

On Teaching

**When History Hurts:
Racial Identity Development
in the American Studies Classroom**

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“History begins for us with murder and enslavement, not with discovery.”

William Carlos Williams¹

“What concerns me is how little most people outside my particular specialty know about racial identity. . . [E]ducators all across the country [are] daily observing identity development in process [without] an important interpretive framework to help them understand what is happening in their interactions with students, or even in their cross-racial interactions with colleagues.”

Beverly Daniel Tatum²

American studies has been building its pedagogical house without sufficient tools. As my first epigraph suggests, American history is replete with cultural trauma. In engaging with such content, students must witness the pain of others; often, that pain is their own. Unfortunately, few teachers have been trained to manage the emotional fallout or group tension that results “when history hurts”—

when the subjects of racism and other “isms” appear in the classroom. Studying the cognitive or emotional aspects of learning may be a central task for scholars in education or psychology, but those working in other fields have not typically been exposed to theories that could help us negotiate the complicated dynamics of teaching about race, class, or gender in multicultural contexts. My own thinking about these issues developed largely outside the purview of my PhD program in literary studies—through the prior curriculum of my MEd in higher education, my subsequent work as a dean of student and academic affairs, and my collaboration with a nationally recognized university center for teaching. In these realms I came into contact with professionals and research literature committed to the scholarship of teaching and student development.

From these perspectives, the pattern of ignoring teaching that has occurred throughout higher education becomes more apparent. As a consequence of academic professionalization, the study of teaching has been largely quarantined in schools of education while the arts and science disciplines became “information-rich content” areas more concerned with what, rather than how, we teach.³ At the same time, the various protest movements of the twentieth century have resulted in increased demographic and curricular diversity in the academy. Ironically, then, disciplinary norms of specialization subordinated the scholarship of teaching precisely as pedagogy became more complicated. In particular, the traditional mode of teaching as “an act of telling”⁴ by scholarly experts has failed to address the ways that race-related materials provoke diverse reactions in newly multicultural classrooms. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, therefore, we must increasingly look for ways to bring our *scholarly* subjects together with theories about *teaching* those subjects while maintaining a humane interest in our *students* as subjects.

Such an undertaking requires our acknowledgment that the historically underrepresented “subjects of oppression” (in the sense of both topics and people) generate new teaching challenges. Most notably, we must confront the inescapable fact that our students may have strong *feelings* about the course material. In contrast to the sciences, humanities and social studies cannot easily compartmentalize the subjects and objects of inquiry.⁵ Inevitably, we find our identities implicated in our studies of race, class, and gender in a way that we may not when, for example, contemplating the laws of physics. The emotional aspects of teaching and learning thus matter because “psychical experience is not separate from the realms of society or law but is the very place where the law and society are processed.”⁶ Although we may be tempted to subscribe to the notion that the university functions apart from “the real world,” bell hooks reminds us that “the democratic educator breaks through the false construction of the corporate university as set apart from real life and seeks to re-envision schooling as always a part of our real world experience, and our real life.”⁷ “Schooling in capitalist America” does not automatically work to redress societal inequalities, but may in fact be a principal site of their reproduction.⁸ Although

the classroom, too, is a complicated “America” to be studied, it is a microcosm too rarely investigated.

In 2002, Larry Griffin and Maria Tempenis conducted a study to explore whether “theory and research on race, gender, and ethnicity have replaced class analysis.”⁹ In their assessment of what had been published in the fifty previous years of *American Quarterly*, the authors concluded that class analysis has not disappeared but instead taken on a “combinatorial” logic. The more interesting finding, however, was not that the approach to class analysis has changed, but rather that class has always received little scholarly attention: “American Studies,” they write, “pre- or post-1960s, has never much ‘done’ class; class, whether ‘pure’ or ‘enfolded,’ has never really had its ‘particular moment’ in the field.” Our intellectual engagements *in* class have never really had their “particular moment” either. American studies, like most of the disciplines, has likewise never really “done” teaching.¹⁰ I suspect that few of the research articles that Griffin and Timpenis analyzed on race, class, and gender addressed those other classes—the formal sites of pedagogy. Yet the “holy trinity” surfaces in pedagogy in the most interesting ways—not only because we include studies of race, class, and gender in course content but also because we and our students *embody* their interconnections and *enact* social hierarchies in the classroom. Griffin and Timpenis conclude that

Class, like gender and race, can be conceptualized as an articulation of power and cultural difference that is (a) historicized as materially and symbolically inscribed sets of impositions, practices, collective meanings and identities, (b) simultaneously constitutive of and constituted by social relations and institutional arrangements, and (c) subject to contestation, definition, and redefinition. As such, class is integral both to any complete analysis of American society and to the ability of American studies to offer cogent criticism of the present or to envision a more egalitarian future (93).

The same can most certainly be said of classes in the pedagogical sense. Yet although teaching and related activities dominate the working life of most academics, “scholarship” continues to function as the primary mark of our productivity in our professional lives, and some kinds of work are valued more than others.¹¹ Thus my title’s reference to histories that hurt also refers to the way that the historic rise of the disciplines has distorted knowledge itself, creating a split between teaching and scholarship, practice and theory, and affect and reason that cannot ethically be maintained in such emotionally provocative areas as American studies. This essay therefore attempts to integrate the knowledge I have gained from different professional domains, as well as my varied teaching experiences.

Over the past eight years, I have taught at both the small liberal arts colleges (including single-sex environments) and the large public university of the Five College consortium in Western Massachusetts;¹² my courses have ranged from introductory literary, ethnic, and American studies classes to more advanced, topically focused seminars. My students have represented all class years (including some nontraditional-age students) and have ranged from those reluctantly fulfilling curricular distribution requirements to highly motivated honors students or department majors. While all of my professional experiences have been at predominantly White institutions, my classes have shown the bifurcated demographic pattern familiar to many teachers of ethnic studies. That is, the student population in courses listed under general rubrics tends to be predominantly White; by contrast, ethnic studies courses, such as those I have taught in Asian American studies, consist predominantly (and occasionally entirely) of students of color. Thus my ensuing discussion of teaching about race in different kinds of contexts is based upon a broadly comparative disciplinary, institutional, and professional foundation.

In part, this essay stems from my interest in explaining the disjunction between my own teaching experiences and that of many of my peers. For many if not most faculty, race-related teaching seems prone to agonizing discussions, emotional outbursts, and active forms of student resistance, as well as negative “backlash” on student evaluations of faculty members. Intriguingly, however, even though I am a woman of color who teaches explicitly about racism and White privilege, my classrooms have rarely been problematic in this way and I have not experienced the backlash on student evaluations described by many others. I hypothesize that the more collegial tenor of my classes might result in part because I regularly incorporate racial identity development (RID) theories into my teaching. I have done so since the start of my teaching career primarily because, fortuitously *prior* to my PhD program, I had been a colleague of several scholars conducting research in this area.¹³ The strategy of introducing students to RID frameworks seems to have inoculated me from some of the worst difficulties of teaching about race, since this paradigm explicitly encourages students to become both more compassionate and self-reflexive learners. Significantly, it also redistributes the burden disproportionately held by racially “marked” bodies in the classroom because *everyone* has a racial identity in this taxonomy; White students cannot therefore look out from an unmarked position upon others who “have a race.” Rather, they must take up the responsibility of theorizing their own racial identities along with everybody else, including their teachers. The consistent results across my different teaching experiences suggest that exposing students to RID theories provides a framework that

1. enables students to critically attend to their feelings and thus productively channels emotions provoked by the course towards learning;

2. addresses the racial identities of *all* students, including those who identify as multiracial;
3. illuminates the developmental psychology of young adulthood;
4. normalizes both cross-cultural and intra-ethnic conflict in the classroom;
5. highlights the centrality of systemic racism to racial identity development, thereby distinguishing between the concepts of race and ethnicity; and
6. diminishes unrealistic expectations of “closure” by framing any course within the longitudinal perspective of identity development.

