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We were treated like machines : professionalism and anti-Blackness in social work agency culture

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Mark Drummond Davis
We Were Treated Like Machines:
Professionalism and Anti-Blackness in
Social Work Agency Culture

ABSTRACT

This exploratory study sought to answer two overarching research questions: (1) To what extent is there color-blind anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agency culture? (2) What are exacerbating and ameliorating factors for this anti-Black bias? I developed a mixed-methods online questionnaire and recruited 246 participants via e-mail and Facebook. Participants were mostly White female social workers 18-39 years old, though the sample was disproportionately African American as compared with the general social worker population. When participants were asked if they perceived anti-Black bias in professionalism at their agencies, 42.7% answered *yes* while 57.3% answered *no*. A t-test demonstrated a significant difference in agencies' percentage of African American staff members by reported bias ($t(113) = 3.24$, $p = .002$, two-tailed). Participants who answered *yes* to bias had a lower mean percentage of African American staff in their agencies ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.17$) than those who answered *no* ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.37$). There were no significant relationships found between bias reporting and age, race, or gender. However, a chi-square test found a significant difference in bias reporting by supervisory status ($\chi^2(1, n = 115) = 4.18$, $p = .041$, continuity corrected). A larger percentage of participants who were not in a supervisory role (58.7%) answered *yes* to anti-Black bias, compared to 41.3% of supervisors. Anti-racist trainings, anti-racist policies and procedures, and increased staff diversity were the three most common recommendations given to reduce anti-Black bias in professionalism. Overall, the findings suggest that anti-Black bias is widespread in social work professional culture, and that concerted reform efforts will be necessary to dismantle it.

WE WERE TREATED LIKE MACHINES:

PROFESSIONALISM AND ANTI-BLACKNESS IN

SOCIAL WORK AGENCY CULTURE

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2016

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In 2013, Katherine Lemire resigned as president of investigations at Michael Stapleton

Associates (MSA), a private security company based in New York City, and sued her former

employer. Lemire, who is African American, reported that MSA administrators took multiple

steps to retaliate against her after she advocated for a fellow African American employee who

had alleged racial harassment. The employee had recounted to Lemire dozens of instances of

racism directed against her by White staff over a five-year period. On one occasion, one of the

vice presidents noticed her looking at a magazine photograph of a braided hairstyle common

among African American women and commented,

> When someone like me . . . sees someone with a style like that, we think ghetto—not
>
> professional . . . someone like that will get an interview, but will not get the job. I'll tell
>
> you what's beautiful: my daughter, with blond hair and blue eyes. It's so easy for her.
>
> (Lemire & Vladeck, Waldman, Elias & Engelhard, P.C., 2013, p. 8)

While this episode may seem singular, the policing of African American employees'

appearance and behavior in the American workplace is so common that the phrase "working

while Black" now joins "driving while Black" in the anti-racist lexicon.[1] Tahmincioglu (2008)

reports that "racial harassment cases have more than doubled since the early 1990s, hitting an all-

time high of 6,977 in 2007, according to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission data."

African Americans filed 90% of the charges. In the case of Lemire, the White vice president's

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[1] "Driving while Black" is a riff on driving while intoxicated (DWI) that describes racial profiling of Black drivers
by police officers.

use of the phrase "not professional" arouses my suspicion. What did he mean by that? Is it possible, as Adams (2012) argues, that professionalism, "for all the ways in which it is invoked with positivity, also hides processes of marginalization" (p. 328)? Ko (2014) argues that "our ideas about cleanliness and professionalism are largely steeped in White supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal ideas of looking appropriate." And in the saliently titled blog post "You Call It Professionalism; I Call It Oppression in a Three-Piece Suit," Rios (2015) observes, "In office environments especially, standards of professionalism are the law of the land—and they reinforce social hierarchies that value White maleness above all."

Does Rios's statement apply to social work agencies? In social work, we go above and beyond Title VII[2] to standardize anti-discriminatory professionalism with the National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics. The Code stipulates that we should avoid "demeaning comments that refer to colleagues' level of competence or to individuals' attributes such as race"; further, it states we "should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of" race— among multiple other identity attributes (2.01, 6.04, 2008).

In theory, then, in a social work agency context, the Code of Ethics should provide a buffer against the White supremacist undercurrents of American professionalism. My Black colleagues tell me otherwise. For example, "Sara" related how a former White practicum instructor labeled her as "insubordinate" when she calmly and respectfully raised questions about some agency policies. When Sara submitted a draft of her learning plan, the instructor, in Sara's words, "demanded that I put 'learning the culture of social work professionalism' as one of my goals." Sara perceived this use of the word "professionalism" (which did not appear on her

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[2] Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination against any employee on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin."

White peers' plans) as an imposition of White culture, and felt that the Angry Black Woman[3] stereotype had colored her instructor's evaluation of her.

Anecdotes like Sara's inspire the present study, which has sought to answer two overarching research questions: (1) To what extent is there color-blind anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agency culture? (2) What are exacerbating and ameliorating factors for this anti-Black bias? For the purposes of this study, which is limited to the United States, I will use the term *anti-Blackness* throughout to mean racism directed specifically against African Americans (as opposed to African or Afro-Caribbean immigrants and refugees). I will therefore use the terms *Black* and *African American* interchangeably. I have focused my study on African Americans (defined here as American descendants of enslaved Africans) because I wanted to explore the connections between contemporary anti-Blackness in professional culture and the particular history of structural racism against Black people in the United States.[4] *Color-blind anti-Blackness* will denote ostensibly race-neutral discrimination against African Americans, or as Bonilla-Silva (2002) puts it, "how to talk nasty about Blacks without sounding 'racist'" (p. 41).

Working with definitions established by Anderson and Bolt (2016) and Cournoyer (2014), I will use the term *professionalism* to mean the set of standards concerning appearance, character, values, and behavior that mark employees as competent, appropriate, effective, ethical, and respected/respectful. By "set of standards," I mean spoken or unspoken rules about how employees are supposed to dress, act, talk, groom, accessorize, gesticulate, emote, and decorate in order to have the above qualities attributed to them by their supervisors and colleagues. This

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[3] The Angry Black Woman (Sapphire) is a racial stereotype popularized by the *Amos 'n' Andy* show in the 1940s and 50s (West, 2008, p. 296).
[4] I explain my rationale for this decision in more detail on the next page. In Chapter V, I propose recommendations for further research involving more expansive definitions of Blackness and anti-Blackness.

definition is intentionally broad enough to leave room for elastic—and potentially problematic—interpretations of these ostensibly positive attributes (for example, judging dreadlocks as inappropriate for the workplace).

There are multiple forms of oppression that may be baked into professionalism. As an exploratory foray into this topic, I have pulled focus on anti-Blackness, wary of the inevitable loss of intersectionally[5] disaggregated data via other racial identities, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, and ability. My hope is that this loss will be compensated by the topic's salience in the historical moment. The American criminal justice system's disproportionate targeting of African Americans has been ongoing for centuries (Alexander, 2012; Hairston, 2012). However, several recent murders of unarmed Black men (Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray) have brought the subject of anti-Blackness to a fever pitch in American social and political discourse, one catalyzed by national movements like the Stop Mass Incarceration Network and Black Lives Matter. News media have tended to focus on Black cisgender males, overshadowing the police murders of Black cisgender girls and women (e.g., Tanisha Anderson, Miriam Carey, Aiyana Jones, Kendra James) as well as the murders of Black trans* people (e.g., Kiesha Jenkins, Penny Proud, Jasmine Collins, Amber Monroe, Evon Young).

While there is extensive literature documenting anti-Black employment discrimination across the labor market as a whole (Coleman, 2003; Cornileus, 2013; Couch & Fairlie, 2010; Jeanquart-Barone & Sekaran, 1996; Kim & Tamborini, 2006; Loubert, 2012), there are few published studies addressing anti-Blackness specifically within social work (Brown & Brown, 1997; Hall, 1992; Jayaratne et al., 1992). Furthermore, while anecdotal evidence of color-blind

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[5] *Intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1989) refers to ways in which multiple systems of oppression (e.g., race and gender) join forces multiplicatively, rather than additively, to enact discrimination on groups and individuals.

anti-Blackness in professionalism abounds on the web (Beekman, 2013; Dossou, 2013; Hammond, 2013; Ko, 2014), I have not found any empirical studies on the subject. My exploratory study will hopefully contribute to filling this gap in the literature. Participation was limited to social workers in agency settings, and consisted of a mixed-methods anonymous online questionnaire intended to gather data on color-blind anti-Blackness in social work professionalism. The following chapters will provide a review of the literature surrounding this topic, describe the details of my methodology, present my findings, and discuss limitations and implications of the study as a whole.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to orient the reader to the literature surrounding the topic of color-blind anti-Blackness in social work professionalism. My intention is to offer an exploded view of this topic, and consequently, my task will be to define and discuss all the separate components (color-blind racism, anti-Blackness, Blackness, professionalism, social work professionalism) as well as all the ways they can combine. The often invisible center in discourse on racism is Whiteness, and I will begin by naming and defining the term.

Whiteness

For the purposes of this study, I will use the definition of *race* delineated by DiAngelo (2012): "The false concept that superficial adaptations to geography are genetic and biological determinants that result in significant differences among groups of human beings" (p. 82). Race is a social and legal construct granting White designees power, privilege, safety, access, and resources unavailable to people of color (Omi & Winant, 1994; McIntosh, 1988). According to the United States Census Bureau's (2013) current racial standards (based on 1997 Office of Management and Budget criteria), a White person has "origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa." Since many people from the Middle East and North Africa do not have access to the same systematic advantages as light-skinned Europeans, this census designation patently clashes with DiAngelo's definition of Whiteness as "a term to capture all of the dynamics that go into being defined and/or perceived as White in society." She

elaborates, "Whiteness grants material and psychological advantages (White privilege) that are often invisible and taken for granted by Whites" (p. 83).

DiAngelo's definition appears circular since it includes the word *White*; however, circularity seems apt in light of how Whiteness has been defined legally. In the 1923 case of United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, the Supreme Court ruled that the Indian American plaintiff—arguing for his White status via his Aryan ethnic heritage—did not qualify:

> It may be true that the blond Scandinavian and the brown Hindu have a common ancestor in the dim reaches of antiquity, but the average man knows perfectly well that there are unmistakable and profound differences between them today. (as cited in Nakanishi & Lai, 2003, p. 42)

According to this opinion of the Court, Whiteness can effectively be defined in America by whether the "average man," which likely means *White* man, thinks you are White. This definition still largely rings true today. In "How to Know If You Are White," McKenzie (2014)—creator of an online social justice community for queer and trans* people of color called *Black Girl Dangerous*—asks,

> Do you look White? If this seems in any way like a complicated question, it can be easily discerned by walking into a fancy store (in clean, neat clothing) and seeing how the people who work there treat you. Do you get dirty looks upon entering? Do the shopkeepers glance at each other with worry? Do you notice people following you around to make sure you're not stealing anything? If not, you may be White. (p. 70)

In the end, a person's Whiteness may be best defined circularly by their degree of access to White privilege. For the sake of this study, I will define a White person more narrowly than the Census Bureau as a non-Hispanic light-skinned person of European origin.

Throughout this study, I will refer to White, European, and European-American culture. None of these three categories can be treated monolithically, as altogether they would subsume the cultures of Appalachians, Germans, Italian Americans, and Norwegians—among countless other groups. I will use the three terms in the way that multiple scholars have to describe specifically the culture of Northern European or Anglo-Saxon Protestants and their American immigrant descendants (Ani, 1994; Daniels, 2012; Jones & Okun, 2001; Schiele, 2000). *European* (and *Eurocentric*) will focus on the culture's geographic provenance, whereas *White* will focus more on how the culture has taken shape in America. *Euro-American* will subsume both. Even White culture in the United States is by no means monolithic and will vary widely by region, class, and ethnic origin. When I speak of *White culture* in my study, I will be using that term as shorthand for patriarchal upper-class White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) culture. This shorthand stems from my desire to get at the heart of the White supremacy that may undergird professionalism. Upper-class cisgender male WASPs are the group under the White umbrella who have been the ruling elite since the Colonial American gentry (Zinn, 2003). They are therefore those with the most power to define norms of American professionalism.

In the course of my research, I have attempted to establish an operational domain of White culture. This domain includes attributes potentially subject to the professional/unprofessional imputation in the workplace:

1. Attributes of appearance including straight or curly (but not Afro-textured) hair; European-style semi-formal clothing such as sport coats, ties, oxford shirts, khakis, loafers, polo shirts, dresses, and pantsuits; or more casual-wear fashion trends such as madras shirts/shorts, UGG boots, Ray-Ban Wayfarer sunglasses, outdoor

performance gear such as North Face fleece, boat shoes, cargo shorts, Birkenstocks, and Nantucket Reds[6] (DeLeon, 2012; Lander, 2008; Lander, 2009).

2. Attributes of organizational culture such perfectionism, quantity over quality, paternalism, either/or thinking, defensiveness, an emphasis on memos and written communication, individualism, a sense of urgency, fear of open conflict, power hoarding, and a focus on rationality over emotion in decision making (Jones & Okun, 2001). Hall (1976) and Ani (1994) portray the Eurocentric view of time as monochronic and lineal, that is, finite and requiring organization into strict units.

Cultural boundaries are usually quite porous, so I do not mean to imply, for example, that people of color do not wear UGG boots, or that they cannot assimilate into White organizational culture and exhibit signs of defensiveness and power hoarding. I posit these characteristics not as *exclusively* White, but rather as more common or originating in White culture.

(Anti-)Blackness

As I explained in my introductory chapter, I am using the term anti-Blackness to denote racist oppression against African Americans, and I define African Americans as descendants of enslaved Africans living in the United States. Defining anti-Blackness necessarily entails defining Blackness; however, to attempt a general definition of Blackness itself could be essentialist and problematic, especially for me as a White author. Blackness presents a vast and variegated landscape of values and narratives unfolding across social, cultural, historical, and phenotypical space. As Yancy (2012) writes,

The Black body, my very Black body, is a signifier (a historically fluid hypertext) of pain, joy, movement, crossings, mutilation, tears, European expansionism, Elmina Castle, creolization, syncretism, colonialism, the whip, the rope, and the so-called New World.

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[6] Nantucket Reds are a type of cotton red trousers sold by Murray's Toggery Shop on Nantucket Island.

The Black body invokes the names and the themes of Nat (Turner and Cole), Sojourner

Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Mary Prince, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," gospel music, to

enact a "good spell," Tituba, Champong Nanny or Grande Nanny, the field holler, James

Brown, the ontology of the blues, the improvisational dimensions of jazz expressed

existentially, reggae sounds, Bob Marley, Bessie Smith, the Lindy hop, and hip-hop. (p.

85)

For the purposes of this study, I demarcate within the corporeal-hypertextual landscape that

Yancy evokes an operational domain of Blackness that, as with my Whiteness domain, subsumes

attributes most likely to be subject to the professional/unprofessional imputation in the

workplace:

1. Attributes historically, politically, and sociologically linked with African American

   culture. These include hairstyles such as box braids, locs, weaves, and Afros; fashion,

   accessories, and jewelry associated with African American cultural or political

   movements or trends (e.g., do-rags, Black Power fist prints, hoop earrings, hip-hop bling,

   long acrylic nails, or Timbs[7]), or with traditional African culture such as dashikis;[8]

   elements of office decor (e.g., a Kente cloth wall hanging or a Black Lives Matter

   poster); names such as Lakisha and Jamal;[9] polychronicity;[10] speaking in African

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[7] Starting in the 2000s, loosely laced tan Timberland boots (known colloquially as "Timbs") became popular as an African American urban fashion trend, one sported by musical artists like Rihanna, Jay-Z, and Kanye West.
[8] In 2013, Melphine Evans, a former top executive at British Petroleum West Products, sued the company for her allegedly racist termination. She claimed her coworkers told her,
    "You intimidate and make your colleagues uncomfortable by wearing ethnic clothing and ethnic hairstyles ('Dashikis,' 'twists,' 'braids/cornrows')." On one occasion, a BP representative went so far as to ask Ms. Evans "if she understood that wearing a 'dashiki' to work makes her colleagues feel uncomfortable?" (Ross, 2013)
[9] Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination. *American Economic Review, 94*(4), 991-1013.
[10] *Polychronicity* refers to having a cyclical, flexible, and relational understanding of time, as opposed to a discrete, linear, rigid sense of time, i.e., *monochronicity* (Hall, 1976).

American Vernacular English (AAVE);[11] and finally, Afrocentric[12] collectivistic values such as the relative importance of relationships, cooperation, and group identity as compared with Eurocentric culture's individualistic emphasis on competition and power consolidation (Ani, 1994; Jones & Okun, 2001; Schiele, 2000).

2. Attributes associated with African Americans via racist stereotypes in the domains of speech (inarticulateness), ability (low intelligence, incompetence), character (dishonesty, laziness), and behavior (sexual promiscuity or predation, aggression, violence) (Anderson, 2012). These attributes, it may already be clear, are patently at odds with the "competent, appropriate, effective, ethical, and respected/respectful" attributes of professionalism defined previously.

As a White author wary of the pitfalls here of my own caricaturish stereotyping, or of Whitesplaining[13] Blackness to African American readers, I want to clarify that I am not positing the above attributes as a pigeon-holing definition of what it means to be Black. After all, many African Americans may not identify with *any* of these attributes, and what Black culture looks like will also vary widely by region and class. Rather, I am presenting these attributes as clearly distinguishable signifiers of Blackness that would hold up (in the forensic sense, before a mostly White jury) as targets of anti-Blackness in social work professional culture. For example, imagine if a White social worker told his Black colleague that the Star Trek button on her backpack was unprofessional. That comment might not hold up as a case for anti-Blackness

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[11] In 2012, William Peake, a former Pennsylvania state trooper, filed a lawsuit against the police department, claiming that he was fired for allegedly using "Ebonics" in his police reports. Peake denied the claims ("State Trooper," 2012).

[12] *Afrocentric* here means associated with traditional elements of African culture. A more detailed discussion of this term begins on the next page.

[13] *Whitesplaining* refers to instances of White people explaining issues faced by people of color to them in a patronizing and overbearing manner.

(unless perhaps he was repeatedly giving similar feedback to only her and not to his White colleagues) whereas it might hold up if the button were emblazoned with a Black Power fist.

Cultural Appropriation

"But," some readers may say, "I've seen White people with dreads, White people wearing do-rags, and White people with long acrylic nails and hoop earrings. So how are these things Black?" The answer lies in *ontological expansiveness*, a term coined by Sullivan (2006) to describe the tendency of White people "to act and think as if all spaces—whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise—are or should be available for them to move in and out of as they wish" (p. 10). Ontological expansiveness is the underlying property of White psychology that fuels White cultural appropriation, the practice of stealing elements from the cultures of people of color. The history of White appropriation of African American culture extends back generations in multiple domains including music (jazz, blues, rock 'n' roll, blue-eyed soul, hip-hop, rap), dance (Lindy hop, Harlem shake, twerking), clothing and hairstyles (zoot suits, dreadlocks,), and slang (cool, hip, square, yo) (Ainsely, 2011; Baldwin, 1961; Davis, 2012; Mailer, 1957).

In an office setting, it is conceivable that a professional policy targeting an element of historically Black culture ("no dreadlocks") could limit White employees' freedom of expression. In this study, I will not devote attention to the potential discomfort of culturally appropriative Whites, as such discomfort is not only easily avoidable through respectful choices but also pales in comparison to the daily insults and invalidations endured by Black people.

