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# Misrecognition and Well-being in Culturally White Northern New England[☆]

***Emily Walton***
***Department of Sociology***
***Dartmouth College***

Abstract Rural America is undergoing a demographic transition, as the white population decline is matched by a growing movement of racialized minorities into small towns. In the current study, I examine processes of belonging among middle-class racialized minorities living in predominantly white and rural Northern New England. Through an analysis of in-depth interviews with $n=58$ individuals of color, I show how "misrecognition," or the processes through which community members fail to affirm the humanity of others, can lead to diminished well-being. I elaborate a novel conceptual model linking a stigmatizing cultural context (chilly social climate; ignorance and racism) with misrecognition (social distancing; having to prove oneself) and well-being (unease; weariness). The study's main contribution is the generation of theory regarding symbolic boundary processes that undergird racialized minority residents' negotiation of the right to belong in a rapidly changing rural America.

Racial and ethnic minorities are increasingly moving to rural and small-town America (Sharp and Lee 2017), transforming the demographic landscape and social fabric of places where the white population is simultaneously in decline. For the first time in US history, the absolute population of rural counties declined over 2010–2020 decade, and this pattern was most evident among the white population, which lost 2 million total individuals and decreased from 79.8 percent to 76 percent of the population in this period (Johnson and Lichter 2022). Over the same decade, most rural population growth can be traced to in-migration and natural increase among racial and ethnic minorities, who increased their population by 1.6 million individuals and their share of the population rose from 20.2 percent to 24 percent; however, these growth patterns were uneven across the country, with the largest proportional changes occurring in the Northeast and Midwest (Lichter and Johnson 2023). This racialized demographic shift is particularly evident in rural Northern New England, where, over the last two decades, the number of racialized

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minority residents tripled in Maine, and quadrupled in New Hampshire and Vermont (Chiumenti 2020).

Rural scholars have shown how the social impact of non-white in-migration is often acutely felt in rural communities, despite the fact that "new arrivals bring vitality, determination, and diligence that can breathe new life into [small] towns" (Jensen 2006:7). This profound racial and ethnic change in rural and small-town America is happening against the backdrop of open nativism and hostility toward people of color, articulated at the top levels of the federal government (Huber 2016), perpetuated in the mainstream media (Bump 2022), and increasingly adopted by the general public (Pape 2022). These changes bring urgency to understanding the nature and consequences of exclusionary social processes as historically white, small-town America undergoes a racial transformation.

Over the last two decades, demographers and ethnographers have revealed the ways small towns in the Midwest and Southeast have been transformed with the settlement of often large populations of low-income Latinx individuals (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000; Sizemore 2004). At the same time, rural sociologists have investigated the meaning communities make around the incorporation of often low-income people of color, such as migrant workers and refugees (Cairns 2013; Garni 2018; Leitner 2012; Nelson 2008). Because this rural diversification is often related to undocumented migrants filling farm, industrial, and service labor demands, these people of color both lack the power to participate in civic life (Schmalzbauer 2014), and conspicuously animate fears of financial insecurity and loss of morality capital among working-class whites (Carillo, King, and Schafft 2021; Hochschild 2016).

The current study adds to this literature with its focus on professional and middle-class people of color, as they work to carve out a home in a less-studied rural area, Northern New England. Although the cluster of small towns in the Upper Valley technically constitutes a rural environment, the area is exceptional in many ways from the southern and midwestern rural areas that dominate much of the current literature. First, the racial changes in rural Northern New England are a bit behind the typical timing of the demographic shift, so racial and ethnic minorities are only beginning to transform the social and structural fabric of the area, suggesting an opportunity to understand these processes as they unfold. Second, unlike perceptions of openness and friendliness in the South and the Midwest, New Englanders have long been characterized as taciturn, reserved, and self-reliant, and these depictions persist today. Tellingly, New England states are consistently rated among the least "friendly" in the nation (Big 7 Travel 2019). Finally, because Northern New England is an early colonial settlement, a sense of entitlement to

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place make it fertile ground for the exclusion of those who do not fit with the original settler narrative (Sohoni and Mendez 2014).

Another contribution to the current literature is that this study includes a multiracial, multinational sample of racial and ethnic minorities, particularly one with a large and diverse group of Asian Americans. This inclusive sample allows me to analyze the data through a racialized incorporation lens that emphasizes the "uneven, incomplete integration of diverse, non-European migrants" (Swartz, Hartmann, and Vue 2022:1198) and recognizes that "many Americans of color and of immigrant origin understand themselves and their experiences in society through racial and ethnic lenses" (Hartmann, Baiocchi, and Swartz 2018:332). Conceptually, I bring immigrant and native-born nonwhite people together under the broad umbrellas of "people of color" and "racialized minorities" in order to emphasize their common experiences with stigmatization. In addition, by grouping all non-white people together regardless of race or immigration status, I aim to call attention to the power of whiteness as a racial category with social boundaries in need of defense. I draw upon immigration and critical race theories in these analyses because I am interested in the processes of inclusion, incorporation, and domination these literature address.

While social scientists pioneered the study of contextual impacts on success and well-being, most research examines the structural effects of physical and social disorder in racially segregated urban spaces of concentrated poverty. These theories are less informative about the cultural context of rural space. Moreover, when researchers apply a cultural lens to understand well-being, they typically examine individual behavioral changes that can be attributed to acculturation or the processes of adopting the practices and values of another culture (Abraído-Lanza, Chao, and Flórez 2005). Instead, I call attention to the ways the cultural context of predominantly white rural communities may influence the well-being among racialized minorities who live there (Viruell-Fuentes 2007). In doing so, I depart from investigations of structural context and individual cultures that shift the blame and the need for a behavioral resolution to people of color. This "gazing up" (Paton 2018) is in line with critical race efforts to decolonize sociology by asking questions that ascertain where racial stigma is produced (Tyler and Slater 2018) and how it is used in everyday life by dominant groups to maintain the status hierarchy from which they benefit (Crenshaw et al. 1995). While understanding that ideology comes from and serves those at the top, a critical race lens does the work of theorizing from "the bottom" (Matsuda 1987), positioning the experiences and knowledge of marginalized groups at the center of the analysis.

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This study's major contribution is the qualitative elaboration of "misrecognition" mechanisms linking the stigmatizing cultural context of predominantly white rural America with diminished well-being among racialized minorities. To understand misrecognition, contemporary philosophers and social scientists build upon Hegel's (1977 [1807]) foundational claim that successful integration into a community depends upon recognition, a process of acknowledging someone as they already are (Appiah 1994), affirming their humanity (Taylor 1994), and treating them as a full and equal partner in interaction (Fraser 2000). Therefore, when non-white people are *mis*-recognized, their humanity is denied and a complex, positive image of themselves is not reflected back to them in interaction. The current study responds to Lamont's (2018) call to develop a sociology of recognition that specifies concepts and analyzes pathways through which misrecognition emerges and proceeds. I employ a qualitative analysis—using interviews among middle-class racialized minorities in a cluster of small towns in rural Northern New England—to elaborate the specific misrecognition processes through which a stigmatizing cultural context can "get under the skin" for diminished well-being (see Figure 1 for a conceptual model of these relationships).