Without a pedagogical strategy that attends to the difficulties of teaching about race, student learning can be inhibited and instructors can be unfairly penalized for their attempts to dismantle systemic racism through education. By contrast, explicit attention to these issues can relieve some of the tensions inherent in teaching about race and can legitimize the genuinely complicated and difficult work that students and teachers of American studies do in the classroom.

Although they differ in their details, most theories of racial identity development subscribe to three main principles:¹⁴

1. racial identity remains salient because systemic racism still exists;
2. a positive racial self-concept depends upon unlearning internalized racism; and
3. mental health depends upon acquiring a positive racial identity.

Although these tenets may seem to state the obvious, in fact, few people subscribe to them and many would actively contest them. With regard to the first, as Beverly Daniel Tatum notes, “it is because we live in a racist society that racial identity has as much meaning as it does. We cannot talk meaningfully about racial identity without also talking about racism.”¹⁵ This is easier said than done, since acknowledging systemic racism requires unlearning deeply cherished American myths of individualism, meritocracy, and justice. In addition, it requires recognition of *White privilege*, a concept much harder to grasp than racial discrimination.¹⁶ As such, many public discourses deny the systemic aspects of racism by defining racism only as the aberrant behavior of individuals, by announcing the end of racism, or by calling for “colorblind justice” while charging people of color with reverse racism (as in affirmative action discourses). Thus Tatum explicitly distinguishes *prejudice*, the biased beliefs or behaviors of individuals, from *racism*, a more faceless, systemic network upheld in large

part by White privilege. As with Mia Tuan's concept of "racialized ethnics," Tatum thus distinguishes the concept of ethnicity (the self-ascribed affiliation with particular cultural norms) from that of race (an externally imposed designation largely dependent upon skin color or other visual markers).¹⁷

Second, the RID theories presume that racism has been internalized and can only be unlearned through conscious effort. Again, this is easier said than done. As Tatum puts it, "the cultural images and messages that affirm the assumed superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of people of color [are] like smog. . . . How can we avoid breathing the air?"¹⁸ Using the metaphor of a moving walkway, Tatum observes that "Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt . . . Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still [and anti-racist behavior involves] walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt." In other words, it is only through willful strategies—coursework, cultural politics, or other engagements—that individuals can discover positive depictions of members of their racial group and attempt to integrate the group's history into more truthful narratives. For students of color, this means learning about the creativity, resistance, and resilience of members of their group; for White students, this means searching for White role models who have actively walked against the conveyor belt of racism. However, as Tatum notes, "heightening students' awareness of racism without also developing an awareness of the possibility of change is a prescription for despair."¹⁹ Thus alongside our deconstruction of racism, we must also provide *constructive* models of people acting as effective moral agents in society.

Third, the RID models assume that mental health depends upon the internalization of a positive racial identity. Such a statement may appear almost trite, and yet, many people in fact live out their lives without achieving a healthy racial identity. The structural condition of systemic racism yields both the phenomena of White people afflicted with denial or guilt and the "double-consciousness" famously expressed by W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*.²⁰ Thus it is not enough that teachers familiarize themselves with RID theory in order to better understand students. Students must also have access to these frameworks so that they may begin to interrogate how they come to knowledge of self and others.

Why Should We Teach About Racial Identity Development?

My article proceeds on the assumption that few American studies courses can avoid teaching about the histories or legacies of racism, which has increasingly been shown to be foundational rather than exceptional to American social structures. As historian Matthew Frye Jacobson has observed, "to write about race in American culture is to exclude virtually nothing."²¹ In Anne Cheng's psychoanalytic analysis, "racial melancholia is both the technology and the nightmare of the American Dream."²² Drawing from anthropology and literary

studies, Kathleen Brogan shows how traumatic racial histories generate ubiquitous narratives of “cultural haunting” in the United States.²³ Such insights may provoke strong feelings given that students have an inescapably *lived* relationship to the topic of race that inevitably informs their academic work, often in unproductive ways. For example, in an anthology on multicultural teaching, David Schoem describes “students who can ‘see’ only one perspective, who don’t listen or read carefully except when their own group is being discussed, who are so anxious to talk about themselves and their individual ethnic/racial experience that they are ready to dismiss research findings and scholarly debate as interfering with their learning.”²⁴

In her landmark essay, “Talking About Race, Learning About Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development in the Classroom” (1992), Beverly Daniel Tatum observes that the diversification of both the academy and the curriculum has not brought with it corresponding pedagogical adjustments.²⁵ Tatum suggests that “if not addressed,” these kinds of responses to provocative race-related topics “can result in student resistance to oppression-related content areas [and] can ultimately interfere [with] the understanding and mastery of the material.”²⁶ Equally important, teaching about racism may harm faculty professionally, as when students act out emotionally and “kill the messenger” on faculty course evaluations. The editors of *Race in the College Classroom* point out that a teaching evaluation system “that has not accounted for this crucial factor is, in fact, invalid and counterproductive,” and they note that White professors who teach about racism are as likely as faculty of color to be targets of student backlash.²⁷ Thus institutions must develop a fair means of evaluating those who rock the boat of racism in their teaching. At the same time, it is incumbent upon those of us who teach about race to do so in a pedagogically informed manner.

First, we must realize that for most students, the study of race in the college classroom represents uncharted cultural and intellectual territory. Given the *de facto* segregation of many neighborhoods and schools, few students have had prior opportunities to discuss race in multicultural settings. Moreover, as Christine Sleeter points out, while racism may be a regular topic of conversation for people of color, it is rarely so for their White counterparts.²⁸ Furthermore, given the celebratory nationalism of most elementary and secondary school curricula, students of all racial backgrounds experience cognitive dissonance when college-level study leads them to question myths of individualism, meritocracy, and justice.²⁹ In just such a moment, one of my White students bitterly asked, “How old do you have to be before you can learn the truth about history?” This very question reveals the process of knowledge acquisition as itself racialized and uneven: children of color, as educators and psychologists have shown, tend to learn harsh truths about our society much earlier than their White counterparts.

Teaching about racism in diverse classrooms thus generates a heady brew of differing emotional responses. Students of color may experience anger,

sadness, or shame when confronting the ways in which their communities have been (or are being) discriminated against. White students may feel tremendous guilt at being “the oppressor”; some may manage these feelings by denying the persistence of racism altogether. Students from other countries may be confused about how the U.S. racial formation differs from their own cultural frameworks, where people of color may not be the minority but instead a statistical majority. In any given classroom, students may also subscribe to what Audre Lorde called a “hierarchy of oppression” paradigm, an unproductive competition over which group has it worse. In addition to the *cross-racial* tensions that inevitably arise in classrooms, a less obvious but equally challenging struggle may emerge *within* ethnic groups as differing degrees of racial identification become apparent and lead some students to critique the racial “authenticity” of others.

