

Feeling Race: Theorizing the Racial Economy of Emotions

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Abstract

In this presidential address, I advance a theoretical sketch on racialized emotions—the emotions specific to racialized societies. These emotions are central to the racial edifice of societies, thus, analysts and policymakers should understand their collective nature, be aware of how they function, and appreciate the existence of variability among emoting racial subjects. Clarity on these matters is key for developing an effective affective politics to challenge any racial order. After the sketch, I offer potential strategies to retool our racial emotive order as well as our racial selves. I end my address urging White sociologists to acknowledge the significance of racism in sociology and the emotions it engenders and to work to advance new personal and organizational anti-racist practices.

Keywords

emotion, racialized emotions, racism, race, interests, feelings

“It is not possible to enslave men [sic] without logically making them inferior through and through. And racism is only the emotional, affective, sometimes intellectual explanation of this inferiorization.” — Frantz Fanon (1967b:40)

grammar (Bonilla-Silva 2011), the Latin Americanization of racial stratification in the United States (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich

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Many asked me why I selected race and emotions as the theme for my meeting. After all, I am known for work on racial theory, color-blind racism, racism and methodology, racial

2008), whiteness (Doane and Bonilla-Silva 2003), racial ideology among the Western nations of the world-system (Bonilla-Silva 2000), and a few other things, but not for work on emotions. Some even pondered why an old structuralist like me would be concerned about emotions? After all, structuralists believe that “impulses and emotions explain nothing,” as they are “always the results, either of the power of the body or the impotence of the mind” (Lévi-Strauss 1962:71). Ponder no more. Despite my historical allegiance to a version of structuralism,¹ I have been *feeling race* all my life. I felt race even before I knew what race was and long before I recognized myself as a Black Puerto Rican (Bonilla-Silva 2010) because, as James Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time* (1963:26), “Long before the Negro child perceives this difference [socially imposed White superiority and Black inferiority], and even longer before he understands it, he has begun to react to it, he has begun to be controlled by it.” Race has affected my life in and out of the academy, making me realize the terrible truth of Fanon’s (1967a:116) dictum about people of color being “overdetermined from without.” But I am not alone in feeling race—whether consciously or not, we *all* feel race because the category is produced not just “objectively” but subjectively. Much like class and gender, race cannot come to life without being infused with emotions, thus, racialized actors feel the emotional weight of their categorical location.

My interest in *racialized emotions* (RE henceforth), however, is not a personal exploration² belonging to what some White sociologists, blinded by their whiteness, label as “mesearch” (Hordge-Freeman, Mayorga-Gallo, and Bonilla-Silva 2011). I am convinced RE are fundamental social forces shaping the house of racism. Accordingly, my main goal in this address is to delineate the basic components necessary for theorizing the racial economy of emotions. Yet, RE cannot be properly analyzed without a structural understanding of racism. In previous work, I outlined such an understanding, namely the “racialized social system” approach (Bonilla-Silva 1997), and critiqued

those who see racial stratification (“race relations”) as the product of actors’ prejudice or irrationality. I argued that racism forms a social system organized around practices, mechanisms, cognitions, and behaviors that reproduce racial domination. Consequently, racism has a material foundation—Whites, as the dominant race, are invested in preserving the system because they receive tangible benefits, whereas non-Whites fight to change it. The driver of racial history then is not stupidity, ignorance, or irrationality, but the process of racial contestation.

Although racial affairs cannot be properly understood without a structural perspective on racism, I no longer regard racial domination as just a matter of presumably objective practices and mechanisms driven by the socioeconomic material interests of actors. Racial actors, both dominant and subordinate, simply cannot transact their lives without RE. While Whites believe the system is fair (Jensen 2005), the racially subordinate experience the unfairness of the system, leading each group to develop emotions that match their “perceptual segregation” (Robinson 2008). Accordingly, races fashion an emotional subjectivity generally fitting of their location in the racial order.

I hope to influence sociologists with this address in at least three ways. First, like the addresses of other ASA presidents before (most notably, Cecilia Ridgeway, Doug Massey, and Randall Collins), this address is a call for sociologists to take emotions seriously. Second, I specifically want to persuade scholars doing work on race of the need to expand their analytic scope beyond negative emotions. They need to comprehend that racial domination produces the entire emotional gamut: hate and love, disgust and pleasure, aversion and empathy. Finally, I delve into RE because without understanding their significance, the struggle against racism will always be incomplete. Eradicating racism will require a radical process to uproot its visible, “objective” components as well as demolish its emotional skeleton. We will need, as political scientist Brigitte Bargetz

(2015) has argued, an “affective politics of emancipation” rooted not in the hope for, but in the premise of, equality.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THEORIZING RACIALIZED EMOTIONS

Before outlining the basic components needed for theorizing RE, let me define a few terms. First, I focus on “racialized emotions” because I am not examining emotions in general, nor do I view them as universal, biologically-driven entities. I am not interested in people’s fear of heights or snakes, but the socially engendered emotions in racialized societies. According to Green (2013:961), these are “emotions related to race that people experience when they engage in interracial interaction.” I agree with the gist of Green’s definition, but add that RE need not be the product of social interactions. RE can surface from looking at a picture, reading a newspaper, watching a movie, or walking into—or even thinking about—a location (i.e., a neighborhood) (Smith et al. 2009). Second, I am not separating feelings (“mental experiences of body states”) and emotions (“physical states arising from the body’s responses to external stimuli”)³ because a growing segment of scholars in the field of emotions has moved past the Cartesian division between rationality and irrationality (Zembylas 2016). The most interesting work on emotions begins from the assumption that “reason” and emotion operate in tandem (Thoits 1989) where feelings and emotions are seen as co-constitutive. Finally, I label the effort “racial economy” because my goal is to map the social production of RE and how they suffuse all the “objective” practices and behaviors that comprise a racial order.

RE Are Group-Based, Relational Phenomena

RE are group-based and relational (Smith and Mackie 2015). Their group-based nature reflects the different positions of actors in

racialized societies. We are all social subjects as our bodies are “already and always inscribed within a social, cultural, historical, and political milieu as, for example, female and/or queer and/or of color and/or abled and/or aged” (Lee 2005:288). The relational component of RE is the product of race-making and racial interactions, both relational processes through and through. Whiteness, for example, cannot operate in isolation: it typically requires a binary racial construction where the Other is viewed as the opposite. This construction infuses dominant actors with beliefs and emotions about selves (e.g., good, beautiful) and Others (e.g., bad, ugly) that produce, for example, “negrophobia” (Whitney 2015). Let me illustrate this point: Whites fear Blacks in interracial encounters and many people of color experience anxiety and discomfort when entering “white spaces” (Anderson 2015). On Whites’ fear, I cite social justice writer Rebecca McCray (2015), who in a piece concerning the McKinney, TX, pool incident of 2015,⁴ reflected on her own racialized fears:

While it is my job to think and report deeply on race and justice in my waking life—by the way, I’m a white woman from a predominantly white Midwestern city—I have also instinctively, and unthinkingly, clutched at my purse while crossing paths with a black man on a dark street, then felt disgust at my actions. I have locked my doors while driving through the South Side of Chicago.