## Background

I situate this investigation of the well-being effects of living in a rural cultural context within the analytic framework of misrecognition. Following the general structure of the conceptual model I elaborate on in Figure 1, I first review the literature on symbolic boundaries and racial stigma, applying these perspectives to better understand the cultural context of rural America. Next, I review the social psychological, philosophical, and political literature on misrecognition, advocating for its utility as a conceptual tool that can be critically applied in the social sciences to understand racial exclusion. Finally, I discuss some health and emotion literature that demonstrates the potential for misrecognition to be a mechanism linking cultural context with well-being.

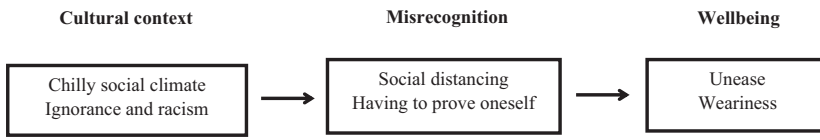



Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Cultural Context, Misrecognition, and Well-being.

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## The (White) Cultural Context of Rural America

Migration scholars have demonstrated how the "context of reception"—broadly, the opportunity structure, perceptions of acceptance, and availability of social support in the local community (Schwartz et al. 2014)—is a key determinant of "incorporation," or full participation in major social institutions and membership in the new community (Portes and Rumbaut [1996] 2014). I utilize and expand on this notion by considering the current data against the backdrop of emerging theories of racialized incorporation (Lee and Kye 2016; Swartz, Hartmann, and Vue 2022), which demonstrate how racial group boundaries remain bright even as groups are socially mobile and assimilate over time. It is important to understand the ways in which race continues to matter for groups, such as Latinx and Asian Americans, that are growing due to ongoing immigration and often migrating directly to rural areas for labor reasons. At the same time, this framework allows theorists to draw out the similarities in racialized migrant experiences with those of Black and Indigenous peoples.

Rural places often have attractive assets that cannot be found in cities, such as access to a natural environment, lower cost of living, relatively better quality of life for lower-income individuals, and a strong sense of community (Chin 2017). At the same time, rural destinations often lack both institutional structures to integrate new members of color (Tran 2017) and established ethnic communities that could help racialized minority individuals cope with exclusion (Flippen and Parrado 2015). In contrast, longtime white residents in rural areas often rely on a dense network of friends, family, and neighbors that have been in place throughout their lives (Parr, Philo, and Burns 2004). This social cohesion in rural areas is protective in terms of ensuring informal support, but the dense networks can also be double-edged in that those deemed morally unworthy of such support may also be systematically isolated and separated from resources (Sherman 2023).

For those in a dominant position, symbolic boundaries between "us" and "them" are an essential mechanism through which they may preserve their status (Lamont and Molnár 2002). While perhaps not perpetuated intentionally by individuals in interaction, the systemic practice of making cultural distinctions about the value and worth of others is a critical mechanism for maintaining symbolic power with the dominant group (Bourdieu 1987). Stigma works as a tool of inequality that shores up these symbolic social boundaries. Today's predominantly neoliberal social environment nurtures racism as a "preeminent form of stigma" because "public anxieties and hostilities are channeled

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toward those groups […] who are imagined to be a parasitical drain upon scarce resources" (Tyler and Slater 2018:733). Dominant groups—in the case of racism, this of course means white people—sustain hierarchy by wielding "stigma power" (Link and Phelan 2014) to control and exclude those who deviate from social norms.

The divisive impacts of symbolic social boundaries in cohesive rural communities can become more salient during periods of social change (Sherman and Sage 2011), such as racial demographic transition. Rural scholars have found that demographic changes destabilize and reorder social life in ways that threaten local status hierarchies (Sherman 2018) and undermine the shared sense of local identity (Schafft 2018). Though racial changes have been going on for decades, the "rural spatial imaginary remains associated with whiteness" (Ford 2021:473), and longtime white residents may respond to feelings of status threat by attempting to hold on to their power to set the cultural standards. For example, in rural Virginia, longtime white residents drew conceptual distinctions between themselves as "deserving" community members of one of the original American colonies and growing proportions of low-wage Latinx workers who threatened "American taxpayers" by depressing wages and draining public resources (Sohoni and Mendez 2014). Similarly, in response to feeling threatened because racialized minority students "take up too much space" and "think they can do whatever they want," white students in rural Sweden constructed "Others" as morally inferior and therefore undeserving of membership in the school community (Odenbring and Johansson 2019:88). In rural Arkansas, Latinx individuals framed themselves as "good" workers—in contrast to poor whites—and thus moral, dignified, and legitimate community members; rather than assure their belonging in the cultural community, this Latinx performance of symbolic boundary work resulted in only a contingent belonging that relied upon their participation in exploitative labor practices and avoidance of public benefits (Hallett 2012).

### Misrecognition as a Pathway Linking Community Culture to Well-being

I elaborate on the theoretical details of an important microprocess through which racial stigma works: the devaluation and denial of others' shared humanity and cultural membership, or *misrecognition*. Conceptually, misrecognition resonates with Goffman's (1963) classic description of stigmatized individuals as "not quite human." To recognize someone is to encounter them as if you have met before; something about this person triggers a sense of acquaintance and comfort, so you do not see them as new, unfamiliar, and exotic, but rather as someone you understand and with whom you share a common interest. Lamont et al. (2016) argue that scholars should pay more attention to processes of *mis*recognition,

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where people are overlooked and ignored in social interaction—acts not of aggression, but nonattention—because it is through these practices that symbolic social boundaries are constructed and maintained, leading to racial and social exclusion. In the United States, the "historically robust connection between ideal whiteness and authentic citizenship" (Hughey 2012:177)—identifying with the dominant culture, religion, and language—means the humanity of white individuals is automatically recognized in most spaces. This automatic recognition of white people is amplified in rural areas by the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism, which has "instilled an enduring racial imaginary in which rural spaces [are] for white people" (Carillo, King, and Schafft 2021:431).

My focus on misrecognition relies on the premise that if individuals are not seen in their full complexity as valuable members of society, this can "inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being" (Taylor 1994:25). Philosophers see recognition as not just as a courtesy we extend to others, but a "vital human need" (Taylor 1994), so that to misrecognize another is a failure to acknowledge their full humanity (Martineau, Meer, and Thompson 2012). Because the self is constituted in social relationships, people depend upon social affirmation about their value, worth, and competence as individuals. Philosophers understand this lack of social validation from others in society as akin to a "moral injury," the distressing aftermath of exposure to an event that crossed a line with respect to one's moral beliefs, such as participating in combat or making complex medical decisions (Honneth 2001).

