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The Racial Foundation of Organizational Communication

Scholars of organizational communication have begun to focus diligently on organization as gendered, yet we continue to neglect the ways in which it is fundamentally raced. With this article, we seek to stimulate systematic attention to the racial dynamics of organizational communication. We argue that the field's most common ways of framing race ironically preserve its racial foundation. Specifically, our analysis of core organizational communication texts exposes 5 disciplined messages that disguise our field's participation in preserving the normative power of organized Whiteness. We conclude with specific suggestions for revising the racial subtext of our scholarship. The essay follows in the spirit of "a radical rethinking of the role we play in articulating accounts of organizational life" (Mumby, 1993, p. 21).

Despite significant advancements since the Civil Rights movement, race still matters in the United States. Consider an array of popular and academic observations: During the past few years, racial-ethnic minority groups have filed class action suits against numerous corporations, such as Coca Cola, Burger King, United Parcel Service, Texaco, Lockheed Martin, and Microsoft. People of color persistently and disproportionately occupy menial service-sector jobs, and women of color remain the lowest paid labor group (U.S. Department of Labor, 1997). As corporations and educational institutions attend to diversity issues, most of their initiatives revolve around racial groups (Allen, 1995; T. Cox, 1994; Kossek & Zonia, 1994). Indeed, the most cited impetus for interest in diversity is Johnston and Packer's (1987) Workforce 2000 report, which predicted that the workforce would contain more people of color than ever by the turn of the 21st century. Communication studies report that race-based stereotypes and expectations shape interaction across a variety of contexts (e.g., Allen, 2000; Collier, 1991; Hecht, 1998; Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993; Houston & Wood, 1996; Orbe, 1998, 1999; Orbe & Harris, 2001; van Dijk, 1987, 1993). Organizational scholars contend that race is "manifested in everyday life experiences and social interactions" and remains one of the "major bases of domination in our society and a major means through which the division of labor occurs in organizations" (Nkomo, 1992, p. 488). These and other developments affirm the importance of race to organizational communication scholarship.

Interestingly, recent depictions of organizational communication studies would lead one to expect race to be one of our central concerns. Discussing 21st-century objectives for the field, Seibold (Poole, Putnam, & Seibold, 1997) said that we should “anticipate what political, social, legal, environmental, technological, and other problems are likely to beset us at any time and apply ourselves to understanding and redressing them” (p. 134). In an article that situates organizational communication as a discipline, Mumby and Stohl (1996) observed that the field increasingly highlights “ways in which society, culture, organizations, and communication are inextricably and reciprocally bound” (p. 65). They cited “voice” as a central problematic:

How can we as organizational communication scholars provide insight into the practices of traditionally marginalized groups or forms of organizing? How can we show from a communication perspective that what appears natural and normal about organizational practices is actually socially constructed and obscures other organizational possibilities? (p. 58)

In *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication*, Deetz (2000) articulated the goal of critical organizational communication studies: “to create a society and workplaces that are free from domination and where all members can contribute equally to produce systems and meet human needs and lead to the progressive development of all” (p. 26). Critical scholars engage “the historically situated conditions of power relationships, including such structures of domination as social class, race, and sex biases” (Banks, 1995, p. 292). Given that race is particularly pertinent to organizational communication—and given our claims to engage it as such—one might reasonably expect the field to grant serious, sustained, and systematic attention to race.

However, organizational communication scholarship rarely and inadequately attends to racial issues. We have begun to focus diligently on organizing and organization theory as gendered (e.g., Acker, 1990; Ashcraft, 1999; Buzzanell, 1994, 2001; Calas & Smircich, 1992; Mills & Chiaramonte, 1991; Mumby, 1998), yet we continue to neglect the ways in which they are fundamentally raced. Our goal in this article is to stimulate the vital yet underdeveloped project of theoretically and empirically examining the racial dynamics of organizational communication. Because this project would presume that organizational structure and practice, as well as theory and research, are significantly raced, we seek to provide preliminary support for that premise. We argue that the field of organizational communication tends to reproduce and sustain raced organization. In particular, the ways in which we routinely frame race preserve the Whiteness of the field, even as we claim to do otherwise. Complex accounts of organizing race will likely elude us until we

confront the ways in which our scholarship helps to craft the dominance and invisibility of Whiteness. In this sense, we hope to renew “a radical rethinking of the role we play in articulating accounts of organizational life” (Mumby, 1993, p. 21).

We begin in what some may find an odd place. We focus on overviews of our field as presented by foundational organizational communication texts. We believe that such texts are legitimate objects of analysis because they disseminate a field’s canon of knowledge (Altbach, 1991; Kuhn, 1970; Litvin, 1997) and “define the legitimacy of topic areas and mirror the field’s research priorities” (Litvin, 1997, p. 189). In this sense, textbooks “discipline” undergraduate and graduate students with respect to the field’s dominant theories and interests. In a critical reading of sociology textbooks, Agger (1991) explained that such introductory works

socialize not only students but also the faculty members who teach from them. Indeed, many graduate students and junior faculty members are acculturated to our common disciplinary assumptions by teaching through the chapters of the introductory books. In this sense pedagogy merges with academic professionalization, underlining the disciplinarily constitutive nature of the textbooks. The books not only reflect the discipline; they also help to reproduce it in the way in which they expose graduate students and faculty to the consensus underlying the dominant approach to epistemology, methodology and theory. (pp. 107–108)

Overview texts provide “prisms through which to ‘read’” a discipline, for they refract its underlying assumptions in a way that more advanced or specialized scholarly works rarely allow (Agger, 1991, p. 106). As organizational communication scholars Mumby and Stohl (1996) observed, textbooks are “where the academic ‘sacred cows’ of a discipline are enshrined” (p. 51). Accordingly, we argue that whether and how our foundational texts address race is a theoretical and political matter, with ramifications that extend far beyond the classroom.

Many scholars have begun to interrogate the politics of the textbook, deconstructing the ideological subtext of its form—for instance, the move to encapsulate and secure a discipline, rhetorical devices that erase authorial voice and ensure audience passivity, and so on (Agger, 1991). Although these are vital issues for the study of organizational communication texts, our interest in this article is less about the textbook as a form of representation and more about subtle representations embedded in textbook content. Specifically, we identify and critically analyze five racial messages implied by the selected texts. Our approach requires at least two caveats. First, the implications of our analysis must be sorted cautiously (for example, does it inform pedagogy, the field’s self-image, or actual scholarly trends?). Second, our method enables breadth yet

also risks a caricature of the field. Admittedly, by focusing on foundational texts, we limit the claims we can make about organizational communication scholarship. We understand that the literature of our field reflects ambiguities, exceptions, debates, and other nuances that must be addressed as we continue the conversation commenced in this essay. Nonetheless, by exposing broad trends in the field as conveyed by our core texts, we hope to surface submerged issues and spark essential debate. Ultimately, we hope to promote dialogue about the ways in which contemporary organization structures, practices, and theories are raced.

Reading Subtext: How Organizational Communication Texts Organize Race

We begin with a word about “race.” The term carries complex meanings that encompass either a set of biological designations based upon physical characteristics, such as skin pigmentation, stature, hair texture, and form of the nose, or a sociopolitical construction constrained by material factors (Orbe & Harris, 2001). To complicate matters, classifications vary across time and place. In 19th-century U.S. society, for instance, Blacks were distinguished in terms of gradations (one quarter Black = quadroon; Davis, 1991). For purposes of this article, we refer to the primary racial categories applied in the U.S.: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Latino/a, and White.¹ We conceptualize race as “a largely social—yet powerful—construction of human difference that has been used to classify human beings into separate value-based categories” (Orbe & Harris, 2001, p. 6). As Lopez (1996) explained, race is socially constructed amid the intricate interplay of chance (e.g., “accidents” of birth), context (e.g., the local meaning of physical features), and choice (e.g., ever-negotiated decisions to highlight certain aspects of identity). Race is a hegemonic process and outcome with individual, interactional, and systemic consequences (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). We distinguish “race” from other words that are often used as synonyms: ethnicity, culture, minority, and so forth. These terms can serve as euphemisms that obfuscate or dilute the political implications of race, for example, by leaving the Whiteness of European-American bodies and institutions unmarked and, thus, invisible (Jackson & Garner, 1998).

