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Paradoxes of Privilege and Participation: The Case of the American Red Cross

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This critical discourse analysis of the American Red Cross (ARC) interrogates the discourses of situated ARC stakeholders following their participation in the 2005 hurricane disaster relief efforts. The author uses critical discourse analysis as a guiding theoretical framework and method of analysis to reflect on how the language and practices of the ARC, on a variety of levels, normalizes Whiteness and maintains White privilege. Following this analysis, the author offers a discussion of how communication research, criticism, theory, and practice can contribute to the elimination of the perpetuation of privileged racial ideology and organizational practice.

Keywords: American Red Cross; Discourse; Privilege; Race; Whiteness

When individuals organize, they produce, share, and use discourse to affect change on one another and the world around them. In organizational contexts, discourse functions as both the cause and solution for many of the systemic problems humans face when they participate in social collectives. One element of contemporary organizing that continues to have profound social, cultural, and political implications is race (Allen, 1995, 2007; Allen, Orbe, & Olivas, 1999; Ashcraft & Allen, 2003; Grimes, 2001, 2002). When it comes to organizing, discussions of race engender a number of considerations such as interracial communication, competing ideologies, competence, motivation, privilege, and participation. Each of these characteristics of

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multiracial organizing gives rise to a number of communication-related tensions, paradoxes, and contradictions that must be considered in race-related research.

So, how should the field of communication respond to the dynamics of multiracial organizing? I believe communication research, criticism, theory, and practice should contribute understanding to multiracial organizing by problematizing the organizational discourses that produce unjust race relations. This scholarly undertaking involves calling attention to the language and actions of situated social actors and engaging in critical reflection about how certain discourses attempt to normalize and maintain the power of historically dominant groups (namely, White men). Beyond reflection, however, communication scholars should provide recommendations for organizational practitioners who lack the knowledge, skills, motivations, or abilities to use discourse to promote racially just or democratic organizations (Allen, 2007; Cooks, 2003; Grimes, 2001, 2002; see also Ashcraft & Allen, 2003).

This project demonstrates the progressive potential of such work in that I problematize the discourses produced by American Red Cross (ARC) stakeholders. More specifically, my objective is to critically analyze how members of the ARC used discourse to position issues of cultural diversity following the hurricane disaster of 2005. My intention for focusing on the racial politics of the ARC specifically, rather than on issues of gender, class, or age, is to problematize the multileveled ways in which race gets constructed through organizational practices. The ARC is an excellent site for engaging such questions because of the scrutiny it received following the 2005 hurricane response (e.g., Dyson, 2005; Salmon, 2005). Taking the social, cultural, and theoretical importance of these issues into consideration, my goal is to critically engage the racializing discourses of individuals as they invoke them within an organizational context characterized by its systemic commitment to political neutrality, equality, and impartiality (International Red Cross, 2005).

The discourses engaged here demonstrate how racial privilege is articulated through various orders of organizational communication. These privileges give rise to a number of tensions and paradoxes pertaining to the participation of ARC stakeholders. Thus, taking pause to interrogate how race is discursively produced through ARC discourse has value in terms of shedding light on the politics and practices surrounding this uniquely situated organization. Moreover, understanding the tensions and paradoxes of race and organizing can inform communication practice related to internal–external communication, organizational policy, training practices, recruitment, leadership succession, and strategic diversity initiatives.

The critical approach (theory and method) that I use to examine the ARC is primarily informed by the work of organizational discourse theorists in communication (Broadfoot, Deetz, & Anderson, 2001; Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004) and that of critical discourse analysts (Barker & Galasinski, 2001; Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). This approach centralizes the constitutive nature of discourse, views organizations as continually emerging through nested moments of discursive action, views social actors as enmeshed in complex relations of power, and assumes that moments of discursive action occur across multiple layers of the organization and through multiple orders

of discourse (e.g., public discourse, privately spoken discourse, and written discourse; on orders of discourse, see Foucault, 1978). Above all, a critical discursive approach assumes that discourses are taken up in social practice to perpetuate asymmetrical relations of power (Fairclough, 1995).

To problematize the discourse of the ARC, this article is organized in the following manner: First, I situate the problem this study addresses within existing literature. Second, I offer a brief history and rationale for using the ARC as a site for critical discursive inquiry. Third, I outline the process of inquiry used to collect and critically analyze ARC discourse. Fourth, I present exemplars that illustrate four interrelated tensions present in participant talk and organizational rhetoric, which include *inclusion–exclusion, particularity–universality, individual–institutional identity*, and *privilege–equality*. Finally, I offer a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of this study for future research and practice.

