paying. If I want to have it out in the parking lot, what's the big deal? Or chew a wad of tobacco. I think it's dumb, but as far as swearing I guess they ain't gonna put a stop to that, so I'll continue that.

Facilitator: Alright, let's move on to the next category of swearing. So the fourth category is the category of slang. These are words like bastard or slut. So if the professor was to use these in the classroom setting in front of the class, how would that affect your perception of them?

F20: Well, I first would feel like they're trying to fit in with us. Relate to us a little bit more. I feel like some professors already try to do that just based on like, Oh, like how they walk into class and just have like a crazy morning, all this stuff. Like they do little things to relate to us, but then, I don't know, taking it to that step where they're using those certain words, like I really just don't hear adults like using them that much.

I just feel like there's more of like a younger generation type of thing. So in a way I lose a little bit of respect with those words. I'm just going, I know we are in a different society right now to where those words just really aren't accepted too much. And that plays a little bit of a roll into that too.

F19(C): I agree. I think I would kind of lose respect because those are words that you normally like say at people. And I just feel like specifically using slut is not something nice to tell a

person, no matter like what that person has done or what that person does. Because, you know, they're living their life. So why put the label on them?

F19(A): It's kind of offensive towards like each gender. I think too, depending on like what you use it in. Like if a professor were to just like, say "everyone in here is a bunch of sluts." Like I would take offense to that cause I'm a girl. I wouldn't want to be known as that. So I'd be offended.

F20: And not even if the professor said, "Oh, everyone in here is a slut," even if like they're going through something and they're like, "Oh, it's okay, she was just a slut" or something like that. I just feel like we're at that stage to where anyone will take offense to that. Any women being called a slut, all women would take offense to it. Just because, we don't even necessarily, people are defining slut in their own way now and stuff. So there's just a certain few terms in that category that I just really would stay away from. I don't know if we're putting like the words "faggot" in that category too, but there are just ones that I feel like we just aren't really to allow to say just in conversation.

M55: What's interesting about slut is, You women can call each other sluts and seems like that's acceptable. But if we men call you sluts, whoa, nope. I've noticed that.

F19(D): No, it's the same way. If a girl calls a girl a slut it's probably going to be something. I mean like they're probably going to get into it. If a man calls a girl a slut, that's also disrespect, it's disrespectful both ways. The professor, that's disrespectful. I will lose respect. Most definitely, and bastard, because that's the same thing.

M19: Going back to what you said again. For me, it just ties back to like the intention behind the word. And I understand that the context, uh, there might not be that sort of weight behind it, but it's the fact that those were specifically designed to be used to describe someone is what

changes it for me. And so, I don't know. I feel like the whole talking down about someone else is what lowers the respect level.

M55: When I had my girlfriend and she had a girlfriend, she always referred to her as " my slut friend." Yeah, which is the way it was.

Facilitator: So let's focus primarily on swearing in the classroom. The next category of swearing is kind of similar to this, but instead of slang, these are things that would be slurs. You can think of gender specific slurs or racial slurs. If an instructor was to use those in the classroom, not in the context of education. So they're not explaining the history of the slur, but they're using the slur. How would that affect your perception of them?

M19: I mean again, for me. Same thing. There's no other use for that word, other than, you know, it's a slur. It's just meant to hurt.

F20: Yeah. For me, it definitely kind of cuts off the conversation a little bit right there. It makes me kind of think about, of course, I'm looking at all like your experience and experiences and perspectives and why you may have used that word. But at the end of the day, like a whole lot of respect has gone because I feel like I am just able to censor myself so much that I would feel that a professor could do the same. But then again, I hear like stories like, um, what happened with Papa John's, I guess he had said like the N-word in the middle of like a marketing meeting to all of the employees and then ended up getting removed from his position.

So when I think back, like how could you just let that word slip out? It must be like they are using words like that so easily and all of their other situations in life, and that's what I kind of judge him based on. Like if you're able to just let a slur go out that easy, you must be using it quite often. Then that would just change my perspective on it personally.

Facilitator: How would that influence your perception of their credibility as an instructor at this institution?

N22: I feel like the instructor would lose credibility because, you know, they favor, like they favor certain races and like other races that they'll like, you don't know if they'll grade us, oh, the instructor will grade harshly on certain races.

F19(C): I think you would completely ruin their credibility because those are really harsh words and using those, you know, you never know if they're like just racist or sexist and that's just not okay, no matter who you are or what you've been through.

M19: Yeah. That point I really wouldn't want to listen to what they have to say.

M55: Once again, it's about he's the boss, he's the boss. If you want to do that, it's fine. I'm just here to get my paperwork done. Here to get a grade.

N22: Also like, um, like I might feel discouraged to go in for help or something because that instructor might, you know, provide me less help compared to other people in the class based on their race or gender.

M55: Well you go to tutors, for your help.

Facilitator: So looking at the last category, which is scatology. These are words like shit or piss. If the instructor was to use those, what would your perception be?

F20: It really, it doesn't get affected too much with those words. I feel like I hear most often the S word of anything. And so, um, I dunno, it's kinda just one in there. You just use it to switch a different word up and then, um, I don't really take anything away from it at all. No credibility lost and no respect lost. It's a small word kind of.

M55: If you, you're in vet school, you hear those words. Very common from an instructor, not a big thing.

Facilitator: Do you think that the frequency of it dilutes it?

M55: No.

Facilitator: Does anybody else think that if an instructor swears or, really uses any word repeatedly, it sort of dilutes it? So it doesn't become as noticeable. You lose that giggle with the class and so it becomes more normalized. In what ways?

F19(C): Well, those are also like not too terrible words, I guess. And it also kind of depends on the context. Like if they start off the class saying, "I like to swear," or "you can expect that from me," then it's like, okay. You know? Um, so yeah, the first time it's like, Whoa, what the heck? But then after that it's like, okay, it's just their thing then.

M55: Uh, I'll share that at my old job, uh, we all had to take a pee test about every four months for drugs and alcohol. And it was very common for a petite secretary to come down and say, "boys, piss test in the morning."

F20: Yeah, I wouldn't say it matters. The frequency of it though, I feel like it does make the setting almost too relaxed. And so even though that can be a good thing, sometimes I don't like it to get all that relaxed. We are still learning that is still our professor that I look up to and I'm getting my knowledge from.

So sometimes I feel like. It can just be left out a little bit, because I don't necessarily want to get to a point where everyone just feels comfortable saying whatever they want, so easily. Um, so in that case, I hope it's just not always just being used and stuff like that.

Facilitator: Do you think that there can come a point where an instructor loses control of the class by being too personable and using swear words?

M19: I think the potential's there for it. Sure. Uh, but I think it all comes back to how well they can, you know, command respect from a class. And I just don't think it necessarily strictly hinges on the usage of swear words.

M55: Oh, I think you could probably lose the class. Yeah. I doubt that'll ever happen because I think there's going to be enough straight kids in the class to straighten things out.

F20: Yeah. And by lose the classroom, I honestly want to say that the classroom wouldn't like get up, like in riots where the teacher couldn't really control the situation. But I would say that, I do know, I have one class where there is a teacher who has basically said they're the most like politically incorrect that they can get.

And then. There's no problem with that, but it's just like as the class goes on and then little things are starting to be said out there about just like women and politics, and then I started catching on all the small comments. I definitely can see how the women in the class may start to feel standoffish to where they don't want to participate or raise their hand to say certain things. And so I could see where they could lose the class in that end. Where they're just, people don't want to speak up, but not necessarily lose it toward just chaos. But definitely, yeah. People just like standing in the back and don't really want to say much because they feel like it's not going to be, maybe just not taken how they want to.

M55: Yeah. Along with that, you have to realize what class you're in. Politics, politics, that's the way it is. That's the political world.

F20: Yeah. But I also heard that a good like teacher is not gonna necessarily let their students know what political side that they are on. I have found that the teachers who do make that a focus, not to pick a certain side, or at least let their students know what side they are, they are on those classes go a lot better with students speaking up and sharing their ideas.

M55: Oh boy, not me. I would want to know where my professor stood.

F20: Well I wouldn't, cause I wouldn't want them to go against me. I'm currently in that situation right now. Yeah. Yep. And it just gets kind of difficult. I'm like wanting to just raise my hand and say certain things when, I don't know. It is Business Law, so that could be a reason, but, alright.

Facilitator: So it can make it harder to share your own perspective if a teacher is coming from the aggressive standpoint.

F20: Yes.

Facilitator: Okay. Um, so do you all feel, and I know someone mentioned this earlier on about how sometimes swear words can make you perceive someone as less educated. So do you all think that that applies to an instructor as well? If they're using swear words, you might consider it, you know, not proper language. So maybe just a little bit less educated of a background?

M55: No, because people that don't like swearing and they get onto you about it, especially religious people, uh, they do use it for an ego thing. I've got even with you. Uh, and that's how they do that. So I, no, I, I don't agree with that at all. Uh, using swear words, it has nothing to do with education.

N22: For some reason, like the word very is very similar to, um, the F word. Like, are you effing serious? Like if I, since we're like graded down for using the word very and we're like, judged harshly for using the word very, cause it's like repetitive and rhetorical. You know, um, I kind of feel like instructors who use the word effing, when they use it constantly, they kinda lose credibility. Like, based on my experiences.

M19: Sorry, just, uh, just to reiterate, are you saying that whenever someone uses any word repetitively, it does that to them?

N22: Nope. I'm talking specifically about the word, the F word, effing. There's also, I kind of feel like I associate both those words very seldom.

M19: Yeah, and that's something that I really wanted to bring up earlier too. Uh, is that I, I feel like it's not, so, at least for me personally, I feel like it's not necessarily the word that's being used. It's just how frequently are they using those words. So if, if you can tell from the way they speak that they don't have a broad vocabulary, it might diminish that perception of intelligence. But I don't think it's necessarily what the word is, but that's just me.

M55: I have relatives that are, I mean, if he didn't just say the hell word, "Oh, you don't cuss my house. We don't go for that at all." Well, all they're doing is just standing up and pushing their ego on you as if they're smarter than you.

But what tickles me is people, dog people for using foul language, uh, and they think it's uneducated, but what gets me is they can go out, shoot up with dope, or go out here and get drunk, crash a car or something, and it don't really think they're uneducated.

Facilitator: Okay. So repetition probably factors in a little bit. I know, "very." That stands out a lot when someone can't think of other words to use. So they just rely on that. That's sort of, I think, what you were getting at with the F word, when they can't find another word to describe something. It's just always that word. Are there other situations where someone might use a swear word and you just feel like it degrades their intelligence a little bit? They can't think of another descriptor?

F20: I feel like if I go on a social media and I were to see like a CEO or someone, just any kind of big professionals, use a curse word, again, like their, their Twitter, their messaging, in a way I'm gonna not necessarily look at them the same. I don't know if it's me losing respect, but I just feel like professionals, they don't drop the ball with certain things.

