

CLASSISM OUTSIDE OF CLASS:
SOCIAL CLASS AND FACULTY-STAFF RELATIONS

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

Classism is an oppressive form of negative interpersonal behavior that occurs because of different social classes. Compared to other forms of oppression (e.g., sexism, racism), classism is understudied in organizational contexts. The purpose of this study was to address this gap in the literature by examining experiences and outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, turnover intentions, affective organizational commitment, and psychological distress) of classism from faculty toward staff in a university context. Staff social class status (i.e., education, income) and organizational actions against interpersonal mistreatment were also examined as moderators of this relationship. Data came from a sample of 252 staff (80% female, 76% white) employed at a large southern university in the United States who completed an online survey. While there was no clear group of employees who were the most impacted by experiencing classism, results suggest that classism is prevalent in the workplace and it is harmful to employees. This study demonstrates the need to study classism in different contexts and not expect employees who are the lowest ranked to be most negatively affected.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supervised by a thesis committee consisting of Associate Professor Kathi N. Miner [advisor] of the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, Professor Mindy E. Bergman of the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, and Professor George B. Cunningham of the Department of Health and Kinesiology.

All other work conducted for the thesis was completed by the student, under the advisement of Kathi N. Miner.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Decades of psychological research have focused on how sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression affect individuals. However, one form of oppression, classism, has received considerably less attention (Côté, 2011; Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013; Thompson & Subich, 2013). For example, in their content analysis of counseling psychology journals between the years of 1981 and 2000, Liu et al. (2004a), found that only 18% of the reviewed articles included social class as a variable and even then, social class was often not the main focus those articles. Moreover, since 2000, a quick search through article titles on PsycINFO displayed that only 102 articles on social class in general were published in psychology journals. In 2006, the American Psychological Association (APA) released “Task Force on Socioeconomic Status” highlighting the association’s concern about psychology’s lack of research on class inequity. Research on classism in organizational science is especially sparse (Côté, 2011).

Classism refers to the oppression of an individual based on the individual’s social class status. Classism permeates people’s everyday lives, including their jobs, schools, and neighborhoods, and anywhere in which people are grouped or judged based on their social or economic statuses (Ostrove & Cole, 2003). Lott (2002) describes that discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice constitute classism, and quotes Moon and Rolison (1998, pp. 132) that classism results from unequal “class privilege (i.e., unearned advantage and conferred dominance) and power.” Therefore, as with other forms of oppression and inequality, classism often results in mistreatment toward others

who do not “belong” to the dominant (i.e., higher social class) group leading to negative consequences for the subordinate (i.e., lower social class) group (Aosved & Long, 2006; Collins & Yeskel, 2005; Schwalbe, et al., 2000).

The purpose of the present study was to examine experiences of classism in a work context and how those experiences affect employees’ occupational well-being. To begin identifying steps that can be taken to curb classist behavior in organizations, I also examine the extent to which organizational actions against mistreatment buffer the negative effects associated with experiencing classism at work. I expect that experiencing classism at work relates to detriments in occupational well-being for employees, that the relationship between experiencing classism and negative well-being is strongest for employees in lower social classes, and that organizational actions against mistreatment buffer the negative effects of experiencing classism. Moreover, researchers who have studied the effects of classism have often utilized samples consisting of university students (Allan, Garriott, & Keene, 2016; Backhaus, 2009; Thompson & Subich, 2013; Aosved, Long, & Voller, 2009). I wanted to study classism involving individuals of a different role from student (i.e., workers). Therefore, I test the hypotheses in a sample of employees in a work context: faculty and staff employed at a university.

Conceptualization of Classism

To fully understand classism, social class also needs to be understood because they are interconnected, dependent constructs, much like gender and sexism or race and racism (Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett Jr., 2004b). *Social class* is a

combination of economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1987), and is typically assessed objectively through indices of income, education, and occupational prestige as well as through subjective comparisons to other people (Côté, 2011; Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013; Liu et al., 2004b). Therefore, social class is an identity rooted in objective material resources and subjective comparisons relative to others. Based on these social class assessments, a sophisticated hierarchical stratification of social class groups is formed (Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013). These social class groups affect the identities individuals form about themselves and how they identify with others.

People's tendencies to form groups based on social class indices is supported by social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT proposes that the salience of a particular category (e.g. occupational rank) shapes an individual's identity (Huddy, 2004) and which social groups they identify with (e.g., the different levels of rankings within an organization serve as identifiers). When people identify with a certain group, they have a preference for this group (i.e. the in-group) over other groups (i.e. the out-groups). Thus, when people categorize themselves, they categorize others (i.e. whether others belong in the in- or out-group) as well. In this way, others become depersonalized as they become viewed as embodiments of their groups' attributes (Hogg, 2006). SIT hones in on the prejudice, discrimination, and conditions that bolster and maintain different types of intergroup behaviors as people categorize, judge, and depersonalize others based on their social groups (Hogg, 2006). Social class is a common grouping category that serves as a major identity for people (DiMaggio, 2012). Thus, people are

more likely to identify with and favor people who are members of their same social class group leading to differential behaviors toward others based on their social class status.

Previous researchers described classism in terms of negative treatment and attitudes toward the poor (Lott, 2002) and defined it in this context as unearned privilege and power associated with having a higher socioeconomic status. However, Liu et al. (2004a) found this aspect of the definition lacking and thus extended the definition of classism to include negative treatment of upper class individuals by lower class individuals broadening the original definition of classism from unidirectional to multidirectional (i.e., downward, upward, and lateral classism). Liu (2001) defined classism as “prejudice and discrimination based on social class resulting from individuals from different perceived social classes” (pp. 137). In contrast to Liu’s (2001) definition, Smith (2005) described classism as exclusively the oppression of lower class individuals by upper class individuals. Liu (2001) and Liu et al.’s (2004a) definition of classism opposed Lott (2002) and Smith’s (2005) definition resulting in two schools of thought in the classism literature.

The key difference between the two definitions of classism is Liu’s (2001) definition neglects the power dimension associated with classism. Lau, Cho Chang, and Huang (2013) explain that while any social class can have biased attitudes against another social class (i.e., upward, downward, and lateral classist attitudes), these class-based prejudices do not constitute classism. Poor people do not have the power to engage their biases against people who are in higher social classes; therefore, the actions and attitudes middle and upper-class individuals receive from lower class individuals are

solely class-related, and not a form of oppression (i.e., classism; Smith, 2005). Indeed, an individual in any social class can express class-related prejudice and discrimination toward someone in their own social class, in a lower social class, or in a higher social class, but classism is unidirectional such that classism ensues only when someone with power (i.e., someone in a higher social class) exhibits their class-related biases against others in a lower social class.

Classism and Class-Based Discrimination in the Workplace

With work composing a major part of people's lives and social class status as a major identity for people (DiMaggio, 2012), there is a critical need to understand how classism functions in organizational contexts. Indeed, Langhout, Rosseilli, and Feinstein (2007) explain that social class is best understood by understanding the context in which it occurs. Status and power interact with social class in organizations, such that social class acts as a constant that people carry to each relational interaction and context, and status and power are situationally specific (Gary & Kish-Gephart, 2013). Social class status can also be subjective through perceptions of rank which is dependent on the possession of resources (i.e., money, advanced education, prestigious employment) relative to reference groups (Côté, 2011). Thus, the context in which people of different social statuses interact and how power influences these interactions is important.

The difference in treatment between the classes may also be a result of a culture gap such as between the professional-managerial elite and the working classes (Williams, 2012; see also Williams, Blair-Loy, & Berdahl, 2013). Social class categories tend to have different cultural patterns distinguishing themselves from each other and

thus reinforcing different categories of social class (Stephens, Fryberg, & Markus, 2012). High and low social classes in the United States engage in differing practices in regards to how they work, spend time with family, and refinement of skills. The working, or blue-collar, class idea of working is “work to live,” whereas the middle, or white-collar, class views work as “live to work” (Williams, 2012, pp. 47). The middle-class views work as something to make them happy and develop themselves whereas the working-class views work as a means to support family. Lamont’s work (1992, 2000) captures these different meanings of work between upper and lower social classes in her interviews of Black and White American and French workers. She found that whereas the working class lives primarily for after work (i.e., work to support their families), the middle class predominately lives for work (i.e., the place to develop, express, and evaluate themselves) making it a central role in their lives (Lamont, 1992, 2000).

These differing preferences and priorities affect perceptions of others in different social class groups. Lucas (2011) interviewed 37 blue-collar employees in the mining community about their workplace dignity as well as their work-related values, attitudes, and experiences. She found that status differences between workers and their supervisors sometimes impaired the perceived level of competency of the workers. For example, she described how one blue-collar worker was perceived as being less competent than someone who graduated from college, despite the worker’s advanced skills and training (Lucas, 2011). Thus, despite the blue-collar employee’s years of work experience, the worker was not perceived as being competent because of the worker’s lack of formal education. The perceptions and expectations of individuals from the two classes differed

and, in this case, the class difference was based on education level, one of the indices of class, resulting in classism against the blue-collar worker.

A power-prestige order arises as employees rank each other based on the power associated with their social class status. For example, employees who are in positions that do not require higher education (i.e., education beyond high school) are typically considered less valuable and competent than employees in positions requiring higher education (Lucas, 2011). Furthermore, status differences between employees leads to greater attention and resources for higher-status members compared to lower-status members (Bunderson & Reagans, 2011). Thus, prestige increases when an employee gains a higher status giving that individual more power and resources within the organization. In addition to greater power, higher-status employees have more ways than employees with less status to be uncivil and are more likely to get away with disrespectful actions, especially toward lower-status employees (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

In line with these ideas, a study of a Dutch population found that classism was experienced the most by people in the lowest income and occupational groups (Simmons, Koster, Groffen, and Bosma, 2017). They also found that occupation and income, as more salient aspects of social class compared to education level, were especially influential in these perceptions. However, this study was conducted in a setting representing general Dutch society. Within in a university, as in the present study, education level might be more salient than in the general population because selection of job applicants into different occupations at a university have varying

educational requirements that cannot be replaced with work experience. For example, a professor at a university requires a doctoral degree whereas a staff position at a university may require a high school diploma regardless of job tenure.

People can have greater status in one indicator (e.g., education level) of social class than in another (e.g., income level) which may affect their experiences of classism, however. For example, two psychology professors can be in the same social class based on education because they both earned a doctorate in their field; however, they may differ in ranks in social class based on income level because one is an adjunct or assistant professor and the other is a full professor. Because class status can be represented by multiple indices, I investigated whether experiences of classism was differentially related to two indices of social class: education level and income level. Previous research and theory led to the first set of hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1a: Social class status based on educational level is negatively related to experiences of classism at work.

