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Uncompensated emotional labor, racial battle fatigue, and (in)civility in digital spaces

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Abstract

Emotional labor was originally theorized by Arlie Hochschild in the context of domestic labor. Since her early theorization, popular culture and social scientists have adopted the term to refer to emotion work that is exhibited in a manner of financially compensated social settings. *Emotional labor* refers to the process by which individuals are expected to conform to a set of societal guidelines, ensuring that their emotions conform to that performance. As the use of social media grows, emotional labor plays an increasing role in the lives of people of color—across media platforms. We frame the ever-present negotiation involved in racialized interactions online as a type of uncompensated emotional labor that results in racial battle fatigue. Next, we position emotional labor as an intrinsic part of the experience for social media users of color because digital media is by default a White, racialized space. Lastly, we argue that current research on civility does not account for the emotional labor of people of color. We offer an original view of uncompensated emotional labor that is inclusive of cross-platform, racialized emotional labor that can result in racial battle fatigue.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Love it or hate it, digital media¹ are an embedded piece of our social fabric. Even if one does not personally use social media, it is likely that their friends and family do. In some ways, the rapid spread of information impacts our consumption of popular culture references, world news, domestic politics, and many other aspects of social life. Social media can facilitate diffusion of awareness and knowledge, enhance discourse, and encourage participation in the political process. But access to the power shifting nature of digital media is not evenly dispersed. The quality and content of discourse are largely dependent on one's social networks (Rainie & Wellman, 2012), the algorithms which influence

the content users view, and the user's ability to successfully navigate digital platforms. Beyond the limitations and affordances specific to digital platforms, race can play a large part in our interactions online. In fact, it is well documented that social media are racialized spaces (Brock, 2009; Brock, 2012; Daniels, 2012; Gray, 2014; Mueller, Williams, & Dirks, 2018). Racialization is generally defined by scholars as the process of learning about racial meaning and in turn, ascribing characteristics to people and groups of people based on interpretations of racial categories such as perceived differences in cultural or ethnic norms, patterns of behavior, and phenotypical features (Barot & Bird, 2001, p. 601). Our perceptions of race inform interactions online and offline. The Internet itself is shaped by, and reproduces, the same processes of racialization that occur offline. The Internet does not fundamentally change the inherent racialization that occurs in our society.

The use of digital media reshapes the implicit understanding of race as a social fact and enhances the reach of racial domination. Consider, for example, the act of "Trayvoning" in which mostly White social media users posted stylized pictures and videos of themselves imitating Trayvon Martin's dead body for racist comedic effect (Durham, 2015; Mueller et al., 2018). Both the audiences who viewed the videos and those who produced them enacted their racial dominance over an audience in pain by making light of the current state of police violence against Black bodies. One complexity in this racialized exchange, brought on by the advent of the Internet, is that this type of race play is more visible to both Black and White audiences. Racism and race play are historically rooted in the transatlantic slave trade in the United States. However, individuals no longer feel the need to hide their racism behind closed doors (Mueller, Dirks, & Picca, 2007; Mueller et al., 2018; Pitcher, 2014). In the age when civil discourse is simultaneously called for and neglected by White bodies in power, the constant interaction with racism can take an enhanced toll on Black and Brown social media users, resulting in racial battle fatigue.

A growing body of work examines racial battle fatigue as "the accumulative stress from racial microaggressions" that "leads people of color to exhibit various psychophysiological symptoms, including suppressed immunity and increased sickness, tension headaches, trembling and jumpiness, chronic pain in healed injuries, elevated blood pressure, and a pounding heartbeat" (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006, pp. 300–301). Racial battle fatigue, or the "stress of unavoidable front-line racial battles in historically white spaces," causes undue anxiety and oftentimes, emotional exertion (Smith et al., 2006, p. 301). However, digital media can compound the experience of racial battle fatigue. We know that all social life involves some degree of performativity (Goffman, 1967), but the nature of social media can cause us to be more aware of the people in our networks—especially when our online social networks encompass individuals from social circles that were traditionally considered separate. For example, in the past, it was less likely that your mother-in-law and your boss would both comment on a picture of your child in the same setting. Internet studies scholars call this conflation of social circles *context collapse* (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Context collapse can make the performance of race, and the negotiation of already tense racialized interactions, even more anxiety inducing for people of color when multiple audiences with various social capital are all present for the discussion. What happens when a colleague makes a racist remark on your Facebook page? Your family may or may not be watching to see how you respond. Just as your work colleagues may or may not be watching to see how you respond. Whether or not people are actually that interested in your life is not the question. Rather, the perceived or imagined audience may dictate how a person responds in this situation (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). One can (a) say nothing, (b) call attention to the apparent racism while trying to salvage the relationship with their colleague, or (c) call attention to the racist remark while deciding not to salvage the relationship with the colleague which will have long-term implications for their comfort in the workplace. The tension we have elucidated here is exactly where our present examination lies.

