

Bringing Your Authentic Self to Work

Pathfinders Program 2018

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Objectives

- Discuss what it means to bring your authentic self to work (challenges and advantages)
- Explore the role “covering” identities may play in whether someone feels connected at work
- Provide strategies to support you in leveraging your best self at work

Setting the Context

“We believe there is a widespread feeling that people are meant to check a lot of stuff at the door when they arrive at work. Some of that makes sense, but there’s a risk of having people feel diminished or unable to contribute fully.”*

*Stewart Butterfield, the CEO and co-founder of Slack

Cost/Benefit Analysis

	Benefits (You/Your Employer)	Costs (You/Your Employer)
Checking Yourself at the Door		
Bringing Your Authentic Self		

What does it mean to “Bring Your Authentic Self to Work”?

Bringing Your Authentic Self to Work

Authenticity

The skill of aligning one's personal sense of self with its outward expression—actively crafting one's identity and revealing it in a way that feels genuine.

Your Experience

- What does “bringing your authentic self to work” mean to you?
- Share 1-2 examples when you did and/or didn’t bring your authentic self to work.
- What was the impact on you?

Factors Influencing Authenticity

- **Normativity:**
Who defines “the norm”?
- **Intersectionality:**
Combination of identities that create additional obstacles and/or oppression (or opportunities and/or privileges)
- **Privilege:**
Special advantages or access to resources possessed by a particular person or group that was not earned or achieved
- **Insider/Outsider Dynamics:**
Situations and behaviors that operate to include or exclude often based on differences: numeric majority/minority; tenure/newness

Covering is...

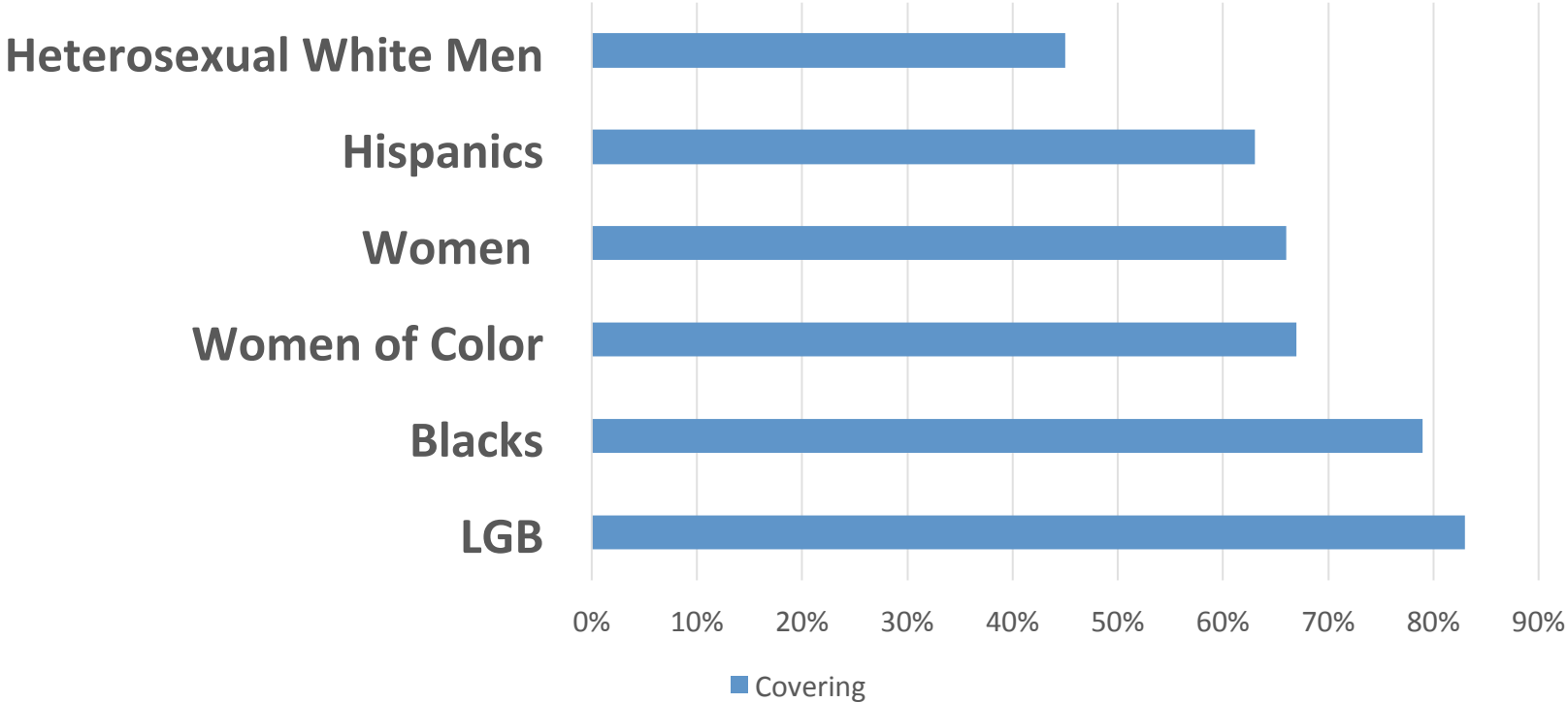
Downplaying a ***stigmatized identity to fit into the mainstream***. This differs from “passing” in that an individual will manage their identity so that others are not aware of a particular aspect of their identity.

