ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Masked Silence Sequences: Hearing Discrimination in the College Classroom

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This essay examines the ways that some college students bear the costs of silence-mediated racialized communication in everyday classroom activities. Specifically, White privilege is shown to enable racially laden communication that regenerates the social exclusion of American Indian students. Combining interpretive approaches from the ethnography of communication and critical Whiteness theories, this inquiry draws from data collected from 35 American Indian students in a western U.S. university. By introducing the concept of masked silence sequences and offering a definition for discriminatory silence, this study harnesses attention on the discursive strategies resulting in the perpetuated marginalization of a particular people of color. This study also offers the identification of potential loci wherein we as educators can collaborate to enact necessary redressive action and help construct more equitable and inclusive contexts for all students.

"Just give 'em back their sheep!" according to Susan (Blackfeet, European American) was the expressed reaction by one of her White classmates following Susan's speech in a college class on persuasive communication. Susan had just presented an argument advocating for less restrictive gaming laws for American Indians in her home state. Feeling "shocked," as she puts it, she notes experiencing confusion about how to respond to her classmate's comment especially in view of the fact that no one expressed any objection to the White student's statement. Matters were made worse, she says, by her professor's silence to what, for her, was a deeply hurtful remark.

> The professor completely ignored it [the White student's statement] and went straight over it and did not address the issue *at all*, and just went on for the next comment about the subject …. I was *completely flattened* and just walked over …. I didn't feel like I had any place whatsoever to address a person after class or further address it in class …. I felt that I was the *outsider* …. If he [the professor] had made one comment to *me*. I would have preferred him to say something to her about how that was inappropriate, you know, because even if I don't agree with something that somebody says …. I wouldn't be so

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bold as to blurt out in the middle of the class just some comment that would totally crush the other person.

The student's statement, according to Susan, was one of multiple analogous comments made by the particular classmate to her during the course of the semester. Because Susan was the only person of color in the class, she says she felt "singled out," and further qualifies the comment as "racist," precisely because she was the only American Indian student in the class and comparable commentary was never made about or to other students.

What meaning can be given to such communication-mediated college classroom moments as the one described by Susan? How might such impromptu enactments suggest social privilege? How might they suggest social discrimination? How do college teachers, albeit unknowingly, contribute to perpetuating the social structures that position or reposition some students along the margins?

These are some of the questions that motivate the present inquiry. A fruitful place to begin responding is through the construct of White privilege, that is, from the lens of the socially constructed, historically sanctioned, unacknowledged, and unearned entitlements that being White award a person (Kivel, 2002; Martin & Nakayama, 2008; McIntosh, 1992; McLaren, 1994; Nakayama & Martin, 1999). Because the entitlements accorded Whites by virtue of their Whiteness include discursive resources, Whiteness approaches make possible explanations about how it is that some college students can and do express particular viewpoints that can and do result in students of color feeling belittled, hurt, and disenfranchised.

As enactments of social power appropriated by Whites (Anzaldúa, 1990; Hooks, 1992; Omi & Winant, 1994; Rodríguez, 2000; Wildman, 2005; Winant, 1997), the roots and legacies of privilege have received considerable attention in scholarly literature. However, manifestations of White privilege and its discriminatory and prejudicial potential have been looked primarily at macrolevels (Asante, 2003; Dyer, 1988; Kincheloe, 1999; Lipsitz, 1998; McIntosh, 1992; McLaren, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994; Roediger, 1994, 2005; Wildman, 1996). Still in need of investigation is the microlevel interplay between Whiteness and racialized communicative action. Because Whiteness is a strategic rhetoric that positions interlocutors in particular ways (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995), looking closely at its everyday communicative improvisations offers unique usefulness. It is in the routine microdynamics of prejudice that we can better apprehend how its individual demonstrations inform and are informed by broader institutionalized structures of day-to-day life. More pointed investigation is necessary because "simply looking for overt prejudice does not reveal the deeper, subtle layers of racism" (Kailin, 1999, p. 726).

The linkages between Whiteness and silence at the deeper levels of discrimination and prejudice also warrant focused probing. Silence, like other communicative resources are, if not "invisible" to Whites (McIntosh, 1992) can be more difficult to detect even though for people of color, racialized silence is seldom invisible or inaudible. On the contrary, silences reveal themselves in plain sight and are loudly

heard by those to whom discriminatory silences are aimed. It is within the everyday flux of improvised intersections between talk and silence that the deepest layers of prejudice can be most disturbing. It is there that the most telling expressions of inequity can reside. And it is there that humans can seek loci for rectifying the unproductive effects of inequity and reinventing more just selves.

Blending interpretive approaches from the ethnography of communication (EOC) (Hymes, 1962, 1974; Philipsen, 1992, 1997; Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005) and critical Whiteness theories (Martin & Nakayama, 2008; McIntosh, 1992; Nakayama & Martin, 1999; Sleeter, 1995a, 1995b), this study draws from the articulations of those who experienced discrimination in action in specific contexts. To glean understandings about discrimination in action from the perspectives of those who live it, as well as hear much underrepresented voices in communication research, this study focuses exclusively on the experiences of some American Indian students. I use the EOC to describe students' expressed experiences on their own terms. I use Whiteness theories to move beyond the communicants' immediate discourse to relevant historical structures within which the immediate discourse is nested. Using students' utterances, a key contribution of this inquiry is the illumining of meaningful ethical violations activated at the nexus of silence and discrimination in the college classroom. Discriminatory silence practices have gone largely unchecked despite their centrality to how education is lived moment to moment by many students of color. Also insufficiently checked are the ways that educators use silence in their classrooms, albeit unknowingly, that result in perpetuating the marginalization of underrepresented peoples. The critique made possible by Whiteness approaches also helps identify communicative moments wherein together we can work toward constructing more equitable contexts in higher education.

White privilege, according to Berlak and Moyenda (2001) and R. L. Allen (2004), continues to perpetuate sociocultural inequality from kindergartens to doctoral programs. Half a century of civil rights activism and commitments to social justice notwithstanding, discrimination across societal institutions endures, with college settings being no exception (B. Allen, 2004; Bowser & Hunt, 1996; Hacker, 1995; Jackson & Heckman, 2002; Kailin, 1999; Manglitz, 2003; Tusmith & Reddy, 2002; Warren, 2001). For American Indian students, historical experiences have involved acutely discriminatory and culturally marginalizing practices (Adams, 1995; Child 2002) whose emotional and sociocultural effects are still felt and seen today. Years of mainstream educational practices also have resulted, according to Cajete (1994), in the continuing alienation from education of American Indian students.

