Exploring the Complex Dynamics of 'Bringing Your Whole Self to Work': Implications for Black Americans in the United States

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This manuscript investigates the impact of the concept "bringing your whole self to work" on underrepresented minorities, focusing on Black workers. It critiques the idea of workplace authenticity for overlooking the adverse effects on those from marginalized backgrounds. The alignment of professionalism with white cultural norms has perpetuated inequality and suppressed Black cultural identities. Black employees often resort to code-switching, modifying language and behavior to fit into dominant organizational cultures, to avoid negative stereotypes. This adaptation, however, can hinder job prospects and advancement. The paper examines the challenges of presenting authentic selves for underrepresented individuals, exploring code-switching as a coping strategy. It suggests methods for employers and practitioners to foster true inclusion and aims to stimulate discussion and promote equitable practices in organizations.

Keywords: Black, management, cultural identity, race, code switching

INTRODUCTION

While bringing your whole self to work can benefit some employees, it could cost Black workers. Professionalism has been a malleable construct synonymous with whiteness over the past hundred years (McCluney et al., 2021). Cultural signifiers for Blacks are flagged as inappropriate in the workplace. The prevalence of negative Black stereotypes, often associated with laziness, violence, and incompetence, has made many Black employees resort to code-switching to de-emphasize their racial identity. As a result, using racial code-switching as an impression management strategy has increased the likelihood of being hired and promoted. This spectacle demonstrates that Black people must weigh the pros and cons of code-switching, as their cultural norms can result in a negative perception of their professional conduct.

Black people have limited options for presenting their authentic identity in workplaces dominated by white cultural spaces; thus, "bring your whole self to work" policies are likely only to perpetuate inequalities. Due in part to Mike Robbins's (2018) book *Bring Your Whole Self to Work: How Vulnerability Unlocks Creativity, Connection, and Performance*, being your authentic self in the workplace gained popularity and became a formal or informal policy in many corporations. The book focuses on five principles—Be Authentic, Utilize the Power of Appreciation, Focus on Emotional Intelligence, Embrace a Growth Mindset, and Create a Championship Team—as mechanisms to increase inclusivity and belonging in the workforce. Thus, in response to a call for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, companies rushed to incorporate these approaches into their cultural belief systems and cultures. However, as with many organizational thrusts, there are significant consequences for well-intentioned policies.

Bringing your whole self to work ignores the marginalization faced by underrepresented minorities in the workplace, where they frequently feel pressured to hide their authentic selves to fit cultural norms that primarily represent whiteness. Thus, this manuscript discusses the challenges faced by underrepresented people being their authentic selves in the workplace, the linguistic practice of code-switching, which many employees use to fit into the organizational culture, and mechanisms employers and practitioners can utilize to begin addressing the policy to facilitate inclusion.

LITERTURE REVIEW

Bringing Your Whole Self to Work

Accepting authenticity involves bringing one's whole self to the workplace (Robbins, 2018). This entails embracing all aspects of one's personality, including the eccentric ones, and carrying one's passions, goals, and concerns to work, even if they seem unrelated. This allows individuals to be their best selves at work. Thus, they may discover that their experiences, challenges, and unique perspectives are more valuable to their work than they had anticipated as long as they acknowledge and do not conceal them.

Bringing one's complete self to a situation does not imply that one must be unfiltered, disclose personal information to their team, or act the same way they do at home or with close friends. Rather, it means that the person's work persona should be distinguishable from and consistent with their persona outside of work. However, there should be no drastic personality shift. For instance, if someone is energetic and talkative at home, their colleagues should still perceive them that way at work. This allows individuals to show who they are, not just what they do, to themselves, their coworkers, and their managers. Therefore, by bringing their complete selves to work, individuals can push themselves beyond their comfort zones.

While it is recommended to bring one's complete self to work by being authentic, leveraging the power of appreciation, focusing on emotional intelligence, adopting a growth mindset, and building a championship team (Robbins, 2018), this practice has varying effects on different groups. For example, Black Americans encounter numerous obstacles if they bring their complete selves to work in Western countries. These challenges include systemic racism, expectations of professionalism, and corporate hypocrisy regarding diversity and inclusion.

