

Epistemic injustice and hegemonic ordeal in management and organization studies: Advancing Black scholarship

human relations
2023, Vol. 76(1) 3–26
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DOI: 10.1177/00187267211014802
journals.sagepub.com/home/hum



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Abstract

Why do the majority of (White) academics within management and organization studies (MOS) endorse discourses of equality, diversity and inclusion on the one hand yet ignore the epistemic injustice suffered by Black scholars on the other? We demonstrate how White supremacy within a historically racist academia marginalizes non-White bodies from knowledge production and dissemination by embedding epistemic injustice in MOS, and diminishing their utility globally. To expose the multifaceted harm caused by White supremacy, we reflect on Black scholars' experiences of epistemic injustice, conceptualizing their work (i.e. Black scholarship) as underpinned by epistemic struggle and epistemic survival. We conceptualize epistemic struggle as striving to produce and disseminate knowledge in the face of difficulties and resistance generated by structural and agential powers. Epistemic survival denotes the sustained presence of Black scholarship through compromise, collusion and radicalism. Subsequently, we propose collective intellectual activism based on cross-racial coalitions to eliminate epistemic injustice and locate Black scholarship at the center of MOS.

Keywords

decolonization, inclusion, inequality, justice, postcolonialism, racism

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Introduction

It is not a novel observation that academic institutions are breeding grounds for racism, as articulated in the experiences of Black scholars in management and organization studies (MOS) (Minefee et al., 2018; Settles et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2008). Racism denotes assigning individuals to an inferior category that dictates 'their social, economic, civic, and human standing' (Fields, 2001: 48). Such hierarchical grouping of individuals is rooted in the notion of race as a connotation of socially interpreted distinctions applied to individuals based on physical and cultural dimensions, including historical domination and oppression (Acker, 2006). Racism is founded upon *White supremacy*, which primarily locates White people (ideologically and socio-economically) as superior to every other race (Grimes, 2001), and systematically positions non-White bodies as ignorant and incapable of generating useful scientific knowledge (c.f. Mignolo, 2009). Black scholars in particular suffer harsh racism, despite heightened institutional rhetoric on color-blind practices (McCluney and Rabelo, 2019).

Logically, we need to more vigorously scrutinize the effects of White supremacy on Black scholars' production of knowledge in MOS. This is because powerful White academic actors' disenfranchisement of Black scholars based on their race (e.g. Bell and Nkomo, 1999; Cox, 2004; Nkomo, 2016), embedded in epistemic injustice, effectively dehumanizes the individuals, and limits their knowledge growth (Fricker, 2010). Thus, it is vital to explore how to center Black scholarship as a legitimate body of knowledge in MOS and how to dismantle the White supremacist foundation. We approach this analysis with the viewpoint that Black scholarship matters in MOS (Murrell, 2020), and thus we link it to postcolonial literature to expose how marginalizing non-White bodies is inimical to the global utility of theoretical models.

We define Black scholarship as epistemic practices grounded in the social realities and locations of both individuals and communities of African descent (i.e. Black people). We focus on how Black scholars encounter the 'double whammy effect', implying that they are marginalized based both on their race and on their research on Black social realities (c.f. Nkomo and Cox, 1989). The concept of epistemic injustice is rooted in the field of philosophy. Fricker (2010: 1) defines epistemic injustice as 'a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower', owing to prejudicial judgments linked to their social identity as women, Black people, or low-level social class, among other marginalized social categories that may intersect. In stark contrast to the predominantly White male middle class academics historically positioned as the true elite experts (Ashcraft et al., 2012), Black scholars are 'outsiders within' (Collins, 1999). This means that they are subject to 'othering' (c.f. Said, 1978), and thus socially located as less powerful, less knowledgeable (Collins, 1999), less acceptable and, more broadly, rather untrustworthy in relation to White scholars (c.f. Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

Hence, Black scholars experience testimonial and hermeneutic injustices, the two underlying dimensions of epistemic injustice identified by Fricker (2010). Testimonial injustice occurs when powerful actors discredit an individual's representation by attaching a credibility deficit to the person's social identity (or overlapping social identities) based on prejudicial (pre)assumptions (Fricker, 2010). Prejudice infuses judgments with biases, leading to wrongful dismissal, and ignoring and overlooking of other individuals'

knowledge accounts (Fricker, 2010; Medina, 2013). Hermeneutic injustice emerges when there is a lack of common representational categories within the public pool of knowledge, hindering a marginalized individual from articulating their social experience meaningfully to others (Fricker, 2010). Either *testimonial* injustice or *hermeneutical* injustice results in *epistemic* injustice, without a prerequisite for the two dimensions to intersect.