Contemporarily, 80% of full-time faculty at postsecondary institutions is White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003) at a time of growing racially and ethnically diverse student populations. In postsecondary schools, 27.8% of students identify themselves as students of color, comprising a more than 50% increase between 1993 and 2003 (American Council on Education, 2006). Increasingly, diverse university student populations, together with heightened cultural consciousness about Whiteness and continual calls for justice, make this inquiry imperative.

To proceed, I first present a focused review of literatures that are particularly useful for examining White privilege in action in the college classroom. After identifying the research methods, I focus on the description, analysis, and discussion of incidents involving silence-mediated racialized communication. My thoughts are summarized in concluding remarks.

Literature review

White privilege in multicultural educational contexts

Emerging from an era rife with violent racial inequality, the foundational premises of Whiteness and White privilege called for the realization of social justice for all peoples. Contemporary thinking about Whiteness was ushered by Du Bois' (1903/2005) challenge to White supremacy with his forecast that the problem of the 20th century would be the problem of the color line. More recently, prompted by sociologist McIntosh's (1992) breakthrough self-examination of the invisible social benefits her Whiteness accorded her, broad-level explorations across disciplines flourished in communication, cultural studies, education, English, history, law, sociology, White studies, and elsewhere.

With McIntosh's (1992) inspiration and that of others, multicultural education scholars critiqued the macrolevel effects of de facto White advantages on personnel matters, curriculum, and instructional practices (Dei, 1996; Kincheloe, 1999; Scheurich, 1993; Sleeter, 1995a). Observing the ways that influential, yet hidden, dominant group norms facilitate Whites' membership into privileged groupings, scholars critiqued preferred-status access to educational resources and power. This scholarly discourse also included critical examinations of the universalization of White, Western culture individualistic mores regulating academic standards for merit, hiring criteria, grading criteria, and predictors of success (Scheurich, 1993). Discussion has included critiques about White intellectual domination of knowledge in higher education (Mather & Tetrault, 1997, 2000). White privilege also has been the subject of much dialogue in courses targeted for teachers in efforts to advance understandings about White teachers' own privileged situatedness (McIntyre, 1997) and the ways that situatedness affected teaching and learning strategies. Collectively, these works advanced ideological and theoretical propositions about the structural, social, and personal configurations that revealed White privilege in educational contexts.

Examinations of White privilege evolved from efforts to identify the forms that privilege takes into more militant calls for its abolition (Sleeter, 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Tatum, 1994). Critical multiculturalist and antiracist educators suggested the eradication of racism via the establishment of partnerships with White "allies" (Tatum, 1994). By establishing coalitions with White antiracist activists wishing to partner with "people of color in the struggle against racism," 1994, p. 462, according to Tatum, racism could be erased across educational contexts. Stressing that educators could "not continue to be silent" about matters of race, Tatum (1997, p. 206) encouraged dialogue leading to productive action.

Sleeter (1995a) underscored the need for teachers to develop critical examinations of their own unearned authority for the purpose of dismantling it. Sleeter (1995a, 1996) urged those who benefited from White privilege vigilantly to monitor how and when their own life opportunities happen at the expense of delimiting opportunities for people of color. She called on educators to terminate the systems that enable social hierarchies to exist in the first place. Without such watchfulness, she claimed, *White solidarity* would continue to prevail, meaning Whites would be able to maintain implicit agreements to be silent about race when speaking directly about it would be the more ethical enactment (Sleeter, 1995b).

These important and useful discussions provided broad-spectrum theoretical groundings and much needed motivation for fostering equity across educational contexts. They have elided, however, nuanced examinations of the microenactments within which social inequities are manifested daily in higher education and which incrementally propagate the marginalization of some students.

White privilege in communication contexts

Scholars of human communication also have examined Whiteness and White privilege extensively. Communication approaches have treated Whiteness and privilege as fundamentally discursive practices and have probed the ways ethnic and racial inequities are enacted. Communication inquiries generally have favored broader discussions about Whiteness as a social and ideological phenomenon. Scholars Judith Martin, Thomas Nakayama, and their collaborators offer some of the most comprehensive available treatments pertaining to conceptualizations of privilege and its associated communicative forms. Work by these scholars includes historical overviews of U.S. racialized thinking, exploratory inquiry, and the formulation of theoretical frameworks highlighting power relations.

Wander, Martin, and Nakayama (1999), for example, traced the sociocultural foundations of racial categories that shape U.S. Whiteness thinking. From an exploratory perspective, Martin, Krizek, Nakayama, and Bradford (1996) inquired into the self-labeling preferences of European American students and presented the general label of "white" as the students' preferred option as well as their resistance to self-labeling. Other offerings include postcolonial frameworks, such as Nakayama and Krizek's (1995) scheme for conceptualizing Whiteness as a rhetorical phenomenon. Drawing from overarching histories and ideologies of power relations, the work of Martin and Nakayama (2008) constitutes valuable interrogations of Whiteness. These scholars' claim that Whiteness "operates as a tremendous social force in mobilizing how people act and interact" (Wander et al., 1999, p. 23) is impetus for this study's focus on the real-time micropractices that uncover how people act and interact at the nuanced, microdynamic nexus of Whiteness and silence.

With reference to questioning Whiteness in contexts of higher education, Jackson and Heckman (2002) delved into White college students' reactions to the circulation of hate mail to minority students. The authors concluded that White

students enjoy and expect the privileges of Whiteness, yet, although seeing Whiteness as a negative attribute that positions them at a social disadvantage.

Advocating the exploration of Whiteness at the local level, Stage (1999) promoted the use of indigenous ethnography for "texturizing 'white'" (p. 71), that is, for accounting for multivocality within Whiteness. Convergent with the goals of the present study, Warren (2001) applied ethnographic methods to study racism in action within the college classroom. Warren's study explored how students in an entry-level college communication classroom used public performances to reiterate Whiteness as a privileged cultural category. It should be noted, however, that Warren's study participants engaged classroom activities specifically designed to address race matters, leaving open the requisite for inquiry into impromptu enactments of privilege.

Other Whiteness-relevant communication contexts

Although Orbe and Spellers (2005) do not explicitly name Whiteness as element in cocultural theory, the authors' premises are relevant to the present work in that cocultural theory, like the present study, is grounded on the lived experiences of the persons it describes. And cocultural theory illumines contextualized rhetorical choice making on behalf of interlocutors traditionally marginalized in societal structures (and in communication inquiry), which also is consistent with the goals of this project. The work of Orbe, Spellers, and Whiteness scholars helps ground the present goal of illumining context-specific spontaneous enactments of racialized communication that occur within the flux of the everyday college lives of some American Indian students.

