

# **The Role of White Support in Predicting Racial Minorities' Feelings of Inclusion and Retention**

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*The principal objective of the current study is to identify specific strategies that White individuals can employ to support coworkers of color in their workplaces. Thus, we introduced a measure of white support for coworkers of color (WSCC) in which employees of color rated their White coworkers' openness to learning about sociocultural factors that impact the lives of racial minorities and how they can demonstrate solidarity in promoting racial justice in the workplace. Moreover, in the same sample, we found results consistent with the proposition that increased feelings of inclusion mediates the positive affect of WSCC on retention. It is our hope that these findings will provide a starting point for crafting holistic diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives that provide guidance to those who benefit relatively more from the current power structures on practical ways to authentically support and uplift those who benefit relatively less.*

*Keywords: diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, anti-racism, allyship, microaggressions, implicit bias, white fragility, systemic racism, critical race theory*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Structuring Workplaces for Racial Minorities to Thrive**

Currently, there is an emphasis on the goal of diversifying the workforce for the sake of the organization's image and competitive advantage (Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; Stewart, Volpone, Avery, & McKay, 2011). However, enhanced racial diversity and representation in organizations amplifies the imperative to foster workplace climates that prioritize the needs and perspectives of people of color (PoC); so they will choose to remain in the organization (Buttner, Lowe, & Billings-Harris, 2012). This study represents a step forward in understanding the nature of support that employees of color would desire in the workplace from White coworkers, and it contributes to the current literature in two ways. First, we introduce a new measure that is intended to capture an aspect of broader, holistic support that White individuals can provide to enhance the comfort and feelings of belonging for coworkers of color. Specifically, it assesses White coworkers' openness to understanding how power and

privilege operates in broader society to impact the daily experiences of racial minorities. Second, it is important to acknowledge White individuals should not position themselves as the liberators of PoC. Critical scholar and activist Freire (1970) argues these intentions merely perpetuate the existing power hierarchy. Rather, White individuals should expend their privilege to empower and uplift minority voices, so PoC can liberate themselves. It is essential to place the needs, perspectives, and priorities of PoC front and center in organizational life. Therefore, in the current study, employees of color reported their perceptions of the magnitude of support reflected in the attitudes and behaviors of their White coworkers. Additionally, we tested the proposition that racial minorities will experience feelings of inclusion to the degree that their White coworkers demonstrate an openness to understanding the broader picture of both how racial injustice has operated historically and how it filters into the current, daily experiences of PoC. Moreover, they are open to learning to adjust their attitudes and behaviors accordingly. We expect that when White individuals engage in these behaviors, coworkers of color will feel more comfortable bringing their full selves to their work.

### **Centering Racial Minorities' Perspectives and Priorities in the Workplace**

In the study and practice of diversity management, scholars (e.g., Janssens & Steyaert, 2019; Nkomo, Bell, Roberts, Joshi, & Thatcher, 2019; Opie and Roberts, 2017) have recommended the acknowledgement of the historical, sociological, and economic factors that result in the dominance of minority groups and damage to their lives. In their recent, integrative review, Amis, Mair, and Munir (2019) wove together pieces of evidence from several scholarly domains to present a compelling case that current, everyday organizational practices reproduce and reinforce gender, race, and class inequities. Unfortunately, these processes are normalized to the point that they operate essentially undetected (Amis et al., 2019; Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2007). Thus, we suggest that DEI initiatives, in which the sole goals are to appreciate all viewpoints and modify personal biases, may distract attention from the less visible ways that norms and policies are upholding racial hierarchies in the organization. In contrast, holistic and multidisciplinary DEI management strategies that openly acknowledge the role of race and power in society will offer a starting point for exposing and dismantling those structures (Opie and Roberts, 2017).