Once a group is racialized as “savage” and “dangerous,” its members are feared and seen in need of supervision and civilization (for an interesting example, see Kramer [2006] on Filipinos). Hence, McCray’s fear of Blacks is part of a collective phenomenon. RE are “not substances” in the interior of individuals (Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005:471), but transacted between actors who are already shaped by social relationships and history.

But does this mean there is no room for individuality? Although we are all “social individuals” (Marx 1977), each person has a

unique history of engagements in various sets of relations that partly accounts for their racial individuality (Griffiths and Scarantino 2008). Furthermore, because racialization is a continuous process, it does not guarantee uniformity among the racialized subjects. Therefore, although we can generally predict individuals' emotional responses based on their race, there is always room for racial deviance. For example, Jason, a college student participating in a study exploring White students' experiences taking multicultural studies courses (Cabrera 2012), challenged his grandfather's belief in the rumor that Michelle Obama's college thesis was titled *How to Kill Whities, Volume I*. This led him to be shunned by his family members:

I mean, I call home once a week, check on how my siblings and such are doing, and I called. They were very curt. They said they were busy. I have a pretty extended family and we all do keep in touch, and so at first I just thought I was hearing some bad schedules, but then as it became more and more consistent, I finally realized that I'm in the racial doghouse for daring to defend a Black person. (Cabrera 2012:391)

Jason was very close to his family, making this situation "very difficult" for him. However, he did not back down on his views because he believed he had to "first and foremost . . . be fair to everyone I can around me" (Cabrera 2012:391–92). Nevertheless, despite variance, the racial order is reproduced because interacting individuals are constrained by social relations, group belonging, and historically constituted emotional group norms. Most Whites follow the normative racial script because they have adopted dominant actors' emotional repertoire (Rosino 2017).

Embracing emotional norms is not, however, a blind process. Individuals, as Rafanell and Gorringer (2010) suggest, have "calculative agency." Domination, racial or otherwise, is not the product of totally unconscious, unreflexive actions, but the result of individuals' "dispositional, routinized activity, *constantly reinforced* by the practices, beliefs and

mutual monitoring of a collective" (Rafanell and Gorringer 2010:615). Individuals have agency,⁵ but in a racialized world the odds are stacked, which explains why most people comply with existing racial norms.

RE Are Central in the Production of Actors' Subjectivity

The modern subject is interpellated in various ways: as an individual, as a class and gender actor, and as a racial subject. Subjectivity, however, is not just an attribute externally injected into actors. The racial subject emerges because people experience, learn about, and interpret racialized relationships not just practically but emotionally (Denzin 1984). Individuals are racially "branded" (Preston 2010), and once branded recognize that racial status gives material (Lipsitz 2006) and ontological benefits to some (Mills 2003) and disadvantages to others. Although race becomes habitual, which reproduces normative RE, change is always latent; our racialized self is constantly being remade (re-branded) through big and small racial acts. These acts can be negative—lynching, police brutality, reinforcement of Jim Crow's racial etiquette, microgressions⁶—or positive—racial solidarity in struggles, everyday acts of kindness across the color line, interracial friendship and attraction. The constant retooling of the racial self usually produces more of the same, but it also creates the space for rupturing racialized habits (for interesting examples of breaks, see Matias, Henry, and Darland 2017).

The RE that shape actors' subjectivity are not individual emotions; they have histories and specific contexts of manifestation (Denzin 1984). As Ahmed (2004:120–21) remarks, "[F]eelings appear in objects, or indeed as objects with a life of their own, only by the concealment of how they are shaped by histories, including histories of production (labor and labor time), as well as circulation or exchange." Emotions appear, much like Marx argued about commodities, as fetishes—objects independent of the historical process and relations that made them. Yet actors' racial subjectivities and their accompanying

emotions are the product of historically-specific dynamics and do not generate innocent identities. In Fanon's (1967a:138) words, "the white man is not just The Other but also the master, whether real or imaginary." For instance, although whiteness is "[a] social relation" based on "a political project securing and protecting privileges in society whose ideals would seem to forbid them" (Olson 2004:xviii), the social relationships that produce whiteness are also emotionally charged and create identity (Moon 2013). As Mercer (2014:530) states,

People do not merely associate with groups, they can become those groups through shared culture, interaction, contagion, and common group interest. The social emotion of group identity cannot be reduced to biological bodies. Instead, emotion goes with identity: group-level emotion can be stronger than, and different from, emotion experienced as an individual; group members share, validate, and police each other's feelings; and these feelings structure relations within and between groups.

Individuals develop "affection for group members and, frequently, antipathy toward nonmembers" (Jasper and Polleta 2001:8). Nevertheless, as these subjectivities are not uniforms to be sported in school, there are variations in how individuals express and perform their identities. As Asante, Sekimoto, and Brown (2016:369) write about Blackness, an observation that applies to all racial categories, "[t]here is no authentic or universal Black experience, but the 'shades' of Blackness fluctuate based on locally specific racial politics, history of White supremacy, and interethnic relations among Blacks." Becoming White or non-White is thus bonded objectively and subjectively yet imperfectly.

Racial subjectivities are also not one-dimensional because actors exhibit multivalence (Snyder 2012)—their racial identities always intersect with other identities. Furthermore, while the affective force of our racial subjectivity is never "fully outside"

us—even tolerant Whites, as Hook (2011:111) points out, experience "a set of anxious, affective, bodily reactions in relation to the physical proximity of certain others"—our subjectivity can be altered and even changed through upheavals, experiences, interactions, and other means. The fluidity of racial identity can be glimpsed from the notion of "race traitor." John Brown and Clarence Thomas are clear examples of racial treason; given the importance of the subject for emancipatory politics, I expand on the topic here.

A group that has a very complicated, and clearly non-unitary racial identity, is Latinos (Morales 2018). As Prieto (2015:518) writes, Latino identity "is a complex and evolving process inflected by a whole host of social forces, including a personal history of immigration, national belonging, professional responsibilities and assimilationist pressures." Prieto's analysis of Latino border patrol agents demonstrates the various identities of Latinos and how they play out politically. While some Latino border agents exhibit *mano suave* (velvet glove) with immigrants, others relish in their toughness or *mano dura*. Miguel, a second-generation Latino, evinces a Trump-like *mano dura* stance on immigrants:

[T]hese are criminal people, I mean some of these people coming across, you have to be able to control that. . . . The way you know about that is by getting them in the station and rolling their fingerprints. People say, you know, that law is not right. You know, it's not morally right. I'm like, no, no, no it has nothing to do with moral issues, I'm talking about criminal aliens trying to get into, it's like, you're gonna stop people coming into your house, right? You peek in and see, do I know this person coming into my home? Who are you? Someone knocks, gains admittance, you're gonna say, "Hey, who are you? Are you a salesman or what are you?" But you're gonna find out who this person is, you're not gonna just let him, just let him in to your home. So why you gonna let him come into the United States as a government, as a sovereign nation? The

United States has got to be able to do that. There's only one way of doing it. (Prieto 2015:513–14)

Whites, despite their privileged location in the racial hierarchy, have their “race traitors” too. A good contemporary example is the group Redneck Revolt. They describe themselves as

. . . a national network of community defense projects from a broad spread of political, religious, and cultural backgrounds. It is a pro-worker, anti-racist organization that focuses on working class liberation from the oppressive systems which dominate our lives. In states where it is legal to practice armed community defense, many branches choose to become John Brown Gun Clubs, training ourselves and our communities in defense and mutual aid. (Redneck Revolt 2018)

The group justifies its anti-racism stand as follows:

White supremacy is a system that white working people have helped protect, but it is also used as a tool against all working people, with people of color impacted the most severely. Allegiance to a politics of white racism has only allowed the rich to continue to hold onto power, with no lifting effect to working class folks of any race. (Redneck Revolt 2018)

Members of Redneck Revolt are achieving their aims by inserting themselves “into overwhelmingly White spaces—NASCAR races, gun shows, flea markets in rural communities, and country music concerts—to offer a meaningful alternative to the White supremacist groups who often also recruit in those spaces” (Ware 2017). It is important to point out that this organization’s racial politics and the new White subjectivity it entails have a long lineage in American history—for example, the Black–White alliance during the Bacon Rebellion, the Populists of the late nineteenth century, and the White activists

working with poor Whites in the 1960s (Sonnine and Tracy 2011).