The EOC

As a theoretical (and methodological) lens, the EOC (Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005; Hymes, 1962; Philipsen, 1994, 1997) fundamentally is concerned with theorizing how humans make sense of their culturally contextualized lived experiences by attending to the particular symbols people use to describe those experiences. The EOC holds that because communication and culture are inextricably bound, attending to the speaking and silences via which people live and interpret their lives, the deep-level worldviews embedded in the communication are revealed and can be understood.

Traditionally, the EOC is interested primarily in descriptive and interpretive theorizing about particular constructions of cultural identities and sociocultural worlds. As such, the EOC centers on questions about what patterns of communication are used, by whom, when and where, and for what social purpose. Questions about who can and cannot speak under particular circumstances, for whom, and for whose interests are addressed only if the members of the community under study make those dimensions explicitly relevant. Concerns about power relationships, social justice, and other points of advocacy and judgment are broached if in-group members themselves cue their pertinence and significance.

Using ethnographic means, the distinctiveness of American Indian silence practices has received attention from anthropologic and communication perspectives

among others. In anthropology, Basso's (1970) seminal treatment of Western Apache communication strategies showcased uses of silence as strategy for managing interpersonal ambiguity and uncertainty. Philips (1983) illumined culturally contextualized silence practices in classroom interactions among schoolchildren on the Warm Spring Indian Reservation. And Scollon (1985) discussed the ways non–American Indians used the silence orientations of Athabaskans to discriminate against the latter group.

In the field of communication, Braithwaite's (1990) distillation of Basso's (1970) work with the Western Apache explained silence practices as means for negotiating and affirming interpersonal relationships. Pratt and Wieder (1993) addressed uses of silence (and speech) to define communal membership among the Osage people. Carbaugh (1999) focused on Blackfeet ways of using silence and listening as cultural means for enhancing understanding of oneself and of one's environment.

The work of the above authors reveals that it is not that American Indians disvalue silence. Indeed, native appreciation for the vigor and productivity of silence is well documented (Audlin, 2006; Covarrubias, 2007; 2007; Basso, 1970; Braithwaite, 1990; Bruneau, 1973; Carbaugh, 1999; Deloria, 2003; Fixico, 2003; Glenn, 2004; Philips, 1983; Pratt & Wieder, 1993; Scollon, 1985; Wieder & Pratt, 1990). However, silence is context dependent and not always productive, and it is these two aspects that this study addresses. Moreover, Whiteness-laden silences are not always easily discernable to everyone within everyday interactional rhythms. In fact, silences often are masked.

With the objective, then, of illumining the significance and ramifications of masked acts of silence from the perspective of those for whom such acts are relevant, this project responds to the following research questions: (a) What patterns of communication can and do reveal how Whiteness-laden discrimination is enacted, reproduced, and perpetuated communicatively in the microdynamics of U.S. college classroom activities? and (b) How is silence used to enact Whiteness-laden discrimination in U.S. college classrooms?

Methods

Overview of an unconventional methodological merger

In this study, I combine the EOC and critical Whiteness perspectives. This methodological union makes two important outcomes possible: It evidences the possibility of productively joining two seemingly incompatible approaches and it demonstrates the value of doing so.

The EOC (Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005; Hymes, 1962, 1972, 1974; Philipsen, 1992, 1997) involves investigating and describing the patterned everyday utterances of situated communicants in order to abstract embedded culture-specific systematized worldviews and ideologies. To access the communication patterns that are informed by and in turn inform worldviews and ideologies, the EOC directs the researcher's attention to apprehending when and where patterns are used, by whom,

toward what social objectives, and in accordance (or not) with what norms for enacting and interpreting interaction. Because silence, like speech, also is subject to contextualized rules for communicative conduct, accounting for situated uses of silence also is encouraged (Basso, 1970; Hymes, 1968). As an approach grounded on emic or insider perspectives, the EOC discourages researchers from imposing their views on the people studied.

Ultimately, the EOC is devoted to the description of the means of communication people use and the meanings those strategies hold for the people who produce them. In the spirit of the EOC's descriptive impetus, this inquiry began as an effort to develop a local definition for "academic success" by American Indian students. Conducted at a predominately White university in the U.S. Western Interior between 2002 and 2006, this work involves ethnographic observations and interviews with 35 American Indian collaborators. In the process of querying about academic success and what that meant to them, students expressed experiencing challenges with the persistence of racially charged moments. These moments, they explained, impeded their academic objectives by adding stresses that made campus life, at times, too intense.

Contrasting with the EOC, Whiteness perspectives, as instantiations of critical approaches, involve moving beyond description (Denzin, 2001; Thomas, 2003). Critical standpoints seek to reveal the subtle and explicit ways that discourse, among other social constructions, is embedded with the structures that provide material and symbolic privileges to some people, often at the expense of others. A focus on Whiteness calls for the uncovering of the discursive structures that privilege Whites while they simultaneously oppress non-Whites.

In their methodological expression, critical approaches inform ethnography by openly advocating for the emancipation of oppressed others, including disadvantaged study participants, from sociocultural structures that neither benefit others nor are of their creation (Thomas, 2003). And rather than foregrounding the researcher's presence, critical ethnography stresses the investigator's involvement in spotlighting any social inequities revealed within the research process. Critical ethnography also underscores the researcher's role in promoting a transformed social milieu by problematizing and challenging any uncovered discriminatory ideologies.

The fruitfulness of combining these two presumably unharmonious perspectives—the EOC and Whiteness theories—resulted in this study's potential for moving beyond the immediate discourse in order to more fully do justice to the particular data and its producers. Indeed, ethnographically gleaned discourses revealed a set of expressions where participants themselves suggested the usefulness of situating the analysis within Whiteness perspectives. As an example I cite Susan's suggesting the involvement of privileged White voices when, as the only non-White student in her class, she felt specifically targeted by her classmate's racialized comment and felt like "the *outsider*." Further, participants' own ethnographically garnered explanations pointed to specific loci for the possible repairing of discriminatory communicative action. For example, Melissa's explanation that her White professor "did nothing …and allowed them [her White classmates] to do that

[laugh at Melissa]" suggests that speech, not corporate silence, for her, would have been the preferred behavior in that particular situation.

