Allison S: Okay, great. So, to get us started, do you mind just introducing yourself to me and telling me a little bit about who you are, a little bit about your education and your employment background?

Participant 32: Okay, so my name is Participant 32. Um, I have an interesting employment background. Well, let's start with education. So, I got my undergraduate at Cal, and got my MPH at UCLA. It was one of those things where like most stereotypical Asian Americans, went into Cal thinking that I was going to be a chemical engineer, ended up being an anthropologist with an education background, which converted well to a career in public health. Primarily in public health I had been working um… started working with the Department of Public health here in the state of California, primarily in immunizations. Again, this was at the first peak of the anti-vaxxer movement, with, you know, Jenny Mccarthy, and all those folks which made things very lovely, especially when you had to speak to parents about getting their kids vaccinated. But in any case, you know, I’ve always had a little bit of a international, sort of, bent, and you know this was based on a some advice I received from my graduate school instructor. So actually, immediately after grad school, I went into the peace corps in Madagascar, where I served for three years. Did some consulting work after that, but I never really got that bug out in the system. So, after some time working for the State, I went back abroad and did disease surveillance and eradication in South Sudan for three years. And so, my background is a lot of - There's a lot of international work. There's a lot of work where I would say that there isn't necessarily a traditional workplace, let's say. Because, again, I was working as a team, you know, when it came to things like management, HR, and things like that, that was just all me because I was overseeing a team of twenty or thirty at any given point in time. I returned back to the States about nine years ago, and that's when I started my current job, and that's probably the longest stint I've ever had at one place, and so I guess I can talk more about that. Currently, I work for a fairly large, one of the largest foundations here in - well, actually in the United States now - and primarily my work is in - well, there's a couple of domains that I work in, including on our refugees portfolio, our disaster portfolio, our blindness portfolio. And so again, it keeps me connected with my previous lives of working abroad and doing international development. It's just at a different level. Um. So yeah, that's about me. I think, you know, it's a lot of, you know. And I'm assuming that some of the questions might focus on this but, you know, it is interesting to see the dynamics, especially when you happen to be the only person that is, let's say, not African trying to deal with things in the workplace versus even here in the United States, where yes, of course, there is a substantial of folks who are Asian-American but you're still working in a fairly white, heterocentric, sort of environment. But, you know, hopefully that history will provide some perspective, I guess, in any of the questions that you might have for me today.

Allison S: Sure, yeah. Wow, That's quite a background. Madagascar and South Sudan, and then you've been working at your current place for nine years. Can you tell me a little bit more about the role that you currently have, and what you do day-to-day?

Robery M: So it's an evolving role. So, when I first came - our organization has grown substantially in the last couple of years. So, if you had asked me this question about two years ago, I directly managed portfolios. So, I had a direct line with our vice president and our president, and so basically a lot of the decision making processes happen through me. Um, since then, because we've grown and we've had some changes at upper management, it has been decided that they would put an additional level of senior management to oversee a lot of the, you know, a lot of us old timers, I guess. And so now, I guess my decision-making potential has been reduced significantly because I have to run through two other levels. Again, it adds a degree of complexity when it comes to, you know. And so, I’m going from basically a team where, let's say, even prior to this job, it was basically, you managed everything. Anything that really you couldn't handle, you bubble up, but like otherwise, you would handle it yourself to coming here to a foundation where I had a team - well, a team of one under me where, you know, again everything was handled through. Now, I'm part of a like a little tree where I've got to go through processes. It's different, so as far as day to day, you know, we give money to projects. And so, our day-to-day basically is to seek projects that would be in alignment with certain strategies that the foundation has, as far as what we like to fund. And then, of course, if they're new fund grantee, we do the requisite due diligence to make sure that again, they are a legitimate organization. Um, look at their financials to make sure that they can do what they say they're going to do, you know, just a lot of back, because again, the last thing we want to do is provide money to a project that doesn't exist, or something like that which would never ever happen. And then after the funding goes out, then again, we keep in contact to make sure that again we are monitoring progress. Hopefully if the prior foundation don't change and the grantee does perform, then you know, we're not worried about, you know, cutting funding. But again, you know it is - as a foundation, you know, our funding is dictated by the the the success of the stock market. So, obviously, if the stock market does well, then, of course, we may have more money to give the following year. You know we may have a recession in the next couple of years, in which case that might just mean that there's less money going out the door, which means again, our jobs may change - shift a little bit more to, let's say, monitoring versus looking for new opportunities to invest in.

Allison S: Gotcha, can you tell me about how big this foundation is? How many people work there, and how many people you work with on a regular basis?