Afrocentricity

Hamlet (1998) describes *Afrocentricity* as "the efforts of some African American scholars to reclaim an African past and illuminate its presence in the culture and behavior of African

American people" (p. xi). As with the terms White, Eurocentric, and European, the terms Black,

African, African American, and Afrocentric must not be monolithically conflated at the risk of

treating, for example, the diverse cultures of Ghana, Senegal, and Angola as more or less

identical to contemporary African American culture in Chicago, or to Gullah culture in South

Carolina's Sea Islands. In this study, as I explained previously, I will use the terms Black and

African American interchangeably. *African* will refer specifically to the cultures of Africa, while

Afrocentric will be used to describe the cultural inheritance African Americans trace back to

Africa. Scholars of Afrocentricity contrast these inherited values with the dominant inherited

Eurocentric values of White America (Ani, 1994; Daniels, 2012; Schiele, 2000).

Color-Blind Anti-Blackness

In the story I told in Chapter I, my Black colleague Sara's practicum instructor exhorted

her to learn the culture of social work professionalism, and Sara perceived the episode as an

instance of covert anti-Black racism. Cleansed of any explicitly racial language, the instructor's

subtly discriminatory feedback was interpellated by a new "post-civil rights racial ideology"

described by Bonilla-Silva (2003):

> Instead of relying on an in-your-face set of beliefs ("Minorities are behind us because
>
> they are stupid or biologically inferior"), the new ideology is as indirect, slippery, and
>
> apparently non-racial as the new ways of maintaining racial privilege. I label this new
>
> ideology *colour blind racism*[14] and argue that it is centrally anchored in the abstract
>
> extension of egalitarian values to racial minorities and the notion that racial minorities are
>
> culturally rather than biologically deficient. (p. 68)

In other words, while the instructor would likely balk at critiquing Sara for being Black,

she had no problem subjecting Sara's assimilation into social work professional culture to a

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[14] Elsewhere, Bonilla-Silva (2013) styles this term as *color-blind racism*, and I will follow this style throughout.

double standard of judgment, as compared with her White peers. Such are the subtle maneuvers of color-blind racism when functioning interpersonally. On a structural level, Bonilla-Silva

contends that the main frames of this ideology are the denial of the centrality of

discrimination ("Discrimination ended in the sixties!"), the abstract extension of liberal

principles to racial matters ("I am all for equal opportunity; that's why I oppose

affirmative action"), the naturalization of racial matters ("Residential segregation is

natural . . ."), and the cultural explanation of minorities' standing ("Mexicans are poorer

because they lack the motivation to succeed"). (Bonilla-Silva, Lewis, & Embrick, 2004,

p. 560)

Alexander (2012) has applied color blindness to the problem of mass incarceration—

which she calls "the New Jim Crow"—chronicling how seemingly race-neutral policies like the

War on Drugs (marketed as being "tough on crime") have disproportionately swept Black and

Brown men into the criminal justice system. "We have not ended racial caste in America," she

argues. "We have merely redesigned it" (p. 2). For this study, I have pulled focus on

institutionalized color-blind anti-Blackness operating under the banner of professionalism and

interpellated by the larger structural dynamics that Bonilla-Silva and Alexander name.

Professionalism and Color-Blind Anti-Blackness

In a satirical blog post entitled "15 Things Black People Must Do to End Racism," Slim

(2013) alludes multiple times to the White supremacist underpinnings of professionalism:

The Negro must maintain the correct posture, articulation, appearance and

professionalism as determined by Whites, in order to avoid abuse and mistreatment by

law enforcement. . . . It is the responsibility of the Negro to name his child appropriately.

Names like Ebony, Kenya, Keisha and especially names that are more than two syllables long are unprofessional and difficult to pronounce.

As Slim limns it, professionalism is all about conforming to a set of behavioral codes defined and enforced by Whites. But what exactly does professionalism mean and how did it become encoded with White supremacy? Chambers Dictionary of Etymology (2006) tells us that before the 13th century, *profession* (derived from the Latin *professus*, meaning professed or avowed) referred to a "vow made by a person entering a religious order." By the 16th century, it had taken on "the meaning of an occupation requiring professed skill or qualified training." The Oxford English Dictionary Online (2016) notes that *profession* "in early use applied spec. to the professions of law, the Church, and medicine, and sometimes extended also to the military profession."

By the early 20th century, the semantic domain of *profession* had been expanded and informalized such that Flexner (1915) observed, "The word profession or professional may be loosely or strictly used. In its broadest significance it is simply the opposite of the word amateur." Flexner favored a stricter usage, contending,

> If there is a dancing profession, a baseball profession, an acting profession, a nursing profession, an artistic profession, a musical profession, a literary profession, a medical profession, and a legal profession—to mention no others—the term profession is too vague to be fought for. We may as well let down the bars and permit people to call themselves professional, for no better reason than that they choose in this way to appropriate whatever of social distinction may still cling to a term obviously abused.

It would seem that the politics of professionalism have much to do with "social distinction." Among Flexner's criteria for professions proper is that "they involve essentially intellectual

15

operations with large individual responsibility," and so in his taxonomy, "medicine, law, engineering, literature, painting, [and] music" make the cut—while plumbing, banking, pharmacy, nursing, and social work do not.

Stipulating intellectual (i.e., not manual) labor "with large individual responsibility" (i.e., autonomous power) automatically introduces exclusionary and oppressive relations that favor a dominant (i.e., White, straight, cisgender, male, upper-class) culture. Adams (2012) observes,

> In developing a personal brand of "professional," individuals model themselves based on normative expectations of how professionals dress, style hair, arrange space, select office décor, and so forth. . . . Neoliberal discourses of consumerism and professionalism influence that which is marketable. As such, gender, race, class, sexuality and age affect an individual's capacity for personal branding based on taken-for-granted, socially constructed depictions of the professional as a White, middle-aged, heterosexual man. (p. 337)

Professionalism is fundamentally a construct of kyriarchy. In Slim's (2013) blog post, its destructive anti-Blackness is starkly rendered, but in seemingly neutral workday usage of the term, this discursive violence is sub rosa. According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online (2016), the word *professionalism* first appeared in English around 1856, and benignly describes "professional quality, character, or conduct" as well as "the competence or skill expected of a professional." The definition is vague and circular, failing to capture what professionalism really looks like in the workplace.

For a more granular look at professional norms, I will turn to a recently published manual for post-secondary students looking to land (and keep) their first white-collar job: Anderson and Bolt's (2016) *Professionalism: Skills for Workplace Success*. Given that *Professionalism* is the

most up-to-date, comprehensive, and widely sold manual of professional behavior I have come across in my research, I uphold it as a premier primer in American white-collar professional norms. In an effort to render discursive violence visible, I will perform a close reading of the text with an eye for covert (color-blind) anti-Black content.

Workplace attitudes and goal setting. Anderson and Bolt (2016) define professionalism as "workplace behaviors that result in positive business relationships" (p. 2). Regarding workplace attitudes and goal setting, they advise students as follows: "Believe you are a talented and capable human being"; "project self-confidence"; "set goals in writing"; "let go of past baggage"; "*don't* become obsessed with how others view you"; and "*don't* keep telling everyone about a past negative experience" (p. 12). To clarify what they mean by "negative experience," they marshal examples of "an unplanned pregnancy or a criminal offense," and they admonish students struggling with such experiences to "not keep dwelling on the past and using it as an excuse or barrier toward achieving your goals" (p. 5).

For African American employees facing institutional racism in the workplace, an image of themselves as "talented and capable" could be difficult to sustain. In a 2007 meta-study on the psychological impacts of racism, Carter (2007) reports,

> Researchers cited in the discrimination literature review have found racially based harassment to include physical, interpersonal, and verbal assaults; assuming one is not to be trusted; treating people according to racial stereotypes (i.e., lazy, lacks ability); and assuming one is a criminal or is dangerous. Emotional reactions to hostile treatment include anger, rage, powerlessness, shame, guilt, helplessness, low self-esteem or persistent self-doubt, suspiciousness, and distrust. (p. 78)

Low self-esteem and persistent self-doubt could hamper the projected self-confidence that Anderson and Bolt (2016) recommend. Furthermore, suspiciousness and distrust might make it challenging *not* to "become obsessed with how others view you." These challenges would theoretically apply to all marginalized groups, but Anderson and Bolt's particular examples of "an unplanned pregnancy or a criminal offense" traffic in iconic anti-Black stereotypes of Black women as hyperfertile and Black men as criminals (Anderson, 2012).

Anderson and Bolt's (2016) advice about "not dwelling on the past and using it as an excuse or barrier toward achieving your goals" echoes rhetoric used by right-wing Whites to write off institutional racism as the sorry excuse of lazy Black people unwilling to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. In a satirical piece entitled "How to Be Black in America," McKenzie (2014) responds to such rhetoric by urging her fellow Black Americans to "stop talking about racism. That's over. (See: Black president)" (p. 164); she later scolds, "Jesus, slavery was 150 years ago. Get your shit together." She also advises, "Be successful somehow. But do it without any kind of help. I mean, that's how White people did it, right? No help whatsoever" (p. 166).

Anderson and Bolt's (2016) emphasis on setting goals in writing would seem to discriminate against the orality of many collectivistic non-European cultures, among them African American culture. Anokye (1997) notes, "African Americans come from a rich oral tradition. The ability of a person to use active and copious verbal performance to achieve recognition within his or her group is widespread in the African American community, having its roots in African verbal art" (p. 220). Schiele (2000) observes "the exclusive and primary reliance, among African-American human service professionals, on an oral transmission of knowledge" (p. 243).

By way of contrast, Jones and Okun (2001) identify a "worship of the written word" in White institutional culture and reflect that a White-centered "organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared." This graphocentric bias could put African American employees at a discriminatory disadvantage, especially in an academic publish-or-perish context. In a study of Black social work academics, Schiele (1991) found that "higher preferences for orality were associated with lower levels of publication productivity" (as cited in Schiele, 2000, p. 244). This finding led him to exhort his colleagues,

> Though the African oral tradition should be maintained by African-American
>
> social work faculty and other human service professionals of African descent, these
>
> professionals should recognize that codifying and recording a group's perspectives in
>
> writing can help increase that group's political power in society. (p. 245)

Time and efficiency. In the third edition of *Professionalism*, Anderson and Bolt (2013) write that "in business, time is money" (p. 43) and that one should "keep a calendar accessible at all times" (p. 44). They also recommend listing an excellent punctuality record on one's resume (p. 232). Being efficient, timely, and punctual may seem like universally positive characteristics grounded in a good work ethic and interpersonal respect, but it is important to attend to the historical construction and cultural mediation of time and timeliness. Ani (1994) exposes what she calls "lineal time" as a Protestant, Eurocentric construct:

> Time, in European society, serves the technological order, and as such is nonhuman and
>
> mechanical. . . . [It] loses its phenomenal character and is instead experienced as absolute
>
> and oppressive. . . . We have a concept created by human beings, reified than [*sic*] used
>
> against them. Within the logic of European development this process is necessary,
>
> because mechanical time is a precondition for the triumph or ascendancy of European

science and technology. They are the supreme values because they are "progress."
Several theorists . . . have made the connection between the establishment of
watchmaking in Geneva in 1587 with the ascendancy of Calvinism there in the sixteenth
century. Calvin intensified the importance of the idea of predestination. While preparing
people for salvation in heaven, Calvinism trained them for assembly-line production on
earth. . . . Lineal time fails spiritually. It pushes us constantly towards anxiety and fear.
The European is always asking him/herself, even while she/he rests: Where am I going?
What will become of me? (pp. 60-61)

Ani's analysis resonates with one of the main points Weber (2001) argues in *The
Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: Anxiety over eternal damnation drove Protestant
predestination adherents to value punctuality, hard work, and the accumulation of capital as
public evidence of their elect (hell-exempt) status. This historical morbid anxiety interpellates
contemporary White institutional culture—marked by a "continued sense of urgency" (Jones &
Okun, 2001)—and is etymologically recapitulated in the word *deadline*, originally "a line drawn
around a military prison, beyond which a prisoner is liable to be shot" (OED Online, 2016).

Contrasting European and African conceptions of time, Gerritsen and Wannet (2005)
summarize Hall's (1976) analysis in *Beyond Cultures*:

[Hall] distinguishes between polychronic and monochronic cultures. Time is not very
structured in polychronic cultures. People are able to do different things at the same
time, and priority is given to relations with individuals rather than to a fixed program. In
polychronic cultures, interruptive têtes-à-têtes during meetings are very common and are
not regarded as a lapse in manners. In monochronic cultures, time is ordered in strict
units, and people prefer to perform only one task at a time. Features of monochronic

cultures are tight half-hour schedules and chaired meetings with strictly regulated speech turns. There is an African proverb that accurately describes the difference between polychronic and monochronic cultures: "God gave time to the Africans, and He offered the clock to the Europeans." (p. 196)

The African polychronic practice of "interruptive têtes-à-têtes" evinces a different set of values than that underlying Anderson and Bolt's (2016) complaint against the "common workplace interruption . . . of individuals who visit your work area and stay longer than necessary." To ward off such distractions, they recommend not inviting visitors to sit down and avoiding "items like a candy dish on your desk that might attract unwanted guests" (p. 44). In Anderson and Bolt's color-blind, crypto-Eurocentric organizational cosmology, the value of efficiency and a good (Protestant) work ethic trumps the value of developing relationships through casual, unstructured interactions. Meanwhile, African polychronic time prioritizes "relations with individuals rather than to a fixed program." Schiele (2000) asserts,

> Since the speed at which activities are accomplished is usually a major organizational objective, concerns and needs of workers that are external to the expectations to perform efficiently (i.e., their socioemotional needs) are generally unmet and treated as secondary. Thus, workers are dehumanized because their worth as human beings is confined to their ability to perform efficiently. (p. 207)

Schiele therefore argues that "from an Afrocentric perspective, the overwhelming concern given to efficiency or speed in organizations should be diminished" (p. 207). From a Eurocentric vantage, the Afrocentric treatment of time may be seen as deviant, lazy behavior ("Colored People Time," in the racist colloquialism). However, when Whiteness is interrogated

21

and decentered, its monochronicity comes into focus as rigid and thanatophobic as compared to a more forgiving and relationship-centered polychronicity.

Looking professional (or, dress to oppress). Regarding dress, Anderson and Bolt (2016) recommend to "start with basic pieces and think conservative. For women working in a traditional office environment, this attire includes a simple, solid skirt or pantsuit in a dark color and a blazer. . . . Men should select dark slacks, a matching jacket, and a tie" (p. 47). Anderson and Bolt further note that clothes "should fit properly" (p. 48), and that "baggy pants that reveal underwear are inappropriate" (p. 49). In terms of grooming, "fad hairstyles and unnatural color are inappropriate" (p. 48). Nails should be "clean and well groomed" ("unnaturally long nails are inappropriate"), and nail artwork must be "neat and conservative." Finally, jewelry must not be "large and gaudy" (p. 49).

Since Anderson and Bolt (2016) are writing for a predominately White American audience, it is no surprise that their baseline professional wardrobe colors within Eurocentric lines of skirts, slacks, and ties. However, some of their specific guidelines may betray colorblind anti-Black bias. The emphasis on well-fitting clothes, waist-anchored pants, and subtle jewelry seems like a thinly veiled critique of the hip-hop stylistic conventions of baggy clothes, sagging (the practice of wearing pants below the waistline), and bling. The jewelry, hair, and nail recommendations may also discriminate against the popularity among some Black women of large hoop earrings, brightly dyed weaves and extensions, and long airbrush acrylic nails (Reed, 2014). Slim's (2013) satire is germane here:

> It is the responsibility of the Negro to maintain hairstyles that are acceptable to American
> Whites. This means discontinuing hairstyles such as Afros, dreadlocks, braids, cornrows,

Philly's,[15] multi-colored hair, and other styles that may directly or indirectly suggest any sort of regional trends or cultural pride. For tips on definitive, acceptable hairstyles, the Negro must consult the expertise of White people and go to great lengths to control the texture of their hair to the extent that it mirrors that of American Whites.

Respectability politics. Fourteen seconds of televisual popular culture crystallize dominant perceptions of Black style as unprofessional: In Fox's animated sitcom *Family Guy*, which often relies on racial caricatures for humor, the titular patriarch Peter Griffin (a middle-aged White man) impersonates a Black female receptionist in a corporate office (BoulevardeTV, 2010). Typing with long acrylic nails, he answers the phone saying, "Oh hey, Loranda . . . no, I got fo' people on hold, but I can talk." This short clip offers up several stereotype-laden jokes for a White target audience: the nails, the "Black-sounding" name ("Loranda") and vocalization ("fo'" vs. "four"), and the prioritization of a personal friendship over productivity ("I can talk"). "Ha, how unprofessional Black women are!" viewers are meant to think. And indeed, insofar as professionalism is understood to be encoded with the stylistic, linguistic, nominal, and Protestant work values of White culture, the viewers are tragically right.

But then again, White people are not the only ones who might laugh at such a joke. Studies of implicit (unconscious) bias show that people of all races, including African Americans, can hold anti-Black bias (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013). Furthermore, it is critical not to treat Blackness as a monolithic political and cultural entity, when among the multiplicity of identities under the Black umbrella, there are, for example, suit-wearing conservative Black professionals who might scoff at a Black woman with long nails and brightly dyed hair as "ghetto" or "ratchet." These class-driven differential value judgments within the Black

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[15] A "Philly" (also, "Philly fade" or "temple fade") is a style of haircut whose distinguishing characteristic is a close fade from the hairline at the temples and/or neck up to a longer hair length higher on the head. Sometimes lines and designs are cut into the fade region.

community drive, in part, the complex ideology of *respectability politics*, which emphasizes the role of personal responsibility in increasing Black economic status and political power. In 2011, after a group of young Black men caused injuries and property damage in downtown Philadelphia, Mayor Michael Nutter (also a Black man) gave a speech at the Mount Carmel Baptist Church in which he admonished,

> Take those doggone hoodies down, especially in the summer. Pull your pants up and buy a belt, because no one wants to see your underwear or the crack of your butt. Nobody . . . Comb your hair – and get some grooming skills. . . . Keep your butt in school.

The African American audience gave a thundering applause. Mayor Nutter's speech embodies the rhetoric of respectability politics, which place the onus of advancement on individual effort to the neglect—critics would say—of considering structural oppression's role in disempowering Black youth (Harris, 2014). The point is that while Anderson and Bolt (2016) no doubt would consider a sagging, bling-flashing Black man to be dressed unprofessionally, many people in the African American community might think similarly. Anderson and Bolt themselves identify as "part Hispanic" and "White," respectively (personal communication, June 3, 2016). Personally, I am not sure where I fall on the issue of acceptable workplace attire. I do not fear hoodies, and sagging does not offend me. There is no pre-existing standard of socially just professional attire to which I can appeal. My intention is merely to point out when seemingly race-neutral guidelines of professionalism betray hidden dimensions targeting African American culture.

Trayvon's hoodie. According to Amazon.com, the Kindle version of the third edition of *Professionalism* was available in January 2012. Anderson and Bolt (2013) must therefore have finished their manuscript well before that fateful night in February 2012 when George

Zimmerman fatally shot hoodie-clad African American teenager Trayvon Martin. For the fourth

edition of *Professionalism*, Anderson and Bolt (2016) added "hoodies are inappropriate" to the

professional clothing guide. It is hard not to interpret this line as an anti-Black political

statement since, according to Nguyen (2015), "the hoodie soon populated the landscape of

protest and punditry" following Martin's death (p. 791). Nguyen highlights "Million Hoodie

Marches in New York City, Philadelphia, and over a hundred other cities nationwide" as well as

"the viral spread of the hoodie photograph across mediascapes as a gesture of solidarity and

critique" (p. 791). Given how, in Nguyen's words, "the hoodie scripts some part of the

performance of racial optics and its claims to legitimate violence" (p. 792), its explicit exclusion

by Anderson and Bolt from the professional wardrobe seems like adding insult to injury, or more

properly, to death. Slim (2013) writes in sartorial satire,

> It is the responsibility of the Negro to always dress in a respectable manner. The Negro
>
> must, at all times, dress professionally with impeccably pressed trousers and non-
>
> threatening White button down shirts. . . . The Negro should try to avoid sneakers,
>
> sweats, baggy jeans, hoodies, or any other apparel that may constitute a thuggish,
>
> frightening appearance or suggest that he may be concealing a weapon or drugs.