Hypothesis 1b: Social class status based on income level is negatively related to experiences of classism at work.

Classism at Work and Occupational Well-Being

Similar to other forms of oppressions, experiences of classism have a negative effect on the well-being of the individual. Within a university setting, Langhout, Drake, and Rosselli (2009) demonstrated that students who experienced classism had more negative psychosocial outcomes and intentions of leaving school prior to graduation. Additionally, Simmons et al. (2017) found that perceived classism was associated with

worse self-rated health and feelings of inferiority in a sample of Dutch employees. This research suggests that classism acts as a stressor, negatively impacting the well-being of individuals.

Transactional Stress Theory (TST; Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) explains that stressful events can lead to negative health and well-being consequences for those who experience them. TST explains that frequent and enduring stressful experiences deteriorate the capacity in which individuals can manage the stressful situations resulting in the depletion of their cognitive and emotional resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus, 1999). This depletion makes each stressful experience more harmful to the individuals (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lazarus, 1999).

Little research, though, has specifically examined how experiences of classism in the workplace impact targeted employees' occupational well-being (Côté, 2011). However, research in other areas suggest that the more mistreatment an employee experiences the worse the outcomes are for the employee. The research on incivility shows that more incivility employees experience the worse their job stress, psychological well-being, turnover intentions, and job satisfaction (Miner, Settles, Pratt-Hyatt, & Brady, 2012; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Therefore, based on the prior research in other areas, preliminary research, and theoretical reasoning on experiences of classism at work, I propose that experiencing classism at work will be negatively related to employees' occupational well-being.

Hypothesis 2: Greater experiences of classism are related to lowered occupational well-being (lowered job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, and heightened turnover intentions and psychological distress).

Social Class Status as a Moderator

Indicators of social class are often treated as “nuisance” variables whose influence must be controlled for in analyses (Christie & Barling, 2009, pp. 1474) suggesting that they play a role in relationships among variables but are considered unimportant or uninteresting. TST (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) proposes that how stressors affect individuals depends on the extent to which they feel they have the resources to cope. TST (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) postulates that there are two processes involved in this stress appraisal process: primary and secondary appraisal. During primary appraisal, people evaluate the extent to which an event is perceived to be harmful or stressful. Evaluations can appraise the event as not threatening at all to very threatening, depending on various factors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The secondary appraisal process concerns whether people believe they have the resources to cope with the event; depending on how they cope with the stressor, individuals can experience psychological and/or physical strain. TST (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) suggests that experiences of classism at work may result in negative occupational well-being outcomes for employees in lower social class statuses because they have fewer resources to combat the stressful events.

In organizations, employees with higher status tend have access to more resources than employees with lower status which may help them cope and manage

class-based discrimination. For example, individuals of higher social classes, subjectively or objectively, generally have more material resources than others (Côté, 2011). Additionally, individuals of upper classes have more social power than those in lower classes (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Because there are more available resources to an employee with higher status than to an employee of lower status, the higher status employee may be able to better cope with the stressor of experiencing classism than an employee of lower status who lacks these resources. Indeed, previous researchers reported that higher social class status buffers the negative effects of stressors (e.g., Grzywacz, Almeida, Neupert, & Ettner, 2004; Lantz, House, Mero, & Williams, 2005).

Research of stigmatized groups (i.e., devalued characteristics not in a favorable placement within a status hierarchy) demonstrates that belonging to a stigmatized group relates to worse academic performance and mental health (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Henry (2011) described that respectful treatment affects employees' levels of job satisfaction differently such that employees belonging in a stigmatized group (e.g., those without a college education) were more strongly impacted by respectful treatment than employees belonging in the non-stigmatized group (e.g., those with a college education). Stigmatized employees had higher levels job satisfaction than employees in non-stigmatized groups when treated with respect; and this was found with other stigmatized/non-stigmatized groups as well (i.e., ethnicity and sex; Henry, 2011). These findings indicate that social class status may be an important boundary condition affecting the relationship between experiences of classism at work and occupational well-being outcomes. Therefore, it is proposed that an individual's social class status

moderates the outcomes associated with experiences of classism at work. Thus, the third hypothesis follows:

Hypothesis 3: Social class status moderates the relationship between experiences of classism and lowered occupational well-being such that employees with lower social class status report worse outcomes than employees with higher social class with greater experiences of classism.

Organizational Actions against Mistreatment as a Moderator

With acts of discrimination impacting more than just the individual but organizations as well (e.g., turnover), organizations need to get involved, as described in Cox's (1994) Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity (IMCD) model. Workplaces need to attempt to address the occurrence and possibility of mistreatment in order to create an environment where employees feel safe and cared for. Such actions may also buffer the negative effects employees may endure from any mistreatment they do experience. Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, and Fitzgerald (2002) describe that the actions organizations take against mistreatment can make employees feel as though the mistreatment is unlikely to occur again and it will be dealt with appropriately (e.g., the perpetrator will be punished for the behavior). When organizations do not take such actions, employees' perceptions of organizational support are likely hindered. Thus, organizational actions against mistreatment may mitigate further harm to victims.

There are a variety of ways in which organizations can take action against mistreatment in the workplace, such as training, policies, and interventions. Researchers have found that effective diversity training, for example, which has objectives of altering

behaviors and reducing biases and stereotypes, can significantly increase employees' commitment to the organization and their career satisfaction (Yap, Holmes, Hannan, & Cukier, 2010). In short, the organization plays a key role in the extent to which mistreatment toward others is tolerated within the organization. Therefore, it is predicted that perceived organizational actions against mistreatment will buffer the negative effects associated with experiencing classism. These ideas led to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Organizational actions against mistreatment moderate the relationship between experiences of classism and lowered occupational well-being such that employees who perceive fewer organizational actions against mistreatment report worse outcomes than employees who perceive greater organizational actions against mistreatment with greater experiences of classism.

TST reasons that individuals will appraise whether or not they have the resources to cope with a stressor (Lazarus, 1999). Having multiple resources available allows individuals to have different options to turn to so that if they find that one resource is not sufficient in dealing with the stressor, there is another resource available to them to help them cope. Research has examined a variety of resources in which employees utilize when dealing with stressors. For example, perceptions of organizational support and emotional support have been found to weaken the negative impact experiencing incivility has on employees' job satisfaction and job stress (Miner et al., 2012). Additionally, Spence Laschinger, Leiter, Day, and Gilin (2009) found that greater

perceptions of empowerment reduced the negative impact mistreatment from supervisors had on nurses' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions.

This line of reasoning suggests that if one resource buffers an individual from the negative effects of classism, then having multiple resources available would be even more beneficial. I posit that if individuals perceive that they have greater support from their work organization such that the organization takes strong actions against interpersonal mistreatment *and* they hold a high social class status, then they should have multiple resources readily available to them. Thus, I formed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Social class status indicated by educational level (a) or income level (b) and organizations actions against mistreatment combine to moderate the relationship between experiences of classism and lowered occupational well-being, such that employees with lower social class status who perceive fewer organizational actions against mistreatment report the worst outcomes with greater experiences of classism.

The full proposed model appears in Figure 1 in Appendix C.

2. METHOD AND MEASURES

Participants and Procedure

Participants for this study included a sample of university staff employees at a large Southern university in the United States who completed an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved online “Faculty-Staff Interaction Survey Study” in the fall of 2011. Participants were recruited via two email invitations, the initial invitation and a reminder invitation two weeks later. In order to increase response rates because of anonymity concerns, participants were not asked to identify their department. Before beginning the survey, participants read a consent form that described the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and researcher and institution contact information. The consent form also included information about incentives for participating in the study: participants who completed the survey could supply their email address to be entered into a drawing for a gift certificate for \$200. Participants could cease the survey at any time and consent was considered given when the participant completed the survey.

Of the 770 staff who were invited to participate, 252 (80% female) completed the survey for a 33% response rate. Participants’ ages ranged from 23 to 69 ($M = 45.00$, $SD = 11.79$). In regards to race, 76% were White, 7.1% were Hispanic, 2.4% were Black, 2.4% were other, and 12.3% did not respond. The majority of respondents had been working in their current position for at least a year (86.5%) with 60.7% working in their current position for over three years. Their job classifications were as follows: 49.1% were employed in clerical and office administration, 12.1% in fiscal and accounting,

10.7% in information technology, 7.5% in technical, 6.1% in engineering, 3.7% in research, 3.7% in student personnel, 1.9% in publications, 1.4% in admissions and records, 1.4% in facilities and events, 1.4% in human resources, and 0.9% in purchasing and stores.

In regard to highest education level received, there were .9% who received some high school education, 9.3% who were high school graduates, 35.6% who received some college education, 34.7% who received a Bachelor's Degree, 15.6% who received a Master's Degree, and 4.0% who received a Professional Degree (e.g., Ph.D., J.D., M.D. Ed.D.). For yearly household income level, none of the respondents reported an income of under \$20,000, 19.9% reported an income between \$21,000-\$40,000, 19.9% between \$41,000-\$60,000, 19.0% between \$61,000-\$80,000, 21.7% between \$81,000-\$100,000, 11.8% between \$101,000-\$150,000, 6.8% between \$151,000-\$200,000, 0.9% between \$201,000-\$250,000, and none reported an income above \$250,000.

Measures

The survey assessed: (a) experiences of classism at work; (b) job outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, affective commitment to the university, turnover intentions, and psychological distress); (c) perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment; and (d) demographics. The well-being measures appeared before questions assessing experiences of classism to mitigate contamination by questions about classism experiences. All measures were scored such that higher values reflect higher levels of the underlying construct. A summary of all items included in the present study appears in Appendix A.

Experiences of Classism. Experiences of classism was measured with four items created for the present study. Respondents answered the items on a 5-point scale (0 = “*hardly ever*” to 4 = “*almost always*”). The items included “During the past year, has a faculty member you have contact with at [organization]... told offensive jokes about people in a lower economic/social class” (item 1), “made crude or offensive remarks about people in a lower economic/social class” (item 2), “treated staff ‘differently’ based on their occupational position” (item 3), and “put down or was condescending to staff because of their occupational position” (item 4). The overall experiences of classism scale combining the four items demonstrated good internal reliability ($\alpha = .82$). I also created two subscales separating the overall scale into experiences of classism based on social class (henceforth called “economic class disrespect;” items 1 and 2) and experiences of classism based on position (henceforth called “position disrespect;” items 3 and 4) in order to conduct exploratory analyses. The alphas for these two subscales were 0.93 and 0.93, respectively).