RE Generate a Hierarchical “Structure of Feelings”

All individuals in racialized societies experience RE, but their emotions are not considered equally. Boler (1999) names the dynamic through which the emotions of the dominant race become authoritative as “feeling power.” The dominant race’s feelings are normalized, producing “hegemonic emotional domination” (Matias 2016), whereas those of the subordinate are deemed dubious (see Turner’s [2015] notion of “emotional stratification”). A good example of this phenomenon is how the tears of White women are almost magical and command immediate concern (Accapadi 2007). For example, when members of feminist organizations discuss internal racial issues, White women’s tears “offer a place of comfort and even distraction (and) innocence,” whereas the tears of women of color in these interactions are seen as signs of “vulnerability . . . and a diversion from anti-racist change” (Srivastava 2006:78). A woman of color depicted this dialectic in the following way: “white women cry all the fucking time, and women of color never cry” (Srivastava 2006:61).

Another example of the hierarchical way in which RE operate is colorblindness, a “diss-course” that is “dangerous because Whites . . . position themselves as the knowledge bearers of race” (Matias 2016:14). Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) illustrate this well in their analysis of how the abstract liberal stance of colorblindness facilitates an approach to hiring that favors White applicants (their focus is on academic hiring, but their arguments apply to hiring in all professional occupations). One of the strategies they discuss is the “‘objective’ scrutiny of the [candidates’] CVs” (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017:559). By assuming that CVs are race-neutral, White professors can routinely reject candidates of color without feeling remorse or having any doubt. The existence of this emotional stratification explains why most

Whites cannot relate deeply to the RE of people of color. For instance, how many Whites can connect with the raw feelings Linda Chavers expressed in *Dame Magazine* after Officer Darren Wilson was not indicted for killing Mike Brown?

It is now a week since Darren Wilson was not indicted by a grand jury for shooting and killing Michael Brown. A week since he testified that he felt as if Brown was an “it,” “a demon” that would not die. A colleague tells me she and her husband are taking their 1-year-old son apple-picking. An old high-school friend posts pictures of a warm, wholesome Thanksgiving dinner. I want to scream, *Fuck your apples! Fuck your turkey! Fuck your holidays! Fuck your smiles! Fuck you! Fuck. Your. Children.* . . . How can I do anything, how can anyone do anything remotely normal like motherfucking apple-picking? (Chavers 2014)

Whites’ emotional hegemony does not mean their RE are completely functional and always reproductive of their racial standing. Although most Whites continued life as usual, stuffing themselves with turkey after Officer Wilson was not indicted, some did not (Holland and Swanson 2016). This divergent reaction from some members of the White community is not new, it also occurred in the aftermath of Emmett Till’s murder in 1955. Mace (2014:95) argues that this patently racist murder and the trial that ensued created the “Emmett Till generation”: “Regardless of race, Americans, galvanized by the brutal and insensate lynching of a fourteen-year-old boy, rallied around the cause of racial uplift, and these members of the Emmett Till generation would change the very nature of race relations in the United States.”

RE are not reliable mirror images of racial domination because they are often transacted in interracial encounters that, on occasion, yield unexpected outcomes (Holmes 2004). The racialized emotional hierarchy, however, is durable because individuals’ “emotional habitus” (Gould 2009) schools them on how

to feel and react to bodies; in the case of Whites, on how to fear bodies seen as different, dangerous, and inferior, and to empathize with those seen as members of the in-group. Variability makes racial change a permanent societal feature, but continuity is the order of the day.

RE Are “Rational” and Produce “Affective Interests”

RE are “rational,” but their rationality must be understood from the specific social, cultural, and ontological position of the racial groups, and not from a narrow, economic perspective.⁷ Racial groups have rationalities (the plural is essential) connected to their specific position in society and they need not converge—the economic rationality of a group, for example, does not always converge with its emotional rationality (Jackson 2011). The rationality of subordinate groups’ RE is directly derived from racial domination, but how does one understand the rationality behind dominant actors’ RE? How does one understand Whites’ fears of Muslim immigrants as “terrorists” or Blacks as “murderers” when the odds of a Black person killing a White person or of an American being killed by a refugee are infinitesimal (Nowrasteh 2016)? Whites’ RE are based on unreal fears about racial Others, but they are expressive of how they *see* and *understand* a racial regime.

More significantly, although racial domination is partly based on falsehoods (Whites’ contemporary pains are not caused by Blacks, Muslims, or undocumented workers), domination itself produces both material (Mills 2003) and *emotional* well-being among members of the dominant race. (Resistance to domination, as I will argue, also produces emotional well-being among the racially oppressed and is central for their efforts to improve their circumstances.) Because racial actors derive emotional well-being from racial domination or resistance, they develop *affective interests* in keeping (or upgrading) their standing vis-à-vis racial Others. For example, throughout history Whites in the

United States have struggled to maintain their standing relative to Blacks and have viewed them as their “symbolic index” to judge their status (Marable 1983). Whenever Whites have felt too socially or economically close to Blacks, they have lashed out. This was the case in the 1980s that propelled the election of Ronald Reagan (Marable 1983), and it was the case in 2016 that led to the election of Donald Trump. In both moments, Whites’ relative standing to Blacks declined, hence, racist appeals found fertile soil (Bonilla-Silva 2018). Therefore, analysts who focus on the falsity of Whites’ emotions, much like those who interpret ideology as false, miss their true matrix and social power. Whites’ emotions, like race itself, are socially real and have a materiality that cannot be ignored or assumed unchangeable.

Whites’ emotional rationality helps explain why working-class Whites support Trump. Even though his policies (e.g., tax cuts, deregulation) ultimately benefit capitalists, making it seem like the White masses are duped (Ioanide 2015), from an affective logic, they are not. Given that Whites’ identities are fundamentally built on notions of freedom and being self-made, as hard-working people in opposition to racial Others whom they categorize as lazy and undeserving (powell 2012, particularly chapter 6), their support for Trump makes emotional sense. They love Trump not just because he promised them a few concrete things (e.g., bringing jobs back, draining the swamp, and even taxing the wealthy), but because he says he is going to build a wall (control undocumented workers), deal with crime in cities such as Chicago (control Black folks), ban Muslims from coming to America (America as a Christian nation), and “bomb the shit out of ISIS” (control the Other outside America) (Tarnopolsky 2017). In short, Trump connects with the White masses by offering them emotional appeasement.

