

3-30-2022

## **Social Class and Workplace Norms: How African American and White Women and Men from Working-class Backgrounds Learn Workplace Norms as They Experience Career Mobility**

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

SOCIAL CLASS AND WORKPLACE NORMS: HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN AND  
WHITE WOMEN AND MEN FROM WORKING-CLASS BACKGROUNDS LEARN  
WORKPLACE NORMS AS THEY EXPERIENCE CAREER MOBILITY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

PSYCHOLOGY

by

Anna M. Kallschmidt

2022

To: Dean Michael Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This dissertation, written by Anna Kallschmidt, and entitled Social Class and Workplace Norms: How African American and White Women and Men from Working-Class Backgrounds Learn Workplace Norms as they Experience Career Mobility, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Dionne Stephens

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Valentina Bruk-Lee

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Matthew Marr

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Asia A. Eaton, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 30, 2022

The dissertation of Anna Kallschmidt is approved.

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Dean Michael Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

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Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2022

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## DEDICATION

For my friends, chosen family, students, teachers, and colleagues who challenged me to open my mind. There is a plethora of unseen labor that goes into every White person doing social justice work, especially from comrades of color. I still don't know it all, and I never will, but I know I used to know a lot less. This dissertation is an attempt to grow and share the many seeds y'all planted.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This section could easily be the longest part of the dissertation. I want to start with thanking my research team because this project would never have been finished without them. If there is anything I have learned from my research these past six years, it is that nobody bootstraps alone, and that has absolutely been the case with this dissertation. Many ask how I “do it all”, and the answer is that I did not. Thank you to Donya Ardalan, Courtney Berthiaume, Mykala Dechant, Silvette Duarte, Angelina Elliott, Natasha Harris, Bianca Marconcini, Alondra Santiago Martinez, Camila Muñoz-Hirschfeld, Rochelle Camino Oliver, Kamalini Rodriguez, Carmen Roque-Rosario, Havi Tran, Andreina Valencia, and Jan Joey Jr. Zabala. Your fingerprints all over this work and they made it not only possible, but better.

I want to thank my outstanding mentor, Dr. Asia Eaton. You were the first exposure I had to empathetic and authentic leadership. It has been a privilege to mimic you in your shadow, and it has absolutely made me a better mentor and person. I walked into our first meeting with not a clue what I wanted to research and walked out with six plus years of inspiration. Thank you for supporting me through all the moves, tears, panic attacks, depressive episodes, and health problems. Thank you also to Dr. Dionne Stephens, a committee member on both my thesis and dissertation, who was one of the first consultants on my idea of studying social class. You pulled the veil from my eyes on looking at social class in isolation and started my journey through acknowledging intersectionality. This dissertation would not have even been thought of without you. I also want to thank my other committee members and the outstanding FIU faculty. I truly do not think I would have survived any other program. Thank you for the mental health

support, along with all the intellectual support. I truly felt like I could be myself in this program and learn from my mistakes, and I have learned that is sadly rare. Thank you to all the mental health professionals I consulted with throughout this process, starting with the FIU Counseling Center. A special thank you to Judy Moses for sticking it out with me through two different time zones and having mercy on a grad student budget and insurance hassles.

A sincere thank you to Dr. Anthony DeSantis. Without his encouragement, tough love, and exposure to new ideas, I never would have applied to a single Ph.D. program. Your aggressive encouragement and mentorship changed my life, and I have spent the past decade trying to be an Anthony to everyone else. That role is more important to me than the title “doctor” ever will be (although...not mad about that though...).

I want to thank my dad for—everything. You always say, “the only thing that stays the same is change,” but I disagree. Your love and support have often been the only consistent thing in my rambunctious life, even when we do not believe the same things. I remember you encouraging me to volunteer as a fiddle instructor in high school because “you should always give back to your community,” and that mantra has guided much of my life decisions, especially the topic and design of this dissertation. You are the only person I would drive across the country with twice!

I also want to thank my first teacher, my mom, who home schooled me for ten years. You instilled a love for learning, especially for history, that has been woven throughout this work. Additionally, thank you to my lifelong friend John Ketring for putting I-O Psychology on my radar and introducing me to the first I-O practitioner I

spoke with, Amy Legg. Thank you, Amy, for answering the phone calls of a very confused undergrad!

A special shoutout to my best friend and fellow Zoom dissertator, Dr. Yanet Ruvalcaba, for helping me get through statistics, life, self-doubt, and a pandemic. Thank you to Dr. April Schantz for being the best grad school aunt, and showing our cohort the ropes when we started (and for showing me the ropes in the RV park). To my grad school gang, thank you to Drs. Elsa Bravo, Jessica Saunders, Danilo Le Sante, Alexander Snihur, and Francisco Chitty for the collaborative suffering, I mean support, even as I moved farther and farther away over time. A special thank you to my former roommate and forever friend Leah Wade, for bouncing around ideas with me, calling me out when I was wrong, being a clean roommate, and feeding a broke grad student too many times in the early days.

Thank you also to all the friends and family who helped us recruit respondents. Out of respect for confidentiality, I cannot name you here, but thank you for making this work possible. Ultimately, thank you to our respondents for trusting us with your stories. I hope we represent you well.



ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

SOCIAL CLASS AND WORKPLACE NORMS: HOW AFRICAN AMERICAN AND  
WHITE WOMEN AND MEN FROM WORKING-CLASS BACKGROUNDS LEARN  
WORKPLACE NORMS AS THEY EXPERIENCE CAREER MOBILITY

by

Anna Kallschmidt

Florida International University, 2022

Miami, Florida

Professor Asia A. Eaton, Major Professor

Professional workplace norms in the U.S., such as wearing a suit to an interview or offering a firm handshake as a greeting (Sharma & Sharma, 2012), are behaviors considered ideal among members of a specific occupation (Cohn et al., 2017). This project investigated how people from working-class backgrounds in the U.S. learned, adopted, and conformed to workplace norms as they moved from a lower-status to a higher-status position within their career. Guided by Intersectionality Theory, Cultural Mismatch Theory, and the Stereotype Content Model, these studies examined how workplace norms shifted as employees changed social class and interacted with employees' racial and gender identities. We conducted two qualitative studies in which White and African American women and men were interviewed regarding their experiences learning workplace norms throughout their class transition. The first qualitative study explored the professional norms learned by White and African American women and men who experienced career mobility. Inductive thematic analysis

was used to glean themes from the data. All our respondents recounted that there are workplace norms they had to learn during their transition, with some norms being consistent across race and gender groups, but many varying between these groups. Using the same sample, in the second study we investigated how participants' workplace norms fit into a framework of White Supremacy Culture (WSC). Deductive thematic analysis found support for many of the facets of WSC. Additionally, awareness of these norms varied for different identity groups.

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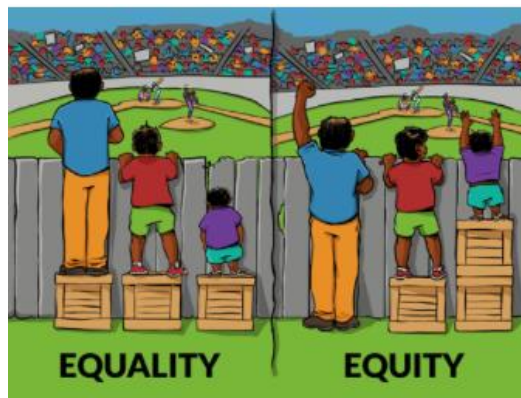
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## INTRODUCTION TO COLLECTED PAPERS

Versions of the popular image below (Figure 1) have been floating around the internet over the past few years (e.g., Aparna, 2019; Rise, n.d.; TSDF, 2021). This image has been used as an attempt to demonstrate the difference between equality and equity (Aparna, 2019; Rise, n.d.; TSDF, 2021). Equality is when everyone being treated the same, while equity is allocating resources as people need them based on their different circumstances (Cramer et al., 2018).

**Figure 1**

*Image of the Fence Analogy on the Difference between Equality and Equity (Unknown, reposted by the Equity in Education Coalition, n.d.)*



While likely well-intentioned, some bloggers have stated this image misses a key point—justice (Equity in Education Coalition, n.d.; Valbrun, 2018). Why is the fence there at all? In a just world, there should be no fence. In this dissertation, we aim to investigate what “the fence” in workplaces might be for people from lower-income backgrounds. To do so, we investigated if there are cultural norms in workplaces that can be easier for some groups to see than others, as they progress in their careers.

### **a. Social Class Culture**

One of the most powerful influences in our lives is that of our own culture (Oyserman 2017). The cultures we are raised in shape our behaviors, values, and what we perceive as “normal” (Stephens & Townsend, 2015; Stone & Hernandez, 2013). A major cultural influence in the United States is that of social class (Case, 2017). Social class is traditionally thought of as someone’s relative ranking in society, based on their income, education, occupation, social capital, and prestige (Côté, 2011). However, it is more than that. Social class has also been identified as an influential component of people’s identities (Destin et al., 2017), influencing a broad range of behaviors including health, dress, style of speech, and many others (Adler et al., 2000; Case, 2017; Jensen, 2012). These distinctions in cultural norms are the distinctions between the social classes that keep them separate (Stephens et al., 2014).

### **b. Organizational Culture**

People lean on cultural norms heavily when they are in ambiguous and high-stakes situations (Gelfand & Harrington, 2015), making knowledge of culture particularly important in organizational science. Organizations have their own cultures as well (Boisnier & Chatman, 2014). Organizational cultural norms dictate the behaviors and practices that are not just normalized in a work environment but expected (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). Within the overall culture, there are subcultures (Howard-Grenville, 2006). These subcultures can vary in their similarity to, and even conflict with the overall culture of the organization (van Marrewiljk, 2016). Ultimately, the sub-group with the most power will decide which norms are rewarded or penalized in an organization (Howard-Grenville, 2006).



In some ways, organizational norms can be equitable, such as by providing flexible work arrangements to support working mothers (e.g., Lott & Klenner, 2018). On the other hand, organizational norms may be unclear or inaccessible to certain groups, thus favoring one subgroup over another (Stephens & Townsend, 2015). Cultural mismatch theory (CMT) proposes that inequality occurs when the organizational norms are not consistent with the norms socialized in marginalized subgroups (Stephens & Townsend, 2015).

Some workplace norms are documented in the organization's policies; however, not all are. "Invisible" workplace norms have been a barrier for marginalized groups. For instance, women have struggled with "invisible" barriers for years (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). While instances of blatant gender discrimination have decreased, sexism has not, as organizations still largely support male-centered organizational norms (Glauser, 2018). This is particularly salient in male-dominated professions, which prioritize organizational norms that make it especially difficult for people with child-care responsibilities to comply with (Stone & Hernandez, 2013).

There is some evidence suggesting that there could be social class cultural barriers in the workplace as well. A recent study in the federal government identified barriers to workplace inclusion for first-generation professionals (Terry & Fobia, 2019). Similar barriers have been researched in universities, noting cultural mismatches between first-generation students and the norms of elite universities, which impacted these students' performance and perceptions of belonging (Manstead, 2018; Ni et al., 2019; Stephens & Townsend, 2013). Thus, it is vital that organizational science explore how these norms may impact employees from low-income backgrounds.

### **c. Intersection of Class, Race, and Gender**

However, we cannot examine social class identities in isolation. In the United States, the social class system is built on a foundation of misogyny and White supremacy (Liu, 2017; Painter, 2020). These systems were initially visible by the genocide of Native Americans, enslavement of Africans,<sup>1</sup> and limiting the rights of women (Gaynor & Lopez-Littleon, 2021; Gerbner, 2018; Nakagawa, 2021). Today, it is still present in our cultural cycles (Markus & Conner, 2013).

White Supremacy was initially used to ensure power among wealthy White men (Adams-Wiggins & Taylor-García, 2020; Malagon et al., 2009), separating paid labor from women and minorities (Yellen, 2020). Some have argued that White supremacy culture is still prevalent in our organizations today (Okun & Jones, 2000; Okun, 2010), continuing to harm non-White employees. Because culture is powerful but difficult to perceive, a culture with White supremacy can poison well-intentioned organizational efforts to be inclusive by unintentionally discriminating against people of color (Okun & Jones, 2000).

Thus, White privilege is not the product of interpersonal exchanges, but rather these institutional forces anchored in our history (Liu, 2017). These systemic inequities are the force behind some groups having privilege and others not (Liu, 2017). Within these institutions, people have multiple identities, of which some are privileged, and some are marginalized (Crenshaw, 1990; Overstreet et al., 2020). Intersectionality Theory posits

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<sup>1</sup> We intentionally chose the language “African American” in our recruitment materials because we wanted to focus on the descents of these African ancestors, which we did not want to generalize all Black identities (i.e., Haitian and Caribbean immigrants), who have different histories with their own distinct implications. Even so, many of our respondents referred to themselves as “Black” in the interviews, and we kept their language intact.

that people have multiple identities that influence their behavior (Crenshaw, 1990). These identities can be both marginalized and privileged and coexist within the same person (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1990; Rabelo & Cortina, 2016). In this collection of papers, we focus on the intersection of class, race, and gender identities, as these are some of the most salient identities ingrained in the U.S. class system (Liu, 2017). Consequently, we cannot examine barriers to social class mobility in organizations without also accounting for race and gender identity intersections.

In race and gender identities, typically White identities have privilege over non-White groups, and men have privilege over women; thus, women and minorities may have additional barriers to social mobility that White men do not have (Cotter et al., 2001; Martin & Côté, 2019; Torche, 2017). Within privileged race and gender identities, there can also be marginalized social class identities (Liu, 2011). For example, wealthy White men have more power and influence than working-class White men (Liu, 2017). Therefore, in the first of these papers, we aim to explore:

Research question 1: Are there norms, visible and/or invisible, that African American and White women and men from lower-income backgrounds have to learn after they experience social mobility?

Research question 2: What are these norms?

Research question 3: Are the workplace norms experienced and learned by African American men and women from low-income backgrounds different from the norms experienced and learned by their White counterparts?

Research Question 4: Are the workplace norms of low-income background White men different than the norms expected of low-income background White women?

Research Question 5: Are there different norms expected for African American men as compared to African American women?

In the second paper, we investigate

Research Question 1: Are the cultural norms in higher-status positions consistent with WSC?

Research Question 2: Does awareness of these norms differ between Black and White employees, men and women employees, and intersections between and within each race and gender?

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II. STUDY #1: COMPLIANCE, FAKE FRIENDS, SCHMOOZING, AND  
‘ASSERTIVE BUT NOT TOO AGGRESSIVE’: EXAMINING THE UNWRITTEN  
RULES EMPLOYEES FROM WORKING-CLASS BACKGROUNDS EXPERIENCE  
DURING SOCIAL CLASS MOBILITY, AND DIFFERENCES BY EMPLOYEE RACE  
AND GENDER

### **a. Social Mobility**

Employment has been a driving factor for social mobility for all of American history (Convergence Center for Policy Resolution, 2018; Economic and Social Research Council, 2012). Even with the American workforce's ongoing history of systemic discrimination and economic crises, employment has still enabled millions of Americans to move up in social class (Convergence Center for Policy Resolution, 2018). However, this trend has stagnated in the United States, with the income gap between the upper class and the middle and working class steadily growing since 2008, resulting in families staying in the same class for successive generations (Butcher & Schanzenbach, 2018; Terriquez, 2014). Further, between 2010 and 2016, upper-income households increased their incomes by 19%, while lower-income households only grew by 5% (Kochhar, 2018).

In 2019, the United States witnessed the largest economic disparities between the richest and poorest American households in the last 50 years (Chappell, 2019), despite 10 consecutive years of GDP growth (Kochhar, 2018). The chasm between the richest and poorest in America has only become deeper and more visible with the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic (Nassif-Pires et al., 2020). Americans with higher economic well-being have been mostly able to purchase adequate resources and adjust their work schedules given the pandemic; however, Americans with lower economic well-being have been more impacted by the virus through lost work hours and wages (Nassif-Pires et al., 2020). In the wake of this global disaster, it will be important for organizational science to understand how people from lower social class backgrounds will perceive and navigate the workplace.

Along the path of career mobility, there are inevitably challenges. One of those difficulties may be acquiring, adopting, and conforming to new workplace norms and expectations. It is well-established that there are different customs expected from and imposed upon employees at different levels of status and power within organizations (Greenberg & Edwards, 2009). For example, higher-status employees are allowed to have emotional displays at work, such as expressing anger towards a subordinate, while lower-status employees are expected to calmly accept the anger without displaying emotion (Conway et al., 1999; Sloan, 2004). In this dissertation, we investigated new workplace norms that employees from working-class backgrounds had to learn as they moved into higher positions.

## **b. Cultural Norms**

A cultural “norm” is a behavior that is an accepted standard of conduct in a culture (Stephens & Townsend, 2015; Stone & Hernandez, 2013). For example, in Western culture, cultural norms range from saying “bless you” when someone sneezes to the side of the road on which to drive. Cultural norms are used to for social coordination, clarifying group boundaries, and providing a space for innovation (Oyserman, 2016; Oyserman, 2011). Cultural norms, meanings, and actions are considered reality for cultural members, not an interpretation of reality (Oyersman, 2016). Therefore, within a culture, norms are interpreted as what is normal, acceptable, and correct, and not as expectations unique to their facet of society (Oyersman, 2016).

Some sociologists have posited that cultural norms are not only the values that communities possess; rather, they are the “tool kits” of habits, skills, and styles which drive people’s actions (Swidler, 1986). People learn “cultural toolkits” when they

participate in a culture (Swidler, 1986). People who transition social classes are unique because they can acquire cultural toolkits in multiple classes (Martin & Cote, 2019). Social class “transitioners” have been theorized to learn new toolkits based on the class distance they have traveled, the time they have spent in each class position, and the direction of their transition (Martin & Cote, 2019). Consequently, they learn cultural toolkits that permit them to share experiences, values, norms, and perspectives with people from multiple backgrounds (Martin & Cote, 2019).

Within cultures are subcultures (Haenfler, 2013). A subculture is a subset of a culture in which members of groups within the culture share assumptions, values, and practices. Subcultures are theorized to partially be a result of immigration and segmented assimilation of new immigrants into spaces within a larger society, and these segments are deepened by wage inequality within the host society (Grusky & MacLean, 2016; Portes & Zhou, 1993). For example, a host society could be “Western Civilization,” in which U.S. culture could be a subculture of the modern, educated, and wealthy Western culture; however, within U.S. culture, there are also subcultures (Oyserman, 2017). For example, race-ethnicity, religion, and social class are communities within the U.S. host culture, which are groups placed within a social hierarchy, like a caste.

### **c. Social Class**

One distinct cultural grouping in the U.S. is social class, with different norms and subcultures within each of the major social classes (Case, 2017; Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2018). Social class is objectively measured as a construct defining a person’s relative ranking in society based on factors such as their income, occupation, education, social capital, and prestige (Côté, 2011). Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that an

individual's social class status can function as a core tenant of their social identity (Case, 2017; Destin et al., 2017). In fact, a person's subjective social class identity has been found to be an important predictor of their behavior beyond objective measures (Rubin et al., 2014). Individuals have been found to place at least as high subjective importance on their social class identity as they do on their race and gender identities (Manstead, 2018).

A person's social class background can therefore be understood as a sociocultural context consisting of the material and social conditions that they are familiar with (Stephens & Townsend, 2013), ultimately manifesting in identity, attitudes, and behaviors. In general, people are seen and self-identify as being working class, middle class, or upper class, though distinctions exist within these (e.g., the top 1%, upper-middle class, the poor or indigent, etc.) (Aronowitz, 2014; Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2017; Reeves, 2015). This context narrates a person's ideas and practices, as well as institutions and roles they have access to. On a deeper level, these contexts also define a person's identity, by prescribing ideology about who they are and how they should act (Stephens & Townsend, 2013).

Jensen (2012) theorized social class as a culture by pointing out that it defines how people dress, speak, eat, work, and act. Each class has its own cultural norms that operate in homes, schools, and workplaces (Stephens et al., 2014), keeping the classes separate and operating as a medium to perpetuate inequality. People participate in their social class culture over their lifetimes, and class-specific cultural norms are learned during one's childhood. Indeed, there is substantial evidence to suggest that a person's childhood social class background influences their adult behavior, even after

experiencing social class mobility (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2018; Kish-Gephart & Gray, 2015; McCall & Lawler, 1976).

For instance, Case (2017) defined her role as a university professor from a working-class background as an “insider-without,” as the cultural norms of her working-class childhood conflicted with the upper-middle/middle-class norms of academia. Case recalled the inability to relate to her coworker’s lavish vacations, as well as being a token among her peers for having student loan payments (Case, 2017). Furthermore, she recollected feeling self-conscious about her accent and pronunciation of words. Additionally, Kallschmidt and Eaton (2022) interviewed White men who experienced social mobility. They referred to their previous and current classes as “two different worlds,” and admitted they felt the need to strategically toggle between their social class identities, alternating their actions and words to blend into either their middle-class work environments or their lower-income home/family environments- a form of code switching (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2022). Therefore, it has become evident that social class cultural norms permeate the workplace (Kish-Gephart & Gray, 2015; Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013).

#### **d. Workplace Culture and Norms**

Cultures have also been identified within organizations (Boisnier & Chatman, 2014; Howard-Grenville, 2006). Organizational culture is a system of meanings accompanied by behaviors and practices which are recognized as a way of life. Organizational subcultures can emerge from workplace roles, teams, hierarchical levels, or shared understandings. These subcultures can relate to each other, as they have the same overall organizational culture (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). However, they can

also be quite diverse and possibly even conflict (van Marrewijk, 2016). Subcultures have their own forms of interpreting situations and problem-solving, but the subgroup with the most power will decide which norms are considered rewarded in the organization (Howard-Grenville, 2006).

Cultural norms are most likely to be followed in situations with high ambiguity or threat, or when one must consider favorable evaluations from others (Gelfand & Harrington, 2015). For example, when going on a first date, the relationship between partners is ambiguous, their knowledge of one another is limited, and they are seeking approval from one another; this results in stronger compliance with gender role norms and related scripts because relying on a shared cultural structure of interaction reduces uncertainty and possible error (Eaton & Rose, 2012). For example, the cultural script for a traditional first date is known to require the man to pick up the woman, pay for the activity, lead the conversation, take her home, etc. (Eaton & Rose, 2012).