In what follows, we offer an original theorization of emotional labor by framing the ever-present negotiation involved in racialized interactions online as a type of emotional labor that results in racial battle fatigue. First, in a departure from Arlie Hochschild's theorization of emotional labor, we contend that *uncompensated emotional labor* can be used as a sociological lens to investigate unpaid and non-traditional emotional labor that may result in racial battle fatigue. Next, we position emotional labor as an intrinsic part of the experience for social media users of color because digital media is by default a White, racialized space. Lastly, we update the performativity of online self-presentation, situating the role of social media in creating a postmodern discourse on racialized civility. In lieu of

empirical data, we use existing case studies from peer-reviewed articles to aid in the development of our theorization of *uncompensated emotional labor*. We assert that current research on civility does not account for the emotional labor and racial battle fatigue of people of color and call for a renewed framing of civility and incivility.

2 | RACIALIZED EMOTIONAL LABOR AND EMOTION WORK

In *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild describes emotional labor as a process that “requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (1983, p. 20). When Hochschild theorized emotional labor, it was first applied to flight attendants and the layer of caring that is involved with the occupation: “in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling” (1983, p. 20). For flight attendants, emotional labor is an expectation that comes with economic compensation. “Part of the job is to disguise fatigue and irritation, for otherwise the labor would show in an unseemly way and the product–passenger contentment, would be damaged” (1983, p. 20). Flight attendants manage their emotions in a manner that best facilitates customer satisfaction because it encourages repeat consumers, the ultimate goal of the airline.

More recently, in *Second Shift*, Hochschild and Machung (1989) write about the pressure women experience when trying to balance home and professional lives. Hochschild argues that women and men adopt gender strategies (both consciously and unconsciously) to help balance emotional tension in the home. Gender strategies, defined as “a plan of action through which a person tries to solve problems at hand, given the cultural notion of gender at play” (1989, p. 15), is akin to racial strategies that people of color have adopted for survival in a culture that actively reinforces White supremacy. Folks of color experience racialization early on in their lives and learn the rules by which to navigate race and racism over the course of a lifetime. Included in these rules is the need to mask emotional responses in the face of racism (Smith et al., 2006) for the sake of civility. Infamously, a perceived overreaction to racism can result in death or imprisonment (e.g., Barned-Smith, 2017; Smith, 2017). Other scholars have expanded on Hochschild's theorization to account for the racial strategies used by people of color in predominantly White spaces.

Harlow (2003) examines racialized and gendered experiences that Black professors endure while teaching at predominantly White institutions. Harlow focuses on the emotion management of professors of color in the face of students' expectations based on racial stigmas and controlling images (Collins, 1990). Harlow's case study involved interviews of both White and Black faculty members and ultimately found that one's race affected the navigation of the classroom (2003). Harlow's results suggest that Black faculty members are expected to manage their emotions in ways that were not expected from their White colleagues. Emotion management strategies consisted of downplaying race in the classroom, exempting one's self from the structural effects of racism, attempting to have an apathetic attitude about students' opinions, and feeling the need to suppress anger (Harlow, 2003, p. 358). These strategies allowed faculty of color (at all academic ranks) to cope with the frustrations of teaching at predominantly White institutions.

Similarly, Jackson (2018) argues that some Black men adopt the racial strategy of a “cool pose” to deal and cope with racialized and gendered oppressive systems. The cool pose involves the redirecting of emotions by Black men, as a way of performing their masculinity, in order to avoid being perceived as weak and vulnerable (Jackson, 2018, p. 1). Due to the “controlling images” (Collins, 1990) that frame Black men as threatening, those who work or find themselves in predominantly White settings often find themselves performing their emotions in a way that is less threatening to others in the name of civility. The daily management of emotions can contribute to racial battle fatigue.