And so, um, that just could be going into like how people explained to me, like always clean up your social media. Just don't really ever just make it seem like you just don't care about certain things. And so, I don't know. I think we just always are associating, like, professionals just don't use certain language.

And so that does that. Even though I shouldn't like always just use it, have that stigma in my head. It just does stay there. Similar to like first impressions, like you really can't change those. Um, if you're using those, if you're using that language, you have to understand people receive it differently.

Facilitator: So when an instructor swears. Do you think that it changes the climate or the attitude of the class, whether that be positively or negatively?

F19(D): I mean, that's like the classes. I don't know. Like quiet or uncomfortable, make a joke with a swear word in it brightens up the class a little bit.

M20: I think it definitely changes the climate. It can be either negative or positive. I think it makes it more informal of a class of a setting, but also makes it more comfortable, which being informal can be a good thing or a bad thing and be comfortable can be a good thing or a bad thing in a classroom.

M19: There's one interesting way that...let me rephrase this. The way that I see it, is it gives them another tool. I feel like in an average classroom where it's just sort of how we all expect a classroom to be, you know, no swearing, all of that. Um, it's difficult for an instructor to guide and how they want the class to feel and the whole mood of it.

But I feel like when that sort of barrier gets broken, it allows him to shift it in whatever way you want to. And like I said, it could be positive, could be negative, uh, but I do think that in a way it becomes sort of a tool.

F20: Yeah, I'd agree with the tool part just because I know it has gone both ways. When I hear that teacher, like throw out the S word there, it could be leading up to something that makes me think like, Oh, like this teacher doesn't play around. Like he already knows if people are going to come at him with like, BS excuses at the end of the semester. And he just basically, I know that, cause he just said it.

And so it kind of makes me feel like, okay, I don't want to mess around with this teacher. And then at the same time, it makes me see him like as more of like a human or something like that. So, um, I see it as both ways, depending on at what point in the conversation that teacher uses the cuss word. Um, it can be used as a tool or it can be used to, people are going to like tune out that teacher kind of.

Facilitator: So regardless of your own perception of the instructor, based on when they swear, if the attitude of the class is uncomfortable, so you don't have a problem with it but someone next to you clearly is uncomfortable, how would that affect your perception of the instructor?

M19: It depends on how they handle it from that point forward. You know, if, if they recognize that people are uncomfortable with it and they continue to do it, it might shift my perception of them negatively. Because I feel like whenever you are an instructor, it is your duty to gauge the audience and try and see how you can steer things. So if it's blatantly obvious, people are uncomfortable with it, it might be a signal to step back.

F19(B): Yeah, I feel like if they're just trying to test the waters to make sure it's ok with everyone, it's important to see everyone's reaction. And if they are a good teacher, and they see some of the students are, like, uncomfortable, then they probably wouldn't do it again.

M55: Once again, I treated just like an office, just like I did at work. I come in there, that's the boss. I'm doing a lot of paperwork with this. Personal feelings, that's your deal. I'm here to get an education. I spent \$9,500 on this place. That's their problem.

Facilitator: Okay. Are there any final thoughts or questions that you all have regarding this topic of research?

F19(C): I think it was very interesting. Um, categorizing the swear words. I didn't know that and it never like really clicked in my head.

F20: I thought that was pretty cool too.

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPTIONS: FOCUS GROUP 2

Facilitator: To start off with, I kind of want to understand what your perception and views of swearing are. What do you all find is the appeal or the deterrent to using swear words? In your general life, why do you choose to swear or choose not to swear?

F18: I swear just cause I feel like it enhances the story I'm telling or the conversation. I try not to do it a lot cause it can be seen as aggressive or, a big one is unladylike, but I also just grew up around it. My mom swore, my aunt swore, it's just something I was comfortable with.

M18(B): For me, it's like standard in the industry that I work in and just like what I want to do. I'm around it all the time, so I picked it up. I don't know. I'm a pretty heavy sweater. I work in car sales.

M19: I agree. I feel like, it's like more of your environment where you grew up around, but I feel like it's not something you should say out in public to our children. You might hear it because usually whenever you're swearing, it's always like, in a negative connotation. Like in the consent form, one of the things we're saying is go to hell.

You wouldn't tell someone you'd like to go to hell, but you'd say that to someone you hate. So it's like most swear words have a negative connotation to it.

Facilitator: So that would be a deterrent?

M19: Yeah.

M18(A): I think I recently just started swearing as soon as I entered the college atmosphere. I grew up in a very religious family, and so it was a big no-no. But then I learned that my mom used to swear. She stopped when she had me, and so now we both swear with each other, it's

become a lot less of a taboo subject, especially as I've left the church environment that I grew up in, I'm now studying my own ideas and beliefs and practicing them.

N25: I feel like I cuss when I'm telling a really intense story or like when I'm mad or not even mad, just like emotional, like it could be good and I could be like "it's like really fucking good." Like, you know.

M18(A): Emphasis.

N25: Yeah. Emphasizing things, but like, same thing, I still do not cuss around my family and they would be very upset. I think one time I like posted a cussword on like Myspace and my mom was like, "oh my god." but like my mom like recently she would be like, I dunno, like to say the word ass or something. Or like, "he's a grown ass man." So, my family is the only, well, not the only, and probably not at work and stuff, but the main taboo place.

That's the main deterrent as far as cussing for me. But if it's in front of my friends for sure.

Probably at work sometimes. And then like in the classroom, if the teacher cusses then I feel like I'm then allowed to cuss too.

F18: I definitely don't curse at my teachers or like, I don't curse at my parents, but if I'm telling my mom a story, I will say a curse word in there.

When I was younger. It was a problem, but she's like, you know, you're grown. You make your own decisions now, and especially since like she did all the time. Even when I was like the kid, like she, she obviously doesn't care.

Do you curse?

F19: A little bit. It's mostly like what he said. With family, I don't curse at all and, funny enough, they actually curse all the time, but a different language. I speak Spanish at home. So they curse all the time in Spanish. Whenever I try, they're like, "No, you can't do that." Okay, then, I guess I

can't do that at home. And I get like, you know the talk, like you're not supposed to do that. And it's like, even if you're an adult now, you still can't do it in this household.

But with my friends, because the friends I hang out with, we've known each other since high school, so we've known each other for seven years. In high school, we really didn't curse cause like we would be in the school setting, but now that we're in college, we kind of like, "Hey B-word, how are you?"

Like, "Oh, I'm great, how bout you?" So like, kind of as a connection sort of since we've known each other, we wouldn't, I wouldn't say that too you for instance. Maybe someone I've known for a year, I won't say that to, but my friends who I've known for seven years, it's kind of like a connection.

F18: So yeah, my roommate and I are super close and I just walk in and I'm like, "hey stupid bitch, whatcha doin?" And she does it too. So it's like, yeah, but you definitely won't do that to somebody you don't know. Like I wouldn't walk in and just do that to you. So that's definitely right place right time.

Facilitator: So there's a filter in place. What do you think is the reason behind that filter? Is it respect? Is it professionalism? Is it how you want people to perceive you? What drives that.

F18: Respect is mine for one thing. Okay. it used to be how people perceive me because I'm just, like I said earlier, like it was always told, like that's unladylike to curse. so that was definitely a thing for me. But now, like, I don't care if it's ladylike or not. For now, it's just respect.

M19: I feel like it's a professional thing for me, like I would usually cuss around my friends, so it's like a mutual thing. But if I'm like in the interview or if I'm working with customers, I wouldn't cuss right in front of them. It's unprofessional and then you don't want them to like see you as a bad person or something.

M18(B): Yeah, piggy backing off what he said, it's definitely like professionalism for me. It's like, that's probably the only place that I have a filter. I mean, like of course like teachers and stuff. But I would consider that professionalism.

M19: I think it's more perception based with me. oftentimes if I'll wait until they cuss first and then I'll bring it in. So if I'm talking with the customer and they start cussing, I won't do it because it's a workplace. But if that was outside of that environment, then I would start cussing a lot with them or, just to develop that kind of trust and comfort in a conversation. Or, depending on what I'm trying to talk with them about.

N25: I feel like, like this listening to everyone else, I feel like for me, I'm very aware of the power dynamic when I'm cussing, like I teach and I cuss in front of my students. But like, I don't say like the F-word, like, I'd probably say like hell or something. But it's almost like intentional. Like, I want them to know my class is very small, very chill. I want them to get that feel. They're seniors, but I used to teach freshmen and I think I maybe said a few cuss words there, but it was a bigger class. Like with the seniors, I had like 10 students, I'm a grad student.

So with the seniors, I had like 10 students, but with the freshmen, I had, like I taught gen-sci and I taught like 30 students, so it was like a bigger group and there were students that are older than me too, so that was kind of weird. Like if I cuss, like are they, I don't know, like power dynamic. I feel like it's people who I feel like have some stuff. Sort of, I don't want to say power, but like if I know that they can offer me like a professional opportunity, like you guys were saying or like a job. I don't want to come off as unprofessional or, like you were talking about like, cause you're a woman, but I feel like my race and my gender intersect, I don't want to be seen as that angry black woman. Yeah. Like if I say the word fuck then they're gonna be like, "oh, well then."

F18: Like she's automatically like aggressive or something.

N25: Yeah. I don't want to seem like that. So I feel like power dynamics come into play.

F19: Picking back with what you said. So it's like, same thing, cause I even noticed like in TV and stuff, usually with like Hispanic women or Hispanic men, they curse a ton. Like unprofessional gangsters and stuff. And I'm kind of like, I'm not like that. I'm very professional. I work at the library. So it's kind of more perception and professionalism.

Facilitator: You actually led right into my next question, which is how do you think your peers perceive you when you swear? So not necessarily your close friend groups, but maybe the people just outside of that, that you interact with on a somewhat regular basis, but you wouldn't walk into their dorm room. So how do you think people like that perceive you when you swear?

F18: I look really young, like I've gotten mistaken for like a 13-year-old at points. And I feel like I've definitely gotten looks that they're like, like who? I'm with my mom. They're like, Oh my gosh. Like you know, kinda like "you're letting her curse??"

So like ill mannered. I feel like that's the main one. Like, I don't feel like I've ever, like I said, I never curse at people. It's just like when I'm telling a story. So, I was never really seen as like disrespectful or anything, but it's just like, oh my gosh, like you're cursing kind of. I don't know. I think it's just like shocking to them, which I don't think it should be.

M19: I feel like it shows that I'm comfortable around them. Like not only my friends, but sometimes my family. Like even my close cousins or any cousins, I was cussing around with them. I don't think I'm comfortable doing it with strangers or in the public place like at the store or if I'm at schools and I wouldn't curse.

N25: I feel like my acquaintances probably don't care. That's my perception.

F18: I only get those reactions from like strangers, like if I'm talking to my mom and then we're in the store or something. But if it's like somebody I know, then, you know, I've never seen

anything from it. But I think that's probably just cause like they're around my age and they understand, they get it, yeah.