Assessed collectively, research data confirmed a locally produced pattern of expressed interactions that productively could be explicated as Whiteness enactments. Whiteness theory enabled me to expand and deepen analysis of the expressed micropractices by situating them amid the broader context that nested them. In this way, I was able to demonstrate how harnessing attention on patterns of locally generated expressions can be used to inspect the discursive strategies that can and do perpetuate the marginalization of a particular people of color. Moreover, identifying these strategies also enabled me to abstract specific loci for redressive action. By unconventionally triangulating and attending to, both, ethnographic descriptions and sites of struggle, I was able to exploit methodological opportunities that occur when perspectives seen to be set for collision, in fact, can collude to expose understandings as well as locations for advancing social justice.

Participants

To identify collaborators, I posted fliers on campus bulletin boards and made appeals through colleagues and at various campus meetings. However, I relied primarily on snowball sampling techniques (Miles & Huberman, 1994), with 1 participant telling another and so on. The ages of the 35 undergraduate and graduate students range from early 20s to late 50s from the following tribes: Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Chippewa, Cree, Crow, Dakota Sioux, Fort Peck Sioux, Mexican, Nakona, Navajo, Salish, Whiteclay/Gros Ventre, and Yaqui. Although participants generally preferred to self-identify by tribal affiliation, I use the term *American Indian* to refer to participants because that is the term they most commonly used to reference themselves collectively.

To refer to individual participants, I use both pseudonyms and real names. The reason for this is that some participants did not feel comfortable being called a name other than their own. However, even those who wanted me to use their real names did not wish to be fully identified. Therefore, to negotiate their preferences, although protecting all students' privacy, I use first names only but do not pinpoint where I use pseudonyms and real names.

With three exceptions, every participant intimated at least one experience that they considered discriminatory. In this study, however, I include only those examples which participants elected for me to write about. Although I include illustrations from several communicants, I focus primarily on incidents recounted by two undergraduate students, Susan and Melissa. The depth and richness of their examples helped construct the archetypal Whiteness-laden interactions. Further, a more in-depth focus on two instantiations enables the "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) that is necessary for more profound and more nuanced understandings of contexted human communicative behavior.

Another reason for focusing on two participants is that the racially charged events occurred while I had close relationships with Susan and Melissa. Our rapport

afforded me opportunities for more intimate understandings of the details of their experiences as well as personally help mitigate the emotional fallout from those incidents. Susan was my student as well as participant in the "academic success" study, and she reported the details of what she had experienced the day after their advent. As I had become her informal mentor, Susan sought me for guidance and support.[1] Likewise, Melissa's experiences occurred while she was a research collaborator. Melissa shared her distress about what to her amounted to discrimination because she, too, had become an unofficial mentee. Ultimately, Susan's and Melissa's examples facilitated hearing what otherwise might not have been expressed. Reporting on their "stories," as Susan and Melissa termed it, is something both students wanted as part of the overall research plan.

Data collection: Fieldwork and other protocols

I used five types of data collection: fieldwork observations, field notes, university documents, other complementary protocols, and semistructured interviews (Merriam, 1998). During the first 3 years of the study, I generally devoted 6–7 hours per week to focused observations, interviews, and informal conversations about the research topics. A 4th year was spent finishing interviews primarily over the telephone and e-mail.

Fieldwork observations took place in my own and others' classes (communication, anthropology, political science, and Native American studies). I observed at various university and community events pertaining to matters affecting American Indian students (i.e., conferences, symposia, club meetings, and cultural gatherings) over a period of 3 years. My observations of American Indian student interactions achieved two purposes: (a) they helped cue interview questions and (b) helped confirm or challenge participant descriptions of events.

The data for this study include typed field notes and journal entries made during the entire research period. Other documents include minutes from meetings and administrative reports. All documents and notes help augment the corpus of research materials (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

To better understand the educational experiences of participants, during spring semester 2004, I audited "American Indian Education," a university class offered through the Department of Native American Studies. For 2.5 years, I was also a member of a university faculty–staff organization dedicated to the overall support of American Indian students. And I attended the university's "Diversity Council" meetings for 1 year, although I was not officially a member.

Data collection: Interviews

Interviews include a set of 35 semistructured conversations lasting from 1 to 3 hours. I fully transcribed recordings from all interviews in order that they could be analyzed as a whole (Briggs, 1992). My task as interviewer was grounded in the recognition that interviews constitute culturally infused performances that require becoming "communicative[ly] competent" (Briggs, 1992, p. 43). To me, this meant exploring

a priori the communicative roots of the participants better to understand the social meanings and norms that could influence the interview process as a speech event (Hymes, 1974). Interviews began with general questions about obstacles students perceived they had to overcome in their university life. The goal with this technique was to enable students, as much as possible, to direct the course our talks would take.

Because participants were offered unmeasured time to express themselves, a fertile array of topics emerged including themes about prejudice, discrimination, and racism. Without my prompting, examples of racialized silences surfaced from the first interview. Once students made elements of racialized practices explicit, I felt I could further query for deeper understandings about what those practices meant to them.

Data analysis

From interview transcriptions and from field notes (Emerson et al., 1995), I performed detailed analyses of each document to identify emergent themes. I attended to references to particular speech acts (e.g., "I asked" and "He didn't say anything") to understand the role of communication in its context. I screened line by line (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to isolate units of meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) from which to make core inferences. This process of systematic and inductive data analysis enabled me to stay close to the students' thoughts, feelings, and actions as they pertained to the inquiry's focus. Multiple readings of the data helped identify and confirm the silence-mediated interactional sequences that suggested discriminatory acts. Throughout the process of analysis and writing, I consulted regularly with participants for their appraisal of my findings and interpretations and shared substantial portions of the article with eight contributors. The two key participants, Susan and Melissa, as well as two other participants reviewed the full final article.

The role of the researcher

Because it may be relevant to the reader, particularly as data are presented and interpreted, I make the following explanations.

I write as a native Spanish-speaking Mexican woman who, as an immigrant to the United States, since childhood has seen and/or experienced firsthand some of the racialized experiences broached in this essay. All participants were aware of my cultural heritage. I write not as an expert on American Indian cultures but as educator, ethnographer of communication, and researcher who has observed, studied, and experienced cultural clashes resulting from incompatible silence practices. Moreover, I write with the understanding that my own situatedness positions me as outsider in multiple ways. I am, for instance, an academic studying a complex and culturally bounded phenomenon with participants for whom I was a cultural foreigner. As researcher, I impose analytic categories and labels on interactions for which interactants themselves do not have names. And I write as a member of a minority group who also has experienced discrimination and prejudice, and such history no doubt filters my work in ways in which I am not fully aware. What I

provide here is one answer to two research questions that involve a very complex phenomenon.

