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FEELING AND DEALING: TEACHING WHITE STUDENTS ABOUT RACIAL PRIVILEGE

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Abstract—In order to determine to what extent a one-semester course in multicultural education could help white teacher education students develop a white anti-racist identity, interview data and course writings from five participants enrolled in Education 205 were collected and then analyzed qualitatively according to attitudes and behaviours described in Helms (1990) [*Black and white racial identity: Theory, research and practices*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press] model of white racial identity development. Results indicate that Education 205 seemed to serve as a catalyst for development of students' racial identities, but more than one course is needed to guide and support white students as they progress towards further development of a positive white anti-racist identity. Copyright © 1996 Elsevier Science Ltd

Introduction

In order to prepare teacher-education students to teach in multicultural ways, we must help them change the way they perceive U.S. society and the positions they hold in that society. We must help them to both unlearn and relearn history and to examine how issues of power and dominance have influenced and continue to influence the fabric of life in this country (Banks, 1993; Banks & McGee Banks, 1993; Nieto, 1995). A crucial part of this unlearning, relearning, and examining for white teacher education students involves seeing themselves as racial beings, as white persons in a white-dominated society (Haymes, 1995; Sleeter, 1994). White students must also be encouraged to examine how race shapes their lives, not just the lives of people of color (Frankenberg, 1993), and how they can use their race-privilege to either contribute to the maintenance of the

racial order or take steps to challenge it (Sleeter, 1993; Sleeter, 1995).

We know, however, that teaching white students about race and their race privilege can be difficult as efforts in anti-racist education have demonstrated (Tatum, 1992; Adams & Zhou-McGovern, 1994; Sleeter, 1994). One major obstacle to anti-racist education is the invisibility of whiteness to white students. It is difficult for them to recognize, no less examine, a position of being race-privileged when being white has been so normalized. White students (as well as those of us teacher educators who are white) have been educated not to acknowledge color; past experiences have taught us that to acknowledge racial differences ranges from being impolite to outright racist. This "color-evasive orientation to race" (Frankenberg, 1993), however, functions to obscure the power structures that maintain racial dominance rather than expose them for further study.

Another source of difficulty arises from the "bad" feelings that result from recognizing one's white privilege. When white students learn about racial oppression and racial privilege, they experience guilt, shame, anger, and embarrassment (Schoem, 1993; Tatum, 1992, 1994). Some students, as a result of the emotional burden they feel from learning about racism, resist further learning by refusing to attend classes or closing-down and preventing any further learning from taking place. If, however, the classroom environment is supportive enough and teachers can guide students towards developing a positive white racial identity and envision a role for themselves in challenging the racial order, these forms of resistance can be overcome (Tatum, 1992, 1994; Lawrence & Tatum, in press).

White Racial Identity Development

Janet Helms' (Helms, 1990) claims that in order for white persons to be effective in multi-racial settings, they must alter their color-blind perspective and work through the feelings of guilt and shame. Only when white persons fully examine their whiteness and recognize their position in the racial order can they go beyond positions of assumed superiority and work towards effective change by opposing institutional and cultural racism. To accomplish this transformation and develop a positive white racial identity, Helms posits a psychological model delineating six stages of development: Contact Stage, Disintegration Stage, Reintegration Stage, Pseudo-Independent Stage, Immersion/Emersion Stage, and the Autonomy Stage.

Persons in the Contact Stage are likely to have a low level of awareness, if any, of institutional or cultural racism; nor are they aware of their own racism. They may be uncomfortable in mixed-race settings and are likely to assume that commonly held and publicized negative stereotypes about people of color are true. Due to the segregation of U.S. society, many people in this stage are likely to have limited first-hand experiences with people of color. Many teacher education students who take a race-focused course for the first time tend to be at this stage of their racial identity development (Tatum, 1992).

When white students begin to learn about their role in racism and the differential treatment that whites and people of color receive, their old ways of seeing begin to break down and they experience the uncomfortable feelings described earlier that can form the basis of resistance. This break-down in previously-held perceptions-about themselves as non-racist and about U.S. society as just-signals entry into the Disintegration Stage.