To focus our analysis, we selected six texts, based on a few criteria. First, we emphasized book-length manuscripts that provide a synopsis of organizational communication as a field of study. Second, we sought to cover a range of levels, from theoretically oriented undergraduate texts to more sophisticated graduate-level works. Finally, for this exploratory analysis, we chose texts that we understand to be widely used and highly regarded by members of our discipline. The final list included

four undergraduate texts (Conrad & Poole, 1998; Daniels, Spiker, & Papa, 1997; Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001; Miller, 1999) and two graduate-level works (Corman, Banks, Bantz, & Mayer, 1995; Jablin & Putnam, 2000). Below, we briefly recount how each work is situated in relation to race.

Conrad and Poole (1998) ground the second edition of their text, *Strategic Organizational Communication in the 21st Century*, in the notion that “organizations (and societies) are sites in which tensions and contradictions are negotiated through communication” (p. ix). One contemporary U.S. tension they promise to address stems from “the dynamics of a diverse workforce” (p. viii). Daniels, Spiker, and Papa (1997) focus on *Perspectives on Organizational Communication*. The fourth edition broaches the “changing features of organizational life that have been revealed through pluralistic perspectives” (p. xi). The authors identify diversity as a key workforce change that requires the attention of organizational communication scholars. Eisenberg and Goodall’s (2001) book, *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint*, pursues the primary goal of “helping students bridge the gap between what they learn in school and what they experience at work” (p. vii). The authors explain that the third edition features “a global perspective . . . with special attention to managing cultural differences” (p. viii). Finally, the Miller (1999) text, *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes*, “attempts to reflect the eclectic maturity of the field of organizational communication” (p. xiii). In the second edition, she seeks to address “current concerns of both organizational communication scholars and practitioners,” including “processes related to cultural and gender diversity” (p. xiv). In sum, all of the undergraduate texts stress the importance of cultural diversity to organizational communication studies and profess to address it more extensively in current volumes than in previous editions. Given the primacy of race in discourse about diversity and multiculturalism, it seems reasonable to expect race to be a central topic in discussions about those issues.

The Corman, Banks, Bantz, and Mayer (1995) text, entitled *Foundations of Organizational Communication: A Reader*, aims to provide advanced students “a foundation of knowledge about organizational communication,” as well as to promote “thinking about the future study of organizational communication” (pp. vii–viii). The back cover of the second edition declares that “timely articles cover contemporary issues, including . . . women and minorities.” In contrast, Jablin and Putnam (2000) mention neither diversity nor racial issues as they introduce the text. The book’s 20 chapters, which span 911 pages, are meant “to pull together the many loose threads in the various strands of thinking and research about organizational communication and . . . to point toward new theory and empirical work” (p. 11).

As we perused the selected works, we sought to be sensitive to presence and absence, to observe when and how race draws overt attention and dubious silence. Accordingly, this question guided our textual analysis: What implications follow (a) the ways in which race is explicitly addressed and (b) the neglect or absence of race? The report to follow is organized around five latent messages that characterize the texts we reviewed. For each message, we describe its central themes, offer textual evidence, and provide a critical reading of its subtext(s). All five messages do not pervade all selected texts, and we specify exceptional cases. Some of the messages may overlap and contradict one another; the categories are not neat. To clarify, we contend that the messages underlie common ways of framing race in core organizational communication texts. We see the messages as a starting point for dialogue, not as an exhaustive inventory of racial meanings in our field.

Before we present our analysis, we want to stress that it is not our intent to criticize the texts' authors or question their racial politics. To the contrary, we hold the authors in high esteem and appreciate the value of their work. Indeed, it is the importance and influence of these texts that make them apt for analysis. Furthermore, we do not mean to depict ourselves as somehow immune or absolved from the tacit messages we discerned. We view the patterns we present as part of the "intellectual hegemony" of organizational communication studies. Because textbooks are designed to reflect and reproduce mainstream disciplinary "knowledge," they can be said to write their authors and instruct the teachers who adopt them (Agger, 1991, p. 107). Ultimately, then, our goal is not to draw attention to particular authors or works but, rather, to illuminate subtle consequences of the ways in which we all tend to articulate and hush race.

Message 1: Race Is a Separate, Singular Concept That Is Relevant Only Under Certain Circumstances. Several of the texts segregate discussions of race, postponing coverage for chapters near the end of the book. They rarely or superficially mention race elsewhere, even in logical topical areas. When race is discussed, it appears to be the unique interest of people of color, manifest as a static identity variable with relatively predictable effects on one's perspective or behavior. With few exceptions, racial issues are restricted to practice and "professional" (i.e., white-collar) settings.

Evidence of separation can be found in most of the texts. Near the beginning of their book, Daniels, Spiker, and Papa (1997) observe that diversity changes in the workforce require the attention of organizational communication scholars; they contend that "change is possible because human beings become what they are through learning, socialization, and acculturation" (p. 16). They gloss over the topic of race a few times prior to chapter 11 (of 14), entitled "Cultural Control, Diver-

sity, and Change.” In a discussion of politics, for example, they note that “serious political conflicts can arise from various sources of cultural diversity in organizations, for example, gender, race, age, and ethnicity” (p. 92). However, even in chapter 11, they devote only 7 pages to “race and ethnicity.” Miller addresses race in chapter 12 (of 14), although she substitutes such terms as “ethnic,” “minorities,” and “people of color.” The chapter seems to avoid the term “race” to the extent of characterizing D. Thomas’s (1993) self-identified studies of “interracial” mentoring as “cross-ethnic” (p. 241). Interestingly, the previous edition employs the term “race” in this chapter. At least in part, however, some authors have begun to use alternate terminology to circumvent tricky ironies associated with race (for example, to avoid instantiating arbitrary differences)—a point we elaborate in our discussion of the third message.

In Corman et al.’s (1995) book, 2 of 36 chapters address race. On the one hand, this is not surprising. After all, the book emphasizes organization theory “classics,” and, historically, organization scholars have paid little mind to race. Chapter 28, which theorizes basic patterns of majority-minority relations, offers indirect treatment of race, and this piece is drawn from Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s (1977) renowned *Men and Women of the Corporation*. However, the only chapter that explicitly engages race is chapter 30, the four-page personal narrative of a Mexican professional. Only chapter 29 on gender takes a similar atheoretical-pragmatic-case-study approach.² Back-to-back, these chapters sit at odds with the detached, conceptual tone that typifies the remaining chapters. As noted earlier, race is virtually absent from the Jablin and Putnam (2000) handbook. On a few occasions, it appears in a concluding call for further research. For example, Mumby admits that his chapter did not systematically address “the issue of race and its relationship to organizing processes” (p. 613), whereas Taylor and Trujillo suggest that feminist scholars delve into more diverse women’s experiences. Though in different ways and degrees, both texts tend to segregate race from existing organizational communication theory.

Relatedly, race is maintained as a separate issue in that it remains absent from passages where its inclusion would seem most logical (e.g., socialization theory, critical approaches, feminist perspectives). For instance, Eisenberg and Goodall’s (2001) chapter on critical perspectives barely mentions race, save where it receives credit as a historical catalyst for the rise of critical theory in the U.S. Moreover, the chapter’s review of feminist theory lumps all women under a model of “male/female values” that, at best, reflects White, middle-class norms (pp. 151–155). Likewise, Corman et al.’s (1995) chapters on power, conflict, communication networks, and so forth broach race only in passing (e.g. mention

that critical theorists study race). Even in Daniels et al.'s (1997) chapter on diversity, the notion of "cultural control" is couched in management/employee terms, safely bracketed from the discussion of race that follows. Similar silences echo in comparable sections of Jablin and Putnam (2000) and Miller (1999). It is worth noting that these silences and separations are not limited to discussions of race; for example, similar rhetorical features often typify discussions of ethics or class (Cheney, 2000).