Participant 32: So, there's one hundred and fifty - I would say a hundred and fifty, a hundred and sixty, something like that, and that includes, you know, facilities, management things like that. Obviously, we're still hybrid. So, it's a little weird, you know. Um. And then I work in a program department of probably fifty. Um and then on my specific team there's probably I would say, maybe three that we directly are part of the team, plus two sort of staff that we share with other folks, plus a director, plus, you know… So, I would say three is the team that’s the core team, plus three people that are, you know, less than zero point three three FTE for some of the some of the work that we're doing. Yeah.

Allison S: Gotcha, How do you feel about your job overall? What do you like about it? What do you dislike? And if you gave it a reading on one to ten scale, what would you give it?

Participant 32: You know what, that's a good question to have, you know. I think I've never had a job more than three years frankly, because again, I was always told that it's good to cycle through, you know. Again, it's not our parents' generation where the whole idea was lifetime employment, and that was, yeah. And so, it's been weird where basically every time there is an opportunity to kind of, let's say if I've been headhunted or something like that, you know. There's always something interesting that happens at the foundation. So like, you know, I was able to develop our refugee strategy, which is now a standalone strategy. You know, there are certain opportunities that I was given. Now that there are more people, though, and the opportunity of creativity is, it's just now about implementation. I'd say that my job satisfaction has gone down little bit. But again, I also want to see the silver lining in the sense of like, now we're not talking about like sixty, seventy, eighty hours a week while I'm trying to get everything done with limited staff. But now that there's more staff and this and that, then hopefully, you know, I'll be able to actually, I don't know, have a life, and still be able to pull in the same salary, right? So, it's kind of like a raise if you think about it that way, because I'm not talking about like, you know, work as much. So, on the one hand, professionally, I don't know if I'm going to advance more, you know. Again, philanthropy is one of those spaces where you get hired to do a certain job, and there's no upward mobility. Um, if you want upward mobility, you have to move to another position, another… And so, I think I'm, you know, at nine years it's a little, you know… These sorts of questions are kind of popping up. But all in all, like on a scale of one to ten, I'd say, maybe… well let's say eight.

Allison S: Eight is still pretty high.

Participant 32: Yeah, well, and that's the thing like you know, I was able to, you know, there's a portfolio that's very near and dear to my heart on neglected tropical diseases. You know, we're one of the few foundations that was in the process of doing this, and there are very few like - we're talking about like you know us gates, the End Fund, you know, just very limited, few foundations that do this sort of work in neglected tropical diseases. That’s why it’s called neglected. And you know, the board had made the decision in 2018 to close out, and then I've been sort of like trying to extend it as much as I could. So finally, this year I was kind of forced to close out completely, but I was able to do it in such a way where I think we got the maximum of money out, which I think is good for the foundation, but also good for the sector. And so, these sorts of wins, kind of like keep me going. You know, I think that the board has very, you know - obviously, we have a huge difference for the board, but they also respect a lot the work that staff do as well, and so like, you know in that case, that might bump that up to a ten one day. But then, I get a memo. You know, it's kind of like office space, where, like, my TPS report form is wrong, and I have to send it to four different people, and then it bubs down to a five that day, you know. So I would say, eight is a good sort of medium point area.

Allison S: Sure, Sure, that makes sense. Um, Can you tell me a little more about the culture and overall vibe, or like atmosphere of your workplace? I know you said you work hybrid, so this might be a little weird, but.

Participant 32: So, you know, the foundation's gone through a lot of change. When I came in in 2013, I was an employee like thirty one. And now, of course, we're at one hundred and sixty something. But obviously, there's been people that came in, came out, so there's probably more than that, right. Back in the day it was smaller, it was a little bit more intimate, it was more familial. Yeah, and granted, four days a week in the office was pretty helpful for that, right? For the most part, most sorts of conflict in the workplace got taken care of just because we were kind of tossed in the room together. Yeah, there are certain ones that kind of like never got addressed and they exploded later on, but I would say those are few and far in between. I think that now that we've gotten bigger, and you know, and I'll say this, and you can quote me on this. I feel that organizations as they get bigger, you breed a culture of mediocrity where you just kind of like, you have checkboxes, checklists, and you try to just make sure that they're done. But the quality to care and things like that becomes less intimate because of the fact that there's so many more people involved. And so, I feel like that's what's going on. Where, you know, like when we had smaller teams, like again, yes I'm on a team of three plus three now, but like before when it was team of two, you either did it or you didn't. You couldn't delegate that out, because there was no one to delegate to, right? And so it kind of required a little bit more of a commitment to the team, and there was a little bit more of that. That's less gone. Now with the hybrid, with so many people also being hired during the pandemic as well, you know, I think that that compartmentalization of roles is a lot more apparent than it was perhaps in the past. And I know it's the direction that they want to go in in the sense of like, okay, well, you're supposed to do the job that's listed on your job description versus you know what you feel is right, and I have my opinions about that, but I also do feel that that is.. you know you miss… Again, the history of the foundation. It's a family foundation, you know, we're very intimate with the family. We know the family. We count some of the family members as good friends of ours, to now where it's become a little bit more distant, a little bit more separated. And again, just structurally being that way, I feel like that also changes the expectations of what people should expect from a workplace. Um, you know, and it does not help that a lot of it, like I said, breeding mediocrity, lot of this stuff , it seems a little – for lack of a better word, half-assed. In like sort of like, you know, we're doing it because we have to versus because we want to sort of thing, and you know this is where… I value genuineness in any interaction, and when I don't see this, but it's being portrayed as something that is genuine without the work being done behind it. Then I'm doubly offended. I’m doubly offended, because again, not only are you not doing what you're saying you're doing, but also you're claiming that you're doing it by putting in less work, and that's just not very, you know. So yeah, you know that that's kind of the the trend we're going through. I think part of it is, you know, the fact that we've had a lot of hires that happened during the pandemic, and we've gotten used to not having to interact with people. And part of it is the fact that we've grown so much, so like there's a lot more new people, you know. So like it's the perfect storm, like there's two alternate sort of things that are contributing to this.

