Impossible Burdens: White Institutions, Emotional Labor, and Micro-Resistance

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the connections between white institutional spaces, emotional labor, and resistance by illuminating the shared experiences of people of color in elite law schools and the commercial aviation industry. Based on in-depth qualitative data combined from two individual studies, we illustrate the processes by which white institutional spaces create a complex environment where people of color must navigate racial narratives, ideologies, and discourses, while simultaneously attempting to achieve institutional success to reap the material rewards of these elite institutional settings. In these distinct environments, people of color experience an unequal distribution of emotional labor as a result of negotiating both everyday racial micro-aggressions and dismissive dominant ideologies that deny the relevance of race and racism. As a result they must actively seek ways to engage in forms of resistance that promote counter narratives and protect themselves from denigration while minimizing the risk of severe consequence. Our data suggest that a more nuanced conceptualization of resistance and the context in which resistance occurs is needed in order to understand the everyday experiences of people of color.

KEYWORDS: white institutions; white space; emotional labor; racism; micro-resistance.

On an otherwise uneventful day while in her second year attending an elite U.S. law school, Maria, a Latina law student was confronted by a white male student. Sitting at her desk at the end of her immigration law class, Maria was reflecting on the day's lecture and waiting for the professor to become available so she could ask him a question. As she sat thinking about the issues she wanted to discuss with the professor, a white male student whom she did not know well walked up to her and said, "Hey, you look very thoughtful—are you afraid that they're gonna deport you?" Maria shared this story when interviewed about her experiences with race in the law school, and she noted:

> He said this to me, and I'm still sittin' there, and I'm so stunned that I didn't have an answer. And I still hate myself for that, because I just sat there . . . And for God's sake, I'm a second-year law student, and I'm gonna be a lawyer, and I have all this huge resume, and somebody asks me if I'm gonna get deported.

Tim, an African American pilot, experienced a similar racial incident, though in a different institutional context. Tim was waiting in the airport in Atlanta, wearing his pilot's uniform because his work shift had just ended, to catch a ride on a plane back to his home city of Washington, DC. As he waited at the gate, an old white man got up from his seat by the gate and said, "That nigger better not be flying my plane . . ." Tim was shocked by the outburst, unsure of how to respond, he considered it and thought, "Well, I was going to a completely different city, so I just kind of sat there and stared . . . I mean, really?"

Although these two incidents occurred in different institutional settings, their similarity is striking and reveals the racial dynamics that people of color must navigate as they participate in education and work settings.[1] These incidents are representative of broader patterns of racial dynamics discovered by the authors in two separate in-depth studies of race in elite law schools and commercial airlines. This research combines data collected from a two-year ethnographic investigation; 33 interviews with students of color in two elite law schools; and interviews with 31 African American pilots and flight attendants employed by commercial airlines. When combined, our data illuminate the processes by which institutions that historically excluded people of color from participation before the legal changes enacted in the civil rights era today maintain the institutional boundaries of white power and privilege despite increasing representation of people of color within these institutions. In particular, our data illuminate the racialized structures, ideologies, and discourses that lead to the everyday micro-aggressions faced by people of color in what Moore (2008) terms "white institutional spaces" (see Smith, Allen, and Danley 2007; Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2011, for a discussion of racial micro-aggression). As well, the data from these two studies reveal similar patterns of coping mechanisms and strategies deployed by people of color in white institutional spaces in order to negotiate and sustain their success in these institutions.

Experiences like the ones shared by law student Maria and pilot Tim help to illuminate particular elements of the mechanisms that reproduce white institutional power dynamics (Moore 2008). More specifically, with the changing laws of the civil rights era—which led to the inclusion of some people of color into previously exclusively white institutional settings—embedded white discourses, ideologies, practices, and institutional arrangements of power have become normalized and justified. Yet, in part because of the inclusion of some people of color, these white institutional spaces have been constructed through institutional ideology and dominant narratives, as committed to abstract liberalism, equality, and non-racialized or racially equitable spaces (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Moore 2008). This is what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010) and other scholars describe as "color-blind racism" (Carr 1997; Doane and Bonilla-Silva 2003; Gallagher 2003). Thus, even as people of color are forced to negotiate systematic racial micro-aggressions that objectify and other them within the institution, as illustrated by the experiences of Maria and Tim, their potential responses to these racialized practices are constrained by an institutionalized ideological frame that minimizes and denies the relevance of race and racism, and both tacitly and explicitly asserts institutional neutrality at least and racial equality at most.

Many scholars have documented the disconnect between color-blind racist (also sometimes termed abstract-liberalist, or laissez-faire) discourse and ideology and the empirical realities of racial structural and institutional arrangements (see, for example, Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997; Bonilla-Silva and Baiocci 2008; Doane and Bonilla-Silva 2003; Feagin 2006, 2010). In addition, a vast number of studies have documented the continued persistence of racial micro-aggressions or everyday incidents of racism in a wide range of social settings (see, for example, Smith et al. 2007;

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[1] While the focus of this article highlights the similarities in racial dynamics in institutional settings faced by people of color, we also note that racism takes various forms depending on the specific race-ethnic group about which the tropes are aimed. We recognize that the specific racial narratives and stereotypes deployed against African Americans may be different in form than those deployed against Latinos, but here we suggest that in relationship to systemic white domination, many people of color experience similar challenges in negotiating white institutional space.