My goals in this essay exclude condemning one group of people while romanticizing another. I do not wish to suggest that all Whites necessarily share all cultural ideologies and practices (e.g., individualism), that all Whites are discriminatory, or that all White students are exempt from ideological and normative constraints. This study expressly addresses the perspectives of American Indian interlocutors who themselves made Whiteness a relevant element for apprehending their communication-mediated college experiences in their references to race and discrimination. To the best of my ability, I report on the direct and indirect invocations of White privilege that I heard from the perspectives of participants.

Discriminatory communication

Discriminatory race-laden communication in the college campus occurs frequently enough that the pattern of its expression is made inspectable. As cases in point, I draw from examples offered by study participants Susan, Melissa, Larry, Jade, and Janine. For reasons detailed above, I focus in greater detail on instances recounted by Susan and Melissa. Their illustrations took place within the context of the most fundamental of activities of the college experience, the everyday classroom. Melissa (Spirit Lake Nation; Participant No. 17) is a 30-year-old mother of two young children and is in her senior year as a journalism major. Susan (Blackfeet/European American; Participant No. 14) is a 27-year-old mother of one young daughter and a stepson and is in her junior year as a communication studies major.

Melissa tells of a situation in a senior seminar class involving a White local news reporter who was the day's guest speaker. She says the speaker began his visit by visually canvassing the room and remarking, "Oh, I see that you are all White!" All eyes turned toward Melissa, who is fair complected and was the only American Indian student in the class. No one, including the instructor, corrected the speaker's assumption. Melissa goes on to explain that during the course of the presentation, which she acknowledges was an effort to garner sympathy for injustices imposed on American Indians by White society, the journalist interspersed his words with frequent references to "drunk Indians." These references provoked irrepressible emotions for Melissa:

> I cried through the whole class but I knew I couldn't leave. I needed to take notes …[the White guest speaker] began by saying, "drunk Indians, drunk Indians," we shouldn't think this way …he made everyone squirm in their seats because he said it so hateful like …. He had a very disrespectful tone to the stories he was telling …[When no one speaks up against a prejudiced speaker the interpersonal space created] is no longer a space, it is a wall with many locks on it and no one has the key, not even the Native student …. For the Native

student it really is not silence, it is an inward cry …. They feel like an animal or
like they got kicked in the stomach.

For Melissa, the painful situation resulted in the creation of a social space that was
alienating and entrapping—"a wall with many locks on it" and to which "no one has
the key," and leaving her emotionally spent feeling "frustrated," "angry," and
"degraded." In her estimation, other audience members realized the inappropriate-
ness of the speaker's words and tone as "everyone squirm[ed] in their seats." But yet,
no one spoke up in protest.

   Sitting in silence and jotting notes to ensure her accurate remembrance of the
event so she could later provide a detailed account for university officials, Melissa
"cried through the whole class." As she notes, the speaker's offenses were intensified
because no one in the class, including her White professor, made an effort to ques-
tion the guest speaker's assumptions and stereotyping. To her, the silence of others in
the face of this moment was experienced as an "inward cry" leaving her feeling
dehumanized, "like an animal," and hurting, like she "got kicked in the stomach."

   Melissa recounts a second incident from a political science class. In this situation,
she had just asked a question about an upcoming exam. The question was immedi-
ately followed by an outburst of laughter by some White female classmates. She
recalls immediately protesting the laughter with, "Why did you laugh at my ques-
tion? I don't laugh when you ask a question." One of the persons who had laughed
responded with, "Well, if you're going to act so dumb all the time and say your
question clearer, maybe we wouldn't laugh at you!" As Melissa explains, she con-
sidered the White student's remark to be racially discriminatory because Melissa was
the only American Indian student in the class, and no other student had ever been
addressed in such terms or tone. Additionally, none of the other White class mem-
bers, including the professor, publicly objected to the White student's offense. "[The
professor] did nothing …and allowed them [her classmates] to do that [laugh]," she
says, adding, "That's the day I almost quit school," feeling "frustrated" and "angry"
and "I ran out of there crying."

   Here again, the communication event took an emotional toll on Melissa leaving
her "frustrated" and "angry," with a desire not only to leave the class but also to "quit
school" altogether. As with the first incident, the situation was aggravated by her
White professor's absent objections to the White student's expressions.

   Like Melissa, Susan has known moments of racialized discrimination in her
college classrooms. Adding to the opening example, she tells of a second event in
the same class on persuasive communication. Touched by the sorrow of what her
partner's American Indian (Crow) family perceived as the untimely death of the
grandfather due to inadequate medical services, Susan presented a speech advocating
for increased federal funding for improved health care on Indian reservations. As
"I poured my soul out" during the course of the speech, she explains, "I noticed
people starting to look away, scowl, and make negative remarks from the back of the
room." At the conclusion of the speech, a White student said, "You're not gonna like

me very much, but I don't think that Indians deserve to have free health care. My grandfather had to pay for his own." Susan says she felt "crushed" by the student's remark, especially as the student disregarded the information Susan had provided about hows and whys of health care provisions for native peoples (e.g., treaty conditions). Susan says:

> I felt like I was just getting smaller and smaller behind the podium …and just felt really crushed, and I just went home and cried …. I talked to my professor out of class and I felt like he was very supportive of me *outside* of class. But I feel alienated in that class now …. I don't know that it's fair to say that the whole classroom felt that way [like the outspoken White student], but I felt like *they did* because nobody said anything to defend me.[2]

As with Melissa, Susan experienced the action as discriminatory and physically diminishing, feeling herself to be "getting smaller and smaller" and "really crushed." And she, too, felt emotionally spent, having poured out her "soul" and going home to cry. Additionally, she felt socially disenfranchised and "alienated in that class now." Further, similar to her first example, a key aggravator of the classroom interaction was the silence of the other class members, all Whites, including the silence of her professor.

Larry (Blackfeet; Participant No. 27), a 38-year-old PhD student in educational leadership, recalls an interaction that occurred during a weekend class. He and a White classmate sat outside near their classroom during a midmorning break while furniture movers carried new storage cabinets into the building. Larry explains:

> We were just kinda hanging out …we're both dressed in a similar manner [when a professor of education came up and speaking to the White student said], 'You must be here for that [the Ph.D. courses offered on weekends]' and turning to me said, 'And how are them cabinets coming along, are you getting those put in well?' He tells that to *me*! …and I didn't say anything …. He [the professor of Education] got the reputation among the Native doctoral students as a kind of racist professor, the Indian fighter.

Unacquainted with the students, the professor assumed that Larry, a dark-complected, dark-haired man, was not a student but a laborer installing cabinets. The professor, however, did not make a comparable assumption about the White man. Although the students later discussed the incident with their fellow classmates, at the moment of its occurrence, both men remained silent.