Allison S: What percentage of your job is interacting with people and are you interacting ever with clients as well? Or just with coworkers?

Participant 32: I would say, like eighty percent is outside folks. And our partners. I would say like, you know, aside from our meetings internally, where we just kind of catch each other, like it would basically just kind of like… Okay, you know, we might have a meeting where it’s: “Okay, well, we need to get these four things done this week.” But then, of course, in order to do those four things, you need to like, oh, you need to talk to this grantee, and you know, make sure that the reports are in. So, I would say, like It's like eighty percent of that, and then maybe twenty percent of internal communication. But then, that's not specifically with the team. There could be other folks like, communications, other departments, you know, even getting their expense report in and stuff like that. So I would say, it's about that.

Allison S: Gotcha. Do you feel like you can just be yourself when you're at work? Or do you find that you have to act a certain way? And when you're having these conversations with both clients and coworkers, can you talk about anything? Or do you feel like it needs to be business professional?

Participant 32: I feel like with my clients, I can get a lot more like myself because they've known me longer. Um, you know, a lot of our grantees are people that knew me even before I got this job. And so, you know, because again, it's international development, like, you know, everyone is kind of, you know, and if you stuck at it, you get out of the system. So, like if you've been in long enough, you must be pretty good at your job, right? And so, in that sense, you know, I can be a lot more open about certain things, and silly about certain things. In the workplace though, it's a different issue. Yeah, I think it's not safe and what makes it worse is the fact that, like HR says: “Oh, this is a safe space”. No, it's not a safe space and you can't like, you know, and this whole sort of melding like I want to be your friend, but you know, like it's very um... I don't know if you've seen the movies, the TV show "Severance” on Apple TV plus.

Allison S: No, but I've heard good things about it.

Participant 32: It’s kind of like how HR goes about certain things, you might want to watch it. It's sad and it’s scary but people could relate to it. It's become increasingly... Yeah, I've had to - in order to not cause trouble, or like you know, earn a talking to perhaps, I don't know what the process would be, but as a result, I just sort of kind of like isolate myself from like coworkers, except for the people I knew and a lot of those are folks that I knew prior to this new, you know. Because of the fact that again, you know it's just... Yeah, I just don't want to deal with that like, you know. (…)

Allison S: What sort of things would you consider like unsafe topics or interactions that you would have there?