Smith et al. 2011; Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000; Sue et al. 2009;). Fewer studies, but several important works, have interrogated the way that people of color are required to engage in a range of emotion management in institutional settings such as education and employment (Bell 2014; Evans 2013; Guy, Newman, and Mastracci 2008; Harlow 2003; Kang 2010; Lively 2000; Moore 2008; Pierce 2003, 2012; Wingfield 2010). What has not been interrogated, and what we take up here, is how the institutional arrangements of white institutional space place people of color in the contradictory position of having to negotiate racist structures and everyday practices, *as well as* the corresponding ideological framing and discursive assertions that these racist dynamics do not exist.

Herein we illustrate how participation in white institutional spaces requires particular forms of emotional labor and management of emotions from people of color, resulting from the stark contradiction between their racialized experiences in these institutions, on the one hand, and the dominant discourse that minimizes and delegitimizes their experiences on the other hand. To accomplish this we focus on the experiences of people of color in two distinct white institutional spaces, looking specifically at the patterned similarities in their experiences vis-à-vis the challenges of negotiating and succeeding within white institutional spaces. We note that people of color in white spaces must engage in emotional labor, or the management of feeling to "create a publicly observable facial and bodily display," as a consequence of the contradiction between racialized space and abstract liberalist ideology that is deeply embedded within the culture of white institutional spaces (Hochschild 1983:7). In particular, the gap between the dominant ideological framing of U.S. institutions as racially neutral (or equal) and the reality of institutional practices and structures that reproduce racial inequality creates an institutional context in which people of color who attempt to identify, acknowledge, or reject racist tropes and racialized institutional structure and practices are set up to be constructed as overly emotional and/or problematic. This institutional frame places people of color in a contradictory position in relationship to the institution; they are required to participate in institutional dynamics in which they are systematically racially objectified and othered while at the same time participate in an institutional logic that minimizes and/or denies the existence of the racial denigration they experience. Moreover, this contradictory position provides an institutional mechanism to arrest challenge or resistance to racist institutional organization in that the dominant ideological frame has constructed people of color as overly emotional and/or angry *prior to* any actual emotional reaction to racist organizational dynamics (see also Harlow 2003; Wingfield 2010).

People of color within white institutional spaces carry the burden of having to choose between tacitly participating in their own objectification and marginalization within the institution or actively reacting against these racial dynamics at the risk of institutional alienation, and possibly exclusion (see Pierce 2003, 2012). This institutional dynamic embeds a mechanism for the reproduction and reification of white institutional power and privilege, and this potential for racial reproduction represents a key element of our findings. Yet despite these institutional constraints, as Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1996) note, racial interactions and institutional dynamics are never absent resistance (see also Bonilla-Silva and Baiocci 2008). Our findings reveal that people of color in white institutional spaces negotiate their responses to racist institutional practices in such a way that creates avenues to resist racial objectification and degradation and emotionally protect themselves from the damaging consequences of racism. These everyday micro-resistances, as we call them, represent an important aspect of racial resilience and resistance, enabling people of color to participate in racially oppressive institutions while maintaining and valuing their human dignity (Higginbotham 2001).

White Institutional Space and Racialized Emotional Labor

Jennifer Pierce (1996), in her pivotal study examining the gendered dynamics of law firms, suggests that women in gendered organizations are required to engage in particular emotional performances as an element of their job roles within the organization. For example, she notes that women are

expected to be calm, nurturing, and even mothering toward male trial lawyers, even if the men lose their tempers. Pierce (1996) notes:

> By playing this emotional role, women paralegals unwittingly reproduce their subordinate position in the law firm hierarchy. On the other hand, women who violate these emotional norms are harshly criticized for their "unprofessional behavior" sanctioned through a reduction in an annual raise, or, in the most extreme case, faced with termination (p. 3).

Thus, within an organizational structure that is characterized by embedded gendered inequality, women are faced with the dilemma of either conforming to the emotional labor associated with expected gendered roles, which means participating in their own subordination, or facing sanctions within the organization (see also Acker 1990; Hochschild 1983; Lively 2000).

A number of scholars have extended the work on gendered emotional labor to examine the dynamics of race in various social settings, and explicate processes of racialized emotional labor. For instance, within service occupations, when deference is an aspect of the job, Amy Wharton (2009) finds that workers of color are likely to be overrepresented in such jobs as they are seen as better suited based on their group membership. Moreover, in her work on Korean nail salon workers, Miliann Kang (2003, 2010) notes that there was an expectation on behalf of consumers that Asian women would engage in specific forms of emotional performances based on the longstanding notions of Asian women as docile. In professional occupations, workers of color are forced to adhere to an altogether different set of emotion norms and emotional labor than their white counterparts. In various occupations, both service and professional, workers of color are expected to place themselves in a one-down subordinate position vis-à-vis colleagues and/or consumers, based on preconceived negative ideologies of the emotional displays of people of color (Wharton 2009). Thus, workers of color must engage in emotional performances based on those ideologies or risk punishment. Like Pierce (1996), however, we suggest that to fully understand the connection between forms of emotion work required of people of color in racialized organizations, and the reproduction of racist relations of power, we must consider the connection between emotion work and racialized organizational and institutional space (Wingfield 2010).

In *How Racism Takes Place* (2011), George Lipsitz discusses how seemingly race-neutral social spaces become embedded with and reproduce white privilege and power. The reproduction of racialized power dynamics takes place spatially, according to Lipsitz, through the "white spatial imaginary." Lipsitz suggests:

> The white spatial imaginary idealizes "pure" and homogenous spaces, controlled environments, and predictable patterns of design and behavior. It seeks to hide social problems rather than solve them . . . This imaginary does not emerge simply or directly from the embodied identities of people who are white. It is inscribed in the physical contours or the places where we live, work, and play, and it is bolstered by financial rewards for whiteness (p. 209).