*Not all groups have the capacity to pass,
but all groups have the capacity to cover.*

Types of Covering

- **Appearance Based:**
Altering appearance to “blend in”
- **Affiliation Based:**
Avoiding behaviors widely associated with perceived negative stereotypes about one’s identity group
- **Advocacy Based:**
Staying silent/not sticking up for your identity group
- **Association Based:**
Avoiding contact with other identity group members

Everyone Covers



Kenji Yoshino, Christie Smith, "Uncovering talent A new model of inclusion," 2013.

Things to Keep in Mind

“...Covering is not just something “they” do, it is something “we” do.”

Kenji Yoshino

- Covering has a cost – to you, to your colleagues, and to the organization
- Don't assume to know when others are covering
- Organizational culture plays a role; however, you also have power and options

Moving Forward: Tips & Tools

Things to Keep in Mind

- Be courageous
- Be willing to challenge others' assumptions and beliefs
- Assume people are interested in getting to know you
- Seek opportunities to build authentic relationships and have dialogues across differences
- We all play a role: look for ways to promote an inclusive culture for everyone
- Be an ally to yourself and others
- Practice “appropriate” self-disclosure

Self-Disclosure: What to Consider

- Content and Pacing
 - What's too much? too little?
- Cultural Alignment
 - Consider the culture of your department, practice group, office, etc.
- Authenticity
 - Be courageous and genuine
 - Share situation-specific stories
- Test for Impact
 - Self-reflect: how do you feel afterward
 - Check for impact/solicit feedback

Be An Ally to Yourself and Others

An ALLY is someone willing and able to:

- Act on behalf of, in support of, or in collaboration with someone else
- Stand with and support others, even when they are not present
- Confront and speak up on issues (*e.g.*, exclusion, bias and/or stereotyping)

Everyone needs allies and everyone can be an ally to others.

Opportunities to Be An Ally

Ways I can support myself:

Ways others can support me:

Ways I can support others:

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Closing Thoughts/Comments



Bring your whole self to work. I don't believe we have a professional self Monday through Friday and a real self the rest of the time. It is all professional and it is all personal.

— *Sheryl Sandberg* —

Thank you!

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Roundtable: Bringing Your Authentic Self to Work

Looking at Your Patterns

	I tend to...	One way this helps me/ enhances my effectiveness is....	One way this hinders/ undermines my effectiveness is....	Another way I might respond is...
1. What identities/aspects do you lead with?				
2. What identities/aspects do you downplay?				
3. When I meet people at work for the first time...				