Organizational power dynamics. Anderson and Bolt (2016) counsel students that

"everyone possesses some form of workplace power. The trick is to recognize, utilize, and

increase your power. The easiest way to increase legitimate power is to make people aware of

your title and responsibilities" (p. 67). This focus on personal power maximization resonates

with Jones and Okun's (2001) identification of individualism and power hoarding in White

supremacy culture. Ani (1994) argues that "interpersonal behavior among European (European-

American) peoples is competitive, aggressive, exploitative, and based on a European-defined

'survivalism'" (p. 376). This competitive ethic, she asserts, is the outgrowth of the individualistic Eurocentric worldview: "The individual perceives that the best way to assure his own survival is to disarm others; to 'beat' them, to 'win,' to 'get ahead,' to usurp the objects of value before they do, to control them" (p. 376). "In the African world-view," Ani contrasts, "the European dichotomy of opposition between the 'individual' and the group collapses, and, instead, the person and the community are defined in terms of each other" (p. 352). With regard to organizational culture in the human services, Schiele (2000) writes, "The interests of the organization as a whole or collective would be the primary concern within an Afrocentric framework. . . . From an Afrocentric perspective, organizational and group survival replaces productivity as the overriding concern" (p. 201).

Daniels (2012) summarizes the differences between Eurocentric and Afrocentric organizational conceptual frameworks in the following table (p. 328):

Figure 1

Image of Daniels's (2012) Table Comparing Afrocentric/Eurocentric Conceptual Frameworks

Table 1. Conceptual Framework for Organizations

Dimension	Afrocentric	Eurocentric
Organizational style/philosophy	Support/care for the group	Large profits
Management	Communal team oriented	Hierarchy
Leadership	Selected by the people	Appointed succession
Power/authority	Council/spread	In the hierarchy
Decision making	Collaborative	Individualistic
Staff relations	Familial/interdependent	Person to object
Work orientation	Sense of excellence	Quantitative output
Productivity	Cooperative teams	Competitive

Note: Adapted from "Toward a Theory of Afrocentric Organizations," by N. Warfield-Coppock, 1995, *Journal of Black Psychology, 21*(1), p. 34. Copyright 1995 by SAGE.

Diversity. Anderson and Bolt (2016) recognize diversity as an important issue in the workplace, and *Professionalism* is full of stock photos of multi-racial workplace collaboration. Even so, their handling of the topic does not incorporate an analysis of oppression. McKenzie (2014) lists "talking about 'diversity' without talking about oppression" as third among "Six Things You're Probably Doing to Further Inequality." She specifically focuses on this aspect of institutional racism as it manifests in education:

> Schools recruit Black and brown students in the name of diversity and within a few months those students are buckling under the weight of White supremacy . . . in every facet of their college experience. That's around the time they discover that there is no system in place to talk about *oppression*. . . . If you want to support the students of color . . . you need to make space to talk openly and honestly about, and take action against, oppression and, in particular, White supremacy within your institutions. (pp. 158-159)

Anderson and Bolt (2016) note that "no matter how we differ, everyone should be treated fairly, with respect, and with professionalism" (p. 69), as if professionalism were a culturally neutral notion transcending all bias and discrimination. They further assert that "diversity should be viewed as an asset that utilizes our differences as a means to create, innovate, and compete as an organization" (p. 69). This argument reinforces the tokenizing, capitalist notion that people of color hired into a predominantly White workplace function as a value-added bonus. Anderson and Bolt also claim that "individual differences related to diversity should only be an issue when the diversity negatively affects performance" (p. 69). The authors do not specify how diversity might detract from performance, but they seem to problematically imply that resolving a diversity "issue" may be necessary at times to maintain workplace productivity. In this framing, diversity is cast as a pathogen threatening the homeostasis of White organizational culture.

"*Don't* use your minority status to take advantage of situations" (p. 73), Anderson and Bolt exhort. This admonition that sounds eerily akin to the charge of "playing the race card" that conservative Whites often deploy against people of color who call out institutional racism.

Verbal and non-verbal communication. Anderson and Bolt (2016) instruct students to "use proper English and grammar" (p. 127), to "avoid using slang" (p. 137), and to practice active listening, marked by "nodding, eye contact, or other favorable body language" (p. 127). They inform students that "an individual's personal space is about one-and-a-half feet around him or her" (p. 128) and that "touching another person at work is not acceptable," explaining, "People in our society frequently place a hand on another's shoulder as a show of support; however, some interpret that gesture as a threat or sexual advance" (p. 129).

Anderson and Bolt's (2016) linguistic recommendations may discriminate against Black employees who use African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the workplace. Furthermore, their kinesic, proxemic, and haptic recommendations may mark behavior normative among African Americans as unprofessional. Summarizing the work of LaFrance and Mayo (1978), Ting-Toomey (2012) explains,

> It has been found that African Americans tend to maintain eye contact when speaking and break off eye contact when listening; European Americans tend to break off eye contact when speaking and maintain eye contact when listening. . . . Interethnic expectancy violations exist when African Americans expect the European Americans to look them in the eyes when speaking but instead receive "nonresponsiveness" or "indifference" cues. European Americans, on the other hand, may view the direct eye game during speaking as "confrontational" or "aggressive." (p. 126)

Johnson (2004) makes a historical argument for African American male eye contact avoidance of White male authority figures:

> In the South Black males were taught—either overtly or covertly—not to look at a White male in the eye because this communicated equality. Thus, not to look at White males was really a survival pattern in the South. Note how "culture clash" can occur because of the avoidance of eye contact. . . . Avoidance of eye contact by a Black person communicates, "I am in a subordinate role and I respect your authority over me," while the dominant cultural member may interpret avoidance of eye contact as, "Here is a shifty unreliable person I am dealing with." (pp. 41-42)

Johnson also observes that young Black men take a "limp stance" in response to an extended reprimand from a superior whereas young White men react with more rigid posture (p. 42). It seems possible that such a limp stance would not qualify as an example of Anderson and Bolt's (2016) "favorable body language."

Research on the haptics and proxemics of African American culture is scant, dated, and at times contradictory. There is some evidence of smaller interactional distances and a higher frequency of touch than in White Euro-American culture (Hall, 1969; Halberstadt, 1985; LaFrance & Mayo, 1978). However, Baxter (1970) found evidence for greater relative personal space. Halberstadt (1985) found that African Americans use touch with one another more than with Whites. Similarly, Mueller (2008) reports, "Although African Americans tend to establish closer distances and tend to touch more frequently during conversations than Anglo Americans, when conversing with Anglo Americans, these tendencies do not carry over" (p. 70).

Contemporary empirical research is clearly lacking in this area. If Mueller's claims are correct, then Anderson and Bolt's (2016) no-touching standard may make it more likely for

Whites to judge touch-friendly interactions among their Black colleagues as unprofessional. Anderson and Bolt do not mention the provenance of their personal space guideline of "one-and-a-half feet," but given its lack of flexibility for intercultural differences, it leaves room for anti-Black bias concerning professional proxemics, especially if African American personal space is in fact closer than White space. Furthermore, Anderson and Bolt's interpretation of shoulder touching as a "threat or sexual advance" may play into stereotypes of African Americans as violent and sexually predatory.

Stress and conflict. Anderson and Bolt (2016) caution, "Do not make conflict personal. . . . Frame the conflict around an issue or situation, not a person" (172). Further, they advise to "remain calm and unemotional." These recommendations may run counter to African American styles of handling conflict. Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) summarize the work of Kochman (1981) in reporting that the

> "Black mode" of conflict is "high-keyed: animated, interpersonal, and confrontational,"
> comparatively, the "White mode" of conflict is relatively "low-keyed: dispassionate,
> impersonal and non-challenging" (p. 18). While African Americans tend to prefer
> emotionally expressive and involving modes of conflict management, European
> Americans tend to engage in emotionally-restrained, factual conflict discussions. (p. 55)

Speicher (1995) writes that African Americans "prefer greater personal involvement (Hecht et al., 1992; Ting-Toomey, 1986) and a fuller range of responses than do European Americans (Bachman & O'Malley, 1984)" (p. 195). It appears Anderson and Bolt's ostensibly race-neutral professional advice displays a hidden bias for a dominant Euro-American conflict style.

Regarding stress, Anderson and Bolt (2013) note that it "may start to affect your work performance" and so caution "to maintain a low stress level" (p. 39). In the face of life and

workplace stressors, they emphasize, "Do not become emotional. Becoming emotional means you are losing control and may become illogical in response to the stress." Instead, they counsel students, "Create and maintain a support network" and "control your attitude" (p. 41). For White workers, this advice might make sense, but what about for their Black colleagues dealing with institutional racism? Maintaining a low stress level may prove difficult given Carter and Helms's (2002) evidence that racial discrimination can induce a traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, since many Black professionals find themselves in the illogical racist double bind of being simultaneously invisible and hypervisible[16] in the workplace, how can they be expected to maintain a firmly logical response? Finally, given the demographics of aptly named white-collar work, what kind of support network can a Black face in a White place hope to find?[17]

Anger and rationality. Anderson and Bolt (2016) provide students with the following counsel on emotional expression:

> Although reality may cause you to express emotions that are difficult to control, try to control your emotions in public. If you feel you are beginning to cry or have an outburst of anger, excuse yourself. . . . If you are getting angry, assess why you are angry, control your anger, and then create a strategy to regain control of how to handle the situation in a professional manner. Any overt display of anger in the workplace is inappropriate, can damage workplace relationships, and could potentially jeopardize your job. When you become emotional at work, you lose your ability to logically deal with situations and risk losing credibility and the trust of others. (p. 129)

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[16] The invisibility/hypervisibility of the Black body, particularly the Black female body, is a theme explored by Mowatt, French, and Malebranche (2013).

[17] I am not sure who originally coined this phrase "Black face in a White place," but I came across it in Simien's (2014) book *Dear White People*, based on his film of the same name.

Anderson and Bolt's valorization of rationality over open emotional expression dovetails with Jones and Okun's (2001) portrayal of White supremacy culture as steeped in the notions "that there is such a thing as objectivity" and "that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process." Jones and Okun assert that valuing objectivity entails "invalidating people who show emotion," "requiring people to think in a linear fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways," and promoting "impatience with any thinking that does not appear logical to those with power."

The Eurocentric organizational value of rationalism traces back historically to Cartesian dualism, which inaugurated the Enlightenment's worship of reason (associated with the mind) and disdain for the passions (associated with the body). Affect was seen as contaminating the power of dispassionate logic (O'Neill, 1999). Rationality has become so deeply embedded in Euro-American culture that—from my perspective as a White American—it is often difficult to perceive it as a social construct, rather than a found natural faculty.

Spelman (1982, 1988) has developed a robust post-structural critique of rationalism in her concept of *somatophobia*: the sexist, racist, and classist devaluation of embodiment and bodily knowledge, experience, and labor. She argues that upper-class White men have been historically associated with a glorified disembodied capacity for reason, and that women, the poor, and people of color have been culturally corporealized on account of pregnancy, classist disdain for manual labor, and stereotypes of people of color as bestial creatures.

Ani (1994) echoes Spelman in spelling out the European mythology of the "Rational Man": Europeans are "in possession of an objectivity that places them, as it were, way ahead of the pack. For while others flounder in a sea of emotion (i.e., cultural commitment) that colors and clouds their vision, Europeans are able to rise above this attachment" (p. 242).

Contemporary philosophy of mind scholarship focused on the embodied nature of consciousness

bolsters Ani's critique of rationality as mythical. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999) explain,

> We have inherited from the Western philosophical tradition a theory of faculty
>
> psychology, in which we have a "faculty" of reason that is separate from and independent
>
> of what we do with our bodies. This autonomous capacity of reason is regarded as what
>
> makes us essentially human, distinguishing us from all other animals. The evidence from
>
> cognitive science shows reason is not disembodied, but arises from the nature of our
>
> brains, bodies, and bodily experience. This is not just the innocuous and obvious claim
>
> that we need a body to reason; rather, it is the striking claim that the very structure of
>
> reason itself comes from the details of our embodiment (p. 16).

Ani (1994) posits that following the Eurocentric "redefinition of 'humannness' in terms

of 'rationality' (European power), other people become subhuman; they must therefore be

controlled (culturally destroyed)" (p. 565). From her perspective, rationalism is an ideological

weapon for the control and destruction of the Other. Is it also part of the anti-Black arsenal of

White professionalism? If, as Anderson and Bolt claim, "any overt display of anger in the

workplace is inappropriate" how can Black workers communicate their anger over

discriminatory treatment? In "The Uses of Anger: Woman Responding to Racism," Lorde

(1981) recounts, "I speak out of a direct and particular anger at an academic conference, and a

White woman comes up and says, 'Tell me how you feel but don't say it too harshly or I cannot

hear you'" (p. 124). In contemporary anti-racist discourse, Lorde experienced what is known as

tone policing, the habit of White people asking an angry person of color to cool down and to be

nice when talking about oppression. Lorde comments,

My response to racism is anger. I have lived with that anger, on that anger, beneath that

anger, on top of that anger, ignoring that anger, feeding upon that anger, learning to use

that anger before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence,

afraid of the weight of that anger. My fear of that anger taught me nothing. Your fear of

that anger will teach you nothing, also. (p. 124)

When Anderson and Bolt (2016) insist that being professional means subduing anger with calm

rationality, they may be unwittingly endorsing the institutionalized tone policing of people of

color.

"But," some readers may say, "subduing anger goes for everyone. White people have to

control their anger too so the workplace can be safe and non-threatening for everyone." The

reality is that in practice White people may enjoy a kind of anger privilege that gives them

license to flout Anderson and Bolt's (2016) standards with impunity. For the tellingly titled "Are

Some Emotions Marked 'Whites Only'? Racialized Feeling Rules in Professional Workplaces,"

Wingfield (2010) interviewed 25 Black professionals who

cite numerous examples of White workers who have openly expressed feelings of

frustration or annoyance in ways that they believe are simply unavailable to them as

Black employees. Respondents argue that as Black professionals, they would be

punished for displaying anger in the same ways their White colleagues do. Thus, when it

comes to the feeling rules that establish the appropriate contexts for showing anger, Black

professionals argue that two sets of rules are in effect: the rule that Whites can show

anger in certain circumstances; and the rule that Blacks' anger is never appropriate and

thus should be concealed. (p. 259)

Even in diversity workshops, which

> are, in principle, the settings where organizations permitted workers to express emotions
>
> related to racial issues, many Black professionals do not believe that they are truly able to
>
> speak freely about their feelings concerning race and racism. They contend that White
>
> colleagues are able to share their emotional responses to working in an integrated
>
> environment, but that these feeling rules remain inaccessible to them. (p. 263)

The "feeling rules" of professional rationalism exemplify the insidious workings of color-blind anti-Blackness. Although Anderson and Bolt's (2016) emphasis on taming emotions with reason has no explicit mention of race, it has the impact of silencing African Americans and giving the supposedly Rational Man, to use Ani's construct, the privilege of a broader spectrum of emotional expression. The rationality mythologem has given rise to a racialized emotional caste system.

Professionalism **and beyond.** Devoid of any explicit racial language, color-blind anti-Blackness is a subtle phenomenon that easily passes under the noses of liberal Whites and under the radar of anti-discrimination policies. Anderson and Bolt's (2016) *Professionalism* is admittedly just a single textbook; however, as stated previously, it is the most regularly updated and widely published manual of professionalism that I have found. I have performed this close reading of the text in order to unmask the color-blind anti-Blackness unconsciously concealed beneath its putatively neutral presentation.

A survey of multiple less popular and less current manuals reveals consistency across white-collar conventions of professionalism. Common themes include conservative, Eurocentric dress and hairstyle; short nails; understated jewelry; the primacy of productivity, rationality and emotional neutrality during conflict; and an emphasis on outcompeting colleagues for increased

power and promotion (Bixler & Dugan, 2000; Cross & Lanaghen, 2015a; Cross & Lanaghen, 2015b; McCammon, 2015; Molloy, 1988; Pace, 2006; Stevens, 2012). These themes align with those in Anderson and Bolt's (2016) *Professionalism*, and also suggest a bias toward Eurocentric organizational culture and a potential for anti-Black discrimination, especially against African Americans who embrace Afrocentric values.

Social Work Professionalism and Anti-Black Bias

The work of Anderson and Bolt (2016) serves as a window into color-blind anti-Blackness in white-collar corporate culture, but what does professionalism look like in social work? Cournoyer (2014) writes,

> Integral to the values and ethics of social work and inherent in several aspects of the essential facilitative qualities, professionalism is so important to social workers individually and collectively that it requires special attention. Professionalism includes several characteristics: (1) integrity, (2) professional knowledge and self-efficacy, (3) self-understanding and self-control, (4) social support, (5) critical thinking, scientific inquiry, and career-long learning, (6) valuing diversity and difference, (7) advancing human rights and social justice, (8) promoting social well-being, and, of course, (9) ethical decision making. (p. 24)

On the surface, there is no clear evidence of any anti-Black bias in these qualities of professionalism. In fact, while the business world offers a raft of literature on the granular details of professional appearance and behavior, social work literature on the subject is scant. A review of several major contemporary social work textbooks (Akhtar, 2013; Berthold, 2015; Corcoran, 2012; Dewees, Birkenmaier, & Berg-Weger, 2014; Gast & Bailey, 2014; Gast & Patmore, 2013; Germak, 2015; Hardinger, 2013; Kemshall, Wilkinson, & Baker, 2013; Langer &

Lietz, 2015; Rosenberger, 2014) turns up the word *professionalism* only a few times, and without any specific definition. The NASW Code of Ethics does not even contain the word, though *professional* appears 57 times, again without being defined.

While rarely defining, per se, what professional appearance and behavior should be, social work literature, if read between the lines, still contains recommendations ensconced within a White Eurocentric perspective with possible anti-Black implications. Chronemics is one example. Kadushin and Kadushin (2013) observe,

> As interviewers we have a monochronomic sense of the use of time—meaning we expect to concentrate on one activity at a time. Other people may have a polychronomic sense of time—doing a number of things in the same time slot. This may present a problem in home interviews when the interviewee cooks or washes dishes or cleans the house while participating in an interview. The culture [of social work] communicates a great respect for time, time schedules, and promptness. Almost all of us wear watches and are constantly aware of the passage of time. We schedule interviews for a particular time, and we participate in the interview for a particular time period. Our supposition is that all interviewees have a similar attitude, but this may not be the case. Cultures differ in regard to time and time-related expectations. Interviewers take the expenditure of time seriously because they are bound by their schedule and training to do so. Other orientations suggest a more relaxed attitude. To Southeast Asians, such as Vietnamese and Cambodians, time is a flexible commodity, and punctuality is not a great virtue. (p. 57)

The "we" that Kadushin and Kadushin (2013) invoke appears to be an invisibly White social worker with an assumed Eurocentric, monochronic sense of time working with cultural

Others who lack the "virtue" of punctuality. Nylund (2006) argues that social work cultural competency training takes "a liberal or conservative multicultural perspective that precludes a power analysis and a critical discussion of Whiteness" (p. 27). Park (2005) concludes that the word *culture*, as it is used in social work literature, often implies deficit: "Against the blank, White backdrop of the 'culture-free' mainstream, the 'cultured' Others are made visible in sharp relief, and this visibility—a sign of separateness and differentiation from the standard—are inscriptions of marginality" (p. 22). There is nothing specifically anti-Black about Kadushin and Kadushin's chronemic orientation, but its unacknowledged White Eurocentrism has the potential to exclude African American social workers who may identify with and live by an Afrocentric polychronicity.