Social Class Status. Social class status of respondents was assessed with measures of education level and income level. Education level was measured with the item “What is the highest level of education you have received?” Respondents chose from a range of increasing education levels with the lowest option being “less than high school” and the highest option being “professional degree.” Income was assessed with the item “please indicate your household’s yearly income.” Respondents chose from a list of income ranges from “under 20,000” to “over 250,000.” The lowest category “under 20,000” (n = 0) and the highest category “over 250,000” (n = 2) were removed.

The income ranges were then divided into equal intervals of \$20,000 except for the last interval: 21,000-40,000, 41,000-60,000, 61,000-80,000, 81,000-100,000, and 100,000-250,000. The last interval (i.e., 100,000-250,000) aggregated the intervals of 101,000-150,000, 151,000-200,000, and 201,000-250,000. By doing so, about the same number of participants fell into each interval of income level. Each income interval had from 42 to 48 participants.

Job Satisfaction. Job satisfaction was assessed with Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh's (1979) three-item Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Job Satisfaction Subscale (MOAQ-JSS). Respondents indicated how satisfied they were with their present job using a 5-point response format ranging from 1 ("*strongly disagree*") to 5 ("*strongly agree*"). Items for this scale included "In general, I don't like my job" (reverse-coded), "In general, I like working here," and "All in all, I am satisfied with my job." In this sample, the internal consistency reliability of the measure of job satisfaction was good ($\alpha = .86$).

Affective Organizational Commitment. This measure was adapted from Allen and Meyer's (1990) Affective Commitment Scale. Three items were utilized in this survey. Respondents indicated how strongly they agreed with each item using a 5-point response format ranging from 1 ("*strongly disagree*") to 5 ("*strongly agree*"). Items for this scale included "I would be very happy spending the rest of my work life at [organization]," "I do not feel a strong sense of commitment to [organization]" (reverse-coded) and "[organization] has a great deal of personal meaning to me." The internal consistency reliability for this measure was good ($\alpha = .84$).

Turnover Intentions. This measure was adapted from Jaros's (1997) turnover intentions scale. Respondents rated four items on a scale ranging from 1 ("*strongly disagree*") to 5 ("*strongly agree*"). Example items included "I often think about quitting this job," and "I want to continue working in my current position" (reverse-coded). The alpha coefficient for this sample was good ($\alpha = .83$).

Psychological Distress. Psychological distress was measured with the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983), which has been used extensively in both psychiatric and non-psychiatric populations. This measure asked employees to indicate the extent that each of a list of 12 symptoms (e.g., "feeling blue," "feeling tense or keyed up") had distressed or bothered them during the previous seven days, using a response scale from 1 ("*never*") to 6 ("*once a week or more*"). The alpha coefficient for this sample was good ($\alpha = .89$).

Perceived Organizational Actions against Mistreatment. Nine items were adapted from Miner-Rubino and Cortina (2007) to assess perceived organizational actions against mistreatment. Respondents indicated their knowledge regarding the extent to which the organization takes actions to address mistreatment using a 3-point scale (1 = "*yes*," 2 = "*I don't know*," and 3 = "*no*"). Examples of items included "investigates mistreatment complaints no matter who does the mistreating," "makes strong public statements about the seriousness of mistreatment," and "investigates mistreatment complaints no matter who files the complaint." The items composing this scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = .91$).

3. RESULTS

All analyses were conducted using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Version [25] software (IBM Corp, 2017). Table 1 (found in Appendix B) displays the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all study variables. Experiences of classism were negatively correlated with affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction ($r = -.28$ and $-.54$, respectively), and positively correlated with psychological distress and turnover intentions ($r = .33$ and $.47$, respectively). Experiences of classism did not correlate highly with any of the proposed moderators making any issues of multicollinearity minimal (i.e., none of these correlations were greater than a 0.50). The occupational well-being outcomes were intercorrelated with correlation values ranging from absolute values of .33 to .76, as displayed in Table 1.

I tested Hypotheses 1 and 2 using correlational analyses as shown in Table 1. Hypotheses 3-5 were tested using moderated regression using the PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) macro for SPSS. A 95% confidence level was chosen to apply a p -value of 0.05. For all the moderation models, experiences of classism were the independent variable and the occupational well-being outcomes were the dependent variables (i.e., affective organizational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and psychological distress). In order to produce standardized results, for every model, missing data was first filtered out, and then, appropriate variables were standardized (Hayes, 2018). Therefore, all variables, except for the categorical variables (i.e., income and education),

were standardized for every analysis to adjust for missing data unique to each analysis which also resulted in different sample sizes for each analysis. Due to missing data, the sample sizes for each analysis ranged from 205 to 213 (listed in Tables 2 and 3 in Appendix B). I first examined the simple moderations of each moderation variable to see the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables in PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) using model 1 with a bootstrapping of 10,000. To test whether there was a three-way interaction, I ran model 3 of PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) with a bootstrapping of 10,000. The social class status indicator (i.e., either education level or income level) was inputted as the first moderator and perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment was added as the second moderator.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that social class status based on two different social class indices (i.e., (1a) educational level and (1b) income level) would be negatively related to experiences of classism at work. As shown in Table 1, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. For education level, education was significantly and positively related to experiences of classism which contradicts Hypothesis 1a. Experiences of classism was not related to income level, negating Hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that greater experiences of classism would be related to lower occupational well-being (i.e., lower job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions and psychological distress). Consistent with Hypothesis 2, experiences of classism were negatively related to occupational well-being, such that classism was significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction and

affective commitment, and significantly and positively related to turnover intentions and psychological distress (see Table 1).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that social class status would moderate the relationship between experiences of classism and occupational well-being such that employees in lower social class statuses would report worse outcomes than employees with higher social class with greater experiences of classism. Hypothesis 3 was not supported; neither education level nor income level moderated any of the relationships between experiences of classism and the occupational well-being outcomes.¹

Hypothesis 4 predicted that organizational actions against mistreatment would moderate the relationship between experiences of classism and lowered occupational well-being such that, employees who perceived fewer organizational actions against mistreatment would report worse outcomes with greater experiences of classism than employees who perceived greater organizational actions against mistreatment. Hypothesis 4 was not supported. Perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment did not significantly moderate any of the relationships between experiences of classism and occupational well-being.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that organizational actions against mistreatment and social class status (i.e., indicated by education (5a) and income level (5b)) would interact to moderate the relationship between experiences of classism and occupational outcomes. Results for Hypothesis 5 are displayed in Tables 2 and 3. Specifically, I predicted in Hypothesis 5a that employees with lower education and who perceived

¹ See Appendix D.

fewer organizational actions against mistreatment would report the worst outcomes with greater experiences of classism. The overall moderated three-way interaction model was not significant for psychological distress ($F(7, 201)=4.74, p=0.85, R^2=0.14$) or turnover intentions ($F(7,202)=10.84, p=0.51, R^2=0.27$) but was significant for affective organizational commitment ($F(7,200)=9.49, p=0.01, R^2=0.25$) and job satisfaction ($F(7,205)=17.01, p=0.01, R^2=.37$). To examine the pattern of the significant interactions on job satisfaction and affective commitment, the predictors were categorized into four groups: low perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and low education level, low perceptions of organizational actions and high education level, high perceptions of organizational actions and low education level, and high organizational actions and high education level. Low and high refer to one standard deviation below and above the mean, respectively, to indicate lower or higher levels of the respective variable.

For affective organizational commitment, none of the slopes of the four groups were significant at different levels of experienced classism ($\beta= 0.22$ for low education and low perceptions of organizational actions; $\beta= -0.27$ for low education and high perceptions of organizational actions; $\beta= -0.18$ for high education and low perceptions of organizational actions; and $\beta= -0.04$ for high education and high perceptions of organizational actions). That is, while the interaction was significant, there were no significant differences in the level of affective commitment each group reported with different levels of experienced classism. Thus, Hypothesis 5a was not supported for affective commitment. However, there were significant effects of classism on job

satisfaction for the individual groups though findings were not in the expected direction. As shown in Figure 2 (in Appendix C), the effect of classism on lowered job satisfaction was most pronounced for staff who had low perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and had a high level of education. Staff who had high perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and a low education level were the next group whose job satisfaction was most negatively affected, which was then followed by staff employees who had high perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and a high level of education. There was no significant effect found for staff who had both low perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and low levels of education. In other words, staff who were high on at least one moderator (i.e., perceptions of organizational action against mistreatment or education level) were less satisfied with their jobs when they experienced greater levels of classism at work.

Hypothesis 5b predicted that income level and organizational actions against mistreatment would interact to moderate the relationship between experiences of classism and lowered occupational well-being. Specifically, it was predicted that employees with lower income and who perceived fewer organizational actions against mistreatment would report the worst outcomes with greater experiences of classism. Results showed that the moderated three-way interaction model was not significant for affective commitment ($F(7,197)=8.44, p=0.91, R^2=0.23$), job satisfaction ($F(7,201)=15.97, p=0.16, R^2=0.36$), or turnover intentions ($F(7,198)=10.56, p=0.82, R^2=0.27$); however, the model was significant for psychological distress ($F(7,197)=6.06, p=0.02, R^2=0.18$), as seen in Table 3. To examine the significant interaction on psychological

distress, the data were again organized into four categories: low perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and low income level, low perceptions of organizational actions and high income level, high perceptions of organizational actions and low income level, and high organizational actions and high income levels low and high refer to one standard deviation below and above the mean, respectively, to indicate lower (one standard deviation below) or higher (one standard deviation above) levels of the respective variable.

Findings revealed that of the four groups, two group's slopes showed significant differences of psychological distress at different levels of experienced classism (see Figure 3 in Appendix C): Staff employees who had high perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and a high level of income reported significantly greater psychological distress with higher experiences of classism. Findings also showed an identical pattern for staff employees who had low perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and a low level of income. Thus, in partial support of the hypothesis, it was staff who were either high or low on both moderators (i.e., high or low on income level and perceptions of organizational actions) who reported the most psychological distress with higher experiences of classism.

Exploratory Analyses

To assess the extent to which the results reported above hold when economic class disrespect and position disrespect (i.e., the subscales comprising experiences of classism) are examined separately, I conducted exploratory analyses using the separate scales to test the hypotheses. Note that these subscales were only moderately correlated

(see Table 1) corroborating the decision to assess them separately. The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of these subscales are displayed in Table 1.

Position Disrespect Subscale. This subscale demonstrated the same pattern as the overall scale in regards to Hypothesis 1a and 1b. As shown in Table 1, experiences of position disrespect was significantly and positively related to education level, and was not related to income level, negating both Hypothesis 1a and 1b, respectively. In regards to Hypothesis 2, experiences of position disrespect subscale followed the same pattern as the overall classism scale. Position disrespect was negatively related to the occupational well-being variables thereby supporting Hypothesis 2.