Description of Challenges
Systemic Racism

Underrepresented groups, including people of color, individuals with disabilities, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others (LGBTQ+) community, practitioners of nondominant belief systems, and retirees, face workplace and education discrimination (Allen, 2017). For example, women and people of color remain severely underrepresented in senior business leadership positions. However, the increasing emphasis on the "value-added" aspect of diversity for a company's effectiveness is gradually opening up avenues for power and influence in organizations. According to Thomas (2019), the variety of experiences and perspectives that women and people of color bring to managerial decisions, creativity, and growth is beneficial to inclusive companies. However, their specific experiences are not well-known. Black women experience a constant struggle between their multiple cultural settings, requiring them to dedicate as much effort, if not more, to

maintaining relationships with the Black community than establishing their competence in the dominant white group (Bell, 1990).

In education, systemic racism significantly affects the number of students who graduate, as demonstrated by a 2015 study that identified racism as a limiting factor in students' daily lives in counselor education programs (Baker et al., 2015). Years of systemic racism, negative stereotyping, and state violence have made it difficult for a single initiative to effect meaningful change without adequately addressing systemic racial issues. Most underrepresented groups, such as those in the LGBTQ+ community, Black people, Hispanics, Asians, and women of color, often feel pressure to conceal aspects of themselves that make them less likable in workplaces (Baker, 2014). Thus, they become more socially "agreeable," and their accent and grooming practices change to mirror those of the preferred race. Black people, even after police killings, are unwilling to speak up about what they are truly going through, as doing so would make them look like "activists" in a work environment. Concerning the elimination of discrimination, confusion persists, with some people minimizing attention to race by advocating a color-blind approach that inflicts more harm than good. White people accuse Black people of using "race cards"—emphasizing their race over other qualifications—to benefit from affirmative action in hiring and promotion processes or when they dare to speak up against discrimination. Many minorities deal with stereotypes daily, whether at work, school, or home, which makes them vigilant in monitoring their workplace behavior and communication style to avoid inviting negative cultural assumptions. However, this happens even after implementing "bring your whole self to work" human resources initiatives. As a result, marginalized groups can achieve their career objectives by having good standing with their fellow white colleagues through code-switching. A holistic approach is needed to accommodate marginalized identities within the workplace environment.

Corporate Hypocrisy on Diversity and Inclusion

Though many companies have continued to echo their support for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), change has yet to materialize in the workplace. Despite numerous organizations setting DEI goals, many of these same organizations continue to perpetuate practices that discourage individuality. Besides exploiting DEI for good public relations, most companies do not see the value in employees "bringing their whole selves to work." Organizations continue to show bias against candidates whose names sound "Black." Additionally, whether through unconscious bias or outright intentionally racist treatment, racial and cultural identity still significantly influence the determination of employee salary compensation. Consequently, Black employees who choose not to code-switch tend to suffer in professional development, whether in hiring, compensation, recognition, or promotion.

Professionalism

Whites, particularly in Western nations, have often held managerial positions in many occupations. The prolonged overrepresentation of whites in administrative functions in white-collar occupations has made their values and norms the *de facto* definition of professionalism. Their standards of appearance, dialect, style of speech, hobbies, interests, and commonly acceptable names have come to be conflated as conducts of professionalism. However, Black people must racially code-switch in workplace settings to be perceived as professionals and gain access to privileged career recognition, promotion, and compensation perks. Members of a dominant social group might deem their appearance, expressions, values, and behaviors normative (standard norm) and thus subject people of color to their way of life by judging how well they embody their attributes. Black people who refuse to code-switch tend to be negatively evaluated by white observers as negative stereotypes of Blacks are used against them. Thus, even in a workplace where employees are encouraged to "bring their whole selves to work," Black employees will try to avoid cultural displays that make them seem "too Black." As a result, they appear more professional in a white cultural context, increasing their likelihood of getting job offers or maintaining job stability. To overcome these challenges, Blacks adopt various strategies to promote a professional image in the workplace. One strategy is code-switching, whereby Black individuals adjust their authentic identity to achieve desirable outcomes (McCluney et al., 2021).