F19: I usually don't. I try not to. I use like words like Holy mackerel, or oh geez. I don't know. That's just how I was raised and whenever I say curse words, it's either because I'm like, it's in story, like it's intense or I'm very upset and when I'm very upset I usually curse.

So I remember this one time I got upset with my friends and I just like said a curse word and they just looked so shocked, all frightened and hurt, and I'm like, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to. But I guess it's just like, since I usually don't swear that often, that when I say it's more impactful than other times. It's kind of surprising.

M18(B): I think it depends on the vibe. There's the specific, like me, I think it depends on the person and just the vibe that I give off. I mean, maybe I'm not allowed to, but it seems like the way I carry myself, it's just normal for me and I don't think it surprises anybody really.

And I feel like it also depends on the people that you hang out with. Cause like I associate myself with people who also cuss a lot.

M18(A): I don't think it's really shocking for the people I hang out with or certain friend groups or acquaintances. I don't add a lot of emphasis on it, but I don't use it to intentionally label somebody.

It's more like just a fling, like "Oh shit," or "fuck" there, whatever. And then I move on from that. And so people don't really pay attention to that. And I only do it as long as I understand they're comfortable with cussing or, like if there's no children, I agree with that point. I don't know what they believe and if I am imparting on them that way, I would feel that I wouldn't be perceived well by them. And so I wouldn't do it at all.

F18: I definitely try not to curse when there are kids around. Ah. Just because it's like kids, they hear it once and they will say it for three weeks. They will. And so it's like, that's just not my place to teach a kid that word. You know? Like even if the parent wouldn't care, it's just like, that's just not my area.

So, and I think that just has to go down to like boundaries and respect.

N25: I have a friend too. I don't have kids. I'm not around kids. I don't know. I'm not. But my best friend has three daughters and the two oldest are like seven and eight. And her philosophy is like, I raise my kids in the real world, like they will like whatever.

One time I came over and they were listening to DMX, that was crazy to me. But she's like, no, I just let them listen to whatever. They've heard cuss words, they're around cuss words, but we teach them, you know, when you're older, whatever, and like you wouldn't cuss at somebody. So like teaching boundaries too. I don't really want kids, but if I ever have kids, that's what I'll do.

Facilitator: You all have mentioned a few situations in which you wouldn't swear. Would you ever use swear words in the classroom, as a student?

F18: If it's initiated by the teacher first. Like you said, kind of wait and see. They do it and if they do it and then I'll see that they aren't offended by that. Cause some people truly do take offense to cursing. It's just waiting for them to be okay with it.

And then when I use it with the teacher, it just kinda depends on how the teacher is, if they're super chill. but I still wouldn't like curse at them. And honestly, I don't really talk to my teachers that much. So I don't see me cursing with my teacher. Like if I'm talking to them. But I would use it in a classroom with my friend for sure.

M19: I kinda agreed. It depends what teacher or who I'm comfortable with. But the instructor, like in high school, I was really comfortable with this one history teacher. And then sometimes he would hear me say like, Oh, what the hell was up? Or my friends would say it. And then I wouldn't say that in a college environment, I guess, like for example, in public speaking, if I'm giving a speech, I had to act professional, so I wouldn't speak or I wouldn't curse in a presentation. I feel like it just depends on what you're comfortable with an instructor.

M18(A): I would like to add that I think it's more subject based. So with the humanities, when it's a form of an expression such as theater or English or, art, maybe then it's more difficult to avoid cussing or not.

Or having a controlled environment where people are allowed to cuss. Cause theater, if it's in the script, you've got to say it. Or with art, if that's how somebody is feeling and it goes along with the rubric, then they have to. So I would only do that then. Maybe not with math or scientific, like STEM related subjects, because it's a lot more of a professional environment and so you don't want to be perceived in the wrong way or have it be useless.

N25: And I agree with what she said, it depends on the teacher. As a student, it depends. I've been in classrooms where there is cussing between the teacher and the student and it's not weird. And I've been, like I said, I'm a grad student, they're smaller classes. It's a more intimate environment. So I've also been in classrooms where like we cuss and the teachers like "oh!" So we know with that one professor, not to cuss in her classroom. We still do. But, we like try to refrain. But it depends on the teacher for sure.

F18: My psychology and personality teacher, first day, she said, "I curse a lot, so if that offends you, come talk to me after class. I'm really sorry. I'll try to refrain." That was like one of the first things she said, so you know, I was like, okay, like would I curse at her? Like in a conversation?

I don't, I still feel like I wouldn't, honestly. I don't know, like there's something that would be like, they don't need to throw that word in there. I don't know. but if I, if it did slip, like I wouldn't be like, "Oh, gosh," like, you know, I'd be okay with it.

F19: I feel in that situation also, it depends on your tone, cause if you're saying like the story or how it happened, she can only be like, okay, if you're saying it aggressively, then that steers it that way.

M18(B): I agree with him. It definitely falls into like this specific category of theater or like my instance would be in English, like when you're writing a paper, sometimes you express different words. But for me, I just turn off all cussing when I go into the classroom because I'm afraid I'm going to say something that I'm going to regret. I'm like, I'm going to go too far, so I would just like turn it off. There's no reason to do it.

Facilitator: Do you think that there's ever a perception of professionalism that is kind of destroyed when you use swear words in the classroom?

M18(B): I feel like it's alright for a teacher. I mean, me personally, just that when a teacher cusses, it makes me feel more comfortable in the classroom. I like the teacher more. I want to go to class because it just, you know, I'm like, Oh, it's going to be all right. It's not going to be boring.

F18: And I don't think that it takes away from professionalism at all. Like I've had teachers personally, it's not like my stomach drops and I'm like. Oh, now they don't know what they're talking about or you know, like I've never had that. Like it doesn't make me question their information or their teaching or anything like that.

It just makes me feel honestly a little less like, 'you are superior.' Less like you're the teacher, I'm the student. Kind of like strict, it seems like we're more like common now. So it never makes me question their intelligence. Or their professionalism.

M19: I feel like it's kind of unprofessional and then cause cursing, just to be like going to school, to be attending a professional place, and then as a teacher they should act professional and then instead of cursing, they might have students that don't approve of it. So then there's going to be students who curse and don't curse, and then as a teacher, they shouldn't be using that type of language in the classroom. I don't think it's appropriate.

F19: My teacher, I usually go to classes that are really big, so like probably around 30 to 60 people, so usually you don't get a teacher, like you don't talk to the teachers usually it's just lecture. So usually I feel like sometimes teachers just did it for like the storytelling or getting a subject. Cause I'm like, I'm in health science, like medical lab scientist.

So sometimes he tries to play it like, I'm taking microbiology, and he like tells stories and throws cuss words. So I think it's more for us to remember it, I guess. Cause it's so like, Oh, he said a curse word for this subject. Oh, we're going to remember it now. I don't know. That's what I've noticed. Cause the few times they've done that and I'm like, that's weird, they curse with a specific subject that they want us to remember. So I don't know if it's just me that notices that, or if any of you guys notice that.

N25: I haven't, but I feel like it depends, like I kind of agree with your perspective, all your perspectives. I feel like if a teacher said "fuck" a lot, like every day or something, every day I go to class, like for some reason they had to say that, I would be a little bit taken aback.

Like why do you need to say that? Like maybe the extent to which they cuss and then like the words that they're using because they're definitely different words. Like hell isn't the same as fuck, you know.

F18: Definitely. It depends on if it's excessive. Cause like as I keep talking, I'm just thinking like subtle, like occasionally, you know, but then, you know, definitely if it were like they were cursing a lot. Like I think excessive cursing can be unprofessional. I think it can be ill mannered. I think it can be disrespectful and just honestly overall unattractive. But, as I speak, like I keep saying, I mean I'm talking as if they're doing it like occasionally, not a bunch.

M18(A): It becomes, once you use it excessively, then it becomes a crutch word except a more poignant crutch word. And so then people will take notice of that a lot more and then it would definitely lower the professionalism, because crutch words typically aren't used in a professional environment like public speaking or if you're giving a presentation or speaking with someone. You always want to have the perception of, 'I know what I'm saying. I'm speaking clearly and I'm speaking my mind thoroughly, and you understand what my standpoint is.' And so once you have a catch word, then it kind of devalues what you're saying. Like if you say "like" a lot. Whatever. I think at that point then it becomes an issue with unprofessionalism. But otherwise to me, it would show that they're more honest if they use it like a story or there's a specific point for it.

Facilitator: To piggyback off of that, do you ever feel that there's an element of, a lack of education? Whether that is when it's used as a crutch word or just in repetitive use or occasional use, do you ever feel that colors some of your perception of them?

F18: I hear that a lot where people are like "if you curse a lot, you're like uneducated" or "you have a lower vocab." I don't get that from it. I don't, I just, that's just me personally. I don't think

it makes you seem uneducated. Like I said previously, it doesn't make me question their knowledge. it just. It's like, not like gross, but it just kinda like "ugh" to me. But it doesn't make me question the information that's going on through their lecture anyway.

M18(A): I think it depends on which word they say too. Like what the definition of the swear word is. So for example, the R word or retarded that would show that, to me, that they need a better understanding of empathy. Or specifically with certain philosophies or politics. It would lower my perception of their intelligence for that subject matter.

While they could be like an amazing engineer, or a great business major. But if they use that word, then I believe that in that subject matter, they wouldn't be as intelligent as some other people.

Facilitator: Okay. We actually are going to get into the categories of swearing as there are several of them. And they do kind of carry some different weight. A lot of people see some as more intense and others as less intense. Some are more acceptable and others are less acceptable. As we go through these categories, I really want you to keep it in mind how you would perceive the instructor if they were to use these words in the classroom setting, whether that be an impact on their credibility and impact on your respect for them, impact on your view of their education. or if it makes them more personable, friendly and approachable. Those kinds of different things, how you would perceive the instructor if they use these. The first category is going to be curse words. These are often religious, but not always. And they would be directed at a person. Something like "God dammit" or "go to hell." So if an instructor were to use those in the classroom, how would you perceive them?

F18: I'm not religious at all. Zero. but I know that religion is a very sensitive thing, so I think that, like I don't, I won't say goddammit, like I only say dammit. I just think that has something

to do with like respect because that is such a touchy subject. For teachers who even say, God bless you. Like some people can get offended by that. So I think that that should be left out.

M19: I kind of agree, it has a chance of offending those who are religious. And for teachers to say that, it wouldn't be appropriate for them to tell a student to go to hell if they're mad at them, or if they don't approve of what they're doing. So then it would make me have like less respect for them and make me not want to go to their class. Probably give them a bad review. I just don't think that it's appropriate for them to say that cause they can offend a student.

F18: Even not that, like Christianity, we believe in God. Like if there's other religions in that classroom too, maybe. So I think that's why it's, it can be so offensive. It's not only because of people who believe in God, but who believe in other things too.