Because rural places can be homogeneous socioeconomically and lacking in cues upon which to base social distinctions (Sherman 2009), moral capital, involving concepts such as "work ethic" and "family values," tends to flourish and can be traded for advantages and status in the community (Sherman 2018). Unlike white people in rural areas, racialized minority newcomers are first considered strangers and, unless they actively work to demonstrate loyalty (Yuval-Davis 2006) and a commitment to shared values (Hoekstra and Gerteis 2019), they may not be recognized as part of the moral community (Wuthnow 2018). The current study contributes to the sociological application and development of the concept of misrecognition by understanding it as the processual mechanism linking a racially stigmatizing cultural context with individual well-being.

## Misrecognition and Well-being

Though most studies do not name misrecognition outright, recent research on health and well-being suggests its utility as a unifying concept. Nicklett and Burgard (2009) have shown that as international

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migrants have more experience in the U.S. and begin to understand their downgraded social position, they are more likely to be depressed. In her study of undocumented Brazilians in the U.S., Joseph (2011) described how a majority of them live in a state of constant anxiety, feeling that they are never able to let their hair down to simply "live." In the same vein, Quesada (2014) describes daily life as a "constant trial" for Latinx day laborers in Northern California, as they must negotiate their right to be seen as human beings and find themselves negatively internalizing and embodying the subtle, everyday racism they face.

We might also gain some empirical purchase on the links between misrecognition and well-being by thinking about its similarities with microinvalidations, a category of microaggression understood as, "actions that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiences of people of color" (Sue et al. 2008:331). Microaggressions have been shown to relate to lower self-esteem and feelings of self-doubt, isolation, and marginalization among students of color in academic settings (Nadal et al. 2014b), all indicators of not belonging much like exclusion from the community. In turn, studies have also proven cumulative effects of microaggressions on mental health outcomes, such as emotional stress (Anderson and Finch 2017), depressive symptoms (Gattis and Larson 2017), negative affect (Nadal et al. 2014a), and some physical health conditions, such as pain, lower energy levels, and fatigue (Nadal et al. 2017).

Misrecognition could diminish well-being through the stress of negotiating a stigmatized status (Gee et al. 2016; Hicken, Lee, and Hing 2018; Pachankis et al. 2018) and the performance of emotional labor required to display normatively appropriate behavior. The minority stress paradigm emphasizes how the social environment may be taxing to stigmatized individuals, thus requiring adaptation, or a stress response (Meyer 2003). Social psychological theories explain how interactions with others are crucial for self-development; negative regard from others can lead to negative self-regard (Tajfel and Turner 2004), and having a subordinate position in society functions as an ambient stressor (Pearlin 1999). Helping them stay "in" in response to stigma, racial minorities' performance of emotional labor, or managing their feelings so as to not upset their interaction partners (Hochschild 1983), may smooth interactions because it reduces anxiety on the part of whites, however, regular displays of ungenuine emotions can lead to alienation of one's feelings and emotional exhaustion (Morris and Feldman 1996). Evans and Moore (2015) also identify how emotion management works as an important mechanism in the reproduction of white power and privilege in culturally white spaces; in these settings, people of color carry the everyday burden of

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having to choose between tacit participation in their own stigmatization or actively resisting it at the risk of alienation.

## Methods

### Research Setting

The Upper Valley refers to an area with the Connecticut River at its center and its western and eastern bounds falling at the foothills of the Green and White Mountains in Vermont and New Hampshire. The local newspaper, *The Valley News*, includes 42 towns (median population of 2,176) and two cities (each with a population of 13,000) located across four counties in its circulation area (Lippman 2021), and I aggregate statistics about these places in the descriptive sociodemographic summaries I report below. The Upper Valley's communities are located in four nonmetro counties with little urban influence, as indicated by the Rural–Urban Continuum Codes (RUCC) and Urban Influence Codes (UIC)—Grafton (RUCC 5, UIC 8) and Sullivan (RUCC 7, UIC 9) Counties in New Hampshire, and Orange (RUCC 9, UIC 8) and Windsor (RUCC 7, UIC 8) Counties in Vermont.

These communities' small sizes and more than 250-year history of white settlement make the recent in-migration of non-white people a new and visible phenomenon. In 1990, the Upper Valley was 97.8 percent white; however, this proportion had shrunk to 92.4 percent in 2019—still a small share of people of color but growing steadily over time. Table 1 shows the composite racial and ethnic composition for

**Table 1. Racial and Ethnic Composition in Four Central Upper Valley Communities**

| | Population | % of Total Population | % of Non-White Population |
|---|---|---|---|
| White | 41,633 | 87.3 | |
| Black or African American | 899 | 1.9 | 14.8 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 67 | 0.1 | 1.1 |
| Asian American | 2,490 | 5.2 | 41.0 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander | 8 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Some other race | 36 | 0.1 | 0.6 |
| Two or more races | 912 | 1.9 | 15.0 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 1,665 | 3.5 | 27.4 |
| Total population | 47,710 | 100.0 | |
| Non-White population | 6,077 | | 100.0 |

*Source*: ACS 2015–19 for Lebanon, Claremont, and Hanover, New Hampshire, and Hartford, Vermont.

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the four most populous cities and towns in the Upper Valley; I focus on these communities in reporting these racial statistics because they are both geographically and economically central, containing 55 percent of the jobs in the area (Uyizeye and Josephson 2022). Examining the population change in the Upper Valley over the last three decades (not shown) reveals that between 1990 and 2000, 26 percent of the population growth occurred among non-white individuals, and this rate rose to 45 percent from 2000 to 2009, and 309 percent from 2009 to 2019 (in this final decade, the white population declined by 2,053 individuals overall, while the non-white population increased by 3,035 individuals.) The fact that the population growth is occurring primarily among Asian Americans in the Upper Valley is different from most other rural areas across the country, where the population growth is comprised of mostly Latinx, Black, and Indigenous people (Rowlands and Love 2021).

Despite having working-class historical roots (and substantial working-class populations still), Upper Valley rural towns are unique in that they are near an Ivy League university, a regional medical center, and several hi-tech and engineering firms, which offer a wide range of service and professional employment opportunities. A study investigating the social exclusion of homeless people in the Upper Valley characterized the economic backdrop as having "a certain bimodal quality," where "privilege […] obscures poverty and problems of housing insecurity" (Carpenter-Song, Ferron, and Kobylenski 2016:45). Since 1990, manufacturing and retail trade industries have declined from 16.2 percent to 10.4 percent and 16.7 percent to 10.7 percent of the economy, respectively, while the employment category of education, healthcare, and social assistance has risen from 25.4 percent to 34.6 percent. When examined together with non-white population growth over the period, it suggests that this growth is occurring among those with professional occupations.