Similarly, ambiguous situations that require favorable evaluations are prevalent in the workplace, including during a job interview or performance appraisal. Consequently, there are many generally expected workplace norms and scripts to structure behavior. Organizational norms have the potential to serve as equalizers, enabling social justice by holding all workers to the same standard of accountability and behavior. In some cases, this may be true, such as in the case of flexible work arrangements; when workers can create their own schedule, there is less discrimination against groups with specific time or seasonal obligations, such as Muslims during Ramadan (Trenerry et al., 2012).

In other cases, however, organizational norms may be (a) unclear or not equally evident to people from all groups or (b) designed to favor some groups over others

(Stephens & Townsend, 2015). Cultural mismatch theory (CMT) posits that inequality prevails when the cultural norms that are institutionalized in an organization are different from the norms socialized among social groups who are underrepresented in that institution (Stephens & Townsend, 2015). For example, for decades, the U.S. Army banned cornrows, braids, twists, and locs hair styles; thus, African American enlistees, particularly African American women, were adversely impacted (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Typically, Eurocentric hair styles are accepted as more “professional” (Opie & Phillips, 2015). African American hairstyles have long been considered unprofessional; for instance, African American women were rated as more dominant and less professional with Afrocentric versus Eurocentric hair (Opie & Phillips, 2015).

Sometimes, the workplace norms that promote inequality are invisible (Stephens & Townsend, 2015). Some norms are written down in the employee handbook (i.e., what the standards for workplace dress code are). However, other norms are not officially documented. For example, norms that create gendered barriers for women at work are often invisible. Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) state that while blatant forms of gender discrimination are becoming rare over time, that does not mean sexism has decreased; organizations still largely support patriarchal norms, with men being in leadership positions, and women being in support roles (Glauser, 2018). Male-dominated professions that advance careers based on years of continuous, uninterrupted work, unencumbered by caregiving responsibilities, have been identified to influence women’s decisions to suspend their careers after having children (Stone & Hernandez, 2013). The researchers in this study identified 27 barriers for women in the workplace, but they were so embedded into society and the workplace that they were considered “invisible.” For



example, one of the barriers was the “devaluing of communal practice,” which entailed a lack of acknowledgement, support, and respect for communal behaviors at work. Women are stereotyped to be communal and expected to engage in such activities (Teele et al., 2018). Therefore, these practices being perceived as inappropriate at work present as an invisible barrier. Thus, a thorough examination of workplace norms must search for both visible and invisible expectations.

#### **e. Social Class Norms Interact with Workplace Norms**

Evidence has recently emerged of a cultural mismatch between people from working-class backgrounds and white-collar workplaces. In a study by the U.S. Census Bureau, first-generation professionals (FGPs) in the federal government identified several barriers to workplace inclusion and career advancement for people whose parents were not professionals (Terry & Fobia, 2019). Professional or “white-collar” jobs are typically regarded as an indicator of being middle- or upper-class, while non-professional or “blue-collar” occupations are usually viewed as working-or lower-income (Lucas, 2011). FGP participants said some of the challenges they experienced in White-collar workplaces included fewer development programs and internships before college, smaller educational and professional networks, less disposable income for social events with coworkers, lack of awareness of how to navigate white-collar office culture and advance one's career, and not having career mentors. Reducing barriers involved orientations to workplace culture, networking skills training, and career advancement counseling (Terry & Fobia, 2019).

In the case of Terry and Fobia (2019), there was a mismatch in knowledge of cultural norms between first-generation and continuing-generation professionals. Since white-collar jobs are considered middle-class, they likely contain and support upper-

middle/middle social class cultural norms, while blue-collar jobs are affiliated with working-class cultural norms. Considering FGP Census participants reported not knowing professional workplace norms, there is reason to suggest that there is a divide between the classes in knowledge of workplace norms expected in higher-status positions. Thus, there could be a cultural mismatch between the norms people from working-class backgrounds are taught and apply to low-status positions are not congruent with high-status positions.

People raised in working-class environments have lived with limited material resources and have fewer opportunities to exercise choice, influence, and control (Stephens et al., 2012). Consequently, working-class people learn to practice interdependent norms, such as sharing limited resources, adjusting to others' needs, and operating within a community (Stephens et al., 2012; Stephens et al., 2009). On the contrary, middle-class children are raised to be independent and realize their own potential, mainly through developing their voices, pursuing their passions, attending college, and establishing their careers (Stephens et al., 2012). However, universities endorse independent norms, which creates a cultural mismatch between working-class students and these institutions (Stephens et al., 2012).

In other research, students of parents with low levels of education perceived lower compatibility with their school environment than students whose parents had higher levels of education (Manstead, 2018). These low compatibility scores were related to lower anticipated acceptance at universities, as well as lower likelihood of applying to a highly selective/more elite university (Manstead, 2018). Meanwhile, students from middle- and upper-class backgrounds were found to perceive their college campuses as a

positive environment for social class, gender, and race, and this was related with participation in more extracurricular activities, interaction with faculty, and a sense of belonging (Soria, 2013). Lower-income students have a more difficult time gaining personal resources in universities; for example, they cannot buy lunch, so they do not network as much, or they live farther away for less expensive rent (Stephens & Townsend, 2013). If middle-class norms are expected in certain workplaces and/or jobs, these norms might be a hindrance for job applicants who have not been exposed to them (Stephens et al., 2018).

#### **f. Workplace Norms for African American and White Women and Men**

The goals of this study are to examine the differences between workplace norms at different levels of status, and how participants learn these norms as they climb the organizational ladder. To explore this, data was collected from people from working-class backgrounds who had moved from a lower-status work position to a higher-status position. They were asked about their experience of the workplace norms associated with each position and how they learned them. For example, a participant in this study could have been a working-class person who began their career as a cashier at a grocery store, and over the years, was promoted within the company to be the regional manager. Participants were asked what norms they learned throughout their transition, and whether they learned these through formal (education, organizational training, etc.) or informal means (i.e., mimicking a colleague, discussions with a friend, etc.). Examining a social class change within a career allows us to examine workplace norms within a single career trajectory, which helps narrow the number of industries examined to those within a single

person's career, thus avoiding confusing between-industry differences in norms from norms that are expected at different levels within a workplace.

#### **g. Intersectionality**

We cannot gather information on social class identities without acknowledging that experiences of class stigma and dynamics at work may depend on those other identities, including but not limited to gender and/or race. The idea that social identities intersect and interlock to produce unique and emergent experiences is known as intersectionality (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Rabelo & Cortina, 2016). Intersectionality theory contends that identity dimensions cannot be understood in isolation as they depend on one another for personal and social meaning (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1990; Rabelo & Cortina, 2016). Because their race and gender identities are marginalized, women and minorities may experience additional barriers to social mobility (Cotter et al., 2001; Martin & Côté, 2019; Torche, 2017).

Identity intersections lead to individuals being perceived differently through stereotypes (Cuddy et al., 2011). Perceptions of warmth and competences are two dimensions that social cognition uses to make sense of individuals and/or groups (Fiske, 2018). These cognitions are rooted in human survival instincts, as warmth is interpreted to gauge if another person/group can be considered trustworthy and sociable, and competence sends cues about their agency and capability (Fiske, 2018). The Stereotype Content Model (SCM) maps how perceptions of warmth and competence influence stereotypes of groups (Fiske, 2018). In the workplace, SCM posits that people who are considered cold and competent are rewarded at workplaces; on the other hand, people who are perceived as warm and incompetent are limited to more support roles (Cuddy et

al., 2011). Both women and the poor are perceived as warm but incompetent on the SCM (Cuddy et al., 2011; Ebert et al., 2014).

Some research has suggested these stereotypes may be one reason for the underrepresentation of women leaders at the top levels of business. In one study, college students were asked to find the “ideal worker” for a job and were given the option to choose a male or a female applicant (Güngör & Biernat, 2009). Women were perceived as warmer, and men were more often perceived to be the ideal candidate (Güngör & Biernat, 2009). Another study found that having an interviewer who was high in implicit bias against women and low in explicit stereotypes was more likely to see women as incompetent and rate them lower than male applicants. Furthermore, the female interviewees were more likely to rate their own interview performance lower than the male participants did (Latu et al., 2015). Collectively, support for SCM suggests that men and women are perceived differently at work, thus it is plausible that they might be expected to adhere to different norms.

It is also important to expand our examination of social class and workplace norms to include not only White men and women, for whom class mobility and stigma may have one set of meanings and implications, but also racial/ethnic minorities, for whom social class prejudices and experiences may differ. Specific to social class, African Americans are frequently depicted as poor by the media, even though most people living in poverty are White (Gilens, 1996; Van Doorn, 2015). Additionally, they are stigmatized as living in poverty due to a lack of work ethic, while other racial minorities, such as Hispanics and Asians, are presented as having a greater work ethic (Van Doorn, 2015). Consequently, African Americans are associated with a form of poverty that lacks

sympathy (Clawson, 2002; Van Doorn, 2015). For example, African Americans are not represented as poor during the Great Depression, which is viewed as a time of justified and sympathetic poverty (Clawson, 2002). They are also not illustrated as partaking in Social Security but are instead stereotyped as participating in welfare programs (Clawson, 2002; Van Doorn, 2015).

Because African Americans are stereotyped as lacking a strong work ethic, their motives and mere presence conflict with the American Dream ideology (Lynn, et al., 2010; Van Doorn, 2015; Welch & Sigelman, 2011). One study found that most Americans believe African Americans are responsible for their failure to systematically achieve the American Dream, and that racial discrimination was not the cause (Hanson & Zogby, 2010). Since there appears to be a conflict between how people perceive social mobility and how people examine African Americans, it is important to evaluate how social class mobility, their social experiences as they move up perceptions of their mobility, and the cultural norms impact African American people as well.

Further, African American women face the additional barrier of race bias as well as gender bias, separating their experience uniquely from both White women and African American men (Hall et al., 2012; Rabelo & Cortina, 2016). For instance, African American women are more likely to experience higher rates of unemployment, work in support positions with fewer rewards and advancement opportunity, and work in jobs with less security than ones held by men (Hughes & Dodge, 1997; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). The stress African American women experience at work based on a combination of race-related, gender-related, and generic stress predicts higher distress than race, gender, or generic stress does separately (Woods-

Giscombe & Lobel, 2008). Stressors for African American women include stereotypes, excessive demands, lack of mentoring, isolation from workplaces cliques, being ignored and/or harassed, and assumptions of incompetence (Hall et al., 2012). Thus, African American women's experience at work is fraught with structural bias and is distinct from that of both African American men and White women. Accounting for race and gender identity intersections will enable us to achieve rich understandings of both within and between-group experiences around class identity at work. Additionally, there has been a call for more intersectional research in the I-O psychology domain (Weaver et al., 2016), and this work will respond to that need.

Therefore, based on SCM and CMT theory, this study aims to address the following research questions:

Research question 1: Are there norms, visible and/or invisible, that African American and White women and men from lower-income backgrounds have to learn after they experience social mobility?

Research question 2: What are these norms?

Research question 3: Are the workplace norms experienced and learned by African American men and women from low-income backgrounds different from the norms experienced and learned by their White counterparts?

Research Question 5: Are the workplace norms of low-income background White men different than the norms expected of low-income background White women?

Research Question 6: Are there different norms expected for African American men as compared to African American women?

## **h. Methods**

Since middle- and upper-class workplace norms have not yet been systematically investigated in the psychology literature, there is no pre-existing class or status-related workplace norms scale with which to collect data. However, workplace norm scales measuring other constructs have been developed. For instance, workplace norms measuring social relations and workplace performance norms have contributed to explaining significant amounts of job stress (Hammer et al., 2004). Also, the Social Relations Norms scale uses five items to measure how people are treated within an organization (Hammer et al., 2004), and scales measuring workplace drinking norms have been used to identify how social control in workplaces predicts workplace drinking habits (Ames et al., 2000).

While no scales exist to measure white-collar workplace norms, there are scales to measure workplace professionalism. Professionalism defines the goals, qualities, and behaviors that are expected and rewarded in a workplace (Veloski & Hojat, 2006). For instance, professionalism measures for the medical field measure constructs such as respect (i.e., “I have observed residents making derogatory statements about other medical/surgical specialty groups or other healthcare workers”) or excellence (i.e., “I have observed that the residents I have worked with educate their patients about their illnesses”) (Arnold et al. 1998, p. 1120). However, this scale was largely catered specifically to the medical field, so the questions were too narrow for the scope of this study.

Additionally, the Workplace Civility Scale assesses if employees perceive their managers as involved in preventing incivility and verbal aggression at work (i.e., “My



organization has clearly defined rules on how to respectfully treat coworkers” (Ottinot, 2008, p. 86). However, when this scale still refers to behaving “respectfully,” it does not specify what behaviors are considered respectful at work. Thus, its questions were not helpful in identifying appropriate questions for this study.

Consequently, the only framework for developing our qualitative questioning route (See Appendix C), was the U.S. Census study on FGPs (Terry & Fobia, 2019). This study interviewed government employees who were the first people in their family to hold a white-collar professional position. However, their questions were designed close-ended, which is not a best practice in qualitative research (Brod et al. 2009). Thus, we consulted with qualitative experts and adapted some of their questions to both tap into cultural norms to suit our study, and to be open-ended. For example, the FGP study asked “As a First Generation Professional, have you had to adjust to the culture of your workplace? If so, how? What about adjusting how you speak or how you relate to others? What about adjusting how you dress or wear your hair?”, and we asked “When have you had to adjust yourself to the culture of the workplace as compared to your own personal class and/or cultural identity?” and “Some people tell me they have to adjust to the culture of their workplaces, such as changing their appearance, or how they speak or dress, others say they’ve never had to think about this, how about for you?”

Additionally, questions and probes were added that would help answer our specific research questions, such as “Tell me about any new behaviors you felt you had to learn as you transitioned? Tell me the story of how you learned that/these.” and “Thinking about these workplace norms and adjustments in cultures, can you tell me who you had to enact them for? How did these expectations change as you transitioned to

higher-level positions? How? Did they change with every new position, or was there a certain position that was significant? How do the norms change with colleagues or supervisors?” All questions were asked one at a time, to avoid directing double-barreled questions to the respondent (Slayter, 2020).

Furthermore, participants were be probed on how their racial and gender identities intersected with these norms. For instance, participants were asked, “How would figuring out or learning the workplace norms be different if you were from another race/ ethnic group?” Additionally, participants were asked “How would figuring out or learning the workplace norms be different if you were a man/woman?”

Participants were also asked about their employment history (i.e., “When did you first start working? Tell me about how you got to your current work position?”) and their social mobility beliefs (i.e., “Some could argue that the modern generation is doing worse than their parents at their age. Do you think that’s true?”). These questions are useful for understanding not only about how social mobility and a social class change has impacted our participants’ lives, but also how it has shaped their beliefs about other people’s social mobility prospects. Since this research occurred during a pandemic, participants’ perceptions of social class mobility may have been influenced by the wave of job losses that surged due to COVID-19. Therefore, after participants were asked about their beliefs about social mobility, they were also asked “How has living through the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your perceptions of social class mobility?”

#### **i. Design**

Previous work has identified lower-income background as a socially stigmatized identity in the workplace (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2018). Indeed, the Stereotype Content

Model (SCM) of prejudice provides theoretical support for why a low-income background is stigmatized, as “the poor” are perceived in low in competence but high in warmth (Cuddy et al., 2011; Judd et al., 2005; Kervyn et al., 2010; Swencionis et al., 2017). Since the discussion and disclosure of stigmatized identities is a highly sensitive situation (Decker et al., 2011), the data-collection instrument was a one-on-one, in-person interview. This method was chosen because interviewing has been proven effective with discussing other sensitive topics, such as posttraumatic stress disorder experiences (Kassam-Adams & Newman, 2005). Additionally, research has shown that when people participate in focus groups, they disclose less information about stigmatized topics as compared to one-on-one interviews (Wutich et al., 2010). Thus, to respect participants’ privacy and obtain the most accurate information, we interviewed respondents individually and saved their audio recordings under a pseudonym in a password-protected cloud (Appendix A).

Participants were African American and White women and men who identified as having been working-class when they started their careers and have experienced career mobility since then. We chose this study criteria because most people who started their careers as low-status workers have been part of the working-class culture. The median-income for a low-wage worker is \$10.22/hour, likely placing them in a lower-class (Brookings, 2019). These professions are quite common, with forty-four percent of workers in the U.S. considered low-wage workers (Brookings, 2019).

High-status jobs are likely to have a higher level of pay stability, better lateral career mobility, and established professional associations (Hauser & Warren, 1997). Jobs typically considered prestigious include chief executives, managers, engineers, scientists,

etc. (Davis et al., 1989). We defined high status positions as ones that have decision-power in the organization (Schieman et al., 2006), and low-status positions as not having decision power and being lower in wages. This experience was referred to as “career mobility.”

#### **j. Recruitment**

Participants were recruited via a flyer and snowball sampling (Frandsen et al., 2014; Goodman, 1961). A flyer was posted on online platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn). When potential respondents contacted the research team, they were screened for study criteria. If they met the criteria, they were scheduled for an interview over the virtual medium of their choice (i.e., the telephone or zoom audio). Participants were offered the option of having the consent form sent to them through e-mail or phone, and all respondents were read the consent script at the beginning of the interview. On average, the interviews took between 1.5 and 2 hours. At the end of the interview, participants were given a brief questionnaire and were asked for recommendations for future contacts. Participants were also assured that they could contact anyone on the research team and the FIU Office of Research if that had any questions and/or concerns.

#### **k. Analytic Strategy**

The interviews were conducted by the first author and trained research assistants. It is important to consider how the identity of the researchers shaped the experiences of the interviews, as well as the analysis. To enact anti-discriminatory research, it is essential for researchers to acknowledge and consciously confront their own dimensions

of privilege, power, and oppression (Barn, 1994). For decades, the scientific community has perceived cis-gender, White, male scholars as the “neutral” experts of investigating identities (Bourke, 2014; Christensen & Jensen, 2014; Spivak, 1988). However, it is a fact that the race, social class, and sexual identities of both the researcher and the participant has implications for the research process, as both parties perceive each other as members within their respective social structures, which can increase or decrease the sensitivity of topics discussed (Edwards, 1993).

A high-level analysis of the class, race, and gender identities of my team is available in Appendix A. As the lead scientist on this project, I have an obligation to disclose my own positionality. I am a White woman from what I like to call a “working-class culture.” I would say I was raised in a rural, southern lower-middle class household, as both of my parents have bachelor’s degrees. My father was the sole income-provider for eight children. During my teenage years my parents divorced, thus separating the family into two households. My father remained middle-class, but my mother’s household shifted between low-income and working-class for several years. This dichotomy provided me the opportunity to witness both a middle- and a working-class lifestyle simultaneously. Thus, I entered these interviews with both the privilege of being a White woman and having the experience of dancing on the dyad between working- and middle-class lifestyles.

In cross-racial dialogues, both the interviewer and the participant may try to avoid responses that could offend the opposite race person, instead of providing honest answers (Hatchett & Schuman, 1976). However, it is possible to interview between races (Edwards, 1993). An issue in cross-racial research occurs when some White researchers

intentionally avoid racially-charged spaces because they do not perceive them as “safe” (The Roestone Collective, 2014). By doing so, White researchers reassert the invisible power structures that exist between Whites and others (Farough, 2006). Both to protect my researchers and participants from Covid-19 and to combat social power dynamics as much as possible, we conducted the interviews over Zoom or the phone, so participants were able to interview where they can find a space where they felt most comfortable. Interviews over the phone have been identified as a space where participants disclose sensitive information more freely (Drabble et al., 2016; Hopper, 1992). Phone interviews are especially valuable for collecting sensitive information from marginalized groups, such as women (Drabble et al., 2016). If the participant chose Zoom as the platform of communication, the choice to have the video camera off or on was left to them.

There is also research to show that cross-racial research can be beneficial. When researchers have similar racial/ethnic backgrounds to their participants, they can become too immersed in the situation to observe the situation as a third party (Callender, 1997). For example, studies have shown that White participants interviewed by a White researcher tend to separate themselves from race-related topics by claiming they are not part of the racism problem (Bowman, 2007). However, when White participants are interviewed by an African American researcher, they were more uncomfortable discussing race (Bowman, 2007). On the contrary, when African American participants were interviewed by an African American researcher, they were eager to discuss race and more easily built rapport with the researcher (Bowman, 2007). However, their responses were less detailed and required additional probing, as the participants assumed that the African American researcher already understood racism. Thus, as a White researcher, it

was essential that I be especially aware of representing my African American participants accurately. To support this goal, I practiced the interviewing techniques of repeating back to the participant what I heard and summarizing their story to them, so as not to taint their words with my own experiences as a White person (Agyeman, 2008).

My research team was trained to incorporate the same practices. The pre-interviewing exercises that RAs were required to complete are available in Appendix B. These completed exercises required them to reflect on their own positionality both privately and in groups. I led the training sessions and designed the assignment but did not read the finished assignments or attend the group sessions in order to minimize power dynamics. Instead, I completed my own reflection pieces with research peers in my workplace who were also seeking intersectional, anti-racist practices. After each interview, the interviewer (myself and my RAs) was required to write field notes. The template for the field notes had questions for contextual information of the interview, in addition to questions about the respondent and the interviewer's identities and how that dynamic might have influenced the discussion.

The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using inductive thematic analysis to identify recurring themes in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) endorse thematic analysis as an effective and flexible method for collecting new, detailed data, which allows the researcher to represent the data in the participants' own words. Therefore, this study will adhere to the clear guidelines for conducting thematic analysis outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006). Our goal was to obtain 20 interviews for each identity group (African American women, African American men, White men, White women), for a total of 80 interviews. While 20 interviews per group might seem

small from a quantitative perspective, qualitative data is rich data that can meet saturation at smaller sample sizes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Saturation is the point in the process where responses between participants are repeated and begin to form themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In recent work on related topics with adult social class mobility participants, this number has been 20 participants per group (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2018).

We recruited and collected data for nine months and were able to conduct 63 interviews. It was especially difficult to recruit African American men, potentially due to there being no African American men on the research team. Further, this point in time (September 2020-May 2021), was a deeply traumatic time for African American Americans, with the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on African American communities, the trial of Derek Chauvin, the collective grief and trauma of continued murders of African American people at the hands of law enforcement, and a global re-awakening of delayed racial reckoning (Associated Press, 2021; BBC, 2021; Paz, 2021). We did due diligence in respectfully recruiting African American men through snowball sampling, contacting Historically African American Colleges and Universities, and African American fraternities; however, we did not want to harass or burden. We contacted institutions and referrals a maximum of two times, and then relinquished our efforts. At 10 interviews, with African American men we had collected enough data to notice repeat themes and signs of saturation.