Likewise, the concept of white institutional space facilitates an explication of how race privilege is produced and reproduced in organizations and institutions by illuminating the interrelated mechanisms of racialized structures, everyday practices, ideology, and discourse within these settings (Evans and Feagin 2012; Moore 2008).

Moore (2008) suggests that white institutional space was produced historically through several explicitly racist processes (see also Feagin 2006). First, historically, U.S. institutions explicitly excluded people of color, particularly in positions of institutional power and authority. Building from that exclusion, exclusively white institutional actors constructed a white-centered logic that organized institutional norms and values (see Bonilla-Silva and Baiocci 2008 for a discussion of white logic). This resulted in what Feagin (2010) calls a white racial frame that explicitly and implicitly enforced

institutional white power, privilege, and wealth. And, finally, white institutions relied upon enlightenment ideological and discursive frames, which professed neutrality, impartiality, and objectivity as central in the construction of rules, practices, and ideologies of the institutions (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Bonilla-Silva and Baiocci 2008). Thus, historically white institutional space developed as a result of explicit racial exclusions, and with largely uncontested ideological justifications, based upon the logic of white supremacy (note here that when we say uncontested we mean uncontested within the institutions, resulting from the explicit exclusion of people of color, who thus had no institutional space to contest the processes). The consequence is a deeply embedded, and thus often tacit, white racial frame.

Joe Feagin (2006) defines the white racial frame as "an organized set of racialized ideas, emotions, and inclinations, as well as recurring or habitual discriminatory actions, that are consciously or unconsciously expressed in, and constitutive of, the routine operation and racist institutions of U.S. society" (p. 23). As the discussion of the historical development of white institutional space illustrates, this organization of racial logic, inclinations, and actions is produced over time and becomes embedded in such a way that the white frame remains tacit and gets naturalized as part of the normative (and neutral) working of the institution (Moore 2008; Bonilla-Silva and Baiocci 2008). The contemporary consequence is racially organized institutions that normalize white institutional power, privilege, and material wealth. However, in the contemporary era, which Bonilla-Silva (2010) and others note is characterized by an ideological frame and discourse based upon color-blind racism, the racialized structure, practice, and ideology of white institutional spaces gets obscured through assertions of abstract liberalism and notions of equality—especially so-called "equality of opportunity"—and the minimization of racist activities and practices (see also Pierce 2003, 2012).

The result is racially organized institutions in which what Moore (2008) terms the *practice* of color-blind racism operates. The practice of color-blind racism occurs as, on the one hand, institutional members assert a dominant discourse professing abstract liberalist ideology, often in the form of commitment to race neutrality and formal equality, while, on the other hand, engaging in systematic patterns of racialized practices—such as assertions that a Mexican American student in an immigration class may be afraid of deportation, or open statements to an African American pilot that he is a nigger whom they do not want piloting their plane (see García-López and Segura 2008). The contemporary practice of color-blind racism is, ironically, facilitated by the presence of some people of color in the space. This is because the inclusion of people of color into previously exclusively white spaces in the post-civil rights era can be signaled as the evidence of racial neutrality and/or equality. The fact that this inclusion occurs often in the context of extreme white resistance and without meaningful institutional or organizational change in terms of racist dynamics of power, racialized practices, or corresponding ideological frames are thus obscured and the dynamics of white institutional space become more tacit (Bell 1987; Carmichael and Hamilton 1977; Crenshaw 1988; Ferguson 2012; Mills 1999). However, for people of color in white institutional spaces, the racist organizational dynamics are much less tacit as they face an organization of institutional power that patterns along the lines of white domination and everyday racist practices (or micro-aggressions) on the one hand, and the contradicting ideological and discursive assertion of race neutrality and equality on the other. As we discuss in more detail below, this contradiction necessitates complicated emotional gymnastics on the part of people of color within these institutional spaces.

METHODS: INVESTIGATING WHITE INSTITUTIONAL SPACES AND EMOTIONS

Our research involves the synthesis of data from two separate research studies undertaken by each of the authors that examine the racial dynamics of two distinct institutional settings—elite U.S. law schools and U.S. commercial airlines. Each of these projects were conducted utilizing in-depth qualitative investigation, including two years of ethnographic research and formal interviews with over 30 students, faculty, and administrators of color at the law schools; and in-depth interviews with 31 African American flight attendants and pilots at three major commercial airlines, 20 of whom were

pilots and 11 flight attendants. In both studies, interview participants were asked to discuss their views about the racial dynamics of the institutions (for example, does discrimination take place in the institution, is the institution characterized by equal opportunities for people of all racial backgrounds, etc.), as well as about their experiences with race and racism within the institutions (for example, have you experienced racism or discrimination here, or have you ever felt people viewed you in a particular manner because of your race). In addition, the research in elite law schools included ethnographic observations of classes, meetings of law school organizations, and public events. This collaborative work was born out of a discussion between the authors concerning the remarkable similarities in the data in these two distinct sites.

Having completed two distinct and separate research projects, we initially discovered remarkable similarities in the data concerning both the experiences of our participants in these two separate institutional spaces, as well as their emotional reactions and patterns of what we ultimately termed micro-resistances, as a result of reviewing one another's work and discussing the examples. As a result, we felt it would be a fruitful extension of both of our studies to combine the data from interviews and observations of people of color in both settings, and reexamine it as one large pool of data to uncover similar patterns of racial micro-aggressions, responses to micro-aggressions, and forms of articulated negotiation and resistance to racialized incidents. As a result we found incredible similarities in the stories of everyday racist practices in both institutional settings, to the extent that the stories respondents told were often interchangeable in the institutions. As well, we found that the respondents described similar emotional negotiations taking place in these two relatively elite institutional settings. As a result of our individual research processes, as well as our collective analysis of the combined data, we suggest that both of these sites are white institutional spaces,[2] and that within this institutional context, people of color who participate in these institutions must engage in specific forms of emotional labor and management of their emotions, which influence their choices concerning reaction and resistance to forces of institutional racism.