How students deal with their feelings and how they incorporate the reactions they receive from significant others about their ways of dealing influence further movement along Helms' continuum. For example, some students try to deal with the guilt and shame they feel from prior racist behaviors by challenging family and friends about their racist remarks and behaviors. However, their "racial naivete" coupled with their "ambivalent racial identification" (Helms, 1990, p.59) leads to little success with this approach. When faced with the realization that it will be difficult to change long-standing attitudes about race, some students give up and try to lessen their guilt by adopting an "I-can't-do-anything-about-it-anyway" attitude. Other students try to get relief from their guilt by blaming people of color themselves for the inequalities they see. Students who seem to resign themselves to the status quo or "blame the victim" for the racism they now see are moving towards the Reintegration Stage of their racial identity. Even students who do not blame people of color for the racism they see can fall into Reintegration thinking as they wonder whether their struggle to speak out against the injustices they see is really worth the resistance they experience from close friends and family.

If, however, students work through the discomfort of the Disintegration Stage and the Reintegration Stage, while continuing to acknowledge their responsibility for racism, they can enter the Pseudo-Independent Stage. At this phase, students have abandoned their previously-held belief in white superiority but may still look to people of color to teach them about racism rather than making it their own responsibility. Students in this stage may also find it difficult to associate with other whites who seem "blatantly racist" to them as they struggle to define what being white means for

them. When students become active in defining a positive white identity and in seeking out information to confirm what being an anti-racist white person in U.S. society means, they enter the Immersion/Emersion Stage of development.

Finally, as students internalize their new racial selves, actively confront racism and other forms of oppression, and can more easily build alliances with people of color, they enter the Autonomy Stage of "racial self-actualization" (Helms, 1990, p.66). Helms (1990) describes this stage not as an end-point but as an "on-going process" of being "open to new ways of thinking about racial and cultural variables" (p.66).

Carter & Goodwin (1994) have suggested that racial identity development has important implications for the education of children of color and for multicultural teaching. White educators with poorly developed racial identities (as assessed by Helms' theory) could negatively impact the performance of students of color as well as the implementation of multicultural practices and policies. Educators with more developed racial identities, on the other hand, are more likely to be successful interacting with students and parents of color and with designing appropriate learning situations that are effective for all students.

Tatum (1992, 1994) has demonstrated that an undergraduate course in the Psychology of Racism can have a significant impact on white student's racial identity development. Similarly, Sleeter (1992) has shown that a 2-year multicultural professional development program can positively influence the ways that white teachers think about themselves, their students of color, and multicultural curricula. Yet it remains to be seen to what extent an undergraduate, race-focused course in multicultural education, which involves a varied content and extends for only one semester, can effect white students' racial identity.

The Course Under Study

In order to determine whether a race-focused multicultural education at the undergraduate level could alter white students' perceptions about race and racism and thus influence the

development of their white racial identity, we conducted a qualitative study involving students enrolled in a multicultural education course at a small liberal arts college for women. The course, Education 205: Race, Class, Culture and Gender in the Classroom, was a requirement for all teacher education students and an elective course for others. The goals of the course included making race more visible especially for those holding onto a "color-blind orientation" (Frankenberg, 1993) to racial politics, and helping white, as well as students of color, understand the obvious and not-so-obvious ways that white racial dominance is maintained in this society. One specific goal involved helping undergraduate students to understand the benefits of anti-racist classroom practices and school policies for all students.

The course, which was taught by a white woman (and co-author of this paper), utilized readings, small and large group discussions, films, hands-on activities, collaborative projects and writing assignments to focus on the interplay of race, class, and gender issues and how they impact students and teachers in schools. Some topics included an examination of white privilege, the cultural and institutional manifestations of racism, theories of racial identity development for whites and people of color, the connections between racism and other forms of oppression, and the dimensions of multicultural education. Readings central to the course included those by Sonia Nieto (1992), James Banks (1993), Peggy McIntosh (1989), Christine Sleeter (1994), Beverly Daniel Tatum (1992, 1994), Jonathan Kozol (1991), and Lisa Delpit (1988) among others. Students also viewed and discussed films such as "A Class Divided," "Good Morning, Miss Toliver" and "Unequal Education" and participated in field experiences for trying out multicultural and anti-racist pedagogy.