Participant 32: So again, I'm going to phrase this fairly... Well, I'm, you know. I think people who know me - I think maybe it's going to sound really bad, but like among my most like, closest folks, you know, I might tell an Asian joke, but that's just because it's something to sort of - It's meant to be in jest, but it's you know, and the words might be a little harsher than whatever, but like it's just kind of there to rile a certain reaction, right? And you know, and things like that that I know are not necessarily, I wouldn't say they're politically correct, or anything like that. I think I tend to be a lot more open with my observations. So, you know. And again, this is where I'm trying to be like, I guess, overly cautious about certain things. So, like I had a coworker, and you know, she looked amazing because she had just come back from a - she was a bridesmaid in a wedding. She had all her stuff done, but she didn't have enough time to take it all off because her flight was delayed. So, you know, we're good friends, so I can be, you know. And so, I realized that after work that like I couldn't say that at work. I could say that at happy hour, I can say that you know um... but I didn't want other people to kind of walk by and see that. It might be interpreted as I was like trying to like diminish her to just, sort of her looks, stuff like that. And I feel like, obviously it's not offending the person I'm talking to, but it might offend a bystander, and I feel like that is just as bad as far as, you know, whatever process you might have to go through, because again it's a workplace, right? And so those sorts of things, I think are a little bit more... Yeah, stuff like that, you know. Especially with the pandemic, you know. I think I caught myself once, because a good friend of mine, she's been, you know, during the whole pandemic. We're really good friends, but like she just went through a divorce, and so like she went on a plan where she was, you know, working out, eating well, and stuff like that. And she had lost a significant amount of weight, you know, that’s amazing! So, it's like one of those things where I'm like: “Oh, my gosh!” I knew that I could not say that in front of other people, because that might be construed very rudely except for the fact that when I'm talking to her, right? We know, like, it was meant as a compliment. She knew it was a compliment. We talked a little bit more about it, you know, and it was fine. But then, knowing that there may be bystanders that are kind of maybe eavesdropping, or like might catch bits of that conversation, I would not - I could not risk saying that, because it might be interpreted as whatever, you know. And so those are the things that I feel like are, you know. Now, to kind of go back to the same question earlier about like my grantees, like, I will say that in front of everyone, and we will, because again, I think we all know each other a little bit more, and like there is that sort of thing that like - It's also a different kind of group. We're talking about international development people, you know, we don't really... You know, there's enough BS in the world to try to like deal with it. And so we try, you know, like - I think it's a different breed of people that kind of work in that field, so like we don't get as, you know, triggered via certain things that perhaps others might be, and so just kind of like, you know. Just gotta be very careful about it. And so, that's an example of that. Yeah.

Allison S: So, it's a pretty PC Environment then, that you're working in.

Participant 32: Yeah, I think that in, you know. It's kind of like, you know, if you're talking to, let's say, you know. And I volunteered, you know, I used to volunteer at a nursing facility. Like I can say certain things. Like: “Oh Mildred...” That’s a stereotypical name, I don’t think I’ve ever met an old person named Mildred, but anyway. “But you know, oh you know (…) She had her … it’s gorgeous.” I can say that in front of everyone. It’s an environment that I think, you know. And maybe there’s someone that finds it sexist but it's not, I wouldn't say it's necessarily... I think it's the people you know more so than the, you know. So, I guess your environment would be a part of that. Yeah, but it's also the anonymity of that, you know. I take that back. It's because I guess in certain situations anonymity is there. I think that there is this sort of false intimacy, I guess, that you see in workplaces where it's like because we work together, the default is that there is a relationship, and there's a default, you know. And even if I don't know you, I will interpret things, as I know, you know. And so, I feel like there is a sort of dichotomy that's happening in the workplace, which is kind of like by default because we work together, there's a certain relationship that exists, even though I may not know you and stuff like that. And so, how you react to certain things, again, is based on how you're made up right. And for me it's impossible to know, you know. Like obviously with a good friend, I know. Okay, I don't talk about Trump or I don't talk about religion, you know. You have these sorts of things, where at the workplace, you don't even - You have to realize that there is a second circle of folks that might be walking through, folks that might be, you know. Because again, it’s a more public space, yeah.

Allison S: Have you had any run-ins with this where you've said something, or you witnessed somebody else say something, and then there were repercussions, or?

Participant 32: You know, I did once, and this was earlier on. A good coworker of mine, you know she - Wow! There's been a lot of divorces at our foundation, so um, anyway. So, she had just gotten divorced, and she was trying to change her life, you know, like this whole thing. And then one day, you know, just kind of like: “Oh, she looks amazing!”, right? And I told a new co-worker, and that was reported back as being like: “Okay? Well clearly, you don't respect, you know, whatever.” It was, sort of solved in the sense of like our HR department really didn't do anything about it. It didn't - you know it was one of those things where I thought that I knew - I had assumed that the content or the motivation behind saying that was, you know, clearly transmitted. But clearly, it could be interpreted in other ways. And so, that happened earlier on. That's why probably I'm a lot more careful about that, even though again, the person that I was speaking of, who eventually heard about it, saying: “Why did I have to hear through this like? You know? I know you told me this earlier, and I think it's flattering, but like it's weird that I had to hear from someone else.” Yeah, it was right about the time that we started growing, too. And so, it was just one of those, you know. Yeah. As a result, you know, that sort of stuff is just a little, you know, forbidden, and I think that there have been colleagues of mine that will talk about their extracurricular activities, and I think they're fairly innocent. I think one person goes to a gun club that kind of like rubs people the wrong way. But, you know, whatever. And you know, as a result of that, I think that it's also become a de facto sort of rule. We just don't talk about what we do outside of work, which is weird, because you are with these people eight hours a day. And then how do you build? You know? So, anyway, hopefully that answers your question.