Both elite law schools (those in the top 20 in the *U.S. News & World Report*) and commercial airlines have a history of racist exclusion, as do most U.S. institutions of education and employment. Historically, elite law schools did not admit students of color in most instances, and certainly did not include people of color in the faculty or administrative positions. Commercial airlines similarly excluded people of color from the ranks of most jobs, but in particular those jobs with high prestige and/or contact with the public, such as pilots and flight attendants. In both of these contexts, a white racial frame developed, born out of the context of exclusion; in law schools, for example, methods of teaching and perspectives to be taken in interpretations of the law and legal frames were all constructed from a white standpoint (see, for example, Crenshaw 1994; Williams 1993). The systematic exclusion of African Americans in the position of pilot and flight attendant well into the 1950s and 1960s allowed pilot and flight attendant to become synonymous with whiteness, allowing passengers and company personnel to construct African Americans on the aircraft as cleaners or security, even while they wore the uniforms of flight attendants and pilots (Evans 2013; Evans and Feagin 2012; Hansen and Oster 1997; Whitlock 2009).

This history connects to the present in both the demography of these institutions, as well as to institutional logic and culture. In both elite law schools and commercial airlines, people of color remain underrepresented, particularly in positions of power. For example, at every elite law school in the United States, African Americans, Latino/as, and American Indians remain underrepresented in the student body. Moreover, while staff members or janitorial workers in elite law schools are often disproportionately people of color, in positions of authority, such as tenured faculty and deans, they

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2 Feagin (2010) notes that because of the foundational history of white supremacy in the United States, all U.S. institutions operate as racist institutions to a greater or lesser extent, reproducing the dynamics of white domination and the oppression of people of color. For more detail on the specific dynamics of elite law schools and the airline industry and how they were constructed as and continue to operate as white institutional spaces see Moore 2008.

remain deeply underrepresented.[3] As well, of the 71,000 pilots currently employed in the commercial aviation industry, less than 700 are African American, with less than 20 being African American women (OBAP 2010). Though there are more people of color serving as flight attendants, in 2010 more than 70 percent of flight attendants were white (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Yet in both institutions there exists a dominant discourse that asserts an ideology of commitment to racial equality and a valuation of diversity (see Hansen and Oster 1997; Moore 2008).

More than that, as our data indicate, both of these institutional sites have an embedded practice of color-blind racism. In other words, while both institutions make claims and foster a discourse that asserts racial neutrality and even racial equity, these assertions are contradicted by the racialized organizational structures of these institutional settings and racialized everyday practices like the ones described in the introduction. In both of our sites a parallel discourse that simultaneously disavowed racism while engaging racially denigrating and othering tropes existed. These parallel discourses seemed so contradictory as to be incompatible, yet as we discovered, there is an ideological and discursive mechanism that operates to rectify the incompatibility. The ideological and discursive construction of people of color as overly emotional, overly focused on race, too sensitive, etc., means that people of color within the institution are constructed in such a way that their resistance to racist organizational structures or denigrating racist incidents is countered before it occurs. This becomes a paradox for people of color in that, if they respond to their own marginalization and denigration in the institutional setting with normal human emotions—anger, frustration, sadness—they reify the white racial framing of themselves as overly emotional or emotionally "deviant" (Evans 2013; Thoits 2004; Wingfield 2010, 2013). Yet if they manage their emotions to hide their anger, frustration, and sadness, they "unwittingly reproduce their subordinate position in the [institutional] hierarchy," as Pierce (1996:3) suggests.

The institutional settings in which the two individual studies took place are differently situated, one being an educational institution, one an employment institution, and there are differences in the avenues of entry and goals for institutional outcomes. As a result, the kinds of everyday racial experiences our respondents faced in the two settings did have some variability. For example, a Latina student who was questioned in her immigration law class is differently situated in terms of institutional space and power than the African American pilot whose ability to pilot the plane is questioned by a customer. Moreover, people of different racial backgrounds, Latinos and African Americans, for example, have distinct experiences with particular racial tropes—the trope of being an illegal immigrant is more likely to be deployed against a Latino than an African American, and the racist epithet "nigger" is more likely to be deployed against an African American. There are also differences in the racialized experiences of people of different gender, class, and sexuality backgrounds. Recognizing that these distinctions do exist, however, we made the explicit choice to focus on the patterned similarities of people of color in the two institutional settings that we found in our data. We did this not to obscure the nuances that exist in different institutional settings, for different racial groups, or along the lines of intersectional oppression and marginalization. Instead, we chose to focus on shared experiences in both institutions among all people of color in order to highlight the congruity of experiences of people of color in relationship to institutionalized white domination.

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3 The American Bar Association keeps a record of race and gender statistics of all U.S. law schools, but those statistics are combined in such a way that they minimize the racial disparities that exist. For example, the ABA keeps statistics on the "total number of minority J.D. degrees awarded" by year (see American Bar Association n.d.), but these statistics include all those that law schools describe as "minorities," which often includes international students. As well, this combining of all "minorities" prevents assessments of underrepresentation among particular groups like African American or Latino students. The same phenomenon occurs in reporting of tenure track professorships and administrative positions, although the ABA and the Association of American Law Schools keep statistics, the statistics are kept for all American law schools together. This includes the seven historically black law schools, the administration of which is disproportionately African American—yet none of these schools is in the top 100 in *U.S. News & World Report*. A look at just elite law schools (done by Moore 2008 through an analysis of individual law school statistics) reveals that the underrepresentation of people of color in the student body, administration, and faculty in these schools are much more stark.