THE PRACTICE OF CODE-SWITCHING

The term "code-switching" was initially used in linguistic studies to refer to language fluency or using multiple languages simultaneously in a conversation. However, sociolinguists recognize that code-switching involves interpersonal communication, and the sociocultural aspects of language use change rather than just a clash of languages. Code-switching specifically takes into account the use of various languages, language fusions, and mannerisms to indicate formal and informal interactions within and between social groups (McCluney et al., 2021).

Code-Switching and Underrepresented Groups

In the United States, race dramatically influences social context, particularly in determining how people of different skin color interact. It is important to note that code-switching is a survival technique often adopted by people from marginalized groups worldwide when interacting in spaces where the dominant culture is reluctant to accommodate diverse cultural norms. Whereas in other nations, people might engage in cultural frame-switching based on age, seniority, religious criteria, or gender roles, in America, racial code-switching is the dominant mode primarily used by people of color. However, the success of racial code-switching depends on whether the observer evaluates the behaviors of Black employees as professionals and how closely those behaviors reflect white sociocultural norms (McCluney et al., 2021).

Racial Code-Switching

Racial code-switching among Black employees involves adjusting the style of speech, behavior, and appearance to mirror the dominant social group, white people. When Black people "bring their whole selves to work," they are more likely to be accused of professional misconduct. What would count as normal conduct for Black people would be labeled inappropriate in a white cultural context (McCluney et al., 2021). Thus, most Blacks will code-switch to elevate their social standing with colleagues at the workplace. Humans also tend to affiliate with people who look similar; therefore, the more Black employees mirror white people's norms, attributes, and behaviors, the more likely they are to receive the desired outcomes, such as career progression. Racial code-switching is also meant to optimize white colleagues' comfort in exchange for fair treatment and career opportunities for Black people. By downplaying their membership within a stigmatized racial minority community, Black people enhance their perceived professionalism. Subsequently, the evaluation of their job qualifications, competence, and performance improves.

Types of Code-Switching Behaviors

Code-switching can be an unconscious or conscious behavior. Most Black professionals will modify their appearance, speech, and physicality—and may even adjust their names and mannerisms—to fit in their primarily white organization. Besides, Black employees often feel compelled to express shared interests with dominant white racial groups. Therefore, by promoting similarity and sameness, they benefit from increased affiliation, which raises their career prospects. These decisions might involve changing the afro hair, which appears curly in its natural state, or removing braids, which many white corporate institutions view as messy or unkempt. Black people might avoid these Black-centric hairstyles and straighten their hair. Black women may alter their appearance to match Eurocentric beauty standards. On the other hand, Black men could face biases for having natural hairstyles such as braids and locs, forcing them to go clean-shaven with a low haircut as the masculine form of racial code-switching for appearance (McCluney et al., 2021).

Second, many Black employees change their language, mannerisms, and physicality. This might involve code-switching selectively from African-American English (AAE) to standard English when talking to white colleagues. Black employees must resort to this sort of code-switching because AAE is often perceived as inferior to standard English and is thus highly stigmatized.

Third, many Black employees pick an easy-to-pronounce, white-sounding nickname. They might go with Amy, Emily, William, Luke, Liam, or Claire instead of Johnson, Shaniqua, La'Kisha, Dewayne, and Duante. They pick these names because Black-sounding names can activate biases, particularly in job

interview processes or even in print on a resume before the employer meets the individual (McCluney et al., 2021).