Allison S: Interesting. Can you tell me a little more about the demographics of the people you work with, the composition in terms of gender, race, age, that sort of thing?

Participant 32: Okay. So because I work more closely with programs, I'll talk to you about that. Um, I would say programs is about eighty percent white. It's much more disproportionately white than the general population. I would say It's also eighty-five percent female. I would say eighty five percent have at least a master's degree if not a doctorate. I would say eighty percent probably grew up in a middle-class or higher living circumstance. I would say even ninety percent actually. I would say seventy-five percent probably have families, and children. Average age is probably... Well, okay. So, there's senior staff, middle management, and I guess juniors. The junior staff, I would say, cover around thirty-five. I would say, I'm kind of middle and I'm probably on the younger side of the middle, forty-three. Probably, you know, it's closer to forty-five, forty-six is probably where middle is. And then with senior, it's probably early fifties. So yeah, a little bit older than what you'd expect. Let's see... Ah, primarily. Yeah, we don't have too many, you know. Maybe ten percent have grown up abroad, primarily U.S., you know. But regardless, you know, pretty middle class. I would even say ninety five percent. Yeah, like I don't know if anyone - and I have to take that back, because again, since the pandemic there's so many people that moved on, but we'd like to think that we know about how folks grew up because it's always a great way of kind of learning about folks right? Yeah, I would also say that it's, you know... I just spoke about this a little bit. Yeah, it's very heteronormative. It irks me because there's a lot of things that they try to do to show “how woke they are”, but it's like the complete opposite of what an organization should be doing. So, it’s like one of those things. And that's only a reaction because I used to work with older youth back in the day, and so like the whole idea of understanding identity and stuff like that is, you know, part of what I used to do. And so like, you know, yeah. So, I don't know if there are any other specific demographic questions that you had or?

Allison S: No, no, that's great. Um! What What examples do you have of? Or do you have any examples of things where you were saying the organization likes to pretend that it's really woke but it's not?

Participant 32: So we should have been doing DEI forever, right? But of course, George Floyd kind of pushed the, you know. And so, it’s kind of like... It's hard to um (...) When senior staff don't feel that they can take something - And again, I will go to DEI class and I'll be like, you know what, I think I know enough, but I know enough to know that I could always learn more, right? Like, I think that that's a great - you know, that's what everyone should be entering in, you know. And once, yeah, like when senior staff either claim that they are beyond, because there are certain circumstances, or you know, that is irking. I think it's more just the curriculum that's been used. You know it snacks of like the nineties sort of shock and learning. On the one hand, it may try to talk about race, but then it's very ableist. You know it talks about, you know, and it's just very... It reminds me a lot of the inclusion curricula that I used to run back in the early 2000s, and I’m sure that things have changed since the 2000s. And so that's where it's just kind of like hmm... And the fact that the matter is like I think that there is a sort of presumption that it's not a learning journey, but rather a once and done sort of thing, which you know, I think that no one should be entering this thing thinking that it’s a once and done thing. So, there's a lot of aspects about that that I think are a little irksome, you know. And it would be interesting to, you know, talk about whether or not there is, you know... Like yes, I know that there are fewer Asian Americans at the foundation than, let's say, that are represented by the local population. Um, but that sort of racial tension is not necessarily spoken of or acknowledged, or anything like that, because it's not prioritized, let's say in some of these sorts of things. So that's where I'm... You know, it's not so much like - and it's very specific, as far as you know, what it - you know like, you know. For example, there are certain exercises that I think, you know. And again, this is because I used to work also in DV as well, like that would be triggering for a survivor that they're using. Like you can't, you know? It's that sort of stuff. That's where I get a little, you know, because again, it seems very... It could have worked a decade or two ago. But again, everything should be evolving to match the time, to match whatever. And it seems like, you know, this is basically just cookie cutter, sort of like we do the same thing over and over again because that's what we're known for, and I think that that in itself is representative of being too comfortable or too confident that what you've got is the right thing, as opposed to, again, acknowledging that it is a learning journey for everyone involved, whether or not you're providing the services or you're receiving services. So that’s... yeah.

Allison S: Gotcha? Um. Do you feel like your race-class gender, sexuality, or any other identity you know characteristics matter with how you're viewed at work?