### **I. Participant Information**

Of our 63 interviews, 20 were with White women, 17 with Black women, 17 with White men, and 10 with Black men. Of our 64 respondents who interviewed, 52 filled out



the post-interview survey where we asked their demographics. These demographics revealed most (36.5%) had a master's degree, 26.9% a doctoral degree, 21.15% an undergraduate degree, 9.6% an associate degree, 1.9% a high school diploma, and 3.9% selected "other." This was distinct from their parents' highest level of education, with 59.6% of our respondents reporting a high school education as their parents' highest level of education. Additionally, 90.4% of respondents stated they worked in a professional field, 5.8% were self-employed, 1.9% aligned with clerical work, and 1.9% identified as blue collar. This was again distinct from their parents' occupations, with 69.2% stating that their parents were blue collar workers. Seventy-five percent of respondents were employed by an employer, 9.6% self-employed, 1.9% in the military, 5.8% were students, 1.9% was out of work and seeking additional work, and 5.8% were retired. For income, 55.8% of respondents made over \$100,000 dollars, 19.2% between \$80,001 and \$100,000, 15.4% between \$50,001 and \$80,000, 3.9% between \$30,001 and \$50,000, and 5.8% between \$10,001 and \$30,000. In contrast, most of our respondents (34.62%) reported their childhood household income as between \$10,001 and \$30,000, followed by 28.85% reporting between \$30,001 and \$50,000.

The interviews were transcribed by trained undergraduate research assistants, and then proofread for accuracy by additional research assistants. RAs were divided into teams of two, and all transcripts were read by the collaborating RAs and the first author. Each coding team was assigned three transcripts and read them separately to obtain a general sense of meaning. The coders identified codes, which referenced the repeated features relevant to the research questions which emerge from the data. Each code was organized into subordinate themes that were also found to be similar between the

participants. These codes and subordinate themes were documented in an initial code book with a description of each.

Next, the coders independently read three more transcripts, in which they noted similar themes to the original transcripts, as well as new repeated content. This data was organized into a second document, and we analyzed the content from both sets of transcripts and updated the codebook to reflect the codes and subordinate themes that best represented the data. Based on these findings, we created super-ordinate themes which captured all the sub-ordinate themes and documented these in the codebook as well. We read another set of three interviews independently to investigate repeated content among the participants. The coders then met again to discuss agreement on how the findings organized into themes. The level of agreement between each member of the coding team was measured using Cohen's kappa, resulting in an overall  $k=0.80$  (Cohen, 1960). Any inconsistencies between the themes were addressed until there is 100% agreement (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **m. Results**

#### **Yes, There Are Norms**

This code captured if respondents recognized workplace norms in their organizations. Respondents were included in this if they directly said there are workplace norms and/or if they brought up norms in their workplace. If a respondent were to say there were no norms and not bring up any examples, they would not fit into this code. However, all our respondents, across race and gender categories, was aware of their organizational norms.

I think for norms as far as norms and when it come to supermarket and waitressing it was about being on time and being present and then going home, but now in education it's the same with being on time but now your part of team and now you're responsible for 30 kids and you have to work with the other teachers. -Dr. Gabriel, African American woman

I think umm... dressing. And, dressing appropriately, is a huge one. Umm...and trying to figure out...(pauses)...what you know... how do you express your own individuality but...um, match the...expectations of the workplace. Which is really challenging. -Ann, White woman

I also know I learned about the culture I was working for so like getting dressed professionally and it's kind of ironic given that I haven't work assistant in the office for almost a year haven't had to put on dress shoes in over a year...or wear shoes. I guess... yeah but just learning about the personal culture umm and feeling that I had to, you know, like what should I wear? Umm How should I get ready? - Jack, African American man

Just theses little kind of phrases that, um, that I've picked up but I don't know if it's...the thing is, if I thought that they were strictly related to my class change I would think that I would have learnt them at school, but I think it's more the problem of being in a white-collar environment that you learn these kind of phrases. So, to a certain extent it still represents a change from my, kind of, class when I was younger. Just, not a change experienced through school. -Adam, White man

**Table 1.1***"Yes There Are Norms" Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	17/17 (100%)	10/10 (100%)	27/27 (100%)
White	20/20 (100%)	17/17 (100%)	37/37 (100%)
Total	37/37 (100%)	27/27 (100%)	64/64 (100%)

**Shift to Independent Values**

Many of our respondents said their work norms shifted towards independence as they moved up in their careers. Independent values encompass values of independence, competition, and having influence over others; on the contrary, people with interdependent values are conscious of other and adjust to make them more comfortable (Stephens et al., 2011; Stephens et al., 2009). White women, African American men, and White men represented this category in similar proportions, about 1/3 of each. However, nearly half (47%) of our African American women participants discussed this norm.

It is not surprising that the participant group with both marginalized racial and gender identities were coded for this theme more often than any other group. Literature on race and gender differences in adherence to interdependent/communal values (vs. independent/agentic ones) shows that the socially advantaged tend to value themselves, exhibiting agentic traits, while disadvantaged groups tend to value others, portraying communal ones (Dubois et al., 2015; Rucker et al., 2011). For example, in the U.S., African Americans are a disadvantaged group (Rucker et al., 2018). African American

culture prioritizes interdependence of the self with others, especially within the African American community, which is different from American culture in general, which values independence (Brannon et al., 2015; Constantine et al., 2003). In terms of race, Whites have been found to practice more agentic behaviors, while African Americans tend to exhibit communal behaviors (Rucker et al., 2018). Similarly, women are expected to illustrate communal traits, while men are rewarded for performing agentic ones (Rucker et al., 2018; Suh et al., 2004). Thus, it is logical that our respondents with White and male identities would not be as prevalent in this category, as they are socially expected and taught to portray more independent traits than African American women.

I realized that a lot of the friendship I was building there were superficial and some of them were because I had a position in the organization. I had been, membership directorate, then I had also been president, and some of those relationships I realized after a while, were very, very superficial. They were looking to see what I could do for them, versus, really trying to have meaningful discussions and, and give meaningful activities in the community. And so, I moved away from them because I realized that that's just not important to me. And it's really not how I was raised. I was raised to try to help others. And, to try to be useful, as opposed to, um, just trying to use other people. - Joyce, African American woman

But also...\*sigh\* okay part of middle-class culture in my opinion, is...petty \*chuckles\*, ego-driven, jealousy, and tearing other people down. It is the opposite of what I was trained to do, just lift other people up, celebrate their accomplishments, doesn't matter if you'll ever reach that...and you should happy

for other people...even if the thing they got is like something you are painful inside because you can't have it. It's not about you is my point. -Tara, White woman.

Really, I went from in that transition, I went from being in a very social engaging position working as a you know front line attendant to working in a warehouse where the conversations, it was very isolated in that my work was not affected by someone else, and I was very independent with my work, so I didn't there was very little interactions that I had to deal with, so I can't say that there was anything that really shifted or changed... I because, again, I think, being an extrovert and I was raised in a family with four five other siblings I was kind of prepared to work with. I kind of grew up with the skills necessary to work with different people or people in small spaces and all of that, so I felt like there was not much of a transition there but not much of a difficult transition rather. -Jai, African American man

I do have a bit more autonomy so than I did when I first started working. I have the freedom now to make somewhat unilateral decisions they can have positive and negative impacts on our customers if I make the wrong decision or not...and I have the ability to override certain other people's decisions with my own which is pretty new. I think in my as I moved higher there is still like a competitive side but it's not, I don't feel like as aggressively competitive I would say. - John Perry, White man

**Table 1.2**

*"Shift to Independent Values" Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	8/17 (47%)	3/10 (30%)	11/27 (40%)
White	6/20 (30%)	6/17 (35%)	12/37 (32%)
Total	14/37 (38%)	9/27 (33%)	23/64 (36%)

### **Compliance**

A prevalent theme among our respondents was that of compliance, which captures the respondent being silenced, told to speak less, or not being able to contribute their ideas. This theme was prominent among each group, with the lowest being White men (47%). The largest group was African American men at 70%. This was a little surprising. We expected women to be the most represented in this category, since decades of research show that women are interrupted four times as much as men (Watson, 2019). While African American men were our smallest respondent group, these proportions indicate that African American men were also silenced at work more than White men.

They don't want new ideas they just want you to do your work and then clock out.... Yeah so very shut up and do your work.... Yes I think...like the\*Laugh\* It was really weird. you come on board, they're like they they want fresh new eyes at their work but and....\*Chuckles\* as I got more and more promotions, I just realized they just wanted you to do the work or something? It was really weird.

Umm but yeah...I got more compliant. -Michelle, low-income to upper-middle class, African American woman

He knew how to stay quiet and to observe things from an outside perspective and just kinda like nod his head. I'm very much like a justice warrior personality. If I see something that isn't good, it's not kosher, it's hurting someone, it's just not a good behavior or whatever, I like cannot keep myself from saying something about it. So, when I saw the negative mentorship I was getting, I didn't just kinda like get complacent and go "Oh okay I'll do whatever you say" and get through it. I confronted it and I ended up almost getting kicked out over confronting it. And that been a very consistent thing in a lot of the jobs that I've had. - Lynn, White woman

I have to say that, you know, the higher up I've gotten, the more I have to make sure that I acquiesce to whoever I'm working for and that has had to change. And it's political. And, so I have to be savvy in what I say and don't say. And who I associate with and who I don't. And, um, all of that is, you know, has to be carefully scripted. - Diego, African American man

As a PhD student and a postdoc, you really do learn how to keep your mouth shut to. Ummm there are times when ...it's best to just be quiet. - Frank, White man

**Table 1.3**

*"Compliance" Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>



African American	10/17 (59%)	7/10 (70%)	17/27 (63%)
White	11/20 (55%)	8/17 (47%)	19/37 (51%)
Total	21/37 (57%)	15/27 (56%)	36/64 (53%)

## **Navigating Relationships**

### ***Friendship***

This code encompasses when respondents recalled having to learn what level of friendship is appropriate in workplaces. For example, several participants said they had to learn how to keep a distance from co-workers or maintain a “fake” relationship with people they worked with. All of our identity groups were represented by at least 50% in this category, but it was most prevalent among the women’s groups. This is consistent with the literature showing the communal expectation of women to be more relationship-oriented (Rucker et al., 2018; Suh et al., 2004).

Maybe having to...figure out like...how can I negotiate like friend co-worker boundaries?...Um...so...before I guess like it was um...\*sighs\* and maybe as a teaching assistant and ... in a high school it was very much like a \*sighs\* like a very closed situation, you know? And it was and maybe it was just with people I was with also? Um, but much more like on the friend side of things... Where like my workplace now I’m collegial with many of my colleague’s um and I might go out to dinner or something like once or twice a semester but there's only a few people who I consider myself close friends with. - Ruth, White woman

This could also encompass when respondents had to set boundaries or were surprised by co-workers wanting to know more about their life than they deemed appropriate.

This just might be something that, you know, it's a norm for White folks, but like in this particular experience, in this um, you know on this job site, it was a lot of you know like, questions and wanting to know like 'where do you live?'...and um, you know, just like wanting and asking and not have a problem trying to get into your personal business, which is just you know like a no-no for how I was brought up particularly... In addition to that, they also were not open to sharing information. Like, uh, part of the project that they thought it was okay for me to it, you know, learn about or be privy to. You know, we would all sit down, like the project manager, we could all sit down at that meeting. But in those budget meetings, like the finance meetings, learning how the money really works? I would never be invited to those meetings. Like, that would never happen. Those spreadsheets would never get shared. You know, so I mean but these are the things that you just come to understand and you just, you know, try to maneuver. - Porsha, African American woman

So um for one, um interactions with them especially at the beginning, significantly more formal um they, and this could possibly be in my head, I'm not sure, um they felt less approachable um um interacting with them like everything, a lot of times, felt strictly business like give me the information, let's go forward um um but it also like knowing like so like when you would um like one thing that was vastly different is like we would kinda hide, like we would go out to happy hours and um do lots of different things so it felt like it was kinda a courting process but not like dating but like um like kinda like a courting process

with them or like um in addition to just being the day-to-day type stuff. -David,  
African American man

Um, well, you know, in the kitchen world, uh, you have a lot of, sometimes you  
have a lot of clowns. Uh, and, you know, we like to have a good time as family.  
People say things to each other, you know, when you're, as like family. Uh, you  
say things that may be inappropriate, uh, which is normal, but um, you know  
sometimes we you have new employees starting, um, you gotta be careful cause  
you don't know how easily somebody gets offended, what they get offended with,  
you know. - Donnie, White man

**Table 1.4**

*“Friendship” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	15/17 (88%)	6/10 (60%)	21/27 (78%)
White	18/20 (90%)	9/17 (58%)	27/37 (73%)
Total	33/37 (89%)	15/27 (56%)	48/64 (75%)

***Learning How to Be Indirect***

This code captures when the respondent report learning language that is less direct  
or using “kid gloves” when talking to other people at work. Our groups were represented  
in similar proportions in this theme. Given traditional expectations for women to be more  
docile, we were surprised to see that similar amounts of women and men belonged to this

code. For example, research has found that women who are assertive at work receive more backlash in the form of workplace incivility than men (Gabriel et al., 2018).

Just how to speak to people? Because I came from a background from an environment where...I used to see people argue at work? And then everything was all good and we'd hang out the weekends kinda thing. Whereas arguments in professional spaces was non-existent like you could disagree, but it was more the tension and energy in the room, um. One of the first time I told a supervisor at a \*chuckles\* at a [redacted] meeting that I didn't care, and whenever I looked at me like I had done something like...absurd? But I did? And I did not realize that I was like...oh I did something wrong because I just told you my truth...And I just told you what I was thinking, they asked me their thoughts. So, I don't care had to do I don't really have a preference, and so I had to learn to speak the language. I just thought that was interesting \*chuckles\* I'll never forget that, that was one of the highlights of my career.... E: What do you think about that, I don't care! \*laughs\*  
- Eunice, African American woman

I, I had pulled some very specific detailed analysis on something, and um, [director] had actually called and asked me to come directly to her office to talk to her about the data. And, apparently my, my boss tried to push back and say I'll come talk to her and she's like now I want I want [Ginger]. And, and I went in, and we had a very frank, straightforward conversation, but it was a very different conversation. Like I-I could not have said things I said to her in that one-on-one meeting in a big meeting because I knew, I'd watched her enough to know giving her information that may have come across as contradictory to something she was

saying would have been, she would have seen that as an insult. - Ginger, White woman

Yeah, and sometimes I, uh, express myself, you know, very passionately, and, um, I have learned to, um, control how I express myself. Um, because, um, A) there's not a lot of people that's coming from or viewing things from the same lens as I'm viewing things, and some, I've learned through experiences that my approach sometimes, um, I'm thinking I'm being direct and professional and upfront, and as long as it is, you know, the truth, I can say it. \*Laughs\* But, you know, I had to learn, you know, quickly, that, um, not to do that. I, you know, or the unspoken rules that you, again with the emails, you just don't put everything in an email. You know. There are certain things that you talk with people face to face, and then there's other things you send through an email, so. You may not want to send that in an email because the person may feel like you're documenting them. \*Laughs\* You know? Like, you know, different things like that, um. I, I guess I've had to learn. - Malcolm, African American man

It's different. There's nobody fighting, there's nobody arguing, there's nobody calling somebody out. There's no- \*laughs\* like that's what I grew up with, that was my life, my whole life was growing up with chaos and just just just unlearning how to respond to things and then learning the right ways to respond to things. - Boogie, White man

### **Table 1.5**

*“Learning How to be Indirect” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	7/17 (41%)	4/10 (40%)	11/27 (41%)
White	7/20 (38%)	6/17 (35%)	13/37 (35%)
Total	14/37 (38%)	10/27 (37%)	24/64 (38%)

### ***Phony Socialization***

This theme captures when respondents talked about having to learn how to “schmooze.” This is any time the respondent talks about having to flatter someone to navigate work, such as during networking or other types of conversations. We noticed that proportionally more men than women were represented in this code. It is possible that since men are expected to adhere to more agentic gender roles (Hoover et al., 2019), that they may not be as familiar with “schmoozing” as women are. Women are expected to adhere to communal values, which include deferring to others, while men are expected to express agentic traits like dominance and leadership (Hoover et al., 2019). Additionally, since women do not tend to reap as many benefits from networking as men (Elsesser, 2019), our women respondents might not have been as aware of the importance of using fake pleasantries in networking.

I would say pretty drastically, like I don't--It was weird because for one of my bosses he's the one who gave me the promotion, and I was like, you know who I was before you gave me this promotion. Why are you acting like I'm a different person? Because the expectations...was immense. Like it was immense not only in the sense of like the actual work I had to do, but then he's expecting me

to schmooze a lot more and do that work and it's like I only have so much time. You can't be doing both... You want me to get work done, or do you want me to go and have brunch with this random person? - Gwen, African American woman

That would have been so much easier in so many different aspects of making this transition, if I just knew how to kiss a-- and be a brown nose and just talk my way up, but my behaviors were much more of having to let the work speak for themselves, as opposed to having anybody have like favor for me in any other aspect... um so I had to put in probably more work than some people would who were more charismatic with their bosses and stuff like that. - Lynn, White woman

Umm (pause) I would say the thing that I learned is um that people that I'm interacting with um especially, (slurs) this is gonna make me sound manipulative (laughs) let me think about it (...) um but um kinda making like uh from the person the request is from or like um always kinda like being on, if you will, and like making them feel like they are the most important person um and uh I do not like the way that sounds (laugh). - David, African American man

Ability to develop relationships with customers that's a challenging skill and consulting because I have to be able to be a friend with anyone... Build their trust regardless of their political views, my political views their favorite sports team \*laughs\*. - John Perry, White man

**Table 1.6**

*"Phony Socialization" Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
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Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	3/17 (18%)	3/10 (30%)	6/27 (22%)
White	2/20 (10%)	4/17 (24%)	6/37 (16%)
Total	5/37 (14%)	7/17 (41%)	12/64 (19%)

### ***Playing Political Games***

This code represents when the respondents brought up their awareness of the hierarchy at work, and their attempts to learn how to navigate it. This can include the respondent expressing when someone has stabbed them in the back, or when respondents talk about having to learn to intentionally conceal information as a strategy (i.e., not telling someone about a promotion application so fewer people apply). All of the groups are represented by a large percentage in this code, with the smallest group to state this was White men at 65%. However, this code was most prevalent among women. It is known that women receive less mentoring than men (Saffle-Robertson, 2020), which might account for the need for more women to have to learn more about hierarchy and organizational structures.

I think, as you move up the ranks, I think the lower you are on the ranks, the closer you are and the better the relationships and the friendships. But as you move up the ranks, I think there's this rapport you have to build with anybody and although you can feel good about coming to your job, you're happy about it, you always are kind of watching your back to see who is out for you, or who's after you, or who's talking about you or trying to throw you under the bus, or



attempting to ruin or taint your image or reputation, or your work ethic! - 3MS,  
African American woman

Yeah, and like you know I've been here like a while and so I can figure out often how to get things done or at least who to talk to. Umm but you never know, sometimes like people will come to me with these questions, and I'm like, Oh man, I really don't know! Right, like that's never--...Right, and calculating...How to get those answers or how to, to play the political games necessary to both save face and get what you need. Like the information or the task or the signature that you need done. - Ruth, White woman

I think a lot of...I had to learn the bureaucracy to being in upper management. I had to understand what it meant to you know... what... what... what... is office politics, right? I mean, that's one of the lessons, I think. The hard ones you have to learn is that you can't just talk to everybody about everything and you have to you have to guard...your tongue in, you know? To certain extent... I think the biggest behavior was that for me you know... I just had to learn you know... you know, these are the lines that you...you have to behave. - John 2, African American man

So I mean you know when I was working at for example the grocery store or the coffee shop, there just never was the idea that you could, right, like there was never much upward, um, trajectory to be had there, and to whatever extent it was, I never thought I would be in front of a TV, \*laughs\*you know like a TV camera as someone who worked at a coffee shop, you know even if you get up to be like a manager or something, you know, I doubt you would be up there because that's left to like the white collar people, right? Like the people in the, I wasn't working

at a Starbucks but for lack of a better word, like the Starbucks CEO, you'd go and talk about things whereas here, it feels like there's a bit more mobility. I guess if I do work hard enough, have a good career, at this agency you know plenty of our directors are interviewed for TV all the time so it's like I could feasibly do that, it's not like, out of the ordinary. - Adam, White man

**Table 1.7**

*"Political Games" Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	14/17 (82%)	8/10 (80%)	22/27 (81%)
White	19/20 (95%)	11/17 (65%)	30/37 (81%)
Total	33/37 (89%)	19/27 (70%)	52/64 (81%)

**The Norms Change as You Move Up**

This code represents when respondents bring up that the norms become more or less lax as they move up in their careers. For example, some respondents have said that the higher up they get, the more they are “under the microscope.” Others have said as they move up, they have more freedom and less pressure to conform to norms. Over half of all respondents are represented in this group; however, women in both races were most likely to say that the norms changed as they moved up. We know that women in male-dominated fields report having to continuously prove themselves at work to be respected

(Parker, 2018). Future research should draw on this work and our own to investigate which norms change more for women as they move up and which stay the same for men.

Yes, yes the expectations did change, from lower positions to... higher positions.