N25: I feel like you can get the intent of those words across with other words. Not only other words, but like other cuss words. Like you said, just say, dammit instead of goddammit. Or, I think you mentioned like if someone is telling a student that, like go to hell, like, I feel like it's how they use it too.

So maybe even within those words, some of the like more intense, like how they use it. Like if someone ever directed something at a student, or was like cussing a student out, that would be not, I would not think that they were...maybe not like their credibility as far as like, is the information they're telling me correct. But like my view on them as a person. Like, why are you degrading your student like that?

I never thought about that before. That they're religious. Like obviously goddammit, that's religious.

M18(B): I don't have a problem with the goddammit part, but like in a classroom setting, the difference between throwing in the F word in casual conversation that can kind of make, make it

lighthearted versus like, goddammit, that's like a violent, like, "Whoa, what's going on here now?" It's just a completely different vibe.

F19: Usually when professors say that word, it's usually when they forget something. That's when I've heard it. Like it's not really directed toward someone. Or they drop something and they're like, no. It's towards the situation. Into an object.

F18: Yeah. Like I've never heard a teacher like curse at the student or a student like curse at an instructor. It's like in conversation or, yeah, like if you drop something and like, damn, you know. I think that religion should be kept out of the classroom, not even just curse words, all things. Because for example, you grew up super religious. I am completely atheist. Don't believe it at all. So it's like that could be super offensive towards both of us.

So, and you don't know, you're not going to go around the class. "Okay, what's your religion? Hey, what's your religion?" You know? So I think it should just be kept out of the classroom at all, especially cause we're in Wichita, but just super diverse.

M18(A): Yeah. Like for the example of the religious aspect of it I would never add God to any a curse word. Not that I'm against it, but just because like I was raised by that and at this point. Like it's just so Greek to me. I'm fine with it, but it has a weird tick to it. and then I would definitely agree if it's directed at an object, or a thing, I'd be fine with it. But if it's a person or a subject matter that they're talking about, like they're telling like, "Oh, Lindsay Lohan can go to hell." Then I think that typically shows bias towards that person that you can skew it a lot of different ways. And get a lot of perceptions or maybe incorrect or could be correct about what they believed.

And I believe that teachers should be non-biased and what they teach, or the subject matter.

Facilitator: Okay. The next category is also in the realm of religion. And this is the category of profanities. These are often used as expletives. So for instance, Jesus Christ would be a profanity. but also, damn, which you said, not necessarily a religious one. If they're using these types of curse words, what would your perception of that would be?

M19: Although I'm not religious, I sometimes say Jesus Christ instead of like another curse word. I never saw it as offensive to other people, but I guess it's just all about perspective because I wasn't raised in a religious household, so I didn't see how it affected others. Unless someone told me, then I wouldn't know.

N25: I was like you, so I was raised in a very religious household. I'm not religious anymore, but still how you talked about like if you put God at the beginning of like it just like I was raised where you don't say "oh my God." Like I still am very uncomfortable saying that and I'm not religious anymore. It's just like ingrained. So I feel like Jesus Christ, like saying that, I don't know, even still like just kind of feel weird.

Like there are other things I would say just cause like kind of what you guys were saying, like there's all different religions and you don't know who's going to be there.

Facilitator: Kind of a similar perception of the instructor toward cursing. If they were to use it, it sounds like.

N25: Kind of the same as before.

M18(A): I've heard it used in a good way, like I remember. Cause I know a lot of Christian people who will say "Oh Jesus Christ," or "Damn." And I think the way that I was taught is that as long as it's in a good way, like it's like, "Oh Jesus, it's a miracle" and it's fine.

And that it's still an expletive though because it's showing emotion, but if it's in the negative way then it's bad with those people. So to me, I always imagined it in a good way. For some reason,

even if the context is bad, I just don't know why. I wouldn't say it, but it shows a Christian background depending on how they use it, I would say.

Facilitator: All right, the next category is going to be obscenities. This would be like the F word. So if your instructor was to say “fuck” in the classroom, how would you perceive them?

F18: I don't even flinch. And the way you just said it, I was just like listening, like it was like normal conversation and I think that really just has to do with, cause like my mom's military, my aunt's military, my uncle is, you know, they curse a lot.

So it just really was how I was raised. Fluid in conversations. I don't speak it like that, but like it really just, it doesn't faze me at all.

M19: I wouldn't be bothered by it. But then if they keep saying it repeatedly over like the whole class period, I would kind of get annoyed and then it would make me not like the teacher anymore or like their attitude or them as a person.

F18: It wouldn't make me dislike them as a person, but I don't like excessive swearing. I think it just comes off gross. That's the only word I can think of to describe it is like, it wouldn't make me think like they're a bad person or anything. It's just like listening to the conversation after so many swear words does get kind of like, you don't want to listen as much. But if it's occasional, I don't care.

N25: I feel like they should like use the F word occasionally, like personally, I never use that with my students, but I don't know. I just very occasionally, I dunno, I feel like if they use it like twice in one class. I kind of do like, what are you doing? I don't know what, it would make me feel weird. Like I don't have a problem with it, but I feel like in that setting I do. So very occasionally they should use those words.

M18(B): I think it spices things up.

N25: We all have such different perspectives. You're like, "I didn't even flinch," and you think it's spicy.

Facilitator: Okay. A lot of times people will say there's kind of a collective giggle in the classroom that happens when an instructor swears. Do you think that that is more true when they use obscenities rather than dammit or shit or something like that?

F19: I think it's just, I think some students don't because lots of students are from religious backgrounds. Like you guys, so when they hear it, they're just so shocked that the only way they can like comprehend what they just heard is by laughing. And I know like I was the same way. Like in my high school they laughed. That's how you make it less awkward, isn't it? A defense mechanism, sort of.

F18: I don't think I've heard it in one of my college classes. Definitely in high school, but that's because they're like 15-year-old little kids, you know? but I don't think I've heard any giggling in my college classes when a teacher cussed. In high school though, yeah. And it was honestly kind of annoying. I was like, Oh my God. They said a curse word. You know, like the kids who would scream when the lights would turn off.

M18(B): I think it depends. Like if the teacher says, it's often, like if they start out from like the first week saying curse words or obscenities, then you're used to it. But like if they drop it in the middle of the semester, you're like, Whoa. That was uncalled for. Or just unforeseen.

Facilitator: Okay. Would you consider obscenities more surprising than other curse words?

N25: Yes. And obscenities are like, fuck.

F18: I feel like the top three I here is like fuck, damn, or shit.

Facilitator: Which are all different categories. Okay, so the next category is slang. These would be words like bastard or slut. So if your instructor used those in the classroom, what would you think?

N25: Nope.

M18(B): Yeah, don't agree with those.

Facilitator: Okay, so what would you think of the instructor.

M18(A): I would think they profile people a lot easier or two dimensionally. That they don't think of them as people, but rather just that word, bastard, or slut, and that's all they see.

F18: Judgmental and they probably have really bad road rage. Okay. I absolutely hate this word, and I hate hearing, I hate saying it, but would cunt be in that?

Facilitator: That would actually be an obscenity. Yeah.

F18: That's honestly my least favorite curse word. Oh God. I feel like those are more like about people, like the other ones, you can use them towards people, but those are like specifically about people. Like those are meant to be said at people.

N25: We all kind of talked about like if a teacher was using something that was toward a student, at a student or about someone. Like you talked about, I don't know what celebrity, but, yeah, like if you're talking about someone, even if you're not using one of those, it's kind of in a different light. But those are like specifically intended to be a rude word toward somebody.

F18: Yeah. Those are just straight up like gross words.

Facilitator: So would you be less likely to listen to what that person had to say if they're your instructor?

N25: Honestly, now I'd probably still listen, but I'd be way more like judgmental and like now what they're saying isn't resonating with me. It's just now I want to hear what other stupid things are about to come out of their mouth. I feel like it would make me like them less to be honest.

M18(B): I don't think that would fly in the classroom, to be honest. People probably report that type of cussword.

Facilitator: You think you would lose respect for them?

F18: Oh, definitely. I think part of that for me, like slut has to do with just being a woman. Like that was like, I hate that. And bastard, I feel like, I just feel like those are words, like, I don't see any use for that. I don't see any need to use those type of words. Not even just in a classroom setting, but at all. There are just other words you can use. I mean, look how big a dictionary is. There are plenty of adjectives you can use or names that you can say.

N25: I was thinking about like the part of, would it make me feel like they're less credible? And [participant], like you said, I feel like it would be biased. It would be like, not that they're less educated, but like everything they're saying is tainted by that bias. So I would almost take it with a grain of salt.

Like you said, this thing, like you're an educated person because you're standing in front of me teaching me, but like I probably need to question it.

F18: Yeah. Like everything I've heard after that that comes out of your mouth, I'm going to be questioning. So like the information necessarily isn't going to be wrong, but it's just definitely gonna make me take it in differently.

F19: I think the only situation really those words would be okay is like if you were discussing it. So in women's studies we were discussing those words and how they're used in society or like, like you said, humanities. Like how we were discussing how they came about. That's the right

context to say now cause you're discussing it. But if you're just like saying it at a person, I mean that's really disrespectful.

F18: That was like a whole shift of a different level, like damn to slut, that's a big difference.

Facilitator: Yeah. The next one is a step up too. This is the category of slurs and this would be like gender slurs or racial slurs. Using those in the classroom.

N25: Yeah. I would have to try to not walk out of the class.

Facilitator: So once again, how would that affect your perception of that instructor?

F19: Like I said previously, only if it's like to discuss it. Like the negative connotations or why it was used in history, but other than that, no, you don't. You can't use those words.

F18: That's like just off on, it's like you just can't, and the second that you say it, I lose all respect for you. I'm huge on women's rights and on equal rights. Equal rights for everything. I have mixed family, a household of women. So those things are huge for me. So the second it comes out of your mouth, I lose all respect for you and for your education, like the teaching stuff that, because if you're not, if you can say things like that, then I have no respect for you as a person. And then like as a teacher, you're supposed to want to help people and stuff like that. So I don't understand how you can be in that career. That is when it does affect my education, cause I will question what's coming out of your mouth and like what you're lecturing about and what you're teaching.

M19: I think other like historical context is kind of, it's kinda okay. But then once they use it, like in a classroom setting, then especially in today's society, people get offended by certain words that it wouldn't be appropriate for them to use it. And probably if they use it in the classroom, then they're probably getting reported or fired even within the next few weeks. So it's better for them not to say those words.

N25: Yeah, I feel like we have to be careful about the line with like talk, like using it in historical context or talking about the subject because I remember in elementary school or talking about something like black people, I don't know, but my teacher said like the N I G, G, E, R, and like, it wasn't a book.

It was like, well, this is like, just show the person, I don't care. Don't say that. Like, I don't care. Like you can, you know, say like, say "the n-word" or whatever you want to say. But like, "it's a teaching moment," I don't care. Don't say it. That makes me uncomfortable. So I feel like there's, there's a line, even when we talk about those teaching moments, whatever.