Moreover, people of color must disguise fatigue or irritation in order that they not be perceived as a threat to White people and whiteness, even in the face of direct discrimination or racism. For example, workplaces that are predominantly White are often hostile to Black middle-class workers. When Black employees receive a promotion, White individuals falsely claim that they are victims of “reverse discrimination.” In reality, Black employees are routinely paid less than White employees of equal status (Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Moras, Shehan, & Berardo, 2018).

Pointing out this contradiction may result in ongoing hostility in the workplace as it did for the Black lawyers in Jennifer Pierce's (2012) study on a White law firm. When Black lawyers mentioned that their White colleagues intentionally neglected to mentor them, office gossip suggested that Black lawyers were unfit for the job and that they only worked at the law firm due to affirmative action policies. These rumors ultimately drove two Black lawyers to leave the firm because of emotional distress experienced simply for asking for assistance as junior lawyers—a routine practice that was obliged for junior White lawyers in the same firm (Pierce, 2012). Thus, emotional labor is intrinsic to the survival of the racialized other and the maintenance of civility norms. Under threat of bodily harm, loss of a job, or loss of cultural capital, racialized others must at times engage in emotional labor to “induce or suppress feeling” to invoke an attitude that does not disturb others.

Emotional labor that is employed in professional workplaces is included in Hochschild's original theorization. The emotional labor required is not necessarily negative because it is at least compensated monetarily. However, workers paid the same amount are still not in an equitable situation, as minority workers are performing additional emotional labor tasks for which they do not receive additional pay. There is no emotional labor stipend to account for this added layer of expected job performance. Uncompensated emotional labor is commonplace for people of color—where they are often the “diversity experts” at their institutions. Often, people of color are expected to be civil in these situations and have to manage their emotions to be deemed professional. Thus, our new formulation of emotional labor applies to and accounts for unpaid aspects of emotional labor and emotion management for people of color.

2.1 | Racialized feeling rules

Next, we draw attention to *feeling rules*. According to Hochschild, feeling rules “are what guide emotion work by establishing the sense of entitlement or obligation that governs emotional exchanges” (1983). Wingfield (2010) expands on the notion of racialized feeling rules in a study of professional workspaces, finding that White employees are able to express and display emotions without repercussions when Black employees cannot. When it comes to heated discussions that occur on digital media, feeling rules abound. We borrow a clear example from Schmittell and Sanderson's (2015) work on NFL player's tweets in response to the George Zimmerman verdict:

With respect to social and political causes, African American and minority athletes may perceive that expressing commentary on these issues is a required response, particularly when, as with the Zimmerman verdict, an injustice is believed to have taken place ... Although engaging in these advocacy efforts can be liberating for African American and minority athletes, it also can cause disruption for fans, leading them to “push back” and criticize these athletes for offering social and political commentary. Such reprimands often involve fans reminding athletes to stick to “what they know best” (e.g., playing the sport). (pp. 4–5)

The engaged feeling rule is that African-American athletes cannot show emotion. Their fans would rather view them as emotionless bodies that simply play a sport well. When players violate feeling rules, rule reminders function to trigger emotional labor so that the players return to a, so-called, normal performance of emotion. “How do we recognize a rule reminder? We can experience it as a private mumbling to ourselves, the voice of a watchful chorus standing outside to the side of the main stage on which we act and feel” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 51). Hochschild seems to echo Mead's (1934) theorization of the generalized other. Taking the generalized other is exactly the type of experiential moment described by Hochschild. We imagine how others may react to our self-presentation. “We can also receive rule reminders from others who ask us to account for *what* we feel. A friend might ask, ‘why do you feel depressed? You've just won the prize you've always wanted ... A call for account implies that emotional conventions are not in order and must be brought up to consciousness for repair” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 51). For Black NFL players, feeling rules come as directives from fans.