I think that now I'm in more of a position um of respect and authority in my career and so um when I do speak on cultural or um critical issues, um people try to see, or at least consider those thoughts and ideas. Whereas when I was a little bit, not XXX when I was younger in my early 20s, that that whole thing wasn't as well thought out or accepted. - Ella, African American woman

I mean, when I was acting assistant principal. I don't know, it was just different. How everybody looked at you, or talked or interacted with you and I don't know it was just different than if I was a teacher, I mean I don't know...just just in general the people talking to me, and bringing umm classroom concerns. Cause he was out for like a week. And was like oh my gosh, it was, it was the worst job I'd ever had. I'm not playin'! -Barbara, White woman

No, I would say that this last position that I've gotten, I have to change a little bit in terms of, not in terms of dress, not in terms of the way I speak, but I've had to step up my game in terms of my punctuality and my, um, being well versed in what is, whatever topic we're working on, so I can't go into a meeting and kind of wing it anymore. - Diego, African American man

When I moved into a management position and then eventually into a leadership position, one of the things that I recognized was you know that if I was going to be a leader in an organization, I needed to dress differently, I needed to wear a suit to work uh and you know, do that every day. And um previously as a

manager, the difference between being a manager and being an engineer was you know, I occasionally wear a tie to work... There were other responsibilities too that step in the leadership roles that I felt that I had to do. One was I had to sort of look after and, and foster um the development of my employees. - Douglas, White man

**Table 1.8**

*“The Norms Change as You Move Up” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	15/17 (88%)	5/10 (50%)	20/27 (74%)
White	17/20 (85%)	10/17 (59%)	27/37 (73%)
Total	32/37 (86%)	15/27 (56%)	47/64 (73%)

### ***Assertiveness***

This code captures when respondents recall having to learn how to be more assertive and confident. This code was mostly represented by women, particularly African American women. This theme is interesting because assertiveness can often be a double-edged sword for women, especially African American women. Leadership roles are stereotyped for requiring what are considered masculine traits, such as assertiveness, leadership, and ambition. Indeed, men typically rate higher in confidence, even overconfidence, than women (Schneider, 2019). Consequently, when both African American and White women are not assertive, they are perceived as a poor fit for leadership positions (Kramer, 2020; Schley, 2021). African American women in

particular are affronted with negative stereotypes throughout their lives that portray them as less intelligent and successful than their White peers, which negatively impacts their confidence (Jones et al., 2018). Further, at work, assertive African American women are perceived as “angry” or “having an attitude,” instead of confident (Kramer, 2020).

I think the only thing that I really had to learn, in the position that I'm in now, I had to learn how to be comfortable with people saying no to me and I had to be comfortable challenging that because I'm a I would consider myself a people pleaser...and I want to make everyone happy, and so when I feel like I'm making someone uncomfortable, naturally I back down, so I had to learn how to push forward when I feel like backing down.” - Alyssa, White woman

“Um....ooo let me think, how can I...explain it. I have a lot of....a lot of my colleagues like I said for I....I am sometimes the only one. Um and so...I have to.....be on....I'm always very mindful when I am among....my colleagues I'm always very mindful of what I'm saying um...um....making sure that I really get my point across. Um...and and it's almost like I really stand my ground...a lot.” - Carmen, African American woman

“And, you know enough about yourself that you can say, ‘yes I will and will not do these things, however, um, you know, I understand where you're coming from, this is my point of view, and, you know, I, but I can stand my own ground and I can understand where you're coming from and I can still work with you.’ So, so, that makes sense.” - Diego, African American man

“Um, I I don't necessarily think that there were any behaviors to unlearn, I think on a personal level that I tend to be a little more um, reserved um, and I think that

um, over time, continuing to be more um, assertive when warranted is helpful." -

Adam P., White man

**Table 1.9**

*"Assertiveness" Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	10/17 (59%)	3/10 (30%)	13/27 (48%)
White	7/20 (35%)	5/17 (29%)	12/37 (32%)
Total	17/37 (46%)	8/27 (30%)	25/64 (39%)

***Perceived Aggression***

Since women are expected to be other-centered, warm, and agreeable, they are often penalized at work when they demonstrate masculine traits, such as assertiveness (Lease, 2018; Schley, 2021). Research has identified that women who assert their skills, accomplishments, or leadership goals are perceived as competent but less likeable, which impacts hiring decisions and their career progress (Lease, 2018). This code captures these moments of when a respondent was perceived as aggressive instead of assertive. This theme is overwhelmingly represented by the African American women respondents. Research has long identified the "angry African American woman stereotype," which stereotypes African American women as being angry and loud. It is correlated with African American women being disrespected at work and seen as unlikable and unapproachable (Kilgore et al., 2020). Seventy percent of African American men were also in this code, while only one White man was perceived as "too aggressive."

And I think the African American thing, the idea maybe, has always been something because of how people have perceived me? And again one being the aggression when you know, just vocal, I'm looked at as aggressive, if I don't say anything I'm looked at as withdrawn, um...so I'm having to navigate that, but at a school African American school, for the first time it didn't matter. Because it was African American! \*chuckles\*...And I was grateful of that. - Eunice, African American woman

I mean it definitely makes it sound more aggressive. I feel like I'm new in it so, I'm still experiencing it. I'd say, I'm still finding that out whereas in... I, honestly don't think it influenced as much when I was in lower jobs or at least it wasn't surprising the, the, the differences in treatment. This was surprising. I guess surprising is the word because I did not expect such gender-related discrimination in this type of job. I think that was probably the most surprising, you know? I had like some models on a table. I was taking them to a certification class that I was teaching and biology male professors stopped me, and asked me why I had these models. Like, why would you do that? You know? So, so yeah it it feels more aggressive than, than then it would be if I was male. - Annie, White woman

You know, like, um, don't come off as the angry guy, um. That as a male, you know, talking to females, uh, in the work environment, I'm expressing myself- Because in education, often people, especially when working with others, teachers tell people what to do all the time. \*Laughs\* You know? So sometimes they take the tone of speaking to other adults like children, ummm, so, and when, I think we're, and this is just my personal opinion, I think you know when it is done from

a female, it is received differently than from a male. It is almost like something that is more threatening, um, when a--male takes a more assertive tone. So. -

Malcolm, African American man

When I was moving out of the military, by the time I got out I was not a military officer I was an NCO. And I was running seminars I had people working for me I was basically you know lower middle management. And moving into academic research after that was a little bit of a challenge because I was a little harsh... and people used to behave like I did. And early on as I transition from you know basic washing dishes making solutions doing those sorts of things to lab manager was typing up...sheets over the years I had to soften those rough edges to deal with ummm the postdocs the undergraduate mostly. A little less hard a little more polite. Which was something that was in the case in the military. - Frank, White man

**Table 1.10**

*"Perceived Aggression" Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	12/17 (71%)	7/10 (70%)	19/27 (70%)
White	4/20 (20%)	1/17 (6%)	5/37 (14%)
Total	16/37 (43%)	8/27 (30%)	24/64 (38%)



## **Who is subject to the norms?**

### ***Inconsistent about Norms Being the Same***

To attempt to answer our research question on if there are different norms for our different race and gender groups, we coded for when respondents stated that the workplace norms are the same across groups. However, none of respondents said this consistently. Instead, we had participants who would say all workers are held to the same cultural norms but later contradict themselves. There are about twice as many men than women in this group, across races and twice as many White women as African American women. For the few African American respondents in this category, their inconsistency seemed to center around not knowing what the different norms would be or denying that their race was a factor.

For example, Michelle O., an African American woman, when first asked if norms were different for different groups said, “I don’t think there’s much of a change like I said before \*chuckles\* in the government its umm....people are protected umm....but in general....it’s hard to...have an opinion on that in the career path that I have.” However, when later asked if norms were different for race/ethnic groups, she said “I think yes, of course. Do I know them? No.”

Similarly, Jai, an African American man, first said his race had not influenced his career:

I don't think [my race has]. I think, if anything, it's probably influenced it positively because I just have grown to know...grown up to know and then taught to know that I have to be able to navigate these types of environments in order to be successful.

However, he later says, that he would not have to learn as many norms if he was White. “I wouldn't have to learn anything, I would just be capable of just being who I wanted to be without having to change myself to be somebody different to be what was more approachable and whatnot.”

For our White respondents, this theme more so captured when they stated they had a privileged identity, but then later claimed it was marginalized due to “reverse racism.” For instance, Boogie stated that if he were not White, learning the workplace norms would be harder because there are “Too many people with less willingness to help you.” However, he later said:

“If you are getting a position, if you, if you, so I have this issue trying to get a position in IT many times because majority of the company are Indians and because I am White, they're like oh... I'll just get somebody I know in here or somebody that comes from my country in here. And you're just excluded on that because you're White. And people do wanna pretend like that's not a thing, and oh no its all equal opportunity, but that's such bullish\*t.” - Boogie, White man

For White women, this included their awareness of gender marginalization but not that of race. For instance, Holly responded to race questions saying all norms are the same; however, later she states that norms are not the same between men and women. For example, regarding race, Holly said:

I just... I think everyone's equal So, I just think people need to just remember who they are and what they represent. You're either a hard worker and you really like your job. If not, find a new one. [AK2] Like, however you make it for money but just don't do things that you don't love or that you can't do well because find

something you can do well. It shouldn't matter. It shouldn't matter. I mean I'm in Miami right now. I don't speak Spanish and I have blonde hair and blue eyes, you know, I stick out like a sore thumb and you know it's, it wasn't easy.” - Holly, White woman

However, she later discussed gender norms, indicating she did not believe that norms were the same for everyone, “Um, it’s made it harder. Because in my field and especially in leadership it's almost all men. And there’s been so many times where, you know, I’m part of a team and I’m the only female.”- Holly, White woman

**Table 1.11**

*“Inconsistent” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	2/17 (12%)	4/10 (40%)	6/27 (22%)
White	4/20 (20%)	7/17 (41%)	11/37 (30%)
Total	6/37 (16%)	11/27 (41%)	17/64 (27%)

### ***Norms are Different for Some People***

Even so, most of our respondents consistently stated there are different norms for different groups at work (i.e., based on class, race, gender). Most of the women belong to this group, and about half of the men, across races.

Umm..I mean I think that there are just heavier consequences for people who are not...who are not White. Umm, I think there's just umm... like there's just more of an expectation to, um...uhh...be perfect. And I don't know how to say it any other

way, like be precise, be, have, every...like you can't...you can't mess up. -Ann,  
White woman

I had a parent say that I spoke that my speech was unclear but we had another teacher that had broken or could barely speak English, but nobody complained about her but my English was unclear even though I was born and raised in America and only speak one language. I feel like the response the responses to the norms are just different when you are African American. They are just more negative, their more judgmental versus when you're of another race or ethnic group. It's like a beer from another race then you get a pass but if you're African American you don't, you are judged. - Dr. Gabriel, African American woman

What I've had to do over the years, and this is another reason why networking is so important, is because one of the things that they teach African American people, women, other minorities, um, is work hard, let your work speak for itself. This is trash. This is trash. This is what you get for people who already have advantaged baked into the system. And so what a lot of people do, because we're raised in that way, you know, you remove all this doubt about your race, you're working extra hard, you under promise, you over deliver, you work twice as hard, you do, I did all that. I did all of that and repeatedly. I was not only not rewarded but I was penalized. And so I learned differently. I learned that if I don't lift my head up and if I stay just crying with my head down, then I don't develop a network. - Tony, African American man

Um, one that always comes to mind for me is hair. I think I've heard a lot about folks, particularly, African American people, having different expectations for,

um, how they're gonna do their hair at work? You know what I mean which is funny because to me it's, um, it doesn't really cross my mind, you know? It's just, I get haircuts whenever, I just sort of tussle my hair when I go to bed, and I think it goes back to like, White male, whatever, as long as my hair is short enough. - Adam, White man

**Table 1.12**

*“Norms Are Different” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	16/17 (94%)	5/10 (50%)	21/27 (78%)
White	16/20 (80%)	7/17 (41%)	23/37 (62%)
Total	32/37 (86%)	12/27 (44%)	44/64 (69%)

***Additional Labor***

This code captures when a person discusses having to do additional labor beyond their job description as assigned/expected by a supervisor. Women tend to do more emotional labor in their jobs; for instance, 31% of women managers report providing emotional support to their supervisees, while only 19% of men say the same (Kohler, 2021). Women are also more likely to take on additional tasks, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion work (Kohler, 2021), which 87% of companies found as critical but only 25% admit to recognizing (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Among women managers, women who are African American, LGBTQ+ or have a disability are the most likely to take on this additional labor (McKinsey & Company, 2021). In this code, additional labor

is mostly accounted for by African American women and men, followed by White women.

In the sense of you know, as a African American woman, I'm tall, you're gonna recognize me when I walk into a room. Uhm, and knowing that that could be threatening to some people or some people perceive just my presence as threatening. Uhm, to put on a smile to laugh to you know kind of, uhm, yeah appear like-able. Whereas, not to say I'm not like-able person. But you know, to feel like I have to put on, you know, in certain circumstances for others to be comfortable. For them to even get to a place where they do recognize me as smart, or competent or as belonging, you know, there. Uhm, I think that's something that I learned. - Harper, African American woman

Oh, yeah. They're different. I, I feel like [men] could be nastier in [their] career. I can't... they don't have to couch things quite as often when they speak. I feel like I have been challenged by my education. I was out really challenged by my education in a curriculum meeting. So, when I first was hired, naively, I preferred the curriculum that did not have a [redacted] class which my Ph.D. is in [redacted] and [redacted]. So, I put through a curriculum change to add a [redacted] class for the physician assistant program, and when I arrived to the curriculum meeting... I, my, the class wasn't the part of my classes and they challenged my credentials to teach that at work. At the time, I didn't think anything about that but now I've been here long enough to find out that, that would have never happened had it been a male nor have they did, they know that, that has ever happened before. But

I was very aggressively challenged in a very large group on my ability to teach that class. - Annie, White woman

I always at work. Never called in, you know what I'm saying, I was by the book doin things the right way, you know what I'm sayin, so they felt like, I was more qualified to be a supervisor, so a lot of people would go to bat for me, you know what I'm sayin, so they got together to get a attorney on my behalf, in order for me to get promoted, when I was just telling them that that wasn't necessary because eventually, they wouldn't have a choice but to promote me and stuff like that. But a lot of people did go to bat, you know what I'm sayin, so maybe tryna, you know, get a higher position. And then one time we had a um, a interview for the position, and everybody just knew I was automatically gonna get it, they was already congratulating me and huggin me and everything and they gave it to this uh, Caucasian male that had just started. I think he had like 6 months, at this time I had like 9 years, and he had 6 months, and they gave it to him so they called me in and they was doin everything they can to pacify me for me to be quiet about it, don't say nothin about it, um, eventually my time would come um, if there was anything they could do to try to help me to let em know, I mean it was it was pretty bad and pretty rough, but um, you know I just still strong, um, kept the faith and stuff like that and eventually I moved up, it just took me a lot longer, uh, then uh, my Caucasian counterparts. - Donles, African American man

I call it professional anxiety. It's like a reward thing and what I mean by that is, um, like any time I'm at work and we're talking about a project when we're bored or something, and I talk about, oh what if this goes wrong, oh this'll probably

happen so we should send the schedule... It's typically very rewarded if people are like wow it's great that you're thinking like that, things like that. And it just felt like anxiety, and not really class involved, it's like you know my personal life, it's like anxiety can tend to have a pretty detrimental effect on relationships and all sorts of things unless it's captain [unintelligible] it's just. To observe that difference between what's good for me and my own life and what's expected at work. It's like, so you expect me to be professional anxious but not personal anxious, like, how do I manage that balance. - Adam, White man

**Table 1.13**

*“Additional Labor” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	14/17 (82%)	5/10 (50%)	19/27 (70%)
White	8/20 (40%)	3/17 (18%)	11/37 (30%)
Total	22/37 (59%)	8/27 (30%)	30/64 (47%)

***I don’t have to make any adjustments***

This code captures when respondents say they do not have to comply to the workplace norms. Only one White woman and one African American man fit into this category. Neither of them explicitly stated that they did not have to adjust; rather, there were no codes recalling that they did have to adjust. None of our African American women respondents did not talk about adjusting to the workplace norms. White men are



the only participants who explicitly stated they did not have to adjust to the work norms, but only a few. For example, “I can't I don't really think of something that I had to change behaviors,” said Douglas, a White man

**Table 1.14**

*“No Adjustments” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	0/17 (0%)	1/10 (10%)	1/27 (4%)
White	1/20 (5%)	3/17 (18%)	4/37 (11%)
Total	1/37 (3%)	4/27 (15%)	5/64 (8%)

***I do have to make adjustments***

However, most of our respondents reported that they did have to comply with workplace norms. This theme shows that nearly everyone, even our participants with privileged race and gender identities (White men) had to adjust to the norms. This finding is consistent with the Kallschmidt & Eaton (2018) finding that a low-income background is still an influential and stigmatized identity even for White men who have experienced social class mobility. Further, it corroborates with Markus & Stephens’ (2013) work that proposed that cultural adjustments are required for people who move between social classes.

I think often, if not every day I have to adapt to those adjustments. So, as a African American Woman, there are certain micro sessions that afforded to us or

projected onto us, unfortunately still. Even though, I might be making X amount of money and show up into a meeting, I'm still the African American girl, or can still just even if I have a higher degree than other people, I'm leading the meeting, I still have to constantly prove deserving to be here until each other's and that often comes in conflict with like, like White women. So, I think for me and for a lot of African American women, when we kind of like talk about class you know, we might show up and then we could immediately kind of be downsized to or either were reminded of who we are and for me that is a pretty...it's an adjustment. - Sendi, African American woman

How to dress is tricky especially in sciences. You know, you're like in the lab and you want to wear clothes that can get messy um but at the same time you want to look presentable to go to work. But you know I think just striking that balance of being taken seriously and not wearing your best clothes to go to work in case of they get messed up. That's been something. Oh! I've only learned recently about collars. Wearing a collar gives you more respect and looking my time back in my post-doc, I wish I could have made some changes you know, like T-shirts of bands and slogans like that that I have worn. Now, looking back it's unprofessional. - Raea, White woman

Yeah, I had to learn how to navigate a world in which individuals didn't come from the same background as me so effectively I had to be able to navigate conversations and... I also had to change my focus and instead of focusing simply on the short-term gains, you know, take a work in a job and having enough money to do this right now, I have to think long term. - Jai, African American man

I think definitely when I went into the healthcare and higher education jobs I definitely had to adjust to a more formal or more office environment behavior pattern versus you know lifeguard I was you know pretty relaxed...in military you could somewhat be yourself in there. - Ian, White man

**Table 1.15**

*“Adjustments” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	17/17 (100%)	9/10 (90%)	26/27 (96%)
White	19/20 (95%)	14/17 (82%)	33/37 (89%)
Total	36/37 (97%)	23/27 (85%)	59/64 (92%)

**Perceived Consequences**

*No consequences*

When respondents say there are norms, but they intentionally do not follow them or are not held accountable for them. There are three African American men who fell into this category because they never brought up having experienced negative consequences in the interview. However, we do not have any quotes of these men explicitly saying they did not experience any negative consequences.

For example, when asked what would happen if she did not adjust to the norms, Michelle O. said, “I mean I honestly don’t think there would much change cause there’s not much I could do on my end.” - Michelle O., African American woman

I think if I would have been more concerned about how I looked you, how I seemed, and how I came across if I have like a research program that was pulling in millions of dollars... (chuckles) I might keep my mouth shut a little bit more but I guess the point was I had, I had nothing to lose by speaking up.- Raea, White woman

“Nothing really happened from it, but just the fact that whole thing occurred. I took on board as a ya know. Behavior that I was probably exhibiting it wasn't correct in the workplace. -Robert, White man

**Table 1.16**

*“No Consequences” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	1/17 (6%)	3/10 (30%)	4/27 (15%)
White	4/20 (20%)	8/17 (47%)	12/37 (32%)
Total	5/37 (14%)	11/27 (41%)	16/64 (25%)

While almost all our respondents reported adjusting, 41% of the men, most of whom were White, claimed to not perceive any consequences to not adjusting. Among women, White women were four times more likely to state they perceived no consequences; however, it was still a small percentage.

### ***Negative consequences***

Even so, most of our respondents stated that if did not follow the workplace norms, there would be negative outcomes, such as being fired or overlooked for promotions.

I probably wouldn't have my contract renewed. And I would have to look for employment at another college or school. And, um, because we only have three higher education ones and a community college, I don't see going from a university to a two-year college, that would be going backwards in your career. - 3MS, African American woman

"I would be fired...I mean quite frankly, if I hadn't made those adjustments, I wouldn't have ever been hired for any of these positions." - Alyssa, White woman

Honestly, I think that if I didn't make these adjustments early on. Following the career path that I've made, I would not have it, send it to the level that I am...I think I would have been received poorly based on them and their standards with colleagues, they would be colleagues, you know have no very little influence on your standing with the organization. -Jai, African American man

And and the anxiety was was probably the hardest thing that I have ever had to learn to deal with. Uhm, the other thing that was hard to learn to to ya know to deal with or get into is like things. I mean think about like stocks, nobody taught me that. Nobody taught me to balance a checkbook. Nobody taught me to balance a corporate credit card. Uhm, all these all these sudden changes, the anxiety. That was the hardest thing to get over. Uhm, I can't tell you that it's hard to deal with success. It's not. It's not hard to deal with a good feeling. Uhm. But what comes with that are these situations that that occur that cause this anxiety. When you're sitting in a room with all these people dressed to the gills, you look at 'em, you can tell like they come from money or something. And you're sitting in the room and you're like pair of Levi's and a ya know button up polo shirt. And you're just

like wow. Like, I'm not gonna last long. The the anxiety and the pressure, that's maybe one thing that I have that I can't shake. And I can't seem to get over. And I've been trying for years now. The one thing that I can't really shake or get over is like \*sighs\* when let me try to put this the right way. Trying, I'm really trying to search for the best the right words for this. - Boogie, White man

**Table 1.17**

*“Negative Consequences” Percentages*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	16/17 (94%)	7/10 (70%)	23/27 (85%)
White	16/20 (80%)	9/17 (53%)	25/37 (68%)
Total	32/37 (86%)	16/27 (59%)	48/64 (75%)

## **n. Discussion**

Our research confirms that employees from low-income backgrounds do learn new cultural norms as they move up in their organizations, and for many, these norms do change as they move up. It is consistent with Cultural Mismatch Theory, in that the organizational culture was not consistent with our subgroup of people from low-income background's culture. This mismatch is seen in our respondents reports of having to adjust to new cultural norms and the perceived consequences for if they did not.

Future research should explore the organizational consequences of this cultural mismatch. In universities, students' perceptions of compatibility with the institutions' cultural norms see the environment as more positive than students from low-income

backgrounds and report a higher sense of belonging and higher satisfaction with the academic and social aspects of their lives (Soria, 2013). On the contrary, first-generation college students perform poorly on cognitive tasks when they perceive a cultural mismatch (Ni et al., 2019; Stephens et al., 2012). Therefore, future research should evaluate how cultural mismatches in organizations impact employees' organizational belonging, job satisfaction, and performance.