Also, consistent with the overall classism scale, the position-disrespect subscale was neither moderated by a social class indicator (i.e., education or income level) or perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment. Thus, Hypothesis 3 nor Hypothesis 4 were supported for this subscale.¹

In regard to Hypothesis 5a, the results revealed a significant three-way interaction between experiences of position disrespect, education level, and organizational actions on affective organizational commitment ($F(7,205)=9.29, p=.03, R^2=0.24$), as shown in Table 4 (found in Appendix C). There was only one deviation from the results above using the overall classism scale: whereas when using the full classism scale none of the groups showed significant effects of classism on affective commitment, when only the position disrespect subscale was examined staff employees who had low perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and a high level of education reported significantly lower affective commitment with higher experiences

of position disrespect, as shown in Figure 4. Experiences of position disrespect did not significantly predict job satisfaction ($F(7,210)=13.18, p=0.14, R^2=0.31$) as did experiences of overall classism, as shown in Table 4. Regarding Hypothesis 5b, when income level was the social class indicator, experiences of position disrespect did not interact with income level to significantly predict psychological distress ($F(7,202)=5.27, p=0.08, R^2=0.15$) as did experiences of overall classism, as shown in Table 5 (in Appendix B).

Economic Class Disrespect. Like the overall scale, the results using the economic class disrespect subscale did not support either Hypothesis 1a and 1b, as shown in Table 1; rather, experiences of economic class disrespect was significantly and positively related to both education and income levels; the latter finding differs from findings for the overall classism scale which was not related to income. In regards to Hypothesis 2, the subscale of experiences of economic class disrespect partially supported Hypothesis 2. Unlike the overall scale, this subscale was not significantly related to affective organizational commitment, as displayed in Table 1.

This subscale was not moderated by either social class indicator (i.e., education nor income level), which does not support Hypothesis 3 and is the same as the results for the overall classism scale. However, there was partial support for Hypothesis 4 using this subscale such that there was a 2-way interaction between experiences of economic class disrespect and perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment on turnover intentions ($F(3,208)=19.33, \beta= 0.17, p= 0.02, R^2=0.22$).² All groups of staff members

² See Appendix D.

reported higher turnover intentions when they reported higher experiences of economic class disrespect ($\beta = 0.24$ for low perceptions of organizational actions; $B = 0.59$ for high perceptions of organizational actions, $p < .01$).

Similar to the findings for the overall classism scale, there was a significant three-way interaction between economic class disrespect, education level, and organizational actions against mistreatment on affective commitment ($F(7,201)=10.55$, $p=0.02$, $R^2=0.27$; see Table 4), however none of the slopes from the individual groups were significant ($\beta = 0.43$ for low education and low perceptions of organizational actions; $\beta = -0.16$ for low education and high perceptions of organizational actions; $\beta = -0.03$ for high education and low perceptions of organizational actions; and $\beta = 0.01$ for high education and high perceptions of organizational actions). The economic class disrespect subscale also significantly predicted job satisfaction ($F(7,206)=15.30$, $p=0.01$, $R^2=0.34$), as shown in Table 4. Figure 5 (in Appendix C) depicts the slope analyses of the economic class disrespect subscale for job satisfaction. The groups followed a similar pattern found among the staff for the overall classism scale except the group of staff members whose job satisfaction was most affected by economic class disrespect was staff who had high perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and low levels of education (rather than being second group most affected). Still, Hypothesis 5a was not supported.

Regarding Hypothesis 5b, results revealed a significant three-way interaction between economic class disrespect, income level, and organizational actions against mistreatment on psychological distress ($F(7,198)=6.60$, $p=0.01$, $R^2=0.19$). As shown in

Figure 6 (in Appendix C), those who had high perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and a high level of income reported significantly greater distress with higher levels of economic class disrespect (consistent with the results for the overall classism measure). The remaining slopes were not significant.

Summary of Results

In general, results showed that staff with higher social class reported greater experiences of classism at work and that experiences of classism (regardless of social class status) related to lowered occupational well-being. The extent to which social class status and perceived organizational actions against mistreatment moderated the relations between experiences of classism and lowered occupational well-being was more complex and showed an inconsistent pattern across the well-being variables, as seen in Table 6.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Classism is a form of oppression that can occur in the workplace, yet not much research has focused on it (Côté, 2011). I addressed this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between employees' experiences of classism from those who are typically perceived as holding higher rank and employees' occupational well-being. I also examined how employees' perceptions of their organization's actions against mistreatment interacted with an objective indicator of their social class status (i.e., education level, income) in affecting well-being outcomes. I tested the hypotheses in the context of a university where staff employees reported their experiences of classism from faculty.

Based on SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and TST (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), I predicted that social class status would be negatively related to experiences of classism (Hypothesis 1), experiences of classism would be associated with lower occupational well-being (Hypothesis 2), and staff with a lower social class status (i.e., lower education or income level) would report more detrimental outcomes than staff with higher social class status with greater experiences of classism (Hypothesis 3). These hypotheses were based on the proposition that higher social class status (as indicated by income or education level) would act as a resource and buffer the negative effects of classism experienced from faculty (i.e., from someone in a higher occupational position). Furthermore, organizations can implement various actions to support employees that can serve as a resource when employees experience negative

workplace experiences; thus, I also predicted that perceived organizational actions against mistreatment would also buffer the relationship between experiences of classism and well-being (Hypothesis 4). Finally, I predicted that social class status and perceived organizational actions would combine to provide the strongest buffering effects from the negative effects of classism at work (Hypothesis 5).

Contrary to Hypothesis 1, results demonstrated that social class status was positively (rather than negatively) related to experiences of classism. That is, the higher a staff employee ranked on their income level or education level, the more they reported experiencing classism from faculty. This finding is not consistent with previous research (e.g., Simmons et al., 2016; Lantz et al., 1998) or theoretical reasoning (e.g., TST, Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) which suggests that people in lower social class statuses have greater experiences of classism.

Other research provides a possible explanation for this finding, however. Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, and Kowai-Bell (2001) found that interactions between people in higher social classes and people in lower social classes triggered a psychological threat within people who ranked higher. This threat is due to the stigmatization of the lower social class (Blascovich et al., 2001). If faculty tend to distance themselves from staff who are in lower classes, as suggested by Lott (2002), they may feel particularly threatened when a staff member ranks close to them on some social class indicator (such as having similar education and/or income) and may feel the need to oppress that staff member as a result. Indeed, the stigma literature describes that stigmatization becomes applicable “when elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation,

status loss, and discrimination co-occur in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold” (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 367).

Croizet and Clare (1998) explain that social class identity is stigmatizing when individuals identify with lower classes. Additionally, research demonstrates that a non-stigmatized individual can become stigmatized simply through the association with the stigmatized individual (Pryor, Reeder, & Monroe, 2012; Goldstein & Johnson, 1997; Mehta & Farina, 1988). Moreover, a stigmatized identity is difficult to eliminate once applied. Consistent with these ideas, White and Langer (1999) conducted two studies on two different samples (a Jewish congregation and a college soccer team). They found that individuals were more hostile towards others who were more similar to them. That is, Jewish members of a congregation were more prejudiced against another member of a similar but slightly more secular congregation and varsity soccer players displayed prejudice against junior varsity players. Following these lines of reasoning, faculty members may have felt threatened of being stigmatized when staff were closer in rank. Thus, despite a staff’s high social class status in education and/or income, the stigma of the occupational position (i.e., staff) still affected the social interaction. This increased threat may have encouraged faculty to interact with staff in a manner that demonstrated their power and create a distance between the two groups.

This finding also suggests that an occupation (or position) status devalued in the wider society leads to inequality in social interactions in organizations and that there is a status loss associated with accepting a position as a staff member that results in a lower placement in the organizational status hierarchy regardless of education or income (Link

& Phelan, 2001). Thus, the hierarchy of social class in the larger society becomes institutionalized in organizations. Gray and Kish-Gephart (2013) explain that social class distinctions become ingrained within organizations and are sustained through the cognitions and practices that members of different classes engage in when they encounter each other which then further perpetuates inequality.

Confirming Hypothesis 2, staff's experiences of classism from faculty were negatively related to affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and positively related to psychological distress and turnover intentions. Thus, consistent with TST (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), staff who reported experiencing more classism (i.e., a stressor) reported worse occupational well-being. This finding extends other research examining other forms of oppression and worse occupational health, such as sexism (Sojo, Wood, Genat, 2016; Settles, Cortina, Buchanan, & Miner, 2012; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997) and racism (Deitch et al., 2003; Enzher, Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001). The findings from this study demonstrate that classism can be harmful to employees as well.

It was further predicted in Hypothesis 3 that objective indices of social class (i.e., education and income levels) would buffer the effects of experiencing classism. Specifically, I hypothesized that staff with higher education or income would experience fewer negative occupational well-being outcomes with greater experiences of classism. However, in contrast to the third hypothesis, neither income nor education moderated the relationship between staff's experiences of classism and occupational well-being. The second proposed moderator (i.e., perceptions of organizational actions against

mistreatment) also did not buffer this relationship (contrary to Hypothesis 4). Despite these surprising results, this finding is similar to other research findings on formal organizational support via organizational policies (Thompson & Prottas, 2005). Employees may be more positively affected by perceiving that their coworkers, supervisors, and/or organizations are supportive of them rather than perceiving their organization as having many policies (Thompson & Prottas, 2005). Thus, independently, neither social class status nor perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment protected staff members from the negative effects of experiencing classism. This demonstrates that each of these resources on their own is not enough to buffer the negative effects of classism, at least in this study. However, when both resources were incorporated into the model, unanticipated and complex relationships emerged. Even though Hypothesis 5 was not supported, results suggest that staff members other than those in the lowest ranks and with the lowest perceptions of organizational actions (as was predicted) can be negatively affected by experiences of classism.

It was surprising that staff who were low on both perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment and experiences of classism were not affected to the same degree as other groups. Fuller and Gerloff (2008) suggest that although individuals have an inherent desire to be treated with dignity, they also tend to accept degrading treatment as “just the way it is” (pp. 3). Their reasoning may explain why this group of staff members were not more negatively harmed compared to other groups. Other groups of staff members may not accept degrading treatment as the way it is and thus, were more likely to be negatively impacted by classism. In fact, the group most affected was staff

members who had a high income and high perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment group as predicted by the economic class subscale with psychological distress as the outcome. One possibility for this finding is that this group of staff (who were high on both moderators) may have felt they were equals with faculty members based on economic income. Staff members who had income levels closer to the income level of faculty members may also have a significant other who is a faculty and/or even live in similar neighborhoods. Thus, staff members with a high household income and faculty members may hold differing views of status equality (i.e., faculty may perceive the staff member at a lower status, but the staff member perceives themselves as an equal with the faculty). This was particularly the case with the economic class disrespect subscale in which the mistreatment was based on economic class rather than the position disrespect subscale in which the mistreatment was based on their position. In the latter, staff may be more likely to be understanding of mistreatment as part of the rank of that position.