Jade (Crow, Assiniboine, Chippewa, Cree, and Mexican; Participant No. 26), a 29-year-old sociology student, tells of a situation that he and several other study participants say is far from singular. He describes the scene as follows:

> There's a lot of people walking by the [student union building], you know, it's the middle of the day and I can hear 'f*#@ skins!' behind me and a lot people are, like, looking around …and it sort of ruins your day because it's like,

you know, ignorance and I'm thinkin' 'OK, this is college, people are grown up, they're not in high school, 'F*#@ skins,' and it's 'Oh my god, come on, you know, how old are you!'

Jade clarifies that the crass racialized remark was made loudly enough for many people to hear. He adds that he and the other American Indian students who were with him know from experience that the racial epithets were directed at them because of their physical features (e.g., dark skin and dark hair). Although the racialized statement was enough to "ruin" Jade's day, everyone who heard it, including Jade and his friends, remained silent.

Janine (Fort Peck Sioux; Participant No. 2), a 23-year-old MA student in business administration, tells of a professor who interrupted a conversation she and some classmates engaged after class. Overhearing the general theme of the conversation, the White professor injected himself saying, "I don't think Native Americans are a minority group because there have been so few of them." At the time, none of the students said anything to the professor, although they discussed the incident among themselves. The following day, Janine approached the professor for clarification about the previous day's remark. She says he responded with, "[Indian] reservations make up such a small part of the U.S., they are not significant." Then, to conclude the conversation, the professor asked Janine what she planned to do upon graduation. After telling him of her plans to find useful work, she says the professor advised her to "get out and see the world." Janine explains that this remark left her with the impression that "my culture and heritage would change if I had more exposure to the real world." She adds that she did not respond to the professor's advice, opting for silence at that moment.

The examples given by Susan, Melissa, Larry, Jade, and Janine reveal that racially charged moments can be and are lived at complex and multiple levels. The students' descriptions are embedded with details about the psychoemotional complexities that feeling racially targeted and devalued as people implicated for them. Emotionally, instances of discrimination are experienced with such intensity they take on physical dimensions, such as prompting students to feel "smaller and smaller behind the podium," "flattened," "crushed," "walked over," "poured out," and "kicked in the stomach." Agonistic or stress-filled moments are heard to leave the students feeling "frustrated," "angry," "degraded," with the day "ruin[ed]," and dehumanized "like an animal." Socially, the students referenced here felt disenfranchised "like an outsider," "alienated," stereotyped, cursed at, and like their cultural heritage had been belittled and disconfirmed.

Consistently, students' discourses reveal that the stresses and strains of the situations they experience as discriminatory are aggravated by the fact that no one, including their professors, spoke up in protest. The hurtful nature of the uttered remarks, notwithstanding, as Susan explains, the pain of the moment, was exacerbated by the fact that "the professor completely ignored it [the White student's statement] and went straight over it and did not address the issue *at all* and just

went on for the next comment." Melissa echoes Susan's reaction explaining she felt additionally hurt by a professor who "did nothing" and "allowed them [her class-mates] to do that [laugh at her]."

From the students' instantiations, a pattern of communicative behavior emerges. Across various venues, the systematic recurrence of particular configurations of communicative strategies uncovers how White privilege structures can be heard to be activated by some interactants, even if unsuspectingly and unintentionally. These patterned expressions point to the ways discrimination is generated and regenerated within improvised micromoments of college classroom activities.

Masked silence sequences

Scrutiny of the patterned communication act sequences in the race-laden situations described above puts in relief the activation of identifiable recurring co-occurring phenomena. Specifically, a configuration emerges consisting of repeated pairings of two forms of communication—a discriminatory statement + dismissive silence.

The discriminatory statements (e.g., "Just give 'em back their sheep!") system-atically were followed by what I am calling dismissive silence. That is, at the time of their pronouncement, each remark was left intact: No one contested or made any effort to mitigate the statements. The presence of unvoiced objections to them gave the persons to whom the statements were addressed the impression that the discrim-inatory statements had been disregarded, shrugged off, and dismissed. However, for the intended receiver, each statement remained in the social space wherein it was uttered, not as void abstraction but as concrete perlocutionary accomplishment. In each case, the White interlocutor's production was taken by the intended receiver as an offense that performed the interpersonal work of hurting, belittling, invalidating, dismissing, and disconfirming the American Indian communicant. The ensuing absent objection to the articulated discriminatory affront only added to the force of the insult.

This unchecked communication pattern suggests the existence of a particular Whiteness-infused code of conduct in the particular speech community that tacitly endorses such conduct. The speech community—mainstream U.S. college students wherein the American Indian student is usually the only American Indian student in the class—can be heard to invoke a code or set of preapproved norms about what constitutes within-the-standard behavior. Based on the data presented, in this com-municatively activated code, it is permissible for discriminatory utterances to be spoken by and to originate from a centered White self. The centered White self is positioned as the neutral, guiding standard against which all others are measured.

To illustrate this idea, I recall the statement made to Susan in her persuasive communication class by a White classmate: "You're not gonna like me very much, but I don't think that Indians deserve to have free health care. My grandfather had to pay for his own!" Heard superficially, the utterance could be taken as the benign expression of one student's opinion. A more nuanced hearing, however, reveals some

potentially troubling aspects. For instance, the White student is heard to draw from dominant society individualistically oriented privilege to evaluate the beliefs and actions of a person from a group-focused cultural orientation. The student is not heard to take into account that not all societies regard individual action in the same way. She does not seem to consider, among other possibilities, that for American Indians who, according to Deloria (2003), are group oriented, paying for one's individual medical costs may or may not have the same positive valence that it has in other contexts.

This tendency to center White experience as the standard (McIntosh, 1992; Nakayama & Martin, 1999; Sleeter, 1995a, 1995b) also is evident in Janine's White professor's assumption that American Indians do not constitute a legitimate U.S. minority because there were so few American Indians. Here, the professor can be heard to enact an unarticulated preapproved social privilege positioning him as authority in defining for others what counts and does not count as a legitimate social grouping. The tendency to exercise preapproved privilege also is evident in Melissa's senior seminar experience where her White classmate located herself as authority in normalizing (or at least trying to) what does and does not count as a question worthy of being asked.