To their credit, Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) and Conrad and Poole (1998) thread race-related issues through their texts better than most.³ For instance, in a historical account of "founding perspectives on organizational communication," Eisenberg and Goodall discuss slave narratives to illustrate domination and resistance patterns (pp. 56–59). Conrad and Poole go further to note the centrality of assumed middle-class, White male values in organizations. Early in the book, they critique the "melting pot" myth of U.S. society that ignores hegemonic forces that prevent achieving the Horatio Alger myth. Further, they note that we may internalize White superiority. They describe the 1996 Texaco incident (pp. 221–222) to exemplify influence strategies in organizations—a noteworthy example because it does not appear in the sections on diversity and so escapes the tendency to marginalize race or reserve it as a topic worthy of attention only in a specific section of the text (or the course).

Understandably, most authors identify gender and race as key aspects of diversity. Two interesting moves often follow. One, feminist perspectives catch criticism for their inadequate treatment of race. Two chapters in Jablin and Putnam (2000) illustrate the point. As hinted above, Taylor and Trujillo chide feminist scholarship for neglecting issues beyond gender: "Sadly, the literature in organizational communication has offered very little diversity in terms of studies of women in organizations" (p. 172). Likewise, Mumby notes a need for feminist scholars to examine racial issues. It is worth noting that these chapters focus, respectively, on qualitative research methods and on power and politics. Why, then, are feminists singled out for the error? We concur that taking race seriously would challenge feminist theory, but would foregrounding race not also unravel other theories of organizational communication (e.g., socialization, power, networks, systems)? Arguably, the criticism shields the broader area of study from such questions by implying that feminists are somehow uniquely obligated to bear the brunt of the racial burden.⁴ A second and related move entails the texts' own lack of connection between gender and race. Namely, the texts fail to consider how these aspects entwine, discussing them instead as discrete categories.

As the latter move suggests, the texts treat race as a singular, not merely separate, facet of identity. Most neglect to even mention the complexities of in-group variations or intersecting aspects of identity, such as

race, gender, class, age, ability, and sexuality. As such, social identities become reduced and essentialized. Furthermore, the texts often conflate “race” with “minority issues,” which implies that race involves only people of color and reinforces the “unconscious assumption that majority group members do not have a racial identity” (Nkomo, 1992, p. 500). Rarely do any of the authors speak of Whiteness. Mumby’s chapter on power in Jablin and Putnam’s (2000) handbook stands out as an exception. In his conclusion, Mumby identifies “interrogating whiteness” as a promising area of study and explains that “this work shows how ‘whiteness’ as a racial and gendered category is not neutral, but rather is socially constructed through various discursive practices” (p. 613).

Beyond the special interest of minorities, race is further reduced when the experiences of African American males appear to encompass or typify the dilemmas of all people of color. For example, chapter 11 of Daniels et al. (1997) and chapter 12 of Miller (1999) rely almost exclusively on examples drawn from studies of African American men. However, Daniels et al. (1997) do provide employment statistics on Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics, and they lament the fact that few statistics exist on Native Americans. In a discussion about language, they mention Hopi Indians to exemplify the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and they cite a 1979 study about perceptions of Hispanics who speak with or without accents. These types of examples tend to be rare, cursory, and often dated. However, Conrad and Poole (1998) offer an atypical outlook. They confess that “we [organizational communication scholars] do not know enough about experiences of anyone other than White men” (p. 349). They elaborate:

experiences of persons within each of these [racial minority] groups is in some ways similar ... especially among organizational powerholders; each group faces negative stereotypes about their work-related competence, especially in professional and managerial roles; and members of each group have lower status in Western societies than Anglo males do. But in other ways the experiences of Anglo women, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Latinas are quite different. (p. 350)

Finally, the texts overwhelmingly treat race as an issue relevant only to the particular circumstances of professional settings, in which people of color aspire to ascend the corporate ladder. For instance, Daniels et al. (1997) assert that “if women are concerned about breaking through the Glass Ceiling, members of racial and ethnic minority groups are worried about getting through the door . . . 97% of all *female* managers are white” (pp. 236–237, emphasis in the original). Miller (1999) also invokes the glass ceiling as she decries reward differentials for women and minorities in management. Conrad and Poole (1998) stress labor statistics on female managers and persons of color in managerial and

professional jobs. Eisenberg and Goodall's (2001) most direct discussion of racial problems emphasizes "barriers to career development," defined as corporate advancement (pp. 208–209). Similarly, Stephen Cruz, the main character of Corman et al.'s (1995) chapter 28, is the only one in his Mexican family "who really got into the business world" (p. 330). Although white-collar topics and circumstances certainly warrant attention, we are concerned with the implication that race is an issue only in those contexts. Moreover, these representations suggest that race became a vital area of concern only after people of color turned up the volume and insisted upon their rights to assume professional positions. In actuality, women and men of color have long been a strong presence in the labor force, albeit in menial jobs (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993).

In general, then, the texts tend to depict race as a separate, singular, and special issue. Their spatial and topical divides—combined with their emphases, reductions, and silences—maintain race as an isolated and uniform identity component, most relevant to people of color (read African-American males) in professional settings. Race emerges primarily as a practical matter—a kind of modern trend or new development in organizational life. In an analysis of definitions of diversity in organizational behavior textbooks, Litvin (1997) arrived at a similar conclusion: "The heterogeneity of the workforce is presented as something new, different from the presumed homogeneity of the U.S. workforce of the past" (p. 198). In sum, message one obscures crucial micro/macro elements of organizing race, which we elaborate below. As it detaches race from organizational communication theory, it conceals how race is already written into our accounts of organized phenomena. Our analysis of the remaining messages works to flesh out this point.

Message 2: Race Is Relevant in So Far as It Involves Cultural Differences, Which Can Be Identified, Valued, and Managed to Improve Organizational Performance. Several of the texts acknowledge that members can come from different cultural backgrounds, which means that they embrace values, practices, and so forth that may clash with those of another member, customer, or other work relation. The texts generally concur that we need to understand and appreciate cultural diversity, for only then can it be applied creatively to enhance organizational innovation and productivity.

This message was more prominent in the undergraduate texts. Daniels et al. (1997) underscore the role of communication in "the *process of valuing and managing* diversity" (p. 230, emphasis in the original). Indeed, their discussion of "race and ethnicity" exemplifies message two (pp. 236–243). Consider the following excerpt:

First, people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds have life experiences that influence the way they think, talk, and behave. In order for people from these different

backgrounds to work productively together, instructional programs are needed to increase each group's understanding of the other groups' behaviors and worldviews. Second, once intergroup understanding exists, the key to profiting from diversity is to value it. (pp. 242–243)

Similarly, Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) sprinkle discussions of diversity and multicultural management throughout the text; Miller (1999) proffers a multicultural management model designed to increase organizational competitiveness; and Conrad and Poole (1998) address the methods and benefits of diversity management. As noted above, Corman et al. (1995) and Jablin and Putnam (2000) remain quiet on most aspects of race. Nonetheless, we suspect that the notion of race as difference-turned-productive rests comfortably in the common sense of our field.

Across the texts, we found two primary rationales for the cultural difference message. First, authors invoke the notorious Workforce 2000 report to paint the modern U.S. labor pool as an increasingly diverse mosaic of faces. If for no other reason, then, companies must attend to race as a matter of effective management. The second rationale looks beyond the U.S., finding motive in globalization. That is, today's multinational economy renders cultural difference a business concern. In the next section, we inspect the international rationale. For now, we consider the general logic of valuing and managing diversity toward enhanced organizational performance.

Despite surface appeal, the message takes the content of differences at face value. As argued above and elsewhere (e.g., Omi & Winant, 1986), it tends to dilute and essentialize cultural identities, using Whiteness as an invisible, homogenous standard. In addition, the message assumes an ahistorical voice that depicts cultural variations as static, enduring facts and omits the cultural (inter)dependencies from which difference has developed and changed over time. Agger (1991) made a parallel point about the sociology textbook; as it “conveys a certain essentialized view of class, gender and science, it deftly reproduces the current orders . . . by draining history from them. This is an enormously subtle and powerful form of ideology—powerful because subtle” (p. 112). Finally, the message makes all differences seem comparable and capable of equality. In so doing, it sidesteps matters of power. For example, on an international scale, variations among European countries appear parallel to those between “West” and “East” or between “First” and “Third World” countries. This depiction conceals international power relations, as well as how national identities—to the extent that we can speak of such a thing—implicate one another. Put simply, national cultures rarely develop in isolation. To treat them as separate but equal alternatives is to obscure how U.S./European/Western organizational dominance depends

on the exploitation and underdevelopment of other nations and peoples (Mies & Shiva, 1993; Munshi, in press), how Western corporate ideals influence other national identities (Connell, 1993), and so on.