Additionally, unlike Simmons et al.'s (2017) study which found no differences between perceived classism and education level, education level was involved in more of the statistically significant 3-way interactions than income level in the present study. One possibility for this occurrence is that education is especially salient within a university setting. In order to be a professor at a university, an applicant must hold a Ph.D. and no amount of work experience could replace that requirement. Such a requirement is not necessary for many university staff positions though some staff members do certainly hold advanced degrees. Therefore, staff members who have higher

education may perceive greater experiences of classism because they perceive the relationship between faculty and themselves as more equivalent in ranks, especially if the staff member has a higher degree (e.g., Bachelor's or beyond) and more work experience compared to a faculty member with a recently attained doctorate's degree. With higher education as a more central aspect of a university than in other organizational contexts where work experience might be considered more valuable than the highest degree attained, staff members may have felt greater oppression when they perceived their education levels closer in ranking to the faculty's education but that the effects of oppression could have been mitigated by their available resources (i.e., ranking of education and organizational actions against mistreatment) to handle the situations.

Future Directions and Limitations

According to TST (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), employees who feel they have more resources are better able to cope with stressors and as a result have fewer negative outcomes associated with the stressors. Having only one resource (i.e., only social class status or perceptions of organizational support), though, may not be enough to combat oppression for every employee, and different employees may find different resources more or less beneficial. Furthermore, this research demonstrates that within a single organization, employees can have varying perceptions about how the organization handles mistreatment. This could be attributed to an array of reasons, such as the organization not communicating their actions well to employees, its employees having different opinions about the likelihood of the organization following through with their policy, or whether the organization is taking adequate actions. Additionally,

perceiving that the organization does take action does not necessarily mean employees feel supported. For example, Thompson and Prottas (2005) found null findings for formal organizational support (i.e., organizational policies) but that informal organizational support played an important role in employees' occupational well-being (see also O'Driscoll et al., 2003). Employees may be more affected by perceiving that their coworkers, supervisors, and/or organizations are supportive of them rather than perceiving their organization as having many policies. The items assessing organizational support for this study were more about the organization taking strong stances against mistreatment, but did not address whether the employees felt supported by these actions. Future research could consider how informal organizational support mitigates experiences of classism.

In addition, organizational commitment is composed of not only affective commitment, but also continuance and normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), which were not assessed in the present study. Indeed, staff's commitment to the university could have transformed from a commitment based on a sense of belonging (affective) to a commitment based more on perceived job alternatives (continuance) or feelings of obligations (normative) when they experienced classism. As such, the possible associations between classism and commitment warrant further examination.

Individual resources may not be enough to lessen the impact of experiencing classism, but with multiple resources, it becomes clear that organization's actions and different statuses interact and impact the well-being of employees when facing classism. The interaction of additional resources needs to be explored. Future research should

examine what actions against mistreatment are most beneficial. Figuring out which resources mitigate the effects of classism would be beneficial for organizations so that they could implement these resources for the betterment of their employees.

Additionally, out of the two objective indicators, education and income level, the three-way interaction of education level with perceptions of organizations actions against mistreatment and experiences of classism had the greatest influence on staff members. This may be because of the type of organization. Being employed at a university may have had an influence on the weight of significance of education. Education level may not be as much of an influencing factor within a different industry. For example, in an engineering company, income may play more of an influencing role in interactions based on social status compared to education level. Different types of engineers (e.g., chemical, electrical, industrial) can expect different median salaries with the same educational level. Zhou (2005) argues that occupational prestige is determined by “institutional logic of social recognition.” Thus, if organizations have rankings or hierarchies formed by different social recognitions, then the importance, or salience, of objective indices of social class would differ between organizations.

Only two of three primary social class indicators (i.e., occupation, education, and income) were included as moderators in the analyses. Occupation was already factored into the study in that the survey was only sent to staff members, and all staff members were assumed to be the same ranking in the university (i.e., ranked lower than faculty members). However, staff members may be ranked differently amongst themselves. Some staff may be ranked higher than other staff members and thus, may have access to

additional and possibly unknown resources staff at lower ranks cannot access. This might be a fruitful area for future research. Moreover, the two social class indicators included as moderators were measured objectively. However, social class is composed not only objective indices but subjective indices as well. Future research might include subjective assessments of social class in addition to those that are objective.

Additionally, the survey only examined disrespect based on economic class and occupational position. While these do indicate experiences of classism, on the whole, the experiences of classism scale may have been a better indicator of socioeconomic status rather than overall classism. Including items inquiring about mistreatment due to one's education level would have made the scale a better indicator of experiences of classism and thus, may have yielded different results. Moreover, classism includes a subjective aspect of power and authority that was not fully explored in this study. Rather, staff were asked to think of a specific rank (i.e., faculty) that was assumed to be above them and did not fully allow the incorporation of experiences of treatment from someone in a higher rank. Incorporating these subjective components may provide more fruitful results. Future research measuring experiences of classism might include these factors.

Finally, this study was cross-sectional and, thus, the results from this study should be taken with caution regarding claims of causality. While a cross-sectional study was sufficient for my purposes of examining associations, a longitudinal study would be a stronger study to conduct to determine order and causality. A longitudinal design would also allow for the examination of the long-term effects of classism.

Practical Implications

The results of the present study suggest several practical implications for organizations. Although classism “is embedded in hard-to-change, ingrained ideologies” (Simmons et al., 2017, p. 438) efforts to curb classism and its negative effects in organizations are certainly warranted. Langhout et al. (2007) emphasizes the need to understand the context in order to understand the role of social class in organizations. Understanding how a particular context may make a specific indicator of social class more prevalent, or visible, than other social class indices may offer a first step to addressing how classism should be remediated in certain organizations.

Organizations could then implement interventions that create a culture of respect and acceptance for all employees regardless of their social class status. Pettijohn and Walzer (2008) found that students’ prejudicial attitudes regarding race, sex, and sexual orientation significantly decreased after taking a psychology prejudice class. Another intervention could be the broadening of institutional norms to create a more inclusive culture (Stephens, Markus, & Phillips, 2014). Stephens et al. (2014) describe that some ways to diversify norms within an institution were reframing welcome letters to be more inclusive, increasing awareness regarding social class cultural differences, and increasing students’ sense of psychological empowerment. Finally, organizations may turn to diversity trainings to reduce the biases associated with social class, such as implicit bias training. Carnes et al. (2012) found that an evidence-based workshop intended to enhance bias literacy among faculty and in turn transform gender equity

within the institution resulted in increased bias awareness and behavioral changes to counteract biases, even after four months.

Social class is a characteristic people group other individuals and, according to SIT (Tajfel, 1970), people tend to favor individuals who are similar to them. Moreover, the individuals placed in the devalued social class group are likely to be stigmatized and oppressed. To combat this stigmatization, organizations can take on a contact strategy utilizing intergroup approaches exposing members in differently ranked groups (Paluck & Green, 2009). In Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis on intergroup contact interventions, they found these interventions to be generalizable and effective in reducing intergroup prejudice. Thus, one way organizations might reduce the stigma associated with being in a stigmatized social class and then, hopefully, classism, would be to get the two groups to interact under Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis's optimal conditions. These conditions include equal status, common goals, no competition, and authority sanction for contact between the two groups (Allport, 1954).

While Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis suggests that a greater reduction in prejudice occurs when all of Allport's optimal conditions are met, these conditions may not be vital in reducing prejudice. Moreover, it may be unrealistic for an organization to meet all of these conditions. Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) conducted a follow-up meta-analysis on different strategies that may mediate the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice reduction and found two strategies with strong mediational effects. Reducing intergroup anxiety (i.e., feelings of threat and uncertainty in intergroup contexts) was a strong mediator of the relationship between intergroup

contact and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; see also Mendes, Blascovich, Lickel, & Hunter, 2002). Additionally, increasing empathy and perspective taking also mediated the relationship (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Thus, prejudice can be reduced by having employees engage in intergroup contact with strategies that target intergroup anxiety reduction and/or increasing intergroup empathy and perspective-taking. Through reducing employees' prejudice of people's social class, it would be reasonable to expect that mistreatment based on social class (i.e., classism) would decrease as well.

Finally, any policies, strategies, or changes made by the organization need to be communicated and made apparent to employees. Organizations and managers need to be perceived as an agent for change and a source of support against mistreatment.

Cummings and Worley (2014) describe that effective change management involves five primary elements that leaders must implement: motivate change, create a vision, develop political support, manage the transition, and sustain the momentum. In order to minimize oppression within organizations, leaders need to be visibly committed themselves.

Conclusion

While only one of the hypotheses of the present study were supported (i.e., classism is related to negative occupational well-being) and there was no clear group of employees who was most impacted by experiencing classism, the present study suggests that classism is a form of oppression that occurs in the workplace and that it is harmful to employees. Moreover, the findings assessing moderators of these relationships suggests classism is a complex workplace phenomenon that deserves greater research attention.

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APPENDIX A

Experiences of Classism

During the past year, has a faculty member you have contact with at [organization]...

1. Treated staff “differently based on their occupational position.
2. Put down or was condescending to staff because of their occupational position.
3. Told offensive jokes about people in a lower economic/social class.
4. Made crude or offensive remarks about people in a lower economic/social class.

Social Class Status

Please indicate your household’s yearly income.

What is the highest level of education you have received?

Job Satisfaction (revised from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh’s, 1979)

Please rate the extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. In general I don’t like my job.
2. In general I like working here.
3. All in all, I am satisfied with my job.

Affective Organizational Commitment (revised from Allen and Meyer, 1991)

Please rate the extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. I would be very happy spending the rest of my work life at TAMU.
2. I do not feel a strong sense of commitment to TAMU.
3. TAMU has a great deal of personal meaning to me.

Turnover Intentions (revised based on Jaros, 1997)

Please rate the extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. I often think about quitting this job.
2. I will probably look for a new job outside of TAMU during the next year.
3. I want to remain working at TAMU.
4. I want to continue working in my current position.

Perceived Organizational Actions Against Mistreatment (adapted from Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007)

To your knowledge, does TAMU take any of the following actions to address mistreatment directed at staff?