Further, seemingly secure in her freedom to center her reality, the White student in Susan's persuasive communication class engaged in unconstrained communicative behavior, not only once but on multiple occasions. And on multiple occasions, although these emotionally charged interactional moments and their consequences, which appeared to be overlooked by many of the White communicants who exercised the opportunity of opting out of speaking (Wildman & Davis, 2002), Whiteness-laden statements were neither ignorable nor ignored by the American Indian students.

The presence of unchecked assumptions, absent objections to discriminatory communication, and unarticulated sanctions against those who originate prejudiced language points to the existence of a code of conduct that preendorses such phenomena to occur in the first place. With each replication of the socioculturally affirmed conduct, the overarching cultural web of meaning is reaffirmed, thereby perpetuating status quo communicative action.

With the above examples and explanations in mind, I propose naming the arrangement of recurring co-occurring pairings of discriminatory statement + dismissive silence, "masked silence sequences." I define the construct of masked silence sequences as the "patterned succession of racialized discriminatory talk and dismissive silence whose presence is ignorable by particular groups of interactants, either because the pattern is indiscernible to or is deemed discountable by the particular group." I define discriminatory talk as "intentional or unintentional communicative action based on prejudice resulting in the unjust treatment of people on the basis of race." Although prejudice can be based on other identity locations such as ethnicity, sex, religion, social class, disability, or sexual preference to remain within the boundaries of the present argument, I delimit the definition of discriminatory talk to race.

Racialized discriminatory talk gains its discursive force in that it operates on a group basis; it operates on characteristics, often based on prejudiced assumptions, accorded groups by other groups. The examples articulated by study participants reveal that their interpretations of the incidents they considered discriminatory involved not an assessment of individualized features but an assessment of their positions as members of a group—American Indians.

Further, masked silence sequences can and do occur unpredictably and trans-contextually. The array of campus situations referenced in students' explanations shows that the sequences can be heard across time and place (e.g., following a public presentation by a student or a guest speaker, walking from one building to another, sitting outside during a class break) and across hierarchical relational alignments (e.g., peer to peer, instructor to student). And masked silence sequences can occur within any interactional topic (e.g., from a racial slur to mistaking a doctoral student for a laborer within a greeting).

Although not necessarily invisible to all involved interlocutors, the presence of sequences of discriminatory talk followed by disregarding silence, at least to some interactants, is unnoticeable or masked. The sequences might be masked because they occur in the rapid flux of everyday life and their presence, and therefore, their correlated meanings may not be overtly detectable to all communicants. Or cultural constraints may impede out-group members from knowing how to notice, interpret, or act upon silence-mediated sequences. Although disguised, the presence and meanings of masked silence sequences, nevertheless, can be and are identifiable if we offer our attention to things people, White and of color, do with words and silences.

Masked silence sequences and the silence of some people of color

Because social construction masked silence sequences also involve the silences of American Indian interlocutors, an important and relevant question remains in need of addressing: Why did the American Indian students referenced here exercise silence in the face of social injustices against them?

The response is that American Indian students did not always remain silent. Melissa's accounts demonstrate that to her classmates' laughing at her in the political science class, she immediately responded with, "Why did you laugh at my question? I don't laugh when you ask a question." As follow-up to the White journalist's performance in her senior seminar class, Melissa presented a detailed account of the incident to university officials on more than one occasion. Janine queried her professor the day after the discriminatory incident and additionally spoke with school officials to file a grievance. In fact, several other study participants describe themselves as "militant" (Salisha [Salish; Participant No. 3], James [Blackfeet; Participant No. 8], and Jaxin [Crow; Participant No. 11]) and made clear to me that they *do* speak up in class and beyond.

However, when some American Indian students do not speak up in class or elsewhere, it can be due to a complex of cultural, situational, and personal constraints.

For example, tribal norms may prescribe displays of respect for persons in authority (e.g., college professors) by not questioning them in public (Tohe, 1998) or by speaking through intermediaries (Pratt & Wieder, 1993). Other norms encourage enactments of silence for developing character (Author), learning by listening (Carbaugh, 1999), or managing interpersonal uncertainty (Braithwaite, 1990). Another option might be that, according to Orbe (1998), people of color may opt for silence for fear that their speaking might magnify differences and/or alienate them from dominant group members. Or silence might be enacted as means for avoiding interaction with the mainstream world (Orbe, 1998; Tohe, 1998). A different possibility still is that some students are silent simply because they personally prefer to be silent.

American Indian students also might opt for silence as a result of their assessment of the demands of the moment. This option resonates with Orbe and Spellers' (2005) claim that traditionally muted group members exercise strategic choice making according to the specifics of the situational context. After a long history of structurally sanctioned marginalization, many American Indian students have learned that at some point in the course of events, their voiced opinions and grievances most likely will not result in positive outcomes.[3] Students, then, are left with few options but to silence themselves.

Strategic choice making is reflected in the following statements study participants made to explain their own reasons for maintaining silence in their classrooms in the face of perceived injustices affecting them. Jon (Crow; Participant No. 12) says, "I'm not going to change White people's minds in 5 minutes." Salisha (Salish; Participant No. 3) says, "I usually speak up, but when [I don't, it's because] there's no one else there with you to stand up for you. Nobody really understands your point of view anyway." Steve (Crow; Participant No. 5): "I think there is a time when you have to educate someone who is ignorant …and there's times when they're just beyond that and it's not going to make a difference to try to teach them." Alice (Assiniboine; Participant No. 25):

> It is always a huge risk to confront people, but it is also tiring. Many times I
> feel like I'm in defense mode, defending my people, defending our values,
> defending our cultural mores, defending our beliefs, defending our lifestyles ….
> We are used to hearing racist remarks and if we addressed every remark we hear
> in a day it would take much of our time …. Also it may be that we feel so
> marginalized on campus and in society that we don't feel like our voice would
> be heard. For me, the reason I often don't, though I often do, say anything is
> because the worldview of the individual—the other White students in the
> class and the professor—isn't going to be changed by anything I say …. We *hear*
> the racism. We hear it nearly every day. And sometimes I get tired. I don't want
> to be Joan of Arc today. Let it be.

Time and experience have taught the American Indian students whose voices are included here (among others) that dominant White privilege systems are hard to challenge. Because contesting every possible instantiation of discrimination and

"racism," as Alice puts it, would take much time, effort, and risk, American Indian students tactically choose the micromoments for enacting resistance to injustice.

For many American Indians (and others), silence in and of itself can be, both, positive and negative and generative and consumptive (Covarrubias, 2007). The matter here is how we can and do use silence negatively as discriminatory communication within the routine microactions of everyday life in college classrooms. To advance toward more productive outcomes by making a phenomenon more discernible, it is important to name and define that phenomenon. In that spirit, I propose the following definition for "discriminatory silence": *the public or private withholding of speech, specifically the withholding of voiced objections to statements that dismiss, disconfirm, or alienate a person because of racial, ethnic, or cultural origin when the ethical action would be to speak up*. This definition comports the potential for isolating loci for redressive action and appeals to directions for future study.