Actors’ RE are real and rational, whether derived from the objective conditions of domination (the case of the racially subaltern) or from their partially distorted subjective understanding of the world (the case of the

dominant race). When Whites express anger because people of color take “their jobs” or exhibit disgust toward minorities’ presence in “their” neighborhoods, their emotions are real and consequential. Only by understanding the power of RE and the affective interests they reflect can incidents such as a New York police officer raping Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, with a broomstick make sense. Officer Volpe, the man who performed this brutal act, was joyful while inserting “a broken broomstick approximately six inches up Louima’s rectum” and extracting it “covered with blood and feces” (Ioanide 2015:63). He justified his action as teaching “niggers . . . how to respect police officers” and proudly announced to his fellow officers afterward that “I broke a man down” (Ioanide 2015:63). Louima’s case also illustrates the affective interests and RE of the racially subordinated. Unlike in most cases of police brutality, the resistance of the Haitian community forced a moral crisis and changed White public opinion in New York City. People of color’s resistance produced guilty verdicts and generated “collective satisfaction” in their communities (Ioanide 2015).

All Racialized Groups Experience “Positive” and “Negative” Emotions

Work on RE has mostly focused on “negative”⁸ emotions, such as Whites’ hatred and anger (Pardy 2010), and the sadness, anxiety, and shame of the racially subaltern (Wilkins and Pace 2014). This approach seriously limits our understanding of RE, as all actors experience the full range of emotions. Whites, to highlight a positive emotion that has not received much attention, derive satisfaction and even pleasure in domination, while the subaltern derive the same emotions from resistance. An example of the latter is how enslaved Africans were never completely subjugated. They created the “potential space” (LaMothe 2012) to maintain their humanity in slave quarters and even in “illicit parties” held outside the plantations. On the latter, ex-slave Austin Steward wrote,

Every dusky face was lighted up, and every eye sparkled with joy. However ill fed they might have been, here, for once, there was plenty. Suffering and toil was forgotten, and they all seemed with one accord to give themselves up to the intoxication of pleasurable amusement. (Camp 2002:552)

“In the context of enslavement,” as Camp (2002:552) underscores, “such exhilarating pleasure gotten by illicit use of the body must be understood as important and meaningful enjoyment, as personal expression, and as oppositional engagement of the body.”

Pictures of lynching parties with Whites literally posing proudly provide a clear example of their pleasure in domination, a practice Memmi (2000:67) characterizes as “a kind of deranged ecstasy in defending the mythic integrity of the white race.” Lynchings were in fact often public, well-attended festivities—pictures taken, food served, souvenirs sold or extracted from the victims, creating what Hall (1979) labels “folk pornography.” Whites’ pleasure in domination can also be discerned from police officers’ interactions with Black and brown subjects (Hahn and Jeffries 2003, particularly chapter 3) or from the nonchalance exhibited by American soldiers toward Abu Ghraib prisoners (Ioanide 2015). This pleasure is legitimated by the White masses as the surveillance of people of color reflects their racialized sentiments on punishment (Harkin 2014). The late Ossie Davis described a horrible incident in his life that illustrates White police officers’ pleasure in domination:

One day, when I was no more than six or seven years old, I was on my way home from school when two policemen called out to me from their car. “Come here boy. Come over here.” They told me to get in the car, I got in, and they carried me down to the precinct. There was no sense of threat or intimidation in them. I was not afraid; neither was I upset. They laughed at me, but the laughter didn’t seem mean or vindictive. They kept me there for about an hour. No attempt was made to call my Mama, who might very well have been worried that I had not come home

from school. We didn’t even have a phone at that time. Anyway, I went along with the game of black emasculation; it seemed to come naturally. Later, in their joshing around, one of them reached for a jar of cane syrup and poured it over my head as if it was the funniest thing in the world. I laughed, too. Then the joke was over. The ritual was complete. They gave me several hunks of peanut brittle and let me go. I ate up the candy right away and went home. I never told Mama or Daddy. It didn’t seem all that important. But for whatever reasons, I decided to keep the entire incident to myself. They were just having some innocent fun at the expense of a little “nigger boy.” Yet, I knew I had been violated. Something very wrong had been done to me; something I would never forget. This was happening to me at the age of six or seven. The culture had already told me what this was and what my reaction to this should be: not to be surprised; to expect it; to accommodate it; to live with it. I didn’t know how deeply I was scarred or affected by that, but it was still a part of who I was. (Marable 2000:9)

Participants in Trump rallies clearly exemplify pleasure in domination. Egged on by comments from Trump such as, “If you see someone getting ready to throw tomatoes knock the crap out of them” (Saramo 2017), his supporters rejoice with every insult, put-down, taunt, and threat he makes, and some engage in violent acts against those targets inside and outside the venues (Saunders 2016). For instance, in June 2018, Esteban Guzmán, a 27-year-old Mexican American from California, was insulted by a Trumpista woman. The video recorded by Guzman’s mother shows a White woman telling Guzman’s mother to “go back to Mexico” (Selk 2018). Guzmán then asks her, “Why do you hate us?” She replies, “Because you are Mexicans.” Guzman states, “We are honest people,” and the woman, using Trump-like language, says, “Yeah, rapists. Drug dealers, rapists and animals.”

A fairly important point of clarification needs to be made at this juncture. So-called

“racist Whites” or agents of racial control such as police officers are not the only ones who derive pleasure from racial domination. All Whites, whether consciously or not, participate in various ways in maintaining racial order, and hence, on occasion, derive a degree of satisfaction from enforcing racial boundaries. Arguing that there is satisfaction and even pleasure in racial domination is a political rather than a moral claim. It does not mean Whites experience this emotion constantly or without trepidation and doubt. Racial pleasure, retooling Lacan’s and Žižek’s ideas, is “enjoyment intermingled with suffering; it is a type of painful arousal poised on the verge of the traumatic; an enjoyment that stretches the subject beyond the bounds of the pleasurable” (Hook 2017:607). To restate one of my main points, RE, whether positive or negative, are collective products expressed and felt by most members of a racial group. Thus, the video of the 2015 McKinney Texas pool party incident referenced above shows most Whites acting as deputized agents of racial control. However, some whites, like Brandon Brooks, the teenager who shot the video, commit acts of emotional deviance. The multiple videos that garnered media attention in the spring and summer of 2018, such as the lawyer who berated employees and customers for speaking Spanish in a New York restaurant, the racially overzealous Starbucks employees in Philadelphia who denied Blacks access to bathrooms, and the White women who called the police on a group of Blacks in Oakland for the crime of barbecuing while Black and on an 8-year-old Black girl in San Francisco for selling water without a permit, are also examples of regular White folks acting as agents of racial control (for references about all these incidents, see Guynn 2018). The implications of these events are serious: Whites’ RE are not the expressions of bad apples, but of average White people.

RE Are Often Experienced Intersectionally Rather Than in Unitary, Categorical Fashion, but . . .