Social work management philosophy provides another example of possible anti-Black bias. Germak (2015) emphasizes that social work administration should mirror business administration, asserting "that the job orientation and associated skills of . . . social work managers and leaders . . . need to evolve to become more businesslike and entrepreneurial" (p. 7). Germak does not unpack the cultural provenance of his sense of what "businesslike" means, but the picture he paints resembles a Eurocentric organizational model (Daniels, 2012). Germak's vision of an effective agency administrator is one who "can take charge of meetings and lead them in a businesslike manner," relying on a highly structured agenda with "a time limit for each item" (p. 95). The power dynamics and chronemics of this style may discriminate against African Americans, especially those who subscribe to an Afrocentric management philosophy characterized by a less hierarchical, more communal sharing of power and a more free-flowing, collaborative decision-making process (Daniels, 2012).

Anti-Black Racism in the Workplace

As I noted in my introductory chapter, while there is extensive literature documenting anti-Black employment discrimination across the labor market as a whole (Coleman, 2003; Cornileus, 2013; Couch & Fairlie, 2010; Jeanquart-Barone & Sekaran, 1996; Kim & Tamborini, 2006; Loubert, 2012) there are few studies addressing anti-Black discrimination within social work. Brown and Brown (1997) have studied the impact of racism on Black social workers working with White clients, while Brown (1991) has examined challenges faced by Black social workers in private practice. My literature search turned up only two studies looking at social work anti-Black discrimination enacted by colleagues and supervisors. Focusing on students, Terry (2002) found

> that racism directed against African American social work students is counterproductive to the stated goals of the profession; a hindrance to professional identity formation; a disruptive influence on service delivery; and a contributor to "acting out" behaviors often attributed to African American social work students during "failed" or difficult cross-racial field instruction experiences.

By way of contrast, Jayaratne et al. (1992) "found that the African-American workers in . . . [a] public agency sample reported no differences in their opportunities for promotion in total, and controlling for gender" (p. 39); and furthermore, that "any negative perceptions of the supervisors by these workers do not appear to be associated with perceptions of discriminatory practices in the agency" (p. 38). The stark differences in these findings suggests that further research on anti-Black discrimination is necessary in social work, particularly research that includes the perspective of African American supervisors, not just students and line staff.

Ample anecdotal evidence of color-blind anti-Blackness in professionalism appears on the web (Beekman, 2013; Dossou, 2013; Hammond, 2013; Ko, 2014), including on Twitter (see Figure 2 below). I have not, however, found any empirical studies on this specific topic in any major academic databases, including EBSCO Discovery Service, JSTOR, and PsycINFO). This literature gap is cross-disciplinary, spanning social work as well as other helping professions such as nursing, psychology, and medicine. Studies of anti-Black racism are abundant, but they do not specifically examine the construct of professionalism.

Figure 2

Image of Search Results for Professionalism *and* Anti-Blackness *on Twitter*

Note. Search was conducted February 9, 2016. Twitter automatically displays search terms in boldface.

Summary

In this chapter, I established operational domains of Whiteness and Blackness as contexts for exploring anti-Blackness in professionalism. I unpacked professionalism as a kyriarchical construct, defined color-blind anti-Blackness, and performed a close reading of a prominent professional manual, noting multiple instances of color-blind anti-Black content. I also surveyed the literature on anti-Black discrimination across the labor market, and in social work, revealing an absence of empirical studies specifically on anti-Black bias in the definition and enforcement of professionalism. Hopefully, the results of this study (presented in Chapter IV) will shed some of the first empirical light on the subject.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

This project was an exploratory study that sought to answer two overarching research questions: (1) To what extent is there color-blind anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agency culture? (2) What are exacerbating and ameliorating factors for this anti-Black bias? Based on the definitions established by Anderson and Bolt (2016) and Cournoyer (2014), I defined professionalism as the set of standards concerning appearance, character, values, and behavior that mark employees as competent, appropriate, effective, ethical, and respected/respectful. More specifically, I delineated this set of standards as spoken or unspoken rules about how employees are supposed to dress, act, talk, groom, accessorize, gesticulate, emote, and decorate in order to have the above qualities attributed to them by their supervisors and colleagues. This study specifically focused on discrimination against African Americans, as opposed to discrimination against African or Afro-Caribbean immigrants and refugees. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I defined anti-Blackness as discrimination against African Americans and used the term Black interchangeably with the term African American.

Sample

The sample consisted of 246 social workers or social work students, at least 18 years old, and currently working or interning in the United States in community mental health agencies or other human services agencies with a strong social work leadership culture. The recruitment method used was snowball sampling via e-mail announcement and Facebook. For my e-mail

recruiting, I wrote a brief description of the study (see Appendix B) and pasted in an image that was hyperlinked to my study website: http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/antiBlackness. I sent this e-mail out to a variety of individuals and organizations in my professional network. Given the topic of the study, I wanted to recruit African American social workers, so I also reached out to 27 different social work programs at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

In addition, I posted a Facebook announcement (see Appendix C) on the public pages of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), multiple state NASW branches, and the American Clinical Social Work Association (ACSWA). I also posted the same announcement to the following Facebook groups: Smith School for Social Work Class of 2016, Network of Professional Social Workers, Ethical Social Workers, Radical Social Work Group, Social Workers for Racial Justice Coalition, #SocialWork4BlackLives, Social Work & Social Justice, The Social Work Toolbox, Social Work Network, MSW Students for Undoing Racism, Military Social Work, and The Icarus Project.

Tables 1-6 and Figure 3 summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample ($N =$ 246), including race, age, gender, social work services, title, supervisory status, and geographic distribution. Appendix F presents the sample's zip code data.

Table 1

Race of Sample

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
White (Non-Hispanic European or European American)	56	22.8	48.7
People of color	59	24.0	51.3
African American	25	10.2	21.7
African or Afro-Caribbean	2	0.8	1.7
Native American, First Nations, or Alaska Native	2	0.8	1.7
Asian or Asian American	6	2.4	5.2
Latino or Hispanic	6	2.4	5.2
Biracial or multi-racial	8	3.3	7.0
Other	6	2.4	5.2
Missing	131	53.3	

Just under half (48.7%) of respondents to the race question identified as White while a little over one quarter (21.7%) identified as African American. According to a 2006 report by the Center for Health Workforce Studies and the NASW Center for Workforce Studies, 86% of licensed American social workers are White and 7% are Black. This means that respondents to this question were disproportionately constituted by social workers of color, specifically Black social workers. The following were answers marked *other* above: Jewish ($n = 2$), Greek ($n = 1$), White Latina ($n = 1$), and "human" ($n = 2$). The large number of missing responses (a theme throughout my findings) is a product of the study design, which featured a mandatory initial question. A discussion of the limitations of the study will appear in Chapter V.

Table 2

Age of Sample

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
18-29	33	13.4	28.9
30-39	40	16.3	35.1
40-49	18	7.3	15.8
49-64	19	7.7	16.7
65+	4	1.6	3.5
Missing	132	53.7	

Most respondents to the age question were 39 and under, with the 30-39 group representing 35.1% of respondents, and the 18-29 group accounting for 28.9%.

Table 3

Gender of Sample

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Genderqueer	2	0.8	1.7
Nonbinary	2	0.8	1.7
Woman	95	38.6	82.6
Man	13	5.3	11.3
Other	3	1.2	2.6
Missing	131	53.3	

Respondents to the gender question mostly identified as women (82.6%). The three *other* answers were "cisgender woman," "My gender is female, not woman," and "A," which may be an abbreviation for agender.

Table 4

Social Work Services of Sample

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Adult mental health or behavioral health	73	29.7	64.0
Children, youth, and family services	36	14.6	31.6
Community organizing	2	0.8	1.8
Medical social work	2	0.8	1.8
Housing services	1	0.4	0.9
Missing	132	53.7	

The greatest number of respondents to this question fell into the *adult mental health or behavioral health* category (64%), followed by *children, youth, and family services* (31.6%).

Table 5

Job Titles of Sample

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Therapist, counselor, or case manager	58	23.6	50.4
Social work student	36	14.6	31.3
Administrator or director	18	7.3	15.7
Researcher	2	0.8	1.7
Other	1	0.4	0.9
Missing	131	53.3	

Therapist, counselor, or case manager was the most frequently identified title (50.4%) among respondents to this question, followed by *social work student* (31.3%). The *other* respondent identified as an "educator."

Table 6

Supervisory Status of Sample

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	34	13.8	29.6
No	81	32.9	70.4
Missing	131	53.3	

Less than one third of respondents to the question identified as supervisors.

The final demographic question inquired about agency zip code. Using the United States Census Bureau's online American FactFinder tool, I was able to determine the percentage of White residents, percentage of African American residents, and the population density of each zip code. I also calculated the ratios of White to African American residents in Excel using the census percentages. All these data are displayed in Appendix F. The region of the country best represented in the sample was Federal Region II (New York and New Jersey; 24.1%), followed by Federal Region IV (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee; 18.1%) and Federal Region IX (Arizona, California, Hawaii, and Nevada; 13.3%). Figure 3 (over) displays the geographic distribution of the sample.

Figure 3

Map of Sample's Agency Locations

Note. Map generated with BatchGeo (http://www.batchgeo.com).

Data Collection

Instrument format and ethical considerations. The instrument was an anonymous

Survey Monkey questionnaire designed to last approximately 15 minutes. As an ethical

safeguard, I did not collect or retain any identifying information about participants. All data was

kept on the secure Survey Monkey server. All survey materials will be stored in a secure

location for three years, according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed

beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed and then destroyed. All

electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period.

Any person who came across my announcement on the web as a result of my recruitment

efforts could click the Survey Monkey link and arrive at an eligibility assessment page, which

inquired, "Are you a social worker or social work student (at least 18 years old) currently

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working or interning in a community mental health agency or other human services agency in the United States staffed and led mostly by social workers?" If the person selected *yes*, they proceeded to the informed consent document (see Appendix D) and were presented with a choice to continue or to decline to continue. If they selected *yes*, they proceeded to an informational page about anti-Black bias in professionalism, which contained some fictionalized anecdotes based on the literature (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Johnson, 2015; Ross, 2013; Wingfield, 2010).

Instrument design. My primary research question asked, "To what extent is there color-blind anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agency culture?" Therefore, the first question of the survey (the only mandatory one) addressed this question directly:

> 'The way that professionalism is defined and enforced in my agency privileges White employees and job applicants and discriminates against African American employees and job applicants.' Do you agree with this statement? (Note: If there are very few or no African American employees at your agency, you might consider if an anti-Black bias in professionalism could be impacting the recruitment and hiring process.)

If participants answered *yes*, they were directed to a survey page that asked more in-depth questions about their observations of anti-Black bias in professionalism; it also inquired how they might change professionalism or create a replacement for professionalism. If participants answered *no*, they were directed to a shorter page that omitted specific questions about anti-Black bias. After completing their respective pages, both categories of participants were then directed to a final page gathering demographic information and information about their agency.

The rationale for splitting participants into two pools with a mandatory first question was to streamline the study for those who reported not observing anti-Black bias. Since they denied the presence of such bias, I did not want to potentially frustrate them with a series of specific questions about it. For those who reported observing anti-Black bias in professionalism, the first question, which allowed for multiple boxes to be checked, asked,

> Do standards of professionalism in your agency privilege White employees and job
> applicants and discriminate against African American employees and job applicants in
> any of the following areas? Please select all that apply: professional hair style;
> professional clothing, jewelry, and accessories; professional ("workplace appropriate")
> expression of emotions; first names thought to sound more "professional" (e.g., John vs.
> Jamal); professional communication style (verbal and non-verbal); professional office
> decor (including holiday decor).

The multiple-choice selections were drawn from examples of anti-Black bias in the literature (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Johnson, 2015; Ross, 2013; Wingfield, 2010).

Since my secondary research question asked, "What are exacerbating and ameliorating factors for this anti-Black bias?" I composed a series of questions to try to determine these factors. One potential exacerbating factor is the extent to which an agency's organizational culture is biased toward White Eurocentric values. I asked about the organizational culture of participants' agencies to assess such bias. Multiple choice selections were based on White and Eurocentric organizational norms cited in the literature (Okun & Jones, 2001; Daniels, 2012), as for example, in this question:

> Do any of the following characteristics describe the organizational culture of your
> agency? Please select; all that apply: perfectionism; a sense of urgency; defensiveness;

quantity over quality; worship of the written word (if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist); paternalism (those without power kept on a need-to-know basis); either/or thinking; power hoarding; fear of open conflict; individualism; emotions should not play a role in decision making; bigger is better, more is better; people with more power deserve more emotional comfort.

Further questions for those who reported anti-Black bias asked whether this bias could at times be enacted by people of color and whether it could have a negative impact on non-Black employees. The intent of these questions was to problematize an oversimplified narrative that anti-Blackness is always perpetrated by White people and has a negative impact only on Black people. Specifically, I asked,

Studies of implicit (unconscious) bias show that people of all races, including African Americans, can hold anti-Black racial bias. Do any social workers of color (including but not limited to African Americans) at your agency participate in anti-Black discrimination concerning issues of professionalism? Does anti-Black bias in your agency's standards of professionalism also have a negative impact on White employees and/or non-Black employees of color?

The final three questions on the page for those who reported anti-Black bias focused on ameliorating factors and asked how professionalism could change to be less discriminatory against Black people. All three were short-answer questions:

How can the professional culture of your agency change to be less discriminatory against African Americans? What impacts would your recommended changes have on your agency, its clients/patients, and its staff? Imagine if, rather than being modified,

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"professionalism" in your agency could be dismantled and replaced with an entirely new

orientation towards workplace culture. What would your new vision look like?

I was hoping participants would think outside the box about how to move beyond

professionalism to some new vision, instead of just troubleshooting professionalism.

Finally, continuing the exploration of ameliorating factors, I asked all participants on a

final page about how involved their agencies and they themselves are in anti-racism work:

"My agency is committed to reducing racial discrimination in the workplace through anti-racist trainings, policies, and practices." Do you agree with this statement? Please select one: *I strongly agree*; *I somewhat agree*; *I somewhat disagree*; *I strongly disagree*.

"I am personally committed to reducing racial discrimination in my workplace through educating myself about racism, attending anti-racist trainings, and advocating for anti-racist policies and practices." Do you agree with this statement? Please select one: *I strongly agree*; *I somewhat agree*; *I somewhat disagree*; *I strongly disagree*.

I asked these questions to determine if the answers might have any bearing on whether

respondents reported anti-Black bias in their workplace.

Data Analysis

The process of my data analysis followed directly from my two aforementioned

overarching research questions. These questions, in turn, break down into a series of sub-

questions. The following outline delineates the organizational schema of all questions. The sub-

questions appear in italics, juxtaposed with my un-italicized hypotheses.

1. **To what extent is there color-blind anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agency culture?**

   a. *Is it happening?* Yes.

   b. *How and to what extent?* Bias appears often in multiple domains of professionalism (e.g., speech, dress, emotional expression, communication norms, and underlying organizational culture).

   c. *Who is enacting it and who is impacted by it?* It is enacted mostly by White people, but also by people of color. Anti-Black bias impacts everyone negatively, but especially African Americans.

2. **What are exacerbating and ameliorating factors for this anti-Black bias?**

   a. *What is the relationship between the population density in agencies' zip codes and reports of anti-Black bias in their professionalism?* Denser urban areas will have less reported anti-Black bias.

   b. *What is the relationship between the ratios of Whites to African Americans in agencies' zip codes and reports of anti-Black bias in their professionalism?* Agencies in zip codes with higher ratios with have more reported anti-Black bias.

   c. *Does having a larger percentage of African American staff and clients ameliorate anti-Black bias in agencies' professionalism?* Yes.

   d. *Does the extent to which agencies' organizational culture is biased toward White Eurocentric norms exacerbate anti-Black bias in those agencies' professionalism, and reduce the likelihood of an anti-racist orientation?* Yes.

   e. *How does age, race, gender, supervisory status, and anti-racist orientation impact people's likelihood to report anti-Black bias in professionalism?* Older

White men in supervisory positions and with minimal commitment to anti-racism will be the least likely to report anti-Black bias in professionalism, as compared with other demographic groups.

f. *What can agencies do to reduce anti-Black bias in their professional culture?* Offer more anti-racist trainings; pursue anti-racist policies and procedures; and undo forms of White Eurocentric bias in their organizational culture.

I coded and organized the data gathered by my instrument using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet downloaded from Survey Monkey, and I analyzed it with the support of Smith College School for Social Work Research Analyst Marjorie Postal. The descriptive statistical analysis consisted of organizing and tabulating the data frequencies and percentages supplied by Postal. For the qualitative analysis, I read all participant responses and assigned codes according to thematic patterns I observed. Outlier responses were marked as *other*. Inferential statistical analyses were run by Postal using SPSS.

For a more granular look at the various forms of analysis I used, I will now repeat my outline of research questions. Under each italicized sub-question, I will include the relevant questions from my instrument, and then provide details on the analysis performed. The findings from these analyses will appear in the following chapter.

1. **To what extent is there color-blind anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agency culture?**

   a. *Is it happening?*

      Question. "'The way that professionalism is defined and enforced in my agency privileges White employees and job applicants and discriminates against African American employees and job applicants.' Do you agree with this statement?

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(Note: If there are very few or no African American employees at your agency, you might consider if an anti-Black bias in professionalism could be impacting the recruitment and hiring process.)"[18]

Analysis. Since this was a polar question, I analyzed it using descriptive statistics ($n = 246$).

Question. "Are there other forms of anti-Black discrimination happening at your agency that are unrelated to professionalism?"

Analysis. Since this was a polar question, I analyzed it using descriptive statistics ($n = 72$).

Question. "Please explain your answer above, including any relevant anecdotes."

Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 46$).

b. *How and to what extent?*

Question. "Do standards of professionalism in your agency privilege White employees and job applicants and discriminate against African American employees and job applicants in any of the following areas? Please select all that apply: professional hair style; professional clothing, jewelry, and accessories; professional ('workplace appropriate') expression of emotions; first names thought to sound more 'professional' (e.g., John vs. Jamal); professional communication style (verbal and non-verbal); professional office decor (including holiday decor)."

Analysis. This was a question where respondents could check multiple boxes. I accidentally omitted a *none of the above* box, so I was not able to determine the

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[18] The reader may note that this question does not contain the phrase *color blind*. This was an intentional choice on my part to avoid excessive terminology in the instrument. The extent to which the reported bias is color blind or not will be assessed in Chapter V.

number of total or missing respondents. I analyzed it using descriptive statistics and was able to determine the boxes most frequently checked.

Question. "Please explain your answers above and identify any other areas of anti-Black bias you perceive in your agency's standards of professionalism. Feel free to share any relevant anecdotes."

Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 24$).

Question. "In your agency, how (and how often) does anti-Black bias in professionalism show up? For each category, please select *frequently*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, or *never*: anti-Black workplace policies and procedures; anti-Black comments from co-workers and supervisors; double standards of what 'unprofessional' behavior means for White employees vs. African American employees."