Discursive Negotiations of Race and Organizing

This study assumes that race is a systemic production that is accomplished through various orders of discourse (symbols and practices; see Mukherjee, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994). From this perspective, race is productively viewed as a social construction that is inseparable from the economic, social, and cultural foundations of all U.S. institutions (Goldberg, 2002; Olson, 2004). Given the unique historical events surrounding the negotiation of race in the United States, race continues to produce social suffering evident in nearly every marker of social progress including income, educational achievement, political representation, and even health (Olson, 2004).

Therefore, the challenge for communication scholar-critics and theorists is to expose how racial privilege is discursively positioned, contested, or reified and to use this understanding to construct new knowledge about race, organizing, and communication. Such knowledge should be aimed at enabling individuals and institutions in the construction new forms of racial subjectivity that resist essentialist, dichotomous, and colorblind conceptualizations of race (Omi & Winant, 1994). To be sure, this process of knowledge construction is not objective or value-free social science. Objective inquiry into the negotiation of race is impossible if one seeks to transform the problematic structures that privilege organizational participation in the first place.

Race and the Study of Organizational Identities

To date, there has been much research in organizational studies on identity negotiation, in general, and gendered organizational identities, in particular (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Ashcraft & Pacanowsky, 1996; Buzzanell & Turner, 2006; Fine, 1996; Sillince, 2006; Tracy, 2000; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Many of these studies adopt critical-constructionist and feminist sensibilities in theory and method. I situate this inquiry within this literature, but distinguish it in several ways.

First, my intention is to tease out the implications that race—particularly, racial privilege—introduces into organizational communication theory and practice (see

also Allen, 1995, 2007; Ashcraft & Allen, 2003; Grimes, 2001, 2002). Specifically, this inquiry uses in-depth, critical-qualitative discourse analysis to examine the significance of race in contemporary organizational communication practice. By centralizing race, I do not deny the complex intersections that race has with other facets of identity (e.g., gender); I simply wish to highlight the ways in which race, specifically, is positioned in the organizational discourse of the ARC.

Second, I distinguish this study in that it adopts a solution-driven approach to understanding and effectively negotiating race through organizational processes and practices. Using Senge's (1990/2006) notion of shifting the burden, organizational practices, such as "sensitivity training," provide short-term symptomatic solutions to complex challenges like race. The problem with symptomatic solutions is that they produce unwanted side-effects—in this case, resentment, animosity, distrust, or even discrimination. By contrast, this inquiry seeks to identify fundamental solutions that involve systemic coordination of resources, reflexive dialogue and learning about racial differences, and the creation of shared vision about what an antiracist organization might look like and what types of practices and policies could facilitate such transformation (cf. Senge, 1990/2006).

Finally, this project is not merely theoretically motivated; it is personally and politically motivated as well. My proclivity for racial justice and progressive organizational transformation is evident throughout this project. As a White man, my privilege permits me the luxury of ignoring the significance of race. However, I am ethically and politically compelled to engage in critical self-reflection about these privileges, as well as those unconsciously (or perhaps strategically) articulated by individuals and institutions that are self-avowedly "equal" or "neutral."

Given this, my project is intentionally and unapologetically critical (see also Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; Giroux, 1997, 2003; Jackson, 1999). This project is grounded in a rigorous research tradition of communication scholarship, which seeks to critically examine race as it is communicatively lived out by individuals. I position this work alongside that of other communication scholars, all of whom reflexively interrogate race by foregrounding their subjective standpoints, and drawing on them as an analytical resource for understanding the communicative experiences of race (Allen et al., 1999; Ashcraft & Allen, 2003; Collier, 2005; Cooks, 2003; Groscurth & Orbe, 2006; Miller & Harris, 2005; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Nakayama & Martin, 1999; Orbe, 1998, 2004; Orbe, Groscurth, Jeffries, & Prater, 2007; Warren, 2003).

As I have highlighted in this section, race and organizing are intertwined phenomena that require systematic reflection, observation, critique, and political action. To transform problematic racial ideologies and promote racially just organizations, it is the responsibility of the critical analyst to problematize the discourses that allow injustice to perpetuate. Following Kincheloe and McLaren (2003), such political and personal commitments inform the analysts' reading of discourse, but "does not mean replicating his or her response to his or her original question" (p. 445). Therefore, although I seek to construct oppositional forms of knowledge around issues of race, privilege, and organizational participation (Ladson-Billings, 2003), I approach this process transparently, reflexively, with theoretical and methodological

rigor, and with a genuine desire to reduce the suffering that discourses of race have produced on individual and institutional levels.