**Study Participants**

From March 2018 to February 2020, research assistants and I interviewed $n=58$ non-white individuals living in the Upper Valley (see Table 2 for a summary of their characteristics.) We used our professional and social networks to initiate recruitment with a convenience sample and expanded recruitment through snowball sampling. As I discuss later, this resulted in a sample overwhelmingly comprised of Asian Americans. Following Asian Americans, there was a substantial representation of US-born Black and Caribbean Black individuals, but just a few Latinx immigrants, African immigrants, and Native Americans. Among US-born Latinx, and US-born and immigrant Middle Eastern individuals, the interview sample included just one participant from each group. The

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**Table 2. Sample Characteristics, by Race and Nativity Groups**

| Race and Nativity | Participants | Percent | Median Age | Median Years UV | Female | Professional |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asian immigrant | 29 | 50 | 42 | 10 | 18 | 24 |
| Asian American | 7 | 12 | 45 | 4 | 4 | 7 |
| US-born Black | 8 | 14 | 32 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| Caribbean Black | 4 | 7 | 48 | 3.5 | 1 | 2 |
| Latinx immigrant | 3 | 5 | 50 | 9 | 1 | 2 |
| African immigrant | 2 | 3 | 45 | 4.1 | 1 | 1 |
| Native American | 2 | 3 | 35 | 11 | 1 | 1 |
| Middle Eastern immigrant | 1 | 2 | 52 | 16 | 0 | 1 |
| Middle Eastern American | 1 | 2 | 42 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| US-born Latinx | 1 | 2 | 31 | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Sample | *N*=58 | 100 | 42 | 7 | 53% | 79% |

median age among participants was 42 years old and their median time living in the Upper Valley was 7 years. The sample was 53 percent female and 79 percent of participants had a professional occupational status, defined as working in a job that required a college degree or advanced degree.

My research assistants and I utilized semi-structured interviews, with most lasting approximately an hour long; the shortest lasted 29 minutes and the longest 1 hour 26 minutes. We always conducted interviews at a location of the participant's choosing (generally their house or a café) and gave a $25 incentive for participation. Interview questions focused on descriptions of the local community, perspectives on knowing others and being known, feelings about and definitions of home, local attachment and participation, sociodemographic questions, experiences with race and stereotypes, health and mental health, and personal worries (see Appendix A for interview guide). A qualitative research approach works well for eliciting the meaning of personal and cultural phenomena and understanding the nature of processes that may help generate and refine social theory (Small 2009).

### Analyses

I allowed emerging ideas from the data—such as feelings of value and respect, seeing oneself represented, disengaging, performance, and demeaning treatment—to drive my ongoing analyses, developing interview questions to pursue certain lines of inquiry throughout the study (Charmaz 2006). I applied case study logic to the sampling procedures

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(Yin 2009), where each case provided an increasingly accurate understanding of the questions at hand and informed the next case. I used Atlas.ti to perform open and then focused coding as key themes related to the cultural context, misrecognition, and well-being emerged throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing processes. Specifically, I did not approach the data collection with misrecognition in mind as a theoretical concept, but rather developed interview questions using a theoretical framework pertaining to belonging and social boundary processes, and also social determinants of health lens on well-being. As my focus on misrecognition emerged, I came to the data with known theories, using an abductive approach (Timmermans and Tavory 2012) to create some preliminary theoretical explanations and coded the data a second time focusing on detailing the pathways. Each of the pathways (e.g., chilly social climate, social distancing, weariness) arose as salient observations across multiple interviewees. Ultimately, I developed the conceptual model that related and integrated my larger categories, represented in Figure 1, and used this as a guide for presenting evidence in the Results section.

**Limitations**

I acknowledge the predominance of Asian Americans and immigrants in the sample is quite different from most literature on race and incorporation, limiting generalizability and comparison to other studies. However, I simultaneously consider this predominantly Asian American and Asian immigrant sample as a strength of the study, as it allows me to utilize a framework that centers on processes of racism and immigrant incorporation at the same time. The total of 63 percent Asian immigrants and U.S.-born Asian Americans in the sample is greater than their presence in the four central Upper Valley communities shown in Table 1, where they make up 41 percent of the non-white population. In contrast, U.S.-born and immigrant Latinx individuals make up only 7 percent of the study sample, while they represent 27 percent of the non-white population in these communities. I believe part of this oversampling reflects the early stages of data collection in which I relied on a convenience sample. I also believe that the lack of Latinx representation reflects the somewhat elusive nature of the Latinx population in the Upper Valley, among whom I had a harder time gaining acceptance and interest to participate in the study. Similarly, I note the preponderance of immigrants in the sample, which can be partially explained by the fact that 71 percent of Asian American adults in the United States were born in another country. But another part of the explanation relates to the Upper Valley

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employment context, which is dominated by healthcare and technology sectors that often recruit from a global workforce and capitalize on U.S. immigration policies that favor highly educated workers. In the analyses presented in this paper, I focus on themes widely represented in the data and chose quotations that captured these themes across many racial and nativity groups. However, I acknowledge that the sample is unique in race studies and may influence the nature of the theoretical processes I describe. For example, the subtle nature of misrecognition may be particular to the social ostracism—as distinct from domination and subordination—more commonly experienced among Asian Americans (Kim 1999).

Further, my identity as a white woman interviewing non-white individuals about their experiences in a predominantly white space brought a power imbalance to the research. Therefore, in the questions I posed, interactions with respondents, and interpretations of the data, I actively worked to remain cognizant and thoughtful regarding my social status. I aimed not to presume expertise, but privileged participants' experiences and understandings over my own. My research team was comprised of students from an array of backgrounds—Vietnamese American, Chinese American, Korean American, Brazilian, Latina, multiracial, white, and Black—and we participated in countless analytic discussions about our interactions in the field. However, I acknowledge that the analyses are interpreted through a white lens and urge readers to keep that in mind.

## Results

### Stigmatizing Cultural Context

***Chilly*** social climate. Overall, I characterize the cultural context of rural Northern New England as individualistic, civil, and kind but not outwardly friendly, and marked by insularity and exclusivity. These characteristics are emblematic of the ways whiteness is expressed in the Upper Valley, and I view them as the means through which racial domination and oppression are perpetuated. The "social climate" is an important site of investigation because white dispositions, norms, and values are often communicated through interaction (Withers 2017). Because rural Northern New England has long been a "white space," many white people do not notice their own dominant identities, and whiteness operates as the unquestioned norm of social engagement (Anderson 2022). Participants described the area as "chilly," especially compared to other places they had lived in the United States. Eswari,

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an Indian physician who moved to the Upper Valley just 1 year ago, contrasted regional cultures this way:

> In [a Southern state] people were friendlier, even though there were not many Indians. People were very curious. We used to walk around the [apartment] building and people would always say hi or just exchange a conversation. Here, it is different. [At work], people don't look at me and don't say hi. I always used to wait until they looked at me, so I could kind of smile, but I don't do that anymore. Now I don't even make an effort. I'm on my phone when I am in the hallway.