In the wake of the Zimmerman verdict, Duane Brown crafted several compelling tweets about his anger and dismay about the verdict. A fan responded, “@DuaneBrown76 lets worry bout getting to the bowl brotuhh” Brown retorted, “Shut the entire fuck up. Life is bigger than a got damn game” (Schmittel & Sanderson, 2015, p. 9). In this case, the feeling rule is a directive to manage emotions in a way that conforms to the trope of the happy slave (Boulukos, 2008; Mellinger, 1992). Black bodies can be patrolled and monitored to the benefit of the NFL and its fans. NFL players of color cannot voice controversial views if it disrupts White fans' enjoyment of NFL culture (Schmittel & Sanderson, 2015, p. 9). This example, used primarily to demonstrate the use of feeling rules, is still closely fitted to Hochschild's original framework because it is part of the players' jobs to entertain. In accordance with the NFL statement on mission and values, the league (including players) aims to

Provide our fans, communities and partners the highest quality sports and entertainment in the world, and to do so in a way that is consistent with our values ... Our fans give us their hearts. Our communities see themselves in us and we see ourselves in them. No matter how much we accomplish, no matter how successful we are, no one is bigger than the game. (NFL, 2018)

The statement demonstrates that players are expected to perform much like Hochschild's flight attendants, in a manner that commoditizes comfort and happy feelings. Players must manage their emotions to meet that goal. In Section 3, we expand on our theorization of emotional labor that is not tied to any particular employer–employee relationship but instead functions on a system of cultural capital.

2.2 | Racialized emotional labor and emotion work online, breaking away from tradition

One recently and widely circulated think piece titled “Please Stop Calling Everything that Frustrates You Emotional Labor” (Swenson, 2017) extols the dangers of expanding Hochschild's theorization to emotional management that is not actually tied to the labor field, namely, a paid job. Swenson argues that most misuse the term when they actually mean knowledge work, stating that the emotions we feel about particular knowledge work do not constitute emotional labor. At first glance, Swenson appears to be right. Hochschild informs

The company lays claim not simply to her physical motions—how she handles food trays—but to her emotional actions and the way they show in the ease of a smile. The final commodity is not a certain number of smiles to be counted like rolls of wallpaper. For the flight attendant, the smiles are part of her work, a part that requires her to coordinate self and feeling so that the work seems to be effortless. To show that the enjoyment takes effort is to do the job poorly.

Here, we argue that in a postmodern society where feigned happiness is the norm (Baudrillard, 1988; Mestrovic, 1994), the acquisition of a particular cultural capital is an essential part of participating in a society that is simultaneously colorblind yet obsessed with race (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). In order to engage in civil discourse online, individuals must know how to talk about race in a manner that is deemed civil.² Yet some White individuals often call on their friends and colleagues of color to do this knowledge work for them as evidenced by the multitude of public-facing think pieces entitled something like “White people, stop asking us to educate you about racism” (WOC & Allies, & WOC, 2017; see also Haile, 2017; Metta, 2017) and a burgeoning body of academic work on ways to be a White ally without inducing racial battle fatigue (see Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Padilla, 1994; Spanierman & Smith, 2017). Thus, the “work” of knowledge work is put up for sale. Whiteness is analogous to the employing company. The commodity being sold is cultural capital on race relations, and the wage paid for that commodity for people of color is continued existence, both physically and representatively. People of color must earn the space to exist.

People of color do engage in knowledge work for free—educating and reproducing knowledge for the masses in Twitter discourse, in Facebook scuffles, in classrooms, and at the dinner table with their own family members, often resulting in racial battle fatigue (Smith et al., 2006). But the emotional labor that accompanies knowledge work must

not be overlooked. Many share their knowledge believing that White people become more compassionate as they encounter narratives of racism from people of color. This empathetic fallacy, delineated by Delgado and Stefancic (2017), continues to undermine racial progress because, as history and academic research have revealed, racism does not stop when people are empathetic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Yet, people of color often take it upon themselves to recount painful incidences of racism in a manner that is palatable to the listener to evoke or awaken empathy from White listeners. Thus, we assert that emotion work and emotional labor are present in every conversation on race and racism when uncompensated emotional labor is defined as “a process of conscious or unconscious emotion regulation in the course of everyday interactions with others to engender or ensure their emotional comfort. The outcome of this emotion work is closely tied to one’s social status and continued good standing in the social networks in which they participate.” Our definition of uncompensated emotional labor is informed by both Hochschild’s original work and the popular culture feminist zeitgeist, exemplified by discourse on emotional labor in popular online news media (Fessler, 2018; Hochschild, 1983).