THE PARADOX OF EMOTIONAL LABOR IN WHITE INSTITUTIONAL SPACE

Elite educational and employment institutions represent the path to upward mobility. However, when these institutions are white institutional spaces they require people of color to perform particular kinds of emotional labor as a requirement of their position in those institutions. The elite law schools and commercial airlines we examined are white spaces, and one of the most challenging and contradictory aspects of racialized emotional labor we discovered in our data was the way that people of color were forced to negotiate ideological and discursive assumptions about their problematic emotional characteristics. For example, in the law school setting many of the students of color discussed their experiences with everyday racism, followed by a discussion about how they had to manage their reaction to these incidents because of the discursive characterization of people of color as overly emotional. Anthony, a second-year African American student, recounted a series of racial incidents, from teachers being shocked when he wore suits, to students disbelieving that he went to college at Columbia University and assuming he meant University of Missouri at Columbia. But he also discussed the process he engaged in when these incidents occurred, evaluating his response in light of how he would be constructed as angry. He said:

> I always try to think of whether or not I should respond or whether I should just sit back, you know . . . people might be like, this angry black man is at it again . . . And that is one of the reasons why I'm cognizant of when I [respond] and when I don't.

Similarly, Yoshimi, an Asian American second-year law student, explained an incident of racism in one of her classes, but when she was asked if she brought up the issues of race and racism in the class discussion she said, "I don't want to look like the minority bitch by complaining."

The same kinds of calculations occurred among pilots in the commercial airline industry. For instance, Martin, an African American pilot, noted:

> Even when they are wrong you can't be angry. Because what are the passengers gonna expect from you when you confront someone like that? They're gonna think that oh sooner or later the head is gonna shake, the fingers gonna point, you gonna start showing black angry tendencies. And then you might actually scare the passengers 'cause now you're a black angry man. Even though you're not even six feet tall you've completely overshadowed everybody and they get scared so.

Similarly, pilot Darnell said:

> I try to voice my opinions and give my information in the calmest way that I can because I don't want them to think that I am the angry black man and be afraid 'cause then they will tell on me. White guys will tell me: "You can't present yourself as the angry black person." If you are not just accepting how everything is—everything they do, everything they say, everything that's American, i.e., white—and you speak about it too much then you remind them of what they see on TV. You are just angry—angry for no reason.

And as Darnell's narrative indicates, similar to Pierce's (1996) finding, the implications of being labeled as the "angry black" have institutional consequences, which may include sanctions or even firing. They are faced with the racial perspectives of white passengers and their white colleagues, and hindered in their potential response by the societal reputation of being black and expressing anger (see also Wingfield 2010, 2013).

All of these narratives illustrate that people of color in these institutional spaces understand that there is an explicit connection between black male anger and "danger." Moreover, as Yoshimi's comments that she does not want to look like the "minority bitch" illustrate, this notion of inappropriate

emotions becomes racialized in white spaces such that people of color, across race and gender lines, are subject to this racist disciplining ideological frame.[4] In other words, not only do they have to negotiate their own emotions in response to racial micro-aggressions, but they are also required to anticipate the potential reactions of white people in their institutions to any emotional reaction they might express (Bell 2014).

These narratives illuminate the conflict associated with potential resistance to racist practices and the deployment of racial tropes in these spaces. The challenge to overcoming tacit and embedded assumptions about the intellectual and/or cultural inferiority of people of color in white institutional spaces becomes even more problematic when resistance itself is incorporated into a white frame that characterizes people of color as unobjective or overly emotional—as a *component* of their intellectual and/or cultural inferiority. Therefore, outward manifestations of resistance are incorporated into the white frame, resulting in a no-win situation for people of color attempting to negotiate white spaces. Moreover, our data indicate that people of color in white institutional spaces are keenly aware of both the contradictions and potential consequences of explicitly rejecting and resisting racist structures, practices, and discourses. As a result, the students and airline personnel made affirmative choices about how to manage their emotional responses to racist incidents.

Devon, a South Asian law student noted:

> [Y]ou know, you don't rock the boat, you don't have to worry about getting into large arguments . . . because [then] you don't have to deal with a lot of issues, and you don't have to deal with a lot of problems. And if you just pretend like you don't hear it, you don't get upset by it.

Devon made a conscious decision to use inaction as an emotional strategy for preventing the emotional pain of racism. If you do not respond to racism, you do not have to worry about getting into the larger arguments, and if you pretend like you do not hear it, you do not get upset. In actively seeking out a strategy that will keep her from getting upset, she decided to avoid confrontation, not "rock the boat," and even pretend to herself that she does not hear racist comments. Her hope was that this strategy would allow her to carry on with the work of learning and attaining her education, without the time-consuming process of managing her emotions with regard to the racism she experiences. Thus, while this strategy is about emotionally protecting herself, it is also about a conscious choice to resist and reject the emotional injury of white racism in such a way that she can continue to be successful and reap the material rewards of the institution.

Gary, a young commercial pilot, similarly withdrew from emotional conversations in the flight deck, even when they were racist in nature. He stated:

> At my job I fly under the radar . . . Not that that has anything to do with me holding my tongue, but I try not to engage or get into certain conversations. If I hear a comment going a certain way, and we're flying, I just have to let that comment go.