Throughout the course, students were required to write weekly response papers as well as more formal papers. In the response papers, students were asked to write their thoughts, feelings, questions, or concerns that came up for them either in the required readings or in class sessions. Students discussed in their writings for example, their feelings about white privilege after a class activity focusing

on Peggy McIntosh's work (Lawrence, 1996), their amazement at the power of a teacher's bias on children's school performance after viewing the video of "A Class Divided," and their realization of the unequal distribution of educational resources in many urban schools as depicted in Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1991).

In more formal papers, students wrote essays on their teaching philosophy. They also wrote critical analyses of required readings, they created plans for teaching multiculturally, and they designed "action plans" in which they were expected to describe how they would continue to learn more about or begin to challenge any one of the inequalities they had learned about in the course. One student's action plan involved the design of a program for her Girl Scout troop for teaching them about race and gender issues; another student designed a plan for organizing a multiracial group of tenants to present their concerns to a landlord about policies and practices they felt were discriminatory. Other students chose to devise plans focusing on their own development by organizing groups to study race in the residence halls, extending their knowledge of racial groups other than their own, and making plans to attend specific cultural events or compiling literature that they would read on their own.

The Students

Student enrollment in Education 205, as in the College at large, is racially-mixed, though predominantly white; most students are from middle class backgrounds. Of the 23 female students enrolled in the fall course of Education 205; 19 students were white, and 4 were students of color. When Takiema Bunche (a senior honors student and co-author of this paper) asked for volunteers to participate in this study, 16 of the 19 white women (who identified themselves as white on the volunteer sign-up sheet) agreed to participate in the study. Of the 16, 10 were teacher education students; and from those 10, 5 students were selected as case studies. Of the 5 women in the study, 3 were traditional aged undergraduates, and 2 were older, non-traditional students. Three students were seniors and 2 were juniors.

Data Collection and Analysis

As a way to examine the extent to which this course influenced students' racial identity development, data from interviews with students both at the beginning and at the end of the course were collected. The interviews were conducted by Takiema Bunche (an African American woman) who was not a member of the class. Participants were assured that their identities would not be disclosed to the instructor of the course until final grades had been submitted. In fact, the instructor did not see nor analyze the interview until the semester following the course.

The interviews near the beginning of the course tended to focus on students' ethnic background, family and community characteristics, prior educational experiences, previous experiences with people from different racial groups, and views about the U.S. educational system. For example, some questions asked during the first interview included: "How would you identify yourself?" "Have you taken courses where race and racism were discussed?" and "If you had to describe the U.S. educational system to someone who was not familiar with it, what would you say?"

Post-course interviews concerned participants' learning as well as their opinions about the course they had just completed. Questions focused on the most and least important aspect of the course, specific class assignments, and their feelings about being in a racially-mixed class where race was discussed. Some examples of post-course questions included: "What has the classroom been like for you?" "If you had to omit part of the course, what would it be?" "If a close friend or family member asked you what you learned in Education 205, what would you say?"

Other forms of data included weekly written response pieces and more formal papers composed throughout the semester. All data were coded, categorized and analyzed qualitatively with attention to behaviors, expressions, and attitudes described in Helms' (1990) theory of white racial identity development.

Initial Assessment of Racial Identity

Typically, white students who take a race-focused course for the first time enter the

course in the Contact Stage of their racial identity development (Tatum, 1992); the white students in Education 205 seemed to be no exception. Except for those students who had prior course work involving race, generally students had little or no awareness of the existence or effects of institutional racism, had not recognized the advantages they had as white persons in a white-dominated society, and thought of themselves as prejudice-free. Of the five students studied here, four exhibited thinking and attitudes consistent with the Contact Stage, and three of them shared similar views.

Tracey

Tracey is a 33-year-old single parent with two children who identifies herself as having English and French heritage. Although she grew up in a middle class environment, since her divorce she and her two children have been receiving public assistance. She transferred into the College from a nearby community college and is preparing to teach elementary school the following semester. Although Tracey has had many courses at both institutions, she has not had any previous course work involving race or racism.