Contextualizing the ARC

Founded on May 21, 1881, the ARC is ''a humanitarian organization led by volunteers and guided by its Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement. [It] provide[s] relief to victims of disasters and help[s] people prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies'' (''American Red Cross 2006,'' 2006, p. 2). The ARC is an independent charitable organization that is ''organized, operated, and controlled by Americans in the United States'' (Casey & Rivken, 2005, p. 64).

To ensure fair and equitable treatment for those in need, the ARC, in accordance with the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, upholds the seven fundamental principles of *humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity,* and *universality* (International Red Cross, 2005). These guiding principles provide a unique context for empirically examining the multiple orders of discourse appropriated by organizational members in terms of how they position meanings of diversity and racial difference and participate in the construction of their own—and the ARC's—racialized identity.

Over the last 100 years, the ARC has become a disaster relief partner of the Federal Emergency Response Agency (FEMA). Their close governmental affiliation and the ubiquity of their simple, yet highly identifiable, brand makes the ARC an important subject for critical inquiry. What is more, the ARC is continually negotiating public discourse and criticism through the situated meaning-making practices of staff members, spokespersons, and volunteers. For example, following the hurricane season of 2005, the ARC came under fire by critics across a variety of media including popular press, newspapers, and the blogosphere (see Dyson, 2005; Gibbs, 2005; Neal, 2005; ''Re-examining,'' 2005; Salmon, 2005; Wallace, 2005). *The New York Times* ran several editorials pertaining to the ARC, such as one calling into question the trust and loyalty that is granted to the organization (''Re-examining,'' 2005). According to this editorial, the ARC represents all that is right and wrong with the American preference for federal disaster response to be carried out by private volunteers rather than government.

Similarly, Salmon's (2005) article in *The Washington Post* describes the aggressive minority recruitment campaign that the ARC initiated following the 2005 hurricane season. These efforts included faith-based recruitment initiatives in churches with large numbers of Hispanics, Latinos, and African Americans. Ostensibly, these recruitment efforts were undertaken as a reactive response to allegations of racial insensitivity and the severe lack of interpreters during the hurricane relief efforts (see Salmon, 2005).

Elsewhere, Dyson's (2005) critique of the hurricane disaster response highlights the disparities between federal responses to White, upper-middle class communities,

such as those in California, and the large racial minority populations of the Gulf region. His criticism is largely directed toward FEMA (see also Neal, 2005). Dyson's adroit critique highlights a variety of issues leading up to and following the 2005 disaster, not least of which were the delayed response, inhumane accommodations, and governmental negligence for human life.

In light of the ARC's response to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma in 2005, it is evident that this organization actively participated (and continues to participate) in the cultural production of race. Given their active negotiation of racial discourse, the ARC is an instructive site for examining how race is negotiated through situated talk and the written discourse of organizations with increasingly blurred organizational boundaries (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). In what follows, I outline my process of inquiry for interrogating the discourse of ARC stakeholders.

Analytic Processes and Practices

I situate this project within a critical tradition that is concerned with the texts and contexts through which domination and resistance are negotiated (e.g., Ashcraft & Allen, 2003; Barker & Galasinski, 2001; Broadfoot et al., 2001; Buzzanell & Turner, 2003, 2006; Deetz, 1992; Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Fairclough, 1995). Using this previous literature as a foundation, this section reviews the assumptions that I bring to this inquiry about power and subjectivity, in addition to outlining the methodological processes and analytical practices used throughout.

My assumptions about power and subjectivity are informed by the work of Michel Foucault (1978, 1988, 1994). For Foucault, power is not merely a top-down, repressive structural phenomenon, but an ever-present, relational, and productive social force negotiated between various orders of social discourse (see also Fairclough, 1995). Accordingly, I do not assume that individuals are merely effects of hegemonic structural discourses. I believe that in and through their negotiation of discourse, individuals resist, comply with, or reproduce social ideology and become social subjects (see Best & Kellner, 1991; Foucault, 1978, 1994). Put differently, humans are both discursively constituted and self-constituting subjects immersed in a complex network of power relations. Providing critical interpretations of how these relations of power are negotiated by racial subjects is essential for producing alternative discourses from which they can draw to fashion alternative subjectivities (see Foucault, 1994).

Process of Inquiry

During the Fall and Winter of 2005, approximately 40 hr of participant observations were conducted both on- and offsite at a large (i.e., 5 county service area) Midwestern chapter of the ARC. Although the chapter has approximately 1,300 volunteers on record, typically 10 to 20 volunteers carry out administrative functions on a weekly basis. Many of these ''operations'' volunteers work 20 to 40 hr per week. My role in

the organization was that of a participant-observer, but also that of a volunteer. My volunteerism was both a means for reciprocating the ARC for my intrusion and building rapport with staff members in the organization. During my observations, I attended and assisted with the operations of fundraisers and other chapter events. These experiences both shaped and were shaped by my simultaneous collection and analysis of public discourse surrounding the ARC's involvement in the hurricane response effort earlier that Summer.