Moreover, as Tina, a pilot, described her daily walk through the terminal along with the looks and gestures aimed at her by passengers, she noted:

> When my co-workers come and walk with me they constantly tell me. I know it's there but they think it's funny and they really, really see it. I usually walk through the airport with my head down so that I don't have to make eye contact. When I do look at people, some smile, but most don't know what to do.

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4 In racialized narratives of emotions and emotional display, there is both an implicit and explicit connection to gender and race-ethnic identity.

Gary, like many others in the industry, avoided racial discussions in the flight deck as a means to manage his emotions that are directly connected to experiencing racism. In the above cases, both Gary and Devon developed protective strategies of disengaging racial narratives by flying under the radar or not rocking the boat. Additionally, Tina, like many others, avoided making eye contact by looking away from people who might engage in racist behavior as a way to disconnect from the potential racial slights she may receive. These conflict-deflecting strategies represent what Crystal Fleming, Michèle Lamont, and Jessica Welburn (2012) call a "best approach" for dealing with and managing the harms of racism for many people of color in public interactions, and in these institutional settings they become a conscious process of negotiating everyday racial micro-aggressions and resisting the internalization of dehumanizing racism in these spaces.

In some instances, people of color in white institutional spaces were forced to distance themselves emotionally and cognitively from the institution in order to protect themselves from the harms of racism in the space. In most cases, these decisions occurred, like the ones above, as a means to manage their emotions in the space to *both* avoid being viewed as emotionally problematic and protect their emotional health. For example, Tiffany, an African American law student, described an incident she and another African American student, Sean, had in their criminal law class. Tiffany explained that one day in the class they were discussing a case in which a black man had been following a white woman, and although he never got close enough to touch the woman, she called the police, and he was arrested and charged with attempted rape. Tiffany explained that in the discussion of the case, several white students (women and men) asserted that it was rational for a white woman to fear a black man following her, and that it was reasonable for that woman to assume he intended to rape her even though he never touched her. Tiffany said, "I looked at [Sean] and I could just tell he was pissed. I could see it in him. But he didn't say anything, which was really surprising because I thought he was just gonna explode." Both Tiffany and Sean were outraged by the willingness of white class members to assume that it was natural for a white woman to fear rape from a black man (an example of the dominance of the ideological framing of black men as potentially violent). Tiffany stated that after that class she and Sean discussed how upset they were, and together they decided that from that point on they would no longer speak in the class.

Tiffany and Sean, like the other law students of color, recognized the personal injury they felt when racist tropes were deployed in their class, but more than that, they realized that engaging in the discussion would only result in their feeling more angry and hurt. They knew that if they reacted in class, their comments could potentially be dismissed or minimized, and this would make the event even more upsetting, and thereafter make it more difficult to be in the space of the law school. They were also aware of the amount of time it took to process and deal with this anger—time taken away from other elements of their legal education like reading, studying, and writing. As a result, they made a calculated decision to emotionally and cognitively disengage from the class in order to lessen their emotional burden.

Similarly, Tina, one of five African American female pilots at her company, withdrew from emotionally charged conversations in the flight deck. Recalling a specific conversation in which she noted that she was "offended to sickness to her stomach" when her captain relentlessly wanted to have a discussion about all "the disparities of black culture—broken homes, crime infested neighborhoods" and the difficulties she surely faced because of those disparities. Because her continued existence and achievement in the institution depends upon her negotiating relationships with white people who often deploy racial stereotypes, Tina responded in the following way:

> I don't want drama. I'm in an environment where you're stuck . . . Get the job done and everyone is cool. I will keep my thoughts to myself and I'll just look out window and roll my eyes and be done with the flight. I will go home and enjoy my life and know that I won't fly with you again.

As Tina evaluated her options for a response, a process that takes both time and energy, she made the conscious decision to disengage from the discussion. While many have the option of leaving a conversation, the spatial reality of experiencing discomfort in the flight deck introduces the notion that Tina not only had to stay in this environment in order to maintain a productive and comfortable environment, she had to also suppress her emotional distress. What we also see in these narratives is that whatever choices individuals make to cope with the racist institutional space, they are unable to completely avoid the process of managing their emotions, which becomes a central element of occupying these spaces—a process of emotional labor that gets added to the normal labor of schooling and work (see also Evans 2013; Wingfield 2013).

EMOTIONS, WHITE INSTITUTIONAL SPACE, AND RESISTANCE

Within the paradoxical context created by white institutional space, where people of color must negotiate ways to protect their humanity in the face of racism while at the same time negotiating their emotions to prevent themselves from being further marginalized or excluded from the institutions, resistance to white dominance, expressed in the form of everyday micro-aggressions, becomes a challenging endeavor. As we examined our data, we found many examples of the kinds of narratives presented above, decisions not to actively or forcefully resist as a result of both the fear of being labeled as problematically emotional, and the fear of that label being used to justify institutional consequences (like being alienated by peers, sanctioned by superiors, or even fired or excluded). Importantly, this pattern of strategically ignoring racial micro-aggressions occurred among students, who tend to be young and are navigating the educational arena and attempting to network in ways that will lead to jobs, as well as very experienced senior African American workers in the airline industry. At the same time, however, we found a resistance and resilience among people of color as they navigated this paradox, one which leads us to suggest that we need to create a more nuanced understanding of the process of resistance in the context of white institutional spaces.