On a more local scale, the valuing difference approach ignores a similar power problem. If corporate America is built around Whiteness—and if Whiteness is socially constructed as separate from and superior to darkness—how can we genuinely speak of valuing difference as a possibility? In other words, expressing White heritage often amounts to celebrating others' oppression; recent U.S. debates over flying the Confederate flag illustrate the difficulty. We are reminded of a parallel point regarding gender, which might clarify our critique here. If enacting masculinity means "doing dominance" and enacting femininity, "doing deference" (West & Zimmerman, 1987), it makes little sense to appreciate gender difference, much less to embrace the devalued other (e.g., women's ways or feminine styles), because the variation itself reflects relations of dominance and subordination (Ashcraft & Pacanowsky, 1996; Buzzanell, 1995; Calas & Smircich, 1993; Fletcher, 1994). Likewise, if performing "professional" means enacting Whiteness and thereby reinforcing racial dominance, talk of valuing differences seems empty and patronizing (Munshi, in press). By operating at a descriptive level and treating cultural habits as choices made by collectives in a vacuum, the valuing difference approach ignores the power relations that create and get sustained by the (re)production of difference (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). In short, just as gender equality requires interrogating masculinity (e.g., Mumby, 1998), racial equality necessitates dismantling, not valuing, Whiteness (e.g., Lopez, 1996).

Finally, the language of managing diversity suggests that organizations can channel difference into a productive order. One pressing question here is, productive for whom? Whereas organized diversity may enhance the comfort of individual members (e.g., by reducing tokenism or fear of the unknown), the texts usually translate such effects into organizational gain. By and large, diversity is framed as a source of competitive advantage for organizations (e.g., it can reduce lawsuits, lift barriers to teamwork and production, encourage innovation). We agree with the implication that scholars do well to remember a simple point sometimes erased by critical and feminist scholarship: Organizations are accountable to a purpose. We sympathize with the impulse to build a business case for valuing difference, as practical appeals are more conducive to timely social change. Simultaneously, we note the irony that such pleas ultimately promote diversity for its financial benefit to top executives, shareholders, and other corporate elites—positions that, at least in the U.S. and other Western nations, are overwhelmingly occupied by White men (Munshi, 1999, in press). Certainly, the instrumental logic we observe here extends beyond racial concerns to the manage-

ment of other dimensions of difference (for example, gender, ability, sexuality, and so forth) and their intersections. Indeed, it is part of a larger shift toward a discourse of “persons as objects” in organization theory and corporate relations (Cheney & Carroll, 1997). Next, we inspect a third message that stems from the second and concerns the international motive for valuing and managing diversity.

Message 3: All Cultural Differences Are Synonymous With International Variations. We observed at least two versions of this message. The first and most literal rendition appears in some of the texts, which depict nation of origin as the strongest influence on one’s cultural disposition. These works suggest that, as globalization becomes the rule, organizations and members must learn to understand and utilize cultural differences defined by national borders. Though we briefly mentioned this rationale for diversity above, we found that its message merits closer scrutiny, particularly when it becomes a principal way to frame cultural difference. A second version, often present alongside the first, holds that all cultural differences are akin to those between nations.

Eisenberg and Goodall’s text (2001) epitomizes this treatment of race and culture. For example, chapter 1 explains that multicultural management skills are necessitated by the recent explosion of globalization. In chapter 5, the authors review the comparative management approach, which highlights differences in management style and organization culture. Here again, national or regional origin is marked as the most crucial source of difference, as illustrated by the emphasis on Western vs. non-Western countries and variations among U.S. states and cities. Chapter 7 offers BMW as an example of a postmodern organization that facilitates “multicultural communication,” understood as the mingling of national cultures. Chapter 8 depicts “national culture” and “intercultural difficulties” (i.e., problems of interpretation in the context of international business travel) as environmental sources of stress. Chapter 9 identifies “cultural boundaries” as a key obstacle to interpersonal relationships at work, and every example marks national origin as the root of culture. The Daniels et al. (1997) text enacts a subtler version of the message: All three case studies that conclude the unit on culture—which includes the diversity chapter—present scenarios about members’ national, rather than racial, identity. In tune with the other texts, Daniels et al. also claim that diversity management can “help firms to compete in a global economy” (p. 229).

Stohl’s chapter in Jablin and Putnam (2000) also considers race through a multinational lens. Of course, this focus makes perfect sense, given the chapter’s topic of globalizing organizational communication. Stohl writes of international variations, emphasizing women’s issues. Yet this roughly one-page discussion represents the most extensive coverage of race in the entire handbook. Corman et al.’s (1995) only reference to cultural

difference appears in the conclusion of chapter 26, which updates French and Raven's classic model of bases of power. One paragraph, subtitled "cross-cultural comparisons," reports recent research on international variance in children's usage of power resources.

It is not our intent to deny the importance of international variation, and we recognize, as we briefly noted in our treatment of the first message, that some authors have begun to avoid the term "race" in an effort to evade its baggage. For example, biologists and anthropologists widely problematize the term; closer to home, communication scholars acknowledge the knotty paradox of "race" analyses, in that they risk reproducing what they seek to undermine (Flores & Moon, 2002). Perhaps these concerns form part of the impetus for the shift to international differences. Nonetheless, we argue that simply dropping the word "race" does little to engage such problems. On the contrary, the tendency to frame race as parallel to or transposable with national culture evokes several consequences that relate to and extend those that accompany message two. For instance, the international lens creates the illusory appearance of homogeneity and coherence at multiple levels. It implies homogeneous national and regional identities, neglecting cultural variation and race relations *within* national and regional boundaries. This move dilutes a dominant culture and depicts it as representative of a unified national identity, omitting domestic challenges and alternatives. In the case of the U.S., the message preserves the values and practices of a hegemonic—and, arguably, White—professional culture as "the American way" of doing business (e.g., Trice & Beyer, 1993). In short, the message "confuses Whiteness with nationality" (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 300). Although we expand this point in our analysis of message five, we note that message three performs at least two ideological practices: It reifies a dominant culture as "the" national culture and, thus, permits partial interests to masquerade as universal (Deetz & Kersten, 1983; Giddens, 1979; Sholle, 1988).

The message also constructs homogeneity at other levels. It implies that each person adheres to one culture. This construction denies the intersection of national, regional, racial-ethnic, gender-sexual, class, religious, and other discourses in the formation of identity, as well as the contextual ways in which these strands of discourse become more and less salient to subjectivity (Hearn & Parkin, 1993). Accordingly, it masks the dilemmas people of color and White persons may experience as they enact professional selves.

As the international lens puts forth uniform notions of individual and national culture, it permits "one's culture" to appear as a seamless, uncontested construct. Consequently, the message serves a deflecting function. Telling examples surface in the Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) text. In chapters 5 and 6, the authors acknowledge U.S. race relations as part

of the impetus for cultural and critical theories of organization. Yet the perspectives subsequently reviewed do not engage race, much less domestic racial struggle. In chapter 5, only the comparative management view, which highlights international variance, addresses culture at a level other than organizational. Discussing “the hidden power of cultures,” chapter 6 explains that “ideology operates locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally” (p. 145). Yet the authors pitch the ensuing discussion at a strictly international level, obscuring how “assumptions of superiority,” “ethnocentrism,” and “universality” operate closer to home (pp. 145–146). In these examples, attention to national culture obscures the point that the cultural and critical movements in organizational communication studies have apparently failed to address the domestic racial tensions that helped fuel them. Later, in chapter 8, the authors identify organizational norms against diversity as a source of stress “for minority employees” (p. 208). The ensuing description of discrimination against women and people of color in U.S. workplaces dissolves into the following observation: “Significant communication problems can ensue between members of cultures that on the surface may not appear all that different” (p. 209). An example of miscommunication between “Americans and Finns” immediately follows. In this example, international Anglo-European differences are lumped with that between U.S. Whites and African Americans, as if these are comparable variations and relationships. Consequently, U.S. racial discrimination appears minimized as a failure to understand and utilize cultural difference. In each of these cases, the international frame professes to include cultural issues yet effectively averts attention from issues of power and race.