Tracey was unaware of both the prevalence of racism and her own racist attitudes and beliefs. She held a basic mistrust of people of color and was often suspicious of their intentions. At the same time, though, she didn't want people of color to think that she was racist. In mixed-race situations, she was always careful about choosing her remarks, so that people of color would not "form some kind of impression about me being a white person." She felt she was not like some other whites and didn't want to be grouped with them. Tracey revealed during a pre-course interview that "I don't consider myself prejudiced because I grew up having so many friendships with diverse people." Even though those friendships were formed when Tracey was in elementary school and she has had no cross-race friendships since, Tracey felt that this early experience defined her as prejudice-free.

Barbara

Barbara is a 20-year-old Polish-American woman who is scheduled to student-teach

during the next year. Barbara was unaware of the extent of racial oppression as well as her own racial privilege. She was uncomfortable in mixed-race settings and avoided thinking or talking about race. She has been in situations where people make racial slurs and although she knows "it's just not right," she found it hard to "stick up for someone" because of what other people might think of her. Barbara believed that being racist is a characteristic of other whites and their individual acts. Since she did not consider herself "selfish and manipulative", the problem of racism lies with others not her.

Cynthia

Cynthia is a 43-year-old married woman with three children. She had previous experience in the medical field but decided to go back to school to learn how to teach, and she is very much looking forward to her student-teaching during the next semester. Cynthia identifies herself as middle class and from English and Irish descent. Although some of her previous course work involved learning about people from different cultures, that learning involved people living in countries other than the U.S.

Cynthia also had an image of herself as prejudice-free, "I went into the class thinking that I had no biases. I thought I was open and knowledgeable." Cynthia, like Tracey, had also had cross-race friendships during her schooling. She went to a mixed-race high school and found through visiting her classmates homes that "everybody was the same; we're really just not any different." Cynthia's father, on the other hand, whom she describes as "the biggest Archie Bunker in the world" saw major differences between people based on the color of their skin and was "blatantly racist" towards people of color. Cynthia knew that she wasn't like her father; instead she believed that she treated everybody equally.

Tracey, Barbara, and Cynthia believed they were free of racist attitudes and behaviors because they did not acknowledge color differences. They felt they treated people as individuals as "just human beings." In fact, they mentioned and implied more than once that "it would be rude" or "impolite" to ever

mention race. This type of thinking or "non-thinking" about race is consistent with what Frankenberg (1993) refers to as a "color- and power-evasive orientation" involving issues of race. Although the absurdity of not seeing color is evident, for these students it seemed a better alternative than the blatant racism that their parents or neighbors exhibited. However, this color-blind approach to race also prevented these women from recognizing the existence of cultural and institutional racist practices as well as their own advantaged position in the racial order.

Susan

Unlike her counterparts in the Contact stage, Susan, a 20-year-old junior, did not exhibit color-evasive thinking prior to the course. In fact, she was acutely aware of color. Although she had known for a few years that her great-grandfather was African American, for most of those years she was silent about this knowledge as advised by family members who themselves did not acknowledge their African American heritage. Susan, who previously identified as Italian-American (and referred to herself as "white" on the volunteer sign-up sheet), now wanted to claim her African American heritage and make alliances with others of African descent. Yet Susan had lived her life as a white person accepting though not acknowledging all the privileges bestowed upon her because of her whiteness and not recognizing the power structures that functioned to maintain the racial order. During one of her course writings she reflects back on her Contact Stage thinking prior to the course involving her non-recognition of racial oppression:

It is a powerful realization that people of color do not have the same advantages as I. This self-imposed ignorance was not a conscious decision, but a decision none-the-less. As long as I did not think about the fact that grave oppression exists, I had no responsibility to take any course of action.

Not only did Susan's non-recognition of her white advantage prevent her from seeing the structural inequalities that exist, it also prevented her from seeing the obstacles her white privilege would present in making connections with or gaining acceptance to communities of color.