M18(A): I think professionally it shows when somebody uses that that they're old fashioned thinking, or that they aren't up to date with what people consider to be triggering words. So it shows insensitivity for me, if somebody used that. Then I would say that there's definitely a time and place to use it. Like if you're an actor and you say, like with to kill a Mockingbird because you're supposed to hate that character. And so if they use that, then it gets that emotion out of it and it's in the script, and so they have to do that. But for education purposes, I don't think, unless it's being discussed, and it shouldn't be.

N25: I agree with that, they're not up to date, or like lack of awareness.

F18: That makes me not want to talk to you about just anything. Like if I'm going to miss class and I'm going to be like, "Hey, what are we doing next Thursday?" I don't even, I just don't want to talk to you. I don't know. I don't like looking at people like that. I don't, I just don't want to be in your classroom at all, honestly.

M18(B): Feel like we're looking at it kind of on a base level, like especially if it's like a racial word. It's not, "Oh, I'm going to look at the professor differently." To me, it's more along the lines of "they're going to be fired." Because like I have a family friend, not that I'm associated

with him, but he was a high school teacher. He got fired because he was breaking down a fight and he said something you shouldn't have. And so it's just, immediately, it's not allowed. So it's not like, "Oh, I'm going to look at him different," because he's going to be gone, or she, he or she, whoever is probably gonna be gone.

F18: I don't go out of my way to like, like I am a double major with two jobs. I do not have time to go and make reports about teachers and stuff. And I'm like, you know, that's probably what I think I would take my time to go and do. You know, I wouldn't wait to put it on my teacher evaluation at the end of the semester. That is something I would take 10 minutes to go write an email about it. That says a lot because I'm terribly busy all the time. So I think that is something.

Facilitator: Okay, so we're going to bring it back down with our final category. This is the category of scatology. These are words like shit or piss. So these are used within a classroom by the instructor – how would that affect your perception of them? What would you think?

F18: I think the word piss is gross. I don't know if you use it in like, "I have to take a piss." I think that's just disgusting to me. And you're like "I'm pissed off" and like, I feel like that's honestly one of the most casual curse words there are. and then say for shit, like "I have to take a shit." Like that's disgusting to me, but if you're like "shit" cause you dropped something that I think is different. So context.

M18(A): As long as it doesn't go specifically with its actual definition, yeah.

N25: When you initially said that, I was like, "Whoa, those are the same category. How is that?" Cause I look at shit a lot different. I was like, that's fine. But then whenever you said like pissed off, I was like, Oh, that may change the whole idea that I had in my head too.

Facilitator: So, don't care? Wouldn't notice?

M19: As long as they're not like directing or like losing respect for someone else or like dehumanizing them or saying it towards them, I'd be fine with it.

F18: Yeah. If my teacher dropped something and said, "shit." Okay, cool.

M18(A): Especially if you say like you're a piece of shit, right?

N25: Yeah, I feel like that's been like a theme, if it's like directed at someone, then it's like, no. But if it's just an expression, it doesn't matter.

Facilitator: Okay. Do you ever believe that gender influences what you believe about instructors who swear? So if it's a woman who swears, I know you mentioned that sometimes you'll get that it's unladylike, do you ever think that colors slightly what you believe about it? If it's a female versus a male, standing at the front of the classroom, what are your thoughts?

M18(B): No, it doesn't because I have both female and male teachers and I haven't even thought about it. It's the same.

N25: I think subconsciously, at least for me, like, I don't know. I mean societally, we're taught that there's no difference. But I think like you were told that, it's not lady like or whatever. Yeah. I think at some level we all were. Those kinds of things were said to me. So I feel like, like I want to say no, but I feel like if I said no, that would be a lie. Just because I know that that's like, it's kind of ingrained in our brains. It's ingrained in our society. So like I feel like subliminally, probably in ways that I am not noticing, but, I don't know. It might manifest in other ways, like I might not be like, "oh my gosh, you cussed, and you're a woman that's crazy," but it might manifest some other way. And like subliminally, yeah, probably does.

M19: In my experience then I don't really see that many females cursing, but most of my male teachers who curse, most of them are coming from like a sports background, like they played

football or something. They would curse doing that, so then usually they curse in the classroom, but I don't think there is a difference between the male cursing and the female cursing.

M18(A): Everyone just cussed, so either I'm more focused on the word rather than who said it.

F19: What they're saying and what they mean is more important than who it came from.

F18: From other people, it probably would be perceived differently though. Like I think as a female, like, you know, it's just, I feel like you get taught that. You get told that, like you say one word and they're like, "Oh, you're not supposed to say that, you're a lady," you know. And so I feel like some people, like it probably does. To me though I actually like when a female curses, it's like "power to you, sister." Like, yes. But I know that it probably does, like some people probably do see a difference in it.

N25: Yeah, that's a good point too. There's also that opposite thing of where it's like "yeah, you're a badass."

Facilitator: That almost comes from the internalized message that she's breaking the rules.

N25: Yeah, yeah. Yes.

Facilitator: All right. Final question would be, how does the attitude of those around you and their attitude towards the swearing, so if they're comfortable or uncomfortable, affect your attitude toward an instructor? So if you're totally, you know, whatever, saying cuss words, it's fine, but someone next to you or the attitude of the class is very uncomfortable, what would you then think of the instructor when they're swearing?

F19: I think it's the instructor's job to know the class atmosphere. If they can tell that most of the class is kind of uncomfortable or done with it and they keep on doing it, then I think that kind of discredits the teacher with like, just like you're the teacher. You're supposed to know what your classroom feels like. You can just tell. Kind of agree with that the teachers should be responsible

for the kinds of words to use. Like they shouldn't use, religious swear words or like gender curse words. They should know the time and place to use those words.

N25: I feel like it depends on the context. Like if someone step outside of class, and says "oh my gosh, can you believe that they were cussing?" I'd be like, "I don't care. Like who cares?" You know? But if the teacher was made aware of it, they didn't do anything, like their reaction to it. It depends on their awareness. If everyone around me thinks it's terrible, but the teacher doesn't know. And I'll probably still be like, I don't care. It doesn't matter.

F18: I think that the teachers should be like, you know, conscious about who's around and who's comfortable with that. But you have to think at the same time, you have classes up to 60 people. How are they supposed to know every student's body language? Know what they're comfortable with, you know, and they get a new class every semester too. I think that what my teacher did was great, like she said I curse a lot. Come talk after class or send me an email if that's a problem. So that it was "make me aware that you aren't comfortable with it" or something because if she's more comfortable teaching like that, then you know, like that she might, it might make her teach the information easier for her. But if it makes you feel uncomfortable that she was okay to not curse, but she said, you guys have to let me know that, cause like I'm not going to be able to tell.

So I think it's on everybody. Honestly, I think. Yes. The teacher shouldn't curse if they don't know everybody's comfortable with it. But also like, how's the teacher supposed to know you're not comfortable with it if you don't say anything.

I wouldn't care. And I think that if the student just keeps complaining and doesn't say anything about it, then I still don't care. Cause I'm like, well, it takes three minutes to type an email and be

like, Hey, do you mind not cursing in class? And I'd say, it's really rare that a teacher's gonna be like, "ah, no, I'm going to keep cursing."

M18(B): I completely agree with her on that topic, but at the same time, we're all in college and we're all about to be adults. Yeah. So I mean, at the same time, I don't think it should be a big deal to anybody really. Unless it's like, but obviously we've talked about it for an hour, so like, like God damn or like stuff like that. But like base level cursing, shrug it off.

F18: You go to the class twice a week. Maybe if you have like math you go every day or whatever, but like, it's for a semester.

M18(B): Obviously if the whole class was uncomfortable, then yeah, you're going to bring it up or say something or the teacher should obviously judge. I don't, I've never been in a situation where the class seems uncomfortable.

F18: My thing is just like cursing, like it's just not that big a deal. If you're in a class, like you go to the class a couple times. It's a semester. It's not like this is the person you're marrying or something. Shrug it off, it'll be over in a couple of weeks. And if it's really not, maybe send an email or something, and I'm sure that the teacher would be happy to compromise with you to stop cursing for the semester.

At the end of the class you want to leave as quick as possible anyways.

APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPTIONS: FOCUS GROUP 3

Facilitator: To start off with, I want to understand what all of you think about swearing for your own personal use. And so once again, like I said in the introduction, this is really about having a conversation between all of you. It's not just that I ask questions, you answer directly to me. Interact with each other's comments. You can build off of what other people say. What is the appeal or deterrent to using swear words in your own lives? This would be outside of the classroom, just in your day to day interactions with people.

M18: I don't know. I prefer not to. Okay. I just think it's a respectful thing not to. I mean on my own time, I will.

F19: Yeah. I swear all the time with my close friends because it shows I'm comfortable with you and that's just a thing I do. And my parents used to tell me not to because they're like, that's such a bad thing. But now that I'm older, they really don't care. So, I sometimes I'm like, I'm in public and I swear or something, and I'm like, oh crap, I shouldn't have said that. Then I'm like, ah, who cares?

F18(B): So my family's always been really loud. It's like we've all kind of, I've grown up with my parents swearing. I do it with my sister, like more of like, it's a comfort thing. And like a lot of times we joke around a lot, so there's a lot of cussing.

Me and my roommate, we cuss a lot cause we're dramatic, but I don't at work because I work in the nursing field, so it's just not the type of place.

M19(B): Same here. I feel like it just depends where you're at. With my closest friends, I do cuss. But if I'm in the professional field, I try to limit, you know, but it does slip out a lot cause I do use it daily. So it does slip out once in a while. But in a professional area, I try not to.

F20: It definitely depends on comfort. I know I let it slip more than I should probably. But I am a college student, so is that an excuse? My parents, like while I was growing up, it was the same. My parents did not want me to swear. And now that I'm like old and grown and live away from them, they don't care as much. Until we get to that point where my mom's like, "Oh my gosh." But it definitely depends on setting. Like I try not to at work, or like, if I'm in a class, I probably won't.

F18(A): Yeah, I don't normally curse unless, I'm like, I don't know. I drop something. Or like hurt myself and it just slips out. So like usually I don't really cuss, because I was raised not to basically. And it also kind of depends on like work, like you said. And then I consciously try not to do it around little kids, cause my parents always told me not to do that. But, other than that, yeah, I don't curse that much. It's just not really a habit for me, but I don't really care if other people do it.

F19(B): Yeah. I don't really care much about cussing. I don't think I cuss that much. I mean maybe sometimes it slips out every once in a while. I don't really think it's that big of a deal. But the setting part does matter though. I try not to cuss cause I'm like a server for a catering company. So I like don't curse there.

Facilitator: You all have mentioned a few situations in which you wouldn't curse. What's the reason that you don't curse there? Is it a perception of professionalism or respect or the lack of education that you think leads to that? What do you think it is?