Uncompensated emotional labor as it is experienced online has limited scope in scholarship. Our theorization of *uncompensated emotional labor* seeks to fill that gap in Internet studies research. The Internet has transformed the dynamic of labor relations. One can be employed remotely and work to coordinate social media marketing campaigns from across the globe. In other cases, individuals are contracted to perform service labor via a smartphone application (think Uber and Lyft). Even those who are not employed by a particular organization may work to produce knowledge, acclaim, or awareness for a company, group, or cause simply because they like it or because they support the values. On some level, we all reproduce and consume culture, branding, and knowledge every time we post about a popular culture reference (ordering the first Pumpkin Spice latte of the season, for an innocuous example; (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010; Ritzer & Rey, 2016). Thus, it is imperative that scholars move toward theorizing emotional labor in digital spaces. Duffy and Wissinger (2017) explore the emotional labor that comes along with the creative and entrepreneurial work of fashion bloggers, Youtubers, and Instagrammers. They argue that engaging in creative work online involves mythologies that portray the work as fun, authentic, and creative when it is, in fact, extremely emotionally taxing (Duffy & Wissinger, 2017, p. 4633). Duffy and Wissinger contend that social media entrepreneurs and influencers are required to engage in emotional labor by simulating, feeling, and performing sentiments to gain support and a following (2017 p. 4658). Hence, these gestures are forms of the continuous emotional labor needed to achieve a likable self-branded persona.

Similarly, Baym (2015) tackles a related occurrence of what she terms “relational labor,” a type of uncompensated emotional labor that aspiring musicians perform to generate attention. Specifically, she describes a process of “regular, ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work. ‘Relational’ is meant to emphasize effort that goes beyond managing others’ feelings in single encounters” (2015, p. 5). Baym describes an exercise in which artists, at times, must compromise their true feelings and beliefs to generate a following with online audiences. As digital media platforms continue to evolve along with our relationship to the Internet, we must explore new avenues of emotional labor. The uncompensated emotional labor that exists alongside knowledge work remains strenuous and must be acknowledged and valued as true labor.

3 | IMPLICATIONS FOR DIGITAL SOCIOLOGY AND THE FIELD OF INTERNET STUDIES

Though it has not been named as such, research on *uncompensated emotional labor* has largely been conducted on bloggers, vloggers, and other social influencers (see Duffy, 2017; Elias, Gill, & Scharff, 2017; Rocamora, 2018). As we have demonstrated here, uncompensated emotional labor occurs via everyday interactions for people of color online; we need only develop a systematic method for cataloging such events. Likewise, research on uncompensated emotional labor has timely implications for the study of racial battle fatigue and research on American discourse on civility and incivility.

3.1 | The toll of civility: uncompensated emotional labor and racial battle fatigue

Civility can be defined as a set of social behaviors that govern conversation including politeness and ethical consideration. Civility is intended to promote mutual respect in dialog even when participants disagree (Elsner & Boggs, 2005). Papacharissi argues that “civility standards should promote respect for the other, enhance democracy, but also allow for human uniqueness and unpredictability” (2004, p. 266). Conversely, incivility can be defined as a social interaction that involves discourteous treatment, is lacking in respect, and displays general disregard for either party's dignity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Kane & Montgomery, 1998; Montgomery, Kane, & Vance, 2004, p. 249). Cortina describes general incivility as “low-intensity conduct that lacks a clear intent to harm but nevertheless violates social norms” of civility (2008, p. 55) such as refusing to acknowledge another's comment or repetitive interruptions during an exchange.

Norms of respect and civility differ across cultures and even within communities, subcultures, and organizations (Montgomery et al., 2004). Scholars suggest that thresholds for incivility are determined by several factors: gender, race, and other shared identities (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2012). An individual's “attitude is likely to be influenced by the extent to which they share a salient identity with the participants” (Montgomery et al., 2004, p. 260). In the instance of political debate or a heated discussion on race, this means that those who share political identities or a particular viewpoint on race relations are more likely to find a conversation civil than if the involved parties do not share a point of commonality (Mendelberg, 2009). Hence, existing implicit racial bias can cause White individuals to perceive a more serious violation of their norms of respect, causing them to react more intensely toward those they deem uncivil (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; Montgomery et al., 2004) leading to a cycle in which people of color must work harder not to be deemed uncivil.