Analysis. Since this question used a Likert-type scale, I analyzed it using descriptive statistics ($n = 47$).

c. ***Who is enacting it and who is impacted by it?***

Question. "Studies of implicit (unconscious) bias show that people of all races, including African Americans, can hold anti-Black racial bias. Do any social workers of color (including but not limited to African Americans) at your agency participate in anti-Black discrimination concerning issues of professionalism?"

Analysis. Since this was a polar question, I analyzed it using descriptive statistics ($n = 46$).

Question. "Please explain your answer above and share any relevant anecdotes."

Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 15$).

Question. "Does anti-Black bias in your agency's standards of professionalism also have a negative impact on White employees and/or non-Black employees of color?"

Analysis. Since this was a polar question, I analyzed it using descriptive statistics ($n = 47$).

Question. "Please explain your answer above and share any relevant anecdotes."

Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 17$).

2. **What are exacerbating and ameliorating factors for this anti-Black bias?**

   a. *What is the relationship between the population density in agencies' zip codes and reports of anti-Black bias in their professionalism?*

      Question. "What is your agency's zip code?"

      Analysis. I used the United States Census Bureau's online FactFinder tool to look up each zip code and determine the population density. A Pearson correlation was run between frequency of anti-Black bias from the Likert question on the previous page ($n = 47$) and population density ($n = 83$). Hereafter, I will refer to this first variable as *anti-Black bias frequency*.

   b. *What is the relationship between the ratios of Whites to African Americans in agencies' zip codes and reports of anti-Black bias in their professionalism?*

      Question. I used the same zip code question as above.

      Analysis. Using the FactFinder tool, I found the racial demographic data for each zip code and then calculated the ratios of Whites to African Americans using Excel. A Pearson correlation was run between anti-Black bias frequency ($n = 47$) and these ratios ($n = 83$).

c. *Does having a larger percentage of African American staff and clients*

   ameliorate anti-Black bias in agencies' professionalism?

   Question. I asked participants to estimate the percentages of their agencies'

   African American staff and clients.

   Analysis. Spearman's rho correlations were run between anti-Black bias

   frequency ($n = 47$), and the percentages of African American staff ($n = 115$) and

   clients ($n = 112$). T-tests were also run to see if there were differences in these

   percentages by the mandatory opening polar question about anti-Black bias ($n =$

   246). (I will refer to this second variable as *anti-Black bias* from now on.)

d. *Does the extent to which agencies' organizational culture is biased toward*

   White Eurocentric norms exacerbate anti-Black bias in those agencies'

   professionalism, and reduce the likelihood of an anti-racist orientation?

   Question. "Do any of the following characteristics describe the organizational

   culture of your agency? Please select; all that apply: perfectionism; a sense of

   urgency; defensiveness; quantity over quality; worship of the written word (if it's

   not in a memo, it doesn't exist); paternalism (those without power kept on a need-

   to-know basis); either/or thinking; power hoarding; fear of open conflict;

   individualism; emotions should not play a role in decision-making; bigger is

   better, more is better; people with more power deserve more emotional comfort."

   Analysis. This was a question where respondents could check multiple boxes. I

   accidentally omitted a *none of the above* box, so I was not able to determine the

   number of total or missing respondents. I analyzed it using descriptive statistics

   and was able to determine the boxes most frequently checked.

Question. "'My agency is committed to reducing racial discrimination in the workplace through anti-racist trainings, policies, and practices.' Do you agree with this statement? Please select one of the following: *I strongly agree*; *I somewhat agree*; *I somewhat disagree*; *I strongly disagree*."

Analysis. Since this question used a Likert-type scale, I analyzed it using descriptive statistics ($n = 115$).

Question. "For each of the eight categories below, please choose one of the two characteristics that best describes the organizational culture of your agency. Organizational style/philosophy: large profits or support/care for the group? Management: communal (team-oriented) or hierarchical? Leadership: selected by the people or appointed by succession by those in power? Power/authority: in the hierarchy or spread out (council based)? Decision making: individualistic or collaborative? Staff relations: familial (interdependent, face-to-face) or impersonal (mostly carried out through written memos)? Work orientation sense of excellence or quantitative output? Productivity: competition or cooperative teams?"

Analysis. A Eurocentrism variable was created by coding the eight cultural variables (1 = White/Eurocentric and 0 = Afrocentric) and then summing the number of Eurocentric responses. (Table 21 in the following chapter displays which characteristics are Eurocentric and which are Afrocentric.) A Pearson correlation was run between Eurocentrism ($n = 47, 48, 47, 47, 48, 48, 46, 48$, respectively, for the eight categories listed above) and anti-Black bias frequency ($n = 47$). A Spearman's rho correlation was also run between Eurocentrism and

the Likert question that assessed the extent to which respondents agreed that their agency has an anti-racist orientation ($n = 115$).

e. ***How does age, race, gender, supervisory status, and anti-racist orientation impact a person's likelihood to report anti-Black bias in professionalism?***

  Question. In the demographic section of my survey, I asked participants for their age, race, gender, supervisory status, and in a Likert question, asked them to assess their personal commitment to anti-racism in their work.

  Analysis. Spearman's rho correlations were run between anti-Black bias frequency ($n = 47$) and age ($n = 114$) and, as well as between bias frequency and personal anti-racist orientation ($n = 114$). A t-test was run to see if there was a difference in bias frequency by gender ($n = 115$). A chi-square analysis was run to see if there was a difference in anti-Black bias ($n = 246$) by supervisory status ($n = 115$). Finally, a one-way ANOVA was run to see if there was a difference in anti-Black bias frequency by race ($n = 115$).

f. ***What can agencies do to reduce anti-Black bias in their professional culture?***

  Question. "You have indicated that you do not agree with this statement: 'The way that professionalism is defined and enforced in my agency privileges White employees and job applicants and discriminates against African American employees and job applicants.' Please explain why you do not agree with the above statement." (I put this question under this particular heading since I thought the answer might shed light on preventative factors).

  Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 66$).

  Question. "Is there anything about how standards of professionalism are defined

and enforced in your agency that you would like to see change?"

Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 31$).

Question. "How can the professional culture of your agency change to be less

discriminatory against African Americans?"

Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 26$).

Question. "What impacts would your recommended changes have on your

agency, its clients/patients, and its staff?"

Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 19$).

Question. "Imagine if, rather than being modified, 'professionalism' in your

agency could be dismantled and replaced with an entirely new orientation towards

workplace culture. What would your new vision look like?"

Analysis. Since this was a short-answer question, I coded it for themes ($n = 46$).

Summary

This chapter has presented the details of my methodology—including recruiting practices, sample demographics, study design rationale, and descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. The analysis section introduced a question-driven organizational schema that will be repeated in the next chapter, as I shift from delineating the methods of my analysis to reporting my findings.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This chapter will provide results for each of the analyses detailed in my methodology. I will use the research question schema introduced in the previous chapter as the overarching organizational structure.

Research Questions and Analyses

To what extent is there color-blind anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agency culture?

Is it happening? Table 7 below summarizes the results for the following question, which was the mandatory opening question on my instrument:

"The way that professionalism is defined and enforced in my agency privileges White employees and job applicants and discriminates against African American employees and job applicants." Do you agree with this statement? (Note: If there are very few or no African American employees at your agency, you might consider if an anti-Black bias in professionalism could be impacting the recruitment and hiring process.)

Table 7

Respondents Reporting Anti-Black Bias in Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	105	42.7	42.7
No	141	57.3	57.3
Missing	0	0.0	

Most respondents to the question did not report bias (57.3%); however, a large percentage did (42.7%). From now on, I will refer to the *no* group as the No-Bias Group (*n* = 141) and the *yes* group as the Yes-Bias Group (*n* = 105). There are none reported missing because this was the only mandatory question on the survey. Skip logic then directed the No-Bias Group to one part of the survey and the Yes-Bias Group to another. All respondents were given the demographic questions. The No-Bias Group was next asked, "Are there other forms of anti-Black discrimination happening at your agency that are unrelated to professionalism?"

Table 8

No-Bias Group's Reports of Anti-Black Bias Unrelated to Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	26	18.4	36.1
No	46	32.6	63.9
Missing	69	48.9	

As above, most respondents to the question said *no*, but a large percentage (36.1%) reported other forms of anti-Black discrimination. With regard to this same question, I asked the No-Bias Group a qualitative follow-up question: "Please explain your answer above, including any relevant anecdotes."

Table 9

No-Bias Group Explains Anti-Black Bias Unrelated to Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
No (have not witnessed)	15	10.6	32.6
No (diversity)	7	5.0	9.7
Yes (against staff)	12	8.5	16.7
Yes (against clients)	7	5.0	9.7
Yes (against staff and clients)	4	2.8	5.6
No (other)	1	0.7	1.4
Missing	95	32.6	

I coded responses into five themes:

1. *No (have not witnessed)*: "There are no forms of discrimination in fact the Whites are being discriminated from [*sic*]."

2. *No (diversity)*: "No, our agency is very diverse in staff."

3. *Yes (against staff)*: "An older White female colleague . . . basically explained her opinion that Black Lives Matter was 'stupid because ALL lives matter' and described the Black Panther Party as a terrorist organization."

4. *Yes (against clients)*: "Many times workers are more reluctant to work with Black families because they feel as though, 'the success rate isn't as high.'"

5. *Yes (against staff and clients)*: "Very few people of color served as clients or among the ssw [*sic*] staff."

In addition, there was one *no (other)* response: "While my agency is welcoming of people from all backgrounds, the population within the agency mirrors the outside community: mostly White, heteronormative with a few people that are persons of color." The most common themes were *no (have not witnessed)* and *yes (against staff)*.

How and to what extent is color-blind anti-Black bias happening? To answer this question, I asked the Yes-Bias Group (*n* = 105) about domains of anti-Black bias:

Do standards of professionalism in your agency privilege White employees and job applicants and discriminate against African American employees and job applicants in any of the following areas? Please select all that apply: professional hair style; professional clothing, jewelry, and accessories; professional ("workplace appropriate") expression of emotions; first names thought to sound more "professional" (e.g., John vs.

Jamal); professional communication style (verbal and non-verbal); professional office

decor (including holiday decor).

Table 10

Domains of Anti-Black Bias Reported by Yes-Bias Group

Domain	*n*
Professional hair style	17
Professional jewelry, clothing, and accessories	22
Professional ("workplace appropriate") expression of emotions	32
First names thought to sound more "professional" (e.g., John vs. Jamal)	14
Professional communication style (verbal and non-verbal)	35
Professional office decor (including holiday decor)	15

Note. This was a question where respondents could check multiple boxes. I accidentally omitted a *none of the above* box, so I was not able to determine the number of total or missing respondents.

Communication style and emotional expression were the two categories checked most

frequently. For some qualitative data on the subject, I also asked respondents, "Please explain

your answers above and identify any other areas of anti-Black bias you perceive in your agency's

standards of professionalism. Feel free to share any relevant anecdotes."

Table 11

Yes-Bias Group Explains Domains of Anti-Black Bias in Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Double standards	6	5.7	25.0
Emotions	4	3.8	16.7
Personal presentation	4	3.8	16.7
Communication	2	1.9	8.3
Structural racism	3	2.9	12.5
Double standards and emotions	2	1.9	8.3
Emotions and personal presentation	1	1.0	4.2
Other	2	1.9	8.3
Missing	81	77.1	

I coded responses into five primary themes:

1. *Double standards*: "Same verbiage used by a Black social work director and White nursing director. Black Director viewed as being a bully."

2. *Emotions*: "Any Black person emoting in any fashion is considered angry."

3. *Personal presentation*: "Staff who had locks have been encouraged to cut them."

4. *Communication*: "The agency relies on constant communication via email, and there are some employees who are only known (and judged) by the 'professionalism' and communication style of their emails- [*sic*] a White standard of professionalism."

5. *Structural racism*: "You need a degree to do a lot of things in our agency, and so I feel that that definition of 'professional' inherently denies those ostracized by the system, like POC [people of color]."

In addition, there were two secondary themes created from combinations of these primary themes. There were also two responses coded as *other.* One participant asserted, "It's way more subtle than that. It's just clear that Black employees seem to 'not work out' or just get fired or

moved on for many different reasons." Another participant felt the study needed clearer

differentiation between anti-Blackness and discrimination against African Americans:

> I found it difficult to select because there's a discrepancy in the questions: anti-Blackness
>
> is different than anti-African Americanness. Black is a race, whereas African American
>
> implies both nationality and ethnicity.

Double standards was the most common theme. This result accords with the quantitative

finding from the following Likert question asked of the Yes-Bias Group ($n = 105$):

> In your agency, how (and how often) does anti-Black bias in professionalism show up?
>
> For each category, please select *frequently*, *sometimes*, *rarely*, or *never*: anti-Black
>
> workplace policies and procedures; anti-Black comments from co-workers and
>
> supervisors; double standards of what "unprofessional" behavior means for White
>
> employees vs. African American employees.

Table 12

Frequency and Type of Anti-Black Bias Reported by Yes-Bias Group

Anti-Black workplace policies and procedures	*n*	Percent	Valid Percent
Frequently	2	1.9	4.3
Sometimes	10	9.5	21.3
Rarely	15	14.3	31.9
Never	20	19.0	42.6
Missing	58	55.2	

Anti-Black comments from co-workers and supervisors	*n*	Percent	Valid Percent
Frequently	6	5.7	12.8
Sometimes	20	19.0	42.6
Rarely	17	16.2	36.2
Never	4	3.8	8.5
Missing	58	55.2	

Double standards of "unprofessional" behavior	*n*	Percent	Valid Percent
Frequently	13	12.4	28.3
Sometimes	22	21.0	47.8
Rarely	10	9.5	21.7
Never	1	1.0	2.2
Missing	59	56.2	

Double standards was reported most often in the *frequently* and *sometimes* categories.

Who is enacting anti-Black bias in professionalism and who is impacted by it? In order to test the possibly erroneous assumption that anti-Blackness is enacted only by White people, I asked the Yes-Bias Group (*n* = 105):

> Studies of implicit (unconscious) bias show that people of all races, including African Americans, can hold anti-Black racial bias. Do any social workers of color (including but not limited to African Americans) at your agency participate in anti-Black discrimination concerning issues of professionalism?

Table 13

Yes-Bias Group Reports Whether Anti-Black Bias Is Enacted by People of Color

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	26	24.8	56.5
No	20	19.0	43.5
Missing	59	56.2	

A little over half of respondents to this question reported anti-Black bias enacted by social workers of color while 43.5% of respondents did not. For additional qualitative data, I asked respondents to this question, "Please explain your answer and share any relevant anecdotes."

Table 14

Yes-Bias Group Explains Anti-Black Bias Enacted by People of Color

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
No (solidarity)	2	1.9	13.3
No (lack of diversity, have not witnessed)	5	4.8	33.3
Yes (have witnessed)	2	1.9	13.3
Yes ("ghetto," Black hair)	5	4.8	33.3
Other	1	1.0	6.7
Missing	90	85.7	

I coded responses into four themes:

1. *No (solidarity)*: "I think the few staff of color at the agency look out for each other."

2. *No (lack of diversity, have not witnessed)*: "We have very few minority professionals of any type in my agency. Hmmmm."

3. *Yes (have witnessed)*: "The standard is different for African Americans and sometimes Blacks who are not African American react with hostility and disdain for African Americans who are the descendants of US based slavery."

4. *Yes ("ghetto," Black hair)*: "Some social workers both Black and Hispanic make statements regarding other Black employees or patients. Use of the term 'ghetto' is a big one as well as statement of 'she should straighten her hair, it's too nappy' has been said countless times. Other times I hear Black employees say 'see, they are the reason Black people get a bad rap.'"

There was also one response coded as *other.* As in their answer to the previous question, the same participant asserted, "Again, you're using African American as equivalent to Black and it's hard to answer the question." *No (lack of diversity, have not witnessed)* and *yes ("ghetto," Black hair)* were the two most common themes.

I asked the Yes-Bias Group ($n = 105$), "Does anti-Black bias in your agency's standards of professionalism also have a negative impact on White employees and/or non-Black employees of color?"

Table 15

Yes-Bias Group Reports Whether Anti-Black Bias Negatively Impacts Non-Black Staff

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	38	36.2	80.9
No	9	8.6	19.1
Missing	58	55.2	

Over 80% of respondents to the question agreed that the negative impact of anti-Black bias is not limited to African Americans. For qualitative data on this topic, I also asked "Please explain your answer above and share any relevant anecdotes."

Table 16

Yes-Bias Group Explains Impact of Anti-Black Bias on Non-Black Employees

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes (White staff)	2	1.9	11.8
Yes (non-Black staff of color)	3	2.9	17.6
Yes (all staff)	8	7.6	47.1
Yes (staff and clients)	3	2.9	17.6
Other	1	1.0	5.9
Missing	88	83.8	

I coded responses into four themes:

1. *Yes (White staff)*: "One White employee has an AA boyfriend but she doesn't let any Whites know because she thinks it will change how she is treated by other Whites."

2. *Yes (non-Black staff of color)*: "For non-Black employees of color, doesn't feel fully safe to express emotions and communicate as openly as it is for White employees."

3. *Yes (all staff)*: "Our agency is rigidly hierarchical and most employees feel they have little or no say in their working conditions, placements, and duties. When people are promoted and fired by fiat from the top, it leads to a culture of fear and power mongering, and the un-stated anti-Black biases that play into these decisions feed into

everyone's sense that decisions are made for other-than-stated reasons and in unpredictable/unmanageable ways over which we have no control."

4. *Yes (staff and clients)*: "Firstly, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr once said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' Furthermore, the strict codes of 'professionalism' mean that the clinicians are required to both look and act differently than their clients (we serve a very low income population) and that separation does improve the quality of care that we provide; if anything it make clients more wary of us and that hurts rapport."

There was also one response coded as *other*:

If it is not addressed, people will not be held accountable to behaviors and actions regarding anti Black sentiment. All behavior is learned and not inate [*sic*]. If education is provided , [*sic*] an increase in change may likely occur.

Yes (all staff) was the most common theme.

What are exacerbating and ameliorating factors for this anti-Black bias?

What is the relationship between the population density in agencies' zip codes and reports of anti-Black bias in their professionalism? I asked participants for their agency zip codes. I then used the United State Census Bureau's online FactFinder tool to look up each zip code and determine the population density (see Appendix F). A Pearson correlation was run between anti-Black bias frequency ($n = 47$) and population density ($n = 83$). No significant correlation was found.

What is the relationship between the ratios of Whites to African Americans in agencies' zip codes and reports of anti-Black bias in their professionalism? To answer this question, I used the same zip code data from above. Using the FactFinder tool, I found the racial

demographic data for each zip code and then calculated the ratios of Whites to African

Americans using Excel (See Appendix F). A Pearson correlation was run between anti-Black

bias frequency ($n = 47$) and these ratios ($n = 83$). No significant correlation was found.