Over time, Eswari adapted to the culture so that she no longer expects people to be friendly and she is less open herself, attesting to the power of stigma to keep people "in," or conforming to the normative climate (Phelan, Link, and Dovidio 2008). Eunice, a Korean American woman who had lived here 16 years, observed the extent to which people regulate their emotions, "Northern New England is a lot colder—its weather and its people. There is a norm that you should control your emotions carefully. You shouldn't be too loud, or laugh too much, or cry in public, or cry at all." Eunice later described how the emotion regulation also manifested as an aversion to the conflict that meant "you'll never have a substantive conversation about race. Ever." The outward dampening of emotions, characteristic of upper middle-class individuals (Lamont 1992), not only maintains a social distance between community members in general but limits the depth of personal relationships because people may not express racial observations central to their identities and experiences. Further, research has shown how people of color in professional settings are not permitted to display emotions like anger or annoyance but feel pressured to present a consistently pleasant demeanor so as to resist conforming to racial stereotypes (Wingfield 2010).

Other respondents, particularly those growing up outside the U.S., interpret their experiences in the context of a broader American culture where individual concerns take primacy over responsibilities to others. Folade, a Nigerian woman, had hoped for better relationships with her neighbors, "Individualism trumps community. It is very different in Nigerian culture, where people check up on you. They just want to know how you are doing. They want to visit you. [Here], I see my neighbors and I have to be the one to say hi." Junior, a Haitian man, also talked about how unfriendly people are and what that has meant for his family's experience, "When you are walking down the street and you see someone, as you get closer, they try to distract themselves

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on their phone or something. We have survived it. Four years now. It's working. But on the human side—like, social relationships—it is a huge adjustment." Junior was disappointed with the chilly reception he and his family have received. His language of adjustment, survival, and inhumanity attest to their loss of dignity. Folade's and Junior's stories attest to the potential particularity of the racialized immigrant experience, where they are simultaneously trying to adjust to a more individualistic American culture and negotiate a stigmatized racial status. This broader American culture of individualism shows up in settings where many groups are coming together and functions to defend white people's comfort. Research on stable multiethnic urban neighborhoods, for example, has shown how white ambivalence, an "outward expression of pleasure derived from multiethnic diversity that often masked feelings of distrust and discomfort" (Walton 2021:80), resulted in limited interracial engagement as white people kept to themselves to relieve their social awkwardness.

***Ignorance and racism.*** Other aspects of the cultural context that foment misrecognition are ignorance and racism. More than 200 years of white racial isolation in rural Northern New England has resulted in a strong white habitus, or "uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites' racial taste, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters" (Bonilla-Silva 2018:121), that remains invisible to most white residents. Mueller (2020:144) conceptualizes white ignorance not as an innocent absence of knowledge among "passive, unwitting" white people, but as a core process upholding domination among "possessive defenders of white power, privilege, and wealth."

Sometimes ignorance and racism come from acquaintances with whom people of color have repeated interactions. Sarah, a Filipina who had been living in town for 3 years, described being dismissed by her coworker because of her identity, "I said to my nurse manager, how can I get to that [higher-level] post? She said to me in plain, simple language, 'You can never get there because you're Filipino.' It doesn't matter if I improve my qualifications, or if I do a better job, or [demonstrate] leadership. Those things don't matter at all." This experience speaks to the relevance of race to Sarah's incorporation into the workplace, where she felt singled out as different and less valued in her community of nurses. Samuel, a Haitian man who had lived in the Upper Valley for 15 years, described an experience where he asked a white woman out on a date, and she dismissed him out of hand because of his race, "It wasn't meant to insult or demean me. But [she said], 'Oh no, Honey. I'm sorry, I don't do Black men.' What do

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you say to that? [All I could do was] accept, agree, shake hands, and bow out." Given that Samuel was asking out a woman he did not know well, she was likely relying on stereotypes in judging him as unworthy of romantic partnership. Samuel's reaction is emblematic of the self-directed emotional work people of color must perform in order to escape personal responsibility for the treatment they receive (Morris and Feldman 1996).

For respondents who are embedded in white social networks, it is difficult when their friends, who largely consider themselves politically progressive, cannot grasp the extent to which they experience racism. Emma, a multiracial woman who is most often read as Black, described her experiences with underemployment since moving to this area 11 years ago:

> When I tell my white friends how many jobs I interviewed for—part-time, low-paying jobs—I am amazed by how shocked they are. That is not comforting, it is just unnerving. I feel like they should believe me right off the bat. I think they are in denial about racism. They want to believe they live in such a wonderfully progressive community; it couldn't happen here. I'm like, it happens all the time!

In addition to experiencing the direct racism of not getting callbacks, Emma also faced the emotional burden of responding to the ignorance of her white friends, who could not imagine people in their community's perpetuating such stereotypes about Black people. The Upper Valley is distinct in that it is largely white and rural, but it also has pockets of political progressivism, so white people here envision themselves as liberal, enlightened, and cosmopolitan. These views, when combined with the American idea that racism largely functions as an interpersonal phenomenon (Omi and Winant 2015), mean people go to great lengths to distance themselves from racism, dismissing it as individual acts of meanness while refusing to recognize the cultural context of exclusion.

Finally, it is often strangers who make ignorant and racist judgments. Folade described how she felt talked down to with unfamiliar people, "[People ask me,] 'Is it true you live in trees and in the midst of animals?' It is an absurd and demeaning question. People talk to me like I don't know what I'm doing, they dismiss me." Folade, like Samuel, faced a stranger's judgment about her intellect and level of "civilization" in her country of origin, Nigeria, attesting to the power of colorism and nativism to guide racism in interactions with people relying on stereotypes. Saima, a Libyan American woman, felt that her

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racial identity was always on display in public, "We go to restaurants, and everyone looks at us. We can't sit without feeling like we are so odd. Last week, we wanted to get ice cream and [my husband said,] 'Oh, I'm not going in there, people will be staring at us.' And he is pretty confident. But he was like, I am not going in there." Saima and her husband anticipated ignorance and removed themselves from the experience of discomfort before it happened; they curtailed their movements and denied themselves the pleasure to protect themselves from harm. When white locals call upon stigmatizing, stereotypical ideas about individuals who are racially different from them, racialized minorities may react by keeping themselves "in" to feel more comfortable.

**Processes of Misrecognition**

***Social*** distancing. Social distancing can manifest along interactive, affective, and normative dimensions for racial and ethnic minorities. Interactive social distance refers to a desire to avoid contact (Lucas and Phelan 2019), in part related to anxiety about anticipated interactions (Plant 2004). Affective social distance refers to the lack of sympathy for and acceptance of members of different groups (Bogardus 1925). Normative social distance refers to exclusionary processes based on distinctions between "us" and "them," and what kinds of people are "acceptable" for group membership (Simmel 1955). These types of social distance support what Beeman (2007:687) conceived as "emotional segregation," where white people are incapable of seeing "people of color as sharing the same human emotions and experiences."