RID theories render these responses intelligible, shedding light on individual, intra-group, and inter-group dynamics. Drawing from this literature, Tatum’s article—which draws upon many years of teaching and refining a course called “Psychology of Racism”—documents the range of student responses to learning about racial oppression and provides four teaching strategies that normalize, rather than ignore or pathologize such feelings:

1. the creation of a safe classroom atmosphere by establishing clear guidelines for discussion;
2. the creation of opportunities for self-generated knowledge;³⁰
3. the provision of an appropriate developmental model that students can use as a framework for understanding their own process;
4. the exploration of strategies to empower students as change agents.³¹

For present purposes, I focus on Tatum’s third strategy—the use of RID theories to help both students and instructors understand and interpret the range of emotional responses in the classroom. In so doing, I offer a kind of inter/disciplinary “translation.” By virtue of her location in psychology and education, Tatum was able to seamlessly integrate course content and process: in her “Psychology of Racism” course, students’ *emotional responses to learning about racism were themselves legitimate course content*. Tatum was thus able to bring scholarship and pedagogy together in a harmonious blend of form and function. For those in other fields, however, student emotions may appear supplemental or even disruptive rather than (as they really are) constitutive of learning. Yet although our courses are ostensibly “about” economics, history, or literature, the race-related subject matter within them provokes both emotions and racial identity development. It is therefore ethically incumbent upon teachers of American studies to adopt the same kinds of pedagogical strategies that Tatum

has found so effective. However, unlike Tatum, each of us must also develop a rationale for how RID theory “relates” to our scholarly content areas.

Working from my own orientation in literary studies, I give students a simple rationale: who we are determines how we read. To make this point—regardless of specific course content and well before any talk of racism—I introduce students to the concepts behind reader-response theories, most famously encapsulated by Stanley Fish’s question: “Is There a Text in this Class?”³² I do so by asking students to create a brief written description of a visual text. Students then share their individual responses with the group; all are invariably amazed at how different their perceptions of the same image can be. Later on in the course, I remind students of this exercise and point out that race, too, is a visual “text” that we constantly read, and quite differently. Thus I stress that the value of both diversity and discussion in the classroom lies in our collaborative movement toward some kind of shared knowledge. As one group of scholars puts it discussing competing views of history, “Success comes when the found knowledge can be understood, verified, or appreciated by people who in no sense share the same self-interest.”³³ Teaching in the multicultural academy thus requires strategies that can help students to see beyond their own perspective, as well as engage in the kind of productive self-reflection that relieves the tendency to lash out emotionally at peers or instructors.

Tatum’s pedagogical approach, and my own, could thus be described as the process of installing what Johnella Butler described as a “pressure-release valve.”³⁴ Provocative race-related material generates emotional pressure: an explicit pedagogical strategy releases it so the classroom environment can remain a productive, reflective, and respectful one. Specifically, this “valve” is installed when students are exposed to RID theory and then turn it towards introspective ends. Although my essay focuses on race, I imagine that this notion of explicit attention to student development could be brought to bear in any area where “history hurts,” whether we are teaching about classism, sexism, homophobia, or any other “ism.”³⁵ As Tatum observes, when faced with discussions about race or racism, students typically “consider their own guilt, shame, embarrassment, or anger an uncomfortable experience that they alone are having. Informing students that these feelings may be part of the learning process is ethically necessary (in the sense of informed consent), and helps to normalize the students’ experience.”³⁶ Tatum adds that it helps to tell students up front that the emotional cycles they may experience upon engaging in such reflection are predictable: “Knowing in advance that a desire to withdraw from classroom discussion or not to complete assignments is a common response helps students to remain engaged.”³⁷ If we make a collective effort to relieve the “side effects” of race-related teaching through such explicit acknowledgments, I believe we will see an improvement both in the capacity of students to engage critically with our course themes and materials and to conduct fair course evaluations. In the next section, I introduce the literature on racial identity development and

explain how such theories can predict a variety of student responses to course materials and illuminate complex classroom dynamics. As Tatum says, the experience of teaching about race across different classes, students, and institutions is “more the same than different.” In the essay’s penultimate section, I offer some practical suggestions of how to incorporate RID theory into courses.

How RID Theories Illuminate Classroom Dynamics

The psychological literature on racial identity development originated in the Civil Rights-era exploration of the impact of racism upon African American psychology; subsequent work has explored the identity development of other racialized groups, including Whites.³⁸ There are a variety of RID theories extant, each of which employs a different vocabulary.³⁹ Although some offer multi-directional paradigms⁴⁰ most present a progressive model of development ranging from 3-6 stages. These depend upon a theory of psychological “conversions” or conflicted transitions, emulating Erik Erikson’s model of adolescent identity crisis.⁴¹ For example, Jean Phinney’s Ethnic Identity Development Model views “ethnicity and/or racial identity as an extension of [Eriksonian] ego identity.”⁴² Thus most RID models describe a series of key psychological *transitions* triggered by racial events. My primary insight is that *American studies courses often function as such events*, not only because racial themes are often prominent at the level of content but also because it quickly becomes apparent that racial identities inform classroom discussion.

Those new to RID theory, may, however, have legitimate reservations about these models. In an apt metaphor, Laura Uba reminds us that “[at] its birth, psychology was pulled by divorcing parents, humanism and scientific realism, and custody was given to the latter.”⁴³ Here we may have one explanation for why RID scholarship has not readily crossed the disciplines, as my second epigraph notes. Those who subscribe to what Uba calls a “postmodern psychology” may view the scientific paradigm of “stages” of racial identity with skepticism. Postmodern and postcolonial theory have taught us, quite rightly, to be suspicious of developmental narratives: historians have repeatedly shown how notions of progress often work toward the oppression of those seen to occupy “lower” rungs of being. Moreover, RID theories do not address the complex interconnection of race, religion, gender, and sexuality; they typically isolate race as the sole identity factor in question. Responding to this concern, psychologist William Cross Jr. suggests that the RID process should be understood as a response to racial events in which “a single dimension of a person’s complex, layered identity is *first isolated*, for purposes of revitalization and transformation, [*then*] *integrated* into the person’s total identity matrix” (my emphases).⁴⁴ In any case, it is important to note that RID theories do not presume that such a process achieves closure, or even that it ever begins.⁴⁵ Tatum, for example, emphasizes the common “recycling” of identity stages in response to new racial events, offering the metaphor of a spiral staircase one generally

ascends but from which one remains able to view and return to points below.⁴⁶ Another drawback is that many RID theories presume a mono-racial identification, failing to account for increasing numbers of people identifying as multiracial. In addition, Cross notes that most “conversion models [were] limited to adult experiences [and that] only recently have scholars such as Beverly Tatum and Jean Phinney extended the discourse to cover a younger phase [of] identity development.”⁴⁷ As such, some models may not transfer as readily to an understanding of traditional-age college student development.

Having noted these theoretical limitations, I have nonetheless found that RID frameworks offer tremendous value for understanding the complex racial dynamics of our classrooms. For such a purpose, these models need not be flawless in order to be useful—indeed, inviting students to assess them can be intellectually productive in itself. Thus, I do not aim to redress the problems of particular RID models, nor adjudicate among them to find the best one—these are issues obviously best left to the psychologists working in this area. Rather, I press their shared insights into the service of pedagogy. In what follows, I synthesize the aspects common to most progressive RID models to provide a composite paradigm. While their terminology varies, each theorist describes a racial identity trajectory that moves, roughly, from lack of salience to conflict to resolution. Understanding the attitudes and behaviors that accompany these transitions allows us to see the emotional and cognitive dissonance generated by race-related teaching as a necessary part of both healthy psychological development and learning. It will be helpful to refer throughout the ensuing section to Table 1 (page 162), which provides a comparative (if necessarily reductive) overview of the developmental continuum in various models.