### **White Allyship and Enhancing Inclusion and Belonging for Racial Minorities**

Nkomo (1992) traces the history of concerted efforts by many entities, from government to organizational scientists, to implement strategies for assimilating immigrants and PoC into the U.S. labor force. The colonialist and capitalist values and practices of the dominant culture (characterized by White, male, able-bodied, heteronormativity), represented the standard to which everyone else was compared. Consequently, it is unsurprising that many PoC currently report feeling a lowered sense of well-being resulting from substantial pressure to assimilate to the expectations of dominant culture, both inside (Dickens & Chavez, 2018) and outside (Wong, Correa, Robinson, & Lu, 2017; Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002) the workplace. According to Hewlin's (2003) Facades of Conformity Theory, stigmatized individuals will often attempt to downplay their unique attributes to blend with the group, and these assimilation attempts are often linked with emotional exhaustion and turnover (Hewlin, 2009). In addition to conformity pressures, many PoC carry feelings of trauma stemming from societal events (e.g., child separation at the U.S./Mexico border, mosque shootings, police brutality) into the workplace that their White coworkers likely do not experience in a similar way (Bor, Venkataramani, & Tsai, 2018; Leigh & Melwani, 2019; Potok, 2017; Winters, 2017). In sum, we believe that if White coworkers are open to understanding these dynamics and providing support accordingly, coworkers of color will feel less pressure to suppress their unique personal qualities and emotional concerns.

In the current, global sociopolitical climate, White allyship has come to the forefront as a means for bringing about social justice and equity in organizations and beyond (Ostrove & Brown, 2018). Erskine and Bilimoria (2019) and Kivel (2017) conceptualize White allyship as actions taken to demonstrate solidarity with the concerns and welfare of PoC, together with an empathetic understanding of their unique struggles in negotiating the demands of dominant culture. In the workplace, this manifests as an ongoing commitment to discover ways to leverage privilege to disrupt the assumptions/practices of Whiteness and center the

priorities of their coworkers of color (Erskine & Bilimoria, 2019). Brown and Ostrove (2013) asked people of color to share their perceptions of White ally attributes; and two dimensions emerged from their responses: personal support/affirmation and informed action. Cheng, Ng, Traylor, and King (2019) reported similar findings when they asked women about characteristics of male allies. Building and expanding on this prior work, our objective was to invite PoC to rate the extent of White allyship support they were currently receiving in the workplace.

While recognizing the importance of personal support and affirmation, our intent was to broaden the White allyship domain to include exhibiting an openness to learning about the sociocultural, economic, and historical factors that affect the lived experiences of their coworkers of color and engaging behaviors in the workplace to alleviate the ill effects of those negative experiences. We refer to this holistic support as *White support for coworkers of color* (WSCC). Our approach is consistent with the ecosystems model of diversity management that attends to the socioeconomic, contextual factors that are operating both in and outside the organization when considering the welfare of minority employees (Mor Barak, 2000). It is a comprehensive strategy that extends well beyond the organization's stated commitment to anti-discrimination policies and relatively cursory activities to expand employees' multi-cultural awareness and appreciation (e.g., world cuisine potluck day). Although these beginning steps are essential, they are likely insufficient to promote feelings of belonging for racial minorities because of White individuals': (a) defensiveness when the topic of racism is broached (DiAngelo, 2018; Swan, 2017), (b) microaggressions aimed at coworkers of color (Holder, Jackson, & Ponterotto, 2015; Sue et al., 2019), and (c) deeply-entrenched racist beliefs stemming from incomplete and inaccurate historical narratives that are propagated in the U.S. and Canadian education systems (Loewen, 2008; King & Simmons, 2018) and reinforced in the mainstream cultural practices and media (Carter & Murphy, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018). Although aspects of systemic racism are undeniably unpleasant to address in the corporate realm—where political neutrality is often touted as ideal (e.g., SHRM, 2020)—we believe they cannot be ignored in organizations that are serious about meaningful DEI progress.

Organizational research and practices that emphasize the deconstruction and decentering of Whiteness (as a characteristic of ethnic privilege), are essential for ensuring healthy, diverse workspaces (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Opie & Roberts, 2017). White employees must be equipped to be proactive, informed allies rather than presuming coworkers of color will undertake all the responsibility and emotional labor of advocating for themselves. Incidentally, individuals from stigmatized groups are often regarded negatively for promoting justice initiatives (Gervais and Hillard, 2014; Hekman, Johnson, Foo, and Yang, 2017). Therefore, like Sabat, Martinez, and Wessel (2013), we contend that those in non-stigmatized groups, who are benefitting the most from unfair systems, should initiate the process of joining in solidarity with PoC to interrogate and correct those systems. Tangibly, this means that White employees will engage in behaviors that demonstrate they are: (a) aware of their own relative privilege and are willing to leverage or abdicate it in pursuit of justice aims, (b) attuned to systemic factors that impact the daily experiences of PoC, and (c) committed to altering their own racially problematic behaviors with minimal defensiveness. Thus, we propose that:

***Hypothesis 1 (a & b).*** *Employees of color who feel supported by their White coworkers will report greater: (a) Perceptions of an inclusive work environment, (b) Intent to remain in their role.*

### **White Support for Coworkers of Color Influences Retention Through Inclusion**

Retention of employees of color is essential for realizing DEI objectives (McKay et. al., 2007), and one important predictor of retention is experiencing a sense of belonging and inclusion in the workplace (Buttner et al., 2012). The concept of inclusion derives from optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991; Leonardelli, Pickett, & Brewer, 2010) which posits that people have two competing desires: a sense of commonality with the members of their work group and that they bring distinctive attributes to the group that are appreciated and valued. Thus, to the extent that both aspects are enhanced, employees will feel a greater sense of safety and belonging (Shore et al., 2011; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). Some positive outcomes associated with inclusion are: (a) intent to remain in the organization (Buttner et al.,

2012; Cowden, 2011; Hwang, & Hopkins, 2011), (b) heightened job satisfaction (Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive, & Heelan., 2010), and (c) team innovation (Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018). Thus, we propose that:

***Hypothesis 2.*** *White support for coworkers of color (WSCC) will positively predict retention of employees of color through the mediating mechanism of their enhanced feelings of inclusion in the workplace.*

Finally, we explored possibility that when employees of color experience WSCC, they will encounter fewer racial microaggressions in their work environment. Sue et al. (2007: 273) define racial microaggressions as: "...brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group." Racial microaggressions invalidate the lived experiences of PoC as they battle the effects of institutional racism that generates personal harm on a continuous basis (Essed, 1991; Neville, Awad, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013). Microaggressions have been associated with a host of detrimental outcomes for PoC including reduced job satisfaction (DeCuir-Gunby & Gunby, 2016), performance (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016), and mental and physical health (Jones et al., 2016; Nadal, Griffin, Wong, Davidoff, & Davis, 2017; Sue et al., 2019). However, as White individuals become informed as to how their ignorance of systemic racism can harm the PoC in their lives, (Neville et al., 2013), they may take increasing care to avoid committing microaggressions. Thus, we propose that:

***Hypothesis 3.*** *Employees of color who feel supported by their White coworkers will experience fewer microaggressions in the workplace.*

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

#### *Inclusion Criteria and Sample Characteristics*

The aim of this study was to understand the relationship between WSCC and people of color's corresponding feelings of inclusion and ultimately their intention to remain in their current role. Considering this focus, participants had to meet several criteria to qualify for the study. A participant had to be at least 18 years of age, live in the United States, and identify as a member of a racial minority group. In addition, participants needed to be currently employed, at either part-time or full-time status, and work in a physical, centralized location for at least a portion of their work. Including individuals who work in centralized locations helped to ensure that we were capturing attitudes associated with an employee's physical interactions with White coworkers.

Initially, data was received from 391 individuals; however, after eliminating cases based on missing data (see Results section for additional details), the final  $N = 292$ . The participants represented a broad array of ethnic backgrounds (see Table 1 for a breakdown), and they varied widely with respect to industry with a large portion of the sample working in either education or healthcare-based organizations.

#### *Recruitment*

Participants were recruited through two virtual platforms, Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTURK) and Prolific. Prolific and MTurk enable researchers to pay individuals who meet certain criteria for their participation in research studies. Evidence suggests utilizing MTurk may lead to more diverse samples in contrast with traditional student samples (Gosling & Mason, 2015). However, with respect to accessing people of color, MTurk has several limitations (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017). MTurk is typically used by younger, White females who have a certain degree of education, which can introduce obstacles for research aimed at collecting a sample consisting solely of people of color (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Springer, Vezich, Lindsey, & Martini, 2016). Due to these limitations, we recruited 91% of our participants through Prolific, which offers a more diverse sample in terms of ethnicity, and the remaining 9% were recruited through MTurk

## Measures

### *White Support for Coworkers of Color*

When developing items for this scale, our intention was to capture, through the lenses of their coworkers of color, White employees' openness to learning how to provide comprehensive, meaningful support. Specifically, we envisioned a workplace in which White employees were willing to make efforts toward understanding how systemic racism impacts the personal lives of their coworkers of color and then act accordingly. Items were generated by the first author (who identifies as White), in consultation with a colleague trained in multi-cultural psychology, who identifies as Asian American. Input from two graduate students of color (African American and Asian American) was also provided. We built on the work of Erskine and Bilimoria (2019), and we had two primary dimensions in mind: openness to learning about the sociocultural contextual factors that impact PoC (i.e., sociocultural context) and openness to learning how to take meaningful action in solidarity with the concerns and priorities of coworkers of color (i.e., solidarity). Because the data were collected in the United States, the items were written in accordance with the U.S.' historical and sociological context.