Conclusions

By combining interpretive approaches from the EOC with critical perspectives from Whiteness theory, this study has responded to the need for more equitable and just human relations, in this case, within the context of the college classroom. A focus on improvised moments comprising everyday college life has revealed how some American Indian students bear myriad unearned stresses resulting from enactments of White privilege. Specifically, silence-mediated communication, as conceptualized by the notion of masked silence sequences, has pointed to the ways that the pairing of discriminatory speaking with dismissive silence can and does promote exclusionary classroom practices.

Moreover, by providing a definition for discriminatory silences, this inquiry has pinpointed potential loci for redressive action. Because masked silence sequenced interactions are socially constructed, they can be modified at the behest of human actors. As Manglitz, Johnson-Bailey, & Cervero (2005) found in their study with White antiracist adult educators, "it is more often the silence of many well-meaning people and not the outright racist behaviors committed by some that keeps us from progressing beyond a point in challenging racism and inequity" (p. 1265).

With reference to theory, in addition to contributing the construct of masked silence sequences and a definition for discriminatory silence, this study has shown the possible and valuable productivity of combining interpretive and critical approaches. Specifically, this project has shown the viability and value of using expressed participant-centered worldviews using the EOC and of explicating those worldviews via race-laden critical Whiteness approaches.

Methodologically, this work has invited some of the voices that we seldom hear in communication research. Although the voices of White students also are important and should be attended to, the goal of this project was to highlight the perspectives of some American Indian interactants whose input is much needed for developing richer communication theories. This study also has modeled a way in which a researcher can

give back to the community being researched as part of the research commitments (e.g., inviting Susan to present her work in the class she was taking with the researcher and have that process be included in the overall research plan.)

With reference to practice, this study has harnessed attention on the need for teachers, as persons in power positions, to be mindful of their potential as key agents of positive social change. Teachers bear unique opportunities for challenging discrimination and effecting equity. The data presented suggest three important strategies wherein teachers can pursue productive action, and, thereby make positive differences in their classrooms. First, professors should speak up in the presence of discriminatory displays and openly support students of color. Second, discriminatory utterances should be repaired in public (in the presence of all involved). When dignity is damaged publicly, it is publicly that it can best be reclaimed. And third, discriminatory utterances should be repaired in the moment of their occurrence. Susan's words serve as powerful affirmation of these strategies: "If he [the professor] had made one comment to me" and "[The professor] was supportive outside of class" but not at the time and place where a positive difference could have been made.

Although campus Diversity personnel can be useful support for students of color, such outlets do not always yield positive results. For reasons of which I am unaware, Diversity office resources were unproductive for the students in this study who sought the intervention of university officials. Here again, we as teachers are uniquely positioned to challenge inequity. By speaking up when it is ethical to do so, the hope is that we can avert the possibilities for students, like Melissa to feel "like an animal," "crushed" like Susan, cursed at like Jade, easily stereotyped like Larry, devalued like Janine, and to feel burnt at the stake like Joan of Arc as Marilyn suggested. Speaking up as ethical action also may avert the possible error of mistaking professors' reticence as expressions of their own prejudice. As Susan put it (and other study participants concurred), "I don't know that it's fair to say that the whole classroom felt that way [like the outspoken White student], but I felt like *they did* because nobody said anything to defend me." Eliding voiced objections in the face of enacted discrimination can itself be seen as discriminatory conduct.

Moments involving masked silence sequences are difficult for many people to experience, including we educators. Moreover, as central bearers of power in our classrooms, we shoulder the sometimes difficult challenge of negotiating diverse interests, perspectives, and emotions on behalf of our students. Perhaps we do not respond to all contingencies in the moment because, for whatever reason, we cannot. Yet, whether in the moment or even in retrospect, in our socially constructed worlds, ultimately, it is up to all of us to collaborate to reinvent more just selves by deciding when it is ethical to exercise silence or to speak up.

Directions for future study

The presence of masked silence sequences and the definition of discriminatory silence suggest the following directions for future investigation especially as college

classrooms become increasingly diverse. Needed are further inquiries on enactments of spontaneous silence-driven discriminatory action with various groups of people of color. Communicative silences constitute radically cultural phenomena and as such bear the potential for engendering misunderstanding. Also needed are empirical studies examining the presence of voiced objections by White "allies" (Tatum, 1994) to assess their mitigating effects for students of color in college classrooms. Studies querying White students' uses of silence in the college classroom also need examination to either affirm or challenge Whiteness theories.

Notes

1 To help Susan devise coping strategies for diffusing the negative emotions related to returning to the problematic context, I invited and she accepted to present her original speech and rehearse her rebuttal speech in the cultural communication class she was taking with me. As a class, her fellow classmates and I were able to offer Susan substantive reactions and moral support. Susan, in turn, allowed us to better understand some of the racialized experiences lived by a number of American Indian students.

2 The possible conclusion might be reached that the norm in the persuasive communication class was to remain silent under the circumstances Susan described or that only she interpreted the comment as discriminatory. However, Susan explained to me that immediately after the particular class referenced here, several White students apologized to her for the offensiveness of the statement made by their fellow classmate. The possible critique arises that perhaps Susan's speech was ineffective with regard to cogency and evidentiary proof and that is why students remained silent. However, there does not seem to be evidence for that supposition. When Susan presented her original speech and rehearsed her rebuttal speech in the cultural communication class, I, along with some 20 students who also heard the speech, found it to be coherent and cohesive.

3 It also should be noted that Melissa and Janine both made oral and written appeals to university officials, but at the time of their graduation, neither had received a response to their filed grievances. After graduation, they chose to move on to other life activities. When Melissa recently read the final draft of this essay, she had this to say about her experience in the journalism class and about her career in journalism: "I have to say that the situation in my journalism class …has forever changed the vision and paths I take in life. I am sad to say that experience turned me off to making my mark in the journalism field. My dreams seemed to be crushed that day in the classroom and, at the time, the only way to feel good about what I would pursue in life was to get out of the field of journalism. I took that day in class as a warning, a warning that there was more racism to come in the field. I started to really pay attention to who were the reporters and writers and whose faces were on TV …. The majority were prominent White kids. I never start something and don't finish, so I stayed and finished my [journalism] internship [but subsequently left the field of journalism for good]."

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