Prevalence of Code-Switching

Code-switching behaviors are more common among Black employees with leadership aspirations than those with other career aspirations. These ambitious professionals will actively avoid conforming to Black stereotypes to be deemed eligible for leadership promotion. Underrepresented employees may also need to hide aspects of their cultural identity to succeed (Siachou et al., 2021; Baker and Moore, 2015). However, women of color suffer the most from years of oppression, as they experience gender and race discrimination by their social group and other racial groups. Previous research supports the notion that the more a minority employee can demonstrate a similarity in traits to the predominant group, the greater the likelihood of positive outcomes and the decreased risk of discrimination (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2008).

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REPERCUSSIONS

Racial code-switching can result in dual consciousness, in which African American employees are "Black" at home with their friends and family before switching to a "white mentality" at work (Summerville and Ruggs, 2022). This can be emotionally, physically, and psychologically exhausting and thus erode Black people's well-being. However, avoiding stereotypes involves being constantly alert at work, which depletes cognitive resources and hinders Black employees' performance. On the other hand, having to feign commonality with white coworkers is socially and mentally demanding, contributing to burnout and further affecting Black employees.

Additionally, since racial code-switching involves suppressing cultural and individual identity, there is a loss of authenticity, which limits creativity at work. By failing to tap into its cultural resources, the company—and society—suffer from a lack of unique perspectives and diverse opinions. In addition, the necessity of code-switching might cause in-group conflict, where Black employees get accused of "acting white" by their fellow Black colleagues. As a result, if other Black people perceive them as disconnected from their racial group, they will elicit less empathy and solidarity. Furthermore, by failing to tackle discrimination head-on, Black people risk reinforcing white norms and cultures as professional standards in workplaces. This could create a pernicious cycle in which generation after generation leans on racial code-switching to advance in their careers while neglecting their authentic selves at the detriment of their psychological well-being (McCluney et al., 2021).

The decision not to code-switch could have a negative impact on the professional career trajectories of Black workers. Despite having diversity statements or diverse leadership, organizations still exhibit bias when evaluating potential candidates and setting salaries for positions that have a Black tone to them (Thomas, 2019). In addition, voices that are easily recognizable as coming from a predominantly white college student population are seen as less important and earn less money compared to comparably educated Black workers whose speech adheres to standard American English. Black women who wear natural hairstyles also face the consequences of violating professional standards, particularly in fields with strict dress codes. Furthermore, Black evaluators penalize Black women job seekers with natural hairstyles more severely than their white counterparts. Criticism of natural hairstyles has led to job losses or expulsion from college institutions. Therefore, evaluating the benefits and drawbacks of code-switching presents a challenge for Black individuals who wish to be perceived as competent in a culture where white cultural norms dominate.

MANAGERIAL EXAMPLES

Several experimental studies have focused on Black lawyers' dilemmas in determining whether to engage in racial code-switching (McCluney et al., 2021). The researchers found that white male lawyers are the majority in the occupation, whereas Black lawyers are underrepresented. This has produced cultural homophily, where the perceptibility of professionalism is dictated by whiteness. In addition, it is common for Black lawyers to engage in racial code-switching to generate the same level of respect, status, and access to the professional network as their white counterparts. McCluney et al. (2021) also found that listeners of voicemail recordings could discern the speaker's race and automatically judge their job competence based on perceived racial identity. This shows that the acceptability of the behavioral conduct of an employee as a professional is contingent on their race. Both white and Black employees believe that racial code-switching is more professional.

The second managerial study, conducted on Amazon Mechanical Turk workers, demonstrated that there is a positive enhancement in how Black workers are evaluated if they engage in racial code-switching as an impression management strategy to reduce being associated with a stigmatized Black racial group (Schlesinger et al., 2018). For instance, a brief exposure to the code-switched voice of a Black employee increases their chances of being evaluated as intelligent and likable, whereas the use of AAE results in the attribution of negative stereotypes to employees, negatively impacting their professional evaluation. However, code-switching also led to self-alienation, where employees felt detached from their true selves. Failure to show their whole selves creates a need to conform to the expectations of white workers. Thus, many Black employees find themselves in a racial dilemma where they know they will likely be penalized for Black cultural traits but still want to be authentic to ease the struggles with code-witching. The researcher concluded that as long as professionalism is always associated with white cultural norms, Black employees will continually suffer racial biases in professional work environments.