1. Investigates mistreatment complaints no matter who does the mistreating.
2. Investigates mistreatment complaints no matter what type of mistreatment it is.
3. Investigates mistreatment complaints no matter how minor the mistreatment may seem.
4. Investigates mistreatment complaints no matter who files the complaint.
5. Has leaders who take public action to stop obvious inappropriate comments (for example, offensive comments about particular individuals or groups).
6. Punishes people who mistreat others, no matter who they are.
7. Has leaders who model respectful behavior toward all employees.
8. Makes strong public statements about the seriousness of mistreatment.
9. Has leaders who take quick action to stop even subtle inappropriate comments (for example, rumors, jokes).

Psychological Distress (adapted from Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983)

During the past year, did you have any of the following symptoms?

1. Nervousness or shakiness inside
2. Feeling easily annoyed or irritated
3. Thoughts of ending your life
4. Suddenly scared for no reason
5. Temper outburst that you could not control
6. Feeling lonely
7. Feeling tense or keyed up
8. Having urges to beat, injure, or harm someone
9. Feeling blue
10. Feeling no interest in things
11. Feeling fearful
12. Having urges to smash or break things
13. Spells of terror or panic

APPENDIX B

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for All Study Variables.

Variable	Mean ^a	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Classism	1.89	0.86									
2. Economic Disrespect	1.30	0.70	.76**								
3. Position Disrespect	2.48	1.27	.93**	.47**							
4. Education	5.00 ^a	1.01	.24**	.19**	.24**						
5. Income	4.00 ^a	1.56	.12	.14*	.08	.12					
6. Org. Commitment	3.72	0.89	-.28**	-.11	-.32**	-.08	.10				
7. Job Satisfaction	3.97	0.82	-.54**	-.43**	-.49**	-.14*	.02	.66**			
8. Psychological Distress	1.97	0.82	.33**	.27**	.29**	.13	-.13	-.33**	-.48**		
9. Turnover Intentions	2.24	0.89	.47**	.37**	.41**	.24**	-.10	-.60**	-.76**	.44**	
10. Org. Actions	2.12	0.50	-.49**	-.35**	-.46**	-.05	-.03	.44**	.43**	-.28**	-.33**

^a median was reported rather than mean for indicated variables

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; Note: Org. = Organizational, Org. Actions = Organizational Actions against Mistreatment

Table 2

Organizational Actions and Education Level as Moderators of Experiences of Classism and Outcomes.

Variable (<i>n</i>)	Commitment (208)			Job Satisfaction (213)			Psyc Distress (209)			Turnover Intentions (210)		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Education Level	0.04	0.07	0.51	0.07	0.06	1.13	0.08	0.08	1.05	0.12	0.07	1.73
Org. Acts.	0.32	0.36	0.90	0.42	0.33	1.28	0.10	0.39	0.24	-0.41	0.36	-1.13
Classism	0.12	0.33	0.36	-0.23	0.31	-0.76	0.07	0.36	0.18	0.27	0.33	0.81
Classism X Educ.	-0.04	0.06	-0.62	-0.04	0.06	-0.59	0.03	0.07	0.43	0.02	0.06	0.36
Org. Acts. X Educ.	0.02	0.08	0.21	-0.04	0.07	-0.57	-0.06	0.08	-0.72	0.05	0.07	0.63
Classism X Org. Acts ³	-0.82*	0.30	-2.71	-0.72*	0.28	-2.58	0.07	0.33	0.22	0.30	0.31	0.96
Classism X Educ. X Org. Acts.	0.16*	0.06	2.55	0.15*	0.06	2.62	-0.01	0.07	-0.19	-0.04	0.06	-0.66
R ²	0.25*			0.37*			0.14*			0.27*		

* $p < 0.05$; Note: Org. Acts. = Organizational Actions against Mistreatment, Educ. = Education level

³ See Appendix D.

Table 3

Organizational Actions and Income Level Interaction Moderation on Experiences of Classism and Outcomes.

Variable (<i>n</i>)	Commitment (205)			Job Satisfaction (209)			Psyc Distress (205)			Turnover Intentions (206)		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Income Level	0.09	0.05	1.82	0.01	0.05	0.19	-0.06	0.05	-1.12	-0.10*	0.05	-2.13
Org. Acts.	0.16	0.17	0.96	0.22	0.16	1.44	-0.15	0.18	-0.83	-0.28	0.17	-1.71
Classism	-0.21	0.18	-1.12	-0.43*	0.17	-2.59	0.25	0.19	1.33	0.52*	0.18	2.91
Classism X Income	0.02	0.05	0.39	0.00	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.05	0.11	-0.02	0.05	-0.46
Org. Acts. X Income	0.07	0.05	1.47	0.01	0.05	0.29	-0.01	0.05	-0.16	0.04	0.05	0.80
Classism X Org. Acts. ⁴	-0.10	0.16	-0.63	0.17	0.14	1.22	-0.31*	0.15	-2.02	0.12	0.15	0.85
Classism X Inc. X Org. Acts.	0.00	0.04	0.11	-0.05	0.04	-1.42	0.10*	0.04	2.30	-0.01	0.04	-0.23
R ²	0.23*			0.36*			0.18*			0.27*		

* $p < 0.05$; Note: Org. Acts. = Organizational Actions against Mistreatment, Inc. = Income level

⁴ See Appendix D.

Table 4

Organizational Actions and Education Interaction Moderation on Classism Subscales and Outcomes.

Classism Subscale Variable	Economic Class Disrespect						Position Disrespect					
	Commitment			Job Satisfaction			Commitment			Job Satisfaction		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Education Level	-0.01	0.06	-0.19	0.02	0.06	0.32	0.33	0.07	0.47	0.03	0.07	0.48
Org. Acts.	0.41	0.33	1.24	0.48	0.31	1.53	0.27	0.37	0.74	0.37	0.35	1.08
Classism Subscale	0.40	0.39	1.05	-0.28	0.37	-0.73	0.06	0.33	0.17	-0.15	0.31	-0.49
Classism Subscale X Educ.	-0.07	0.07	-1.07	-0.01	0.07	-0.20	-0.04	0.07	-0.55	-0.04	0.06	-0.63
Org. Acts. X Subscale	0.01	0.07	0.17	-0.03	0.06	-0.42	0.02	0.08	0.26	-0.02	0.07	-0.31
Subscale X Org. Acts. ⁵	-0.85*	0.34	-2.53	-0.93*	0.32	-2.91	-0.66*	0.31	-2.16	-0.48	0.29	-1.66
Subscale X Educ. X Org. Acts.	0.15*	0.07	2.34	0.17*	0.06	2.76	0.14*	0.06	2.14	0.11	0.06	1.82
R ²	0.27*			0.34*			0.24*			0.32*		

* $p < 0.05$; Note: Org. Acts = Organizational Actions against Mistreatment, Educ. = Education level

⁵ See Appendix D.

Table 5

Organizational Actions and Income Interaction Moderation on Classism Subscales and Outcomes.

Classism Subscale	Economic Class Disrespect			Position Disrespect		
	Psychological Distress			Psychological Distress		
	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	β	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Income Level	-0.04	0.05	-0.72	-0.06	0.05	-1.21
Org. Actions	-0.32	0.18	-1.84	-0.15	0.17	-0.87
Classism Subscale	-0.24	0.35	-0.69	0.28	0.16	1.74
Classism Subscale X Income	0.14	0.09	1.63	-0.02	0.05	-0.48
Org. Actions X Income	0.02	0.05	0.49	-0.01	0.05	-0.26
Classism Subscale X Org. Actions ⁶	-0.47	0.24	-1.99	-0.30*	0.15	-2.01
Classism Subscale X Income X Org. Actions	0.18*	0.06	2.82	0.08	0.04	1.90
R ²	0.19*			0.16*		

* $p < 0.05$; Note: Org. Actions = Organizational Actions against Mistreatment

⁶ See Appendix D.

Table 6

Summary of Interaction Results Showing Groups Most Affected by Classism.

Predictors	Group/s most affected
Outcome: Psychological Distress Classism/ECD × Income × OAM	1. High income, High OAM 2. Low income, Low OAM
Outcome: Job Satisfaction Classism/ECD × Education × OAM	1. Low education, High OAM 2. High education, Low OAM 3. High education, High OAM
Outcome: Affective commitment PD × Education × OAM	1. High education, Low OAM

Note: ECD = economic class disrespect, OAM = organizational actions against mistreatment, PD = position disrespect