Mirchandani (2003:721) argues that social scientists have paid “little or no attention . . .

to the racialized dimensions of emotion work.” Emotionality, in Mirchandani’s (2003:722) view, occurs simultaneously in “gendered, class-based, and racialized hierarchies.” Therefore, she asks analysts to examine the ways “individuals occupy social locations which are relational and shifting” to correctly appreciate their emotions (Mirchandani 2003:729). Mirchandani’s analysis of self-employed businesswomen illustrates her point as it reveals that White women manage their emotions well because they have an advantageous race–class position. In contrast, women of color suppress many of their emotions, particularly when dealing with White customers, because of their subordinated race–class position. In other work, Mirchandani (2012) documents how Indian call-center workers are trained to be “transnational servants” and endure extraordinary abuses from First World callers. The intersectional experience of RE is also evident in work on Black students in predominantly White colleges that shows Black men have to exercise emotional restraint to appear non-threatening around Whites while Black women are expected to be strong. These emotional labor strategies lead Black students to suppress their real emotions: Black college men moderate their anger and downplay the significance of racism (Wilkins 2012), and Black college women hide emotions that denote vulnerabilities to signify strength (Beaufoeuf-Lafontant 2007). For similar findings in the workplace, see Wingfield (2012).

Ridgeway (1997:220) has advanced the idea that salient identities (e.g., race and gender) “become nested within the prior, automatic categorization of that person as male or female and take on slightly different meanings as a result.” Recent research, however, has revealed that intersectional emotions are perhaps somewhat more variegated (Smith, LaFrance, and Dovidio 2017). For instance, participants in face recognition trials are quicker to recognize anger when displayed on the faces of Black men and women than on the faces of White men and women. When asked to categorize happy expressions, respondents recognized this emotion more

quickly in Black male and White female faces than in Black women's faces. These findings suggest *some* RE are viewed stereotypically (White women are happy) while others are understood in a more complex way (*Black women* are angry) (this finding fits well with Ridgeway and Kricheli-Katz's [2013] argument of "intersectional binds").

The growing intersectional body of work on emotions shows the theoretical, empirical, and political importance of exploring the affective weight of the "multidimensional politics of inequality" (McCall and Orloff 2017). For example, to ascertain why White women, White working-class men, White millennials, or the White middle- and upper-middle class supported Trump in the 2016 election, one needs to examine the race-class-gender nexus (powell 2007). Although most analysts believe these votes for Trump were race-based, other factors, such as sexism (Setzler and Yanus 2018) and Christian nationalism (Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018), were equally important predictors. Accordingly, analysts must resist the notion of the White Trump supporter as a monolith. Jaffe (2018) has analyzed the various motivations White women had for supporting Trump. She claims that White women of means voted their class interest, "deplorables" felt like giving a blow to elite women, middle-class White women had "security concerns," working- and middle-class evangelical women supported Trump for "moral" reasons (his pro-life stance), and many working-class White women were "family values" voters. Jaffe (2018) thus concludes:

To assume that "women" would feel a kinship with Hillary Clinton that transcended their other identities proved to be a mistake in this election cycle, though one should always remember that Clinton's popular vote victory was significant and Trump's occupation of the Oval Office is a trick of the Electoral College. There are many concerns that drove women to the polls (and that kept them away) last November, and the left is going to have to figure out a way to challenge the sexism and racism whipped up by Trump without making the mistake of

assuming that all those who voted for Trump are purely motivated by such impulses.

Notwithstanding that thinking intersectionally "can be a distinct advantage when trying to understand how particular inequities are re/made in places," the approach does not deter analysts from concentrating on the "primacy of racism" (or patriarchy or capitalism) (Gillborn 2015:283). RE may be perceived and experienced intersectionally, but the analytic "dynamism between interlocking social systems does not preclude *beginning* from racial analysis" (Harris and Leonardo 2018:16). The intersectional analysis of emotions is a productive development in the field, but as Bilge (2013) cautions, one must be vigilant about the "whitening of intersectionality." In Bilge's (2013:413) view, "race in intersectionality (work)" must be re-centered as this is "vital in the face of widespread practices that decenter race in tune with the hegemonic postracial thinking." "Domesticating intersectionality" to gain academic acceptance violates what Crenshaw (1991), Collins (1990), Lorde (1984), and other pioneers of this approach intended: "intersectionality as a tool of *analysis* and *resistance*" (Harris and Leonardo 2018:17; emphasis added).

RE "Do Things" and, as Such, Have a Materiality

Following the pioneering work of Ahmed, RE "do things," that is, they are a constitutive force. As Ahmed (2004:119) writes,

Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and collective.

Emotions move, circulate, and produce "identities and transform signs" (Lewis and Tierney 2013:291). Jasper (1998:400) suggests that emotion is "an action or state of mind that makes sense only in particular circumstances." Audre Lorde's (1984:32) experience of taking

a bus as a child and realizing a White woman did not want to sit by her exemplifies the movement and power of emotions:

And suddenly I realize there is nothing crawling up the seat between us; it is me she doesn't want her coat to touch. The fur brushes my face as she stands with a shudder and holds on to a strap in the speeding train. Born and bred a New York City child, I quickly slide over to make room for my mother to sit down. No word has been spoken. I'm afraid to say anything to my mother because I don't know what I have done. I look at the side of my snow pants secretly. Is there something on them? Something's going on here I do not understand, but I will never forget it. Her eyes. The flared nostrils. The hate.

Lorde describes an emotion displayed by a White woman—she labeled it hate, but most likely it was disgust (Kim 2016)—that affected her body. The young Audre Lorde's skin became a “border that feels” (Ahmed and Stacey 2001:6). As a child, Lorde metabolized the emotion into shame, but in adulthood, it morphed into anger. Lorde's feelings are not just the product of a specific interracial encounter, as all racial interactions have a predicate: “past histories that stick to the present . . . and allow the White body to be constructed as apart from the Black body” (Ahmed 2004:126). Her story is strikingly similar to Fanon's in *Black Skin, White Masks*. After hearing a child say, “Look, a Negro” and “Mama, see the Negro. I am frightened!” Fanon (1967a:112–14) writes:

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly. . . . Where shall I shelter from now on? I felt an easily identifiable flood mounting out of the countless facets of my being.

These examples illustrate how RE “emerge [and affect] surrounding people and spaces”

and “are not simply feelings that are generated inside an individual and remain within; instead, they emerge to affect surrounding people and spaces” (Kim 2016:457).

The materiality of RE is not just embodied but can be imprinted in spaces. In fact, the subfield of emotional geography examines the interplay between emotions and space, as race is reproduced not only ideologically but through “spatial practices and processes” (Hankins, Cochran, and Derickson 2012:381). Held (2017), for example, discusses overt racializing strategies in gay spaces such as “door policies” and more subtle ones such as “the look” and “the touch.” A participant in her study describes “the look” as follows:

Joanne: Ehm, one of the things what's difficult and different about racism which is, like, really hard to explain for some people . . . sometimes, like, this is hard for people to grasp—other than the people who have experienced it—but sometimes it's just the way that someone looks at you and you can tell by the way that they look at you that they are racist. They look at you like an insect that wants to be squashed, you know. So when you go into that sort of environment, if you are on your own and you say to another white person, “blah-blah, I don't like that person, that person doesn't like me, they are racist,” they're, like, “No, don't be silly.” But if you are with another Black person, they will know instantly because they all had that feeling before. (Held 2017:546)

Consequently, racialized space produces comfort for some and discomfort for others (DiAngelo 2006). Joanne and her friends of color feel uncomfortable in White spaces, much like Whites feel uncomfortable in spaces where they do not rule, an experience that triggers their “white fragility” (DiAngelo 2018). Spatial comfort/discomfort is not symmetrical, however, given that Whites, as the dominant race, rule most of the social real estate. Even in spaces they do not dominate, “[Whites] seek out, retreat to, and carve out protected spaces reserved for white use”

(Schneider 2018:705). This dynamic pressures people of color to do their best to provide “racial comfort” to Whites even in White-controlled spaces (Robinson 2008).