M19(A): I think there's like a lot of situations where you're just not allowed to because of the people who you either work for, or like, if your teachers don't like it. So I think for me, it least, a lot of times I try not to cuss and it's just to try not to get in trouble. and then like, you know, if there's kids around. Cause it's not fair to like expose kids to that if their parents don't want them to be exposed to that.

F18(B): Working in a nursing home, I work with a lot of elderly people, and like when they were growing up and like, they were out and about and still able. Like it was not an okay thing. It wasn't just something everyone did.

So like I've seen other CNAs do it or they like look at you like you're kind of crazy, which is just not something that they're used to. And a lot of times if they're demented, they'll use it saying it to like other people, which they're not supposed to. But I also work in a restaurant and as a sales associate somewhere else, I'm like, there's family and kids that come in.

So it's just not like, it doesn't look good on you and it's not appropriate. And like he said, like a lot of kids around.

M19(B): I think it just depends because he mentioned the workplace. And let's say you work under a boss that's, I guess around your age, and that's more, I guess chill and you're comfortable with him. And you guys would probably cuss. It depends on your values and like experiences in that as well. And like who you're around. Cause the older generation, you know, weren't raised to cuss a lot. But currently like people, it's become a more common thing cause you know you're being real with it because it's more common nowadays.

F19: Yeah. I know my dad, every time, a couple of years ago, like when I started swearing and stuff, he would always get so offended.

And he still gets really offended and my mom doesn't care. They're the same age, but I think it's like a respect thing. And he grew up in like a very respectful household and like you don't swear, you don't disrespect your parents. So I think it depends on the person. I think it's a very much of a respect thing because some people are raised like that so.

Facilitator: How do you all think that your peers perceive you when you swear?

F18(B): Personally, when I hear other people swear, if they do it a lot. I think they're like, they give an impression that they're uneducated, but at the same time, I swear a lot. And I don't like to think of myself as uneducated.

M18: I feel like if it's like, say if you mess up in a class and you just like have something slip, they kind of either laugh about it or it just goes right over their head. But if you're a student it tends to just, or a person being viewed by your peers, they will kinda in their way judge you, I guess. Cause it's very unprofessional. I think I always try to be very professional outside of friends and family. I mean, still family, because of respect, but I feel like you just aren't holding yourself to a great value if you are swearing.

F18(B): I know like when I'm with my friends, it's very different. Like a lot of times it's cause we're mad and that's when it mostly comes out. Cause like when we're telling them about something that happened, like me and my roommate are very close. And I'd say I cuss around pretty much anybody not cause I'm rude, but like just cause I'm comfortable talking with people a lot.

So like I let it go a lot. Like even with my family. Nobody really looks at me weird unless they don't know me whatsoever and I'm in a more professional setting. I feel like it's just something that's become so lax now that people use it more in the way they speak and the way they tell stories than as in derogatory terms.

I do think sometimes swear words are taken too far, like when they're used derogatorily. I feel like it's such a situational thing that it really just depends. It's become less situational, but still is with work and school.

F18(A): I personally think that my peers don't really care. Like I don't know if I let it slip during a presentation then maybe they'll be like, no. But in general, I don't think they care. But then again, it's mainly because I don't care.

F20: I'm the same way. I mean as a person who does swear and is also more or less a professional, it doesn't really matter to me. I mean, yeah, context is everything. If you're in, like, I go to the Kansas board of Regents meetings every month. If someone were there and they were swearing, that's kind of a different situation than if you're sitting in a classroom and someone swears. I don't think classmates would really care just because at this point the perception is more, it's not a derogatory thing, and if it is a derogatory thing, then definitely you would be looked down on. But at this point, swear words mean so much more than just looking down on someone. You can use it to describe various different things. I don't know how to like, how to end this, but it just, I think it depends on how you're using it. But I don't think that my peers really give a damn.

F18(A): I'm sorry, I really don't give a shit if you cuss around me. Unless you're like a 12 year old using the N-word, or calling me a fucking bitch, like my little sister, who I'll punch in the face, like I really don't like, like it's fine to swear. But it's like, it also depends on your age. Cause like if you are like in middle school, you should be focusing on like my little pony, don't be like acting all cool and stuff like that. Cause like well, my sister's friends, he's like a 12-year-old, he said the N word. I honestly want to kick him. I mean, he makes me so mad. I know. I know, but still close enough. If they're a 12-year-old and they say the F word. I'm like, no. And then like

obviously, also it does depend the situation like for me, people probably think I'm crazy. Especially on playing games. So they get really intense sometimes. But obviously I'm also kind of used to it. Cause my mom calls me a swear word, I forgot what it means, I'm not so sure. But my dad's probably cool with it when I say swear words cause he says them all the time too, he says even worse. But my mom, I can't say it around her because if I do say it around her she might hit my head with the broom.

M18: Yeah, I play a lot of games as well, so it's flying when I'm playing games, just because it's, I feel like that's the type of community where it just happens a lot and it's just, it's just well known.

It's not really frowned upon unless you're like attacking someone with it. And that, again, just isn't right. There was also a respect aspect when she was talking about people who are younger than you and you should respect older people than you.

F18(B): I think that's very relatable. I watch both my brother and my boyfriend do it and like, it's funny when you poke at them cause they don't realize, it's like you outside and they turn around, snap at you. And then they're like. I'm sorry,

M19(A): Can you repeat the question?

Facilitator: How do you think your peers perceive you when you swear?

M19(B): So I'm in orgs that we have a professional group chat and another group, and in the professional group chat, you know, there's really, they should be professional. And I like to be kind of dramatic, and you know, when someone does something good, I say "Oh, you did fucking amazing. Congratulations." They always say like "be professional." Like it's for me, I don't care because they know me. I don't care how my peers perceive me, cause I know that, well, like most of my closest friends are my fraternity brothers, so I don't care.

Sometimes I do it on purpose to see like, to poke the bear. But if it's like a professional, maybe I would care cause of job opportunities, stuff like that. That's when I would start to care more. But if I'm comfortable around everybody, I'm just going to talk.

Facilitator: Several of you have mentioned professionalism as a reason that you probably wouldn't swear. So how do you feel when an instructor swears in the classroom?

F20: I smile and then we get back to learning.

M19(B): I think when a professor cusses, I feel like she's, she or he or whatever, is more laid back like, okay. I guess that tension like, the shock to raise your hand kind of lessens cause you're like, okay, maybe I can be real with this professor. And I think I can say my opinion.

F18(A): I think "thank fucking God," because they're always so chill.

It's just, I feel like there's nothing wrong with like an uptight teacher or very strict or formal, but to me, it's nice to have a teacher who is kind of just relatable.

F18(B): It's nice to have a teacher, that like when you have all these like very formal, like I know a lot of my classes are sciences cause I'm in the health major, like everything's so serious and like sucks and you're stressed. Like you go to that one class, like Sandy's that teacher for me. I go in there and I'm like, I could cry in her class and she'd probably give me a hug and it'd be fine. I feel like, I don't know if she cusses, but she has that very loud attitude that cussing has. Like you kind of need one of those teachers. That's just whatever cause she knows life happens and that's it.

M19(A): I'm still kind of used to high school where if you cuss you kinda got scolded or whatever. So when I hear a teacher cuss I kinda giggle.

You know it's like, "look what the grownup said." Like it also is very humanizing, I think to hear actual expression in the words they use instead of just dry, "This is the lecture."

F20: Also, a lot of the time, at least when I'm swearing, it's when I'm like super passionate and I'm on like a tangent about something that I more or less know something about. So if a teacher is on the same kind of roll, that's what I like to hear. If you're going to swear when you're trying to teach us something that you're passionate about, you can do it. I don't see an issue with it personally. Again, smile and get on with it.

M19(B): At the same time it can be more relatable, I guess it can be harsh towards certain people. Or I guess in a more hating way. Cause when it gets to that level, then like, okay, no.

F20: It definitely depends on what they're saying. The context of the swearing is key.

M19(B): If they're saying just to, I guess, be passionate or just to add some seasoning to the food, right. It's cool. But like when it's more toward like hating and harassing, you know, that's when it's like, okay, it was fun at first but you gotta back it up bit.

F18(B): I know they also have to think about the students in class though. It's like, again, some people just aren't comfortable with swear words, if it's religion or culture, so they also have to be considerate.

Facilitator: Do you all take that into consideration in your interactions when you use swearing? Do you kind of filter based on if you think the other person's going to be comfortable with it or not?

M19(A): Absolutely. I feel like saying a cuss word to someone that doesn't like cuss words is the easiest way to alienate someone because they're just uncomfortable and it's like they don't want to talk to you anymore. And then you feel uncomfortable for making them uncomfortable.

F18(B): I think it sounds crazy, but I feel like when I look at somebody, you can kinda tell, like I get the sense like, I mean I obviously when we first hang out or be around me, like it's awkward because things are always awkward for humans. But like you start to tell their habits, what they

do and don't do. So like immediately when I met my roommate, I was like, she doesn't care. Like we had to do our room pact. There was stuff like that, like cussing and cleaning and people over. We both were just like, you know, kinda like our answer literally was, I don't give a fuck, but you can't put that in the room pact.

M19(B): I usually test out the waters. I don't say like, you know, I guess harder cuss words like fuck or whatever. I say crap or hell, you know, like I test out the waters to see how they react and if they react like "that's weird," I won't after that cause I don't want to make the person uncomfortable. I just test it out to see how it is at first.

F18(A): I go off of, like you said, like you look at people and they have that look. Cause like if I'm with someone who is religious, I try not to cuss around them. Because I do remember I had some people come over to visit with friend of mine and then she was like, okay, don't cuss around them, they're super religious, they might hate you. And I'm like, okay, yeah. And then I had a game night one time with some friends, and they invited, cause it's also no shade at private schools either. Cause I went to a private school. And it was like a, like a close group. I had a fun group that we all went to school together forever and we invite this random other guy who was from the Catholic school we went to and then we were playing Mario Cart and I was swearing so much. I was cussing at my friends, I was cussing at the controllers, stuff like that. I was so mad. And then he looked at me and he was like, "but you're so quiet at school." Like he didn't run. He looked at me like I was an alien or something like that.

Facilitator: Okay. You all have mentioned that there is a kind of a level to swearing that you, you mentioned testing the water. And there actually are several different academic categories of swearing, and we're going to work through each one of them to see what your thoughts are, what your perception is of an instructor who would use these swear words in the classroom setting.

Okay. So keep that in mind, how you would view them in the realm of respect and credibility, professionalism, education, all of those kinds of things. Just how you would perceive them as a person. The first category is curse words. It's the act of actually cursing someone or something. This would be like, goddammit, or go to hell.

So what would you think of an instructor who used those types of words in the classroom?