34:40

Participant 32: Oh, yeah, um... So again, you know, typical Asian, I don't complain. This is the reason why my team was only two people, even though we're doing the work of clearly six people. I did explain that as an issue. But again, how my suggestions were taken to the decision-makers, like, I think that had something to do a lot with my race and gender. Yeah, like there is, you know, there is an assumption that, you know, this whole squeaky wheel thing. And again, a lot of workplaces work on this whole squeaky wheel, right? The first in is the one that gets it, but the second in doesn't really get the same attention, right? And so, you know, I feel like that's kind of the situation here where, you know - Yes, there are definitely people that are a lot more vocal about what they need and what they can. Perfectly fine. I just don't have, you know, I was never also brought up to do it that way, and I don't have that sort of quality to be able to bring that up, but they get things done, which is great. Um, I get things done, but in a way that detrimentally affects maybe myself or my colleagues because of the fact that we're asked to do more with less, stuff like that. Partially, it also might have something to do with the fact that I worked in NGOs for so long where we had to do it, you know, and so I wouldn't necessarily say that it's necessarily the cause of how I act this way. It's not necessarily due to race or gender, but how I’m perceived at current at my current workplace, as far as you know when I make these sorts of observations, and how, I wouldn't say seriously, they're taking them. Maybe seriously. How seriously they’re taken. I think, is reflective of the. you know, just gender and things like that and race. And yeah, you know. But at the end the day, I also realize, you know, they’re scarce in resources. you can't necessarily listen to everyone. Again, this is a horrible thing to say so like the folks that come in first, you know “squeaky wheel”, will get whatever needs to be done, but at a certain point it has to end, and maybe that's when I finally express myself. It's beyond that sort of point where you know resources have already been spent. And then that's kind of like, well, you know. “Sorry”, you know. So yeah, I think that's definitely true. But it would be interesting to know - again, I think because of this whole diversity thing, you know, they do send numbers to the board to talk about, like, you know. Well, this percentage of the organization identifies as this blah blah blah, you know, to show that we are somewhat of a Rainbow Coalition. The interesting thing for me to know is, you know, like a frequency analysis would show that perhaps we're a little, you know. There's a little bit of diversity, but how those folks can actually operate and be heard. Well, first off. It'll be impossible to measure that. But secondly, I think that that would be more telling of an indicator for as far as, you know, so.

Allison S: Is this something that you've noticed with other, you know, minoritized populations in your workplace, or do you feel like it's specific to your circumstances?

Rob M: I think, you know, and that's the thing: when I said it was like eighty-five percent white like I think there aren't that many other minorities in our programs department. I think there are three black people. (...) Yeah, and one of them is like off-site completely. So, it's kind of hard to, you know. We haven't had a chance to interact and talk about this, you know. Of course, both of them are a more senior status, so I feel like they feel a little bit more empowered to say certain things versus us, who are middle or junior, where we just... Yeah, you know, it would go nowhere, right? Because we have no power to be able to kind of instill certain things, right? And so I don't think that we've - Yes, we talked about, you know. It comes up like: “Oh, February, black history,” you know, or AAPI month, like it would come up as a blur, but like it doesn't... It's just kind of like, and then what? You know, like it doesn't really lead to anything, you know. And I don't think we've had a conversation in this, probably because of the fact that, again, we're in hybrid mode, probably because of the fact that again we've got so much work to do already to be able to kind of talk about internal dynamics. And partially, I think it's just because it's been so ingrained. And I think we're just kind of like “eh”, like, you know. It's like I said, this is not a job where people - You're not there to move up, like you're there to do your job, and then you leave, and so like I think that sort of overarching understanding that: “well, if you don't really like it, you can leave,” sort of thing. Kind of is, you know, that sort of parachute thing, and so maybe it's just better to - for the sake of your own professionalism at the foundation, to be able to kind of like grin and bear with it. And then just hope that the next position would be very much more, you know, open to these sorts of things, you know. But of course, I'm also coming from a work history where you know – So, the six years I worked in Africa like it's a different beast altogether, right? Where I was the only person that was non-African. So, like we didn't really have to deal with these sorts of things. And then when I worked for the State, I feel like because of the fact that it is government, I think that they have - They're a little bit more cognizant to it. I think that they've got more of the... yeah, you know they're set up differently. Not to say that doesn't happen, but I feel like, you know, versus the private sector, I feel like they have it set up a little bit more differently because of it being a larger bureaucracy. I feel like, you know, there are more opportunities to be heard, and things like that than let's say an organization that has one hundred and fifty employees, you know. And so yeah.

Allison S: Sure, sure. But in general you'd say that it kind of feels like your voices aren't heard in the same way.