1. The Non-Salience of Race. All of the RID models assume an initial phase in which racial identity has little conscious value. Unsurprisingly, the literature acknowledges that people of color are provoked to move beyond this naïve stage sooner than most Whites. However, although it is likely that most students in this “unexamined” phase will be White, our classrooms may also contain students of color who feel that racial identity has had little salience in their lives. As suggested in the Cross and Kim models, this does not necessarily imply racial self-hatred or psychological risk for people of color; the reality may be that they place greater value on other affiliations or have not yet encountered racism in palpable ways. Indeed, if families and segregated communities have provided a kind of buffer zone, *schools* may be the sites of the negative cross-racial interactions that first precipitate identity conflict.

2. Initial Awareness of Racial Identity or Racism. The various models then posit a transition phase that leads to a new reckoning with one’s racial identity, e.g. “encounter” (Cross), “identity exploration” (Phinney), or “dissonance” (Atkinson, Morten, and Sue). Here, a racial “event” of some kind forces an examination of racial identity and its meaning in society. As Jean Kim explains, “Conflict about one’s identity can be said to exist when individuals

perceive certain aspects or attributes of themselves which they simultaneously reject.”⁴⁸ As I have been suggesting, *an American studies course may be the event that generates this conflict*. In such a context, White students may realize for the first time that “whiteness” is itself a racial identity and that they benefit from systemic racism. Students of color may confront a history of racism that, perhaps as a result of traumatic intergenerational silences, they had never known in detail. In addition, we might be teaching multiracial students who, to extend Du Bois, experience a kind of *double* “double-consciousness” within the racial paradigm, potentially excluded from multiple discourses of racial authenticity and belonging.

3. Intensive Exploration of Racial Identity. The identity development models vary as to what happens next; some include the possibility, as with Janet Helms’s theory of White “reintegration,” of a kind of psychological regression—a defense mechanism whereby people revert back to formerly held views to avoid the cognitive dissonance of uncomfortable new knowledge.⁴⁹ Again, RID theory reminds us that it is possible to remain indefinitely at any point in the process; indeed, many Whites remain permanently “stuck” in reintegration. However, to progress to a psychologically *healthy* racial identity, the RID models concur that individuals must experience an “immersion” period. Each of us should have no trouble thinking of students or colleagues who fit this bill. At the immersion stage, the individual often has little interest in those outside the racial group. Rather, he or she seeks to gather positive images from the racial group history and to be with other members of the group who share this desire. This marks an active phase of “unlearning” internalized racism.

The psychological necessity of immersion thus answers the question posed by Tatum’s book: *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* People in immersion seek to unlearn internalized stereotypes and to identify other members of their group who have been or want to be historical agents of change; they may seek out our courses for this very reason. Seen in this light, the desire for ethnically “separate” curricular and cultural space often so controversial on our campuses appears as a necessary part of healthy identity development in a racist society—a reflection of the need to feel empowered, rather than debilitated by, one’s racial identification. Likewise, Whites at the immersion stage need to find White anti-racist allies who will support their development towards a new and positive sense of Whiteness that is not based on assumptions of cultural superiority.⁵⁰ Here it is worth noting that while ethnic cultural organizations often serve as a restorative haven for students of color, White students are often hard pressed to find cultural support for their position as “race traitors,” to borrow a phrase from Noel Ignatiev.⁵¹ In seeking to establish a White identity *not* based on notions of entitlement, White students may feel severely alienated from their peers. For these reasons, White anti-racist groups, while sometimes viewed with skepticism by people of color, are critically important vehicles towards the development of a positive White identity. In the

same way that feminism has begun to consider the relevance of masculinity studies, anti-racist efforts must recognize the importance of White racial identity development.

Ethnic studies courses are likely to draw students in the immersion “stage,” who tend to be highly motivated and engaged. However, such students may have little patience for their classmates who are not also in immersion. We can now begin to see why conversations between students who are just beginning racial identity exploration and those in the immersion stage can be exceedingly fraught, if not downright hostile: this is as true *within* racial groups as it is *across* them. Indeed, it is a shortcoming of many discussions of race and pedagogy that classroom dynamics are often described in terms of binary relations between Whites and people of color. In fact, RID theory reveals that there are many different lines of affiliation within a classroom that alternately cohere and fracture. For example, students of color at the “pre-encounter” stage may actively resist viewing themselves as targets of racism. As one of my students, who self-identified as “Taiwanese-American,” wrote of her Asian American peers: “I had a lot of trouble handling the Asian pride aspect of the class. I’ve never known it [and] can’t understand when people say things like that. So I’m often the devil’s advocate.” By contrast, another student who self-identified as “Asian American” described the same class from what is clearly an “immersion” perspective: “it became difficult to believe the severity of apathy affecting many of the other Asian American students in the group . . . my peers didn’t seem to realize the subtlety of the racism we face.” Indeed, students of color in a “pre-encounter” phase are more likely to align with White students at the “naïve” stage who may also say such things as, “Why must we always talk about race?” or “Why can’t we let the past be the past?” Such students will find themselves in conflict with those of all racial backgrounds who are trying to unlearn internalized racism through active participation in cultural politics.

4. Securing One’s Racial Identity. According to RID theories, the “final” developmental step would involve coming out of immersion in order to form a stable sense of one’s racial identity. From such a place, one can acknowledge the existence and consequences of racism without the emotional fallout that accompanies earlier stages of the process. In addition, the individual can form positive interracial relationships while yet maintaining a secure sense of his or her own racial identity. William Cross Jr. describes internalization as a stage in which “general defensiveness fades, simplistic thinking and simple solutions become transparently inadequate [and therefore mark] the point of departure for serious analysis.”⁵² With this we arrive at the most significant rationale for incorporating RID theories into our teaching: a healthy racial identity facilitates critical thinking—the capacity to consider ambiguity and to explore multiple sides of an issue. But the reality is that most students tend to be at the “encounter” or “immersion” stages; only occasionally might we teach students with a securely internalized sense of racial identity, those who can make genuine connections

across cultural differences and engage the kind of critical thinking to which Cross refers. It follows therefore that the time of racial identity development is out of joint with curricular time: a typical semester represents only a small segment of the identity development process. Thus students and teachers alike need to understand that it is unrealistic to expect closure or “resolution” by the end of a single course; indeed, this is the negotiation of a lifetime. It is interesting to speculate, however, on what might happen if RID theories were more widely taught: would a more “accelerated” process of healthy racial identity development result from multiple curricular opportunities to reflect upon racial identity issues? In any event, when both teachers and students become familiar with the RID frameworks, the emotional tenor of the classroom can be viewed as an integral aspect of, not a pathological aberration from, the learning process.

Incorporating RID Frameworks into Course Designs

In her introduction to *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (1997), Tatum describes how her 1992 essay “triggered an ‘aha’ moment” for her readers:

Suddenly the racial dynamics in their classrooms and within their own campus communities made sense in a way they hadn’t before. [Parents] suddenly had a new lens with which to see the sometimes sudden shifts in their children’s behavior. . . . Cross-racial interactions with colleagues took on new meaning . . . [An understanding of RID] gave them new ways of thinking about old problems and offered them new strategies for facilitating productive dialogue about racial issues.⁵³

With this book, Tatum aims at a general audience beyond the specialist fields of psychology in which discussions of RID originated. Drawing from this literature, she builds upon her earlier insights to provide a fuller explanation of how people from different racial backgrounds may be affected by “talking about race, learning about racism.” In short, Tatum presents internal and interpersonal conflict as the entirely predictable result of reckoning with racial identity in a society that both maintains and denies systemic racism. Quite simply, then, my principal means of creating a “pressure-release valve” has been through assigning Tatum’s book and providing multiple opportunities for students to integrate its RID insights into the work of the course. However, in classes where it is not feasible to assign the entire text, I may substitute a short handout summarizing the RID process (see Appendix A, page 160), to be discussed in tandem with short stories or other literature that models racial identity development or conflict.