Additionally, research has identified that students from low-income backgrounds who perceive cultural mismatch at their universities experience higher levels of stress and negative emotions (Stephens et al., 2012), future research should further probe into how this stress impacts employees. Social mobility itself has been identified as a stressor, particularly for racial minorities because it often requires them to move away from familiar social groups, and they are perceived as a "token" in new social groups (Martin & Côté, 2019). Further, when people experience social mobility, they feel more pressure to adhere to stereotypically White and male norms, indicating that a cultural mismatch is stressful (Martin & Côté, 2019). This research is important for employees and organizations because work stress has a negative impact on both (Applebaum, 2008; Chandola et al., 2006; Frone, 2016; Lamb & Kwok, 2016; LePine et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2005). When the employee responds to the stressor, if the stressor is perceived as neutral or positive, then the stressor may not lead to strain (Backus, 2013; Monat & Lazarus, 1991). However, if the stressor is perceived negatively, then the stressor could lead to strain, and this can have physiological, psychological, and behavioral consequences for the employee (Backus, 2013). Stressed employees can suffer physical ailments, such as increased risk of metabolic syndrome (Chandola et al., 2006),

psychological disturbances, such as increased work fatigue (Frone, 2016), and behavioral changes, such as increased counterproductive work behaviors (Tucker, 2005). These employee consequences can result in the organization suffering from reduced employee job performance and motivation (Lamb & Kwok, 2016; LePine et al., 2016) and increased intent to turnover (Applebaum, 2008).

None of our respondents consistently reported perceiving the norms as the same across race and gender groups. In our groups of African American women and men and White women and men, several of the norm expectations were consistent across groups. Roughly equal percentages of each group were present in the Compliance and Learning to Be Indirect codes. Around 1/3 of the White men and women and African American men were in the Shift to Independent Values category, but nearly half of African American women aligned with this theme. Belonging in the Phony Socialization code was almost twice as high for men in both races as opposed to the respective women.

Most of the norms seemed to be reported most in both women's groups. For example, almost every woman belonged to the "Friendship" code but only half of men did. Similarly, most women reported that the cultural norms in their workplaces changed as they moved up in their careers, while only slightly more than half of men stated the same. More women than men discussed having to become more assertive, and African American women disproportionately reported being perceived as "too aggressive," with African American men being the second-highest category. African American women reported the most additional labor, followed closely by African American men (50%) and White women (40%).



Components of privileged identities peaked out in these themes as well. For example, twice as many men were inconsistent about reporting if workplace norms were same or different for different race and gender groups, while almost every woman said that norms were different for different groups. This is consistent with research showing that White men are less aware of their privileged identities, and men are typically less aware of women's marginalization (Smith, 2016). Men in both categories were also more likely to say they did not have to adjust to the cultural norms. Only one White woman and one African American man, and no African American women, claimed to not have to adjust. However, most respondents reported adjusting to the norms as they experienced career mobility. This is consistent with Kallschmidt & Eaton (2018), who found that White men from low-income backgrounds found their class identities influences their workplace behavior. However, in the present paper, which examines multiple racial and gender groups, we find that the perceived consequences are lowest for White men. Half of our White men said they received no penalty for not adhering to norms, while only a few African American men and White women, and a single African American woman said the same.

Finally, this research is pertinent for organizations because social class migrants bring value to their workplaces. People who transition social classes have been to understand people with diverse values and perspectives; therefore, they can navigate social contexts effectively (Martin & Côté, 2019). Further, organizations that have more women have been found to have increased profits, number of customers, and sales revenues (Hellerstein et al., 1997; Herring 2009; Woolley et al., 2010), and organizations that are diverse make fewer mistakes and are more innovative (McKinsey & Company,

2015). Thus, it behooves organizations to harness the cultural prowess of all three of these group identities, by soothing the cultural mismatch that these employees are experiencing. Cultural priming interventions have been used to promote collaboration in schools (Gardener et al., 1999) and sustainability practices among consumers (White et al., 2019). Thus, it is possible to teach new cultural cues, and organizations might consider cultural norm interventions to learn cultural norms that will be welcoming to social class transitioners.

### **Limitations**

While our research team was far from monolithic, it is a limitation in our study that none of our interviewers were African American and/or men. This likely impacted recruitment efforts, particularly to include African American men, as they were not represented on the research team. Further, this lack of representation also likely influenced participants responses to interview questions, particularly from men respondents when they were asked about the norms women experience at work. Additionally, our study did not constrain to only one industry. While this strengthens our perceptions of the prevalence of cultural mismatch for employees with a low-income background, future research should investigate the specific cultural norm changes by industry, to identify more specific barriers that might vary between them. Our study was also qualitative, which was necessary to provide the rich examples to conceptualize these cultural norms. However, this data should be used to develop a quantitative measure to assess the prevalence of these norms in a larger, more generalizable sample.

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III. STUDY #2: ONE WHITE WAY: EXAMINING WORK NORMS EXPERIENCED  
DURING SOCIAL CLASS MOBILITY THROUGH A WHITE SUPREMACY  
FRAMEWORK



### **a. Introduction**

There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, “Morning, boys. How’s the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, “What the hell is water?”- David Foster Wallace (Wallace, 2009).

Wallace’s message to the 2005 graduating class of Kenyon College was that the most obvious and important realities are the most difficult to acknowledge and discuss (Krajeski, 2008). The sociocultural conditions we live in, including our cultural norms and traditions, are often taken for granted as natural, normal, acceptable, and correct, and not as expectations unique to one’s facet of society (Oyersman, 2017). Since people are embedded in their cultures, they rarely evaluate it as something they are “in.”

Much of our sociocultural reality in the United States is shaped by social class. Social class is conceptualized as a person’s relative ranking in society (Côté, 2011), and typically defined in four broad groups: lower income, working class, middle class, or upper class (Aronowitz, 2014; Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2017; Reeves, 2015). Social class has traditionally been measured by factors thought to symbolize status and power, such as income, occupation, education, social capital, and prestige (Côté, 2011). However, social class systems, like other cultural systems, are often perceived as natural, normal, and inevitable rather than contextual and co-constructed (Markus & Conner, 2013).

Whether they recognize it or not, social class an integral party of people’s identities, as it determines the homes, schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces people are raised in (Stephens et al., 2014). These institutions keep the classes separate, and

consequently they are socialized differently (Stephens et al., 2014). The social class people are born into shapes the hobbies they will entertain, the way they speak and dress, the food they eat, and much more (Jensen 2012). Class also predicts health and well-being, with Americans consistently showing improved health when they report being in a higher social class (Tan et al., 2020). Class is so profoundly important that even adults who have experienced upward social class mobility tend to still culturally identify with their original, lower class (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2022; Kish-Gephart & Gray, 2015; McCall & Lawler, 1976).

### **b. Social Class Mobility**

Social mobility is lauded in the cultural narrative of “American Dream,” which states that class mobility is attainable by anyone who works hard enough, regardless of their social identities (Chambers et al., 2015; Ellis, 2017; Grzeszczyk, 2014; Hanson & Zogby, 2010). This dream is still near and dear to many Americans’ hearts. A Gallup poll in 2019 found that 70% of American adults still believe the American Dream is attainable (Younis, 2019). This ideology is illustrated by the notorious idiom, “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps,” which implies that social class mobility is obtained completely through hard work (Yudovich, 2020).

Some people do move social classes over their lifetime, but it is not as prevalent as many Americans believe. For instance, in 2012 Pew Research Center found that social mobility chances were close to a coin toss, with 51% of Americans born to lower class parents moved up to middle class or higher (Pew Research Center, 2012). A similar study found that only 8.4% of American children born in 1971 moved from the lowest income quartile to the highest in their lifetimes. This number only rose to 9.0% for children born

in 1986 (Chetty et al., 2014). Intergenerational social mobility varies considerably across the U.S., depending largely on neighborhood segregation, school quality, population and family structure, social capital, and community cohesion (Connor & Storper, 2020), indicating that social class mobility is indeed influenced by external factors. However, beliefs about social mobility rates are divided between political parties, with liberal Americans underestimating it and conservative Americans exaggerating it (Chambers et al., 2015; Ellis, 2017). In fact, the U.S. today has lower social mobility rates than any other industrialized country (Paulson & O’Guinn, 2018), and is the most economically unequal of “advanced” countries (Horowitz et al., 2020), with one percent of Americans holding 30.4% of its wealth (Beer, 2020). These statistics are consistent with research showing that countries with high income inequality have lower rates of intergenerational mobility (Amaral et al., 2019).

### ***c. Social Class and Workplace Norms***

When people do move up in social class, they experience new cultural norms in their social lives (Martin & Côté, 2019) and in the workplace (Case, 2017; Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2018). In a study with White men from low-income backgrounds, participants stated that their original social class influences their behavior at work, even after moving into a higher social class (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2018). Some research has found that interactions between employees of different backgrounds can cause anxiety for the employee from the lower-income background (Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013). Additionally, employees’ original class background predicts their later workplace behaviors. For example, CEOs from lower and higher social class backgrounds have been

found to engage in more risky financial behavior than CEOs from middle-class backgrounds (Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015).

In addition to prevailing cultures within nations, organizations have their own cultures and subcultures (Boisnier & Chatman, 2014; Howard-Grenville, 2006; Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). These cultures emerge from workplace roles, environments, groups, areas of expertise, and levels of hierarchy. The additional subcultures within organizations (e.g., the cultures in different organizational divisions, levels, or branches) may be similar to each other and the overall organizational culture, or they can be drastically different and even conflict (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010; van Marrewilik, 2016). Since we perceive the culture we are in as normal (Oyserman, 2017), when a workplace aligns with an employee's cultural norms they might see it as fair and/or of little consequence. However, when the cultural norms of a workplace are different from subgroups within their organization, they can be discriminatory. For example, euro-centric hair styles have long been the norm for many White-collar organizations, while afro-centric hair styles and textures have been deemed "unprofessional," which discriminates against Black employees (Opie & Phillips, 2015). There is no federal protection for Black employees' hairstyles, but some states have passed laws to protect employees' rights to wear their hair naturally (Bennett, 2020).

This difference in cultures is called a "cultural mismatch" (Nyugen & Nyugen, 2020). Cultural mismatch theory (CMT) has been used to explain cultural differences in higher-education institutions in the United States (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). CMT claims that these institutions use middle-class norms of independence, and that these norms advantage students who have grown up middle-class and discriminate from

students who come from lower-income backgrounds with interdependent values (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). Students whose cultural norms align more strongly with the organizational norms perform better than students who do not (Stephens & Townsend, 2015). When an organization, either intentionally or unintentionally, upholds a set of cultural norms that does not include minority subgroups within the organization, it espouses discrimination (Stephens & Townsend, 2015).

#### ***d. White Culture***

In the U.S. as of 2021, White Americans remain the numerical majority (U.S. Census, 2021), and the racial group with the most power (Forman, 2012; Tatum, 2000). Consequently, they have the privilege of instigating and enforcing cultural norms not only for themselves, but also for others (Flint, 2019; Markus & Conner, 2013). Marginalized groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, are forced to adapt to the norms that privileged groups enforce on them. Understanding the history of how these norms came to be helps us understand how modern oppression is normalized and justified (Goodman, 2020). White cultural values center individualism, competition, expediency, and objectivity, which is different from other cultural styles that are more collaborative, have less rigid time norms, and prioritize relationships over tasks (Goodman, 2020).

Because they are the most powerful racial and cultural group in the United States and have the privilege of defining social and cultural standards, White Americans perceive themselves as “without color.” For instance, researchers have found that when students are asked to describe themselves, students of color include their racial identity when describing themselves, but White students do not (Tatum, 2000). When surveyed, 50% of White Americans state they never think about their race, while only 12% of Black

Americans report the same (Forman, 2012). This color-blindness is institutionally supported by organizations enforcing White cultural norms (Ainsworth, 2014). When Whiteness is the norm, anything that deviates from it is not valued (Ainsworth, 2014). For example, Black women are penalized at work for not adapting to White-centered beauty standards (i.e., light skin and long, straight hair) and displaying emotions through facial expressions. Black women are penalized by being stereotyped as angry, aggressive, and/or incompetent (Rabelo et al., 2020). These penalties result in Black women navigating their workplaces with increased vigilance and stress and reduced engagement with their work (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Rabelo et al., 2020).

#### **e. White Supremacy**

“Whiteness” is not a biological category, but a historical one (Painter, 2020). It was created as a political strategy to uphold White supremacy (Painter, 2020). White supremacy (WS) is the belief that people with White skin compose a superior race and should dominate society (Turner, 2018). White supremacy is imbedded in the United States and has been (and still is) used to justify systemic racism through enslaving African Americans and restricting their voting roles, stealing land and lives from Native Americans, limiting the rights of women, and policing who has access to immigration (Gaynor & Lopez-Littleton, 2021; Gerbner, 2018; Nakagawa, 2021). WS is often associated with violent movements, such as attacks on people of color by the Klu Klux Klan or the attempted eradication of Jewish people in the Holocaust (Blee, 2008); however, it is still living in cultural cycles, almost invisibly corrupting cultural norms (Markus & Conner, 2013).

Since before the U.S. was officially a country, racism has been used as tool to ensure the power of wealthy White men (Adams-Wiggins & Taylor-García, 2020; Malagon et al., 2009). Many systems in the United States, including the social class system, are built on racism and sexism (Liu, 2017). Racism is rooted in geographic control and economic inequality, with races being separated by separate levels of power and social class (Liu, 2017). Further, even White women were excluded from most paid labor and were consequently completely dependent on White men (Yellen, 2020). This system was structured to provide White men with the most control in a society, thus systemically upholding White supremacy (Eisenberg, 2021). Thus, White supremacy begot racism, which created the U.S. social class system (Cross, 2020; Liu, 2017).

#### **f. White Supremacy Culture**

White Supremacy (WS) is used to regulate, legitimize, and distribute privilege to White individuals. For example, WS has impacted access to housing through residential redlining and neighborhood segregation (Aalbers, 2013; Pulido, 2015). Additionally, it permeates our workplaces. Okun and Jones (2000) and Okun (2010) have argued that some White cultural norms in organizations uphold White supremacy culture (WSC). The facets of WSC are perfectionism; quantity over quality; sense of urgency; defensiveness; worship of the written word; only one right way; paternalism; either/or thinking; power hoarding; fear of open conflict; individualism; I'm the only one; progress is bigger, more; objectivity; and right to comfort (Okun & Jones, 2000; Okun, 2010).

The WSC framework posits that organizations may unintentionally support WSC and make it difficult, if not impossible, to be inclusive of non-White cultures. Consequently, even organizations that sincerely try to be multicultural may still impose

cultural barriers (Okun & Jones, 2000). For example, in academic work settings, White researchers to be seen as “objective” investigators, while scholars of color are often perceived as biased (Collins, 2002; Pérez Huber, 2010). Academia also exhibits WSC with its never-ceasing sense of urgency at the expense of pushing quantity over quality (Bañales et al., 2021). Further, the content of research has centered around White participants and then generalized to society at large, leaving out the experiences for non-White members of society and assuming they’re either not different from the White experience, or not important enough to investigate (Adams-Wiggins & Taylor-Garcia, 2021; Berenstain et al., 2021). This perpetrates the idea of “one right way” to do things...or one could say one White way to do things. We know facets of WSC have been identified in school settings (Adams-Wiggins & Taylor-Garcia, 2021; Bañales et al., 2021). However, further investigation is needed for how it permeates workplaces.

#### **g. Social Class, Race, and Gender Intersections**

WSC is not apparent to everyone in the same way. People who benefit from the marginalization of others have privilege. Privilege is not an interpersonal interaction where one individual bestows privilege on another; instead, it is the product of institutional forces (Liu, 2017). Moreover, there are intersections in people’s identities, meaning they simultaneously possess some privileged and some marginalized identities, which intersect to create unique experiences (Crenshaw, 1990; Overstreet et al., 2020). Since the American social class system is founded on racism and sexism, we cannot examine social class mobility barriers without accounting for potentially different experiences for women and people of color. The idea that social identities intersect and interlock to produce unique and emergent experiences is known as intersectionality



(Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1990; Rabelo & Cortina, 2016). Intersectionality theory contends that identity dimensions cannot be understood in isolation as they depend on one another for personal and social meaning (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Rabelo & Cortina, 2016).

Because their race and gender identities are marginalized, women and minorities may experience additional barriers to social mobility that are not present for White men (Cotter et al., 2001; Martin & Côté, 2019; Torche, 2017). There are also levels of marginalization within race and gender categories, as social class is a hierarchical system used to discriminate access to resources and power (Liu, 2011). For instance, working-class White men have different access to privilege and power than affluent White men (Liu, 2017). And while people of color have been breaking barriers in employment for decades, the highest echelons of leadership are still predominantly White and male (Liu, 2017). For instance, while prestigious law firms are hiring more Black lawyers, these lawyers are rarely granted the rank of partner (Cose, 1994; Scheiber & Eligon, 2019). Further, Black women bear the double-marginalization of being Black and women simultaneously (Hall et al., 2012; Rabelo & Cortina, 2016), often resulting in compounded biases and barriers. Of the Fortune 500 Companies in 2021, for example, a record 41 of the CEOs are women, but only two of those are Black women (Hinchliffe, 2021). Women make up 50.8% of the U.S. population but only 8.2% of Fortune 500 CEOs (U.S. Census, 2021; Women Business Collaborative, 2021); consequently, for these CEOs to be representative, there should be this to be fair so there should be 6.2x as many women CEOs as there actually are. Further, women of color make up 20.3% of the U.S. population, so they should be but only 1.2% of Fortune 500 CEOs (Catalyst, 2022; Dunn, 2021), so there should be like 16.9 times as many of them as there are.

In the present study, we examine workplace cultural norms that people from working-class backgrounds are forced to learn as they experience social class mobility through employment. Further, we analyze if and how these norms align with WSC, and how WSC workplace norms are viewed and experienced by socially mobile employees with different gender and racial/ethnic identities. To answer these questions, we investigated the cultural norms that Black and White women and men from working-class backgrounds are expected to learn as they experience social mobility through employment. We aim to address the following questions:

1. Are the cultural norms in higher-status positions consistent with WSC?
2. Does awareness of these norms differ between African American and White employees, men and women employees, and intersections between and within each race and gender?

## **h. Methods**

### **i. Analytic Strategy**

Presently, there is no validated scale for measuring WSC. Further, best practices in feminist and anti-racist psychology research, which aim to dismantle harmful narratives and center marginalized communities, support directly listening to the communities impacted by structural harms. Finally, as both social class and racial backgrounds can be stigmatized identities (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2018; Jiang et al., 2021), and discussing and disclosing stigmatized identities is a deeply sensitive experience for participants (Decker et al., 2011), we chose to use private, one-on-one semi-structured interviews as our data collection method. Interviews have been effectively used to discuss especially sensitive topics, such as post-traumatic stress disorder experiences (Kassam-Adams & Newman,

2005). Further, people are more likely to honestly disclose their stigmatized identities when they are interviewed privately instead of in a group (Wutich et al., 2010). Each interviewer was trained on cultural sensitivity in cross-race and gender interviewing, as described in the supplemental materials (Appendix A).

Qualitative research is important in anti-racist work because it allows for “counter-storytelling” -- stories told by marginalized groups that are not part of the mainstream (usually White) narrative (Bañales et al., 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Marginalized people who practice-storytelling disrupt harmful dominant ideologies by sharing their knowledge and experiences (Goessling, 2018). To answer our research questions, we coded data from one-on-one qualitative interviews that were conducted to examine the workplace norms recalled by African American and White women and men from working-class backgrounds.

We collected data from self-identified African American and White women and men, age 18 and above, who had experienced social class mobility through employment. All respondents had a background of living in the Southeastern United States. Participants were recruited via an online flyer shared on social media sites (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and through snowball sampling (Frandsen et al., 2014; Goodman, 1961). People who responded to the flyer were screened for adherence to the study criteria, and if they did, they were scheduled for an interview. At the beginning of the call, the researcher read the consent form and script and asked the respondent if they had any questions. After answering any questions, the researcher conducted an in-depth qualitative interview, which on average took about 1.5 hours to complete. Interviews were conducted by the first author and eight trained research assistants. At the end of

each interview, the interviewer told the respondent we were still looking for participants and noted any referrals the participant wanted to share. Data was collected until the themes collected reached saturation, which is the point in qualitative research where themes are recurring and no new information is obtained (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### **j. Participant Information**

Data was collected from 20 White women, 17 African American women, 17 White men, and 10 African American men, totaling 64 interviews. Of these respondents, 52 participated in the demographic survey administered virtually after the interview. Thirty-six percent of our respondents had a master's degree, 26.9% a doctorate, 21.5% a bachelor's, 9.6% an associates, 1.9% a high school diploma, and 3.9% claimed "other". When asked about their occupation status, 90.4% reported "professional," 5.7% "self-employed," 1.9% "clerical work," and 1.9% "blue collar." At the time of the interview, 75% were employed, 9.6% were self-employed, 1.9% were in the military, 5.8% were students, 1.9% was unemployed and seeking work, and 5.8% were retired. Regarding income, 55.8% of respondents made more than \$100,000 dollars, 19.2% between \$80,001 and \$100,000, 15.4% between \$50,001 and \$80,000, 3.9% between \$30,001 and \$50,000, and 5.8% between \$10,001 and \$30,000.

Questions for the interviews were modeled after the only study we found on a similar topic: a study by the U.S. Census examining the workforce norms that first-generation professionals learned in their agency (Terry & Fobia, 2019). However, these questions had to be edited to focus on social class background and workplace experiences outside of the U.S. Census. Further, the U.S. Census interview asked close-ended questions, and best practices in qualitative research recommend asking open-ended

questions, to obtain richer responses from the participant (Brod et al., 2009). Therefore, based on recommendations from qualitative experts, we adapted some of the language from the U.S. Census study.

For example, the Census asks, “As a First Generation Professional, have you had to adjust to the culture of your workplace? If so, how? What about adjusting how you speak or how you relate to others? What about adjusting how you dress or wear your hair?” (Terry & Fobia, 2019). Borrowing from this, we asked “When have you had to adjust yourself to the culture of the workplace as compared to your own personal class and/or cultural identity?” and “Some people tell me they have to adjust to the culture of their workplaces, such as changing their appearance, or how they speak or dress, others say they’ve never had to think about this, how about for you?” We also asked more questions about the respondents’ class backgrounds (i.e., “What class would you say your family was as a child?” and “Do you now work in a similar field to your parents?”), their work history and current job, (i.e., “Why did you first start working?” and “Tell me about how you got to your current work position?”). Importantly, we also explicitly asked respondents how these norms interacted with their racial identities (i.e., “How would figuring out or learning the workplace norms be different if you were from another race/ethnic group?” and “Tell me about any workplace norms that may differ for people of different racial/ ethnic groups?”) and gender identities (i.e., “How would figuring out or learning the workplace norms be different if you were a man/woman?” and “Tell me about any workplace norms that may differ for men?”).