POTENTIAL STUDY DESIGN

Academicians and practitioners can assess the impact and influence of racial code-switching on the perception of Black people's professionalism, which can be evaluated using experimental research to establish a cause-and-effect relationship. The independent variables are racial code-switching behaviors, such as modification of hairstyles, appearances, name selections, physicality, and style of speech. On the other hand, dependent variables are benefits attributed to a positive perception of professionalism, such as promotion, an increase in compensation, and recognition. An experimental design is preferable to a quasi-experimental method since the studies do not pose ethical or practical obstacles. The study participants are the control and treatment groups in this experimental design.

In one study, randomly selected college graduate participants were asked to apply for a job through a phone call, during which a group audibly heard the voices of randomly selected professionals of multiple races. The most important aspect of this first experiment is that Black participants will bring themselves to work. They will use their authentic speech style, which may include AAE. No linguistic code-switching should be allowed. However, in the second experiment, Black participants will be encouraged to adjust their speech to match the standard English and mirror the dialect and style of speech of those affiliated with white people. Professionals listening on the other end of the line will be asked how likely they are to give that participant a promotion, a job, or a pay raise after a phone conversation.

The workplace assigned for this study will be hypothetical; thus, professionals should come from different industries and companies. It is assumed that based on the participants' (candidates') voices on the phone, the professionals will perceive the candidates' professionalism by consciously or unconsciously discerning their style of speech, dialect, or use of AAE. In this study, the experimental design will involve the manipulation of one or more independent variables (racial code-switching behaviors) and assessing their effect on dependent variables (benefits of positive perceptions of professionalism). Several hypotheses can be systematically tested, such as whether professionals will evaluate non-code-switching Black participants more positively than white graduate participants.

In another study, the researchers will determine whether racially code-switching Black graduate participants were evaluated more negatively than white graduate participants. The first group of Black participants does not engage in code-switching. Further, the researchers should be cautious about isolating racial code-switching from other social identities that generate negative stereotypes of professionalism, such as gender, religion, and sexuality.

The value of bringing your whole self to work initiatives can be assessed at an organizational level by looking into the contributions of Black employees who bring their authentic selves to the workplace. Cultural-minority professionals have been found to offer a unique perspective based on their racial experiences that differ from their white peers (Cha and Roberts 2019). These insights about racial demographics can prove vital in product design, sensitive advertising, and communications. Thus, any assessment of the value of 'bring your whole self' to work will have to determine the matter brought forth from identity-based insights by Black employees who are culturally authentic while at work.

McCluney et al. (2021) examined the impact of code-switching on the perceived professionalism of a fictional Black coworker. The study employed a vignette design between subjects, in which the perceived professionalism of a fictitious Black coworker was evaluated differently based on the observer's ethnicity. The primary stimulus was a voicemail message from a fictitious Black coworker in a fictional legal company, with researchers varying whether the protagonist referred to code-switching across three actions. Researchers assessed the character's demeanor and perceived professionalism depending on the voicemail. The Black male coworker was rated by Black and white men, and the Black female coworker was reviewed by Black and white women. Using voicemail as a stimulus allowed the researchers to examine how Black and white listeners might respond differently to code-switching. It is also essential to consider white people's opinions on racial code-switching to understand how intergroup members might judge this behavior.

MECHANISMS FOR EMPLOYERS AND PRACTITIONERS TO FACILITATE INCLUSION

There are numerous ways in which inclusion in a workplace can be facilitated to reduce issues of code-switching. These include:

Encouraging Authentic Identities

An employee's authentic self has a unique value proposition, as authenticity is correlated with generating creative insights (Cha and Roberts, 2019). Downplaying cultural and individual differences by embracing code-switching can dim the light on their strengths. Once they lose their uniqueness, they fade into the crowd, and what makes them unique and valuable becomes less visible. Authenticity can add value to the company and help employees advance their careers by tapping into their strengths. Since most cultural minority professionals have different personal experiences, they tend to have unique perspectives. A good example is journalism, where a Black employee who grew up in a family that struggled to pay rent or was evicted has a better understanding of American public housing through lived experiences and can thus offer a unique perspective in their coverage.