To evaluate the psychometric properties of the measure, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis to ascertain if the scale was capturing more than one underlying factor. Upon examination of the scree plot and observing two eigenvalues greater than one, we concluded that the two-factor model was optimal for the WSCC scale. We then specified a two-factor structure using maximum likelihood as the estimation method with a Promax rotation, given our expectation that the factors would correlate with one another. The pattern matrix loadings, displayed in Table 1, indicate that each item loaded cleanly on its expected factor and the two factors explained a combined 74% of the total variance. Thus, we designated the dimensions *sociocultural context* (Items 1-8) and *solidarity* (Items 9-10). Cronbach's alphas for the dimensions were .96 and .94, respectively.

### *Racial Microaggressions*

Racial microaggressions were measured using the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS; Nadal, 2011). Although the full REMS measure contains six subscales, the following three were selected for the purposes of this study: (a) assumptions of inferiority, (b) microinvalidations, and (c) workplace microaggressions because they depicted behaviors that could occur in the workplace. Examples of items we used for this study included: "I was told that people of all racial groups experience the same obstacles" and "An employer or co-worker treated me differently than White coworkers." Participants indicated whether they experienced racial microaggressions on scale from 0 = *I did not experience this event* or 1 = *I experienced this event at least once in the past six months*. Items were summed to create a microaggression composite score for each participant.

### *Inclusion*

Inclusion was measured using the 16-item Perceived Group Inclusion Scale (PGIS; Jansen, Otten, van der Zee, & Jans, 2014). The PGIS contains four subscales with items measured on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Sample items included: "This group gives me the feeling that I belong" and "This group allows me to express my authentic self." The Cronbach's alpha in this study for these items was .98.

### *Retention*

Participants' intentions to remain in their current role was captured using a 3-item scale developed by Xu & Payne (2014), and they responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Example items included: "I often think about quitting this job" and "I am actively looking for another job." All items were reverse scored to reflect respondents' intent to stay instead of intent to leave. Cronbach's alpha was .91 for the scale.

## RESULTS

### Data Preparation and Preliminary Analyses

Prior to conducting the analyses, we reviewed the data and determined the degree of missingness for each of our items. Item-level missingness ranged from 14% to 17%, and a substantial proportion of participants skipped entire scales. Prior to data collection, we prepared to solicit many more participants than would be necessary for the study because, given the emotional sensitivity of the scales, we expected there would be several cases that would need to be dropped due to incomplete data. Thus, we began with a sample size of 391 and ultimately elected to take a listwise deletion approach and retain cases with complete data for a final sample of 292.

### Primary Analyses

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations can be found in Table 3. For Hypothesis 1, we proposed that White coworker support will be positively associated with PoC's (a) feelings of inclusion and (b) retention. Results for indicated that the sociocultural context dimension of WSCC and retention were positively related ( $r = .18, p = .002$ ) and the same was found for sociocultural context and inclusion ( $r = .31, p < .0001$ ). Lastly, the solidarity aspect of WSCC demonstrated a significant relationship with both retention ( $r = .27, p < .0001$ ) and inclusion ( $r = .38, p < .0001$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was fully supported.

In Hypothesis 2, we proposed that WSCC would positively predict retention of employees of color through the mediating mechanism of their enhanced feelings of inclusion in the workplace. Results of the first mediation analysis, as shown in Table 4, indicated that there was a significant indirect effect of feelings of inclusion ( $B_{a*b} = .23; 95\% \text{ CI} = .15 \text{ to } .32$ ) in facilitating the positive connection between the sociocultural aspect of WSCC and retention. In addition, our second mediation analysis, as shown in Table 5, indicated that there was also a significant indirect effect of feelings of inclusion ( $B_{a*b} = .18; 95\% \text{ CI} = .12 \text{ to } .24$ ) in facilitating the positive connection between the solidarity aspect of WSCC and retention. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

