(Re)claiming Professional Identity: Humanizing Black women’s experiences in the workplace

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Land, Labor, and Digital Acknowledgement

The land on which we teach, research, and learn are the ancestral homelands of the Piscataway people. They were forcibly removed and displaced from their homelands, and we acknowledge the history of violence and daily oppression Indigenous populations face and stand in solidarity.

Further, we respectfully acknowledge the enslaved people who built this country through exploited labor. The United States is explicitly in debt to their labor and the labor of many Black and Brown bodies that continue to work in the shadows for our collective benefit.

Lastly, let’s consider how our activities shared digitally on the internet have a legacy of colonization through the technology we use. The technological structures we use are not only unavailable to many Indigenous peoples, but they also contribute to climate change by leaving significant carbon footprints that disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples worldwide.

Influenced by University of Maryland, Highline College, Adrienne Wong of SpiderWebShow
Contextual Background

Racialized Organization: racialized organizations enhance or diminish agency of people of color, create unequal distribution of resources, use whiteness as a credential, and make the formal rules of the organization racialized (Ray, 2019).

Colonialism: the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

Settler colonialism:
- based on the logic of owning land (Wolfe, 1999)
- land is fundamentally property, and people are differentially positioned relative to their worthiness to own it (Patel, 2016, p.43)
- Since land is a finite resource there is a desire to accumulate wealth and property and convert it into other entities (i.e. people, status, air and sea). (Harris, 1993)

Decolonization: “cultural, psychological, and economic freedom” for Indigenous people with the goal of achieving Indigenous sovereignty — the right and ability of Indigenous people to practice self-determination over their land, cultures, and political and economic systems.
Overview and Purpose

- Reclaim Professional Identity Development (PID) for Black women in the workplace
- We disrupt the traditional associations and ideas of professionalism that have not considered the multiple identities
- Allows for authenticity in daily work responsibilities and connections to the organization
What comes to mind when you hear the word “professional”? 

Scatterfall Instructions

1. Think of what comes to mind.
2. Type it out, but do not press enter/return until instructed to do so.
What comes to mind when you hear the word “professional”? 

1. Body type
2. Hair (straight)
3. Clothing
4. Tone
5. Socioeconomic Status or Class
6. Educational Background/Pedigree
- Officti cus dolorera abora por soluptaes. Equi de estia volest am ante  nit as nest, odit odis dolor samet expligeniet quam.

- professional black women hairstyles
- professional black women hair
- professional black women with locs
- professional black women with glasses
- professional black women outfits
- professional black women headshots
- professional black women in suits
- professional black women clipart
- professional black women with dreads
The CROWN Act, which stands for “Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair,” is a law that prohibits race-based hair discrimination, which is the denial of employment and educational opportunities because of hair texture or protective hairstyles including braids, locs, twists or bantu knots.
Both are qualified.
One is professional.
One is "distracting."

Black women’s hair is 2.6x more likely to be perceived as unprofessional. And in most states, there are no laws to protect against race-based hair discrimination in the workplace.

That’s why Dove and LinkedIn have partnered to support the passing of the CROWN Act to end hair bias and hair discrimination nationwide.

Visit Dove.com/Linkedin to sign the CROWN Act petition and access free learning courses that support a more equitable and inclusive work environment.

#BlackHairIsProfessional

Jewell, Director of Office Operations

Same strong resume.
Same qualifications.
One “isn’t a culture fit.”

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#BlackHairIsProfessional

Both are qualified.
One is professional.
One is “unpolished.”

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#BlackHairIsProfessional
The CROWN Act passed as law in 13 states.

The CROWN Act is law

THE CROWN ACT IS LAW

Montgomery County, MD
Beckley, WV
Charleston, WV
Huntington, WV
Lewisburg, WV
Morgantown, WV
Ann Arbor, MI
Ingham County, MI
Genesee County, MI
Philadelphia, PA
Pittsburgh, PA
Newburgh Heights, OH
Akron, OH
Columbus, OH
Charleston County, NC
Covington, KY
1Louisville, KY
Ashville, NC
Buncombe County, NC
Charlotte, NC
Durham, NC
Orange County, NC
Greensboro, NC
Raleigh, NC
Winston-Salem, NC
Kansas City, MO
St. Louis, MO
Tempe, AZ
Charlotte, NC
Durham, NC
Orange County, NC
Greensboro, NC
Raleigh, NC
Winston-Salem, NC
Kansas City, MO
St. Louis, MO
Tempe, AZ
Charlotte, NC
Durham, NC

States inspired by The CROWN Act

Legislation is pending
Legislation is filed or pre-filed
Legislation has not been filed
A Conversation With Black Women on Race | Op-Docs

https://youtu.be/U-xz4qiUBsw
Professional Identity Development

• Professional Identity Development (Seemiller & Priest, 2017)
  ■ Self-perception - how one sees themselves
  ■ Legitimization - how one is recognized or regarded by others (Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2012)
Critical Race Theory (CRT):

- Stems from scholars in legal studies
- Demonstrate the ways power perpetuates and reinforces racism
- Highlights the interactions between people and within organizations
- Rely on the assumptions that racism is so normal and woven through our societal structurals, that it is invisible
- **Tenets:** counter-storytelling, **racism as permanence, whiteness as property**, interest conversion, and the critique of liberalism

“CRT analyzes the role of race and racism in perpetuating social disparities between dominant and marginalized racial groups” (Hiraldo, 2010, p.54). (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Patton & Bondi, 2015)
Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Whiteness as Property:
1. the right to disposition
2. the right to use and enjoyment
3. the right to status and property
4. the right to exclude
Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Racism as permanence: explains the degree to which racism is normalized in structural [& institutional] systems
Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Intersectionality: used as an analytical tool for addressing the ways in which Black women face multiple complex issues of discrimination.
(Re)Claiming Professional Identity Development

“There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.”
-Audre Lorde
Black Women’s PID Experience

• Central argument on Black woman PID Experience
  ○ Ways that impacts Black women’s experience
He left that out, so I'm just gonna go with...
Q&A
Lived Experiences
References


Hull, A. G., Bell-Scott, P., & Smith, B. (1982). All the women are white, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave: Black womens studies. New York City: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York.


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