Furthermore, the authentic self can offer identity-based insight at the workplace. For example, employees who belong to a particular cultural minority group better understand the members of their race, culture, or LGBTQ group. During market segmentation of products, they can help management understand why existing products fail to attract target demographics. An employed individual of the LGBTQ+ community better understands why the company's beauty products are not appealing to their affiliated community. Moreover, an employee with the unique lens of a cultural minority can provide quality control for the company's marketing communications (Anand et al., 2023; Cha and Roberts, 2019). They can review the company's sensitive messaging in advertisements, products, and press releases to ensure colleagues do not unintentionally make offensive characterizations or stereotypes. Thus, removing culturally insensitive wording and depictions from ads and products can protect the company's bottom line from public outrage.

Employees who present their whole authentic selves without requiring code-switching to bridge racial, religious, and class differences significantly impact their organization (Roberts and Mayo, 2019). The workplace is where people from different cultures can socialize for the first time. Most employees will be intrigued by aspects of minority identity, and thus being "your true self" could be an opportunity to dispel stereotypes and assumptions associated with their social group. This bridges differences as people genuinely learn from each other by engaging in conversations to build a stronger connection. It also brings people from different backgrounds closer, fostering collaboration that benefits employees and the company. All of these examples demonstrate the importance of "bringing your whole self to work," which Black employees can support by activating their minority identity. Moreover, employees and executives should be open-minded about accepting ideas that challenge the status quo.

Encouraging a Diverse Climate

Organizational policies and procedures, such as equal opportunity and career development programs, have historically been used to describe the diversity climate and support designated groups (Van den Bosch et al, 2019). Research shows that a diverse climate positively impacts various company outcomes, including staff retention, customer satisfaction, and sales success (McCluney et al., 2019). Recent changes in the definition of diversity climate now include employee views, beliefs, and opinions of cultural differences. Thus, a diverse climate is characterized by the ability of employees to openly disclose their cultural backgrounds and exhibit cultural behaviors, which indicates a company that values diversity. Moreover, a diversity environment is one in which cultural differences are actively promoted and contribute value to the team or business. Such an environment has been associated with positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, inclusion, and productivity (Hofhuis et al., 2016).

A critical factor affecting the efficacy of diversity management in multicultural organizations is the "diversity climate," which refers to an organizational culture characterized by openness and acceptance of cultural differences. Prior research has suggested that fostering a culture of diversity can be an effective strategy for reducing negative effects while maintaining the potential for positive outcomes from cultural diversity (Santiago, Nwokoma, and Crentsil, 2021). However, further investigation is needed to explore potential mediators of the relationship between diversity climate and workgroup outcomes, as it is currently unclear which processes are responsible for these outcomes.

According to Hofhuis et al. (2016), the diversity climate in culturally diverse teams is closely associated with communication characteristics. The researchers replicated this finding in a sample of individuals employed in various industries across different organizations, indicating the generalizability of their results. The replicated study also included participants who worked in teams that were not notably diverse but represented a cross-section of typical Dutch firms. Although the relationships were somewhat weaker within groups with low levels of cultural diversity, the diversity climate still appeared to significantly increase trust and openness in group communication.

Evaluating Company Culture

Organizations must consider how the expectation to code-switch in the workplace may impact minority employees. Racial minorities may feel that code-switching presents the risk of appearing unprofessional, even if the employer encourages employees to bring their authentic selves to work. Therefore, organizations should be cautious when assigning tasks to Black workers that may result in negative consequences (McCluney et al., 2021). Employers should also make efforts to understand whether the culture allows employees to express their true thoughts and ideas. For example, in a study on the factors influencing the success rates of racially and ethnically underrepresented PhD students in predominantly white institutions (PWIs), the concept of voice, the degree to which an individual feels they can express concerns or ideas about a program or organization, was a key factor (Baker and Moore, 2015).