Interview Participants

In addition to documenting my process through field notes and reflective elabora-tions of these notes, I conducted four in-depth interviews with volunteers and paid staff who actively participated in the hurricane response as ARC disaster relief volun-teers. These individuals were recruited to participate in in-depth interviews because they occupied unique niches in terms of the services that they provided the chapter. Their job responsibilities included volunteer recruitment, disaster response team training, community relations, and health and safety training. The four semi-structured interviews analyzed here were conducted onsite and lasted between 60 to 75 min. Open-ended questions were posed regarding generalized meanings of diversity; how diversity showed itself in ARC organizational communication practice; and how racial and ethnic differences impact disaster relief recruitment, training, and response.

Three of the participants were White women, and one was an African American man. The participants, who were assigned the pseudonyms Beverly (a White, 40-something staff member and member of the emergency response team) and Joe (a 50-something emergency responder), were deployed to Houston and Falls Church, VA, respectively, during the 2005 hurricane response effort. The two other parti-cipants, Peggy and Ruth—both White, female volunteers in their 60s—played an instrumental role in processing and training over 200 volunteers to be deployed from this chapter. This was one of the largest deployments in the chapter's region.

Analytic Process

The four one-on-one, in-depth interviews were tape recorded and transcribed ver-batim. These interview transcripts serve as the primary data for this critical discourse analysis. The analysis phase of this inquiry was guided by the work of Fairclough 1995; (see also Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 1997). After reviewing the tran-scripts and identifying all instances where race or cultural difference were a salient point of discussion, I posed the following analytical questions to the discourse: (a) How are privilege and participation functioning in this context, and (b) Who seeks to benefit from positioning racial difference in this way? (cf. Barker & Galasinski, 2001). These analytic questions centralize the communicative practices that produce

racial paradox, tension, and privilege; and provide an empirical basis for a critique of the ARC's discourse of impartiality.

In the following section, I provide exemplars from these interviews that illustrate four primary paradoxes present in the ARC's diversity-related discourse around issues of inclusion–exclusion, particularity–universality, individual–institutional identity, and privilege–equality. Each of these tensions demonstrates how discourse functions to privilege the participation and racial identities of White stakeholders while simultaneously upholding ARC principles, such as neutrality and universality.

Racial Privilege, Paradox, and Participation

The following four paradoxes demonstrate how the ARC's commitment to political impartiality actually constrains possibilities for racial inclusion and diverse participation. By drawing on the situated discourse of interview participants, this critical analysis shows how the organizational rhetoric of the ARC normalizes Whiteness and facilitates the production of privileged identities at the individual and institutional level.

Inclusion–Exclusion

The paradox of inclusion–exclusion refers to the ways the ARC undermines its goals of inclusion through its discursive practice. This paradox emerged as participants discussed the importance of diverse racial representation among volunteers and the recruitment practices used by the ARC to invite such inclusion. During my interviews with Peggy and Ruth, racial diversity was positioned as a strategic resource used to access an otherwise inaccessible community of (potential) volunteers or donors.

According to Peggy, "We [i.e., the ARC] certainly promote the inclusion of volunteers from . . . a more diverse background than what is generally seen as the Red Cross, in terms of ethnicity, race, age and gender, and use those individuals to recruit." This comment is contextualized within the ARC's national strategic diversity initiative, intended to leverage diversity as a resource and combat the criticism received for failing to provide culturally competent disaster relief services during the hurricane response efforts of 2005 (Salmon, 2005). Peggy's comment echoes this unfulfilled diversity objective in that it acknowledges the overwhelming White majority of "what is generally seen as the Red Cross." What is more, Peggy's comment confirms the fact that colorblindness inadvertently excludes non-Whites from participating with the ARC while paradoxically being used as an attempt to diversify the organization.

These exclusionary practices are clearly evident in the language Peggy used to describe the racial makeup of the ARC. As an older White woman—the prototypical ARC volunteer—Peggy used the first-person plural pronoun "we" to represent the ARC as a whole, which positions the organization as an already Whitened institution.

The ARC is Whitened to the extent that Peggy must justify that the organization "certainly promote[s] the inclusion" of historically excluded participants of color. This statement echoes subtle forms of individual prejudice that are frequently cited in interracial communication research that sound something like, "I'm not a racist, but ..." (see Miller & Harris, 2005).