Sarah

Sarah, who is 21-years-old, will be student-teaching at an elementary school next semester; she has had three African Studies courses in addition to a Psychology of Racism course, so she is not stranger to a race-focused curriculum. Sarah has ancestry in Ireland and Scotland, but identifies herself as a "white American." Sarah is the only member of the class who was not in the Contact Stage. When she enrolled in Education 205, she was aware of racial oppression and racial privilege and readily acknowledged her white privilege in the first reflection paper: "I am aware of my privileges as a white woman for the most part." From prior course work, Sarah had learned what it means to be a white anti-racist ally and has put some of that learning into practice by challenging racism among friends, classmates and family members. Sarah's thinking and behaviors are consistent with Pseudo-Independent and Immersion Stages of white racial identity.

Commonalities of Experience in the Course

New Learnings and Different Outlooks

Even though the five students studied here were at different stages of their racial identity development when they entered the course, they shared some commonalities in how they experienced the course and in what they learned. All of the participants in the study gained a new awareness, or an increased awareness, of aspects of racism. During interviews and in their writings they referred to learning about the extent of racism, differential treatment due to race, the notion of passive racism, and how the experiences of people of color have been distorted by omissions and stereotypes. One class which seemed to be pivotal for all students involved the reading and class discussion of Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (McIntosh, 1989). During the class, students individually read aloud from index cards each of which contained one of McIntosh's 25 acknowledged privileges. White students were asked to read the cards as written while students of color were asked to read their

cards with a "not" in front of the verb. Any student could pass if she did not want to read. Students reported that reading the individual statements of white skin privilege in the article brought to consciousness aspects of their whiteness that were otherwise unconscious to them. The class discussion also forced them to acknowledge the benefits they received from white privilege and to hear how people of color experienced daily life in a white-dominated society.

Participants also discussed new learning about other topics of the course. They realized, for example, that multicultural education involved more than content integration or "teaching about other cultures." They were able to see connections between racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia. They saw the ways that schools and educational policies mirrored the inequalities prevalent in the greater society. And they learned that they didn't have to accept that "this is just the way things are." From particular course readings (Ayvazian, 1990; Tatum, 1994), they realized they had options: they could take responsibility to move out of passivity and into action. They learned that they had the power individually and collectively to make changes in the status quo if they were ready to meet that challenge.

When asked to describe how their learning from the course affected them, all participants characterized their learning with similar terminology: that it was "eye-opening," "mind-opening," and an "awakening" experience. Although students felt they knew about racism and racial discrimination on some level, they didn't realize the extent of racism and how it was manifested in social institutions. They claimed the course gave them a "new outlook" as a result of having to rethink their prior information and re-examine their present beliefs, values and behaviors about race and racism.

Feeling and Dealing

The new knowledge participants gained from the course and the subsequent challenges to their thinking and perceptions which they experienced was not a comfortable process for them. All participants reported either in writing or during interviews about feelings of guilt, shame, anger, sadness, and confusion which

accompanied their new knowledge. In general they felt "naive," "bad" and "disappointed" in themselves for their lack of knowledge of topics dealing with race. During class discussions about race, they often felt "uncomfortable," "uneasy," or "angry and upset." These feelings of discomfort which often accompany learning about one's whiteness in a white-dominated society are typical characteristics of a person experiencing the Disintegration Stage (Helms, 1990). Helms theorizes that individuals cannot stay with these uncomfortable feelings for long and will have to deal with those feelings in order to reduce the discomfort they feel. The five participants, although sharing similar feelings of discomfort, dealt with those feelings very differently, and those ways of dealing had a significant impact on each person's racial identity development. What follows next is a revisit with these five women and an analysis of how each one "deals."

Portraits of Development along the Racial Identity Continuum

Tracey

When Tracey learned that people were treated differently because of their skin color, and that she as a white woman had an abundance of advantages that people of color are denied in this society, she had strong reactions to this information. Initially, she felt guilty about having advantages that women of color who were her peers did not have. Later, when a woman of color in the class questioned how white women could not know that they had advantages because of their whiteness, Tracey got angry but didn't speak because she couldn't figure out how to justify her ignorance. During an interview she expressed how she felt:

If I have privileges and advantages...I'm not taught...you can't say actively taught because...I mean I had to have picked it up somehow. No one sat me down and said okay you're a white woman and so you have all these advantages...so I didn't...you know, I wasn't taught a lesson.