Does having a larger percentage of African American staff and clients ameliorate anti-Black bias in agencies' professionalism? I asked respondents to estimate the percentage of their

agencies' African American staff and clients:

Table 17

Percentage of African American Clients at Respondents' Agencies

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
0%	6	2.4	5.4
1-10%	15	6.1	13.4
11-25%	22	8.9	19.6
26-50%	23	9.3	20.5
51-75%	22	8.9	19.6
76-99%	22	8.9	19.6
100%	2	0.8	1.8
Missing	134	54.5	

Table 18

Percentage of African American Staff at Respondents' Agencies

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
0%	3	1.2	2.6
1-10%	47	19.1	40.9
11-25%	22	8.9	19.1
26-50%	21	8.5	18.3
51-75%	15	6.1	13.0
76-99%	6	2.4	5.2
100%	1	0.4	0.9
Missing	131	53.3	

The highest number of respondents reported in the 26-50% range for African American clients and in the 1-10% range for African American staff. Spearman's rho correlations were run between anti-Black bias frequency ($n = 47$) and the percentages of African American staff ($n = 115$) and clients ($n = 112$). No significant correlations were found. T-tests were also run to see if there were differences in these percentages by anti-Black bias ($n = 246$). A t-test demonstrated a significant difference in percentages of African American staff ($t(113) = 3.24$, $p = .002$, two-tailed). The Yes-Bias Group had a lower mean percentage of African American staff in their agencies ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.17$) than the No-Bias Group ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.37$). (These mean values indicate percentage categories, as shown in Tables 17 and 18, rather than actual percentages, so $1 = 0\%$, $2 = 1$-10%, etc.) There was no significant difference in percentages of African American clients.

Does the extent to which agencies' organizational culture is biased toward White Eurocentric norms exacerbate anti-Black bias in those agencies' professionalism, and reduce the likelihood of an anti-racist orientation? In order to assess a White bias in organizational culture, I asked the Yes-Bias Group ($n = 105$),

Do any of the following characteristics describe the organizational culture of your agency? Please select; all that apply: perfectionism; a sense of urgency; defensiveness; quantity over quality; worship of the written word (if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist); paternalism (those without power kept on a need-to-know basis); either/or thinking; power hoarding; fear of open conflict; individualism; emotions should not play a role in decision-making; bigger is better, more is better; people with more power deserve more emotional comfort.

Table 19

Characteristics of White Culture Reported in Yes-Bias Group's Agencies

Domain	*n*
Perfectionism	16
A sense of urgency	28
Defensiveness	33
Quantity over quality	25
Worship of the written word	21
Paternalism	30
Either/or thinking	16
Power hoarding	23
Fear of open conflict	32
Individualism	18
Emotions should not play a role in decision making	19
Bigger is better, more is better	15
People with more power deserve more emotional comfort	18

Note. This was a question where respondents could check multiple boxes. I accidentally omitted a *none of the above* box, so I was not able to determine the number of total or missing respondents.

The four most frequently cited characteristics were *defensiveness*, *fear of open conflict*, *paternalism*, and *a sense of urgency*.

To assess perceptions of an anti-racist orientation in respondents' agencies, I asked a Likert question:

My agency is committed to reducing racial discrimination in the workplace through anti-racist trainings, policies, and practices." Do you agree with this statement? Please select one of the following: *I strongly agree*; *I somewhat agree*; *I somewhat disagree*; *I strongly disagree*.

Table 20

Perceptions of Anti-Racist Orientation in Respondents' Agencies

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	24	9.8	20.9
Somewhat agree	40	16.3	34.8
Somewhat disagree	29	11.8	25.2
Strongly disagree	22	8.9	19.1
Missing	131	53.3	

The percentage of those respondents who strongly agreed (20.9%) is nearly equivalent to those who strongly disagreed (19.1%).

To assess whether respondents' agencies fell into more Eurocentric or Afrocentric organizational patterns, I asked the following of the Yes-Bias Group (*n* = 105):

For each of the eight categories below, please choose one of the two characteristics that best describes the organizational culture of your agency. Organizational style/philosophy: large profits or support/care for the group? Management: communal (team-oriented) or hierarchical? Leadership: selected by the people or appointed by succession by those in power? Power/authority: in the hierarchy or spread out (council

based)? Decision making: individualistic or collaborative? Staff relations: familial

(interdependent, face-to-face) or impersonal (mostly carried out through written memos)?

Work orientation sense of excellence or quantitative output? Productivity: competition or

cooperative teams?

Table 21

Eurocentric and Afrocentric Characteristics of Yes-Bias Group's Agencies

Categories	Eurocentric *n*	Afrocentric *n*	Missing
Organizational style/philosophy	Large profits 23	Support/care for the group 24	58
Management	Hierarchical 41	Communal or team oriented 7	57
Leadership	Appointed by succession 43	Selected by the people 4	58
Power/authority	In the hierarchy 46	Spread out or council based 1	58
Decision making	Individualistic 32	Collaborative 16	57
Staff relations	Impersonal (written memos) 26	Familial or interdependent, face-to-face 22	57
Work orientation	Quantitative output 32	Sense of excellence 14	59
Productivity	Competition 21	Cooperative teams 27	57

Participant responses indicated that six of the eight categories were found to be

predominantly Eurocentric, while only two were found to be predominantly Afrocentric

(*support/care for the group* and *cooperative teams*). A Eurocentric variable was created by

coding the eight cultural variables (1 = Eurocentric and 0 = Afrocentric) and then summing the number of Eurocentric responses. A Pearson correlation was run between Eurocentrism (n = 47, 48, 47, 47, 48, 48, 46, 48, respectively, for the eight categories listed above) and anti-Black bias frequency (n = 47), demonstrating a significant negative moderate correlation (r = -.42, p = .003, two-tailed). The way anti-Black bias was scored, this means that the more Eurocentric the agency, the greater the frequency of reported bias. A Spearman's rho correlation was run between Eurocentrism and the Likert question that assessed the extent to which respondents agreed that their agency has an anti-racist orientation (n = 115). A significant positive weak correlation was found between agencies' Eurocentrism and their lack of investment in anti-racist policies and procedures (r_s = .30, p = .046, two-tailed).

How does age, race, gender, supervisory status, and anti-racist orientation impact a person's likelihood to report anti-Black bias in professionalism? In a demographic section on my survey, I asked participants for their age, race, gender, supervisory status, and in a Likert question, I asked to what extent they considered themselves to have an anti-racist orientation in their work. The results of the demographic questions appear in Chapter III. The results of the Likert question appear below:

Table 22

Respondents' Assessments of Their Anti-Racist Commitment

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	80	32.5	70.2
Somewhat agree	25	10.2	21.9
Somewhat disagree	8	3.3	7.0
Strongly disagree	1	0.4	0.9
Missing	132	53.7	

A majority of respondents to the question agree (70.2%), while only one person strongly disagrees. This may have been an error, as that participant's answers to other qualitative questions suggest an anti-racist orientation. Spearman's rho correlations were run between anti-Black bias frequency ($n = 47$) and age ($n = 114$), as well as between bias frequency and personal anti-racist orientation ($n = 114$). There was no correlation by age. A significant positive moderate correlation was found between reported commitment to anti-racism and reported anti-Black bias ($r_s = .549$, $p = .000$, two-tailed).

A t-test was run to see if there was a difference in anti-Black bias frequency by gender ($n = 115$) and no significant difference was found. A chi-square analysis was run to see if there was a difference in anti-Black bias ($n = 246$) by supervisory status ($n = 115$), and a significant difference was found ($\chi^2(1, n = 115) = 4.18$, $p = .041$, continuity corrected). A larger percentage of participants who were not in a supervisory role (58.7%) answered *yes* to anti-Black bias, compared to 41.3% of supervisors. Finally, a one-way ANOVA was run to see if there was a difference in anti-Black bias frequency by race ($n = 115$). There was no significant difference found.

What can agencies do to reduce anti-Black bias in their professionalism culture? In the No-Bias Group ($n = 141$), I wanted to assess whether there might any preventative factors at their agencies, so I asked them,

> You have indicated that you do not agree with this statement: "The way that professionalism is defined and enforced in my agency privileges White employees and job applicants and discriminates against African American employees and job applicants." Please explain why you do not agree with the above statement.

Table 23

No-Bias Group Explains Not Observing Anti-Black Bias in Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Have not witnessed	21	14.9	31.8
Diversity	5	3.5	7.6
Respect	8	5.7	12.1
Black employees	8	5.7	12.1
Black management	2	1.4	3.0
Diversity and respect	7	5.0	10.6
Diversity and have not witnessed	2	1.4	3.0
Respect and have not witnessed	3	2.1	4.5
Diversity and Black employees	2	1.4	3.0
Diversity and Black management	2	1.4	3.0
Black employees and Black management	2	1.4	3.0
Complaints about question	2	1.4	3.0
Other	2	1.4	3.0
Missing	75	53.2	

I coded responses into five primary themes:

1. *Have not witnessed*: "Have not seen this happen at my agency."

2. *Diversity*: "My agency makes the hiring of racial minorities a priority."

3. *Respect*: "I feel like my current employers work hard to create a system which is inclusive to all."

4. *Black employees*: "Majority of employees at my work place are Black, there are actually only a few White people employed there."

5. *Black management*: "Management is majority (at least 90%) Black and sets tone of agency."

Six secondary themes included combinations of these primary themes. There were two participants who complained about the question (writing, for example, "The question is to [*sic*]

broad"), and two responses I designated as *other*: (1) "BLACK PRIVILEGE ensures that Black people's rights are respected. People go out of their way to show respect for Black culture. White people are expected to bow down." (2) "No race should be favored over another." *Have not witnessed* was the most frequently coded theme.

In the No-Bias Group (*n* = 141), I wanted to assess whether there were any changes to professionalism they would recommend at their agency, in spite of not reporting anti-Black bias. I asked, "Is there anything about how standards of professionalism are defined and enforced in your agency that you would like to see change?"

Table 24

No-Bias Group's Recommended Changes in Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Nothing	12	8.5	38.7
Staff treatment and diversity	9	6.4	29.0
Client treatment	4	2.8	12.9
Dress code	3	2.1	9.7
Clarity about professionalism	2	1.4	6.5
Other	1	0.7	3.2
Missing	31	78.0	

I coded responses into five themes:

1. *Nothing*: "No, we are all professionals."

2. *Staff treatment and diversity*: "I would like to see more diversity in management."

3. *Client treatment*: "I would like to use more appropriate language team-wide regarding respect and dignity for clients. I think the agency does a relatively good job of this but could improve in using person-first language."

4. *Dress code*: "I would like for the agency to provide stipends in order for everyone to dress 'professionally.'"

5. *Clarity about professionalism*: "I would like to see things more clearly defined."

In addition, there was one *no (other)* response: "I would like to see White people be able to express themselves and WHITE culture without being labeled racist!" *Nothing* and *staff treatment and diversity* were the two most common themes.

To the Yes-Bias Group (*n* = 105), I asked, "How can the professional culture of your agency change to be less discriminatory against African Americans?"

Table 25

Yes-Bias Group's Recommended Changes in Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Anti-racist policies/procedures	6	5.7	23.1
Anti-racist trainings	7	6.7	26.9
More staff diversity	6	5.7	23.1
Anti-racist trainings and anti-racist policies/procedures	4	3.8	15.4
Anti-racists trainings and more staff diversity	3	2.9	11.5
Missing	79	75.2	

I coded responses into three primary themes:

1. *Anti-racist policies and procedures*: "A data analysis in how many Black employees exist in the system. How many Black employees are in managerial positions. [*sic*] Real implications for those who violate cultural standards."

2. *Anti-racist trainings*: "More trainings that highlight micro aggression and what that looks like. Awareness is always a step in the right direction."

3. *More staff diversity*: "I'm not sure exactly, but I would start by hiring more folks who are not White as the 'veterans' retire."

In addition, there were two secondary themes created from combinations of these primary themes. *Anti-racist trainings* was the most common theme.

As a follow-up question, I also asked the Yes-Bias Group ($n = 105$), "What impacts would your recommended changes have on your agency, its clients/patients, and its staff?"

Table 26

Anticipated Impact of Yes-Bias Group's Recommended Changes in Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Improved staff relations	6	5.7	31.6
Improved staff-client relations	5	4.8	26.3
Increased staff diversity	1	1.0	5.3
Improved staff relations and staff-client relations	4	3.8	21.1
Increased staff diversity and improved staff-client relations	1	1.0	5.3
Other	2	1.9	10.5
Missing	86	81.9	

I coded responses into three primary themes:

1. *Improved staff relations*: "The non minority staff will be more professional and respectful toward minorities in the work place."

2. *Improved staff-client relations*: "Giving us a language as staff to talk about race and racism would also have an impact on how we could work with our primarily Black clients and address some of the inherent paternalism and racism embedded in our service model."

3. *Improved staff diversity*: "More staff members of color."

In addition, there were two secondary themes created from combinations of these primary themes. There were two responses coded *other*. (1) "My agency is allergic to change." (2):

The first step would be to assist people to understand that the truth must be told and racism is a destructive force crippling the ability of the United States to function as it should. It is unthinkable that race based hatred appears to be an acceptable norm due to

the inability of a good percentage of White Europeans to live as they believe they should

due to the greed of the few.

Improved staff relations and *improved staff-client relations* were the most common themes.

Finally, both the Yes-Bias Group ($n = 105$) and the No-Bias Group ($n = 141$) were asked

the same question: "Imagine if, rather than being modified, 'professionalism' in your agency

could be dismantled and replaced with an entirely new orientation towards workplace culture.

What would your new vision look like?"

Table 27

Respondents' Visions of a Replacement for Professionalism

	n	Percent	Valid Percent
Respect for staff	10	4.1	38.5
Respect for clients	2	0.8	7.7
Collaborative teams	10	4.1	38.5
Staff diversity	9	3.7	34.6
Good communication	4	1.6	15.4
Systems perspective	4	1.6	15.4
Respect for staff and clients	2	0.8	7.7
Respect for staff and collaborative teams	2	0.8	7.7
Other	3	1.2	11.5
Missing	200	81.3	

I coded responses into five primary themes:

1. *Respect for staff*: "Respect others [*sic*] difference as you would have them respect

   yours."

2. *Respect for clients*: "Our priority is to provide a professional yet welcoming space for

   clients."

3. *Collaborative teams*: "Group decision making"

4. *Staff diversity*: "Increase in the number of female and racial/ethnic minorities who are promoted"

5. *Good communication*: "The only thing I would change is the communication patterns in my agency. Communication is not based on the color of skin; there just seems to be a lack of communication at times."

In addition, there were two secondary themes created from combinations of these primary themes. There were also three responses coded as *other*: (1) "Not sure. As a White person I would actually like to hear from my non White colleagues as to what they would like to see." (2) "It would be a meritocracy and personal relationships would not factor into professional decisions." (3) "Please." *Respect for staff*, *collaborative teams*, and *staff diversity* were the top three most common themes.

Summary

Using the question-driven organizational schema set forth in Chapter III, this chapter has presented and summarized not only the quantitative and qualitative data gathered during the study, but also the results of my descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. A story emerges out of the statistical grass of a large percentage of participants who are witnessing or directly experiencing anti-Black bias in professionalism and who are hungry for change. The following chapter will address key findings and the larger implications of my research.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

As I noted in previous chapters, this exploratory study has sought to answer two overarching research questions: (1) To what extent is there color-blind anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agency culture? (2) What are exacerbating and ameliorating factors for this anti-Black bias? In this final chapter, I will attempt to answer these questions by presenting key findings vis-à-vis the literature. I will also address limitations of the study as well as implications for social work practice, research, and policy and program development.

Key Findings

Anti-Black bias abounds. As I explored earlier in my literature review, there is ample anecdotal evidence on the web of color-blind anti-Blackness in professionalism (Beekman, 2013; Dossou, 2013; Hammond, 2013; Ko, 2014); however, I did not find any pre-existing published studies on this topic in social work or in other professional contexts. The National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics stipulates that social workers should avoid "demeaning comments that refer to colleagues' level of competence or to individuals' attributes such as race" and "should act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on the basis of" race—among multiple other identity attributes (2.01, 6.04, 2008). I had hoped this stated commitment to anti-racist practice in the workplace would act as a buffer to prevent or at least minimize anti-Black bias in social work professionalism. My study results suggest otherwise. Nearly 43% of participants answered *yes*

when asked if they perceived anti-Black bias in professionalism at their agencies whereas just over 57% answered *no*. These responses suggest that, counter to the values espoused in the Code of Ethics, anti-Black bias infects norms of social work professional culture.

Is this anti-Black bias *color blind*, per se? I did not find in my study a single reported instance of anti-Black bias in the workplace that was explicitly racist. In other words, no one reported a colleague or supervisor saying something like, "Black people are inherently unprofessional, just by virtue of being Black." As I explained in Chapter III, I did not specifically ask participants about color blindness as I did not want to overload them with terminology, but as it turns out, all the bias they reported was coded and covert, baked into the seemingly race-neutral construct of professionalism. This bias was therefore a manifestation of color-blind racism, according to the definition established by Bonilla-Silva (2003).

White fragility. Given what critical Whiteness studies literature has to say about the habitual and systematic White denial of racism (DiAngelo, 2012; Kivel, 2011; Wise, 2011; Yancy, 2012), I am skeptical of those White respondents who reported no bias while uncritically invoking vague aspirations of "diversity" and "equality." For example: "The way professionalism is defined in my agency is neutral when it comes to race and is not biased either way. We have a very diverse work community." As I noted in my literature review, McKenzie (2014) lists "talking about 'diversity' without talking about oppression" as third among "Six Things You're Probably Doing to Further Inequality." My anonymous results did not allow me to compare different responses from the same agency, but I wonder if the people of color in this agency would agree with the characterization of professionalism as "neutral" there.

DiAngelo (2012) has coined the term *White fragility* to describe specific patterns of speech and behavior (and underlying beliefs) that Whites use to avoid or deny racism when it is

pointed out to them. One such pattern is an essentialist tokenism that invokes individual persons

of color to stand in monolithically for their race and to justify a White supremacist perspective.

For example, one respondent denied any anti-Black bias, claiming, "There is one Black

employee in my department and he meets your definition of professionalism way more than any

of his White colleagues." Could it be that a double standard of scrutiny pressures this single

Black employee to meticulously adhere to White professional norms for fear of punishment?

Another pattern DiAngelo observes is that Whites will blame people of color for racial inequity.

One respondent, who identified as White and Native American, asserted that at her agency, a

"higher percentage [of African Americans] would be employed if African Americans were

willing to work with the target population (LGBTQ+ and HIV positive)." The fact that a biracial

person can demonstrate behaviors common to White fragility indicates the insidious power of

White supremacy culture to inculcate its ideology in everyone.

A Black face in a White place. Adams (2012), Ko (2014), and Rios (2015) have argued

that professional culture is normative to White people. The findings of my study suggest this

normativity also applies to social work agencies. As a whole, the Yes-Bias Group reported

observing in their agencies all 11 aspects of White organizational culture described by Jones and

Okun (2001). The four most frequently cited were "defensiveness," "a fear of open conflict,"

"paternalism (those without power kept on a need-to-know basis)," and "sense of urgency." My

study also assessed eight domains of Eurocentric vs. Afrocentric organizational culture (Daniels,

2012) in participants' agencies. Six of the eight were found to be predominantly Eurocentric,

while only two were found to be predominantly Afrocentric. These findings suggest that the

professional culture of social work is a heavily White Eurocentric culture, and this comes as no

surprise, given that 86% of licensed social workers identify as White (Center for

Health Workforce Studies & NASW Center for Workforce Studies, 2006). Whiteness (demographic and cultural) may contribute to anti-Blackness. My inferential statistics indicate anti-Black bias in professionalism may be more likely at agencies with fewer African American employees and more Eurocentric organizational culture. In turn, organizational Eurocentrism in an agency was shown to be positively correlated with a lack of investment in anti-racist policies and procedures.