However, why would a humanitarian organization systematically exclude participants of color? One reason could be the economic advantage that the ARC enjoys during times of national disaster. Although the vast majority of funds are used for their intended disaster relief and emergency response purposes, some are not. For example, according to Barrett (2004), Marsha Evans, the Chief Executive Officer during the hurricanes of 2005, earned a salary of $651,957 in 2004. This generous salary is significant in light of the fact that over 90% of the work done by the ARC is accomplished by volunteers ("American Red Cross 2006," 2006).

From a privileged standpoint, one might argue that people of color have simply chosen not to participate as members of the ARC. This argument, however, overlooks the fact that exclusionary organizational practices have routinely been used by Whites throughout the history of the United States to maintain racial privilege via cross-class alliances (Mukherjee, 2006; Olson, 2004; Roediger, 1992, 1994). Moreover, it fails to recognize that volunteerism with the ARC and service to one's (cultural) community are not necessarily coterminous—that is, to attract racially diverse volunteers, the organization—and the government it represents—must demonstrate its commitment to communities of color in ways that reflect the services received by White, upper-middle class communities (cf. Dyson, 2005).

In a similar way, Ruth stated, "When people are recruited to be on boards or committees, I know that there is a deliberate, although it's not a policy, effort to try to get a more diverse community. ... You get sort of an in-way of influencing people or drawing people in." This comment demonstrates that (a) people of color have to be explicitly recruited in order to ensure their inclusion; otherwise, they would remain marginalized by the organization; (b) these decisions are made by influential, presumably White, stakeholders through informal conversations; and (c) the intention behind such recruitment practices are token representation and influencing particular cultural communities in terms of bolstering financial contributions and volunteerism. Seemingly, non-White board members are recruited to strategically gain an advantage within particular communities, not because it is ethically the right thing to do, that these persons are the right women and men for the job, or because diverse perspectives ensure better decision making.

Above all, the paradox of inclusion–exclusion emerges between racial consciousness and the ideology of colorblindness (i.e., equality and impartiality), which guides the ARC in principle and practice. This was reflected in Peggy's conceptualization of cultural diversity, which she defined as "removing any attribute of an individual or a group based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability or disabilities—anything that would make that individual ... different from the rest. Just removing all of those." In other words, inclusion is conflated with colorblindness or removing considerations of racial particularity from organizing practices (e.g., recruitment). As the last

two comments illustrate, the ideology of colorblindness is not blind at all—It demands that we are hyper-aware of race to a debilitating (i.e., essentialist) degree.

What Peggy seemed to be saying is that the ARC should ignore cultural differences; however, she later stated, "[I]n the diversity committee meetings . . . we discussed using role playing and . . . introducing the issue of diversity, and our need to respond in an appropriate Red Cross way—based on our fundamental principles—of including that into all of the disaster classes that we teach that prepare volunteers." Given this, difference is positioned as simultaneously visible and invisible when the guiding ARC principles are invoked in practice. This finding echoes Watts's (2005) analysis of the hyper-visibility of race, particularly under the guise of a so-called "colorblind" ideology (see Omi & Winant, 1994). In this case, the (in)visibility of racial difference intersects with an organizational rhetoric of "inclusion," resulting in a paradoxical commitment to racial diversity worthy of interrogation and critique.

Particularity–Universality

The paradox between particularity and universality refers to the ways in which universal (i.e., colorblind) models of service undermine individuals' particular identities, beliefs, values, and needs. This tension emerged in each of the interviews when we discussed providing responsive emergency services, but doing so in an "impartial" or politically "neutral" manner. For example, Joe stated:

> If a person is African, black, white, green, yellow, or blue—if they have what the Red Cross says, a need, they will provide your immediate need, which is food and shelter; everybody, there's no distinction . . . there is no distinction between a person based on their color. You have to treat everybody the same.

What is most striking about Joe's comment is the regulative force of the ARC's colorblind principles. This is indicated twice in Joe's comment. First, the ARC has the authority to define "your immediate need, which is food and shelter." Second, Joe's comment demonstrates that because of this pervasive ideology, volunteers *have to* provide "unbiased" (i.e., universal) disaster response relief. This ideology is problematic in that it invalidates the particular needs of the communities it serves, which can be extremely important to them. For example, if the ARC was responding to a major disaster in an area with a large Muslim American population and rationing out canned beans, most often made with pork fat, this would not be a concern insofar as the "immediate" need of the victims was met. This type of colorblind service does little to foster understanding, goodwill, or inclusion. Here, universalist assumptions undermine equality.