Although Tracey tried to defend her white privilege to some degree, she also acknowledged that maybe she was aware of this information a lot sooner than she is willing to let

herself admit. To admit her awareness, however, might be too risky.

Rather than meeting her white advantage head-on and dealing with the accompanying feelings of guilt, Tracey took another approach. She applied an old definition of racism to her new learning and experiences. Instead of considering racism as a system of advantage based on race (a definition the course had adopted), she constructed a view of racism as personal prejudice or discriminatory behavior that one person directs at another. Within this framework, she remarked during an interview that she would be the target of discrimination (as people of color now are) if people knew she received public assistance:

I remember when we were learning about racism and discrimination and things, it seemed like the focus was on Black people or Puerto Ricans or other minorities that are discriminated against, but I've been discriminated against too and I'm a white person, so it happens, you know, to everyone...I mean I've been in situations where—as a matter of fact being on public assistance—that I can be looked at by other people. So, I've been in that situation before.

Tracey undoubtedly felt the class oppression that many low-income people experience in our class-based society, a feeling that is genuine and legitimate. And knowing that as a low-income person she would be treated differently than a middle class person, she chose to conceal her class status whenever possible—a move that her white privilege would allow her to do. As with race oppression, Tracey seemed to lack an analysis of systems of oppression that operate in this society; instead, she focused on the individual discrimination she may receive from others rather than on the more far-reaching institutional aspects of oppression in society.

By equating racism with other forms of individual discrimination and by narrowly defining racism, Tracey minimized her own class oppression and “minimized racism” (Wellman, 1977) as well. Tracey's claim of “I'm discriminated against too” also echoed what Roman (1993) has labelled “white defensiveness”—an attempt to avoid recognizing the extent of racism and the roles that whites have in maintaining it. But by refusing to acknowledge the pervasiveness of racism as well as her own race privilege separate from the oppression she feels as a

low-income woman, Tracey cannot abandon her “racist persona” (Helms, 1990). And instead of moving towards developing a more positive white racial identity, Tracey relied on some old ways of thinking about race—a move characteristic of someone becoming “reintegrated.”

Barbara

As the course progressed and Barbara was exposed to information about the injustices of our seemingly just society and the ways in which she as a white woman benefitted from systems of oppression, she experienced many feelings. In an interview at the end of the course she expressed the uncomfortable feelings she had and continues to have; she also revealed her resistance to participating in a class that was focused on race:

...We spent a lot of time talking about racism like that was a big chunk of the class, and a lot of people, people of color, white people, everybody, we were all just like getting tired of it. We were just getting fed up because there's just, you know too concentrated on. And it's not like racism shouldn't be talked about, but I think the balance could have been better.

Barbara could have avoided further discussions about race by staying away from class as others students have done in similar situations (Tatum, 1992); instead, she considered other ways of getting some relief.

As Barbara wrote one of her reflection papers, she realized she was having a problem coping with all her feelings, “Why is it so hard for me to deal with my race?” Barbara solved her dilemma by relegating race to a lower priority and thus, in effect, denying the significance of race—a move which her white privilege would allow her to do. She wrote about how she will go about this denial, “I will have to learn that my race is only one part of me...Instead of calling myself a white student, I will call myself a student who is an athlete, lives in the Midwest, and is white.” Through this form of denial, Barbara got some relief. But in order to sustain the relief, she had to refuse to acknowledge the systems of oppression which (she now knows) exist, and this non-acknowledgement put her back on the cycle of evading issues of power and racial dominance and into the Reintegration Stage.

Cynthia

Cynthia's "awakening" from "all these years living in blinders, total blinders" about the realities of racism and the fact that she does "engage in passive racist, sexist, and homophobic behaviors" made her feel "ashamed." While reflecting on her whiteness, she had a profound realization:

...being white is not something I notice, it is just something I am. I never thought of being White as a privilege; however, I am aware it has never been an obstacle...I never realized how many times a day a non-white person is made to notice their race. Unlike me, when they are made to notice, it is never in a positive way.