All the interviewers were trained on WSC framework before they began interviewing. After each interview, research assistants wrote field notes where they

documented contextual information from the interviews (i.e., noises in the background, the respondent's demeanor, any information that was shared off the recorder) and the themes that emerged from the interviews. Several research assistants wrote in their field notes that they noticed themes of WSC while conducting the interview. The first author performed quality control every Friday, listening to audio recordings and reading the field notes. After several weeks of seeing this pattern, the research team decided to conduct deductive thematic analysis on the interviews to see if the workplace norms identified by respondents upheld the WSC framework (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). The codebook was created using the original article on White Supremacy Culture (Okun & Jones, 2000). Each facet's definition was put into the codebook, along with text examples from the interviews that served as examples.

The same codebook was used by all coders. In template analysis, the researcher knows which themes it is looking for in the data ahead of time; however, these themes may modify and change as the researcher codes the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; King, 2004). Two teams consisting of two coders divided the codes in half and coded the same transcripts together. Each coding team read the same transcripts (between 1 and 3 at a time, depending on the length of the transcript), and coded quotes where the respondent stated workplace norms that aligned with a description of a WSC facet. Then, each coding team met to compare similarity of codes and rectify any discrepancies.

The original 15 codes were reduced to 12 codes to avoid overlap (Okun & Jones, 2000). The team began coding for 15 themes but noticed significant overlap between three of the codes. Consequently, we combined three sets of themes to avoid confusion but not to minimize content captured. For example, both "progress is bigger, more" and

“quantity over quality” defined organizations perceiving “more” work as preferable, and valuing outcomes over processes. Additionally, “Fear of Open Conflict” and “Right to Comfort” both illustrated people in power avoiding conflict that would make them uncomfortable. Further, both themes portrayed the oppressed whistleblower being seen as insubordinate for bringing light to the issue, even though they are the ones suffering because of it. Finally, we combined “Individualism” and “I’m the Only One” because they both captured people struggling to work in teams, seeking individual recognition and reward, and valuing only themselves to solve problems.

The final 12 codes and their definitions were documented in the codebook. The coding teams re-coded all transcripts. The women’s interrater reliability was low,  $k = 0.42$ ; however, the men’s team had a strong inter-rater reliability at  $k = 0.80$  (Cohen, 1960). All discrepancies were resolved until team members reached 100%. Since the women’s team initial kappa was low, two women’s transcripts were re-assigned to a new coding team, and their  $k = 0.94$ . When all codes were combined in this final effort,  $k = 0.60$ .

#### **k. Reflexivity/Positionality**

Qualitative research is often criticized because it cannot draw conclusive inferences from data, and it cannot be generalized; however, this is not the purpose of qualitative data (Goodwin, 2020). Quantitative research runs the risk of portraying homogenous group identities through reporting statistical averages, instead of identifying the nuance of each lived experience (Reed et al., 2010). Qualitative research allows us to take a person-centered approach to a lived identity by listening to another’s story (von Eye & Wiedermann, 2015).

Quantitative research is often falsely hailed as an “objective” form of measurement (Goodwin, 2020). It would be tremendously hypocritical to code data looking for “objectivity” as a facet of WS and to not acknowledge the subjectivity we bring as researchers to this study. This idea further perpetuates other facets of WSC—power hoarding and paternalism. We operationalize these facets when we make inferences about and decisions for marginalized groups’ data, while often not telling participants what happens with their data. Our subjectivity as researchers can never be fully taken away; however, it has been said that “silence creates the space in which White supremacy thrives” (Goodwin, 2020, p. 80). We confront WS by acknowledging and discussing its role in our lives. Thus, it is critical that researchers decenter the idea of objectivity, decenter ourselves and reflect on our own positionalities and how they might interact with those of our respondents (Goodwin, 2020).

A characteristic of having privilege is to be unaware of the lack of barriers to success we face compared to marginalized groups (de Souza, 2020). Even with positive intentions, we will likely not self-reflect or conduct this research perfectly. We actively sought both to not act in White supremacy through this project, and to not perpetuate White saviorism (Willer, 2019). However, we reject our own “right to comfort”, which encourages silence, and instead choose the difficult and messy path of unpacking how our own affiliations with WS may have impacted the collection and analysis of the data (Goodwin, 2020).

The best way I know how to identify myself, as the first author, is to state that I am a White, heterosexual, cisgender, woman from a working-class culture in the South. I would consider myself as approaching the upper-middle class, based on my occupation



status, level of education, and income in the last year. Large pieces of my identity and culture are swathed not only in privilege, but in the act of oppression. I was raised strictly Catholic and politically conservative, and many of the ideas I once perceived as moral, necessary, and true, I now recognize as White supremacist (Inwood, 2015), sexist (Doyle, 2018), homophobic (Catholic Church, 2012), and xenophobic (Mumford, 2016). Before, during, and after this dissertation is written, I navigate the world as someone trying to unpack these years of prejudice while still loving and being intimately connected to family, friends, religious leaders, and teachers who continue to participate in these institutions and their values.

I am one of eight children. Both of my parents have bachelor's degrees, but my mother stayed at home and homeschooled us until I was 15. I remember my parents always being stressed about money but always having enough. I would say we were likely lower-middle class, even considered middle class as residents of "Smalltown USA." When I was 16, my parents divorced, splitting my family into two different classes, with my father in the middle class, and my mother fluctuating between low-income and working-class.

The questions that form what evolved to be this dissertation have grown from these tangled roots, which have shaped this project, these interviews, and this analysis. Thus, I have entered this space bringing with it the privilege of my Whiteness, heterosexuality, and cisgender identity, my history and current struggle with perpetuating White supremacy, my marginalization as a woman, and my suspension between three different social classes.

Further my gender identity influenced this study. I quickly recruited White women participants. The second-fastest participant group I recruited was African American women, followed by White men. I found more difficulty recruiting African American men, likely due to having no African American men on the research team.

Research has found that men are more willing to talk with women due to the cultural proliferation of heteronormativity and homophobia, which deters straight men sharing private and intimate information with other men (Jachyra et al., 2014; Mac an Ghaill et al., 2013; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2003; Williams & Heikes, 1993). If men interview other men, they are more likely to express behavior that upholds the male gender stereotypes of competing for dominance, suppressing emotions, and degrading women (Jachyra et al., 2014; Mac an Ghaill et al., 2013; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2003; Williams & Heikes, 1993). An advantage our all-woman interviewing team possessed was that the men were perhaps more likely to discuss their feelings due to women's gender stereotype of being nurturing, compassionate, passive, and nonthreatening (Cassell, 2005; Gurney, 1985; Mac an Ghaill et al., 2013; Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2003; Williams & Heikes, 1993). However, it can also be emotionally-taxing for women to interview men because they are often treated as less competent and infantilized, which can be oppressive and humiliating (Arendell, 1997; Huggins & Glebbeck, 2009; Lee, 1997). Women researchers are encouraged to leave room for silence during the interviews, as it encourages the respondent to continue speaking and feeling their emotions more authentically (Gatrell, 2006). Further, women are encouraged to reflect and journal post-interview on how their identity interacted with the respondent. Our team reflected on this in their field notes, in addition to supporting each other listening to each

other's sometimes belittling experience of interviewing someone who expressed misogynistic beliefs.

RAs were assigned interviews based on their availability. After each interview, the interviewer (an RA or the first author) documented field notes (See Appendix E). In addition to documenting the context of the interview, we reflected and wrote a response to the question, "How was your positionality (race, gender, class, etc.) relevant in this interaction?" We all agreed to upload the audio file of the interview to a password-protected cloud within 48 hours of the interview. RAs were encouraged to begin their field notes on the same day of the interview; however, to encourage quality over speed, timing was more flexible on when the field notes could be uploaded. The first author reviewed the data uploads every Friday and can attest that most field notes were uploaded within a few days of the interview. The first author reviewed the field notes for clarity and understanding, and ensured the audio was clear. She then notified the RA that it was time to delete the participants' audio off their personal recording device. The first author held herself to the same standard of deleting data off personal devices after ensuring that the uploads were safely in the drive.

Respondent's data was kept confidential with all information was documented under a pseudo-name. However, several respondents requested to be sent the finished product of this dissertation. To honor their experience and the gift of their story, we kept their e-mail addresses, with their permission, to send them this finished product.

## I. Results

### Perfectionism

This code captures when respondents who say they have experienced workplace norms that dictate there is no room for error, and only their faults are discussed. The group with the smallest representation in this code was White women (25%), and the highest was White men (53%).

I had to work twice as hard as my parents told me. You have to work even harder because you're Black because you will go unnoticed because you're Black. I had a parent not want their child in my class because I was a Black teacher. However, I was the highest qualified teacher in the building with the highest form of education so yeah and things like that because you're Black. Do I think a woman would have asked me how I could afford a Mercedes if I was White? Would she ask me that? Probably not. Yes a lot of those things happen just because you're Black. That's it, - Dr. Gabriel, African American woman

But the higher that you go, the more polished you're expected to be. If you're getting paid this amount of salary I expect you to be perfect. - Alyssa, White woman

Half of the African American men said they were held to standards of perfectionism.

And a lot of my colleagues and stuff like that didn't have any education and they was uh Caucasian and they moved right on up. You know what I'm saying, with no questions. And it was a couple situations where... \*sigh\* I was told to go put in because you didn't think you had a lot of other um, staff, that was gone and then the turn is on my behalf, why I don't know, you know what I'm saying, because

they felt like I should've been the one in the leadership position. Uh, not just because my education but because the way I worked. You know, I always at work. Never called in, you know what I'm saying, I was by the book doin things the right way, you know what I'm sayin, so they felt like, I was more qualified to be a supervisor, so a lot of people would go to bat for me, you know what I'm sayin, so they got together to get a attorney on my behalf, in order for me to get promoted, when I was just telling them that that wasn't necessary because eventually, they wouldn't have a choice but to promote me and stuff like that. But a lot of people did go to bat, you know what I'm sayin, so maybe tryna, you know, get a higher position. And then one time we had a um, a interview for the position, and everybody just knew I was automatically gonna get it, they was already congratulating me and huggin me and everything and they gave it to this uh, Caucasian male that had just started. I think he had like 6 months, at this time I had like 9 years, and he had 6 months, and they gave it to him - Donles, African American man

And I think that for me, that's something that, um, I won't say I ever felt an inferiority complex, or that I didn't belong, but I did feel like I did have to work harder and I had to work smarter and I had to prove that I earned it. As opposed to maybe you know that's just the way it is. In my community that I'm in now, yeah, we're upper middle class, you know, we got our kids going to soccer and baseball and you have your little group and that kind of stuff and you know everyone kind of has the same general role. Um, we don't think so much, but, you know, there

are those, um, but until you get to, it is hard to feel like, um, you've, you deserve the right to be there. - Matthew, White man

However, upon closer examination of the qualitative codes, three of the nine White men in this code said that other groups were held to perfectionism standards more. For example:

I mean just growing up and how we signal certain people when uhhh White people destroy half of Seattle because the Washington won the Super Bowl or something it's fans partying in the streets. When Black people are overwhelmingly marching for basic rights it's labeled as rioting. So bring that back down to a micro level. When someone when young White guys in a workplace makes a mistake it's cause he's learning he's being adjusted. If a Black man were to make the same mistake they may be looked at as being rude, disrespectful, arrogant. - John Perry, White man

**Table 2.1**

*Percentage of Perfectionism Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	8/17 (47%)	5/10 (50%)	13/27 (48%)
White	5/20 (25%)	9/17 (53%)	14/37 (38%)
Total	13/37 (35%)	14/27 (52%)	27/64 (42%)

## Sense of Urgency

This code captures when respondents talk about work having to be done quickly and without enough time and/or compensation. This could include having to act quickly without evaluating all options beforehand, or pressure to complete a task before being asked. This can make it more difficult for workplaces to be inclusive, democratic, plan long-term, allow for thoughtful decision-making, and consider respective consequences (Okun & Jones, 2000). Again, White men reported the highest representation in this category (53%), followed by African American men (30%), then White women (25%), and then African American women (18%).

Oh another big change that I forgot to mention is that, you know, when I was working every day and I got the same paycheck, my paycheck now, you know, because I'm on the visiting professor line, it may be larger, but it's only nine months. So there are three months out of the year I have to figure out what I'm going to do with my life \*laughs\* Or how I'm going to get paid or, you know. So as before, I got paid less but that check was guaranteed every single two weeks. - 3MS, African American woman

It's everyday. It's umm, you know, okay so right now the beach, Miami Beach, is not allowing... everything has to be recyclable ware. I said I have a heart for sustainability so everything I use is already eco-friendly but then I noticed my condiments are not. It's actually like a tin foil mayonnaise, mustard, and ketchup so, now I'm calling the company to find out exactly what that packaging is and then what else can they offer me because I need ecofriendly. But this is something like it's black and white, I have to have it right, because I could be fined. So that

just changed. And then, you know, the clocks just went back. You think, “Great, so it’s gonna get dark at 5:00, we’re all gonna go home?” No, ‘cause right now another restaurant is going to open so they’re going to have us... we’re going to now open up an hour later. We’re going to stay open till 6:00 o’clock in like another week. And guess what? That might not even go well. But it’s again, now motivate the team and like get them to buy it because we all really like leaving at 5:00 o’clock but that’s going to change. And it’s just even when I go, for instance, this weekend right now we’re going to have a tropical depression and it’s supposed to rain all day tomorrow um, but it’s beautiful out right now, the calm before the storm. So we can’t even pack up all the chairs and stuff. So tomorrow, now all of a sudden, instead of making money, working, doing my normal day, we have to be “flexible” again, right? And probably in the rain, moving lounge chairs down, securing umbrellas, and we’re...it’s not talking small projects. It’s gonna take us hours. So it’s just constantly um... change, changes, and you have to be adaptable and flexible. - Holly, White woman

I’ve learned how to handle stress. Like, I’m talking about some serious, serious stress when you know... a good example is...you know, they’ve got a woman cut open there about to put these implants in her and they’re the wrong size and I am responsible to fixing it because I-I’m the purchaser for the OR and I kind of help manage some of the inventory. So, you know, when there’s a problem and they need something like overnight or they need...and they need it, they don’t care where it comes from what... they need it. I’m usually the guy they call frantically screaming, crying and “I need something.” - John 2, African American man



I just did what I needed to do but those are the expectations. Oh then with time, it desiring to be done at a certain time sometimes he needed to stay past that time because there was still were been you to be done and so you could say you know I'm done now I'm done working now, I don't need to do any more work now and that's not the case you have to keep going and you can't stop even if the expectation is that you're going to stop at a certain time. - James T., White man

**Table 2.2**

*Percentage of Sense of Urgency Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	3/17 (18%)	3/10 (30%)	6/27 (22%)
White	5/20 (25%)	9/17 (53%)	14/37 (38%)
Total	8/37 (22%)	12/27 (44%)	20/64 (31%)

**Defensiveness**

This code captures when respondents defend oppressive systems in their organizations, or when they talk about other people at work defending an oppressive system. This could include when respondents talk about how the organizational structure is set up to justify who has power and who does not, instead of aiming to be inclusive of every person and understand their value and expertise that could be helpful in decision making. We have relatively similar and small proportions of representation in this group, except for African American men reporting the highest at 40%.

There was like a like a boy's club almost amongst the faculty where they were like covering up for each other for this. And, you know, whatever women just happened to be his victims happened to be his victims. And they kind of like almost gaslighted the, at least to me in my experience, they were like gaslighting the types of things that I was saying that he did as if like I was some sort of inept person within this environment that just couldn't hack it. And it was just very traumatizing. - Lynn, White woman

Additionally, one White woman displayed defensiveness herself:

Again, you know, I just... I think everyone's equal. So, I just think people need to just remember who they are and what they represent. You're either a hard worker and you really like your job. If not, find a new one. Like, however you make it for money but just don't do things that you don't love or that you can't do well because find something you can do well. It shouldn't matter. It shouldn't matter. I mean I'm in Miami right now. I don't speak Spanish and I have blonde hair and blue eyes, you know, I stick out like a sore thumb and you know it's, it wasn't easy. - Holly, White woman

African American men talked about situations where they had observed or been met with defensiveness when pointing out inequities.

Ummm I think I think [institution] is one example we had there was this racial incident that happened and and I and and I was working on trying to work on a thing or whatnot, and in my original words analysis like lifting my findings, all of these things that have happened to students on campus and my advisor umm was like you know can maybe. Yes she was like yes I get it, but you don't want to one turn people

off from reading the message from the people who need to read it. Number 2 you also don't want to, to make others feel I guess feel guilty or some type of way if they have experienced something similar but they didn't come forward with it and so for me it's learning to acknowledge just as a as an African American male umm The situation gets me fired up understanding that when I am in this position um when I have the...I have to portray my frustration and anger in different ways so people don't get turned off by answer people and understand. - Jack, African American man

White men in this category sometimes talked about the system being defensive, but sometimes also defended the system. For example:

Uh, yeah, it can be difficult for [racial and ethnic minorities], uh. Like I said I've seen it, I have seen it firsthand. Um, the, you know the. People are just, people are evil sometimes. Um, you know, just because somebody is, you know, uh, of a certain ethnic background that you know, other [unintelligible] people just give them a hard time and they, yeah they have to adapt to, you know... I mean they don't have to adapt to it, but they do adapt to it. I mean, uh, [unintelligible] that you constantly keep yourself in a negative environment, I mean you're not doing yourself any favors. - Donnie, White man

**Table 2.3**

*Percentage of Defensiveness Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	2/17 (12%)	4/10 (40%)	6/27 (22%)

White	4/20 (20%)	2/17 (12%)	6/37 (16%)
Total	6/37 (16%)	6/27 (22%)	12/64 (19%)

### Quantity over Quality

This code captures when the organizational leaders are more focused on outcomes than the process required to get to the outcome. It also applies to when “more” is perceived as “better,” and/or the amount of work and production never being “enough.” This code can capture participants talking about how all of the organizational resources are applied to measurable goals, but not valuing relationship quality, democratic decision-making, or navigating conflict (Okun & Jones, 2000). Additionally, this captures when organizations pay little mind to the process and only the outcome, and don’t care about the increased burden on the employee. This code was disproportionately represented by African American women and a third of White women. There were no African American men in this group and only two White men.

So how do I want to say this. Uhm, I've met some really great people, but I really did have the boss from hell. Like I don't know how else to describe it. Uhm, yeah. It just, it wasn't great. Uhm, it was just a lot of ya know contradictory statements being made. Lots of presumptions, a lot of back and forth, a lot of disorganization and I could see that I probably wasn't going to get what I wanted out of it. Professionally. She wasn't a great mentor, uhm in that way. And it was, it just became a lot. She kind of came from this idea that you just work yourself to death and that's how you give value to ya know your job. And I'm like No, I'm gonna do my job and I'm gonna do it well but ya know at some point like the emails stop

and the phone calls stop ya know I take care of my child and I take care of other things. So yeah, that was...and I'm just scratching the surface with that description. It was just, it was bad. Uhm probably about 4 months in I realized, eh this isn't for me. - Harper, African American woman

Um, and the one or two times that I've been in a male-dominated field, one, I didn't stay as long \*laughs\*. Two, um, um, and so like when I was at the [redacted-university name], when the leadership changed and the new leader operated from a more male-dominated paradigm, I, it, it was such a strong break from who I am and from the work that I wanted to do. That it was not long after that that I, I moved on to a different position. Um, but I think that as a woman there's some definite downsides because you know, like I was mentioning earlier, there's also an expectation that, um, we'll take on, we will do work that, that men in particular maybe like they'll see no issue and there's more of a norm that we'll be more giving and more doing. Um, and so, that that can, however that ends up manifesting in our actions it, it is a norm that I think is often out there. - Ginger, White woman

For my first company it wasn't like a culture that they printed on paper. But it was more of the reality of their culture is they had an expectation of just doing things good enough and doing as many things as you can get enough versus doing a few things well. From a young age I was taught and I had to work hard if I want any chance at success so there was a bit of conflict in how I perceived it as not delivering good work. Not delivering an A+ paper. Just by being able to deliver five B minuses. - John P., White man

**Table 2.4***Percentage of Quantity Over Quality Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	13/17 (76%)	0/10 (0%)	13/27 (48%)
White	7/20 (35%)	2/17 (12%)	9/37 (24%)
Total	20/37 (54%)	2/27 (7%)	22/64 (34%)

**Worship of the Written Word**

This code is when the organization requires everything to be written down, and other forms of communication are not valued. This can also include when people who do not have strong writing skills are not valued as much as people who do (Okun & Jones, 2000). We found very little representation for this theme. This could be indicative that as respondents moved up, they were not expected to document everything. The group with the most respondents in this theme was White men at 35% and least among African American women at 6%.

And a lot of people don't like to write, you know. You got people who are journalists who don't know writing. Or writers, or, you know, you know a ton of English professors, but someone committed to research is a different kind of writing. I'm taking up something totally different. So, I had to learn how to write. I'm still learning how to write. And, I have to learn how to write and do it in a schedule because I'm expected to publish twice every three years. And if I don't

publish twice every 3 years I don't add value to the department, college, or school that I'm joining"- 3MS, African American woman

Yeah, absolutely I mean, a lot of I mean most places expect you to speak English, to speak perfect English. To have correct grammar, you know, to be able to read and write English correctly, and if you don't you know it's kind of a... it's kind of a shame on you. -Alyssa, White woman

There are certain things that you talk with people face to face, and then there's other things you send through an email, so. You may not want to send that in an email because the person may feel like you're documenting them. \*Laughs\* You know? Like, you know, different things like that, um. I, I guess I've had to learn. - Malcolm, African American man

I guess you could say the informal, uhhh, the constant informal I guess would have been a behavior. Yeah taking more ... Yeah taking communication to a more formal level versus you know just communicating like you've known someone for XYZ...I guess that's very important, and I guess emails and letters. - Ian, White man

**Table 2.5**

*Percentage of Worship of the Written Word Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	1/17 (6%)	2/10 (20%)	3/27 (11%)
White	4/20 (20%)	6/17 (35%)	10/37 (27%)

Total	5/37 (14%)	8/27 (30%)	13/64 (20%)
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### **Only One Right Way**

This code applies when respondents discussed the organization only valuing one way of doing things (i.e., the work, appearance, interpersonal interactions). This encompasses the belief that there is only one right way to do things, and if people are exposed to it, they will see it is “correct” and adopt it (Okun & Jones, 2000). People who do not adhere to the one right way to do things are perceived as having something “wrong” with them (Okun & Jones, 2000). Almost all our respondents fit into this category, with African American women representing the highest percentage at 94%.