Participant 32: Yeah, I would say that. Yeah. And it's always tokenization, you know, like it's always, you know. I think, Yeah, you know all that you know. All the model minority stuff still pervades, because again, when you look around and you see, you know, and again, this is where it would be great if we had more than ten or fifteen percent of workers grow up in, you know, low- and lower middle class you know who had a struggle to get by. Maybe they had, you know, immigrant parents that you know, were undocumented when they came here, and they had to work, you know, day and night to be able to, you know. Ah, you know, create a good living for their children, you know. Stuff like that. But you know those sorts of stories don't exist because of where we're recruiting from, and so, unfortunately that doesn't kind of percolate up to, you know to be used in sorts of dialogues that could be useful in this, you know Christian sort of agenda. So.

Allison S: Right, um switching gears a little bit. In the study, one of the things I'm interested in is how people feel and express their emotions at work. So, first of all, do you consider yourself an emotional person, and do you tend to share that openly, or do you tend to keep it private?

Participant 32: Yeah. Again, I think, you know, I am not typically emotional. Um. But I think there's also... When I managed teams in the past, and again, this is before the - a little bit at the foundation - But even before that, and the idea is like, so, obviously in the workplace there's a certain sort of professionalism, and you know, try to be pretty distinct about what we do and what we don’t. But then, there should always be a time where you can let go and just say whatever the hell you want, you know, um usually accompanied by little alcohol. But that means like, you know, you can say what you need to say. It won't come back and bite you in the butt, but at least people who are aware enough will take that advice for the next thing, right? I think it's a very Asian thing to do, right? You take your co-workers out to a drink. They'll talk, you know, if you're the boss they’ll be like: “Oh, you're such a bastard! Blah! Blah blah!” And the next day you're not going to fire them, but you're gonna be like: “Oh, wow, well maybe I should ease up on them”. That sort of feedback is very important. And again, I think that that's very cultural. I saw that very much, you know, when I worked in Africa as well. Obviously, I wouldn’t drink with them, but, like you know, I might treat them to a nice dinner, or something like that. It was a safe space in the sense of like, you know, perhaps a little bit too collegial, because I know some people might not agree with that sort of way of management at the, you know. And I did that earlier on at the foundation as well, when I had staff, you know, we talk, you know, there was Happy Hour where we can just kind of dish on everything, right? And it would never go back. It was a safe space, you know, and no one broke that cardinal sin. But, um, I don't think that that sort of exists anymore. I don't think that there is a willingness to do that anymore. I think um, you know again, and part of it has to do with the fact that we're so big, part of it the fact that, like we've had so many like, I think, so much transition. Like I think we've lost maybe a fifth of our programs department just to turn over because of this whole great resignation thing. So it's a different environment for lack of better term. And so yeah, I would say that you, you know. And then expressing, I think it's like, you know, there are certain things. Yeah, I think it's also dependent on the subject matter that you want to talk about, right? Like after, let's say, the 2016 election. Obviously, people had a certain opinion, or after Roe versus Wade, right? When that was overturned. And I think that you can talk about that, you can express yourself about that. Because, again, I think it's a... you know, there's clearly two things that I think a lot of people had emotional reactions about. Whether or not you chose to express some of that was on you. But I think that those were a little bit safer to explain, because again, I feel like, you know, at least in our workplace, that was the majority way of doing things. Of course, it also made it very uncomfortable for people that maybe dissented from these arguments, and then, you know. But then, to talk about something a little bit less... I guess, to express an emotion that's a little bit less popular, I think that's where you need to kind of clam up, or even if you're kind of on the edge of like, well, you know, maybe people...Yeah. So, it's one of those things. Even vaccines, like I remember like - and I'm a huge vaccine proponent - and I remember, like our HR person who is an anti-vaxxer, I found out later, pulled me aside and said: “you can't talk about vaccines, and like provoke that agenda.” And this is before Covid by the way. And because, you know, she was convinced that her nephew, had gotten autism through like, you know, the vaccine combo. And I was just like: “No, this is proven science”. and but it's like, you know. Yeah, that was one of the things I got pulled over: “Oh, you can't talk about vaccine efficacy”. Like there is science, climate deniers at this point, or like flat earthers, like you know. Where are you going to draw the line? And the fact that the matter is like when you get called, you know, when you get talked to by HR about vaccine efficiency, it does change your whole entire perspective of what is appropriate because it's something like that, right? Yeah. So anyway, So, that's kind of what's grounding my comfortability when it comes to talking about these sorts of things. Yeah.

Allison S: Right. Can you think of any times in particular, when you felt, you know, emotional at work?