Similarly Ruth, a White woman, stated, "I don't see diversity as trying to focus on 'I'm this and he's that, and some how I have to accommodate that difference'. I see diversity as recognizing the diverseness of people and getting on with it." Ruth also stated that "diversity . . . is knowing yourself well enough to know where your biases are and to not let those get in the way of doing what a good person should do." In

this example, again, the recognition and accommodation of cultural particularity is not the responsibility of the White volunteer. According to Ruth's understanding of diversity, volunteers are responsible for recognizing their own stereotypes or prejudices and not allowing these mental frameworks to hinder their colorblind service, which she conflates with being a "good person."

Unlike the previous comments made by Joe and Ruth, Peggy's indicates that particularity should be addressed, but that the colorblind principles should simultaneously be upheld. Peggy stated that in the training classes that she facilitated in preparation for the 2005 hurricane deployment, she advocated "talking about [diversity-related] issues, and how we need to keep those fundamental principles at the forefront of our thinking and our actions as we represent the Red Cross." Thus, it is through situated individual practices that the privileged identity of the ARC is constructed and negotiated with stakeholders and victims.

Peggy's comment, which stressed the "need to keep those [colorblind] fundamental principles at the forefront" of volunteer thought and action, ultimately undermines meaningful discussion of cultural difference in that it privileges the universal over the particular. Therefore, organizational practices such as diversity-related training, which in this case promote colorblindness, actually work against promoting volunteer responses to cultural particularity that are mindful of difference and are responsive and accommodating. This point was aptly underscored by Representative Elijah E. Cummings (Democrat, Maryland), a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, following the Gulf Coast relief efforts. Cummings stated, "Just as Katrina pulled the covers off the treatment of vulnerable populations, I think it also pulled the covers off the Red Cross and showed they're not used to—in this country—dealing with communities of color in deep need" (as cited in Salmon, 2005, p. A01).

To provide culturally responsive relief, the ARC must contradict its own principles of impartiality and universality. As these comments illustrate, there is a paradoxical relation between showing respect for humanity and racial particularity, but doing so in a universal or one-size-fits-all manner. Ultimately, the ARC is successful in maintaining Whiteness as a cultural standard by which "others" are measured through a series of policies and colorblind practices, which privilege universality over cultural particularity (see also Cooks, 2003; Dyer, 1997; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; Frankenberg, 1993; Jackson, 1999; Martin & Davis, 2001; McIntosh, 1998; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Roediger, 1992; Warren, 2001, 2003).

Individual–Institutional Identity

Identity, whether individual or collective, is discursively constituted and socially situated (Collier, 2005). In this case, the communicative actions of volunteers are always already situated and constrained by institutional forces of political neutrality. In other words, it is through various discursive practices that "the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others" (Foucault, 1994, p. 326). Given this, the possibility of envisioning or articulating antiracist or politically subversive

subjectivities is also constrained. Throughout the interviews, volunteers demonstrated the power relations between individual and institutional subjectivities that are useful for our understanding of how race is constructed and how Whiteness becomes normalized.

For example, Ruth demonstrated how the ARC creates a subject position through the coordinated actions of individual volunteers. Ruth stated, ''I think Red Cross is a grassroots organization that realizes that . . . the strength of providing services, and the strength of helping people being served, is to do it on a person-to-person basis.'' Ruth's comment positions the ARC as having a subjectivity of its own. Specifically, the institution ''realizes'' that it acts on the community that it serves through the ''person-to-person'' encounters of its volunteers. This reflexive relation was also articulated in Ruth's previous comment: ''I think Red Cross does a good job in its policies and then in its individual people playing out its policies.'' Although individual volunteers do not blindly consent to these policies and practices, ARC training strategies and those used to communicate the fundamental principles (e.g., training manuals, Web site, etc.) are primary discursive means through which intuitional power is exercised and racial privilege is maintained. For Ruth, this power relation is perceived as a positive one in that it is directed at people in need receiving assistance.

Similarly, Joe stated, ''You have to look past your own prejudice in order to provide a service for the Red Cross. Because the Red Cross is, it's their forum.'' Joe's comment demonstrates the fragility of the individual–institutional power relation. Because your actions as a volunteer occur within the institutional forum, one must self-subordinate their own political ideology to represent the organization and uphold its ideology of political neutrality. What is paradoxical about this, however, is that neutrality and colorblindness are not positioned by Joe—a Black man—as a political stance in itself.

Beverly spoke to similar pressures that volunteers faced in Houston in negotiating their role as extensions of the ARC, without becoming personally overwhelmed. She stated:

> The difficulty was, because we were Red Cross, and you talk about a diversity issue, because we wore the red vest there were expectations that went along with that.
>   And, I mean, that we would be able to take care of all. . . . I think that the older the volunteer was, the more difficult time they had in being overwhelmed.

Beverly's language choice (''because we were Red Cross'') constitutes herself and her colleagues present at the Houston Astrodome as the organization itself. The two are discursively intertwined through such regulated actions as wearing ''the red vest.''