This analysis expands our argument by exposing a third ideological function of the message: It deflects and denies the presence of contradiction, such as the tenuous relation of national and racial identity and conflict (Giddens, 1979; Mumby, 1988). Whereas the first three messages conceal relations of power, the fourth message invites a closer look at what happens in those rare moments when race and power do appear together.

Message 4: Racial Discrimination Is a Function of Personal Bias, Interpersonal Misunderstanding, Organizational Failure to Manage Cultural Differences, and Disproportionate Demographics. Across the selected volumes, racial discrimination receives uneven attention. For instance, Daniels et al. (1997) allocate most of their discussion about race to discrimination; Miller (1999) includes a paragraph on discrimination; and Conrad and Poole (1998) pepper their text with examples of discriminatory practices. Taken together, the texts identify at least four sources or causes of racial discrimination. It is the result of (a) individual prejudices or (b) relational misunderstandings, which may

intensify if (c) management fails to value and orchestrate diversity. Finally, discrimination is due to (d) the minority status of people of color in the workplace; in other words, as numbers increase, discrimination should eventually subside. In short, racial discrimination is characterized as an unfortunate practice of people within organizations, not as a uniquely organizational product.

To a significant extent, the preoccupation with (international) cultural differences described thus far reflects the message. Specifically, cultural differences and the ability to appreciate them are located within the individual. Valuing diversity entails changing one's mindset; managing diversity means large-scale efforts to coordinate a collective attitude adjustment.

Miller (1999) attributes "bias and discrimination on the part of others in the organization" as sources of differential organizational experiences of women and people of color. Daniels et al. (1997) recount tales of discrimination experienced by African American male executives and narrate a racist interaction observed by one of the authors during a consulting project. They bemoan "the unfortunate pervasiveness of such bigotry" and pronounce a "real possibility that [minorities] will confront insidious forms of racism, hostility, and even hatred as their numbers increase in the workplace" (p. 237). Corman et al.'s (1995) most direct discussion of racial discrimination comes in chapter 30, which tells the story of Stephen Cruz mentioned above. In his narrative, Stephen struggles to locate sources of racism in "the business world," shifting from the fault of individual people, to particular organizational relationships, to dominant stereotypes, to in-group fighting, to subtle norms of conformity. Ultimately, he opts out of that world, suspicious of intangible, conspiring corporate elites. We are left with a hopeless account of racial discrimination as a repetitive pattern upheld by both malicious and well-intentioned people across organizations and hierarchies. Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) also deliver the message of individual bias and relational misunderstanding. In chapter 8, they attribute the frustration and rage of some African American professionals to "a general inability to relax in a predominantly White workplace as well as to poor communication between Blacks and Whites" (p. 209). In sum, although racism reveals the failings of particular members and relationships, it apparently teaches us little about biases embedded in the organization itself and in society at large.

What we do learn about the organization is that it can take steps to reduce the individual prejudice and cultural miscommunication that occurs within its walls. Some of the authors extend recommendations for how organizations can minimize discrimination. For instance, Daniels et al. (1997) furnish four recommendations "that organizations can implement in order to prevent or at least reduce hatred in

the workplace” (p. 238). Likewise, Miller (1999) encourages managers to provide diversity awareness training, among other initiatives, to counter prejudice and discrimination. As these examples hint, talk of diversity management at the firm level often retains individuals as the root of diversity problems. For example, although Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) invoke Kanter’s claim that “responsibility for change should be at the system level” (p. 152), at least four of the five organization-level diversity stressors discussed in chapter 8 amounted to manager error or individual choice.

Nkomo (1992) compellingly criticized the common focus on personal bias, relational misunderstanding, and failure to manage diversity. These “microlevel” factors suggest individualistic, cognitive origins of racism and remain

silent on the sociohistorical dynamics of the capitalist system in creating and maintaining inequality in organizations. Such explanations detract from issues of power and domination in racial dynamics and reflect a failure to analyze both the historically specific experience of racial minorities in U.S. society and the influence that this history has had on their status in organizations. (p. 496)

In sum, the first three explanations deflect attention from vital historical and systemic factors. Perhaps the fourth cause—disproportionate demographics—points us in that direction.

Most of the texts take as given the increasingly diverse profile of the workforce, as evidenced by frequent reference to the Workforce 2000 report. Growing demographic diversity, however, yields more than a business appeal for managing cultural difference. For some, it constitutes evidence that racial discrimination will be on its way out in due time, for diversity is a business imperative, like it or not. Corman et al.’s (1995) chapter 28, entitled “Numbers: Minorities and Majorities,” yields this implication. Extracted from Kanter’s (1977) classic work on gender and organization, the chapter explains how disproportionate amounts of any group produce similar intergroup power relations. Such inequalities will likely begin to fade as ratios begin to equalize. After painting a bleak picture of African Americans’s plight (e.g., poverty, joblessness, and imprisonment), Daniels et al. (1997) interject, “The only good news for African Americans is that their representation in the workforce is projected to increase 28 percent by 2000” (p. 237).

Some texts draw the link between numbers, power, and race more boldly. We illustrate the point with a quote from the second edition of Eisenberg and Goodall (1997):

Others contend that the growing informal basis of power has unfavorable implications for women, minorities, and others. . . . Although such concerns are not unjustified, a

return to the homogenous, discriminatory workplaces of the past is unlikely. . . . Today, nearly every company with more than three hundred employees offers workshops in cultural diversity to address the needs of a multicultural workforce.” (pp. 13–14)⁵

Because we believe that this account taps common sentiments, we weigh two of its central assumptions. First, the statement supports the notion that firm-level efforts to manage diversity through sensitivity training constitute a legitimate path to end racial discrimination. Management-sponsored lessons in cultural difference, no matter how superficial and fleeting in practice, are equated with substantive change. We believe that such workshops tend to prove problematic for reasons already articulated; namely, they typically ask White members to alter their perception of others in a specified setting without examining their own privilege and related contexts—a tall order, as argued earlier.⁶

Second, the statement paints racial homogeneity and oppression as inevitable companions. To some degree, the claim that sameness begets discrimination is appealing, if not valid. For example, as reviewed above, Corman et al’s (1995) chapter 28 illuminates common patterns that characterize any form of dominant-token relations. Our concern is the implication that race is just another manifestation of these patterns, that there is nothing distinctively racial about these relations. Particularly in the case of race, it is not safe to say that sameness and oppression are necessarily present and absent together, or that heterogeneity and discrimination exist in an inverse relationship. Confidence in inevitable racial progress puts undue faith in numbers of bodies. As Daniels et al. (1997) observe, scholars have presented compelling cases that demographic diversity by no means ensures racial equality (e.g., Zak, 1994). Furthermore, occupations dominated by people of color often involve considerable exploitation (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993).

Thus, message four conceals racial inequality in several ways. As it narrowly defines racial discrimination as the result of personal prejudice, it overlooks widespread structural and material exploitation. Meanwhile, the recent flurry of class action suits against major corporations suggests that discrimination looms larger than individual experience. Systemic discrimination is further obscured by the focus on the firm level, which ignores the organization-society relationship and larger occupational trends. On that note, even if we accept that numerical diversity is a key component of racial equality, it is likely that the presence of people of color in valued positions will grow only so far. At least in the U.S., we depend on the convergence of raced and classed divisions of labor to concentrate people of color in “cheap,” “dirty,” “invisible,”—at minimum, devalued—support roles (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993). Although we pursue the advancement of White women and people of color into White-, male-dominated professions, we rarely campaign for White

men's access to work historically performed by people of color and White women. Moreover, as we elaborate later, our field overwhelmingly excludes workplaces dominated by people of color (for an exception, see Eisenberg & Goodall's references to Conquergood's work). This omission muffles the voices and settings most prone to expose the racial base of organizational power. Finally, the fourth message denies that organizational contexts (i.e., structures and practices) are themselves raced—a line of argument we begin to build in the next section. By assigning responsibility to people within, it relieves the “container” of culpability. We are learning to speak of organizational forms and processes as gendered (e.g., Ashcraft, 1999; Buzzanell, 1994; Calas & Smircich, 1992; Ferguson, 1984; Mills & Chiaramonte, 1991). It is time to develop such a language for race.