In Hypothesis 3, we proposed that WSCC would be negatively associated with microaggressions reported by PoC in the workplace. Results for the bivariate correlation between the sociocultural aspect of WSCC and microaggressions did not support this hypothesis ( $r = -.03, p = .55$ ). The correlation between solidarity and microaggressions was statistically significant; however, contrary to our hypothesis, it was positive in sign ( $r = .28, p < .0001$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Finally, as a brief exploratory endeavor, we regressed inclusion and retention separately on both dimensions of WSCC to determine if they contributed unique variability to those outcomes. Results indicated that sociocultural context and solidarity contributed uniquely to inclusion ( $B = .27, p < .0001; B = .21; p < .0001$ ), respectively. Moreover, the sociocultural and solidarity aspects of WSCC also uniquely predicted retention ( $B = .19, p = .048; B = .17, p = .004$ ). Thus, the results suggest that both dimensions of WSCC are important for predicting to racial minorities' feelings of inclusion and intentions to stay.

## DISCUSSION

### Practical Implications and Future Research

The findings of this study suggest that WSCC is a critical factor in predicting feelings of workplace inclusion and retention for racial minorities. Interestingly, 72% of participants indicated that they could name at least one White coworker who provided some type of WSCC functions (see bottom of Table 2). This is both encouraging and an indication that there is additional work to be done in the realm holistic DEI.

Each of the hypotheses were supported, apart from Hypothesis 3. Microaggressions was unrelated to the sociocultural aspect of WSCC and positively associated with the solidarity dimension. Perhaps microaggressions occurring in the work environment provide additional opportunities to display solidarity (i.e., willingness to defend the coworker of color in cases of discrimination and respond appropriately to

corrective feedback). In the following sections, we present some ideas for applying the findings when developing DEI initiatives and messaging organizational values to applicants.

### *Beyond Implicit Bias: The Case for Holistic Initiatives*

Past research indicates a paucity of evidence for the effectiveness of diversity training for sustained attitude and behavior change (Bezrukova, Spell, Perry, & Jehn, 2016). According to Noon (2018), this is because of the general belief that individual-level bias and prejudice are the primary drivers of conflict and inequitable treatment. Thus, the solution is to employ a variant of implicit bias training with the goal of learning to respond to coworkers/customers in race-free ways (e.g., select the applicant who is best-qualified for the position, ignoring their race). Kahn (2017) argues that this approach tacitly accepts the conservative presupposition that structural racism—that has been reinforced through economics, law, and policy over centuries—can be mitigated by working toward the ideal of colorblindness as the final goal. Similarly, we argue that focusing on individual-level attitudes, to the exclusion of the broader structures operating in and outside the organization that are working at cross-purposes with diversity initiatives, could be upholding a harmful status quo. In contrast, WSCC involves willingness to see race in its historical and sociocultural context and use one's privilege to promote equity and justice. Accordingly, our findings suggest that when White employees are open to broadening their understanding of the constellation of factors impacting the daily well-being of coworkers of color, they are more likely engage with them in ways that create inclusive and healthy workspaces.

Moreover, the findings imply that White individuals will need to engage in some educational and attitudinal leg work to meet this objective. If White employees have not yet begun their racial identity development process, they will likely to be less accepting of this approach (Helms & Carter, 1990; Leach, Behrens, & LaFleur, 2002). Due to a long history of racism and inequity, when those who are accustomed to unearned privilege are invited to examine how they can expend this privilege to level the playing field, feelings of resistance (Kidder et al., 2004; Swan, 2017), anger (Anderson, 2016) and even narcissistic entitlement (Miller & Josephs, 2009) can arise. These emotions pose significant challenges for practitioners, particularly given that the field of management science lags substantially behind fields like counseling (e.g., Ottavi, Pope-Davis, & Dings, 1994; Pinterits, Poteat, & Spanierman, 2009) and education (Glimps, & Ford, 2010; Tate, 1997) in conducting research pertaining to the facilitation of healthy White identity development. Perhaps due to its colonialist, capitalist underpinnings, we contend that the range of acceptable theories and practices in management science have become too narrow to be useful for promoting real inclusion in organizations. We echo philosopher and historian Noam Chomsky when he stated: “The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion but allow very lively debate within that spectrum....” (Chomsky, 1998: 43). We believe broadening the range of acceptable ideas in the field of management to encompass ideas from queer theory (e.g., Gedro & Mizzi, 2014), critical race theory (e.g., Rocco, Bernier, & Bowman, 2014), and critiques of capitalism (e.g., Gerard, 2016) is essential for making meaningful progress toward minority inclusion.