There are several advantages to assigning Tatum’s book. First, she writes in a jargon-free style that proves highly accessible to students and teachers in any

discipline. Second, in separate chapters she provides a brief cultural history of various panethnic racial groups (e.g. Asian, Black, Latino, Native, White, and multiracial); as such, her text provides an efficient ethnic studies background for courses in which comparative ethnic studies may not be the primary focus. Let me briefly describe the structure of Tatum's text and how it might be deployed. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* is divided into five sections. Part One, "A Definition of Terms," usefully introduces the key concepts of systemic racism and identity development, and highlights the emotional aspects of such discussions; the two chapters of Part One can stand on their own as a conceptual framework for any course involving studies of race. Subsequent chapters deal with different cultural groups and their identity issues and could thus be deployed separately in courses pertaining to specific ethnic studies. The last chapter, "Embracing Cross-Racial Dialogues," acknowledges the difficulties of talking about race while reminding us that the goal of healthy racial identity development is not cultural separatism but the capacity for satisfying cross-cultural relationships. Students respond positively to this concluding chapter because it compassionately describes and normalizes experiences most of them have been unable to articulate. Thus one of the pedagogical tricks I have learned is to teach this final chapter first: it sets the right tone at the beginning of each course, sending an early message that the difficulties of "talking about race, learning about racism" are par for the course (pun intended) and that we will work through them together—not in some vague form of "group therapy" but as a vehicle for productive engagement with controversial course topics.

Structurally, Tatum's book thus provides both multicultural and affinity-group space. For example, White students can learn about Asian or African American identity development from the relevant chapters dealing with those groups while the section on White identity provides them access to the voices of others trying to come to terms with the meanings of Whiteness. Asian American students can be exposed to Black or White voices describing their racialized experiences while the chapter on Asian American identity puts them in company with others grappling with being "forever foreigners" in U.S. society. Given this structure, it is also possible to assign everyone the more generalized first and last sections, and then have an open reading assignment in which each student reads the chapters that seem most relevant to their own racial identities.

Students can then productively apply the RID framework in some combination of assignments, for example: an ongoing journal "processing" their reactions to race-related course discussions (graded only for completion, not judged on content); a critical autoethnography; exam questions or directed paper topics involving RID theory, or other assignments that ask them to apply RID theory to course materials. For example, students might consider how RID theory might help us understand social movements or identity politics. In literary studies courses, I often ask students to consider how RID theory illuminates characters or influences their own textual interpretations; quite often, in open-topic

assignments, students will be motivated to conduct such analysis on their own. Over the years many of my students have deployed RID theory to develop keen analyses of historical or contemporary cultural issues, as well as literary texts. To suggest how productive these kinds of applications can be, let me turn to the work of one of my former students, Sarah Krill, who used Tatum's framework to generate an excellent analysis of Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*.⁵⁴ Set in contemporary Seattle, this novel describes the rising hysteria and racial violence that erupts after several White people are murdered. The cultural work of the text hinges upon Alexie's refusal to disclose the identity of the killer(s), as emblemized by the novel's ambiguous title, which could mean both a killer who is Indian and one who kills Indians. While Alexie's paradoxical refusal of narrative resolution in this "whodunit" genre leads many students to judge the novel as "weak," RID theory enabled Krill to discover a different logic.

In her paper, Krill shows how the novel's many characters represent a taxonomy of racial identifications as described by Tatum. She focuses upon the ironically named John Smith, an Indian painfully confused about his identity since his adoption by a White family. Smith targets a White character named Jack Wilson as the source of his problems, because Wilson pens stories about Indians and believes he himself is part Indian (although there is no proof of this). John and Jack are uniquely connected, Krill notes, because "The right to a heritage and the comfort of a known ancestry was taken away from [both] through their dislocation from their biological families."⁵⁵ However, while Wilson appropriates Indian culture to fantasize a new identity for himself, John cannot adopt Whiteness "because of the color of his skin." In Krill's analysis,

John Smith's excruciating search for a cohesive identity is concluded by his suicide. However, right before he steps off the skyscraper in Seattle, John Smith climactically slashes Jack Wilson across the face, forever marking him as the one "responsible" for all that had gone wrong in his life. . . . While the novel is seemingly about the mysteriously chilling murders in the Seattle community, this "marking" exists as the only instance of racial violence enacted between two named people. . . . Though the factual identity of the "Indian Killer" remains anonymous, it is the identity of the person to whom John is directing all his hostility [that] is finally discovered and focused upon: Jack Wilson.⁵⁶

Here she points out what I myself had not previously noticed: this is the only instance of violence in which the actors are known both to each other and to readers; as such, the scene certainly has unique significance. Krill finds its meaning in the climactic moment where Wilson

exercises his White privilege in the most ironic way, by disowning it: "Don't hurt me. I'm not a white man. I'm Indian.

You don't kill Indians" (398). Yet [John] refutes his claims: "You're not innocent." He slashes [Wilson's] face, and [thus] attempts to reverse the process of racism: "people will know you by that mark. They'll know what you did" (411).⁵⁷

She thus argues that the penultimate skyscraper scene represents the story's real *denouement*:

It is not the scalping mystery that is solved. It is not the kidnapper that is caught. It is not the murderer who is jailed . . . It is, however, a White man who will not admit to his whiteness who is "not innocent." . . . To admit no advantages and refuse to acknowledge the privilege that comes with Whiteness is to participate in the system that oppresses others in the most extreme way. Thus, in order to begin to rectify the circular, public crisis of the "Indian Killer," White identity and privilege must be accepted, understood, and ultimately humbly utilized to deconstruct the crisis of racism . . . [By] never supplying the reader with an obvious villain, *Indian Killer* forces the White reader to internally confront the issues of identity and complicity in order to catalyze them to examine their own role.⁵⁸

In Krill's hands, RID theory not only explicates the novel but also its reception, suggesting why some students (and literary critics) judge Alexie's novel as a narrative failure while those who are developmentally ready to legitimize the concept of White privilege might read it as a success. The pedagogical point here is not to privilege Sarah's reading as the correct one, but rather to suggest how her own racial identity development informs her interpretation, just as, potentially, that of others influences their identification with or resistance to the course material. Indeed, others who disliked this novel also drew productively upon the RID framework to consider the possibility that their discomfort with the text was due in part to their own position as White subjects. As I have seen in many other instances, RID theory can give students of all backgrounds a self-reflexive lens that invites them to consider how they construct knowledge. Far from legislating "political correctness," then, racial identity theory asks only that students reflect upon, rather than deny, the ways in which their racial identities may inform their analytic perspectives. As Peggy McIntosh has written, one of the central features of White privilege is the opportunity to forget one's racial identity.⁵⁹ As teachers of American studies, we should not reinforce that privilege. While I hope the foregoing examples suggest a few tangible ways of making use of RID frameworks in the classroom, ultimately any such theories are only as good as their application in specific contexts. It is up to each of us to adapt these

strategies in ways that make sense for our individual teaching styles and particular inter/disciplinary and institutional frameworks.