But rather than dwell on her previous deeds or minimize the effects that those deeds had, she began to engage in conscious reflection on how she could change those behaviors. She realized that "in order to work on ending my own biases," she needed to be able to "recognize those biases" as they arose, so she decided to continue reading about white racism and about being a white anti-racist ally even after the course ended. She also resolved to speak up against "stereotypic, racist, ethnic, or gender-biased remarks or jokes" when she encounters them. She was not going to "put up with them any longer."

Cynthia began putting her resolve into action mid-way through the course. She admitted during an interview that, "I actually have people that I don't invite over [my house] any more. I like her [Jane], but her husband is a bigot, and I won't put up with it." She realized that there are risks involved in this new behavior when she remarks, "I can see why people back down—it takes courage." But she did not let the feelings of others stop her, "I didn't get to be forty-three to start backing down!"

Unlike Tracey and Barbara who tried to ease their discomfort by denying the significance of race, Cynthia moved through the feelings of the disintegration stage by recognizing her complicity in racism and actively trying to change it. But like other whites who want to challenge family and friends on their racist remarks or behaviors, she met significant resistance. Although at times, she wished she "didn't know because now that I know, I

can't go back," Cynthia moved through these reintegration-type feelings. Cynthia's continued focus on her white privilege along with her questioning of the racial order and her display of individual ally-type behaviors (Ayvazian, 1995) signify a move towards Pseudo-Independent and Immersion Stages of white identity.

Susan

Susan entered the course aware of racial injustices, but less aware of her own racial privilege. And, as for her other classmates in the Contact Stage, discussions about racial advantage and privileging brought up intense feelings of guilt. Susan's guilt feelings, however, were somewhat different in that hers were compounded by guilt associated with not acknowledging her African American heritage. Not only did she feel guilty for being white in a white-dominated society, she felt guilty for being able to hide her African American heritage and thus escape the oppression that others of African American descent could not. She expressed this acknowledgment during an interview, "I'm sure I've been perceived as white...but it's like I can be Black at my own convenience." This recognition of the privilege of passing began with the Peggy McIntosh reading and stayed with her throughout the course. She had a profound emotional experience, for example, when the class viewed a film about unequal funding for schools which she recounts during an interview, "We watched a movie on inner city youth in Harlem and like I was bawling because I was—like, you know, I am—part of me is that and I've chosen the easy way out." Susan doesn't try to deny, justify or minimize her complicity with racism; instead she recognized and owned her behavior.

Even though, for Susan, "It's hard to be in that class because I know I've contributed to the problem," she also credited the course for helping her to recognize what she has to do, "It made me, you know, realize I have to change." And she has begun to make some of those changes. She is no longer silent, for example, while people make racist and sexist comments, and she has challenged her mother when she makes derogatory comments about Susan or her brother's skin color. And

although Susan maybe struggling with issues of racial identity in regards to where she fits and does not fit for some time, she has taken positive steps to acknowledge her white privilege and work towards addressing some of the racial inequalities she sees—characteristics consistent with the Pseudo-Independent Stage of white racial identity.

Sarah

Sarah did not experience any “disintegration-type” feelings during Education 205. She did not feel the guilt or anger that many of her classmates experienced when confronted with information about racial privilege primarily because she had those feelings in previous courses. She recognized the pain her classmates were in and was glad that she had worked through that phase:

I know a lot of people in my class—it could be because this is the first class they have taken that deals with race or any ism—they feel a lot of guilt. And they’ve said, I feel so guilty. I’m very happy I took psych of racism first, so I could sort of get past that and move on and be on a different part of the cycle.

Sarah’s pseudo-independent and immersion-type thinking and behaving broadened throughout the course. Although she had done a lot of internal work on her own race privilege, she seemed less aware of the extent of institutional racism and how particular social institutions, like schools, are affected by racism. At times she was embarrassed about her lack of awareness. With hindsight, the information “seemed so obvious,” but her privileged orientation and prior beliefs that schools like society are fair and equal prevented her from seeing. Sarah learned that there is “more involved” in understanding the workings of institutional racism than she thought.