Message 5: White (Collar) Workplaces and Work/ers Constitute “Universal” Settings, Identities, and Practices. With the phrasing of this message, we allude to Acker's (1990) influential piece on the gendered nature of the bureaucratic form, which paved the way for our own claims. Acker argued that previous analyses, although vital, miss the point that organizations are fundamentally gendered; that is, gender is a primary form of organizational control. For example, the bureaucratic form rests on the assumption of a “universal” worker who devotes himself almost exclusively to the organization. It presumes that a worker's career, body, time, and energy will not be marred by emotionality, sexuality, reproduction, and domestic obligations. Although ostensibly gender neutral, such a profile is clearly more available to men but is the profile also “white as well as male? Are white-male-dominated organizations also built on underlying assumptions about the proper place of people with different skin colors? Are racial differences produced by organizational practices as gender differences are?” (Acker, 1990, p. 154).

Here, we begin to address these questions, commencing a parallel case regarding race: As characterized in the selected texts, organizational communication theory constructs “professional” or “white-collar” workplaces, workers, and work as representative or standard. This image is neither arbitrary nor merely convenient. It is more than what we commonly term managerial or class bias. It reveals the racial foundation—the fundamental Whiteness—of the field. To support our case, we probe basic constructs in the discipline: (a) What counts as “organization,” (b) who counts as “member” (or, what organizations and members count), and (c) what constitutes “professional” communication practice?

It has become something of a truism to observe that our field stresses the workplace. Despite important efforts to include varied social collectivities (e.g., Corman et al., chap. 4, 1995), the focus persists. What exactly does the workplace look like though? Generally, it is a larger, for-profit corporation engaged in managerial, knowledge, or other kinds

of professional, white-collar work. When industrial or other forms of blue-collar labor appear, they are typically seen through a managerial lens. Nonprofit organizations and other alternatives remain virtually absent from our theories, although they occasionally serve as sites for illustration or research (Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002).

This partial rendition of the workplace, much less of organization, was manifest across the texts. By and large, chapters and case studies were set on a professional, corporate stage; those that included manufacturing units stressed production concerns. Miller's (1999) text incorporates notable exceptions. She included case studies on day care workers, public schools, and a homeless shelter. In a discussion about workplace democracy, Daniels et al. (1997) mention worker cooperatives. At a glance, Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) might also seem an exception, for examples throughout incorporate some organizational alternatives (e.g., nonprofits, gangs). On the one hand, this move could be read to expand what counts as organization. Yet these visible examples also function to obscure the fact that the theories described in the book normalize business organizations. For instance, chapter 1, entitled "Communication and the Changing World of Work," identifies key developments that define contemporary organization: globalization, increased competitive pressure and turbulent environments, the changing relationship between organizations and employees, and so on. At the risk of stating the obvious, this profile disregards the unique situation of nonprofits and forgets about gangs altogether. Similarly, Daniels et al. (1997) cite eminent workplace changes such as downsizing, mergers, total quality management, and flextime. Although they denote "a major effort to study and foster the adoption of forms of organization that are radically different from traditional American systems" (p. 15), they barely delve into the topic.

We do not find it a coincidence that the workplace of fascination to our field is the one where White, (upper) middle-class men (and many women) are clustered. Perhaps this is a wise place to reiterate that the intent of our analysis is not to cry conspiracy or point fingers of blame. Instead, we seek to show that a kind of adoration for Whiteness is embedded, first, in our field's fixation on the corporate context. Moreover, the boundaries of organization serve as blinders that obstruct our view of the organization-society relationship. For all our talk of the inadequacy of the container metaphor (Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1996), our core texts continue to depict organizational communication as a phenomenon that occurs mostly between walls (or builds the walls) that shelter members from the outside world. The focus on the firm level also curbs the potentially radical effect of including alternative settings. For example, Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) review Conquergood's (1991) research with gangs for its conceptual contributions to orga-

nizational culture. Were our scope of analysis widened, we could begin to grasp the racial implications of legitimate and illegitimate forms of work and community.

It is especially curious that, long after the advent of organization systems theory and its corresponding interest in environment, our central texts continue to downplay the organization-society link, save their nods to critical perspectives (see Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001, p. 171, for an exception). For instance, even though the field retained its eye for business, systems theory (and growing interest in critical theory) opened a window to explore how corporations capitalize on the exploitation of workers and customers from particular race or class positions. Yet, even today, systems principles are most often defined in the narrow light of business interests. As a rule, “environment” refers to marketplace factors; “interdependence” taps a firm’s relation to that environment or among its own subunits. Corman et al.’s (1995) collection of chapters on systems theory illustrate the point. They stress organization-level processes and organization-audience relations, where audience is chiefly defined as competition, client, or consumer. Theoretically, “environment” and “interdependence” could just as easily include the dependence of capitalism on mothers to rejuvenate weary husbands and reproduce sons ready for labor (Chodorow, 1979). They could also expose how many White, upper- and middle-class mothers, to enable their own professional participation, have historically depended on the cheap domestic labor of women of color (Glenn, 1994). As noted above, critical and feminist organization theorists, perhaps most immediately suited to address the political implications of the organization-environment link, have largely limited their concerns to class and gender, respectively. In the reviewed textbooks, no review of critical and feminist theory steps beyond a brief mention of race.

Rarely do we read of work outside organizational bounds. Only Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) write of such labor at any length, which they depicted as a trend resulting from such factors as corporate downsizing, individual choice to “go it alone” in search of “greater autonomy and meaningful work” (p. 220). Consider the alternative careers they identify: outsource services, entrepreneurship, independent contracting, and third-sector jobs (e.g., volunteering, work in “soft-money” organizations). Clearly, this account regards the disillusioned or conscience-struck White (collar) worker. We are reminded of domestics (e.g., Rollins, 1997), farm labor, construction work, and other kinds of labor that have long been performed outside organizations by those who scarcely have the luxury of pondering the “value of work in relation to personal and spiritual life” (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001, p. 220).

Given our preoccupation with firm-level analyses of corporate contexts, it is not surprising that professional members also draw the schol-

arly spotlight. Center stage is granted to the upwardly mobile white-collar worker; the consolation prize goes to the manual or skilled laborer or, more often, to those who manage blue-collar workers. Secretarial and support staff receive little attention, and workers invisible in the 8-to-5 operations of a firm or without permanent contracts virtually disappear. For starters, envision who graces illustrations of organization charts, or who is considered to exert influence on organizational culture. Turning to textual examples, Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) characterize our “new” relationship to work with the following kinds of themes: (a) corporate disloyalty; (b) the problem of workaholics who are “unnaturally preoccupied with work” (p. 17); (c) growing emphasis on quality of life, as people increasingly seek affirmation, fulfillment, and empowerment from their work; and (d) relationships at work as crucial to human well-being. Like all of the reviewed texts, this chapter paints the luxuries and struggles of White (collar) professionals as a universal human experience. Because the discussion set the parameters for the rest of the book, the brief blurb on underprivileged groups that concludes the chapter (see p. 18, “Who can afford to prioritize?”), although an important step, rings a bit hollow.

In tandem with the corporate focus, the emphasis on professional members reproduces the dominant ideology of “a real job” (Clair, 1996). Both moves insinuate that only the work traditionally pursued by White, (upper) middle-class men comprises “career” and deserves study. Fascination with White (collar) organizations and members extends to the texts’ explicit treatment of race. As suggested by messages one and four, race is almost always situated in corporate contexts; racial discrimination appears only as directed against people of color who aspire to climb the corporate ladder. In vivid color, the ideological functions marked earlier now come into focus. White (collar) work, workers, and organizations become reified as a universal goal and concern, a universally possible identity. Contradictions, like the simple point that there is not ample room for all at the top, are denied (Giddens, 1979; Mumby, 1988; R. Thomas, 1990).