Tackling Underrepresentation at All Costs

The issue of minority underrepresentation in certain workplaces is a contributing factor to the pressure felt by Black workers to alter their cultural expressions at work. This pressure makes even the slightest

cultural differences more noticeable. Including people of color at all organizational levels can help normalize and embrace their cultural identities, including hairstyles, interests, and speaking styles. Research suggests that organizational diversity initiatives that only focus on increasing the number of Black employees without promoting an inclusive environment are unlikely to succeed (Roberts and Mayo, 2021). McCluney et al. (2021) found that code-switching occurs even in workplaces with similar percentages of Black and non-Black employees, suggesting that increasing organizational diversity is just one part of the solution.

Thinking of Diversity and Inclusion Separately

Research suggests that simply appreciating diversity is insufficient to eliminate prejudice against minorities (Summerville and Ruggs, 2022). Organizations need to prioritize diversity and create welcoming workplaces where employees feel comfortable being themselves. This involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data on workers based on their social identities, ensuring that the experiences of underrepresented groups are not overlooked. However, creating inclusive workplaces that benefit all employees can be challenging. Studies show that Black workers are less likely to code-switch when their employers acknowledge and address external issues that impact their experiences at work (McCluney et al., 2019). This sends a message to Black employees that the company values them beyond their contributions to the bottom line.

Companies can promote inclusivity by recognizing disparities and striving for fairness and merit-based practices. They can formally declare their commitment to creating a diverse workplace that celebrates individuality and hires the most qualified candidates. In addition, they can develop guidelines and procedures that reflect these values, such as hiring and interviewing standards that prioritize diversity and meritocracy (McCluney et al., 2021).

Maintaining Inclusive Behaviors

Creating an inclusive workplace is not just a one-time initiative but a continuous effort that organizations should prioritize. To achieve this, leaders can cultivate habits such as being curious about cultural differences, educating themselves, intentionally expanding their networks to include Black personnel, and actively listening to their perspectives (McCluney et al., 2021). A focus should also be put on creating opportunities for minority and non-minority employees to collaborate on solutions that will result in non-minorities recognizing minority employees as individuals (Santiago et al., 2021). It is also essential for firms to consider where they can relax standards related to employee dress style, hairstyle, and voice, which may discourage minority employees from being authentic at work (Santiago et al., 2021).

Starting With Oneself

Bringing more of oneself can inspire others to do the same. Understanding one's uniqueness can help identify which aspects are appropriate or inappropriate for the job, leading to a better understanding of the challenges Black employees face when bringing their whole selves to work (McCluney et al., 2021). Bringing oneself to work also encourages the removal of occupational stereotypes, biases, and belief systems that one culture is more competent than another (He et al., 2019). Their study highlights the natural progression of occupational segregation based on stereotypes. Thus, creating a culture of bringing more of oneself to work and providing a space to understand unique individuality will help break down stereotypes and eliminate workplace segregation.

Checking One's Biases

It is essential to recognize diversity in the workplace while also being mindful about bringing attention to it unnecessarily. In addition, it is crucial to embrace the notion that biases form naturally through experiences, cultural differences, gender, etc. Since biases take the form of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes, individuals should consider asking themselves questions if they find themselves assuming that their Black colleague or employee is not like other Black individuals (Cuddy et al., 2008). For example, if one prefers their Black coworker's hair curled over when naturally styled, they should ask themselves why

they hold that preference. Thus, by asking themselves such questions, they encourage self-awareness about their biases instead of putting pressure on Black individuals to explain their differences (McCluney et al., 2021).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The practical implications include having inclusive terms and conditions of employment. This might involve establishing a broad definition of professionalism and helping employees from non-white groups center impression formation and management on their own cultural identity. This helps eliminate the conflation of white standards of professionalism with diverse occupational conduct. Reviewing company work policies, particularly disciplinary practices of professional conduct, could help human resources personnel and company executives determine whether they are penalizing minority employees due to misinterpretation of cultural signifiers shown through their true, authentic selves. In addition, having an inclusive dress code policy could promote employees' freedom of expression. For example, restrictive policies fail to reasonably accommodate transgender people, Black people with natural hair such as dreads, and women who might want casual wear at work (Baker, 2014). The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) states that it is discriminatory if an employer refuses to modify the dress code policy or allows an exception when no undue hardships are posed by such an adjustment (EEOC, 2022).