I would say I definitely think about it. I'm confident enough that if I want to wear my natural hair, I think it has to look a certain way, it has to look a bit more tamed or I have to compromise between OK if you're going to leave your natural hair, but you have to wear a blazer so you can look smart since they don't think that you are. So, yeah. The way that I look sometimes there is the uh, code switching that might happen in our language, depending who I am speaking to but then there's a code switching... there's like the hyper- visibility, the invisibility, from seeing too much maybe because I'm a curvy woman case but then I'm also completely invisible because I'm Black, and I definitely do think there is engendered racism that shows up in the workplace culture. - Sendi, African American woman

Well, I feel like every day as an academic since I've started. I mean...umm....in conversation in the hallway, what words I'm using, umm who I'm supposed to be deferring to. Umm...whether or not I'm supposed to you know acknowledge that the



professor is staring at all the women's chest or some stuff like that. - Tara, White woman

I think the biggest behavior was that for me you know... I just had to learn you know... you know, these are the lines that you...you have to behave. You know, you can't talk about certain things. You can't say, 'Oh yeah, last night I went out, we did XYZ, and then I got home at 4:00 AM. And here, I'm producing 110%, you know? You just... there's certain things you just you have to learn not to do, right? And I think I had to learn really fast in you know... when I started working and started moving up in class that that's something that you just have to be careful of this. But you know the office politics and the bureaucracy of...of... the work environment, right? And if you want go ahead, go ahead. Just asking for the story of how you learned those things, I would say I learned it really from watching other people fail. - John 2, African American man

So, I would say, I mean dress, yes, um. I should say I recognize there are things where I sort of fit, you've got a White male, so you know I fit a certain sort of stereotypically, like historically stereotypical image, which is just like, White male short hair. \*laughs\* Um and it's like, that was fine for me. Um, obviously- I don't know why I said obviously- I don't dress like business casual in my personal life, um, but I have to do that at work, so things like slacks, um and button-down shirts, you know, and my wardrobe is much more composed of those then I was a kid. When I was a kid I had maybe one button down or two for like you know, Christmas and Easter for church and that was pretty much it. Now, I have a much larger wardrobe of quote unquote "professional" clothes. Um, and that's mostly western business attire,

suits and stuff, um and the way I talk. Um, yeah, I definitely talk a little differently at work. Like I said there's the very words that you're using so saying things like "go blow an ocean" you know, "let's put a pin in that" stuff like that, the actual words, and then there's the intonation too, so. My family, when I talk to my mom I have a little bit of a southern accent because we're from the south and sort of, I don't think I have that at work. - Adam, White man

**Table 2.6**

*Percentage of One Right Way Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	16/17 (94%)	7/10 (70%)	23/27 (85%)
White	17/20 (85%)	13/17 (76%)	30/37 (81%)
Total	32/37 (86%)	20/27 (74%)	52/64 (81%)

## Objectivity

This code pertains to the idea that there is an objective/neutral/unbiased position to perceive things, and not that everyone, even White people, have positionalities and emotions. This code captures norms that view emotions as destructive and irrational, invalidating people who show emotion, and claiming to remove emotions from the decision-making process. These codes were represented by almost all women respondents, with 94% of African American women and 85% of White women belonging to this category.

The higher I went up the more I was aware of perceptions that I was given, that were given to me, so for instance XXX a colleague that has the exact same job as me and he could say something and I can say the exact same thing but then I would get a phone call and I would get a label of being aggressive or counterproductive of being working against initiatives, but I could have said the exact same thing as a colleague who didn't look like me. So, I was made aware that the higher I went, and so moving to another level, I just kinda made it work in my favor, so I knew what I was strong at, so it was all about...so just gauging that and raising things in question ...that's a big thing because a question is not really I don't know know, abrasive. If a Black woman asks like "maybe we should consider" "have we thought about considering" instead of saying "it would be better if" even though I know the position I have is better position I can't always outright say it because that would be assertive and abrasive, but if I ask it in the form of a question that softens it a little bit. SO I've had to navigate the way that I talk. Not my dialect, I don't change that, but just the way that I phrase sentences, questions, and things like that. - Kate, African American woman

But that was the biggest, um, change I felt myself on very consciously having to think about how to behave. It had to do more with masculinity. Although, although it is class too because of course the upper-middle class mentality is very rational, like a real emphasis on rationality versus emotion. Um, and I must say being wor-, raised working class, uh, I had to train myself to not lead with my emotional thought. Like if, somebody said something in a meeting that made me angry, um, if I reacted working class, I would say "How dare you say that!" pound the table you know and

of course that doesn't work at all! \*laughs\* in higher ed. They would just dismiss you as crazy. Uh, so you have to take that anger and say "alright, I need to make a, you know this isn't fair, I need to make a plan. How shall I behave?" And, you have that very high emotional intelligence to, to be successful in higher ed. Um, that is SO mature. \*laughs\* Unlike anything working class, at least that was my experience. Um, so that's the other way. But I-I-I, in my-my decode of that was more about masculinity/femininity. But, you know an equally valid decode would be just straight up class. - Elizabeth 2, White woman

I think learning you know how people respond how people respond to emotions ummm just being aware of how I may appear does someone both from a physical standpoint...but also just from like a expectation that I know making sure that when I walk into a room that I know what I'm saying I know why I'm here. To show that I know what I'm doing. - Jack, African American man

I had to report directly to the COO and he was very...I don't know for a lack of a better description he was like, ...he seemed like he seemed like the guy that could uh \*chuckles\* could choke someone and his pulse wouldn't raise right? I felt like he was a bit sociopathic, just extremely calm, extremely dry uh emotions and things like that did not play into, into his decisions and thoughts so I had to sort of mimic him as I was around him um to try to I guess maintain and retain my position. - ONS White man

## **Table 2.7**

### *Percentage of Objectivity Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	16/17 (94%)	2/10 (20%)	18/27 (67%)
White	17/20 (85%)	6/17 (35%)	23/37 (62%)
Total	34/37 (92%)	8/27 (30%)	42/64 (66%)

### **Power Hoarding**

This code encompasses when respondents discuss someone trying to exclude people from power, or someone feeling that their power was threatened by the respondent's work/expertise. These are workplace norms that uphold the idea that power is limited and there is not enough for everyone to partake in it. People in power feel threatened at suggestions of change, but do not see themselves as hoarding power or feeling threatened (Okun & Jones, 2000). Among our respondents, 76% of African American women and 59% of African American men identified power hoarding in their organizations, followed by almost half of our White women respondents. Only a quarter of White men fit into this theme.

So I think the--you know it still continues even as you advance as you-you know, transition and I would tell the guy who's my predecessor I'm like, I know you're preparing Scott for the job you know? Unfortunately, you Scott didn't even want the job he didn't know it at the time, but like he was literally groomed for the position. And like giving him all like the hints you know kind of how to interview for the job, everything...Um so the--they didn't really use language per say but it was more um, I

will give you example, I was the only person that applied for the job three times, the third time they finally gave it to. But it was always, oh we don't have a pool of candidates I was like, well what exactly are you looking for, cause I've been doing the job for 5 years now. You know? \*chuckles\* And...they wouldn't really have an answer, it's just we're looking for more people to apply. Well, obviously more people aren't interested. So \*chuckles\* maybe you could take what you have, but there's something with me that's the problem? Oh no oh no, you're more than qualified, and I asked about my qualifications, again there's something wrong with me or? And obviously nobody's gonna say oh you're a Black girl or you know, or whatever. It is out there you know. Um, so it was always just “don't have enough people to apply.” - Anne Smith, African American woman

Umm, I, you know, um, people who come from wealthier backgrounds you know they have their parents know people and those people act as more formal mentors or connect them with more kind of formal mentors and I think that's where I came to more a clear understanding that I didn't have one is when I became friends with this woman recently and um she worked for Fannie Mae and her company has a formal program for mentoring, and I was like ‘Oh right, that's not a thing I've ever had’. Like not even to, not even... in an informal sense outside of a corporate structure. And she... got her daughter a job there. I was like, “Ohh” (laughs), “That's how this works.”- Ann, White woman

Um, again, it's currently like I said I'm dealing with this hierarchy thing, and know, you know, how to operate. You know, um, like we have a lot of unspoken rules. Like if you're at a certain level you eat lunch with the people at your level. If you're, you

know, at director level, you eat lunch with other directors. You know, like.... it's very very clique-y. Um, like that depending on your position, you don't, um, \*laughs\* lunch down, or... You can't sit at director table, you- \*laughs\*... it wasn't lunch table situation, but, um, again like, the email situation. Um, I didn't know that because of my position I was not allowed to email or request a meeting from individuals that are higher up than me. You know, like, I. So I kind of got in trouble about that. You know, um, so I had to learn that, hey, stay in your lane and obey the pecking order. - Malcolm, African American man

Uhm in higher ed. yea lots of them, but uhm ya know very regularly uh you're put on uhm job search committees or uh panels to to make a decision so I'll just use the job search committee right...Uhm, on a job search committee, uhm, the-the higher ups give give you let's say four candidates to pick from and they want you to pick the top two...So they actually don't want you to, they don't want you to pick THE candidate, they just want you to narrow it because they're gonna pick it...And uh, uh, so like uh and then ya know when the, when the committee goes to hire uhm or makes their quote on quote recommendations. Umhm typically the committee will say well we pick person A uhm is the highest uh, did the best in the interview. Person B did, still did well uhm, but didn't do as well on X, Y, and Z and then they go and pick person B. - Tom, White man

**Table 2.8**

*Percentage of Power Hoarding Codes*

	Women	Men	Total

Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	13/17 (76%)	3/10 (30%)	16/27 (59%)
White	8/20 (40%)	4/17 (24%)	12/37 (32%)
Total	21/37 (57%)	7/27 (26%)	28/64 (44%)

### **Paternalism**

Paternalism is different from power hoarding in that it is not concerned with keeping power; Rather, it represents when people in power believe they are capable of making decisions for people without power, without input from these groups (Okun & Jones, 2000). This includes norms where the decision-making is clear to people with power and not those without it, or when people in power do not make any effort to understand the powerless groups' viewpoint. Interestingly, reports of paternalism were higher among White men than African American men and White women than African American women. This was surprising because African Americans do report experiencing racial paternalism from White Americans (Baker, 2015).

You know when you're a consultant or a project manager or anyone that's in a role and you demonstrate a degree of competence or knowledge and then there will be other people in your organization that may or may not have that same degree of-of competency but then ... you're an analyst, but then you're expected to work with someone who is a director of [redacted] which of course you will do, right? You provide the support in terms of project analysis, writing the insight around the data, writing the insight what the opportunities are. But you're really you're mentoring and



you're not the person that can um implement the change and so that's where sometimes, not even sometimes, quite often what I have experienced is you're just gonna rely on, on the analyst versus addressing the challenges with the person who is actually leading the organization. – Ella, African American woman

Well I think they already do have trouble within, not offering solutions, listening to other solutions, especially if it comes from a woman. Yea, all of those things.

Because they think they have all the answers so it doesn't to them that somebody else might have something good to say about that. – Marie, White woman

So it was, ya know if you're making let's say a ya know a half dozen different decisions from a faculty senate during uh, uh a month-, your monthly meeting, you vote on half a dozen different things uhm on a dozen different things. And 50% of those uhm that that the whole faculty senate decide on get rejected by the president... \*laughs\* - Tom, White man

Of the men, one White and the only African American man in this category brought up that paternalism is experienced more by women in their organizations:

And sometimes I wonder, why? Um. I wonder if it's because it's not a cultural norm for them to have a position of power, right? And so, because of that subconsciously... they don't speak their mind or show authority in the way that they probably should. Because I work in a hospital but when I say would I say to meet with a lot of these Chairs and Chiefs of the different divisions... If I have a Chief or Chair that's a woman, half the times if her assistant, or administrative, or order, or administrators for her division which is someone that works on the meantime... If that person's a male, 9 times outta 10, they'll let the male talk. - John 2, African American man

Um, different for women... Yeah, I mean it like, I “can I” and I was like “yes you can” because only the word shrill comes to mind. Cause it’s like, you know I like there are so many women, I know I’ve read like, they’re called shrill and told to calm down in meetings and stuff whereas they’re just sort of forcefully asserting a point, and it’s like plenty of men do it all the time, and honestly I wonder about the ways it affects my perception. I actually, the reason I was late to this is because I was in a meeting and I was very irritated with this person and you know I’m thinking about it and you know, would I have been the same level of irritated if a man had said those things to me? I would hope the answer’s yes because I like to think of myself as like, you know, an equitable person, we’re not perfect and the answer might not be yes. – Adam, White man

**Table 2.9**

*Percentage of Paternalism Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	6/17 (35%)	1/10 (10%)	7/27 (26%)
White	9/20 (45%)	6/17 (35%)	15/37 (41%)
Total	15/37 (41%)	7/27 (26%)	22/64 (34%)

**Either/Or Thinking**

This code represents norms that demand “all or nothing” of employees, where there is not a “middle ground,” compromise, or alternative. These are norms where behaviors are perceived as either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us, instead of

perceptions that behaviors can be both/and. Most of our respondents in this theme were White men (71%) and African American women (59%).

I'm looked at as aggressive, if I don't say anything I'm looked at as withdrawn, um...so I'm having to navigate that, but at a school Black school, for the first time it didn't matter. Because it was Black! \*chuckles\* - Eunice, African American woman

Yeah for sure. Men can get away with more. They can be aggressive for example and they're leaders or can do these cultural faux pas and they're, excuse the language, assholes, but still because they're quote leaders, they are still in the room and at the table. For women it's definitely different. Women are expected, even in this cultural setting, women are expected to be quieter and less authoritative and if they are more aggressive or argue loudly or raise their voice, then they are emotional and that kind of bias exists as much in academia as it does outside. - Morgan, White woman

Honestly, I think that if I didn't make these adjustments early on. Following the career path that I've made, I would not have it, send it to the level that I am. So, I was the director okay when times are providers. I think I would have been received poorly based on them and their standards with colleagues, they would be colleagues, you know have no very little influence on your standing with the organization. Whereas with supervisors I would have been perceived as not being the quote unquote right fit for the organization. - Jai, African American man

And adapting and learning all the nuances that come with interacting and providing stuff to senior leadership was extremely eye opening, different, and

were just naturally held to a higher standard. Regardless of the time that you've been in, experiences you have or haven't had. It was kind of like a sink or swim environment. - Jimmy, White man

**Table 2.10**

*Percentage of Either/Or Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	10/17 (59%)	1/10 (10%)	11/27 (41%)
White	4/20 (20%)	12/17 (71%)	16/37 (43%)
Total	14/37 (38%)	13/27 (48%)	27/64 (42%)

### **Powerful People's Right to Comfort**

This code captures organizational norms that prioritize making people in power comfortable, even when they are causing harm. For example, this could include penalizing someone for drawing attention to a harmful behavior committed by a person in power. Consequently, the norm in the organization is to avoid conflict and/or ignore complaints of injustice, instead of responding to the problem. There is an emphasis on being polite over being inclusive (Okun & Jones, 2000). In our respondent pool, African American women (47%) and men (70%) were the most likely to bring up this norm.

Well. If, um, an African American faculty member challenged leadership about the practices or being put on the schedule to teach classes, say, at 8 a.m. instead of 8 p.m., then just by them inquiring about it, makes them seem problematic. Makes them seem

confrontational. Makes the African American male seem as if he's trying to instigate an issue. - 3MS, African American woman

It's just difficult, um, because I think I've never worked in some place where I've been respected, even being a woman. Um, and I would, I think I would go home and I would tell friends that, you know, you know, this person grabbed you or this person you know kissed you, or this person leaned over or said something about your chest. And they said, "well, why aren't you horrified, why aren't you saying anything?" and I said "well because I mean this person decides my schedule and I can't say anything because if I say something it might affect making money and I'm not interested in finding another job. I'm not interested in finding another restaurant job." - Christina, White woman

I don't have the luxury of both being quiet and not raising the flag when I see something wrong and also enjoying secure employment and positive performance reviews. So, sometimes I'm in a situation where I'm the guy that's gonna tell you that you're wrong and you're not gonna wanna hear it and it's really challenging. You know, you wanna do a certain kind of analysis I have to tell you you don't have the data for that. You wanna drill the down through the variables, you don't have the fuels for that. You wanna connect these things, that's correlation not causation. So uh those kinds of things, you wanna use data from this source, that's not a system of record. That's not an official data base. Why did you choose this over that well that's not statistically significant. You think it's important because it happened a lot but it doesn't have enough impact. I'm that guy. So um, and when you're dealing with data analysis and visualization there's a lot of parts so if you don't know the data set very

well uh but you wanna speak authoritatively on it, as a lot of supervisors do, you put yourself in a very precarious position with me because I know it. It's like, you're gonna tell Michael Jordan about shooting basketball? Ok let's do this. Let's see how this goes. - Tony, African American man

Whereas, where I come from, at least and this might be very particular to my background, is people are pretty frank with one another as in if you disagree with someone, on a sort of foundational level it's not necessarily taken as offensive or, or mean-spirited to sort of call the person out of it. and say, "look I think you're just plain wrong on this, and then here's why I think why." And it's also what academics are happy to tell the public and each other goes on in academia. But if someone, say, presents their idea for paper, or a book chapter, or a project and you think it's just fundamentally wrong morally, ethically, or academically. If you place it in those terms and just say look listen, I think this is nonsense and here's why I think it's nonsense if you say it like that, they'd typically get all offended about it. So you have to couch your criticism in a language that makes them feel more comfortable, and then they'll sort of just go like, "Oh, let's agree to disagree." So this sort of, uhh...I'm sort of having to over the years get more used to sort of saying, like...just sort of couching any criticisms of people in as comfortable the language as possible for the person hearing the criticism. - John D., White man

***Table 2.11***

*Percentage of Right to Comfort Codes*

Women	Men	Total

Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	8/17 (47%)	7/10 (70%)	15/27 (56%)
White	6/20 (30%)	6/17 (35%)	12/37 (32%)
Total	14/37 (38%)	13/27 (48%)	27/64 (42%)

## Individualism

This norm is not about traditional individualism, which focuses on being unique. Rather, it is about working alone. This code captures norms of working alone and not valuing teamwork and collaboration. Further, it can be represented by people in the organization problem-solving in isolation, instead of cross-collaborating. Individualism includes people feeling that they have to do the work by themselves for it to be accomplished and having little or no ability to delegate to others. This also captures norms that value competition over cooperation, and little commitment to sharing resources. Among our respondents, White men and African American women brought this up the most, at 59% in each group.

“In the university is back being individual. You do your coursework and you go home. it’s not that community feel that we had in the elementary school. ”- Dr. Gabriel, Black woman

Don't expect things to be done that you, really have, to yeah... you have to check all side work. You gotta check people out. You can't be lazy, really gotta go check for yourself so that everything is getting done, you know, 'cause everything is important. Whether it be the server dropping their money or you know, the

cleanliness of a refrigerator. So really you just have them make sure you stay organized, like your opening duties or closing duties. And like really make sure people are coming to work on time. Everything just needs to be on point. You have to be ready for your shift even really the day before. You know, you have to be ready before it starts. Make sure you have like everything ordered.

Everything's in place. - Holly, White woman

I felt like with my culture or class growing up, the culture is more like collectiveness thing um culture and as I increased, people got more individualistic but um I felt more of my so that's one behavior of like mimic that and be more individualist for me, I felt like I was penalized for it...Yea and so in response to it like not doing that but kinda going back to my natural collectivistic like tendencies, um, and then also trying to protrude that more, um I guess to like be accepted and like feel more like um that I wouldn't be um avoid being penalized for it...Um more of I guess it's something that people um assume that whether it was race or whatever um that we've been individualistic or like mimicking types of behaviors they did. -David, African American man

So, it took me 3 or 4 years to really understand my job responsibility. And then that lead to the opportunity that eventually moved me up a couple of um levels um that describes that change from a low-level position to a high-level position. And I'd like to make a comment about that. One of the things that I observed was the people who were moving faster than me to these higher levels, grew up in families where they were aware that there's a corporate ladder and there's a method right? Of um promoting yourself and um demonstrating your



promotability. And I think because I'd never really been exposed to that, uh it took me a little longer that had been exposed to that. - Michael, White man

**Table 2.12**

*Percentage of Individualism Codes*

	Women	Men	Total
Race	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)	<i>N</i> (%)
African American	10/17 (59%)	3/10 (30%)	13/27 (48%)
White	6/20 (30%)	10/17 (59%)	16/37 (43%)
Total	16/37 (43%)	12/27 (44%)	28/64 (44%)

**m. Discussion**

Our data supports the notion that African American and White women and men from working-class backgrounds in the U.S. have to learn new cultural norms as they experience career mobility. Moreover, it presents evidence to suggest that employees' awareness of these norms is not the same across race and gender identities. Reports of the WSC norms of Perfectionism, Sense of Urgency, and Worship of the Written Word were strongest among White men, while Defensiveness was noticed more by African American men. Quantity over Quality and Objectivity norms were most often described by women, with African American women rating the highest in both. Only One Right Way was the largest WSC norm described by both genders, but especially so for women (86%). Paternalism was lowest among African American men and highest among White women. Power hoarding was discussed mostly by African American women but was still recalled by at least 26% by White men. Interestingly, Either/Or, Right to Comfort and

Individualism had closer representation of White men and African American women, which was an interesting contrast to literature showing the different experiences between people with privileged race and gender identities compared to those with marginalized race and gender identities. Consequently, these similarities hint at the importance of a social class identity. Future work should continue to assess perceptions of these norms in larger populations to see if this finding is generalizable.

### **Limitations**

While our respondents were representative of multiple identity combinations, the WSC framework is not fully intersectional. It does not capture the sexism issues women experience or the additional nuances of other stigmatized identities. Okun has expressed that she intentionally only focused on racism and not intersectionality (Okun, 2010). She claims to build on the work of Ron Chisom's anti-racism training, which focuses only on racism to avoid "escapism," the act of referring to other marginalized identities to avoid the discomfort of discussing racial injustice (Okun, 2010). However, Okun admits that while she focuses on race as an attempt to "go deep," it does not mean that the intersection of other oppressions is not important (Okun, 2010). Further, research has also found that learning about others' cultures increases people's awareness about their own identities, and understanding systemic inequities often raises people's awareness of their own privileges (Goodman, 2020). Thus, we see value in the WSC framework, as knowledge of systemic racism will likely heighten awareness of other types of oppression. Even so, in this study, we have examined awareness of these constructs while considering the respondents identities. We recommend future research continue to

investigate awareness of these norms among other identities, as well as which identities are expected to adhere to these norms most strictly.