This type of collective identification, also noted in Peggy's comment in a previous section, was common among volunteers. It indicates the high level of identification that individuals have with the organization, but, more important, that they consent to the guiding principles of the ARC, thereby exercising the power of their colorblind ideology in practice. To be sure, stakeholder consent is not blind, nor are the

principles that guide volunteer practice free from volunteer resistance. However, the sentimentality of "saving lives" coupled with the rationalization of privilege under the guise of "impartiality" and "equality" is easily accepted, as these comments evince, through institutional practices such as volunteer training and recruitment.

Privilege-Equality

The final paradox that I have identified in these transcripts relates to the relation between privilege and equality. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, "The Red Cross is a world-wide institution in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other" (International Red Cross, 2005). This description is associated with the guiding principle of universality. As previously mentioned, the tension between equality and privilege manifests itself through the perpetuation of a colorblind ideology, which denies cultural particularity and centralizes Whiteness as a standard by which others are measured.

Throughout these interviews, Beverly and Joe—both deployed during the 2005 hurricane season—offered comments that speak to the simultaneous operation of discourses of privilege and equality at the ARC. For example, Beverly stated, "[W]e would go out every night and kind of debrief—have dinner. . . . So you'd hear . . . little comments from people, like, 'I just don't understand why people live that way', and you know that kind of stuff."

At another point in our interview, Beverly stated:

> Honestly, yeah, I do think some of these higher, upper class, white, volunteers would be scared to death with a population like this, especially the size. . . . You know, it's usually a fear factor, it's not a racially kind of thing. It's not that they're necessarily prejudice, it's how, you know, those people are depicted in life.

Beverly's comments speak to the privileged social status that many ARC volunteers share—that is, many ARC volunteers are White, middle to upper middle class, and college educated. The comments that Beverly overheard while she and her colleagues ate in restaurants before retiring to their hotel rooms for the night constitute and confirm this privileged social standing. Paradoxically, it is Beverly's privilege that allows her to position the displaced victims of the hurricane disaster as "less than" through her disclosure that many ARC volunteers would be fearful of them based on how they are "depicted in life" while at the same time attributing such fear to factors other than race. In light of the previous paradox discussed, such situated discursive practices are exemplary of the types of strategies of Whiteness that allow White individuals and institutions such as the ARC to maintain their invisibility, privilege, and power (Cooks, 2003; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995).

Unlike Beverly's colorblind articulation of privilege, Joe's comments on racial and class-based privileges are much more color-conscious. Reflecting on his experiences in an ARC call center, Joe stated:

> I can cuss and raise hell with the best of them, but when you have to sit there and take the verbal abuse. And you know, the verbal abuse was from my people.

> . . . I was *embarrassed* that my fellow volunteers would have to take that abuse from people that we were there to help. We gave up our time to help these people who sit on their butts and didn't do nothing.

Based on Joe's comment, we can see that the privilege of ARC volunteers can take several different forms based on race or class. Although my focus is not on class-based privileges, which are important considerations when critically interrogating the different forms racial privilege can take, race and class intersect in an interesting way in this example. There is a tension between Joe's race-based identification with "his people" (equality), but he differentiates himself from the clients that he served based on his middle class socioeconomic status (privilege).

However, in his volunteer practice, Joe's race simultaneously functioned as a privilege and disadvantage. According to Joe, his shared racial status (equality) allowed him to negotiate difficult calls with irate African American hurricane victims. In fact, Joe stated, "Everybody would give me the difficult calls. It didn't matter. . . . I could deal with them. I could deal with them. I could talk with these people." Joe was the only African American in a group of six volunteers, so he frequently bore the brunt of these difficult calls to relieve his (privileged) White colleagues. According to Joe

> I was able to talk to them . . . for them to understand that, "Hey look, it's not the RC's fault" . . . but . . . they want the money. It was all about the money, and that was unfortunate. Because you had some dedicated, good people in Falls Church sitting there crying and, because they were cursed out or [African American victims] were saying, "Y'all fat cats are up there getting rich." And we were all volunteers.

Thus, for a volunteer of color, racial privilege and disadvantage operate in tension-filled simultaneity. What we learn between the comments offered by Beverly and Joe is that privilege and equality operate differently based on your cultural standpoint. Whereas Beverly's comments deny that racial privilege was operating, attributing White fear and disbelief to things like volunteer fatigue and the size of the crowd in the Astrodome, Joe's reflections on privilege and equality were both racially and economically conscious. From a critical perspective, I am left wondering what a pre-deployment training might have looked like if it was led by Joe as opposed to Ruth or Peggy. How might increased inclusion and racial diversity have prepared volunteers for the types of interactions they would encounter?; and, in light of this disaster, if the ARC does have a genuine commitment to humanity and unity (2 other guiding principles), how do they address issues of privilege and interracial communication in their disaster relief training?