When History Hurts: Race, Emotion, and Intellect

If “students learn as much from classroom process, the hidden curriculum, as they do from the overt content of the course,”⁶⁰ they are usually taught that feeling has nothing to do with thinking. In striving to keep classroom discussions “rational” (i.e. untainted by murky feelings), we may fail to reckon with the question of how psychological investments may hinder or facilitate the absorption of our American studies materials. Philosophies of scholarship or teaching that depend upon a dichotomy between reason and emotion cannot therefore account for the ways we come to knowledge. This Enlightenment legacy is inescapably gendered, as Nancy Tuana observes:

reason and justice, those characteristics that are taken to define us as human—are associated with traits historically identified with masculinity. If the “man” of reason must learn to control or overcome traits identified as feminine—the body, the emotions, the passions—then the realm of rationality will be one reserved primarily for men, with grudging entrance to those few women who are capable of transcending their femininity.⁶¹

As ethnic and postcolonial scholars have amply shown, men and women who are neither “White” nor “Western” have also been discursively positioned beyond the typically unmarked space of the abstract, “reasonable,” citizen. The classroom attuned to the powerful role of emotions in learning thus provides a needed corrective for what Native American psychologist Eduardo Duran wryly calls “chronic and/or acute Cartesian anxiety disorder.”⁶²

Recently one of my White female students provided a poignant description of the condition Duran describes (with no prompting from me, I might add). In her informal weekly response to an excerpt I had assigned from Susan Brison’s memoir of rape and recovery,⁶³ this student articulated the cognitive dissonance she typically experiences in educational settings:

I had to choose between being intellectual and emotional. . . . This stems from an experience when an influential teacher in my life [told] me I could not be emotional because people do not respect [you]. Not wanting to live a life without respect yet not having the ability to completely abandon my emotional nature, I have developed two distinct personalities. . . . I feel a great divide even in the English major itself, splitting my classes between creative writing classes or classes which focus

on reading and analyzing various texts. . . .

Brison seemed to rescue me from that more so than other readings. . . . This was powerful because while being a story, it at the same time is an analysis. It is both emotionally compelling and intellectually stimulating, [an] example of being allowed to write as a real person who has an identity and experiences, yet who is also able to look at them as an intellectual without the anonymity I usually feel when I read analytical pieces. The combination of the two was good for me because I didn't feel the need to choose a self and could read it as a whole person.⁶⁴

The problem of being unable to read “as a whole person” is an epistemological symptom felt by far too many—it speaks to the cost of diversifying the academy and curricula without correspondingly adjusting our pedagogical methods. In this instance, the student's insight that the emotional and the rational need not be opposed enables a critical breakthrough: in this essay, her writing voice emerges strongly for the first time, whereas previously it had been lackluster and tentative; the student went on to apply Brison's theory of trauma and recovery to various ethnic narratives in an extremely cogent synthesis. This suggests that confronting the emotions provoked by academic study enables rather than stymies critical thought. Although many faculty express the fear that classroom discussions will degenerate if students are “allowed” to speak in the first person or discuss their emotional reactions to the material, I have found the opposite to be true: inviting students to participate as “whole” people boosts their motivational level and facilitates the absorption and retention of complicated material. Autobiography and scholarship, the emotional and the intellectual, are not mutually exclusive domains but may be the very ground—or borderlands, as Gloria Anzaldúa understood—of knowledge production.⁶⁵ When we consider learning outcomes (something higher education still knows too little about),⁶⁶ we should not therefore privilege “mastery” of content above self-knowledge: both aspects can help students lead more ethical lives in civic, personal, and professional contexts.

Although it may sometimes feel that responding to emotional pressures takes time away from teaching American studies “proper,” I hope I have suggested why this remains the legitimate work of an interdisciplinary field in which the trauma of racism remains a central theme. Paying attention to how the race-related content of American studies impacts our students should remind us of the potential for social change that critical pedagogy represents. In the laboratory of the classroom, social worlds are unmade and remade. While we cannot pretend to control this generative power, we can facilitate it, bear witness to it, and encourage students to claim their places as moral agents in the world. In teaching

about both racism and racial identity development, we inaugurate a number of pedagogical shifts in the classroom that may not otherwise occur. The RID framework normalizes emotional reactions to the material of the course, minimizing potential outbursts or withdrawals. RID theories encourage all classroom participants to pay attention to the development of their own racial identities, thereby providing a framework by which students can take charge of their own learning long after our classes have ended. By acknowledging that racial identity development is a lifetime process, instructors and students can place the goals of any single course in perspective. As is true of all teaching, we must be willing to plant the seeds, knowing that we may not be there to witness their flowering.

Notes

1. William Carlos Williams, *In the American Grain* (New York: New Directions, 1925), 138.
2. Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), xi.
3. See John Guillory, "The Very Idea of Pedagogy," in *Profession 2002* (New York: MLA, 2002), for a brief analysis on how the rise of the disciplines limited attention to pedagogical theory. On the nature of professionalization, see Richard Ohmann's essay, "Graduate Students, Professionals, Intellectuals," in *Politics of Knowledge* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003).
4. George Hillocks, *Ways of Thinking, Ways of Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 93.
5. While many scientists may not see how their subject areas require any engagement with race, class, and gender at the level of the syllabus, the severe underrepresentation of women and people of color in most scientific fields suggest that it is equally necessary for scientists to interrogate pedagogical practices and institutional habits. Furthermore, given the growth of interdisciplinary studies, it is possible to see how many science fields *do* have curricular grounds for exploring race-related issues (for example, with regard to the social construction of disease or environmental racism).
6. Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), x.
7. bell hooks, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 41. See also hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).
8. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).
9. Larry Griffin and Maria Tempenis, "Class, Multiculturalism, and the *American Quarterly*," *American Quarterly* 54 (March 2002): 67-99. Griffin and Tempenis are responding to John Higham's 1993 argument that rubrics of multiculturalism serve to deny class privilege, as well as his revised hypothesis that class analysis now tends to be "enfolded" within studies of cultural "endowment groups."
10. One valuable exception is an article by Lois Rudnick, Judith Smith, Rachel Rubin, Eric Goodson, and Carol Siriani, "Teaching *American Identities*: A University/Secondary School Collaboration," *American Quarterly* 54 (June 2002): 255-277. The form of this article is as important as its content, as it models the kind of collaborative authorship that also rarely "counts" as scholarship (various segments are written by college faculty, a graduate TA, a high school teacher, and her students). Another important forum on teaching occurs in the annual American Studies Association convention's "Focus on Teaching Day" (see, for example, the CFP in the *ASA Newsletter* 28 (December 2005): 27. The on-line American Studies Crossroads project (a collaboration between the ASA and Georgetown University) is also a valuable resource; see <http://www.georgetown.edu/crossroads/>.
11. On the important distinction between publication and scholarship see John Guillory, "Valuing the Humanities, Evaluating Scholarship," in *Profession 2005* (New York: MLA, 2005). For a critique of the way the multifaceted work of the university gets reduced to "scholarship," see Jeffrey Williams's introduction to *The Institution of Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).
12. The Five College Consortium consists of Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke and

Smith colleges, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Mount Holyoke and Smith are liberal arts colleges for women. See <http://www.fivecolleges.edu>.

13. Charmaine Wijesinghe was my supervisor when I was an assistant dean of student affairs at Mount Holyoke; I'm grateful to her for introducing me to her work on multiracial identity development. In that professional context I also attended workshops on racial identity and cross-racial dialogues led by psychologist Beverly Tatum, then a faculty member at Mount Holyoke specializing in the psychology of racism. Later on, Tatum became the Dean of College at Mount Holyoke; I'm grateful to her for taking time during that busy period to talk with me about my application of her work within American studies. My teaching has also greatly benefited from the expertise and mentoring of the former and current directors of the Center for Teaching at UMass Amherst, Mary Deane Sorcinelli and Mathew Ouellette.