The hiring processes should focus on increasing the racial composition of organizational leadership by hiring and promoting Black women and men to the executive team and board of directors (Roberts and Mayo, 2019). This is because the overrepresentation of white employees in senior-level positions in all occupations has led to the dominance of their cultural norms as the standards of professional conduct. Companies should also promote self-presentation strategies that embody the traits of a marginalized social identity group. Professional norms, values, and appearances should include all races, cultures, religions, and genders. In addition, corporate management needs to review their social environment to determine whether they are creating a hostile workplace that compels Black employees to use race-based impression management to gain job opportunities or advance professionally. According to research, a person-environment fit makes employees feel comfortable showing their authentic selves (Van den Bosch et al., 249).

Other Practical Interventions to the Policy of "Bring Your Whole Self to Work"

Despite white cultural norms being considered professional conduct in business sectors, organizations continue to impose these expectations on Black employees irrespective of the difficulties and costs of embodying white characteristics. Regardless of whether the company has a policy of "bring your whole self to work," white observers continue to make implicit associations of professionalism with white norms and cultural behaviors. When companies implement the "bring your whole self to work" policy, they do not realize there is a high likelihood of unintentionally penalizing Black professionals. For instance, an employer might misperceive Black cultural signifiers as unprofessional due to existing stereotypes. Thus, the authors propose that companies redefine what constitutes career professionalism. In addition, there is a need for a strategic plan and purposeful measurement to ensure that DEI policies do not negatively affect historically marginalized groups. Companies should use employee data to identify siloed organizations hosting occupational segregation and create opportunities to eliminate this implicit practice. The company must set rules to protect employees who fear that showing their authentic identity would expose them to more discrimination.

CONCLUSION

Accepting authenticity at work entails bringing one's complete self to the job, including all facets of their personality, even the eccentric ones, and carrying their passions, goals, and concerns with them, even if they appear unrelated to work. By doing so, one brings their whole self to work, and it is better to accept it and have the opportunity to be the best version of themselves. While the "bring your whole self to work"

initiative has good intentions of promoting authenticity in workplaces, it can perpetuate inequalities, as employees who fail to code-switch get penalized. The term "code-switching" was originally coined in linguistic studies to describe the ability to speak or use multiple languages in a conversation. Code-switching is a complex phenomenon involving the use of multiple languages, language blends, and behaviors to indicate formal and informal interactions within and between social groups. However, failure to code-switch can lead to various challenges, including systemic racism, professionalism, and corporate hypocrisy regarding diversity and inclusion. Thus, these challenges can force Black employees to code-switch in order to enhance their professional image. Furthermore, employees from minority groups could be thrown into a dilemma as they understand that their cultural traits could elicit a negative perception of their professionalism. Underrepresentation and negative stereotypes of stigmatized racial groups compel them to conceal identifying cultural aspects of their "self" and adopt dominant social groups' cultural norms, speech styles, and behaviors. Racial code-switching negatively impacts Black employees' social and psychological well-being, as constant monitoring of their professional conduct increases burnout and fatigue. However, racial code-switching makes them appear more professional and thus opens the door to more career opportunities. There are several ways in which organizations, colleagues, and leaders can reduce the need for code-switching in the workplace. For instance, they can assess their company culture, address underrepresentation, and prioritize diversity and inclusion separately. Leaders and colleagues can also maintain inclusive behaviors, start with self-awareness, and check for biases. Companies should equip all employees with the skills necessary to engage constructively with racial differences and adopt non-discriminatory policies toward Black cultural norms to reduce the pressure on Black employees to racially code-switch.

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