RE Are Experienced with a Degree of Ambivalence, Therefore, Can Change

Emotions are typically studied as discrete, independent entities that can be coded as 0 or 1: a person is happy or sad, anxious or relaxed, ashamed or proud. Nevertheless, recent work shows that emotions are not stable and exhibit a degree of fluidity (for a recent discussion on mixed emotions, see Larsen 2017). Benski and Langman (2013) suggest emotions are best seen as amorphous states that tend to occur in “emotional constellations.” In terms of RE, for example, the fear and disgust generated by racial moral panics (e.g., Trump’s demonization of immigrants, Muslims, and Blacks) create simultaneously the “pleasure of surveillance” (Irvine 2008:10). Likewise, psychoanalyst Gillian Straker (2004:407) argues that the enactment of racism allows Whites to escape anxiety, shame, and guilt through the mechanism of disavowal as “such enactments are unconsciously experienced as deeply gratifying in the mode of *jouissance*, as described by Lacan.”

Because ambivalence is often present in emotional exchanges, change in one’s RE is possible. As former ASA President Smelser (1997:7) forcefully argued, “ambivalence forces us to reason even more than preferences do” because “conflict may be a stronger motive for thinking than is desire.” Smelser’s argument has found empirical support in the field of conflict resolution, where researchers have discovered that in situations where options are ambiguous and people understand they are mutually dependent, “cooperation is much easier to achieve” (Lindner 2009:39). Although feelings may be transient, facilitating “creative moments of affect as a means of solidarity and political mobilization,” one must never lose sight “of how (emotions) are woven into the political and economic fabric, and thus how emotions are used to politically

mobilize gender, sexuality, race, and class” (Bargetz 2015:584). Ambivalence is central for the possibility of changing RE, but there are no guarantees (for a general review of the “dual nature of ambivalence,” see Rothman et al. 2017).

An example of how RE are experienced ambivalently appears in *White Folks* (Lensmire 2017). Erin, a White woman who works at a clinic, admits to having different bodily responses based on her customers’ race, and she acknowledges feeling terrible about her reactions:

Racism is the first hair on the back of your neck stands up, 20-year-old Black male—not the 20-year-old white male. I thought, “You do it.” That’s where that profiling comes from. . . . I think we deal with that subconsciously every day. I recognize it. Sometimes I don’t recognize it. I’m just appalled sometimes what the staff at the clinic will say. “You’re doing this for that? I wouldn’t give them the time of day.” So I see myself as being more tuned in and I was just sort of appalled to think that, you know, I really do have a certain amount of that going on. (Lensmire 2017:77)

Erin’s ambivalence allows her to realize not only how her peers react to Blacks, but also how she experiences the same emotions. However, because emotional ambivalence does not guarantee the direction of outcomes, it can lead to behavior that reproduces racial domination even among members of the subordinated races. For instance, Rakesh, an Indian CEO of an investment company in India, recognized the preferential treatment Whites receive in his line of work and stated that he had “still not got over this colonialism” (Ulus 2015:897). Yet he hired a White woman as his head of sales and justified his decision as follows:

If I felt so bad, I should not have appointed Patricia. . . . I went with the winning formula, because it was my company, I had to protect the interest of my—my company is

greater than me. So I never felt bad for it, I was in fact happy. (Ulus 2015:897)

The theoretical sketch on RE I presented is driven by my belief that to dismantle racism, an analysis of the emotions at play in racial transactions is essential. Consequently, in the next section I offer ideas on how to contest RE.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE: TOWARD A “FEELING OF EQUALITY”

“To talk solely about the material conditions of race, or mere dignity and respect is not enough to achieve the goal of inclusion.”
— Janine Young Kim (2016:500)

Kim (2016:500) forcefully advocates for a “feeling of equality” whereby all members of a polity share “anger and grief [about racial inequality and violence], not from sympathy for the other but in sympathy with the other” as a precondition for changing the racial order. However, to nurture this feeling of equality, a number of prerequisites must be met. First, the analytic point of departure for transforming RE is the fact that our subjectivities are deeply racialized and buttressed by exclusionary practices in schools, neighborhoods, the job market, our racist culture, and segregated lifestyles (e.g., limited substantive cross-racial interaction). Assuming a universal subject à la Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* ([1759] 2011) sidesteps that people of color are not part of Whites’ moral universe (Mills 1997), which limits Whites’ capacity to empathize with “sufferers” of color.

Racial identity becomes “deep” as members of racial groups relate in quasi-family fashion (Cheliotis 2010). For people of color, as Du Bois stated in *Dusk of Dawn* ([1940] 2011:117), “the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult,” while for Whites it is “a claim of belonging and membership” (powell 2012:141). Nevertheless, as I have underscored throughout this address, we are not condemned by history.

Subjectivity can be deracialized through a concerted affective political strategy to foster mutuality. Ahmed (2004) urges transforming the discursive “ground” that produces RE, but I believe that direct engagement with the actors who transact them is just as important. This is feasible because people’s subjectivities are not eternal, essential, or unitary (Hall 1996). All racial identities “[are] contingent, historically produced, and transformable through collective and individual human endeavor” (Frankenberg 1993:233). Altering White racial identity, for instance, is bolstered by the fact that subjectivity is intersectional, which produces “shades of white[ness]” (Perry 2002). “Marginal whites” (Rich 2010) are particularly more ambivalent and uncertain about their whiteness. Given their restricted access to the “wages of whiteness” (Roediger 1991) and their spatial and physical proximity to people of color in neighborhoods, schools, and other venues, poor Whites have historically exhibited more variability in their RE toward people of color than have elite Whites (Forret 2006). Nevertheless, even though racial subjectivity is not a perfectly tuned machine and poorer Whites display vulnerabilities, “hegemonic whiteness” (Hughey 2010) prevails because the fractures of whiteness heal fast. Poor Whites, for the most part, follow the dominant White script because “[they] *interpenetrate* and inhabit the same assumptions and definitions of Whiteness to give their experience meaning” (Moss 2003:116).

Second, the racially dominant must adopt a politics of recognition for progressive racial change to occur. They must acknowledge racial domination and its concomitant feeling order as well as the real racial history of the world that produced them (Ricatti 2013). In the specific case of the United States, this will involve coming to terms not only with the injustices faced by African Americans, but also the genocide of Native peoples and its “intergenerational psychological consequences” (Whitbeck et al. 2004:119), the colonial status of Puerto Rico and its repercussions (Collado-Schwarz 2012), and the nation’s treatment of all people of color. The

politics of recognition, however, will not be the result of rational argumentation and debate, as modernity's episteme is imperial and White-centered (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). Instead, it will be based on the experiences accumulated from race-based and anti-colonial movements of the South (Santos 2018), forcing the acknowledgment of culpability and the enactment of policies to eliminate racial injustice (Gunn and Wilson 2011). For example, Adams, O'Brien, and Nelson's work (2006) on racism and Hurricane Katrina illustrates how adopting the perspective of the racially oppressed helps Whites appreciate the significance of racism, attain an accurate understanding of racial history, and reduce their commitment to ignoring racism. Similarly, research on consumer discrimination finds that Whites with higher levels of appreciation for the impact of racism are more likely to believe in the value of openly challenging discriminatory behavior and even to share the anger and anxiety victims experience (Williams et al. 2013).