14. In the context of Asian American identity, for example, Jean Kim presents these three principles as follows: 1) "White racism cannot be separated from Asian American identity development due to racism's pervasive nature," 2) "Asian Americans cannot shed their negative racial identity automatically [but must make] a conscious decision to unlearn what Asian Americans have learned about themselves," and 3) "[the] psychological well-being of Asian Americans is dependent upon their ability to transform the negative racial identity they experience as a result of identity conflict and to acquire a positive racial identity." See Kim, "Asian American Identity Development Theory," in Charmaine Wijesinghe and Bailey Jackson, *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 71.

15. Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids*, xiv.

16. The seminal article here is Peggy McIntosh's "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack of White Privilege," a model that invites analogous consideration of the privileges of class, masculinity, heterosexuality, and other normative modes. Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege, Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: Worth Publishers, 2005). See also Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Noel Ignatiev, *How The Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge University Press, 1995); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), and *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1999).

17. Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites? The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 23.

18. Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids*, 6.

19. Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Talking About Race, Learning About Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development In the Classroom," *Harvard Educational Review* 62, no. 1 (1992): 20.

20. In Du Bois's famous words, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Signet, 1969), 45.

21. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 11.

22. Cheng, xi.

23. Kathleen Brogan, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

24. David Schoem, Linda Frankel, Ximena Zuniga, and Edith A. Lewis, eds., *Multicultural Teaching in the University* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 16.

25. Tatum, "Talking About Race," 1-24.

26. Tatum, "Talking About Race," 2.

27. Bonnie TuSmith and Maureen T. Reddy, eds., *Race in the College Classroom: Pedagogy and Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002). With the editors' comments, a double-bind emerges. If poor evaluations do not necessarily signify poor teaching but, potentially, emotional fallout from the introduction of discomfiting new paradigms, then good evaluations may not signify good teaching either. As TuSmith and Reddy suggest, "High ratings might simply show that the professor did not push hard enough." How, then, can any evaluations of courses involving the study of racism be deemed valid? I suggest that a more widespread introduction of RID theory might result in more genuine assessments of the learning experience. Tatum's discussion of student assessment ("Talking About Race") also speaks to the potential of legitimate student feedback.

28. Christine Sleeter, quoted in Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids*, 195.

29. Studies of American history textbooks reveal a lack of substantive analysis about class and race in the United States. See Frances Fitzgerald, *America Revised* (New York: Vintage, 1980) and James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), particularly

chapter 5, "Gone With the Wind: The Invisibility of Racism in American History Textbooks." Unsurprisingly, then, as Rudnick, et al., "Teaching *American Identities*," argue, many teachers of American studies tackle issues "that are not typically raised in other classes," 270.

30. Tatum's concept of "self-generated knowledge" might also be constructively linked to current discourses on experiential learning, which suggest that students are more likely to retain knowledge gained through the work of integrating abstract principles into concrete and meaningful situations.

31. Tatum, "Talking About Race," 18.

32. Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). For an introduction to reader-response criticism, see Jane Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

33. Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994), 9.

34. Johnella Butler, "Toward a Pedagogy of Everywoman's Studies," in *Gendered Subjects: The Dynamics of Feminist Teaching*, ed. Margo Culley and Catherine Portuges (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 236.

35. However, I have not discovered a literature dealing with gender or sexual identity that is comparable to RID theory, i.e. work that theorizes the psychological impact of coming to knowledge of systemic oppression. I would welcome suggestions in this regard from scholars working in gender and sexuality studies.

36. Tatum, "Talking About Race," 19.

37. *Ibid.*

38. The most efficient introduction to RID theories can be found in the anthology edited by Wijesinghe and Jackson, *New Perspectives*. My focus differs from the majority of the RID literature in that I emphasize the use of this material for pedagogy. As such, I make no claims as to the scientific validity of the various theories.

39. For a more detailed synthesis of core features of the various models, see Maurianne Adams, "Core Processes of Racial Identity Development," in Wijesinghe and Jackson, *New Perspectives*, 209-242.

40. For example, Cross's more recent work emphasizes "Black identity variability" and "nonlinear Black identity growth patterns across the life span"; see William Cross, Jr. and Peony Fhagen-Smith, "Patterns of African American Identity Development," in Wijesinghe and Jackson, 268. Gargai Sodowsky, et al., propose a model that is "bi-directional," in which the individual simultaneously evaluates how strongly s/he values ethnic identity while also determining how much s/he wants to participate in white/majority culture; see "Ethnic Identity of Asians in the United States" in Joseph Ponterotto, ed., *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 123-154. Wijesinghe's Factor Model of Multiracial Identity (FMMI) "assumes that there is no one right or more appropriate choice of racial identity for Multiracial people" and thus the model is "structured around factors affecting choice of racial identity rather than stages of development"; see Wijesinghe and Jackson, *New Perspectives*, 131. Ferdman and Gallegos emphasize different "orientations" to Latino/a identity—i.e. Latino-integrated, Latino-identified, Subgroup-identified, Latino as Other, Undifferentiated/Denial, or White identified—each of which determines how the subjects see other Latinos or Whites; see Bernardo Ferdman and Placida Gallegos, "Racial Identity Development and Latinos in the United States," in Wijesinghe and Jackson, *New Perspectives*, 32-66.

41. Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968).

42. See William Cross Jr. and Peony Fhagen-Smith, "Patterns of African American Identity Development," in Wijesinghe and Jackson, 247. See also Jean S. Phinney, "A Three-Stage Model of Ethnic Identity Development in Adolescence," in Martha Bernal and George P. Knight, eds, *Ethnic Identity: Formation and Transmission Among Hispanics and Other Minorities* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993).

43. Laura Uba, *A Postmodern Psychology of Asian Americans: Creating Knowledge of a Racial Minority* (Albany: SUNY, 2002), 137.

44. William Cross Jr., "The Psychology of Nigrescence: Revising the Cross Model," in Joseph Ponterotto, et al., eds., *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 116.

45. For example, Cross Jr. and Fhagen-Smith provide three examples of Black individuals whose identities do not change across the life span: *Assimilated* (the person never becomes oriented to Black culture), *Fixed Black Identity* (identity stagnates without "recycling" in response to new events), and *Racial Self-Hatred* (the individual never overcomes internalized racism) ("Patterns," 248). Similarly, augmented by a larger culture of privilege and denial, many Whites may never move beyond "naivete." As Tatum notes, "in the areas where a person is a member of a dominant or advantaged social group, the category is usually not mentioned. . . . In Eriksonian terms, their inner experience and outer circumstance are in harmony with one another," *Why Are All the Black Kids*, 21.

46. Tatum, "Talking About Race."
47. Cross and Fhagen-Smith, "Patterns," in Wijesinghe and Jackson, *New Perspectives*, 244.
48. Jean Kim, "Asian American Identity Development Theory," in Wijesinghe and Jackson, *New Perspectives*, 70.
49. Janet Helms, "An Update of Helms's White and People of Color Racial Identity Models," in *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*, eds. J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, and C. M. Alexander (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 181-198.
50. See Tatum, "Teaching White Students About Racism: The Search for White Allies and the Restoration of Hope," *Teachers College Record* 95 (1994), 462-476.
51. Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, eds., *Race Traitor* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
52. Cross, "The Psychology of Nigrescence," in Ponterotto, et al., 114.
53. Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids*, x-xi.
54. Sherman Alexie, *Indian Killer* (New York: Warner Books, 1998).
55. Sarah Krill, "Why Wilson? Systemic Racism, White Privilege, and Racial Identity," 5. Paper written for English 376, American Ethnic Fiction (Fall 2005), University of Massachusetts Amherst. Quoted with student permission.
56. Krill, 2.
57. Krill, 5.
58. Krill, 6-7.
59. Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege, Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," in Paula S. Rothenberg, ed., *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (New York: Worth Publisher, 2005).
60. Schoem, et al., *Multicultural Teaching*, 2.
61. Nancy Tuana, Preface, *Feminist Interpretations of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), xi.
62. Eduardo Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology* (Albany: SUNY Press), 7.
63. Susan Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).
64. Student quoted with her permission.
65. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza Consciousness* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Press, 1987).
66. As a recent report by the American Association of Colleges and Universities points out, we generally lack meaningful assessment instruments to measure the learning outcomes of particular classes and a college education as a whole; thus traditional methods cannot be presumed to be the best ones. The report highlights the need for innovative pedagogies that foreground collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. See the Association of American Colleges and Universities, *Liberal Education and College Achievement* (2004), available at <http://www.aacu.org>.