Although Sarah had taken public action to challenge racist remarks in her classes and had worked with African American and Latina students to sponsor events and discussions in the residence halls, she realized from readings (Tatum, 1994) and from experience that there were few positive role models for people working at being anti-racist allies. Models of racist behavior were ubiquitous, but not so for anti-racist models. During an in-class small

group activity, when she and her classmates (one Latina student and one white student) were discussing role models, they came to the conclusion that, “Maybe we could be the new positive role models. Of course we are not well known, but there is so much we can do in our homes, dorms, neighborhoods, etc.” Sarah’s new feelings about anti-racist leadership speak to her deepening Immersion Stage of development.

Conclusions

When analyzing each of the five women students in the study, all seemed to move along Helms’ model of racial identity development: none was still in the Contact Stage by the end of the course. Two of the students, however, did not move that far along Helms’ continuum. As a result of their Reintegration-type thinking, neither Barbara nor Tracey were able to abandon their racist personas by the end of the course. Since these are students who will be teaching within the year or the following year; their development raises some questions: How multicultural will they be in their approach? How will they interact with students and families of color? Maybe by the time they begin to teach they will get “unstuck” from their Reintegrationist-type thinking through other coursework or experiences. Maybe they will begin to move again if they have the opportunity to participate in anti-racist professional development programs in their school districts. Or maybe they will be in this place for a long time; it is difficult to tell.

Cynthia, Sarah, and Susan, by contrast, moved further along Helms’ continuum either to Pseudo-Independent or Immersion stages. But whether they will be able to maintain their new white identities or continue to develop them is a question unanswerable at this time. Cynthia, for example was enthusiastic and optimistic about her “action plan” in which she outlined an anti-racist agenda for herself. She described her experience of the course (in the excerpt below) as an “awakening,” analogous to that of Mrs. Pontelliers in Chopin’s *The Awakening*, and seemed confident about her ability to follow through with her plan:

...This "awakening," which overwhelmed Mrs. Pontelliers, left her unable to cope with the life which then existed. I, too, have had an awakening, but unlike Mrs. Pontelliers, I do not plan on walking into the sea, never more to return, just to make a point. I do plan, however, to dive head first into my "Action Plan" which will enable me to face the many challenges that still exist today.

In her writing Cynthia's voice and commitment seemed strong, but we do not know whether she will be able to maintain that momentum into her teaching.

From the small sample studied here it seems that race-focused multicultural education can help white students on their journey to unlearn misinformation and provide some guidelines for relearning; it can help white students become more reflective about the effects of racism, and it can influence the development of their racial identities to some degree. But one course in anti-racist multicultural education has its limitations. Even though three of the five students studied here recognized the need to learn more about communities of color and take individual actions to challenge racist and other types of discriminatory remarks, few of them mentioned challenging more institutionalized forms of oppression or joining in alliance with people of color to challenge racist policies and practices. These behaviors, more typical of white persons in the "Autonomy" stage of racial identity, were not evident in this study.

This study is also limited to what occurred during one semester and not beyond. As such, we have no information about these students' continued racial identity development. Students did seem to recognize that there were many challenges ahead, and they worried about facing them without the advice and guidance from their classmates. Students felt they needed more coursework and support to continue to take the action they began in the course. Though exhilarated by the new learning and the individual ally-type behaviors they were exhibiting, students also recognized the isolation that came from "being different" than most of their peers and wished that there were more people who shared similar views. These students' remarks suggest that in order for white students to maintain an anti-racist stance in this society, they need on-going support to meet the daily challenges that will certainly arise.

As teacher educators, we need to consider what other ways we can support and nurture the continuing development of our students' racial identities. One course can help to initiate that process, but it cannot do it all. If, as Helms (1990) suggests, white persons with more fully developed racial identities have a greater chance of being successful in mixed-racial settings and if we are preparing teacher education students to teach in those mixed-racial settings, we have much work to do in designing effective multicultural teacher education programs that can assist our white students in becoming more fully developed white persons and more successful teachers of all their students.

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