Third, addressing RE will require racial justice rather than one-dimensional approaches to structural racial inequality such as reconciliation, apologies, racial healing, cosmopolitanism, or developing tolerant subjects. Racial justice is not simple "diversity"; adding a few anti-minority or post-racial people of color to organizations does not lead to substantive change (Carbado and Gulati 2013). Racial justice is based on targeting "the economic motives, entrenched habits, and unconscious urges that sustain racial domination" (Gooding-Williams 2014:165–66) and requires a morally-driven politics. Because racial justice requires a long-term view, one must also imagine racial utopia and the specifics of a new racial world. Central to imagining racial justice is acknowledging, rather than ignoring, that Whites' RE are characterized "by guilt, defensiveness, anger, sadness, shame, and/or discomfort" (Matias 2016:7). Thankfully, Whites' RE are not immutable, which makes them potential candidates for alliance (Sue 2017:712).

Finally, three emotions will be central for changing the racial order of things. First is

anger. Anger has gotten a bad rap in the sociology of emotions and mental health, yet "silencing anger justifies and perpetuates domination 'by silencing the voices of the oppressed, labelling anger as 'loss of control,' as 'emotionalism,' or as neurotic' (Lyman 2004:134)" (Hattam and Zembylas 2010:24). Anger is an indispensable emotion for the cognitive and emotional liberation of the racially subaltern, as it increases group identification and solidarity (Kessler and Hollbach 2005). In short, anger is literally "a call for action" (Ahmed 2015:174).

Nevertheless, anger must not be glamorized; it can be an all-consuming force that contributes to trauma, leads to depression, and lowers people of color's sense of well-being (Pittman 2011). This is why bell hooks (1995:20) qualifies her stand on anger by pointing out that anger is *potentially* useful when connected to "a passion for freedom and justice that illuminates, heals, and makes redemptive struggle possible."

The second emotion essential for altering RE is empathy. Without empathy, mutuality and respect are impossible. Because Whites have been at the top of the racial hierarchy, they have displayed what Beeman (2007) calls "emotional segregation" or a lack of empathy toward people of color. Lacking empathy (or having empathy only toward one's race) has been correlated with outcomes in capital punishment trials (Lynch and Haney 2010) and not "feeling other-race pain" (Sessa et al. 2014). Nonetheless, because RE are not fixed biological entities, one can envision practices to alter them. For instance, experimental work has shown that empathy can be developed through the recategorization of actors in terms of commonalities (Gaertner and Dovidio 2012), or even through acts as simple as tapping one's hand with another person's hand (Azevedo et al. 2013). Finally, because there is variance in the RE of Whites, some exhibit more empathy toward people of color and share their emotions (anxiety, anger, sadness) when they see racial injustice happening (Baker and Meyer 2011).

Although research findings on empathy are quite suggestive, I must caution against what Boler (1999) calls “passive empathy.” To challenge the racial order, empathy must foster a political will to act. To develop this resolve, we must reverse the rationalistic view on change that assumes that removing “goodwill Whites”’ bad emotions about people of color will lead to the automatic disappearance of their problematic beliefs (Jones 2004). Instead, as Ryden (2007) intimates, to feel *with* people of color, Whites must experience catharsis through crises and shocks (e.g., be challenged frontally about racial matters, have racial explosions in jobs or similar settings), as that is the road for recognizing racial Others as truly part of the Same.

The last key emotion for reshaping RE is love. Here I am not conjuring romantic love, but the “political love” (Hardt 2011) necessary for transforming the world. Chabot (2008:812) argues that this love requires

. . . consistent effort by everyone involved, and it does not become meaningful until we leave our comfort zone and exert ourselves for other people. Through such effort, we develop an orientation toward fellow human beings and our social worlds that is based on giving rather than just receiving.

This radical vision on love is not a dainty one; it recognizes the need for self-love⁹ by the oppressed and even the need for force—for example, the presence of soldiers and federal agents to guarantee Blacks’ access to schools during the 1960s (Nussbaum 2013). Freire (1998:40) describes this kind of love as “armed love” or “the fighting love of those convinced of the right and the duty to fight, to denounce, and to announce.” It is the love that Martin Luther King believed was absolutely necessary for changing the world while maintaining our humanity. As he beautifully stated:

We must be hammers shaping a new society rather than anvils molded by the old. This not only will make us new men [sic] but will give us a new kind of power. . . . It will be power infused with love and justice that will

change dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. (King 1968:3–4)

Leaving aside King’s belief that non-violent resistance was the only way of achieving real change, his idea of “power infused with love and justice” is crucial. On this point, Chabot (2008:813), using King’s and Gandhi’s ideas, challenges us to “expand our social capacity for revolutionary love” by changing “our practical ways of life, both in private and public spheres.” Following Chabot, I end this address with some observations about RE in our sociological house and with a call to change “our practical ways of life, both in private and public spheres.”

FEELING RACE IN THE SOCIOLOGICAL HOUSE

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”
— James Baldwin (1962)

Sociologists are not, and can never be, above the social fray. The various social cleavages we study are part of who we are as subjects and help shape our organizations. Despite the historical whiteness of sociology (Ladner 1973), we have not faced the essential social fact that race affects us systemically. Hence, in this final section I discuss four central ways in which whiteness shapes the emotions of sociologists of color in our “white public spaces.”¹⁰

Inclusive Exclusion: On (Not) Belonging

The formal integration of sociology departments in the 1970s did not involve the full integration of sociologists of color. Like most colleges and universities, sociology departments opened their doors to a few sociologists of color without changing their organizational practices. Conyers and Epps (1974:232) characterized sociology in the 1970s as “dominated by whites” and argued that “the substantive content as well as the epistemology of the discipline [were] determined by whites.”

Since “integration,” sociologists of color became “citizens” of their departments but felt (and still feel) Whites’ resentment (Lewis 1973) and experience high levels of alienation (Margolis and Romero 1998; Romero 2017). This is unfortunate but not surprising, as research shows that people of color have fewer social ties and receive less support from their co-workers than do Whites (Sloan, Newhouse, and Thompson 2013).

Perhaps the most inclusionary act of exclusion is not being incorporated into the all-important informal networks of power, a practice documented in many fields (Bernier 2000). Vital discussions about departmental matters, such as who will be the next chair or which job candidates should be invited for interviews, are often casually considered in gatherings among White colleagues in bars, birthday celebrations, and other private events (Hordge-Freeman et al. 2011). Faculty and students of color usually realize in departmental meetings and other formal events that their White colleagues have already made decisions, thus feeling the pain of “inclusive exclusion.”