In these situations, people of color are expected to put their true feelings aside and prioritize their White counterparts' feelings to be less threatening and be deemed more respectful. Our definition of *uncompensated emotional labor* speaks to current research on civility in that people of color must, at times, engage in uncompensated emotional labor to be deemed civil. Unfortunately, contemporary rhetoric on civility encourages one type of civility that privileges hegemonic conservative ideologies and traditions (see Lukensmeyer, 2017; Plazas, 2018; Sykes & Lukensmeyer, 2018; Washington Post Editorial Board, 2018) and ignores the ongoing racial oppression in the United States. Additionally, norms that govern civility and incivility are not equally enforced.

News media demand that people of color remain civil when discussing social and racial injustice (e.g., Washington Post Editorial Board, 2018). Yet research demonstrates that White individuals regularly react to news which promotes racial justice and equality with negativity and incivility. For example, news stories on peaceful protests held by undocumented immigrants from Mexico were met with incivility “with some users advocating ‘shoot to kill’ laws to deter ‘illegals’ from coming ‘over the border’” (Rholinger & Williams, 2019, p. 1; Santana, 2014). This double standard presents a quagmire in which people of color are expected to remain civil when discussing the impact of racial injustice even in the face of death threats (Rholinger & Williams, 2019; Santana, 2014). This disproportionate emotional labor can negatively impact overall health, including “lower behavioral responses and [may] trigger adverse physiological activity (e.g. high blood pressure; Pennebaker, 1985)” (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2012, p. 112). As individuals experience greater levels of incivility, their stress may also increase (Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2012). Incivility online, in the workplace, and in other aspects of social life may have an accumulative effect that results in racial battle fatigue.

3.2 | Racialized (in)civility

Why is it that people of color are held to a higher standard of civility than their White counterparts? Our response to this question can be summarized by two pivotal viewpoints. (a) *Notions of civility are inextricably racialized*: The meaning of race is constantly changing in a process Omi and Winant refer to as racial formation whereby “social, economic, and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 12). Put

simply, race filters the lens through which we view society and influences how we interact with others. This racial lens is constantly being shaped by politics and other social forces. Historically, Black people have been portrayed as an uncivilized group (Pieterse, 1995). Dominant, controlling narratives of blackness purport that Black individuals are animalistic, lacking in feeling, and ignorant of the norms that govern “civil” society (Collins, 1990). Thus, blackness may implicitly invoke ideas of incivility because of historical patterns of racialization, making it more likely that they be framed as uncivil. Determinations of civility and incivility are directly influenced by our understanding of race, even if this evaluation is done unconsciously.

Hence, our next point is (b) *one can simultaneously exhibit civility while maintaining racist personal beliefs*. The ever-changing racial formation in the United States has taken various forms over the course of history. The election of Barack Obama, the first African-American president of the United States, is said to have marked a pivotal shift toward post-racial attitudes. Often, these racial attitudes are referred to as colorblind ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Colorblind racism refers to a more covert form of racism where direct references to race are avoided (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Through this colorblind ideology, one is able to be civil (purporting to have regard for another's humanity) while holding racist beliefs. They can avoid racist language which would be deemed uncivil while making masked discriminatory remarks (Cortina, 2008). These masked racialized exchanges demonstrate incivility. In fact, a growing body of work (Cortina, 2008) frames incivility as a modern, covert form of discrimination (Cortina, 2008; Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013; Krings, Johnston, Binggeli, & Maggiori, 2014). Cortina's work suggests that individuals may even engage in selective incivility in which some “unknowingly target women and minorities with disproportionate incivility, despite being explicitly opposed to sexism and racism ... Preference for ingroup members, motivation to maintain social power, and so forth could give rise to subtle biases against the outgroup” (2008, p. 64). In these instances, outright uncivil behavior would not be acceptable, so individuals use selective incivility to express their bias. For example, “there is still a big gap in how women attorneys are treated by male attorneys: extremely aggressive behavior in depositions; failure to listen; repeated interruptions in all contexts” (Cortina, 2008, p. 64). These acts of incivility, motivated by race and gender, are a direct result of internalized bias, even if the perpetrator is unaware of their own motivations.