The top two domains of professionalism in which respondents identified anti-Black bias were "professional communication (verbal and non-verbal)" and "professional ('workplace appropriate') display of emotions." Multiple scholars have pointed out key differences between norms of White and African American verbal and non-verbal communication (Halberstadt, 1985; Hall, 1969; Johnson, 2004; LaFrance and Mayo, 1978; Schiele, 2000; Speicher, 1995; Ting-Toomey, 2012). The results about emotional expression confirm Wingfield's (2010) findings that African American professionals report different workplace "feeling rules" for White people as compared with themselves. Of the ways that anti-Black bias in professionalism might show up in an agency, the one most frequently cited among my respondents was "double standards of what 'unprofessional' behavior means for White employees vs. African American employees (e.g., ok for Whites to show anger in a meeting)."

Lost in the hierarchy. My findings suggest that a possible challenge facing African American social workers is a White power hierarchy that prevents anti-Blackness from being seen and addressed. Ani (2009), Jones and Okun (2001), and Schiele (2000) emphasize how White culture is characterized by power hoarding, a sense of scarcity, and competition. Most social workers in upper management are White (Center for Health Workforce Studies & NASW Center for Workforce Studies, 2006) and may be less inclined to recognize anti-

Blackness. My inferential statistics demonstrated that a larger percentage of participants who were not in a supervisory role (58.7%) answered *yes* to anti-Black bias, compared to 41.3% of supervisors. If supervisors are mostly White and also less likely to report anti-Black bias, this situation creates an uphill battle for African American social workers trying to call attention to institutional racism.

The fact that anti-Black bias in professionalism is color blind means that it is potentially invisible to those uneducated about racism and blindfolded with White fragility. As one White male supervisor put it, "I have not seen ways in which my agency discriminates against African American employees; please note: my agency does not have any people that identify as African American and there are very few people that identify as a person of color within the agency." In the same breath, he claims the absence of bias while unwittingly providing evidence of anti-Black hiring practices.

What is to be done? A 2007 NASW report entitled "Institutional Racism and the Social Work Profession: A Call to Action" proposes the following action steps for agencies:

1. Engage in a visioning process, identifying how an organization can become a multicultural, antiracist organization. 2. Create expectations for the organization's CEO and board of directors to lead the organization in addressing institutional racism. 3. Identify methods of accountability to ensure that planning is implemented and evaluated on a regular basis. (pp. 21)

These steps seem reasonable and potentially effective. My concern is that they are not very specific, and since there are no citations provided here, it is unclear whether the steps are based on any empirical research drawing recommendations from people of color. Participants in my study—who were disproportionately people of color (African American in particular)—proposed

numerous specific action steps to combat anti-Black institutional racism. Of the responses I coded, the three most commonly proposed steps were (1) an increase in diversity hiring practices (including in upper management) to mirror diversity in the client community, (2) regular anti-racist trainings and discussion groups (including trainings specifically on anti-Black bias), and (3) anti-racist policies and procedures (such as "conducting data analysis in how many Black employees exist in the system"). Some of these suggested policies and procedures could hopefully address the aforementioned double standards of professionalism via "serious disciplinary action," "legal action," and "real implications for those who violate cultural standards." Many respondents expressed frustration over the racist behavior that White social workers get away with because their White supervisors and colleagues look the other way, or worse, support them in a process Hurtado (1996) calls "White bonding."

Stepping back from the various anti-racist recommendation themes coded in my qualitative analysis, I see two overarching meta-themes emerge. First, many respondents wanted to shift the conversation in a more systems-focused direction. They highlighted the need for changes not only in internal agency policy toward staff, but also in treatment models and relationships with the community. Examining racism structurally, they recognized the fallacy in looking at agencies or clients as islands to be individually addressed. For example, one respondent critiqued the rise of managed care and brief intervention models across American mental health: "Many workers experience this approach as not making room to talk about the systemic and generational trauma of the Black community served. As many workers are themselves Black, this is a negation of their own lived experience, too." This systems-focused meta-theme perhaps indicates a noteworthy limitation in my study: I centered my survey questions on the organizational culture of each participant's agency and did not inquire about

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larger forces of structural inequity in the surrounding community. This more individualistic, less relational approach could be said to be culturally White.

A second meta-theme that cut across multiple questions was an emphasis on replacing "rigidly hierarchical" agency leadership with more horizontally structured collaborative teams. As one respondent formulated his ideal vision of professionalism, "There would be more collaboration than top-down management, or at the very least some kind of unionization of clinicians (who are poorly paid and treated)." Another respondent praised an "agency [that] is entirely run by African-Americans and does not require a master's level education; rather, they have a model where they train staff from the ground up." While few respondents explicitly name rigid hierarchies as a product of Whiteness, their complaints about "a culture of fear and power mongering" bespeak elements of White organizational culture such as paternalism and power hoarding (Jones and Okun, 2001). I want to give space for one respondent to speak her piece here. She paints a starkly dolorous portrait of social workers laboring under Kafkaesque conditions:

> It was entirely numbers driven. Relationship was not important to the agency. We were constantly threatened to be fired if our numbers did not reach a certain threshold. . . . The administrative team consistently made decisions without consulting the people the policies would effect, and as a result, the policies were never good and changed constantly. . . . We were treated like machines.

"We were treated like machines." The author of this passage is a Black woman, and when I read this sentence, it really struck a chord as I heard the crushing pain inflicted by anti-Black professional culture. I want to once more invoke the term color blindness here, because of course, there is nothing explicitly anti-Black about what she is reporting, but the numbers-driven,

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hierarchical, mechanistic culture exudes White supremacist capitalism. I am reminded again of Jones and Okun's (2001) list of White cultural characteristics: "quantity over quality"; "money spent [is] valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, [and the] ability to constructively deal with conflict"; "decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it." Ani's (1994) chilling analysis of lineal chronemics is also relevant here: "Time, in European society, serves the technological order, and as such is nonhuman and mechanical" (p. 60).

It is interesting to note that both White respondents and respondents of color expressed a desire for an end to paternalistic hierarchies. These results suggest White supremacy culture negatively impacts everyone (though, to be clear, systematic racialized oppression and violence are visited only upon people of color in their absence of White privilege). When the Yes-Bias Group was asked if anti-Black bias also negatively impacted White people, 80.9% of respondents said *yes*. Scholars of critical Whiteness studies have emphasized how important it is for Whites to understand racism not just as a problem impacting people of color, but as an insidious system that also harms them as agents enacting it (DiAngelo, 2012; Kivel, 2011; Wise, 2011; Yancy, 2012). My findings also suggest that anyone can collude with White supremacy culture. When the Yes-Bias Group was asked if people of color (including African Americans) also enacted anti-Black bias, 56.5% of respondents said *yes*. Bogado (2014) and Pham (2016) have emphasized how Latino and Asian communities must recognize how their anti-Blackness divides and harms communities of color that could otherwise find anti-racist solidarity together.

All told, the data from my participants indicates that White social workers and social workers of color are struggling under the burden of Whiteness. Is it not time to dismantle the

oppressive hierarchies that Whiteness perpetuates and to look elsewhere for a more humanistic

way of being and working in the world? In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1967) relates,

> I was told by a friend who was a teacher in the United States, "The presence of Negroes
>
> beside the Whites is in a way on insurance policy on humanness. When the Whites feel
>
> that they have become too mechanized, they turn to the men of color and ask them for a
>
> little human sustenance." (p. 129)

Fanon's tone is sardonic. He decries the inhumanity of Whiteness, and the tendency of White

culture to vampirize the cultures of people of color for its own "sustenance." Far be it from me

to unwittingly invoke the noble savage stereotype and to re-enact the narrative that Fanon

describes here. Inspired by my respondents' answers, I am not looking to *resuscitate* a moribund

Whiteness. Rather, I am calling for a radical dismantling of White power and a more egalitarian

workplace culture drawing in part upon the collectivistic values of Afrocentrism.[19] This new

culture must also herald the end of demographic Whiteness in social work, as agencies hire

enough people of color to match the demographics of the communities they serve. It will be the

end of professionalism as we know it.

Limitations

The limitations of my study are many. As I mentioned above, not asking about structural

issues may have limited the scope of the conversation. But perhaps the greatest limitation was

the large amount of missing respondents. While 246 participants answered the first mandatory

question, the numbers dropped off quickly after that. No more than 141 participants answered

any one question afterwards, and some qualitative questions were answered by no more than 15

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[19] These collectivistic values are not unique to traditional African culture, and appear in many societies of color.
Even within Euro-American culture, a more collaborative and community-centered approach to patient care has
emerged in the system-of-care-model, rooted in the postmodern theories of Gregory Bateson (Olson, 2005).
Bateson was, however, influenced by Buddhist psychology (M. E. Olson, personal communication, June 8, 2016).

people. All these missing respondents point to a major flaw in my study design: starting with a mandatory question. My intention was to use this question to drive the skip logic of the study by creating separate pages for the Yes-Bias Group and No-Bias Group. However, it is clear that many respondents merely answered the first question and then skipped out on the rest of the study. Another issue with the study design was my use of multiple-checkbox questions. I did not realize when formulating my survey that Research Analyst Marjorie Postal would not be able to run inferential analyses on these questions. These flaws were important lessons for me, and I would not repeat this particular study design.

From an intersectionality perspective (Crenshaw, 1989), I would certainly critique the scope of my study in that it focused just on anti-Blackness, and not on other systems of oppression. As I explained in my introduction, this limited scope was intentional in light of the salience of anti-Blackness studies in the historical moment. The narrow focus also kept the project from becoming too large and unwieldy, given the limited timeframe I had to complete it. At the same time, it is so clear that professionalism is not just about Whiteness and Blackness, but also about other racial dynamics, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, and ability. One respondent observed Black social workers using the term "ghetto" to describe their Black clients, and there are clearly complex dynamics of class at work in such an interaction. My study fails to address these intersectional nuances.

A validity issue is that my study was certainly biased toward there being anti-Black bias in professionalism, and I believe this bias likely skewed my results by creating a self-selecting sample. Anti-racism is a deeply held conviction of mine, and I do not think I hid my pre-conceived notions enough in my study design or recruitment materials. Many participants may

have decided to take the study because they resonated with the anti-racist position evident in my words.

Finally, I must acknowledge the limitations of my own identity. As a White cisgender male, I was wary from the start of my positionality, given that I have lived experience of anti-Blackness (witnessing and, unfortunately, enacting), but not of Blackness. I asked myself whether it might be safer to study only the Whiteness of professionalism. In the end, I decided that any examination of White supremacy would be incomplete without taking a hard look at target identities as well as agent identities. Despite my best intentions, I recognized the strong potential in this study for oversights and assumptions that might be anti-Black in and of themselves, especially since my thesis advisor was also a White cisgender male. For this reason, I sought out consultation on my theoretical framing and study design with several friends and colleagues of color—Alea Adigweme, Kim DuBose, Allegra Comas, Nathalie Rodriguez, CarmenLeah Ascencio, and Christopher Oladeinde—all of whom provided helpful guidance and critiques along the way. Nevertheless, all my writing and analysis necessarily comes from a White perspective, and is therefore limited. CarmenLeah Ascencio emphasized that, in future research on anti-Blackness, it will be essential for me to collaborate with an African American colleague.

Implications for Practice

The frequency with which respondents reported anti-Black bias in professionalism suggests that it behooves social workers, particularly White social workers in supervisory positions, to educate themselves about institutional racism and to incorporate an anti-racist perspective into their relationships with colleagues and clients. This study has focused first and foremost on intra-agency culture between staff; however, it is important to remember how

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significantly anti-Black bias could harm a therapeutic alliance as well. The critiques that some

respondents voiced about their agency service models suggest that brief, numbers-focused

interventions may serve a capitalist system but fail to address the structural racism in clients'

lives. It may be necessary for agencies to radically rethink their service models to address anti-

Blackness at a deep level and to embody the systems perspective that theoretically undergirds

social work practice.

Implications for Research

Problematics of White research. Does anti-Blackness in professionalism extend to

research methods and publishing in social work? As mentioned in my literature review, Schiele

(2000) observes a graphocentric bias in White culture (as contrasted with Black orality) that

could put African American scholars at a discriminatory disadvantage, especially in an academic

publish-or-perish context. In a study of Black social work academics, Schiele (1991) found that

"higher preferences for orality were associated with lower levels of publication productivity" (as

cited in Schiele, 2000, p. 244). The gold standard in social work research of the so-called

"peer"-reviewed journal article may ultimately be a White standard that dishonors other ways of

sharing knowledge. In an anti-racist movement led by students of color at Smith College School

for Social Work, the organizers demanded,

> [The] Smith curriculum will demonstrate value for diverse and multimodal ways of
>
> knowing by including non-peer reviewed materials such as blog posts, multi-media,
>
> poetry, and visual media to include authors, and creators of knowledge who are not based
>
> in traditional academic institutions. (Smith Social Work Students, 2015)

This demand speaks to how the emphasis in social work education on academic journal articles

as the only form of legitimate knowledge may automatically exclude epistemologies of color due

to forces of structural inequity that bar them from elite academic spaces. To take the implications of anti-Blackness in professionalism seriously might mean overhauling standards of what professional research looks like. Social workers must not only open the doors of academia wider for communities of color, but also rethink academia itself.

     Further research. There are numerous unanswered research questions about professionalism that eluded the scope of this study. First of all, I focused on Black people who identify as African American, but what about African immigrants and refugees who also identify as Black? Is professionalism biased against them in the same way? What do relationships between African and African American social work colleagues look like? One respondent noted, "The standard [of professionalism] is different for African Americans and sometimes Blacks who are not African American react with hostility and disdain for African Americans who are the descendants of US based slavery." Secondly, I focused on anti-Blackness, but what about other forms of racism or other systems of oppression that might be baked into professionalism? Further research into this area needs to look at sexism, transphobia, homophobia, classism, and ableism. As Adams notes, "Professionalism . . . serves to obscure and silence a variety of gender, occupation/profession, skill, race and class inequalities, raising concerns about for whom and to what ends professionalism serves" (p. 328). Lastly, I focused my study on office culture and staff relationships, but the other hemisphere of professionalism is client relationships. How might biased standards of professionalism impact the aspirationally collaborative healing and advocacy work of clinician and client?

Implications for Program Development and Policy

     As I mentioned previously, one respondent called for "a data analysis in how many Black employees exist in the system. How many Black employees are in managerial positions. [*sic*]

Real implications for those who violate cultural standards." The effective implementation of changes in workplace policy and procedures such as these may exceed the resources of many agencies. Consequently, a serious address of anti-Blackness in professionalism may require the development of independent bodies and programs, led by people of color, to evaluate social work agencies on racial bias in their professional culture and hiring practices. It is essential to remember, as several respondents pointed out, that the professional culture of any one agency is deeply embedded within a structural racist matrix. Therefore, any truly radical attempt to address anti-Black bias would necessarily entail not only ground-level efforts but also public policy reform. I am thinking of the several respondents who bemoaned the quantitatively driven managed-care approach to working with their clients. What changes in public policy will be required to shift client care in a more humanistic, less mechanistic direction such that treatment is grounded in relationships and not quantitative output?

Conclusion

Many months ago, this study began with hearing the way that "professionalism" was used to demean my Black female friend and colleague Sara. This disturbing story led to a question: "What is professionalism, and what discrimination might it covertly enact?" In line with Sara's experience, I have focused on anti-Blackness in particular, and in the final analysis, my study has shown me that indeed professionalism is a construct often used to oppress African Americans.

My hope is that this study will do for the word *professionalism* what Park's (2005) "Culture as Deficit" did for the word *culture*. Park reveals how social work literature deploys *culture* to signify difference from an unspoken White norm: Culture is something people of color have, but White people do not. I see professionalism as the converse: it is something White people supposedly have, but people of color do not. Hopefully through interrogating the social

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construction of professionalism, all social workers (and especially White social workers like me) will think twice before using that word and carefully consider its implications. Ideally, together we can dismantle professionalism as it exists now, and replace it with something more equitable.

It is critical to recognize that anti-Blackness in professionalism is not just some abstract academic concept; it is a mental health emergency. Racism has well-documented deleterious effects on the mental and physical health of its targets (Carter, 1994; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). While there is little empirical data on the psychosocial impact of racism on White people, DiAngelo (2012), Kivel (2011), and Wise (2011) have argued that racism takes immense emotional tolls on its agents as well—including guilt, isolation, depression, and a damaging sense of internalized dominance. Since the words *profession*, *professional*, or *professionals* appear 96 times in the NASW Code of Ethics, it is incumbent upon us to carefully examine our relationship with the construct of professionalism, to be held accountable to our commitment to "prevent and eliminate domination," and if necessary, to revise the Code. It is telling that in describing their original Code of Ethics (1968), the National Association of Black Social Workers wrote, "This is a statement of ideals and guiding principles based on functionalism and not professionalism, given the context of pain in our daily lives as Black Americans practicing in the field of social welfare" (as cited in Bell, 2014, pp. 140-141).

Ultimately, I hope the reader will not only turn their attention to words, but also to deeds. Let us take seriously the calls to anti-racist action by my respondents. As Fanon (1967) says, we must listen to "that voice rolling down the stages of history: 'What matters is not to know the world, but to change it'" (p. 17).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Human Subjects Review Committee Approval Letter

SMITH COLLEGE

School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950   F (413) 585-7994

February 17, 2016

Mark Davis

Dear Mark,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Adam Brown, Research Advisor

Appendix B: E-Mail Recruitment Announcement

Social Work Student Seeks Participants for Study on Anti-Black Bias in Professionalism

Hello! My name is Mark Davis, and I am currently pursuing my MSW at Smith College School for Social Work. In partial fulfillment of my degree, I am undertaking an anti-racist thesis research project entitled "Professionalism and Anti-Blackness in Social Work Agency Culture." The project is an anonymous internet survey that seeks to determine whether there might be an anti-Black (which, for this study, I am using to mean anti-African-American) bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work institutional culture. Here are some fictionalized examples of anti-Black bias in professionalism, based on actual anecdotes and studies on non-social-work white-collar office settings:

- A White supervisor tells a Black employee who is wearing her hair in cornrows that she needs to straighten her hair to look more "professional."
- A Black male employee and his White male colleague are asserting some concerns about a new policy during a meeting in very comparable tones of voice. A few White employees tell the Black employee to control his anger and to act more "professionally," but they do not make a similar critique of the White employee.
- A Latina employee gives feedback to a new Black hire that she would be a better fit in the company if she would talk "more professional and less ghetto."
- A Black employee enjoys using traditional African textile patterns in her office decor and clothing; she also has a Black Lives Matter poster over her desk. Her Korean American supervisor suggests that she change her style to be "more professional, and less threatening."
- At a predominantly White workplace, members of a hiring committee are discussing the resume of an African American applicant. One of them comments, "She seems very qualified, but that name Lakisha just sounds so unprofessional."

My anti-racist study aims to determine whether a similar kind of bias might be playing out in social work office environments, in contradiction of social work's social justice aspirations. Participants are limited to American social workers or social work students (at least 18 years old) working in community mental health agencies or other human services agencies staffed and led mostly by social workers. I'm looking for workplace environments where a majority of employees, including staff and administrators, are social workers, i.e., places where social workers are responsible for shaping the organizational culture. The study consists of a 15-minute survey. This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC).

If you would be willing to take the survey and also to forward it on to colleagues who might be interested, I would really appreciate your help. Below you will find an image [see next page] that links to the study website: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/antiBlackness

If you have any questions or concerns, you can reach me at xxxxxxx@smith.edu or XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Thank you so much!
Mark

Does "professionalism" in social work have an anti-Black bias?

A new anti-racist study entitled "Professionalism and Anti-Blackness in Social Work Agency Culture" seeks American social workers or social work students (at least 18 years old) currently working or interning in a community mental health agency or other human services agency staffed and led mostly by social workers.

Estimated time: 15 minutes > > (begin)

This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College
School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee. Here is the link:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/antiBlackness

2015-2016

S SMITH COLLEGE

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work ● Northampton, MA

This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC).