Family Matters: Comfort in the White House

Whites are a racialized group (Lewis 2004) and in sociology, like in the world at large, they mesh in a web of group affiliations. They help one another, become friends, teach one another the ins and outs of academic life, and share valuable information about survival in the business (Cross 2017; Thayer-Bacon 2011). Therefore, White sociologists feel more at ease interacting with their White colleagues; after all, they are all members of the same race and share many interests, perceptions, views, and RE. Obviously, sociologists of color form a kinship group too, but their relatively small size in departments, internal racial and ethnic diversity, and limited power reduces the protection their kinship might provide. Overall, Whites feel quite comfortable in departments, whereas sociologists of color consistently report discomfort and alienation (Segura, Brooks, and Romo 2011). Due to the racial

climate in their units, many sociologists of color are not active in their departments (they do not attend departmental lectures, go to official gatherings, or regularly work in their offices), which creates a vicious cycle.

Labeling: How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?

“How does it feel to be a problem?” (Du Bois 1903:2). Most sociologists of color have heard statements from White colleagues such as, “You make me uncomfortable . . .” or “You keep talking about race even though race is declining in significance.” Whites control sociology and the environments where most sociologists of color labor, yet they label them “controversial,” “difficult,” or “political.” They “pathologize . . . faculty of color by labeling [their] teaching as ‘bad’ or ‘intimidating,’ with rumor, innuendo, and lies mixed in to strengthen the bias” (Agathangelou and Ling 2002:380). Sociologists of color are regarded as such a threat that hiring more than one is regarded as an issue (Zambrana et al. 2017). On a personal note, I am painfully aware that I have been labeled as “arrogant,” “intimidating,” and worse, and of how this labeling has affected my career. However, labeling is not limited to outspoken sociologists of color. Prominent sociologists of color who are not very vocal on racial matters in sociology are also labeled as “problem people.” No one (of color) is safe from labeling.

Racial Assaults: Macro- and Micro-Aggressions

I have argued that contemporary racial domination is reproduced predominantly in a subtle and seemingly nonracial way (Bonilla-Silva 2016). However, this does not mean people of color—in this case, sociologists of color—do not face in-your-face discrimination. Researchers have documented the “outright, subtle, and nuanced racism” (Zambrana 2018:94) they experience (Griffin, Bennett, and Harris 2011). For example, in my 25 years as a sociology professor, I have been berated in my

office, accused of being overpaid, and in one curious case was told, after publishing a paper in the *American Sociological Review*: “I did not know *ASR* had an affirmative action program?”

My experiences, to be clear, are not unique: in survey after survey, faculty of color report having to deal with micro-aggressions at alarmingly high rates (Pittman 2012; Zambrana et al. 2017). Participants in one study reported that they frequently experienced micro-aggressions in their professional lives and that the actions ranged “from snide remarks, to condescending comments meant as jokes, to mixed messages pertaining to job performance, and to surreptitious action to inhibit job progression” (Louis et al. 2016:464–65). The racialized stress sociologists of color experience fosters “racial battle fatigue” (Smith, Allen, and Danley 2007), leading many to withdraw from their departments to maintain their sanity and well-being (Feagin and McKinney 2003). Although I urge my own students not to withdraw from departmental life, I understand when they do so.

The Emotional Toll of White Rule in Sociology (and the Way Out)

Sociologists of color love sociology, but coping with White rule and its emotional repercussions is tough. I have talked with hundreds of sociologists of color throughout my career and can confidently, but sadly, report that very few feel fully integrated and respected in their sociological homes. The differential treatment experienced by sociologists of color, and the emotions it creates, lead to mostly superficial, often tense, relations between White and non-White sociologists. This general state of affairs reflects the historical, epistemological, and practical weight of race in sociology (Bhambra 2014).

I know most White sociologists believe we do not have serious racial issues in sociology, or worse, think that whatever problems we have are caused by sociologists of color. Doubters should check the data. They should read the reports ASA has produced on

diversity issues over the years and the vast literature on the status of people of color in the academy. They should ask colleagues who attended the Town Halls on diversity organized by ASA over the past few years about the things they heard. They should speak with sociologists of color (faculty and students) in their own departments about the things I discuss here. If they do these things, doubters will likely be shocked and may enter into a “state of denial” (Feagin and McKinney 2003). But defensiveness or self-absolution will not help us address the serious racial issues afflicting sociology. White sociologists must get serious about race matters even if doing so hurts. They must acknowledge what Renzetti (2007:165) pointed out in her Society for the Study of Social Problems presidential address: that most White sociologists “act in ways that reinforce white privilege, or fail to act in ways that undermine it or confront it head-on, thereby reproducing and reinforcing racial inequalities.”

Changing the racial status quo in sociology will require a “pedagogy of discomfort” that teaches Whites to “step outside of their comfort zones and recognize what and how one has been taught to see (or not to see)” (Zembylas and Boler 2002:4). This will not be easy because Whites “have not had to build the cognitive or affective skills or develop the stamina that would allow for constructive engagement across racial divides” (DiAngelo 2011:57). But as Baldwin (1962) declared, “nothing can be changed until it is faced.” The question before us then is this: will we face our racial issues and work to create a truly inclusive and multicultural sociology, or will we continue believing like Pangloss that ours is “the best of all (sociological) worlds”? I sincerely hope we choose door number one.

Notes

1. I was a “structural Marxist” in the early 1980s, but my structuralism was always non-traditional because it was informed by my participation in various social movements. Hence, unlike structural and post-structural intellectuals who tend to eschew political

- engagements, I have always advocated for organizing people, raising consciousness, and participating in social movements to affect political change.
2. Although my theorization is not fundamentally derived from personal experiences, the experiential knowledge of the subaltern is quite valuable. As philosopher Charles W. Mills (1998:28) has argued about race-based knowledge, “hegemonic groups characteristically have experiences that foster illusory perceptions about society’s functioning, whereas subordinate groups characteristically have experiences that (at least potentially) give rise to more adequate conceptualizations.”
 3. Both definitions are from Antonio Damasio (Pon-tin 2014), a prominent neuroscientist. However, a growing number of biologists and neuroscientists are claiming that the cognitive and physiological components of affect happen simultaneously. For a short summary, see Scult and Hariri (2018).
 4. The video of this incident is linked in Capehart (2015).
 5. I am persuaded by Burkitt’s (2016:336) idea that agency must be conceived relationally as based in “social relationships . . . constituting the very structure and form of agency itself.” This implies that “we deliberate and make choices but without choosing or always fully comprehending the contextual parameters in which those choices are made” (Burkitt 2016:336).
 6. These racial acts transpire through “[e]motional dynamics based on honoring and dishonoring” (Rafanell and Gorringer 2010:614).
 7. Few would deny the importance of the economic foundations of a society in accounting for social life. But as Hall (1996:417) argued, economism is problematic because it reads “the economic foundations of society as the *only* determining structure.”
 8. The valence of emotions is not a straightforward matter. Anger can lead to collective action and hate for others can produce love for same (Ahmed 2004).
 9. James Baldwin, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, and Malcolm X, among others, recognize the importance of self-love for people of color’s liberation. Self-love has been central to the very survival of people of color, and the independence of spirit and mind it produces is quite “dangerous in a white supremacist culture” (hooks 1995:146).
 10. Brodtkin, Morgen, and Hutchinson (2011:554) characterize anthropology departments as “white public spaces” because they exhibit “a hegemonic, daily, unreflexive praxis that marginalizes faculty and students of color.” Their characterization applies to most departments in the academy, including sociology.
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