It is worth noting that the apparent theoretical absence of the work in which people of color are clustered seems to complement the actual practice of such work. In other words, people of color are often relegated to “back room” spaces or graveyard shifts. Thus, the “dirty work” of organizational maintenance (e.g., actual mess cleanup, as well as how it depends on a racial division of labor) is rendered invisible, literally and figuratively swept under the carpet. That Whiteness reigns in the visible spaces, valued positions, and touted theories of organizational life—that class is raced—is effectively concealed by the physical and conceptual absence of contrast (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993).

Finally, we consider how the texts depict U.S. norms of professional

interaction. Across the texts emerges a basic profile of the “professional” that mirrors popular images: The professional acts with restrained civility and decorum; wears a convincing shell of calmness, objectivity, and impersonality; thinks in abstract, linear, strategic—in a word, “rational”—terms (e.g., the rationality emulated in this article); covers the body in conservative, mainstream attire; keeps bodied processes (e.g., emotionality, sexuality) in check; has a promising, upwardly mobile career track; derives primary identity and fulfillment from occupation and work accomplishments; speaks standard English; and so on. Some authors build the profile explicitly, as they distinguish U.S. business norms from those of other nations. Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) characterize “American” business culture as individualistic, results oriented, goal directed, and preoccupied with measurements. We read that Americans view knowledge as rooted in concepts and perceive uncertainty and shyness as barriers to work success. Interestingly, the authors note, “In the United States, immigrant and guest workers may possess different cultural understandings, values, and beliefs in addition to speaking a different language” (p. 253). We are left to infer that there are few Americans for whom this monolithic professional culture is not a native tongue. Only Conrad and Poole (1998) mention the White, middle-class bias of U.S. business norms; generally speaking, the other texts tacitly preserve the conflation of Whiteness with U.S. corporate culture (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). To date, our field has taken stock of the class and gender basis of professionalism (e.g., Deetz & Mumby, 1990; Marshall, 1989, 1993). Yet, even from the cursory profile formulated here, it becomes undeniably clear that “doing professional” is at least as much (if not more) about performing Whiteness. For example, Brookhiser (1997) traced the ideal of an industrious, goal-oriented, instrumental, and success-driven self to the development of U.S. White, middle-class culture. Heath’s (1983) work documented how concept-centered learning and confidence in fixed, measurable truth—engrained in certain White U.S. communities—contrasts with other raced and classed views of knowledge.

Several of our claims here reframe trends mourned by other scholars. For example, the proclivity to normalize corporate interests in scholarship has received considerable attention as “managerial bias” or “managerialism” (Deetz & Mumby, 1990; Sotirin & Tyrell, 1998). Though crucial to exposing the class bent of our field, these labels overlook its racial bias. In more contemporary terms, we might say that our professional preoccupation reflects the “corporate colonization” of organizational communication theory (Deetz, 1992). Yet, even this concept, as theorized to date, risks normalizing Whiteness. For instance, who most often builds their lives around the next corporate transfer, postponing children, avoiding community, and obsessing about home resale? Who tends to cast higher education as a purely strategic move

for career gain? In short, whose colonization are we lamenting? As noted above, we suspect that corporations colonize many people of color in different ways that, to date, are ignored by organizational communication studies. It follows that race-conscious scholarship will necessitate radical changes in our notions of what organizations, members, and work practices count.

We close this section with a symbolic illustration of our field's reverence for White(collar)ness. Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) conclude chapter 2 with a case study entitled, "The many Robert Smiths." There, we read how various members, janitor and receptionist included, interpret a senior accountant named Robert Smith. Even as the text airs the voices of some marginal members, they speak only of the mystery of Robert. In a kind of nominal inclusion, the wondering eyes of periphery members affirm our fixation on a virile, seemingly raceless, male professional.

Conclusion

From the outset, we recognized the need to carefully sort the implications of our analysis. Thus far, we have surfaced five implicit messages about race that characterize some of our field's foundational texts. We have argued that these common ways of framing race function to sustain raced organization, for they support and obscure the tacit Whiteness of much organizational communication theory. The question remains, however, what is the scope of our critique? We suggest that, although it pertains primarily to the depiction of our field in pedagogical contexts, our analysis indicates ways in which we can revise the racial subtext of organizational communication theory, both in the representation and conduct of scholarship.

We begin with the immediate concern of our analysis: how we represent organizational communication studies in core pedagogical texts. As they orient students to the field and its defining areas of theory and research, textbooks perform a political function. That is, they advance narratives of collective identity, which invite students to internalize a particular map of central and marginal issues, of legitimate and dubious projects (Agger, 1991; Litvin, 1997). Consider, for instance, the ramifications of our analysis for graduate students who teach introductory courses in organizational communication. The undergraduate texts they employ indoctrinate them regarding pedagogical concerns at lower levels of higher education, whereas graduate texts unwittingly imply that race does not merit scholarly attention. Given the vital role of textbooks in "disciplinary" socialization, we take a step back from our analysis to review broader representations of race across our sample of texts.

First, the reviewed texts tend to treat race more as a matter of practice, skill, or personal experience than of substantive theory. In the un-

dergraduate books, race appears most often as a contemporary trend—like changing technologies, the postindustrial age, or a globalized economy—with which students must be prepared to cope. When race makes a cameo in more advanced works, similar themes emerge. Recall, for example, Corman et al.’s (1995) chapters 29 and 30, which address gender and race respectively and are pitched at the level of storytelling, unlike the remaining chapters. However unwittingly, the narrative voice positions race and gender as subjective, pragmatic dilemmas, in contrast with and perhaps extraneous to more scholarly, theoretical issues. Consequently, students are permitted, if not encouraged, to understand abstract theory as race neutral and race as an atheoretical (or less theoretical) matter. This observation indicates at least two concrete steps toward altering the way we socialize students in foundational texts: (a) We can pitch discussions of race in voices and contexts that do not diminish their place in the hierarchy of “real” scholarly issues; and (b) we can explicate race as an ever-present feature of disciplined scholarship, already mapped onto organization theory, as well as a theoretical concern in its own right.

Second, the undergraduate texts in our sample addressed race considerably more than the graduate-level works. Our first point may help to explain this. If race is conceived as a matter of contemporary context and personal practice, it may seem a topic better suited to undergraduate texts, which are designed to provide more general and prescriptive coverage than sophisticated scholarly works. It could also be that a paucity of race scholarship in organizational communication is more difficult to gloss in a graduate-level text. Although the racial messages sent to undergraduate students may be problematic, at least these future practitioners are confronted with the basic notion that race is significant to contemporary organizational life. Our concern is that silence about race at the graduate level is all the more worrisome in terms of the field, for it increases the likelihood that the current racial foundation of organizational communication will be preserved. Presumably, graduate students will be shaping the discipline in the future. As such, the socialization message that race is a peripheral topic—that studying race may be a limiting career choice—becomes deeply consequential. If we do not interrupt the cycle of scholarly socialization about race, we are prone to repeat it. This point suggests another step toward change: We can emphasize race in our foundational graduate texts as a pressing research area, and these core works can provide a theoretical grounding for such research. For instance, we might explain and explore the racial paradox—that is, “the tension between imagining identities beyond race while recognizing the material reality of race as a fundamental organizing construct” (Flores & Moon, 2002, p. 181)—which has obvious implications for theorizing about organizational communication.