Of these forms of social distancing, the one that was perhaps most familiar and obvious in most people's experience was interactional, in which longtime residents appeared to avoid contact and association with them, leaving many experiencing a strong sense of social isolation in the Upper Valley. Anura, an Indian woman who had lived in town for 12 years, described how difficult it was to form connections in the beginning, "My in-laws visited, and they were like, 'How can you live here?' We had hardly any social life. I hardly met anybody. During that time, we also discovered [our child had learning difficulties.] It was a big thing. We were thinking maybe we would be better off going back home because at least we would be with family." Though Anura did not receive the emotional and instrumental support she needed from her relationships, she and her family decided to stay because of the school-related resources and services for her child. With time and effort—such as her husband volunteering to teach in the elementary school supplementary

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science program—Anura felt that they became more accepted as members of the community, showing how actively demonstrating their commitment to shared educational values alleviated the misrecognition (Hoekstra and Gerteis 2019) and allowed them to reduce their social distance. Eunice, a Korean American woman who had lived in her town for 16 years, felt that it was often hard for newcomers to break into the Upper Valley social scene:

> My experience of the Upper Valley is that there is a lot of cliqueyness. I mean there are a lot of long-standing friend groups, social interaction tends to be very groupy. I don't mean cliquey like mean girls or anything, although there is some of that, but cliquey in that there are a lot of things that people do as groups. Human beings are social, people have groupings everywhere. But there is a closeness and solidity and boundary to the groupings here. People are a little surprised at how standoffish people are, and I think how hard it is to make friends.

Eunice eventually made friends, but she reported that those friendships were usually with other newcomers to town, who were also more likely to later move away than longtime residents.

Many respondents felt that longtime community members kept them at an effective distance, resulting in them being essentially unknown in their community. Jocelyn, a Filipino American woman, felt the distance related to her racial identity, "I feel like I am not seen as a complex person. Being able to move through a space and not have to be so hypervigilant all the time is a privilege afforded when you are a part of a majority. Here, I feel very visible. People notice me, but I don't know if they understand me in the way that I want to be understood." Jocelyn expressed how she felt reduced to one dimension—her racial phenotype—and was seen above all as a racial group member, rather than an individual with a complex identity. Emma, a Black professional woman who had lived in her town for 7 years, also felt an affective distance or lack of sympathy from community members that she had no doubt stemmed from a sense of threat related to her racial difference:

> There are some folks that I can tell by just body language alone, and sometimes even by their actions, that I am not part of their 'New England Dream.' For some people [the dream is] to try to escape diversity, really, by coming up to areas that are predominately white. So, primarily my connections have been with other transplants, other people who have relocated here. I know how it feels to be on the outside, and so when I see another individual or groups of

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> people being othered in some way, I do try to go out of my way as much as possible to create an environment that's like: 'I see you. You are not invisible to me.' I have a neighbor who is a person of color and I feel like I never have to explain myself.

Emma related that even her husband, who is white, sometimes does not fully "get it," so she calls upon her deep relationships with other people of color to fulfill her affective social needs.

Other people tried to connect with longstanding community members but failed because they were not able to fit in with the local culture, indicating normative social distance. Joseph, a multiracial Chinese and white man who had lived in the area for a decade, talked about how hard it was for him to break into long-established groups, "I feel like I have never really formed close friendships. It has just been hard for me to meet people. There is a big hockey group that plays every Sunday. I tried out, but it was a lot more intense than I thought. They were like, 'Oh, it's very laid back.' But it wasn't. I was not up to par." Though Joseph was invited to play hockey with this longstanding group, his acceptance hinged on a demonstration of facility with a culturally white, Northern New England sport, and he did not make the grade. Hayden, a Black Puerto Rican man, expressed how locals asked him to participate in their cultural events but did not reciprocate with interest in his:

> Because [New England has] a very rich, very deep culture, there has been a lot of adapting on my part. When you meet people here [they are] like, 'Oh, let me teach you how to make maple syrup. Let me teach you old hymns.' But in terms of the flip side and people getting to know where I'm from and the sorts of things that make me *me*, I wouldn't say that people are too keen on it.

Hayden was asked to fit into the local social norms but because he perceived a lack of interest in his own human complexity, he maintained a normative social distance from the community.

***Having to prove oneself.*** Another mechanism of misrecognition is feeling compelled to prove oneself in social interactions. Having to prove oneself is a reaction to identity denial, in which an individual is not recognized as a member of an important in-group (Cheryan and Monin 2005). Park (2008:134) has characterized the "immigrant life," even among the second generation, as one of "constant doubt and justification of one's presence"; she argues that the act of reminding people of their place—their marginal and subordinate status—is a way of enforcing social control and upholding the racial status quo. Linking to

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racial status, Anderson (2015:13) refers to this performance as a dance in which people of color must overcome the "deficit of credibility" and gain "provisional acceptance." Having to prove oneself can be a harmful misrecognition process because one's view of oneself as a valuable, meritorious person is not validated by others (Wang, Minervino, and Cheryan 2013). Because the growing presence of people of color in these small towns poses a threat to white racial dominance, social interactions are opportunities to remind racialized newcomers of their partial, second-class citizenship in the community.

For many of the newcomers I interviewed, the imperative to prove oneself manifested as a generalized feeling of being noticed as different, as standing out from the crowd. According to Georgia, a Black woman who had lived in the Upper Valley for 3 years:

> Sometimes when you go into a place and it's off the beaten path, you'll get a few more stares, a few more glances. You notice that they are looking at you like, 'What is she doing here, or where does she come from?' Sometimes people just stare. I would hate to say that they have never seen an African American before, except for on TV, but sometimes that is how it feels. And the community that I came from was very diverse, and you had a mixture of incomes and races. It was a mixing pot, a perfect mixing pot. Now that I am gone, I realize how perfect it was.

Being repeatedly stared at in public reminds Georgia that others perceive her as exotic and confirms their view of her as less than human, as undeserving of basic norms of civility.

Interviewees' professional occupational status often brought them into interaction with people who questioned their credentials and their right to occupy a position of equal or greater status in the workplace. Visaka, a Sri Lankan woman who lived in the area for 17 years and felt very at home, related how she felt disrespected at work because of her status as an immigrant:

> I feel like I have to prove myself. They naturally think that I am somebody's assistant. Once, I was meeting a client for the first time and two minutes after meeting him he says, 'Are you a citizen?' I was happy to share my status because I am not illegal, you know? But, in a professional environment like that you don't expect people to just blurt out, 'Are you a citizen? Are you legal?' I thought it was really crass for someone to look at me and just say that.