APPENDIX C

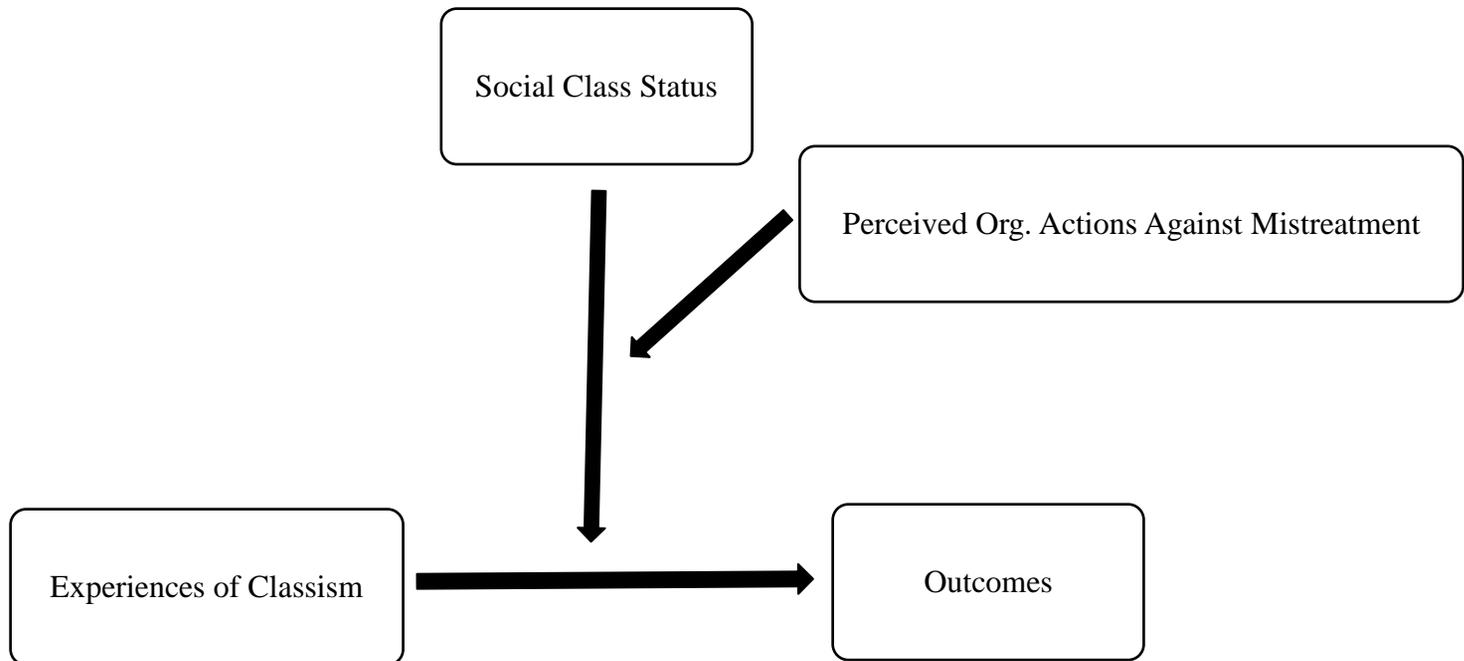


Figure 1. Proposed model

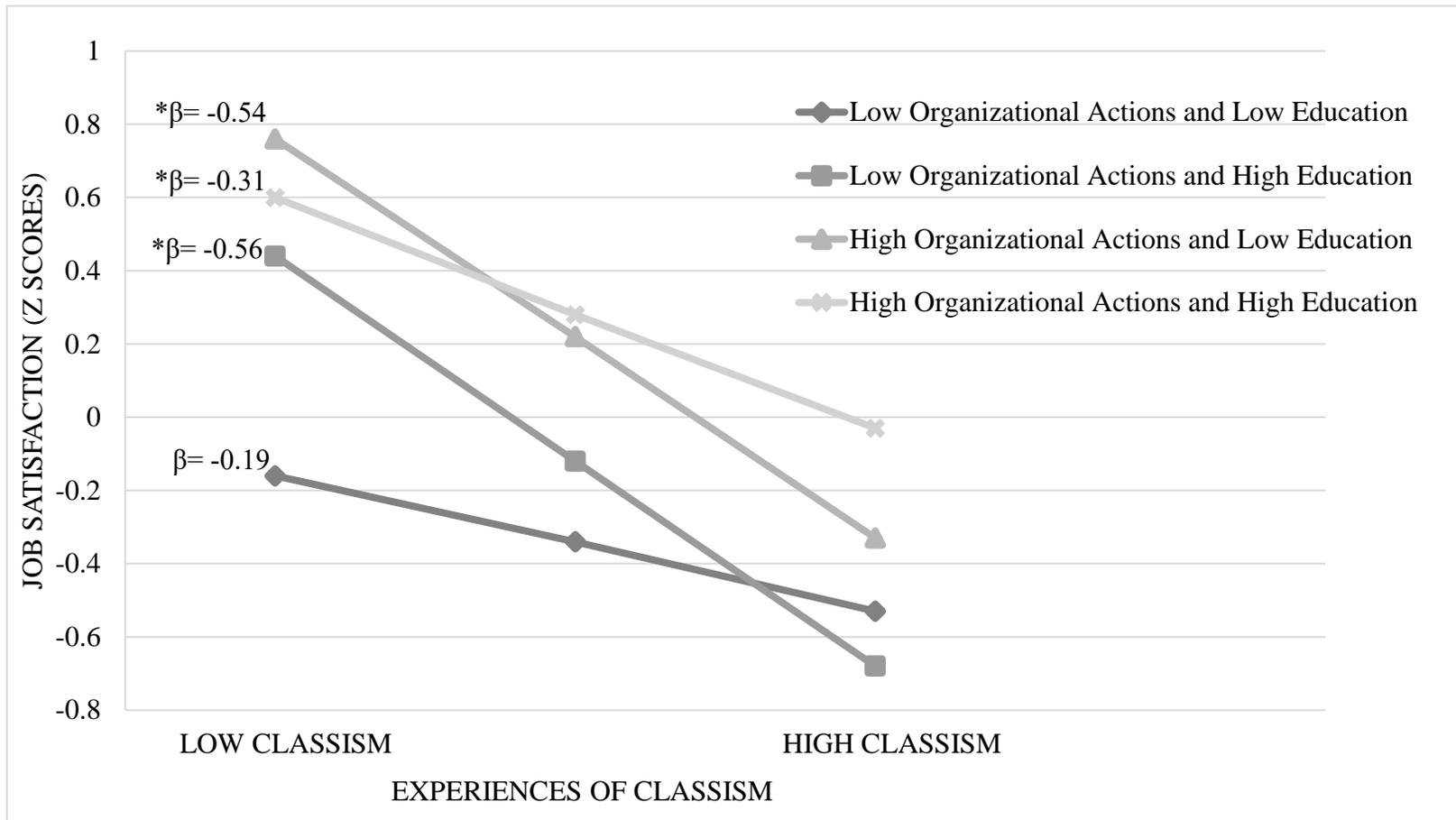


Figure 2. Interaction of classism, perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment, & education on job satisfaction. Note: $*p < 0.05$.

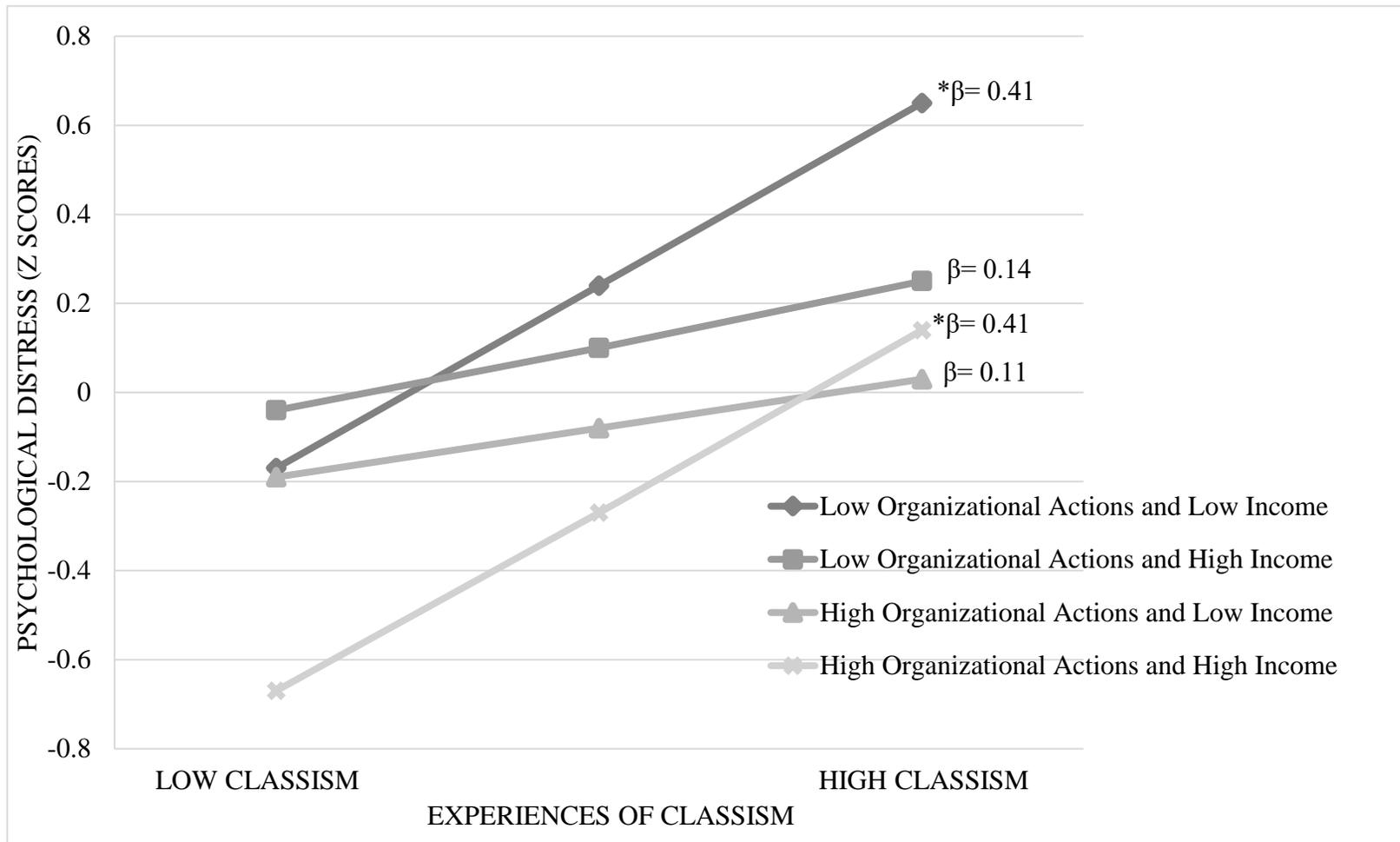


Figure 3. Interaction of classism, perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment, & income on psychological distress. Note: $*p < 0.05$.