Another hallmark of colorblind ideologies is what Pierce terms “racing for innocence” (2012). White people desire not to be labeled as racist, even as they actively hold and act on racist beliefs. Thus, any attempt from a person of color to call attention to this inconsistency may be labeled as incivility because White individuals are invested in perpetuating myths of race-neutral civility and desire to maintain post-racial fantasies (Mueller et al., 2018). Pierce and Cortina both found that people of color disengage after repeated incidences of incivility. Further, continued encounters with incivility may result in the adverse health effects characterized by racial battle fatigue: chronic pain, decreased immunity, tension headaches, and high blood pressure (Smith et al., 2006, p. 300).

Ultimately, our collective definition of civility must change. Civility may sometimes benefit from conflict even when it is impolite (Rholinger & Williams, 2019). “Sometimes impolite disagreements are beneficial to deliberate processes writ large because they bring new ideas and ‘changes of will’ at the periphery to the center of society (Habermas, 1996), which maximizes the inclusion of different perspectives in public debate (Dahlberg, 2005)” (Rholinger & Williams, 2019, p. 2). However, as we have outlined above, there seems to be a disproportionate burden on people of color to bring knowledge of racialized history to the table where these discussions are concerned. That burden extends to digital spaces and racialized interactions online.

4 | CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have made several key scholarly contributions concerning the study of uncompensated emotional labor, civility, and racial battle fatigue. Expanding Arlie Hochschild's theorization of “emotional labor,” we argue that performing and disguising emotions in the social media arena for the sake of civility can result in racial battle fatigue for people of color. We expand her original ideas and add that *uncompensated emotional labor* is a process of conscious or

unconscious emotion regulation in the course of everyday interactions with others to engender or ensure their emotional comfort. The outcome of this emotion work is closely tied to one's social status and continued good standing in the social networks in which they participate. When applying this theory to race, we analyze how racism and (in)civility negatively impact a person of color's emotional and physical well-being online—symptoms commonly attributed to racial battle fatigue. Uncompensated emotional labor is not irregular for people of color as they are routinely expected to carry the burden of educating the majority both online and offline about inequality and sociohistoric vulgarities of racism. This burden can influence the exploration of self-presentation and identity negotiation for people of color in online spaces as they struggle to achieve what is considered civility in the eyes of majority culture, the center of uncompensated emotional labor in digital spaces.

Research from social psychology, cultural studies, and the field of communication suggests that as people feel the effects of uncompensated emotional labor (consciously or subconsciously) in the digital public sphere, they seek out safe spaces as a reprieve (Williams, 2017). As individuals begin to curate their networks, they create a comfort zone “that mitigates characteristic fears of social exclusion and rejection, resulting in greater willingness to share core characteristics of the self” (Trub, 2017, pp. 78–79). People can work to create safe spaces online in pursuit of social acceptance, to avoid the uncompensated emotional labor involved in performing civility or to seek relief from racial battle fatigue, though some platforms afford safe spaces more than others (e.g., one may curate social networks more easily on Tumblr than on Twitter; Davis & Chouinard, 2016; Williams, 2017). Safe spaces can serve as a communal environment of support and may help to temporarily relieve the symptoms of racial battle fatigue because there is less pressure to manage emotions or to maintain performances of civility.

There is currently minimal scholarship on uncompensated emotional labor when discussing race, despite its salience to contemporary studies of race relations. It is imperative that future scholarship expands on the notion of uncompensated emotional labor that occurs in online discourse and recognizes the idea that notions of civility are inextricably racialized. Doing so may result in a more equitable and inclusive study of (in)civility, making the work of Internet studies scholars, communications researchers, and sociologists more relevant to those beyond the ivory tower.

ENDNOTES

¹ Here, we use digital media to encompass all forms of media that are digital and encourage a two-way model of production and consumption from users and audiences. This includes social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google+, Youtube, Snapchat, Xbox Live, and others.

² Here, we refer only to those individuals who desire to engage in civil discourse. There are, of course, those who have no regard for civility and do not aspire to practice anti-racism, of which many articles have already been written (see Daniels, 2009; Daniels, 2012; Gervais, 2015).

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