On that note, we observe a third representational pattern: Our foundational texts tend not to survey burgeoning literature from various disciplines, including our own, that engage race as a multifaceted, organized phenomenon (e.g., Alderfer, 1990, 1992, 2000; Allen, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001; Allen, Orbe, & Olivas, 1999; Amott & Matthaei, 1999; Asante & Davis, 1989; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Boje & Rosile, 1994; Boyce & Franklin, 1996; Branch, 2000; Brinson & Benoit, 1999; Buzzanell, 1999; Carter & Gushue, 1994; Chow, 1994; Cloud, 1999; M. Cox, 1988; T. Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; T. Cox & Nkomo, 1986; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Essed, 1991; Feagin, 1991; Fine, 2000; Foeman & Pressley, 1987; Grimes, 1996; Hafen, in press; Hall & duGay, 1996; Jackson, 2000; Knouse, Rosenfeld, & Culbertson, 1992; Kondo, 1990; Kossek & Zonia, 1994; Lindsley, 1998a, 1998b; Munshi, in press; Nakayama & Martin, 1999; Nkomo, 1992; Nkomo & T. Cox, 1990; Omi & Winant, 1986; Orbe, 1998; Orbe & Harris, 2001; Parameswaran, 2002; Parker, 2001; Pennington, 1999; Phillips & Hardy, 1997; Shuter & Turner, 1997; Sykes & Brown, 1997; Teboul, 1999; D. Thomas, 1990, 1993; D. Thomas & Proudford, 2000; Triandis & Malpass, 1971; Warren, 2001; Wharton, 1992; Zavella, 1985). Even if individual instructors or course coordinators opt to supplement a textbook with such readings, the message persists that race is not part of the organizational communication canon or mainstream. Hence, to augment our previous step toward change, we advocate active efforts to compile and review current research on race and organization in the core texts of the field. Our preliminary list demonstrates that an adequate amount of literature exists to extend and deepen treatments of race in our textbooks. However, we would be remiss if we did not broach the matter of raw materials—namely, the scarcity of organizational communication scholarship available to review.

Here, we tread into the realm of scholarly trends, beyond the scope of our analysis. Clearly, it has not been our purpose to review research and theory on race and organization, and yet, our critique and suggestions regarding textbooks are inevitably grounded in this larger scholarly context. After all, we can hardly expect textbooks to invent literatures, even as they bear some accountability for shaping the future of a field. It is our contention, then, that the field's available conceptions of race and organization, not merely those offered by textbooks, are chillingly simplistic. We submit that the field of organizational communication has developed resilient mechanisms of defense and deflection—framing tactics that permit us to dodge the racial roots of organizing, even as we claim (and, we believe, sincerely hope and intend) to address them. For instance, we are fascinated by the manner in which authors often invoke Brenda J. Allen's work as evidence of race-related scholarship in organizational communication studies. Ironically, the piece most often cited

(1995) actually criticizes the dearth of race research in our field, establishing a provisional agenda for future work. Suffice it to say that, if we continue to claim that the distinctiveness of our discipline lies in our conduct and teaching of critical inquiry and organizational justice, we are compelled to address race in more direct and complex ways, in the foundational texts of our discipline and beyond.

In sum, our analysis indicates promising ways to revise the racial subtext of the field, both in textbook depictions and the practice of theory and research. In particular, we suggest the following strategies:

1. Demonstrate the centrality of race to organizational life by integrating race-related issues throughout our foundational texts. We were heartened to observe that Conrad and Poole (2002) employed this approach in the most recent edition of their textbook. More specifically, this strategy for revision includes minimizing spatial and topical divisions that eclipse racialized power (e.g., avoid the confinement of race to diversity chapters, accounts of power, or identification that split cultural control from race and race from gender).

2. Engage race as a serious theoretical matter. This strategy includes exposing how race is already inscribed on extant scholarship, as well as demonstrating the relevance of race across theories, not merely to feminist perspectives or contemporary diversity management. It also entails developing complex theories of the ways in which race gets organized and organizations become raced.

3. Problematize the persistence of essential conceptions of race and develop alternatives to them. This strategy requires, first, that we point out and explain arrays of racial categories, as well as the heterogeneity within them, to avoid the tendency toward racial dualism or bifurcating race as a Black-White issue (see Flores & Moon, 2002). The strategy also prods us to create critical alternatives to “cultural difference” models of race. For example, we can examine the organizational (re)production of racial difference, analyze inequalities among differences, develop productive alternatives to “valuing and managing diversity,” and refuse homogeneous accounts of national culture. We believe that social constructionist perspectives (e.g., West & Fenstermaker, 1995) will provide particularly helpful guides for this type of revision.

4. Address domestic race relations in their own right. We encourage scholars to distinguish domestic from international issues and to develop cultural and critical organization theories that actually respond to the domestic struggles that kindled their popularity.

5. Probe the idea that we all are raced beings, instead of conflating race with people of color in general, and African Americans specifically. This strategy includes studying the organization of Whiteness—or, investigating White (collar) settings, members, practices, and theories as raced, not as universal or standard (see Grimes, 2002).

6. Study experiences relevant to members of various racial groups in diverse occupations and organizational contexts (i.e., not just African American professionals).

7. Expand our scope of analysis beyond the firm. This strategy for revision entails honing our historical consciousness, as well as broadening our understanding of the organization-society relationship. It also invites theoretical and empirical attention to labor that occurs beyond traditional organization boundaries (e.g., domestic labor).

Other organization scholars have articulated extensive agendas for racial inquiry (e.g., Allen, 1995; Nkomo, 1992; Nkomo & T. Cox, 1996), and we can also look to their work for potential blueprints. We concur with Flores and Moon (2002), who cautioned that “productive approaches to the study of race must balance critiques of racial categories with recognition of the material implications of those critiques” (p. 200).

Such revisions and developments are essential to the growth and health of organizational communication studies. Arguably, the current racial messages that dominate our texts cushion us from awkward yet important questions about our own work community, members, and practices. For instance, why has critical race theory, which increasingly abounds in other areas of communication study, not found a home in organizational communication? Why have people of color not gravitated to our field as they have to other areas of the discipline?⁷ Why has feminist organizational communication scholarship, which—despite calls to the contrary—is overwhelmingly about White women, made far greater inroads than critical race theory? It is tempting to fault such patterns for our lack of racial sophistication. To the contrary, we suggest that these patterns reflect or even follow the poverty of our racial attention span. Our core texts’ depiction of white-collar workplaces, work/ers, and professional norms as representative of “universal” interests and standards informs not only the class bent of our field (Cheney, 2000) but its profound Whiteness as well. We suspect that the Whiteness of our scholarship, not merely our scholars, helps to explain why White women and feminist perspectives have found a home in our field more readily than people of color and critical race theory. Cautiously, we can begin to extend this possibility to professional contexts, identities, and interaction more generally. For example, if crafting a “professional” self necessarily entails enacting Whiteness, it is neither surprising nor coincidental that White women have enjoyed greater corporate success than people of color. Thus, by examining the racial roots of our own field, we take a significant step toward understanding how organizing is deeply raced. We hope to join other organizational communication scholars in turning this step into a well-traveled path.

Crenshaw (1997) argues that “the ideology of White privilege maintains its invisibility through rhetorical silence” (p. 268). This article has

endeavored to articulate and dismantle subtle, disciplined tactics that disguise our participation in preserving the normative power of organized Whiteness. By no means are we committed to the precision or finality of our analysis. Our current ambition is to spark overdue dialogue about troubling, taboo questions. Our grander hope is to unearth and rebuild the racial foundation of organizational communication.

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¹ Although the U.S. Census Bureau (1996) designates Spanish/Hispanic origin as an ethnic category, we include it as a racial category, in keeping with more mundane classifications of race.

² At first glance, it may appear that chapter 11 assumes a similar tone. However, the chapter shifts to a more detached voice to consider “practical application” and “theoretical considerations” (p. 119).

³ It is important to note, however, that Eisenberg and Goodall omitted several of these references in their latest (2001) edition.

⁴ Far beyond our field, the feminist literature has rightfully received much criticism for its fixation on the concerns of White women (Collins, 1991; Davis, 1981; hooks, 1984, 1994; Mohanty, 1995; Thornton Dill, 1983). It is our sense, though, that many organizational communication scholars reproduce such critique without weighing its application to other areas of the field.

⁵ The third edition (2001) omits altogether the gender and race implications of the shift in power resources. Later, the text states that, though the numbers of racial minorities “in management positions has increased” dramatically, “nevertheless, racism and sexism continue to exist in corporations” (p. 208).

⁶ See Hafen (in press) for a cogent discussion of problematics of diversity training in U.S. corporate and educational settings.

⁷ In an analysis of textbooks, Shanklin (2000) hypothesized a similar connection between the “Whiteness” of the profession of anthropology and the scant coverage of race and racism in socio-cultural anthropology texts.

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