Furthermore, with the current trend of remote workplaces and globalized teams, future research should aim to understand how these inclusion dynamics play out with respect to virtual environments where members are rarely or never co-located (Gilson, Maynard, Young, Vartiainen, & Hakonen, 2014).

We believe it is imperative that researchers focus on the entire continuum of experiences of employees of color who are working in virtual environments to understand how to foster belonging and safety in remote workspaces.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the sociocultural context aspect of WSCC did not predict microaggressions; and although the solidarity dimension explained approximately 8% of the variability in microaggressions, the correlation was positive in sign. Perhaps in work groups where microaggressions are frequently occurring, there are additional opportunities for White individuals to display solidarity attitudes and behaviors. The current study's cross-sectional approach places a limit on understanding the dynamic between White coworkers providing solidarity and the experience of microaggressions by employees of color. In future investigations, longitudinal methods could be employed to track the frequency of microaggressions as holistic DEI initiatives are implemented and White individuals become increasingly

educated and proficient in providing support and solidarity. In the short-term, interpersonal conflict may increase as employees work through awkwardness and defensiveness and develop racial awareness and the vocabulary to process through it. In the longer-term, as the organization's diversity climate becomes more established, perhaps microaggressions and other forms of racial discrimination will decrease.

### *Clarity for Applicants*

In line with attraction-selection-attrition theory (Schneider, 1987), we propose that organizations can take steps to strategically clarify their goals and values to attract applicants who would fit with those objectives. Consequently, an organizational climate which emphasizes a holistic diversity perspective will deepen and strengthen over time. We believe future researchers should examine whether providing applicants with specific information about their unique approach to DEI will reduce resistance to those initiatives once they are inside the organization. We wish to highlight a current example of such an approach. Portland Community College ties the philosophical underpinnings of their DEI strategies to critical race theory, and more specifically on the work of Kohli (2009). They explain on their website that they are dedicated to intentionally crafting an organizational climate in which dominant ideologies are questioned, a strong commitment to social justice is modeled, minority experiences are treated as valid, and there is an interdisciplinary focus that places current societal inequities in their historical context (Portland Community College, 2020). When applicants and clients come across this kind of information, they can decide to select in or out, thereby potentially reducing the likelihood of backlash that stems from employee-organization value incongruence.

### **Limitations**

There are some limitations to be addressed. From the beginning, we chose not to capture White allyship behaviors that employees of color would have no opportunity to witness (e.g., pushing back when a racist joke is told in the absence of employees of color). One of the strengths of this study is that employees of color are reporting on their personal perspectives, whereas self-reported White allyship behaviors likely would not convey the full picture. However, for future investigations, a combination of self and other-reported allyship behaviors could provide rich information. Second, the direction of causality is in question, due to the non-experimental, cross-sectional nature of the study. Stone-Romero and Rosopa (2004) contend that questions of causality direction are particularly pertinent for mediation analyses. For future investigations, perhaps researchers can employ creative ways (e.g., vignette method) to manipulate WSCC and observe its effects on various outcomes such as applicant attraction to an organization or work group. Moreover, it is important for researchers and practitioners to continue to anticipate and prevent unintended harmful consequences that could result from initiatives meant to increase WSCC, such White backlash and any resulting reduction in group morale or performance (Mannix and Neale, 1995).

### **CONCLUSION**

In summary, the current study's results suggest the importance of White individuals being open to supporting their coworkers of color in a way that conveys a contextual understanding of how power, privilege, and structural inequities play out in the workplace and in broader society. Thus, it is incumbent on researchers and practitioners to develop DEI initiatives that: (a) acknowledge the ongoing harm that systems of inequity inflict on employees of color, (b) equip majority group members to be non-defensive, empathetic, and effective allies, and (c) clearly convey to potential applicants the organization's values and goals along with concomitant expectations for all employees. Although admittedly challenging to achieve given the polarity and hostility of the current sociopolitical climate, these strategies are essential for envisioning and creating a new status quo where racial minorities are properly represented at all levels of leadership and feel comfortable bringing their full, authentic selves to their workplaces.