Thus, we suggest that, owing to epistemic injustice, Black scholars endure an ‘epistemic struggle’ for legitimacy and belonging in the key areas of teaching and research and that, to cope, they must select from among three, not necessarily exclusive, survival strategies: *compromising*, *collusion* and *radicalism*. However, these approaches, which constitute what we conceive of as ‘epistemic survival’, are fragmented, rendering them too weak in and of themselves to abolish the intergenerational epistemic injustice suffered by Black scholars. Thus, if we truly want to dislodge structural inequalities in knowledge production and dissemination, and center Black scholarship in MOS including other denigrated epistemologies, we call for cross-racial coalitions of Black, Brown and White ‘bystanders’ to mobilize a collective intellectual activism. The White bystander action we propose mirrors ‘comradeship’, that is, aligning with a scientific and political struggle against inequalities (c.f. Dean, 2019), and collective intellectual activism reflects tangible ways that individuals adopt to deploy their powerful ideas for meaningful social change through just and fair deeds (Chowdhury and Willmot, 2019; Chowdhury et al., 2017).

To this end, our conceptualization is located at the intersection of White supremacy, Black scholarship, epistemic injustice and hegemonic MOS. We approach our work as Black scholars who continuously experience racism, epistemic injustice and the exclusion of our communities from MOS. Particularly fundamental to our approach is the positionality of our lead author, who is a female African émigré mostly educated in the ‘first world’, yet who must reckon with being a ‘third world’ scholar (Nkomo, 2011: 381) and the apparent trivialization of her continent within MOS. We start our conceptualization by addressing the operation of White supremacy in the production of hegemonic MOS, linking this to epistemic injustice. We then conceptualize Black scholarship as a concrete example of how epistemic injustice operates, and introduce the ideas of ‘epistemic struggle’ and ‘epistemic survival’ as part of the conceptualization. In concluding, we address ‘epistemic bridging’ as the basis of collective intellectual activism before highlighting some implications for MOS.

Understanding White supremacy as underpinning hegemonic argumentations in MOS

The White supremacist construction of intellectual greatness as a property unique to the White race instructs individuals to value White people, their culture, and all phenomena connected to Whiteness, over individuals of color and everything associated with them (Palmer, 2013, cited in Mayo and Morgan Roberts, 2019). Thus, Whiteness is not merely about skin color (Nkomo and Al Ariss, 2014); rather, it is a socially constructed standpoint from which White individuals perceive and devalue other races, and acquire domination and structural privilege (Frankenberg, 1993). Whiteness is equivalent to White supremacy (Fields, 2001), and by implication restricts scientific inquiry to Western-centric subject

matters in parallel to diminishing the utility of what is monopolistically advanced by powerful White male actors as universal knowledge (Alcadipani et al., 2012). In essence, White supremacy dictates that knowledge is not only produced within Western contexts specifically for White bodies (Girei, 2017), but also imposed on the rest of the world's organizations and societies as logical explanations of their social realities, despite multiplicity (Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011). This hegemonic essentialization of difference is of central concern to emerging postcolonial studies (e.g. Alcadipani et al., 2012; Ibarra-Colado, 2006) that expose and challenge historical power imbalances behind the suppression of epistemologies produced by non-White bodies.

The marginalization of the knowledge produced by the 'Other' is reinforced by hierarchical dichotomy such as 'First World–Third World', 'North–Global South' (e.g. Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011), center–periphery (Ibarra-Colado, 2006) or core–periphery (Westwood et al., 2014), used by powerful White actors to position Western countries as most civilized, and thus (assumed) global leaders of scientific inquiry (Alcadipani et al., 2012). The devaluation of non-White bodies and their geographies is central to such dichotomy (Mignolo, 2011). Therefore, from the hegemonic perspective, 'Third World' scholarship personifies uselessness, unintelligibility and even dangerousness (Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011). The role of the 'Third World' in academia is thus primarily consuming 'First World' research (Mignolo, 2009), which biases hegemonic actors to push non-White bodies to the borders of scientific inquiry, where they are silenced and degraded (Hamann et al., 2020; Ruggunan, 2016; Westwood et al., 2014).