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In her book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*¹ Beverly Tatum looks at the psychology of race—the process by which race takes on meaning in our personal identities, and the ways in which our awareness of race changes over time. It is important to note that these processes are not linear; people can cycle through stages repeatedly in response to life experiences. Moreover, race interacts with cultural identities of class, gender, religion, and sexuality. Finally, the overview below does not address the racial identities of mixed race people, but a helpful chapter in Tatum’s book does.

In terms of Black identity (generally applicable to other groups of color), Tatum uses the model developed by psychologist William Cross Jr., in which “the five stages of racial identity development are *pre-encounter*, *encounter*, *immersion/emersion*, *internalization*, and *internalization commitment*” (55). A brief summary follows:

Pre-encounter: The social significance of race has not yet been realized, racial identity not yet claimed.

Encounter: Event(s) “force the [individual] to acknowledge the personal impact of racism” (55). Anger towards Whites is typical at this stage.

Immersion: Here, White people become irrelevant; the focus is on exploring the individual’s own culture, filling in gaps of knowledge, unlearning internalized stereotypes about being a person of color. The individual may begin to seek out the company of others in her racial group (hence, the cafeteria scene).

Internalization: A sense of security and positive racial identity is achieved.

Internalization/Commitment: Not clearly distinct from fourth stage, at this point the person comes out of immersion to establish meaningful relationships across group boundaries with others, including Whites (76).

In terms of White identity, Tatum cites the work of psychologist Janet Helms, who describes the following stages: *contact*, *disintegration*, *reintegration*, *pseudo-independent*, *immersion/emersion*, and *autonomy* (95).

Contact: Whites at this stage pay little attention to their racial identity; may say things like “I’m just normal.”

Disintegration: Similar to encounter stage for people of color, marked by personal relationships or events in which the social significance of racism is suddenly made visible (e.g. noticing a friend of color being followed in a

department store) (96). Tension results when the person is with Whites who are not as aware of racism.

Reintegration: Feelings of guilt or denial may become directed at people of color in the form of anger, e.g. “it’s not my fault they have problems.” The person may retreat into collusion and silence with other Whites to alleviate burden of noticing racism (102).

Pseudo-independent: A commitment to unlearn one’s racism develops, yet without a clear idea of what to do. Individual may seek out company of people of color in attempt to escape Whiteness (success of this strategy depends on racial identity stage of people of color involved) (107). Whiteness may be a source of shame.

Immersion: Seeks company of White allies who are also committed to unlearning racism; tries to see Whiteness in a positive light. Just as people of color in immersion try to move beyond image of themselves as victims, Whites in this stage try to develop identity beyond that of victimizer (108).

Autonomy: Incorporates newly defined view of Whiteness as part of personal identity; positive feelings energize the person’s efforts to confront racism in daily life, may strengthen relationships with people of color who have likewise internalized a positive racial identity (112).

Note

1. Beverly Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (New York: BasicBooks), 1997.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Karen M. Cardozo

Jean Phinney (1993) Ethnic Identity ¹	William Cross (1995) Nigrescence ²	Bailey Jackson (2001) Black Identity ^{3a}	Atkinson & Sue (2001) Minority Identity ^{3b}	Rita Hardiman (2001) White Identity ⁴	Jean Kim (2001) Asian Am. Identity ⁵
<i>Unexamined</i> Accepts values of majority culture	<i>Pre-encounter</i> Stable identity, to be altered by development	<i>Native</i> Absence of racial consciousness or identity	<i>Conformity</i> Adopts cultural values of Euro-Americans	<i>Native</i> No values ascribed to one race or another	<i>Ethnic Awareness</i> Positive ethnic concept from family setting
<i>Identity Search</i> Events provoke examination of ethnic/racial identity	<i>Encounter</i> Events destabilize the ongoing identity	<i>Acceptance</i> Subscribes to white majority perspective	<i>Dissonance</i> New questions create ambivalence towards both dominant and minority group	<i>Appearance</i> Sees whites as socially superior (even if this sense is unconscious)	<i>White-identified</i> May or may not claim Asian heritage; white-identified
<i>Internalization</i> Stabilization of new identity	<i>Immersion/Emersion</i> Attempts to destroy old identity while decoding nature of the new	<i>Resistance</i> Rejection of majority definition	<i>Resistance/Immersion</i> Rejects majority; embraces minority	<i>Resistance</i> Questions dominant paradigm; may feel shame or guilt	<i>Awakening to Social Political Consciousness</i> Anger towards whites
<i>Achieved Identity</i> Internalization of positive ethnic/racial identity	<i>Internalization-Commitment</i> Retains ethnic identity, forges relationships with whites and other people of color	<i>Reaffirmation</i> Reaffirmation of Blackness	<i>Introspection</i> Questions dogma of minority group	<i>Reaffirmation</i> Takes anti-racial ownership of whiteness	<i>Redirection to Asian American Consciousness</i>
		<i>Internalization</i> Integration of redefined racial identity into self-concept	<i>Syncretic/Articulation and Awareness</i> Selectively accepts or rejects values of both dominant and minority group	<i>Internalization</i> Integrates new conscious of race and racism into all aspects of life	<i>Incorporation</i> Claims Asian American identity with pride as one aspect of overall identity

¹ Jean S. Phinney, "A Three-Stage Model of Ethnic Identity Development in Adolescence," in Martha Berni and George P. Knight, eds., *Ethnic Identity: Formation and Transmission Among Hispanics and Other Minorities* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993).

² William E. Cross, Jr., *The Psychology of Nigrescence: Revising the Cross Model*, in *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*, edited by J.G. Ponterotto, J.M. Casas, L.A. Suzuki, and C.M. Alexander (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 11-27.

³ Bailey Jackson, "Black Identity Development: Further Analysis an Elaboration," in Charmaine Wijeknight and Bailey Jackson, eds., *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 1-31.

⁴ Donald Atkinson, George Morton, and Donald W. Sue, "A minority development model," in Donald Atkinson, George Morton, and Donald W. Sue, eds., *Constructing American Identities* (Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown, 1989), 33-52. The Atkinson and Sue model is also summarized in Luan Ota Wilson-Alexander, *Personality Patterns, Identity and African Jambú* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994), 89-112.

⁵ Rita Hardiman, "Reflections on White Identity Development Theory," in *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development*, edited by Charmaine Wijeknight and Bailey Jackson (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 108-128. Hardiman's model of white identity (1998) differs six phases: Contact (awareness of systemic racism or white privilege); Disintegration (guilt or shame at racism); Reintegration (pressure from other Whites only); Act of Defiance (rejection); Pseudo-Independent (may distance themselves and seek affiliation with people of color); Immersion/Emersion (seek company of anti-racist white allies); and Autonomy (positive redefinition of self as White in terms of ongoing effort to combat racism). See Helmi, "Update of Helmi's White and People of Color Racial Identity Model," in Ponterotto, et al. (1993), 181-198.