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APPENDIX

**TABLE 1**  
**SAMPLE ETHNIC COMPOSITION**

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
African	4	0.01
Black/African American	73	0.25
Caribbean	5	0.02
East Asian	51	0.17
Latino/Hispanic	65	0.22
Middle Eastern	4	0.01
Mixed	50	0.17
Native American or Alaskan Native	7	0.02
South Asian	30	0.01
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2	
White/Caucasian	1	

*Note.*  $N = 292$ .

**TABLE 2**  
**PATTERN MATRIX OF FACTOR LOADINGS FOR ITEMS OF THE WHITE SUPPORT FOR COWORKERS OF COLOR SCALE (2 FACTORS)**

	Solidarity	Sociocultural Context
<b>For each of the statements below, please rate the frequency with which the White individuals in your immediate work group generally demonstrate the behavior indicated.</b>		
Demonstrate openness to learning about how my ethnic group is generally regarded in U.S. culture	.003	<b>.839</b>
Demonstrate openness to learning about the United States' historical, discriminatory treatment of immigrants and people of Asian, Latinx, Native, and African descent	.047	<b>.878</b>
Demonstrate an openness to learning about the historic and current role of people of color in the U.S. economy	.028	<b>.891</b>
Demonstrate openness to learning about the history of my ethnic group	.037	<b>.865</b>
Demonstrate an openness to learning about the norms and traditions of my culture	.013	<b>.862</b>

Demonstrate an openness to learning about the pressure people of color often face to conform to White-dominant, U.S. cultural norms.	- .027	<b>.914</b>
Demonstrate an openness to learning about the unique challenges I face, as a person of color, in my work environment	- .044	<b>.910</b>
Demonstrate an openness to learning about the unique challenges I face, as a person of color, outside my work environment	- .048	<b>.878</b>
Demonstrate an openness to learning how to accept corrective feedback when they behave (either intentionally or unintentionally) in racially inappropriate ways	<b>.998</b>	- .002
Demonstrate an openness to learning how to take clear actions to defend me if I experience unfair treatment at work, due to my race/ethnicity	<b>.888</b>	- .001
Individuals feeling White coworker support (% of sample)	Yes	No
I can name at least one White coworker who consistently supports me in the ways indicated above.	72%	28%

+ Rotation method: Promax

**TABLE 3**  
**MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS**

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Retention	2.09	1.36	(.91)				
2. Inclusion	3.80	0.91	.57**	(.98)			
3. Microaggressions	10.85	3.56	.29**	.22**			
4. WSCC: Sociocultural Context	2.65	1.04	.18**	.31**	-.03	(.96)	
5. WSCC: Solidarity	3.89	1.60	.27**	.38**	.28**	.26**	(.94)
6. Gender	0.52	0.53	-.10	-.10	-.07	-.01	.06

Note. Gender coded 0 = male and 1 = female. WSCC = White Support for Coworkers of Color.  
\* $p < .05$  ; \*\*  $p < .01$ . All tests nondirectional. Cronbach's alphas are on the diagonal.

**TABLE 4**  
**REGRESSION RESULTS FOR MEDIATION:**  
**WSCC – SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT → INCLUSION → RETENTION**

Mediator Model (DV = Inclusion)				
Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	3.06	0.14	22.14	0.00
Sociocultural Context	0.27	0.05	5.59	0.00

  

Outcome Model (DV = Retention)				
Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	-1.16	0.29	-3.96	0.00
Sociocultural Context	0.00	0.07	0.01	0.99
Inclusion	0.86	0.07	11.32	0.00

  

	Boot Indirect Effect	Boot SE	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
<i>Indirect Effect</i>	0.23	0.04	0.15	0.32

*Note.* *N* = 292. *SE* = standard error. *CI* = confidence interval. WSCC = White Support for Coworkers of Color.

**TABLE 5**  
**REGRESSION RESULTS FOR MEDIATION:**  
**WSCC – SOLIDARITY → INCLUSION → RETENTION**

Mediator Model (DV = Inclusion)				
Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	2.96	0.13	22.81	0.00
Solidarity	0.21	0.03	6.96	0.00

  

Outcome Model (DV = Retention)				
Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	-1.23	0.29	-4.31	0.00
Solidarity	0.05	0.04	1.21	0.23
Inclusion	0.82	0.08	10.60	0.00

  

	Boot Indirect Effect	Boot SE	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
<i>Indirect Effect</i>	0.18	0.03	0.12	0.24

*Note.* *N* = 292. *SE* = standard error. *CI* = confidence interval. WSCC = White Support for Coworkers of Color.