Generally when scholars talk about resistance they tend to think of it as manifested in deliberate, active, and often public and collective actions outwardly expressing rejection of systems of oppression (Collins 2000; Rubin 1996). In this construction, failing to act overtly becomes the antithesis of resistance. What we suggest is that this both minimizes the totalizing power of white institutional space, and ignores the time consuming and emotionally laborious process of decision making about how and when people of color will respond to racist institutional arrangements. In his extensive research on peasant rebellions, political scientist James Scott (1985) takes into account those structural constraints upon resistance. Removing the focus of resistance away from collective rebellions, Scott conceptualizes everyday resistance as the constant and ongoing struggle between peasantry and those with the power to dominate. He notes that those without power rarely have the resources or opportunity to engage in collective resistance, but that they instead deploy the "ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (Scott 1985:29). These techniques often go unnoticed by the powerful, which serves as a level of protection for the powerless from subjugation "by masking the resistant nature of their activities" (Hollander and Einwohner 2004:539). While some argue that resistance must be collective and visible to be recognized (Rubin 1996), the notion of everyday resistance can be "manipulated to encourage or discourage recognition" and it can be "deliberately hidden from view" (Hollander and Einwohner 2004:540)

Ongoing experiences with oppression have led many people of color to engage in forms of everyday resistance, thus becoming "salient in almost every detail of the everyday life experiences" of people of color (el-Khoury 2012:97). Often performed in silence, everyday resistance is an act of empowerment that is often unplanned, but is significant, meaningful, and effective in the end (el-Khoury 2012; Fleming et al. 2012). "Therefore, resistance does not have to be collective, organized, or encompass outward protesting . . . resistances to oppressions are 'revolutions of everyday life'"

(el-Khoury 2012:87). In the process of analyzing our data in elite law schools and commercial airlines, we found examples of everyday resistance; this resistance did not take the form of sabotage or foot-dragging in the way the workers in Scott's (1985) research did, in part because such actions would likely result in exclusion from these elite institutional positions. However, we did find patterns of well-considered actions taken to manage and minimize the necessary emotional labor of people of color navigating white spaces. These thoughtful actions are engaged as strategies to both succeed within these institutions and simultaneously reject the personal reification of racial denigration and stereotyping.

To illustrate, we return to Maria's story about the incident in her immigration law class. Maria's description of both the racist incident in her class and her reaction explicate the pain of experiencing racial oppression, as well as the time-consuming process of what we identify as everyday resistance. To reiterate how Maria described her reaction to the racist assertion that she feared deportation because she was Mexican, she said:

> He said this to me, and I'm still sittin' there, and I'm so stunned that I didn't have an answer. And I *still* hate myself for that, because I just sat there . . . And for God's sake, *I'm a second year law student, and I'm gonna be a lawyer, and I have all this huge resume*, and somebody asks me if I'm gonna get deported.[5]

The emotional agony of the situation is clear: "I *still* hate myself for that." By being caught off guard with a racist expression—one equating her racial identity with foreignness and thus potential illegal status—Maria did not have a response. And, she still experiences an immense emotional cost for not responding, as she continues to dwell on the incident. But in the process of managing her emotional pain, Maria created, in her own narrative, an empowering counter-frame. She did not acquiesce to the pain of racism, instead she noted, "I'm a second year law student, and I'm gonna be a lawyer, and I have all this huge resume," affirming to herself how successful and accomplished she is, and how she will find success within the constraints of the institution. Her response indicates an active management of her emotions that, even in the absence of an explicit reaction to the white student who made the comment, reveals the process of everyday resistance, which empowers her in that space.

This was a process that many law students of color recounted. Consider Derrick, an African American law student, as he explained his experience in the law school:

> One thing that drives me absolutely nuts is when I talk, or I do something, and somebody comes up to me and says, "Wow, great point. You are really articulate." What the hell does that mean? Do you know how much money I've put into my education—damn right . . . That is so condescending, like—fine, great, I got your approval, but if I was a white male . . . there's no way you would ever say I'm articulate . . . Everyone says, "Oh, I'm not prejudiced" . . . And I'm like well then why did you just say those comments, because obviously if I'm articulate and I speak just the same as everyone else in the class, the bar is set lower for me.

Derrick explicitly noted and rejected the subtle racism involved in the backhanded compliment concerning his being "articulate." He identified the racist underpinnings of the statement and he affirmed his own position, emotionally taking care of himself as he considered his personal reaction to a recurring racist incident. He said, "Do you know how much money I've put into my education—damn right . . ." Whether or not he decides to explicitly respond to the white actors engaged, he resists their construction of himself by both reaffirming his own educational excellence, and by identifying the methods of white racism, noting the process by which white people engage in racism.

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5   Emphasis added to center the emotional agony, pain, and dilemma associated with responding to racial denigration.

Many African American flight crewmembers noted similar commentary about being "articulate" or "different" from other African Americans. In addition, Allison, a flight attendant, noted that many of her colleagues and passengers alike made other assumptions based on her racial identity. As she discussed an all too familiar conversation that takes place on the aircraft, she stated:

> Many flight attendants talk about their houses and education and I sometimes say, "I have an MBA. Oh, you have a master's degree? Well how many kids do you have?" . . . One. Does every black person have to have five kids by five different daddies? "Are you married?" Yes I am. "Oh, you're married?" Can I not be married? I am not a baby-making machine. Yes, I have an MBA. I graduated, I didn't just work on it; I graduated.

Allison, much like Derrick above, noted the subtle ways she is constructed as a woman of color. As her white colleagues made each assumption, Allison deconstructed the veiled racist ideologies of their questions by internally asking questions and providing answers in return. She resisted these constructions with the fact that she earned an MBA, "not just work on one."