. . . .

Title of Study: Professionalism and Anti-Blackness in Social Work Agency Culture

Investigator: Mark Davis, MSW Candidate, XXX-XXX-XXXX, xxxxxxx@smith.edu

. . . .

Introduction

You are being asked to be in a research study about professionalism and anti-Blackness in social work agency culture.

You were selected as a possible participant because you identified yourself as a social worker or social work student (at least 18 years old) currently working or interning in the United States in a community mental health agency or other human services agency staffed and led mostly by social workers.

I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study. My contact information appears above.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to answer the question, "To what extent is there an anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agencies?" This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master of social work degree. Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

15 minutes: Complete a brief survey that will ask about general demographic information (age, race,

gender, etc.) and about your thoughts about professional culture in social work.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

The study has the following risks: Since it requires that participants reflect on race and racism, the test may cause some discomfort for people who do not like to think about these topics. Since the test inquires about lived experiences of workplace racism, it may also be emotionally triggering to participants who have been the targets of racism.

Benefits of Being in the Study

The benefits of participation are as follows:

1) You will have the opportunity to share about issues of workplace discrimination that may be important to you.

2) You may gain insight into biased attitudes that you may hold about professionalism.

The benefits to social work/society are that social workers may become more aware of how a seemingly race-neutral concept like professionalism may conceal racial bias. In theory, this awareness could lead to positive changes in social work agency culture.

Anonymity

This study is anonymous. I will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity, not even IP addresses. All data will be kept on a secure server. All research materials including analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments/gift

Participants will not receive any financial compensation for taking part in the study.

Right to Refuse

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may exit the study at any point without affecting your relationship with me or Smith College. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to exit the study at any point. That said, once a participant begins to answer survey items, Survey Monkey collects those data even when a participant decides to not finish completing the

survey by exiting the site, even if they have not clicked on the final "submit" button. If you decide to not participate and exit before completing the survey, data from incomplete surveys will not be discarded. Also, once you have started the survey it will not be possible to specifically request that your survey data be removed. Since your answers will be anonymous, I will not be able to identify and remove your particular data.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me, Mark Davis, at xxxxxxx@smith.edu or by telephone at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at 413-585-7974. If you contact me or the Chair, there is absolutely no way of linking your contact information or identity with the results you provided in the study, as the study results are completely anonymous.

Consent

Answering *yes* to the question below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Do you wish to participate in this survey?

❒ Yes

❒ No

Appendix E: Survey Instrument

Professionalism and Anti-Blackness in Social Work Agency Culture

* 1. Thank you so much for your interest in this study. Before we get started, just one question...

Are you a social worker or social work student (at least 18 years old) currently working or interning in the United States in a community mental health agency or other human services agency staffed and led mostly by social workers?

(Note: Many VA and hospital settings would be excluded, for example, because VA and hospital administrators are not generally social workers, and social workers in those setting are often outnumbered by doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and nurses. I'm looking for workplace environments where a majority of employees, including staff and administrators, are social workers, i.e., places where social workers are responsible for shaping the organizational culture.)

○ yes

○ no

Great! Next, please read the following informed consent document.

SMITH COLLEGE

2015-2016
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work ● Northampton, MA

This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC).

Title of Study: Professionalism and Anti-Blackness in Social Work Agency Culture

Investigator: Mark Davis, MSW Candidate, XXX-XXX-XXXX, xxxxxxx@smith.edu

Introduction
You are being asked to participate in a research study about professionalism and anti-Blackness in social work agency culture.

You were selected as a possible participant because you identified yourself as a social worker or social work student (at least 18 years old) currently working or interning in the United States in a community mental health agency or other human services agency staffed and led mostly by social workers.
Please read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study. My contact information appears above.

Purpose of Study
The purpose of the study is to answer the question, "To what extent is there an anti-Black bias in the way that professionalism is defined and enforced in social work agencies?" This study specifically focuses on discrimination against African Americans, as distinguished from discrimination against African or Afro-Caribbean immigrants and refugees. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I am using "anti-Black bias" to mean bias against African Americans, and I am defining African Americans as descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States.

This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my master of social work degree. Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

15 minutes: Complete a brief survey that will gather your thoughts about professional culture in your agency as well as some general demographic information.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study
The study has the following risks: Since it requires participants to reflect on race and racism, the test may cause some discomfort for people who do not like to think about these topics. Since the test inquires about lived experiences of workplace racism, it may also be emotionally triggering to participants who have been the targets of racism.

Benefits of Being in the Study

The benefits of participation are as follows:

1) You will have the opportunity to share about issues of workplace discrimination that may be important to you.

2) You may gain insight into how professional norms may reflect unconscious racial bias.

The benefits to social work/society are that social workers may become more aware of how a seemingly race-neutral concept like professionalism may conceal racial bias. In theory, this awareness could lead to positive changes in social work agency culture.

Anonymity

This study is anonymous. I will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity, not even IP addresses. All data will be kept on a secure server. All research materials including analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments/gift

Participants will not receive any financial compensation for taking part in the study.

Right to Refuse

The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may exit the study at any point without affecting your relationship with me or Smith College. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to exit the study at any point. That said, once a participant begins to answer survey items, Survey Monkey collects those data even when a participant decides not to finish completing the survey by exiting the site (even if they have not clicked on the final "Done" button). If you decide not to participate and exit before completing the survey, data from incomplete surveys will not be discarded. Also, once you have started the survey it will not be possible to specifically request that your survey data be removed. Since your answers will be anonymous, I will not be able to identify and remove your particular data.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact me, Mark Davis, at xxxxxxx@smith.edu or by voice/text at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School

for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at 413-585-7974. If you contact me or the Chair, there is absolutely no way of linking your contact information or identity with your data since the study results are completely anonymous.

Consent
Answering "yes" to the question below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above.

* 2. Do you wish to participate in this survey?

◯ yes

◯ no

Some very important information to read before you start the study:

(1) I am defining **professionalism** as the set of standards concerning appearance, character, values, and behavior that mark employees as competent, appropriate, effective, ethical, and respected/respectful. I see professionalism as a set of spoken or unspoken rules about how employees are supposed to dress, act, talk, groom, accessorize, gesticulate, decorate, emote, etc., in order to have the above qualities attributed to them by their supervisors and colleagues. Some authors have argued that overall standards of workplace professionalism are biased in favor of White men.[1,2]

(2) This study specifically focuses on discrimination against African Americans, as opposed to discrimination against African or Afro-Caribbean immigrants and refugees. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I am defining **anti-Blackness** as discrimination against African Americans and use the term **Black** interchangeably with African American. I am defining African Americans as descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States.

(3) I consider the following four scenarios to be examples of anti-Black bias in professionalism. They are fictionalized but based on real workplace anecdotes and research from non-social-work, white-collar offices. Most of these examples probably reflect implicit (unconscious) bias rather than discriminatory intent:

- A White supervisor tells a Black employee who is wearing her hair in cornrows that she needs to straighten her hair to look more "professional."
- A Latina employee gives feedback to a new Black hire that she would be a better fit in the agency if she would talk "more professional and less ghetto."
- At a predominantly White workplace, members of a hiring committee are discussing the resume of an African American applicant. One of them comments, "She seems very qualified, but that name Shaniqua just sounds so unprofessional."
- A Black male employee and his White male colleague are asserting some concerns about a new policy during a meeting in very comparable tones of voice. A few White employees tell the Black employee to control his anger and to act more "professionally," but they do not make a similar critique of the White employee.
- A Black employee enjoys using traditional African textile patterns in her office decor and clothing; she also has a Black Lives Matter poster over her desk. Her Korean American supervisor suggests that she change her style to be "more professional, and less threatening."

(4) Some empirical studies of anti-Black discrimination in the workplace (not explicitly linked to professionalism):

- Resumes with names like Brendan and Emily receive 50% more job callbacks than those with names like Jamal and Lakisha.[3]
- Black professionals report their White co-workers have the unfair privilege of being able to express anger more freely at work without fear of punishment.[4]

Ok, that's it! You're now ready to start the study.

[1] Adams, K. F. (2012). The discursive construction of professionalism: An episteme of the 21st century. *Ephemera, 12*(3), 327-343. Retrieved from http://www.ephemerajournal.org/sites/default/files/12-3adams_1.pdf

[2] Rios, C. (2015). You call it professionalism; I call it oppression in a three-piece suit. *Everyday Feminism.* Retrieved from http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/02/professionalism-and-oppression

[3] Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination. *American Economic Review, 94*(4), 991-1013.

[4] Wingfield, A. H. (2010). Are some emotions marked "Whites only"? Racialized feeling rules in professional workplaces. *Social Problems, 57*(2), 251–268.

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* 3. "The way that professionalism is defined and enforced in my agency privileges White employees and job applicants and discriminates against African American employees and job applicants." Do you agree with this statement?

(Note: If there are very few or no African American employees at your agency, you might consider if an anti-Black bias in professionalism could be impacting the recruitment and hiring process.)

○ yes

○ no

4. You have indicated that you do <u>not</u> agree with this statement: "The way that professionalism is defined and enforced in my agency privileges White employees and job applicants and discriminates against African American employees and job applicants." (If you made this response in error, you can click the "Back" button at the bottom of the page and change your answer.)

Please explain why you do not agree with the above statement.

5. Are there other forms of anti-Black discrimination happening at your agency that are unrelated to professionalism?

◯ yes

◯ no

6. Please explain your answer above, including any relevant anecdotes.

7. Is there anything about how standards of professionalism are defined and enforced in your agency that you would like to see change?

8. Imagine if, rather than being modified, "professionalism" in your agency could be dismantled and replaced with an entirely new orientation towards workplace culture. What would your new vision look like?

You have indicated that you agree with this statement: "The way that professionalism is defined and enforced in my agency privileges White employees and job applicants and discriminates against African American employees and job applicants." (If you made this response in error, you can click the "Back" button at the bottom of the page and change your answer.)

9. Do standards of professionalism in your agency privilege White employees and job applicants and discriminate against African American employees and job applicants in any of the following areas? Please select all that apply.

☐ professional hair style

☐ professional clothing, jewelry, and accessories

☐ professional ("workplace appropriate") expression of emotions

☐ first names thought to sound more "professional" (e.g., John vs. Jamal)

☐ professional communication style (verbal and non-verbal)

☐ professional office decor (including holiday decor)

10. Please explain your answers above and identify any other areas of anti-Black bias you perceive in your agency's standards of professionalism. Feel free to share any relevant anecdotes.

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11. Do any of the following characteristics describe the organizational culture of your agency? Please select all that apply.

☐ perfectionism

☐ a sense of urgency

☐ defensiveness

☐ quantity over quality

☐ worship of the written word (if it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist)

☐ paternalism (those without power kept on a need-to-know basis)

☐ either/or thinking

☐ power hoarding

☐ fear of open conflict

☐ individualism

☐ emotions should not play a role in decision-making

☐ bigger is better, more is better

☐ people with more power deserve more emotional comfort

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12. For each of the eight categories below, please choose one of the two characteristics that best describes the organizational culture of your agency:

1) organizational style/philosophy

( ) large profits   ( ) support/care for the group

13. 2) management

( ) communal or team-oriented   ( ) hierarchical

14. 3) leadership

( ) selected by the people   ( ) appointed by succession by those in power

15. 4) power/authority

( ) in the hierarchy   ( ) spread out or council-based

16. 5) decision making

( ) individualistic   ( ) collaborative

17. 6) staff relations

( ) familial or interdependent, face-to-face   ( ) impersonal, mostly carried out through written memos

18. 7) work orientation

( ) sense of excellence   ( ) quantitative output

19. 8) productivity

( ) competition   ( ) cooperative teams

20. In your agency, how (and how often) does anti-Black bias in professionalism show up?

	frequently	sometimes	rarely	never
anti-Black workplace policies and procedures (e.g., "no cornrows allowed")	○	○	○	○
anti-Black comments from co-workers and supervisors (e.g., "she talks ghetto...it's not professional")	○	○	○	○
double standards of what "unprofessional" behavior means for White employees vs. African American employees (e.g., ok for Whites to show anger in a meeting)	○	○	○	○

21. Please explain your answers above and share any relevant anecdotes.

22. Studies of implicit (unconscious) bias show that people of all races, including African Americans, can hold anti-Black racial bias.[3] Do any social workers of color (including but not limited to African Americans) at your agency participate in anti-Black discrimination concerning issues of professionalism?

○ yes

○ no

23. Please explain your answer above and share any relevant anecdotes.

24. Does anti-Black bias in your agency's standards of professionalism also have a negative impact on White employees and/or non-Black employees of color?

○ yes

○ no

25. Please explain your answer above and share any relevant anecdotes.

26. How can the professional culture of your agency change to be less discriminatory against African Americans?

27. What impacts would your recommended changes have on your agency, its clients/patients, and its staff?

28. Imagine if, rather than being modified, "professionalism" in your agency could be dismantled and replaced with an entirely new orientation towards workplace culture. What would your new vision look like?

[3] Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2013). *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people.* New York: Delacorte Press.

29. What is your race? If you are biracial or multiracial, please select all that apply.

☐ Middle Eastern, North African, or Arab American

☐ African American

☐ African or Afro-Caribbean

☐ Native American, First Nations, or Alaska Native

☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

☐ Asian or Asian American

☐ Latino or Hispanic

☐ White (Non-Hispanic European or European American)

☐ If the above terms do not adequately describe you, please write in your race below:

> [   ]

30. In your everyday life, do you experience any instances of racism directed against you?

○ yes

○ no

31. "My agency is committed to reducing racial discrimination in the workplace through anti-racist trainings, policies, and practices." Do you agree with this statement?

I strongly agree	I somewhat agree	I somewhat disagree	I strongly disagree
○	○	○	○

32. "I am personally committed to reducing racial discrimination in my workplace through educating myself about racism, attending anti-racist trainings, and advocating for anti-racist policies and practices." Do you agree with this statement?

I strongly agree	I somewhat agree	I somewhat disagree	I strongly disagree
○	○	○	○

33. Approximately what percentage of your clients/patients are African American?

◯ 0%

◯ 1% - 10%

◯ 11%-25%

◯ 26%-50%

◯ 51%-75%

◯ 76%-99%

◯ 100%

◯ I work in a non-clinical setting.

34. Approximately what percentage of your agency's staff (including interns) are African American?

◯ 0%

◯ 1% - 10%

◯ 11%-25%

◯ 26%-50%

◯ 51%-75%

◯ 76%-99%

◯ 100%

35. Which of the following best describes the services provided by your specific department in your agency?

◯ community mental health or behavioral health   ◯ community organizing

◯ addictions and recovery   ◯ immigrant and refugee services

◯ homeless services   ◯ vocational services

◯ legislative advocacy   ◯ disability services

◯ suicide prevention   ◯ child protective services

◯ trauma and interpersonal violence   ◯ children, youth, and family therapy

◯ LGBTQ counseling   ◯ couples counseling

◯ other (please specify)

[   ]

36. Which of the following best describes your position or title at your agency?

○ student intern (BSW)　　　　　　　○ community organizer

○ student intern (MSW)　　　　　　　○ researcher

○ therapist　　　　　　　　　　　　　○ fundraiser or grant writer

○ case manager　　　　　　　　　　　○ director

○ administrator

○ other (please specify)

[   ]

37. Are you in a supervisory role?

○ yes

○ no

38. What is your age?

○ 18-29

○ 30-39

○ 40-49

○ 50-64

○ 65+

39. What is your gender?

○ two-spirit

○ genderqueer

○ nonbinary

○ trans*

○ woman

○ man

○ If the above terms do not apply, please describe your gender below.

[   ]

40. What is your agency's zip code?

[   ]

41. Finally, if you have any feedback, concerns, or critiques about the design of this study or of my recruitment materials, I'd love to hear them. You can also e-mail me at xxxxxxx@smith.edu or call/text me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Ok, you're all set. Please click "Done" below to finish. Thank you for your time!

Appendix F: Sample Zip Code Data Table

Table 28

Sample Zip Code Data

Zip Code	Percentage White	Percentage African American	Ratio of Whites to African Americans	Population Density (per mi^2)
35805	49.2	32.6	1.5	2457
32501	42.0	53.4	0.8	3083
78702	53.1	17.4	3.1	4268
55107	59.6	12.9	4.6	3596
77030	65.8	6.3	10.4	4069
10989	79.0	5.7	13.9	1883
94602	45.6	17.9	2.6	8574
31313	42.4	45.6	0.9	638
10989	79.0	5.7	13.9	1883
11373	26.7	2.1	12.7	66007
21215	14.9	81.5	0.2	8831
90038	51.5	4.2	12.3	18460
77030	65.8	6.3	10.4	4069
20002	31.8	62.0	0.5	9961
10923	65.1	14.9	4.4	4440
21201	35.4	55.2	0.6	13158
37920	91.3	5.2	17.6	539
90291	77.0	5.3	14.5	11359
21205	20.8	70.4	0.3	7883
11706	60.4	16.1	3.8	3670
20904	32.3	42.8	0.8	3995
37830	32.2	42.8	0.8	3995
21204	83.0	9.8	8.5	3359
28801	67.2	28.4	2.4	2955
21212	54.2	39.3	1.4	6951
29020	60.7	36.0	1.7	99
49525	91.6	3.1	29.6	1164
11233	5.4	84.8	0.1	49746
37804	93.0	2.6	35.8	709
46239	35.4	55.2	0.6	873
60435	70.5	13.9	5.1	4566
10003	76.4	3.5	21.8	97188
70121	69.5	23.9	2.9	3202
31061	54.7	41.6	1.3	185

10451	19.0	43.4	0.4	45043
10001	65.0	9.0	7.2	33959
11210	3.3	57.8	0.1	37785
10003	76.4	3.5	21.8	97188
10020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
66442	76.4	3.5	21.8	97188
64802	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
21215	14.9	81.5	0.2	8831
55433	85.2	5.8	14.7	2894
12202	28.7	58.1	0.5	4700
21213	6.2	91.6	0.1	9598
60625	59.2	4.6	12.9	20181
60640	59.1	18.1	3.3	27331
11207	11.4	66.8	0.2	34965
11203	3.5	91.2	0.0	35502
60443	49.7	35.3	1.4	1829
95833	47.4	14.7	3.2	4814
98682	82.5	2.4	34.4	1754
97202	86.9	2.1	41.4	6127
10001	65.0	9.0	7.2	33959
10002	31.3	8.4	3.7	92573
97030	77.4	2.9	26.7	4862
97217	72.1	11.9	6.1	2433
22304	52.3	28.9	1.8	9561
94702	51.8	22.5	2.3	12543
94607	19.9	38.5	0.5	4235
94132	39.6	8.6	4.6	9045
84003	93.8	0.4	234.5	733
91711	70.7	4.7	15.0	2379
29072	87.5	7.2	12.2	724
39564	82.4	9.9	8.3	696
30518	70.6	11.1	6.4	1138
30501	53.0	14.0	3.8	1284
30301	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10001	65.0	9	7.2	33959
12754	75.0	10.9	6.9	272
55408	62.9	15.8	4.0	11032
10003	76.4	3.5	21.8	97188
98122	63.4	16.9	3.8	13594
98122	63.4	16.9	3.8	13594
95501	79.9	2.0	40.0	3403
98034	75.8	2.0	37.9	4428
98122	63.4	16.9	3.8	13594

60130	55.2	32.3	1.7	5118
80302	90.6	0.8	113.3	326
80302	90.6	0.8	113.3	326
98144	43.8	18.2	2.4	7895
95616	63.1	2.2	28.7	1707
90002	28.1	25.6	1.1	16728

Note. 161 missing.