### **Future Directions**

Future research must also impact the of WSC on employees of different identities. The outcome of WS is racism and inequality, which has numerous harmful implications. Racism has negative health implications for African Americans, a dangerous increase during a pandemic (Laurencin & Walker, 2020). Further, future research should explore how WSC impacts organizational outcomes. For example, organizations in Silicon Valley have used the “fail-fast mantra” to spark innovation (Henriksen et al., 2021). The idea is to tackle the most difficult components of a project first to recalibrate and adjust before the project is too far along, or to determine if the project is possible before wasting further resources (Henriksen et al., 2021). An organization that too strictly adheres to Perfectionism might suffer from less organization. In fact, avoiding taking risks is one of the reasons that the federal government is blamed for being slow and ineffective (Markus & Conner, 2013). Higher education has also been criticized for pressuring students to avoid failure (Dobson & Walmsley, 2021).

Another mantra in Silicon Valley is to hire the right people, and then “get out of their way,” instead of only doing things one right way (Berger & Brem, 2016, p. 68). One Right Way reduces an organization’s reception of other cultural influences. This has potential to be detrimental to organizational outcomes business owners care about, such as performance and accuracy. Research has already identified that diverse workforces tend to outperform homogeneous ones (McKinsey & Company, 2015), are better at remaining objective, keeping their cognitive resources sharp (Lieberman, et al. 2015),

and are more aware of their own potential biases, (Lieberman et al., 2015). Other research has suggested that having an out-group member on a team can lead teams to intake information more carefully, and make more accurate decisions (Phillips et al., 2008). Finally, businesses run by culturally diverse leadership teams have been found to develop new products more often than companies with homogeneous leadership (Nathan & Lee, 2013). Thus, future research must examine how workplaces can support cultural diversity and innovation, both to be inclusive and to support organizational success.

However, to reap the benefits of diversity, organizations must also be inclusive and equitable, which requires doing away with the notion of “color blindness” (Markus & Conner, 2013, p. 82). Because Whiteness is the cultural standard in organizations, it can operate invisibly to other White people; however, it can lead to higher stress and lower sense of workplace belonging for non-White workers (Rabelo et al., 2021). Culture norms dictate the accepted dress, language, forms of communication, and even style of decorations in workplaces, which prevent employees from underrepresented groups from sharing their own cultural norms and portraying their authentic selves (Goodman, 2020). Cultural norms in institutions create barriers for marginalized groups, such as bias in education, hiring, mentoring, and promotion. These limitations result in fewer women and people of color in high-level leadership positions, high-earning STEM fields, and pay inequities within fields (Goodman, 2020). For organizations to be truly inclusive, they must recognize that these barriers exist and seek to embrace a wider range of cultural norms to support the breadth of work styles found in U.S. cultures (Goodman, 2020). This is especially important as the U.S., and consequently its workforce, becomes more multicultural (Buidman & Ruiz, 2021; Frey, 2021).

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#### IV. SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

##### **Appendix A: RA Selection and Positionality**

My identities also inevitably influenced the selection of my research team, albeit measures were taken to provide as fair of a selection system as I could with the resources I had. Research assistants (RAs) were recruited twice throughout this project, once in August 2020 and a second time in May 2021 after four RAs completed their roles and took the next steps in their careers.

To recruit research assistants, I outlined the competencies I anticipated needing in RAs, based on my experience hiring and training RAs for Stanford's American Voices Project, another qualitative interview project. Based on these competencies, I developed an application on Google Forms and structured interview questions. On the application, I outlined the research study and was transparent I had no monetary compensation. I promised my future team research opportunities, professional development, and transparency about my experience applying for and attending graduate school. Additionally, I asked for the applicants' name, e-mail address, status in school, bachelor's major or expected major, their GPA, their resume, and two essay questions. The essay questions asked about the respondent's past research and work experience, and how working on this project would contribute to their long- and short-term goals. All applicants who applied were interviewed. The first research team (who conducted the interviews and wrote all the fields notes in this study) consisted of myself and eight other women. Of these eight, two identified as White, five as Latinx, and one as multiracial. Thus, a limitation in our study is that we had no Black and/or men interviewers interacting with our respondents. The second group of researchers retained three of the

original researchers, with the addition of five new RAs and a second author. Thus, the data was analyzed by people who identify as two White people, one Latinx/Hispanic person, two Black people, and three Asian American/Pacific Islander people, and a Middle Eastern person. The gender identities in this group consisted of one man, seven women, and one non-binary person. On the team, two considered themselves lower-middle class, two middle class, three upper-middle class, and one upper class, with two reporting experiences of social mobility. The team represented three different regions of the U.S., with four of the team members residing in the South, one in the Northeast, and four in the West. Consequently, all the data has been collected and analyzed through various identities of privilege and marginalization, some of which overlap with our respondents, and many of which do not.

To the best of my ability, I incorporated cultural humility and reflexivity, in the RA training for this project. The initial training took 16 hours spread over two weeks. Any necessary subsequent training was incorporated in the bi-weekly team meetings where we debriefed on the project, set project goals, and I hosted professional development workshops. Due to the coronavirus, and the cross-country nature of our team (with teammates in Florida, California, and New Jersey), all sessions were conducted remotely over zoom. RAs were trained on the history of economic inequality and racism in the United States, including portions on how research has been exploitative and abusive, particularly of Black women (Scharff et al., 2010). Additionally, RAs were trained on the project logistics and best practices of qualitative research, as well as briefed on my previous work on social class and the workplace (Kallschmidt & Eaton, 2018, Kallschmidt & Eaton 2022, & Kallschmidt et al., 2022). RAs were also trained on

Intersectionality Theory, the Stereotype Content Model, and White Supremacy Culture before being allowed to conduct any interviews. Assignments from these trainings include reflecting on their own positionalities as a solo exercise. They also conducted an exercise in small groups of only RAs (no first author present, to reduce power dynamics), to reflect on if and how they had experienced the facets of WSC in their own lives. The first author did this assignment as well with a group of research peers at her workplace. This exercise was intended to ensure RAs understood the WSC facets, as well as were aware of how we all can and likely have perpetuated these ideologies.

I cannot reflect on the positionality of my entire team, but as the first author I have an obligation to reflect on my own positionality as a White scientist. It is important for White researchers to practice cultural humility and to not seek validation from our respondents that we are racially aware, as this is self-absorbed and again centering our Whiteness (Hodgin, 2014). White teachers have developed positive relationships with students of color by demonstrating mutual respect, care, and trust, as well as an ability to reflect on cultural differences and be receptive to new ideas (Hodgin, 2014). Thus, it was essential in my interactions both with my research team and my respondents to avoid verbal commentary that would show a judgmental reaction to their identities and experiences. To hold myself accountable to this within my own team, I developed an anonymous Qualtrics survey, which I checked weekly, where my RAs could submit feedback on their experience on the project.

## **Appendix B: Project Training Agenda**

### **1. Intro to the Project**

Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. PST/2:00-3:30 p.m. EST

### **2. Consent, IRB, NDAs**

Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 12:30 p.m.-1 p.m. PST-10 a.m. PST/ 3:30 p.m. EST-4 p.m. EST

### **3. Intro to Qualitative Research**

Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 9:00-11:00 a.m. PST/12:00 p.m. EST-3 p.m. EST

*Solo Learning: Listen to an interview*

### **4. Protocol**

Tuesday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 12:30 p.m. PST-2:15 p.m. PST/ 3:30 p.m. EST-5:15 p.m. EST

*Solo Learning: Listen to an interview, Review Field Notes*

*Logistics-After the Interview-Video*

### **5. White Supremacy Culture**

Thursday, October 1st, 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m./ 12:30 p.m. EST-2:00 p.m. EST

### **6. Interviewing Experience and Best Practices-Courtney**

Friday, October 2, 9 a.m.-11 a.m. PST/ 12 p.m.-2 p.m. EST

## **Appendix C: Interview Guide**

### **Appendix A: Study 1 and 2 Interview Questions**

#### **Introduction**

First, what is a fake name I can associate with your data?

I'm really interested in gathering the stories of individuals who have transitioned from a low-status to a high-status position in your industry

#### **CAREER & CLASS BACKGROUND**

Let's start talking about your background and your experiences with understanding work and class growing up. Describe to me your parents' work and how it shaped your understanding of your social class.

- What class would you say your family was as a child?
- Do you now work in a similar field to your parents?

Now I want to learn about your own work experience? Describe to me your career history, from your very first job to your current position now?

- Why did you first start working?
- Tell me about how you got to your current work position?
- How would you describe your industry?
  - How long have you worked in this industry?
  - What stage of your career would you say you are in now?
    - Early, middle, late?

How does your own work impact your knowledge of class now?

Thinking of both your family background and your own work experience how have you transitioned in terms of your social or economic class?

- Do you feel like you have transitioned? How do you know?
- What class would you say you are in now?
- How is this different from your previous class?
- Tell me about any cues that you moved up in class?
- How do you feel about this shift in class?

Thinking about these transitions from your early job to now, let's talk about how you became aware of these transitions. Tell me about the factors that were important for making these transitions from lower status jobs to your current position.

Tell me about any new behaviors you felt you had to learn as you transitioned?

Tell me the story of how you learned that/these.

- Were there any other behaviors or cues you learned OR unlearned?
  - How long did it take you to move from what you would consider a low-status position to what you would consider a high-status position?
  - What factors made it easier or helped your transitioning?
  - What factors made it harder or hurt your transitioning?

## **WORKPLACE NORMS**

Let's shift to talking about workplace "norms". What I mean by this are the qualities and behaviors that are rewarded and expected in your current workplace. When you're answering the next set of questions, think specifically about the culture of the places where you have worked.

- When have you had to adjust yourself to the culture of the workplace as compared to your own personal class and/or cultural identity?
  - Some people tell me they have to adjust to the culture of their workplaces, such as changing their appearance, or how they speak or dress, others say they've never had to think about this, how about for you?
- Tell me about any ongoing adjustments or things you just have to learn as you continue in your career?
  - Tell me a story about a time that you had to make one of these adjustments?

Thinking about these workplace norms and adjustments in cultures, can you tell me who you had to enact them for?

- How did these expectations change as you transitioned to higher-level positions?  
How?
- Did they change with every new position, or was there a certain position that was significant?
- How do the norms change with colleagues or supervisors?

Some people tell me when they're learning and adjusting to norms that they perceive a stigma with having a working-class background, others say they've never thought about it. How about for you?

Tell me what would happen if you did not make these cultural adjustments?

- How would it affect experiences with other colleagues at work?
- How about affect your experiences with supervisors?
- How would it affect your career trajectory?

## **RACE/ ETHNICITY**

[If you do not know already (although you should ask in recruitment), ask, “what race and gender do you identify with”?]

### ***White participants***

Think about your workplace norms in terms of being a White [man/ woman] with a working-class background. How has your racial background influenced your ability to adjust to or learn workplace norms?

- How would figuring out or learning the workplace norms be different if you were from another race/ ethnic group?
- Would the responses to not knowing the informal or formal workplace norms be different for individuals in different racial/ ethnic groups?
- Tell me about any workplace norms that may differ for people of different racial/ ethnic groups?



--OR--

***African American participants***

Think about your workplace norms in terms of being an African American [man/ woman] with a working-class background. How has your racial background influenced your ability to adjust to or learn workplace norms?

- How would figuring out or learning the workplace norms be different if you were from another race/ ethnic group?
- Would the responses to not knowing the informal or formal workplace norms be different for individuals in different racial/ ethnic groups?
- Tell me about any workplace norms that may differ for people of different race/ethnic groups?

**GENDER**

***Male participants***

Think about your workplace norms in terms of self-identifying as a man from a working-class background. How has your gender influenced your ability to adjust to or learn workplace norms?

- How would figuring out or learning the workplace norms be different if you were a woman?
- Would the responses to not knowing the informal or formal workplace norms be different for women?
- Tell me about any workplace norms that may differ for women?

--OR--

***Female participants***

Think about your workplace norms in terms of self-identifying as a woman from a working-class background. How has your gender influenced your ability to adjust to or learn workplace norms?

- How would figuring out or learning the workplace norms be different if you were a man?
- Would the responses to not knowing the informal or formal workplace norms be different for men?

Tell me about any workplace norms that may differ for men?

**TOOLS FOR SUCCESS.**

So, let's close out by looking at the factors that help you reach where you are now. What types of informal or formal support systems were critical in preparing to be promoted in your current job?

- What types of professional development opportunities were available to you? (e.g. mentors, mentoring programs)

- What has been your experience with mentors or networking in terms of helping you transition?
- What types of familial or friend supports were available to you?
- Do you think that most individuals like you have access to these same support systems?

Looking ahead, please tell me where you envision your career going next and what is needed to get there as a person from a working-class background.

- Do you think you have the adequate preparation, opportunities and experiences?
- Is there anything about your career preparation you would have changed?
  - How so?

They say there are growing divides among the classes. As someone who has shifted across them your insight on the future of moving up is important. What do you think of the idea of someone pulling themselves up by their bootstraps?

- Some people say the modern generation isn't doing as well as their parents were at their age, what do you think about that?
  - Do you think future generations will do as well as their parents are now?
- Do you think people have the job prospects now needed for social mobility?
- How has living through the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your perceptions of social class mobility?

- What needs to be done to help working class young adults wanting to move up the career pipeline like you have?

I do have a brief survey I'll ask if I can send you. Before I do that, and turn off the recorder, do you have any final comments?

**How would you like me to send you the incentive?**

**We are still recruiting participants. If you have any friends you would recommend, please give them our contact info!**

## Appendix D: Survey

Q1 What is your requested pseudo name?

---

Q2 What is your age?

---

Q3 What is your gender?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Transgender (3)
- ☐ Nonbinary (4)
- ☐ Other (5)
- ☐ I'd rather not say (6)

Q4 What is your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ African American/Black (2)
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino (3)

- o Asian (4)
- o Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- o Other (6)

Q5 What is your highest level of education?

- o High School Diploma/GED (1)
- o Associate's Degree (2)
- o Undergraduate Degree (3)
- o Master's Degree (4)
- o Doctoral Degree (5)
- o Trade School/Professional School (6)
- o Other (7) \_\_\_\_\_

Q6 What is the highest level of education obtained by your parents?

- o High School Diploma/GED (1)
- o Associate's Degree (2)
- o Undergraduate Degree (3)
- o Master's Degree (4)
- o Doctoral Degree (5)
- o Trade School/Professional School (6)
- o Other (7) \_\_\_\_\_

Q7 What is your current occupation?

- ☐ Blue Collar or Service Work (1)
- ☐ Clerical (2)
- ☐ Self-Employed (3)
- ☐ Professional or Managerial (4)

Q8 What was/is your parents' occupation?

- ☐ Blue Collar or Service Work (1)
- ☐ Clerical (2)
- ☐ Self-Employed (3)
- ☐ Professional or Managerial (4)

Q9 What is your current household income?

- ☐ \$10,000 or less (1)
- ☐ \$10,001-\$30,000 (2)
- ☐ \$30,001-\$50,000 (3)
- ☐ \$50,001-\$80,000 (4)
- ☐ \$80,001-\$100,000 (5)
- ☐ \$100,001 or More (6)

Q11 What was your childhood household's income?

- ☐ \$10,000 or less (1)
- ☐ \$10,001-\$30,000 (2)
- ☐ \$30,001-\$50,000 (3)

- o \$50,001-\$80,000 (4)
- o \$80,001-\$100,000 (5)
- o \$100,001 or More (6)

Q12 What is your marital status?

- o Single, never married (1)
- o Married or Domestic Partnership (2)
- o Widowed (3)
- o Divorced/Separated (4)

Q13 Employment Status

- o Employed for wages (1)
- o Self-employed (2)
- o Military (3)
- o A student (4)
- o A volunteer (5)
- o A homemaker (6)
- o Out of work and looking for work (7)
- o Out of work and not looking for work (8)
- o Retired (9)
- o Unable to work (10)



Q14 Where do you currently live (zip code)?

---

Q15 Now, I am going to ask a few questions about your personal finances. If you do not wish to answer any of these questions, please select the “I decline” option. Remember, all of these answers are anonymous and will be kept confidential

- ☐ I understand (1)
- ☐ I do not understand (2)

Q16 Do you rent or own your home?

- ☐ Rent (1)
- ☐ Own (2)
- ☐ Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I decline (4)

Q18 Do you rent/own/other a home by yourself, or with others?

- ☐ By myself (1)
- ☐ With others (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I decline (3)

Q19 If you own, do you have a mortgage?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q17 What kind of mortgage do you have?

- ☐ VA (1)
- ☐ Fannie Mae (2)
- ☐ Freddie Mac (3)
- ☐ Conventional (4)
- ☐ Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I decline (6)

Q20 How much credit card debt do you carry each month?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q21 How much other debt do you carry each month?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q22 Does your employer provide your health insurance?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No, I have insurance through other means (2)

\_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ No, I do not have insurance (3)

Q23 Did you sign up for Obama Care?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Q24 Do you have dental insurance?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

End of Block: Default Question Block

## **Appendix E: Field Notes Template**

### **Social Class Background and Workplace Norms: Field Notes**

Interviewer:

Participant Pseudonym:

Date:

Time:

Race:

Gender:

Lowest class:

Highest Class:

### **Summary**

*Please summarize this person's story into roughly a paragraph.*

### **Interview Context:**

*Describe the respondent's disposition during the interview [tone of voice, attentiveness, etc.]*

*Were there any distractions/noises in the background?*

*Did the respondent reveal any information while the tape recorder was off?*

*Is there any additional context that would be helpful for someone listening to the interview to know?*

### **Career and Class Background**

*Which class did this person transition to and from?*

*What was their first job and the job they have now?*

*Anything else notable about their class transition?*

### **Workplace Norms**

*Did they recall any norms they had to learn? If so, summarize which ones.*

### **Race/Ethnicity, Gender**

1. *Did the participant say anything that implied their race identity may be relevant in their class and/or career transition?*
2. *Did the participant say anything that implied their gender identity may be relevant in their class and/or career transition?*
3. *Did the participant explicitly say anything about their race, related to their career or social class?*

4. *Did the participant explicitly say anything about their gender, related to their career or social class change?*
5. *How was your positionality (race, gender, class, etc.) relevant in this interaction?*

### **Tools for Success**

*What did the participant say helped them make their class and career transition?*

*What did they think of “bootstrapping?”*

*What did the participant recommend for future employees trying to transition?*

*Based on this interaction, what workplace/policy recommendations would you make?*

### **Conclusion**

*Is there anything else that you think is important to know about this interview?*

*Based on this interaction, what themes/codes would you recommend we investigate?*

## VITA

### ANNA KALLSCHMIDT

- 2015                      B.A., Psychology  
University of South Florida  
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- 2018                      M.S., Psychology  
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### SELECT PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

1. Grusky, D.B., Carpenter, A., Graves, E., Kallschmidt, A., Mitnik, P., Nichols, B., & Snipp, C.M. (2021). [The rise of the noxious contract](#). *The American Voices Project Crisis Monitoring Series*.
2. Kallschmidt, A.M., Mesmer-Magnus, J., Viswesvaran, C., & Deshpande, S. (Expected September 2020). Evaluation of cross-cultural training: A review. In D. Landis (Ed.), [Handbook of Intercultural Training](#). Cambridge University Press.
3. Kallschmidt, A., & Eaton, A. A., (2018). [Are lower social class origins stigmatized at work? A qualitative study of social class concealment and disclosure among White men employees who experienced upward mobility](#). *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2018.08.010
4. Kallschmidt, A.M., Eaton, A.A., An Outsider-within: Identities of low-income background White men at work.
5. Kallschmidt, A.M., Williams, W.R., & Eaton, A.A., Bootstraps to Blessings: Examining the ideologies of White low-income men after economic mobility.
6. Kallschmidt, A.M., Eaton, A.A., Marconcini, B., Rodriguez, K., & Berthiaume (2021, August). 'Nobody Taught Me This': How learning 'professional' expectations is different based on your race, gender, and social class. Oral presentation in Social class and gender in working lives across the globe: An intersectional perspective

- (L. Reiss and W. Mayrhofer, Chair) presented at the Academy of Management Conference, Virtual Conference.
7. Kallschmidt, A. M., & Eaton, A. A. (2021, April). *The visibility and nature of upper-class workplace norms: How class, race, and gender affect individuals' experiences with upper-class workplace norms*. Oral presentation in Intersectionality at work: Navigating multiple stigmatized identities (D. Burrows, Chair) to be presented at the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference, New Orleans, LA.
  8. Kallschmidt, A.M. (2020, December). After the wages are won: The behavioural influence of a low-income background after social mobility. Invited oral presentation to be given at the Centennial Congress of Applied Psychology, in Cancun, Mexico (Cancelled due to COVID-19).
  9. Kallschmidt, A.M., Vaghef, K., & Eaton, A.A. (2020, August). Do social class background and work ethic beliefs influence the use of flexible work arrangements? Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association (Division 14) Virtual Conference.
  10. Kallschmidt, A.M., & Eaton, A.A. (2019, June). *Power, (in)visibility, and hypervisibility in the context of work*. Oral symposium at the Society for the Psychological Study of Social issues Conference, in San Diego, CA.
  11. Kallschmidt, A.M., Williams, W.R., & Eaton, A.A., (2019, June). *Identities and Ideologies of White Low-Income Men after Economic Mobility*. Oral presentation at the Society for the Psychological Study of Social issues Conference, in San Diego, CA.
  12. Kallschmidt, A.M., Le Sante, D., & Viswesvaran, C., (2019, May). *Mentor Matching Based on Occupational Interest*. Poster presented at the Association of Psychological Science Annual Convention, in Washington, D.C.
  13. Kallschmidt, A., Eaton, A.A., & Williams, W.R. (2018, June). *An outsider-within: Identities of low-income background White men at work*. Poster presented at the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues Conference, in Pittsburgh, PA.
  14. Kallschmidt, A. M. & Santana, D., (2018, April). *Cross-cultural storytelling: How to navigate the American workforce culture*. Invited oral presentation at the Florida International University Engineering Center's Hurricane Banquet.
  15. Kallschmidt, A. & Eaton, A.A. (2018, April). *Social Class Disclosure*. Poster presented at the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologist's Conference, in Chicago, IL.