Chimaobi, a Nigerian man, had his capabilities as a professor challenged in another instance:

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> One person commented, 'Why would you be teaching American students since English is their first language? Why not foreign students?' I explained how writing is a different kind of discourse. Even if you speak the language of instruction, you still have to understand the codes of writing. When I talk about some of the things I do here, there is a way that [others] will sort of push it aside. It is kind of implicit.

Common to these professional respondents' experiences is the feeling of being constantly "on," never able to let their guard down as they must provide proof of their worth in social interactions, showing how having to prove oneself may be linked to well-being. This needs to prove one's legitimate place in the community may be particularly strong among immigrants of color and those who are new to the area because they are judged as culturally different on multiple axes.

On the other hand, those who are U.S.-born or have lived in the area for a long time are especially frustrated when their insider status is questioned. Saima is American born, but because she wears a hijab and is non-white, she feels she is constantly asked to demonstrate her humanity, "Every encounter I have to prove to them that I am human. I have to prove I am normal. Everyone thinks that I have an accent before I talk. People ask where I am from all the time." Saima acutely feels the unease from having to prove herself because others see her phenotypically and culturally as an outsider. Similarly, Robbie, a Mexican American who moved to his town with his family when he was in high school and rightly feels like this *is* where he is from, expressed how it was tiresome that people asked anyway, "I'm like, 'I'm from Washington state.' Then they're always like, 'Oh. Well, your parents…' I always try to give them a hard time before I answer. I get upset about it, but it's not worth my time. So, I just answer." Robbie's first instinct is to push back, in part because he is trying to educate those who question his status as a member of the community, but he is also making a statement about the propriety of their question. Because of their stigmatized racial statuses, people of color are misrecognized and called to account for their place as respected, worthy, and valuable individuals in the community.

## Misrecognition and Well-being

***Unease.*** Among many of the interviewees, there was an ever-present sense of unease as they passed through everyday life. I conceptualize unease as the absence of what Giddens (1991) calls "ontological security," or a sense of comfort, confidence, and trust in the world as it appears to be. Scholars emphasize that ontological security is a deep

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psychological need for people in all societies and is an accomplishment of the continuity of individuals' self-identities with the information they receive from others in routine interactions (Dupuis and Thorns 1998). Fei, a Chinese American woman who had been living in town only a year, discussed how her unease stemmed directly from having a stigmatized racial identity, "It is this unspoken anxiety. If you have identities that are less valuable or less affirmed, you are going to suffer more. I am actively looking for a therapist. I am making sure that I do things that will enhance my mental health because it is something I am concerned about—just having the stamina to feel comfortable here." Unlike Fei, who sought an outlet for her unease, Xiu, a Chinese woman living in the area for 3 years, spiraled into negativity: "I used to be a very positive person, but these past few months I have been whining a lot. That is my way of dealing with my anxiety or stress. I am becoming someone I used to hate—someone who brings negativity into people's lives. I thought I could survive any place, but now I think that the community you move into really affects your life quality." Xiu connected her inability to find community with her recent lack of resilience, so she was biding her time until she could move to a more comfortable and connected environment. Emma, who has called this place home for 11 years, says her health has hit rock bottom recently, and it is directly related to her racial identity:

> I think it has gotten worse. Even this morning, thinking about doing this interview, I started feeling anxious. I was thinking, what do I feel safe talking about and sharing? All these micro-aggressions and macro-aggressions are carried within me. I have to meditate or do deep breathing. I have to pull out my tool kit because I know I'm getting triggered. Ultimately, I don't feel safe, even though this is a very safe community crime-wise. As far as my standing in the community, my hope to thrive here really is compromised. My health is not good, and I attribute it to my experiences of being a person of color in this community.

Emma spells it out plainly—her well-being suffers because of the accumulated burden of being a person of color in a culturally white place.

***Weariness.*** Many respondents also described feeling very tired and worn down by their interactions with people in the community. Having to work hard for connection and constantly prove oneself in interaction induces feelings of strain and mental taxation among respondents. Interviewees also conveyed the effort that goes into not upsetting their white interaction partners, in line with Hochschild's (1983) arguments

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about emotional labor as work people do to manage their feelings in public to "create a particular emotional state in another person" (Wharton 2009:148). Rimi, a Bengali woman who lived in town for 13 years, discussed how talking about race and having to manage the feelings of white people was taxing, "I feel like I am trying to help them feel comfortable in my company. That is tiring. Sometimes they want to talk about issues that directly matter to me. They have never lived under my skin; they would never know. But we are having these discussions and I try to make them comfortable." While Rimi's story revealed many experiences with misrecognition she could share, she did not want to do so with people she suspected might not understand and instead pulled away from relationships in general. This shows that social distancing is not just a one-way phenomenon but is practiced by people of color to protect themselves from the weariness that comes with living in a culturally white space.

Because their humanity is not seen by the community, many respondents expressed a desire to move away when circumstances permit. Emma observed, "I feel like this area kind of has an expiration date for some folks. I have seen a lot of people come and go. I don't know when mine is going to be." Saima, who works as a community organizer, encounters many individuals of color who do not stay long, "It is hard, seeing all these people being drained. They come, stay for a few years, take whatever they need to take from the area, and then leave. Even though we know it is [politically] progressive, even though we know it may not be as harmful as other states, we still leave because it's not healthy for our psyche." Saima sums up how misrecognition, as opposed to overt hate, is experienced as a slow, steady assault on well-being.

## Discussion

As more middle-class, professional racialized minorities move to rural places for work and the benefits of country living, it is essential that we refine our theoretical models to understand the potential consequences for their well-being. Understanding the experiences of non-white individuals as they move to historically, traditionally, and culturally white rural places clarifies and complicates models of racialized incorporation. I explicitly recognize and analyze the stigmatizing cultural context of rural Northern New England, rather than using an individual-centered acculturation frame, which puts emphasis on behaviors among individuals themselves to understand their often-poor mental health outcomes. An important contribution of this study is that I am able to identify the cultural context that relates to when people are perceived as racially

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different (Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004), how these processes play out in particular social experiences (Lamont et al. 2016), and elaborate some potential well-being consequences of these misrecognition processes.

The racial hierarchy of the U.S., in which whites engage in a constant struggle to maintain their position at the top (Siddiqi et al. 2019), is reproduced and perhaps even amplified in culturally white, rural Northern New England. Racialized minorities learn about their stigmatized identities through interaction with the predominantly white local population in a cultural context that is "chilly" and characterized by ignorance and racism. Interviewees found the local culture to be closed, unfriendly, and focused on the individual at the expense of the community. In addition, interviewees shared numerous, almost daily, experiences with ignorance and racism at multiple levels of their relationships in local communities. Some described outright racist incidents at the hands of locals, whereas others reported instances of misunderstanding because of language or cultural differences. In this way, the cultural context of the Upper Valley allows longtime white residents to maintain racial domination without explicitly being racist, giving credibility to Mueller's (2020) claim that racial ignorance is an "ends-based technology" of white supremacy. Ignorance and racism are the tools white people use to draw symbolic boundaries between themselves and racialized newcomers, so the cultural context becomes a foundation for white people to hold on to high social status and monopolize resources (Lamont 2018).