In addition, African American pilots face the commonality of being re-interviewed by their white coworkers, even when those whites are in lower ranked positions on the aircraft. The longstanding discourse of African American pilots as unqualified, affirmative action hires often leads to discussions in which they are consistently questioned on their skill set. Bishop, a senior captain, detailed a recent experience with a new first officer as the first officer blatantly asked, "What qualifies you to fly the airplane?" As Bishop recounted his 29-year tenure flying airplanes, he noted:

> And when he realized I'd been through these different airlines and all these different experiences . . . I ask, "So, what's your background?" After he went over his whole litany of picking [on] me; he says, he came right out of high school, straight through college, daddy paid the money and got him a job because he was one of the senior pilots here at the time. He had no idea all I had been through—flying on airplanes where I had to put my hat on the dash to keep the rainwater from shorting out the radios and such. And he has the *nerve* to question me and what I'm capable of. But, I didn't get mad or confrontational. I kept my composure, stayed focused.

In this example, this young first officer felt it was both *appropriate* and necessary to question this senior captain on his abilities to fly the aircraft, foregoing not only the power structure on the aircraft, but also to serve as a tacit mechanism to remove the power and authority held by the black captain in this space. The insinuation of black incapability reaffirms white space, and the creation of a different narrative of blacks undeservingly entering the industry has become a normative aspect in this space. Yet, even as Bishop performed the emotional labor of engaging in frustrating conversations where white colleagues challenged his authority, he ultimately developed an overarching internal dialogue to showcase his skill, intellect, and qualifications, by noting to himself that he can "fly the hell out of an airplane." Through the rejection of white ideological assumptions about the inferior skills and intellect of people of color, this less visible, yet equally important method of micro-resistance, is manifest through the affirmation of self-definitions and valuations of skill and intellect (Collins 2000).

Recall the encounter above by law student Derrick. He suggested that managing his emotions through an empowering inner dialogue became an essential element of his institutional experience because he understands the dynamics of a white racial frame that would dismiss any direct challenge to racist expressions. Derrick said:

> I think racism . . . is like a mind fuck. It really is—because it's not something you can grasp. It's like this intangible thing, because you don't know when somebody's doing it [or] really what's happening. And so people can completely back out of it . . . A lot of it comes through humor.

They're like "I was just kidding." And then it places the responsibility on the person who was offended and I think . . . It's really tough.

The experiences and narratives of our respondents clearly illustrate the way in which white institutional actors engage in color-blind racist practices, but at the same time deploy a dominant discourse and ideology that include an inherent notion that if people of color in the space reveal that they are outwardly offended by such racist practices it is indicative of their being overly sensitive or not capable of understanding the true dynamics of the situation. This, then, puts the pressure on them not to respond, and, if they do, they become the problem. Thus, these incidents require a process of emotional management that includes the decision of how and when to respond, an understanding of how one's response will be co-opted into a white frame, and a conscious decision about how one will feel about that process after responding—all before even making the decision to respond to white racism.

CONCLUSION: IMPOSSIBLE BURDENS

The inclusion of people of color into previously exclusively white institutions in the post-civil rights era has resulted in racially complex and emotionally hazardous spaces that people of color must navigate in order to participate in the resources and rewards these institutions offer. While the legislative changes resulting from the civil rights movement meant that these institutions were required to permit access for people of color, the institutions remain racially contentious environments. White institutional spaces, built on a history of exclusion, are embedded with white discourses and ideologies that subjugate the racialized experiences of people of color. People of color within these spaces carry the burden of engaging in emotion work that is not equally distributed with their white counterparts. The inscription of race privilege into the social dynamics of these spaces creates burdens for people of color, particularly because of the tacit nature of white institutional space. People of color carry the burden of having to choose between tacitly participating in their marginalization or actively resisting racist ideologies with the possible consequence of institutional alienation, exclusion, or official reprimand. White institutional spaces inscribe white privilege and power in the very social institutions that people of color must actively engage in order to experience upward mobility—education and employment. As a result of the additional burden of emotion work for people of color in these racialized institutions, and the need for people of color to sometimes choose an emotional strategy to not engage or challenge racial oppression in order to succeed in these spaces, the racialized relations of power are reproduced. While the strategic decision of people of color to disengage and not challenge micro-aggressions or structural racial inequities may facilitate this reproduction, these strategies also provide an important means for some people of color to successfully navigate white institutions and thereby benefit from the resources they offer.

Our analysis suggests that social science research must begin to account for both the additional labor required for people of color within systems of institutional racism, and the impossible burdens faced by people of color as they negotiate how to resist the racialized mechanisms of those systems. The data reveal that a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the connections between various forms of emotion work required of people of color in racialized organizations, and the subsequent reproduction of racist relations of power, requires an interrogation of the connection between emotion work and the institutional space in which it occurs. Extending the existing literature on emotion work and emotional labor, this study illustrates how the emotion work required by people of color when negotiating white space involves continual internally calculated decisions concerning how to handle racial affronts while maintaining a sense of self. The dominant ideology that constructs people of color as overly emotional prior to any emotional reaction complicates that internal debate. We see that these social institutions are set up to reproduce white institutional power and privilege on an institutional and structural level. These social institutions, and the racialized society in which they are embedded, contain mechanisms for explicitly and implicitly othering people of color in institutional

space, creating and normalizing racial dominance, as well as stalling racial resistance. People of color, as they always have throughout the history of white supremacist society, find creative ways, often through various forms of subjugated knowledge, to resist the mechanisms of white institutional space (see Collins 2000). It is essential to view these decisions as tactical calculations about social resistance and survival in a racially structured society. Our research offers a glimpse into this process, but if we are to seriously recognize the dynamics of the reproduction of racial inequality, other research must engage this project as well.

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