Participant 32: Oh, yeah. Well, so in 2018, the Board made some decisions to exit out of certain programs, stuff like that, and you know, I've been expecting this sort of decision to happen. But when it finally happened, like I was just, yeah, devastated. So I left work. Um I knew that there was no one that I could talk to at work. You know, again, it was my program, right? And there was no one really to... Yeah. If it was a group of like twenty that was working on that team, I think you could all sit down and kind of like have a little cry together. But this was my team, I had one new staff member. I didn't want to like necessarily like, you know. Um. So yeah, at that point in time, you know, I was like, I was calling up my grantees, talking to them about this sort of decision. I was crying, you know, and stuff like that, but it was with the doors closed, and then, after a certain point, I just had to leave, because, yeah. You know, like it's just not a very... It wouldn't be necessarily a place where it would have been acceptable, or like, you wouldn't have gotten like camaraderie or sympathy by expressing that outwardly in the open. And I knew that. And yeah, it's just one of those things. So yeah, that's that's an example. May of 2018 was a very difficult week.

Allison S: Yeah. Ah, well, I know we're gonna, coming up on time, and I want to be aware of that. I did have a couple of just demographic questions for you, some of these have already come up. But um, can you remind me again where you're located?

Participant 32: Uh, I’m in LA.

Allison S: And where were you born? Where did you grow up?

Participant 32: I grew up in Orange County, down the street. Uh, Orange County. Yeah, California.

Allison S: Gotcha. And I think you mentioned your age is forty-three. Is that correct?

Participant 32: Yup.

Allison S: Gotcha, and your ethnic background?

Participant 32: Japanese-American.

Allison S: Japanese-American. Would you... Um, were your parents born in the United States? Or were they born in Japan?

Participant 32: So I'm what they call a two point five, generation two point five. My mom was born in Japan, but then she immigrated here. My dad was born in Hawaii before it became a state. And so like, technically, he's like second generation. So I am generation two point five. Yeah.

Allison S: Interesting. Okay, yeah, can you tell me your gender pronouns?

Participant 32: Um, I don't ascribe to gender pronouns.

Allison S: Okay, that's fair.

Participant 32: That's one of those things where you just kind of like, Yeah, I get it's well-meaning. But I know kids that don't know what their gender pronouns are, and so yeah. So it's one of those... It's an internal fight that I have in my head, because I also don’t want to be associated with people that think pronouns are shit, and it's like: Well, how do I put myself in here without sounding like a bigot? Anyway. Um. But yeah.

Allison S: It's totally okay. Yeah, Now, that makes sense to me. Um, I just trying to figure out if I write something about you, what I - Yeah, that's why.

Participant 32: You can use he/him, it’s fine.

Allison S: Okay, Um! Was there anything else about your workplace or your job that we haven't discussed that you would want to talk about?

Participant 32: You know, all in all, I think, you know, it's a good place to work. I think that a lot of this has come as a result of the growth, and I feel like any organization that goes through rapid growth will have these sorts of teething problems, and I don't think it's necessarily different here than it is elsewhere. I think the struggle - like again, it's always good to give the benefit of the doubt, and I think we all try to do that as much as we can. Um, I think where I get annoyed is patting yourself on the back for a job well done when there's a lot of work to be done, you know, and that's sort of - I guess I wouldn't call it arrogance. But I feel like that sort of thinking can be detrimental. And again, you know, by being satisfied with like doing that, you're again creating a cultural mediocrity, and I think that that's what I am more offended by, you know. And again, maybe offense is not the right word, because offense would suggest that I do something about it, and clearly I'm not. But again, I think on the flip side of things, I am in a lucky situation where, like I said, eighty percent of my communications are with outside folks, so I don't really necessarily have to deal with my co-workers, you know, in a sense of like, I'm not dependent. It's not like someone does step one, I do step two, someone does three like, you know. It's more just kind of like, I do steps one through four, and then I give it to someone to do five and six right, and so like it's, you know. So, I guess in that sense it's pretty segregated, I guess. And again, this is the way that the foundation is going. There's a lot of, you know. I understand, of course, that like HR are very much... You know, they're humans as well, and you have to kind of prioritize. They're doing their best, I would assume. There's that as well, I think. Yeah, you know. But ultimately, at the end of the day. I think a lot of these sorts of situations could be alleviated if we just took the time to just put the work in, right? And I think that that's where we all kind of fall by the wayside in the sense of like, these things explode because we either value our own selves versus what's better for the organization. And I feel like that is part of the reason why it was a different thing when we were smaller. And we're just kind of like: “well, this is for the organization”. We're a little bit more closer-knit, we're a family. It's like that. Let's address this, whatever. Versus now, we're just kind of like, “okay”. Well, we're bigger. And so we're just not as, you know. And the opportunities to be able to address certain situations are either not prioritized, or they don't just bubble up because of the fact that it’s too huge. So,you know, it's when those things. I would say that, yeah, it's probably indicative of what we're going through, despite... indicative of what a lot of organizations that go through significant growth go through too, right?

Allison S: Yeah, no, that makes sense. Totally. Um. Let me go ahead and stop this recording.