F19(B): I went to a Catholic school my entire life, except high school and my teachers would sometimes go on a tangent about morals. And they would sometimes still bring up how go to hell was like the worst thing to tell somebody. Because one time our teacher was like, don't ever say go to hell at all somebody cause that means you're like condemning them to hell or something. And then with Catholicism, if a teacher is like really, really faithful, they're like so against the word goddammit. They'll sometimes say like dadgummit or something like that.

M18: Kind of based off of like switching those words, like my grandma grew up, she was born in 1930 so like they always had to watch what they said. I was always worried if I said, "Oh God," I would get soap in my mouth. That's where it came into respect to elders and just the people around you. but that was like your consequence if you were to do something bad. I'm not religious whatsoever. And if you go to Catholic school for a few years. I don't like go to hell. As somebody who's not religious, like I believe in a higher power and like I have some ideas, but like I'm not Catholic.

Catholic kids I went to school with were terrible. They're like, "you're going to go to hell." And I'm like, I don't care, but that's rude. So I think go to hell is like extremely rude. But I'll say goddammit, all the time.

F20: And I mean in an academic setting, like cursing someone I think is different than using curse words, like swearing. Like I mean saying dammit, sure. But like explicitly saying, that's someone in the room is going to hell probably doesn't help your case as a teacher. Just an idea.

M18: Yeah, it just makes a teacher very aggressive.

F20: Just that, I feel, would discredit them if like, if they, you know, drop a pen and say, goddammit, like, sure. But thinking about the other people who would be in that room, who would be on the end of that "go to hell," that's not a professional thing to do because that, that point is crossing over the line of being able to swear into aggression.

M19(A): Yeah. I think like go to hell and goddammit like aren't even close to the same thing.

Like go to hell is just mean. Like I said, God damn all the time cause I mess up a lot. But I don't think I've ever said go to hell cause I just, not only are you being mean to someone, but like if they are really faithful, that's like a really rude thing to say.

Cause you never know if someone like, I don't know, is really religious like that and is actively fearing hell. And you just told them to go there.

F18(B): I think the whole religion thing is relatable. Like she said, it's a religious connotation. I feel like people are more cautious of religious things and actually what they say. They'd be like, it's such a big deal right now.

M19(A): Also I grew up in like a secular household, so saying the idea of God being a bad word, like not supposed to take the Lord's name in vain or whatever. It's just like never even came up to me. I remember I got in trouble all the time in elementary school for saying, God damn. So I mean, that doesn't even like come up to me as something overtly bad.

M18: Yeah. If a teacher is using words like specifically those, it does seem unprofessional and like a hostile environment. If it's in a reading that's totally different. I feel like that's fine cause you're obviously learning about it.

Facilitator: Okay, so let's move on to the next category of swearing, which is also fairly religious, and this is the category of profanity. This would be using these words like expletives, so saying Jesus Christ, or damn. What would your thoughts be of an instructor who were to use those in the classroom?

M19(B): I say damn a lot. Like "damn, forgot to turn in this assignment." That's, I haven't heard someone actually say like "Jesus Christ, I forgot something." I don't know. Damn is... I feel like I hear it a lot apparently. when people say "Jesus" I feel like they're like serious, like something's bad is happening.

F19: I would say Jesus Christ all the time and my dad hates me. He hates me. He can only cry. He's like, "I grew up Catholic, you're so disrespectful."

Like, I'm sorry. But I feel like if an instructor uses it, I feel like it can be kind of rude because you're not being sensitive to people. And I feel like it's kind of rude. But if I'm just saying it, if I'm like "Jesus Christ, there's a deer in the road" or something like, yeah, I'm going to say it, but I'm not going to say it in class.

M19(B): It depends on how the teacher uses it. If they're like "Damn, the internet's not working," that's fine. But if they're like "Damn, you didn't turn in an assignment, that's more hostile. And that's what's creating a hostile environment. It's very aggressive.

F18(B): I use Jesus Christ like 24/7, cause for whatever reason, everybody thinks it's funny to scare me and I scare easily. So I'll scream at the top of my lungs, "Jesus Christ." And I don't mean it as like against religion or anything, it's just, I don't think about it. I forget shit a lot too

and I just get pissed at myself. “Like damn it, Jesus Christ, like this is ridiculous.” Or Traffic. Like if I’m in the car, I’m probably cussing and screaming at everybody in front of me.

F20: I mean, saying “Jesus Christ” as an expletive, as a Christian does make me a little bit uncomfortable. I will do it and then catch myself in the mirror later. I’m like, shouldn’t have done that. But I mean, I’m not a teacher and I think when you are a teacher you are held to a higher standard because you need to stay respectful of the people that you are instructing.

And like, not only because Kansas has such like a high Christian Catholic population, but just because there probably will be a person in that classroom who will personally take offense to using the Lord’s name in vain. That religious aspect. Everybody obviously is entitled to their own opinion, but it should be taken into account that there are some words that I don’t think should have an impact, but those are some of them that would.

I think, dammit, yeah, wouldn’t be as big of a deal. But as the religious aspect. Also, I grew up saying, dammit, cause my excuse was that it was in the Bible. But I think that there’s a difference between those two examples.

M19(A): Jesus Christ isn’t even something I would even notice my professor’s saying, cause I’m like, that never seemed like a curse word to me.

But I think, you know, like you said, if they’re teaching then they need to be respectful of all their students and I guess I don’t see the point in like offending people for no gain.

F20: I grew up Catholic and I’m still a practicing Catholic. And if I hear like a teacher saying like, Jesus Christ, or God, goddamn or whatever, like honestly, I really don’t care. I kind of grew up when I was younger and I was like, Oh my gosh, scandalous, like, Oh my God. So I would say, Oh my gosh, Oh my goodness instead. Cause I was like, “Oh my gosh, you can’t say that, it’s

a commandment.” But now I just like don't care. I guess I'm desensitized to it. I hear it a lot. And I say it too sometimes like, “Oh my God, I need that.” I just, I don't really care, but that's just me.

Facilitator: All right, so the next category of swearing is obscenities. And these are often sexual in nature. So if an instructor were to say fuck in the classroom. What would you think of it? Do you think that frequency of use changes your perspective as well?

M19(B): It does. When someone is used to you just think “oh, he said fuck.” I think nowadays people are more comfortable with that. They don't think of the sexual term of it. They just think “oh, yeah, I fucked up.” Something like that.

F19(B): I don't see it as a sexual thing. Just “Oh, I messed up.” Or like an agitated “I fucking blew it” or whatever.

F18(B): For the most part everyone uses it like “oh, fuck.” Like if they're forgetful or they messed up, they forgot something. It's if you put that single word, “let's” in front of it that makes it sexualized.

F19: Yeah, I've had a lot of math teachers especially who say the word “fuck” all the time. They'll be like “the expo marker ran out, fuck,” or “I made a mistake in a problem, fuck.” And I'm like, okay. I don't really care. I think it's kind of funny.

M19(A): I think if you say it like, when people say just a little, I don't care. I think it's kind of funny. Like other people have said. But I think if you say like every sentence or worse, more than once in a sentence, that's too much. It seems like you have nothing important to say.

F20: It does like it depends on the frequency and if that's the only word that you're using to describe things, maybe you shouldn't be a teacher. just because they're like, it's a good word if you run out of expo marker or if you stub your toe or if you're trying to have sex, like whatever.

But at the end of the day, there are other terms that you can use in its place. So even if you like to use it, you could probably think of something funnier.

F18(A): I think it's fine as a sort of stress reliever. But if you treat it like a personality trait, you should probably calm it down.

F19(B): I think the same thing. I don't care much about the word fuck, but if you say it every sentence it starts to get annoying.

F18(A): I also think if you're trying to insult someone and you say it too much, it desensitizes it.

Facilitator: Okay, so the next category of swearing is that of slang. This would be words like bastard or slut. So if an instructor were to use those in the classroom, what would you think of them?

M19(A): Those sound like really mean words.

F18(B): I know I use them around my friends as a joke. The c-word though, I get really offended with that. There's a large difference if I'm joking with my friends or if a teacher was to use those. It would be one thing if it's in context, like in my Women in Society class we're looking at that and terms like that were used. But if you're calling a student a slut or a bastard, they should really question like why you're here and why you're being paid to teach these children.

F20: Yeah, I wouldn't see why a teacher would need to say it. I study women's studies where it would be applicable, and I still don't think it has to be used. I mean if it's in the curriculum sure. But outside of that I don't see why you would need to. That is another one of those where like it's more attacking. It's more like aggressive to use that I'm like, yeah, I'll use them with my friends, but, but I don't see a need for it in an academic setting because it's more of a like a gossipy and derogatory.

F20: I agree. If I heard a teacher call someone a slut, I would think they were being sexist. Because like, I don't know, like I said, I grew up in a really Catholic environment. and the teachers never said it, but there are some who were clearly more sexist towards female students. The word slut, when you hear it, you know it's bad. And it's targeted towards women, but there's no male equivalent of that word. I like, I'm sure you guys get what I'm trying to say. Context matters. If you're saying it as a joke, whatever, but as a derogatory term it's not ok. But like, and I don't know. Like, or if like some guy slept around and they're like, well, he's just a player, or something like that. I don't even know how to put this in like proper words, but I'm sure you guys get the message, you know. I think context matters like a lot.

M18: I don't think there's an issue with the word itself. But when it's used as an insult, that becomes very gross. If it's done in like a self-deprecating way or like "I'm a slut for pizza rolls," I don't have an issue with it.

F18(B): I do think that's a good comment because with all my friends I might say "I'm a whore for Taco Bell." It's such a contextual thing, and we keep repeating that. There's no reason for a teacher to use those words in the classroom.

F18(A): I think from professionalism toward a student, slut is a word you shouldn't use at all. It's offensive and it's rude. I don't hear the word bastard anymore. I think it's ok to use those words with your friends, even I use them. But for a teacher it's not ok.

F20: No, but like she said, both of those words like have deeply misogynistic meanings. So even if like a teacher did use it, I think that is where I would draw the line with like professionalism because both of those terms, what they mean, is like so degrading towards the person that you're saying it about. And then just like women in general, I can't stand for it. Like I will call myself a slut, but I think it's one of those more like reclaiming things than anything else.

Facilitator: Okay. The next category is the category of slurs. And this would be gender slurs or racial slurs. What would you think of an instructor who were you use those?

F18(B): I would walk out and report. I went to a large school, large black community, very middle class. And I've watched teachers not say a single thing about it. I've watched my best friend be called it in front of classmates and other people, and I've watched her have to take it into her own hands because adults won't step in or they just don't care, or they think it's funny. I think that's where the line is way crossed. They shouldn't have a job because that's not okay. people say it's not that big of a deal because they weren't slaves. It's not that it has anything to do with them being slaves, but it's because what was said to them and like that word used to not be coined badly.

And it was used like when they were slaves. So it used to be an okay word between the black community, but then as soon as we put in our mouth and we turned it into something it wasn't. It's the context behind it.