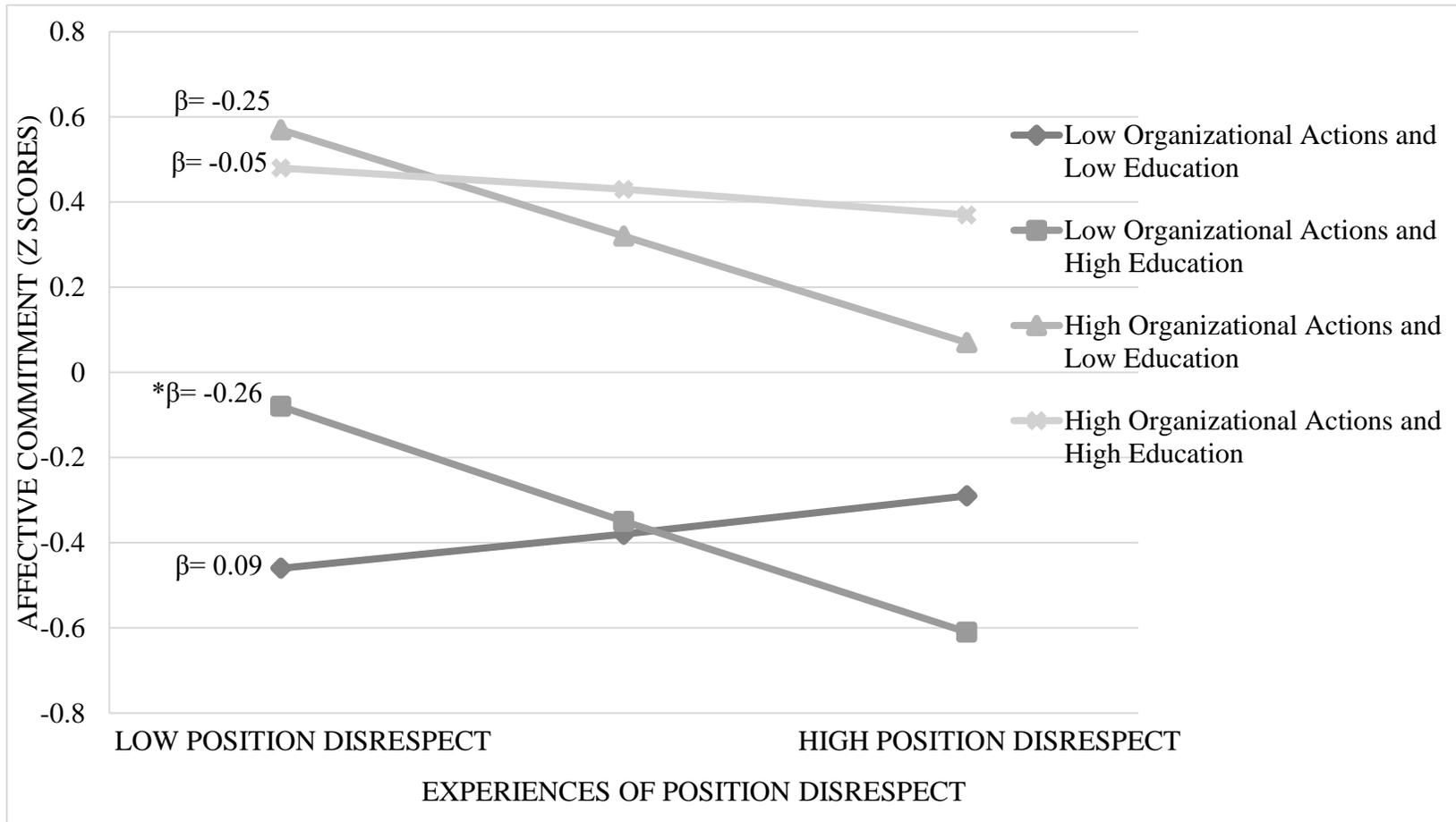


Figure 4. Interaction of position disrespect, perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment, & education on affective organizational commitment. Note: $*p < 0.05$.

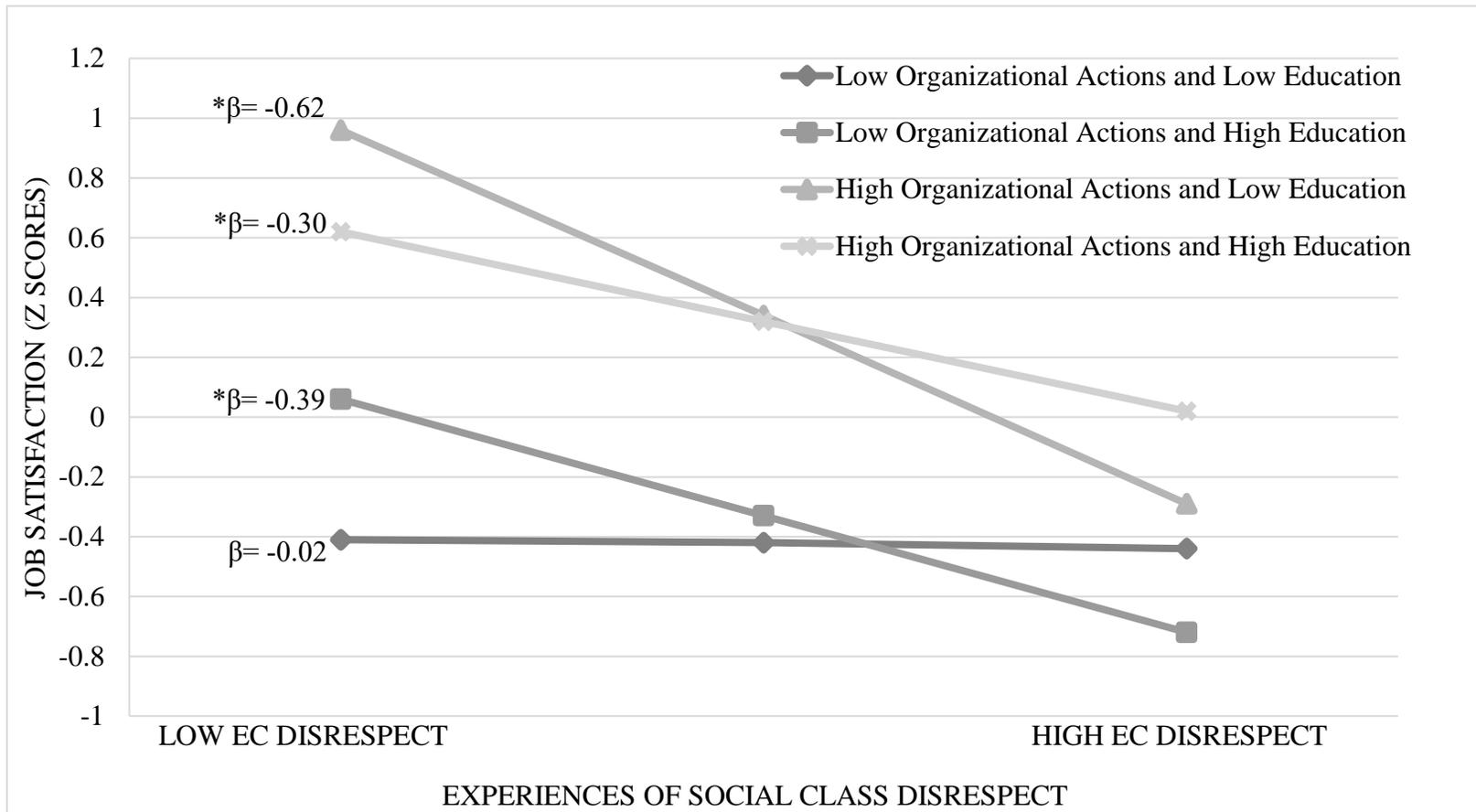


Figure 5. Interaction of economic class disrespect, perceived organizational actions against mistreatment, & education on job satisfaction. Note: $*p < 0.05$.

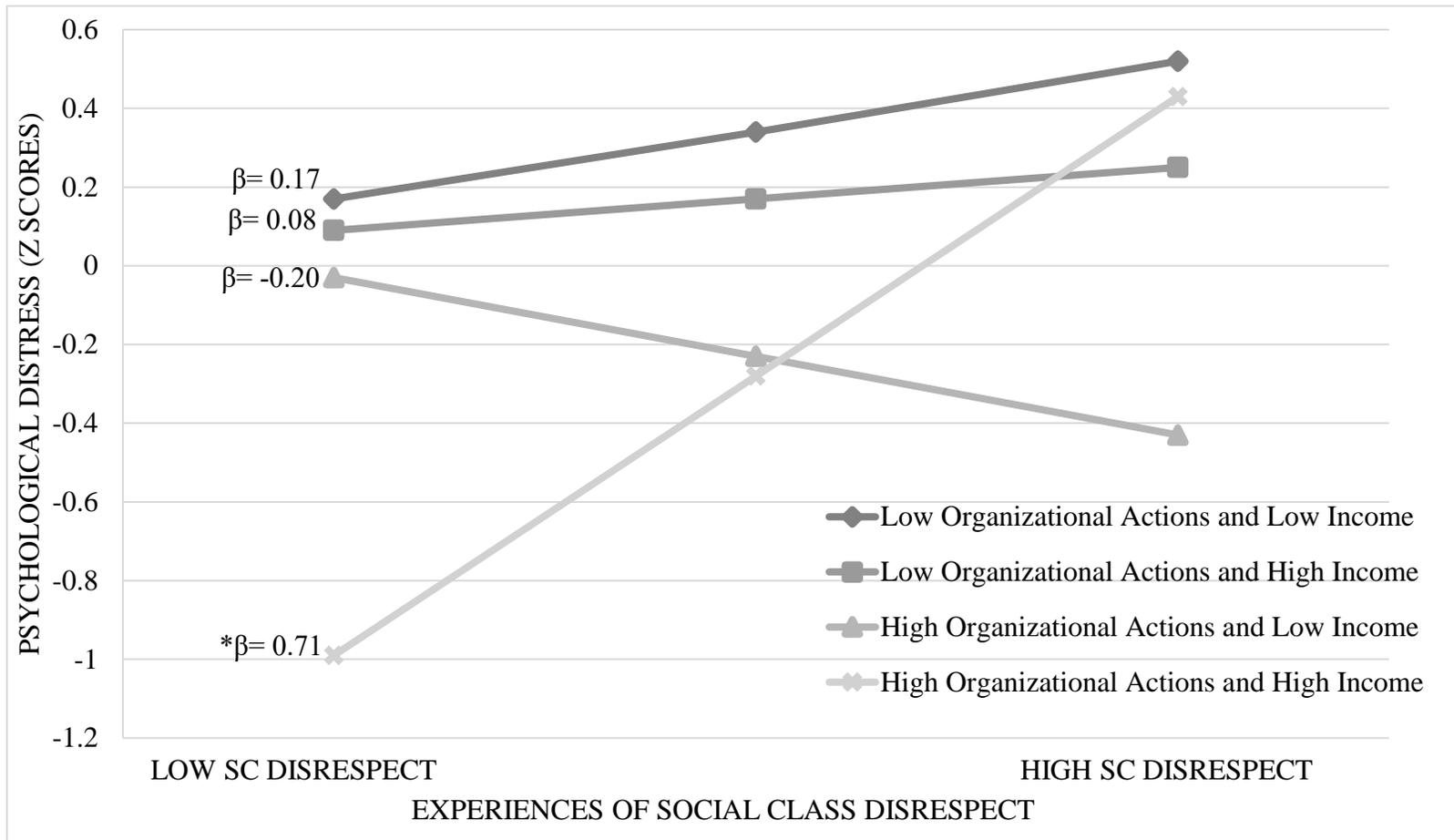


Figure 6. Interaction of social class disrespect, perceptions of organizational actions against mistreatment, & income on psychological distress. Note: $*p < 0.05$.

APPENDIX D

Tests examining Hypotheses 3 and 4 (proposed two-way interactions between experiences of classism and social class or between experiences of classism and organizational actions against mistreatment) were conducted separately from tests examining Hypotheses 5 (proposed three-way interaction between experiences of classism, social class, and organizational actions). Because there were no significant two-way interactions, tables reporting these results are not included. Instead, I include tables reporting results of the three-way interaction analyses only. None of the two-way interactions were significant without the three-way interaction included in the analyses (with the exception of economic class disrespect \times organizational actions interaction on turnover intentions; the statistics for this interaction appear in the text). As such, I also do not report the patterns of these two-way interactions.