Discussion

This section outlines the implications of this analysis for future research, criticism, theory, and organizational practice. Specifically, I organize my discussion around the themes of privilege and participation, power, and practice.

As was the purpose of this inquiry, these qualitative data provide evidence about how privilege is communicated through organizational policies, guiding principles,

and practices, but also through the situated discursive actions of individuals. Communication theorists cannot ignore the role that Whiteness plays in informing the values, practices, and policies that shape the political identities of contemporary organizations, and the relations of power within which stakeholder participation is performed. As the ARC case has illustrated, the discourse of Whiteness is pervasive throughout various layers of organizational discourse. Therefore, centralizing questions of privilege and participation in organizational studies allows for a more adequate understanding of institutions as racialized constructions (see Heath et al., 2006).

In terms of organizational practice, creating shared vision about political involvement, inclusion, and equality—in other words, effective diversity leadership—should address issues of racial privilege. According to Senge (1990/2006), creating shared vision and inspiring organizational learning about issues such as cultural difference must be achieved through open, reflective dialogue between stakeholders. Open and ethical communication praxis in meetings, training, and community outreach are fundamental practices for creating an inclusive organizational culture (see also Schein, 2004).

Future research and criticism might ask, "How do leaders facilitate antiracist organizational cultures?"; "What communication practices invite conversation about privilege and organizational participation?"; and "How can these conversations be utilized to inform recruitment, succession, and training-related practices?" In other words, when issues of racial privilege are centralized in organizational communication practice, what possibilities and opportunities are presented in terms of truly redistributing relations of power in a more equitable and socially just manner?

Theoretically, there is much work for communication scholars to conduct on issues of organizational power and privilege. Within a Foucaultian framework, issues such as regulation, resistance, and relations of power are critical for understanding racial participation in contemporary organizations. To be sure, scholars such as Tracy (2000) and Tracy and Trethewey (2005) utilized the work of Foucault to problematize issues of gender, emotionality, and identity within organizational contexts; however, efforts to understand relations of power as it relates to the institutionalization of race have been scant within the field of communication.

This critical analysis also brings to light another important area of theory development: racial subjectivity. Important questions to consider about postmodern (in the historical sense) subjectivity include the following: How is racial identity constructed in different organizational contexts?, In what ways do individual communication practices cohere with or contradict institutional notions of racial subjectivity?, How can we use institutional discourse to improve 21st-century race relations?, and What do organizations with a dialogic understanding of racial identity look like in practice (e.g., training, recruitment, and leadership succession)?

Finally, this work demonstrates the need for theoretical and methodological pluralism in communication research pertaining to privilege and organizational participation. Each of us—through our teaching, research, advising, consulting, and community outreach—is involved in a continuous social dialogue about race and

racial privilege. If we deny our participation in this dialogue, we are complicit in its hegemonic perpetuation (see McPhail, 2002). Therefore, inviting innovative theoretical and methodological approaches for the study of race and the institutionalization of race is one means of communication activism (cf. Frey & Carragee, 2007).

To empirically question privilege requires novel approaches that do not fit neatly into pre-established social scientific traditions. This is not to say that one should sacrifice theoretical or methodological rigor; it is to say, however, that as scholars and gatekeepers of communication knowledge, we have a responsibility to envision new evaluative criteria for judging the merit of communication research-criticism. Criteria such as institutional change, participant feedback, organizational member-checking, and the like could be used as evaluative criteria for transformative race-related research.

By asking questions about who seeks to benefit when organizational discourse is positioned in a particular way, using innovative theoretical and methodological means, communication researchers have the potential to construct oppositional forms of knowledge about the communication of race. This involves both personal and professional aspiration for progressive racial change. Such aspiration for change comes through in-depth self-reflection about the privileges and disadvantages, which each of us experience in different social contexts. There is no universally privileged social actor, any more than there is a universally disadvantaged one. Following Foucault (1978, 1994), domination and resistance exist in a mutually responsive dialogical relationship. Accordingly, improving the current state of interracial distrust and disharmony requires that we ''promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries'' (Foucault, 1994, p. 336). As this analysis and discussion have demonstrated, research, communication criticism, theory, and organizational practice will play a critical role realizing new ways to envision and respond to the racial subject. Such efforts should not be thought of as symptomatic solutions aimed at addressing deep-seated racial suffering; they are attempts to produce fundamental solutions to the racial challenges in the United States.

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