My interviewees experiences led me to theorize that the cultural climate enables two processes of misrecognition: social distancing and having to prove oneself. Because of their racial identities, respondents felt that they were unable or did not want to form close relationships with local community members. Many tried to break in and failed, and they felt misunderstood and treated one-dimensionally in their interactions. Mostly when in contact with strangers, racialized minorities felt that they were called on to justify their presence and prove that they were worthy of their positions. Locals felt comfortable asking blatant questions about their belonging to the degree that many respondents further isolated themselves from the interaction as a form of emotional protection. This is emblematic of what Jones (2018) labels "intragenerational reverse incorporation," where middle-class individuals experience intensified racialization as stigmatized minorities. Understanding diversification in this way reminds us that desegregation is a necessary, but insufficient, condition for equality because stigmatization and hardening of social boundaries work at cross purposes with true integration (Pattillo 2014). Johnson (2014) argues that understanding the micro-level processes and

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habits that facilitate racism in desegregated spaces helps us know which levers to push to make real and lasting change. In this study, I find that misrecognition, the constant accounting for their humanity in social interactions, reminds racialized minorities of their subordinate status and can be a detriment to their well-being.

I group respondents' experiences with misrecognition into two main categories of diminished well-being. First, a majority of the respondents articulated some form of unease related to negotiating their stigmatized racial identities. They felt less valued in interaction and worried about the potential for harm, and they connected these anxious emotions with negativity and unhappiness in their daily lives. Second, racialized minorities were weary from their constant vigilance and the emotional labor of having to hide or explain their subordinated feelings to others who could not relate. Many respondents felt that this was not a place they could thrive as complex people, but instead were trying to survive until an opportunity to move away arose. The desire to get out was particularly strong among individuals who had moved to the area recently, like in the last 5 years, whereas those with longer tenure had either learned to live with the misrecognition or become embedded in a friendship group that buffered the negative effects. These manifestations of diminished well-being align with recent literature among isolated individuals in urban neighborhoods who report greater depressive symptoms (Vega et al. 2011), and studies linking microaggressions with worse mental health. At the same time, the misrecognition framework allows us to theorize beyond racism as explicit microaggressions, to think about racism as the maintenance of symbolic boundaries that prop up racial hierarchy. Understanding mental health disparities through a misrecognition framework critically also allows us to center the experiences of racialized minorities while implicating a culture of whiteness.

While the qualitative nature of this study allows for the theorization of the processes and mechanisms through which systematic status subordination due to racial differences in diversifying areas may relate to reduced well-being, I would like to acknowledge two complications to the tidy conceptual model I have presented here. First, Northern New England may be a specific case. I contend that the culture in this region is extreme in its emotion suppression, celebration of individualism, and historical predominance of whiteness, which makes it an obvious case for elucidating and refining theoretical processes, but there may be elements of the model that are less generalizable to other rural regions. For example, the respondents themselves suggested interactions they had in the South and West felt more outwardly friendly and emotionally warm. Some research shows that this outward congeniality may help to

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foment conflict in the South and West's "cultures of honor," however, because people lack the cultural tool of rudeness to signal their displeasure before erupting with violence (Cohen et al. 1999).

A second wrinkle in the conceptual model relates to differences in process based on salient group markers, such as nativity and race. I highlighted some instances in which foreign-born identity is salient—language-related discrimination, ignorance, and having to prove one's cultural legitimacy—which may lead to stereotypical judgments and prejudices. On the other hand, U.S.-born racialized minorities may face the emotional burden of spatial stigma, historically rooted and deeply ingrained perceptions about "difference" and "disorder" embodied in Black individuals moving from predominantly Black communities that can relate to identity formation and management processes (Keene and Padilla 2014). Regarding racial differences, I noticed some distinctions aligning with blunt group boundaries but did not undertake systematic analysis for the current study. For example, brownness—associated with South Asian, Muslim, and Latinx individuals—and Blackness were perceived to be very threatening to locals, and these respondents described more experiences with surveillance and subsequent feelings of fear and uncertainty that pervaded their daily lives. The subtleness of misrecognition may be most applicable to the racialized assimilation experiences of Asian Americans (Lee and Kye 2016), who were overrepresented in this sample, and whose long history in the United States has always been characterized by conditional acceptance (Tuan 2005).

Knowing that the cultural context in rural white places is a stigmatizing and damaging environment for racialized minorities also provides a roadmap for potential interventions. Scholars have shown that "welcoming" experiences can facilitate social integration (Tropp et al. 2018). Clarifying how local places can benefit from growth—for example, making visible the ways local economies depend on labor, churches require congregants, and political parties need support—may motivate established residents to actively and openly support racial and ethnic inclusion (Okamoto and Ebert 2016). Further, research has shown that social psychological investment in a sense of ownership and symbolic representation may facilitate a sense of community and ultimately collective efficacy among racially diverse individuals living together in a community (Walton 2016). Ultimately, however, the most fundamental and impactful intervention would involve a cultural shift that actively addresses the investment of the white community in preserving their dominant racial status (Baldwin 1965; Du Bois 1920).

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## Data Availability Statement

The participants of this study did not give written consent for their data to be shared publicly, so due to the sensitive nature of the research, supporting data are not available.

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## APPENDIX A
## Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me a little about how you (and your family) came to live in this community?
    - How long have you lived here?
    - How would you describe this place to someone who is not familiar with it?
    - What sort of image do you think other people (who do not live here) have of this area?
2. Would you say that you know people in this community? Do other people know you?
3. Do you feel at home here?
4. Do you feel valued?
5. What would you change about this place if you could?
6. Do you feel attached to this community? Like, do you see yourself staying here into the future?

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7. Do you participate in any local groups, clubs, or associations? (e.g., union/professional; political; sports/recreational; cultural, educational, or hobby organization; a religious-affiliated group; school, neighborhood, civic, or community group)
8. I would like to ask some questions about your personal characteristics.
    - Are there any important ways that you would describe yourself?
    - What is your age?
    - What do you do for work?
    - Tell me about your racial or ethnic ancestry.
    - Do people often ask or comment on your racial or ethnic background?
    - How do you generally feel when people ask/comment?
    - Has anybody ever made assumptions about you based on stereotypes?

9. How would you rate your overall health? (e.g., VG, G, F, P) Why do you say that?
10. How would you rate your overall mental health? (e.g., VG, G, F, P) Why do you say that?
11. I am interested to learn more about the people you turn to for various important matters.
    - Who would care for your home if you went out of town (water plants, pick up mail, etc.)?
    - Whom do you talk to about decisions at work?
    - Who have you recently done something social with (having over for dinner, going to a movie)?
    - Who do you discuss personal worries or important decisions with?

12. What should I have asked about your experiences in the Upper Valley that I did not think to ask?

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