F20: I agree completely with that. I'm sure that we've all heard once in our lives that, Oh, you shouldn't say that anymore. Or you shouldn't say this certain slur. Maybe we don't know the whole history behind it, but we know that you've been told that you shouldn't say that. Whenever somebody like drops the N word and they're not black, it kind of rubs you the wrong way. Like it gives me like an idea of who they are. Like they just don't care. They just, I don't know, they sound racist.

They just disregard all the hurt that people suffered. Like some black people have been straight up bullied because of their skin and it just grinds my gears. Sometimes my cousins say it whenever they're gaming, so it just gets on my nerves cause, well, we're not white either. And sometimes people call us like a "chink" or something, and then you're out here saying the N-

word. It doesn't make sense. Especially since I'm not white, and I'm just like, we're both minorities. So then why disrespect another minority?

F18(B): Even people of color right now don't actually use the hard R word. I've never heard it come up and any of their mouths. It's just not something they say because it is disrespectful, and I feel like the same thing goes for, I like your sexual orientation. Gay used to be another word for happy, and people are now using queer and lesbian as a derogatory term. Unfortunately, like I've heard my own family do it and like when I hear those terms and it just makes me think, why can't we all just be kind people? Because at the end of the day, we're all going to continue to live our lives. So why even use it? Why put something down like that when at the end of the day, their sexuality and their color of skin is nothing to do with you.

I feel like those words are too harsh because of the way people put context on them and the way they've made changes to their definition. I just think those lines have been like crossed and that's exactly why teachers go to these classes or retreats for things like derogatory terms like that.

M19(B): I grew up in a predominately white school. So I heard a lot of things said to me and other people, and in that Manhattan high school if you complain, nothing would happen. That's what they say, that's how they are. It's not fine if a teacher uses it because they're not including every student in that classroom. They're not thinking of everyone that's in that classroom.

Gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, they're not including any of that. Those words have a connotation behind it. Those words are to hate. Not to be funny, not to, I guess whatever excuses they make up. It's demeaning and it's wrong and they shouldn't use it and if the teacher uses it, they shouldn't be teaching at all, because they're not teaching if they use those words.

F20: I remember people, I think there was like kind of like a meme going around where it's like, Oh, remember when your teacher used the N-word because it's like a quote in To Kill a

Mockingbird? I was like, Oh my gosh. I never really thought about it, I was just like, Oh, she's repeating a word. I just didn't really understand the context and history behind that word. I noticed too that like whenever there's someone who's like in that race, like at work yesterday. There was a guy who needed help with DVD players or something. He was like, "Oh, don't give me one of those terrible crappy Chinese brands." And then he was like, "Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to offend you." And I was like, no, I'm Chinese, I'm Vietnamese. They are a lot more cautious if they're around someone that they're seeing. In my school, like there's a lot of white people and so they would just throw around the N-word cause they just didn't care. But if there was like a black person or like half black person they would not ever, ever say the N-word around them. It was just kind of weird to see that. And teachers kind of just, I don't know, I think they kind of just ignored them about it.

Facilitator: All right. We're going to take it back to some of the less offensive swear words, and that category is scatology. This would be like shit or pissed off, that kind of thing. Reactions to an instructor's use of those?

M19(A): I don't really mind. It just seems like more of just an expression of how they're feeling and not really like, you know, tied with what the words mean. So, I don't really mind, I don't really like it because it does sound kind of vulgar sometimes. But I don't really mind because it is like very divorced from its meaning at this point.

F19(B): If a teacher said "shit," or "I'm pissed off" in class, I don't even think I'd be fazed by it. I probably wouldn't even notice because I think it's such a lower-class word, I guess.

Like even my dad, he's so offended by cuss words, but if we say the word shit around him, he wouldn't even like look up from his laptop. But if we like dropped the F bomb, he'd freak out.

F18(B): I use shit all the time. Like, "I need some of that shit." Like, if I can't think of something I'm talking about, I think shit is such a collective word. Like, "that shit needs to be taken out" or whatever. And pissed off is such an expression of emotion, I wouldn't be surprised if I've heard a teacher saying, "I'm pissed off at you guys because of this." Like, it's such a, what she said, lower-class word. I don't feel like as many people are phased by it, even people who are very offended by language, like I feel like pissed off isn't one not to use. I've always used pissed off as more of a way to express how I'm feeling.

M18: I don't think pissed off is really offensive. It's usually just to show how disappointed they would be, say if they're using towards the class. Because most of the time they give clear directions and they're just pissed, as in disappointed, that nobody really listened. Otherwise, typically, I'd only hear that if let's say my math teacher can't get the projector to work. They'd just be mad because they've been trying for days. otherwise, I don't personally think it's terrible.

M19(A): Pissed off kind of makes me uncomfortable, just cause all my teachers, like elementary school, middle school, high school, just like never used that word. Whereas I had a bunch that would say shit. So it kinda makes me a little uncomfortable, but not really to the point where I care. If that makes sense. It's like a passing feeling,

F18(A): I think pissed off is kind of funny cause it means pee. I think it's hilarious.

F18(B): I feel bad, but like with my roommate, I'm like, "I gotta go piss." I will just casually say to her like that cause she thinks it's funny.

F19: I think it's totally fine for teachers to say it. I mean when I was learning a new language in middle school, like the first curse word we learned was shit. And so, I mean she really didn't care. Nobody cared. It was kind of funny. It's kind of cool. I think it's fine to say those words

cause like everybody says them. So it's like another way to relate to people and like it's fine. So I don't really care.

M19(B): I feel like it's really relatable. Like when the teacher uses like shit or I'm pissed off, this shit is now okay. Like the teacher is relatable, human, not so professional. It's laid back and you can ask them questions.

F18(B): I've had teachers I'm afraid to talk to just because they have such a mold of how they're supposed to be. But when you give off some kind of human form of like you're human, like I had a teacher cancel class because something happened, like family related. And it gives you a sense that like they're not here just to grade your papers and put you down if they fail you or correct you. They're here to make you better. And so when you can actually speak to them, it makes it easier, cause I have plenty of teachers that I wouldn't talk to because they give off this scary look.

Just like in the workplace. The guy who owns our restaurant, he just gives off this very mean look. And the other day we were joking around in the back and it just gave him a more human, sensitive feeling. I feel like it makes them easier to talk to.

M19(A): I said that pissed off makes me uncomfortable, and it kind of does, but like I'd much rather my teacher say that than show like no emotion at all. Because if you're willing to express yourself and be open with your students, I think that's good.

Facilitator: Do you all think that the gender of your teacher and whether or not they swear has any impact on your perception of them?

M18: I think whatever gender they are, if they swear or not, it doesn't really matter.

F18(B): I think society makes cussing out to be a more masculine thing. I feel like society looks down on women in your cuss, but I feel like kids my age or people around my age, it's become

such a normal thing to be more accepting. I feel like in a group of us it's something normal and we don't think anything of who is saying it.

But if you look at other generations or other age groups or ethnicities, they look down on certain sexes because they're a woman or because you're a male or anybody in general. It's what we've said the entire hour, it's all about context. It's all about the culture or whatever is going on, but I don't think it should matter who or what or when something is said.

M19(B): I feel like culture kinda matters in that point, because in other cultures like Latino, Hispanic culture, it is very masculine. It used to be frowned upon for a woman to cuss, but it's more accepted now, but back then it's like frowned upon.

But nowadays, our generation, we don't really notice it. For me, it's more age. Like if an older person, a professor says certain cuss words, we're like, okay, he's human. I don't, I don't look at gender within that.

M19(A): I think that I definitely notice when like female professors curse more than I do men.

But I think that like if you're being critical, you shouldn't let that affect your impression of them.

F19: And I'm kind of the opposite. I feel like I notice more when my male professors swear more than if one of my female professors swear. I don't know if that could be just because my male professors swear more or what, but I feel like I notice it way more in my male professors.

Facilitator: Okay, so a final question for you all. Do you think that your instructors can be perceived as less credible or less educated if they choose to use swear words more frequently than "proper" language?

F19(B): I personally don't think so. I don't think they're less than or less educated if they throw out some cuss words. But I mean, if they use it every single sentence, I don't think it would

somehow make them less credible, I just think it's just kind of annoying. But that doesn't mean they're suddenly dumb or something like that.

M19(B): it depends on what the curriculum is. But if it's used like in almost every sentence that's when it's like "ok, you have to stop." You're doing it too much, or just trying too hard. But if it's like three times a week or whatever, I feel like it's not a problem, but when it's used too often, that's when people find it annoying or not as credible.

F18(B): I don't think your language has anything to do with your education. I think it's more of a society thing. Like my sister has to be careful about where she places her tattoos as a nurse because that's how society views it, they think that nobody of importance should be covered in tattoos or saying those things. It's more of a societal belief that people who are higher up in classes or jobs shouldn't be portrayed that way. But I don't think it should have anything to do with how much you know, or how credible you are because whether or not you're a professor or a teacher. I mean, I know people with degrees, like people who teach, my sister could teach, but she cusses and it doesn't make her any less knowledgeable than the next person just because they chose a certain profession.

M19(A): I think that most of the time if my professors cuss I see them as more credible because I see them as someone who's actually like learned their stuff and has a human quality to them versus someone just reading the textbook to you. But like with that being said, if it's like something extreme, like a slur, then obviously that's going to make me think a little less with you.

F20: I think it comes with like the stereotype of what a professional person should be, like a social expectation or whatever. Like I remember the thing about Elon Musk, I mean it's not

cussing you, but he was smoking weed on a radio show or something and his stocks went down after that.

I remember that. But then a lot of people were cheering him on like, Oh my gosh. Yeah. He's like a real person. He's not this robotic figurehead or whatever. He's not a typical successful entrepreneur. Most of them are really clean cut and you know, fit into that stereotype. I don't think it makes him any less credible because he's really smart.

F18(A): I think it really also depends like what curse words you say. If you say the N-word of "slut" then I think you're stupid. But then if it's something like if they cuss towards you or like if you curse in general in a certain class, like I don't care if they curse, but for some people they probably might lose respect for the teacher. But it also really depends on the situation.

F18(B): I definitely think people our age have changed and are more comfortable with it because you'll see things like that where like my mom will think down on something like weed and people of our age tend not to care as much.

I think our generation is one to break from the norm of our parents and what we've been raised from. And I definitely think it also has something to do with the school we go to. WSU is one of the most open and diverse schools. I definitely think you have a really good variety of openness here, especially with something so small like cursing.

M18: I don't think, I would think less of a teacher and their credibility if they swear. I've never experienced a teacher of a swear a lot though. Maybe three times tops the whole semester. It would just be nothing serious. As long as they are still teaching and I'm understanding, I'm still taking them very seriously because they had to work hard to get where they are today. So, I'd still think they're credible.

F18(A): I think it also depends on the context of how you say things. Like even it's not at you, but at other people. Then you might lose credential or respectfulness in a way.