However, diverse non-White bodies write back to counter hegemonic imposition of faulty theories and ineffective managerial practices without capacity to boost organization performance and societal welfare in the 'Global South' (Alcadipani and Rosa, 2011; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Nkomo, 2011). To the extent that non-White bodies' scholarship constitutes a political project for self-determination through illuminating indigenous management and organization practices (Ibarra-Colado, 2006), it seeks alignment between scientific inquiry and the needs and visions of the so-called 'Third World' (c.f. Mignolo, 2009). This opposes hegemonic actors' subordination and exclusion of local knowledges, and imposition of Western-centric paradigms that fail to uplift the 'Global-South' from poverty and inequalities that, ironically, mainstream MOS (increasingly) claims to target (Ibarra-Colado, 2006).

This means that we must not understate the urgency to dismantle the White supremacist foundation of MOS by advancing diverse epistemologies as exemplified by Black scholarship. Disrupting the status quo entails a departure from reliance on hegemonic actors' initiatives such as intermittently 'bringing Africa in' (George et al., 2016) on White ideological terms (Hamann et al., 2020). These episodes reinforce hegemonic attachment of marginality to Black scholarship, and simultaneously preserve elite narratives of Black historiographies appealing to what Mehrpouya and Willmott (2018) describe as 'niche markets' of Western actors. The same observation applies, for instance, to centering knowledge embedded in the Latin American contexts in MOS, instead of decorating Western-centric theories with a 'Latin accent and tropical perfume', devoid of any significant material benefits for local management and organization practices (Ibarra-Colado, 2006: 465).

The link between White supremacy and MOS draws attention to the underrepresentation of Black scholars in knowledge production and dissemination processes inherent to

the domain. Two points are noteworthy in substantiating the above-stated observation. First, there may be a relatively high number of Black scholars joining MOS resulting from joint initiatives between universities and the corporate world, as compared with previous years (Milano, 2005); however, (Western) business schools in particular are racist (Dar et al., 2020). Black scholars are severely scrutinized, underrepresented, made invisible, excluded from social and professional networks, denied career progression opportunities, poorly compensated for their roles, and exploited as both tokens (Minefee et al., 2018; Settles et al., 2019) and managers of Blackness for institutional benefits (McCluney and Rabelo, 2019). Black scholars within business schools encounter an even more hostile path when pursuing Black scholarship, as they face a 'double whammy' (Nkomo and Cox, 1989). Second, the imperative to develop more epistemologically inclusive and valuable MOS requires, among other key dimensions, a solid understanding of the processes underpinning the marginalization and disenfranchisement of Black scholars, to foster critical reflection on how to transform the status quo. Subsequently, we explore Black scholars' experiences of epistemic injustice.

Black scholarship and epistemic injustice

Black scholarship emerged from the writings of early nineteenth-century Black academics as an interdisciplinary theoretical and political commitment to the emancipation of Black bodies and their minds (Harding, 1974). Its founders include the two Black female trailblazers Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist, women's rights activist and preacher known for her speech 'Ain't I a woman', and Anna Julia Cooper, a Black feminist who authored 'A Voice from the South', thus becoming the first scholar to draw attention to gender and race (i.e. the issue of intersectionality, although she did not apply this concept precisely) (Gilbert et al., 1991). Pioneering Black male scholars include the following: historian, sociologist and civil rights activist WEB Du Bois (Chowdhury, 2017, 2019, 2021); the political philosopher and first African leader of an independent country, Kwame Nkrumah; and the psychiatrist, political philosopher and revolutionist, Frantz Fanon, among others. Du Bois (1903), Nkrumah (1961) and Fanon (1967a) inscribed Black scholarship with a deeper moral and pragmatic value (c.f. Kagan, 1998) as a tool for dismantling White supremacist misrepresentations of Black people, to restore their sense of adequacy.

Intellectual activism forms the heart of Black scholarship (Collins, 2013), with the objective to establish the status of Black human beings as equal to White people or any other ethnic group. This fundamental dimension of equality across social groups has thus far diversified Black scholarship into various intersecting epistemologies (Dei, 2018; Hawthorne and Heitz, 2018; Mukandi and Bond, 2019), united by oppositional power and knowledge for emancipation (Collins, 2013). Black scholarship historically mobilizes non-White bodies against racism (Warmington, 2014), by 'speaking truth' to the hegemonic actors, and directly to people through credible theories on the equal status of all individuals as human beings (Collins, 2013).

Within MOS, Black scholarship fundamentally forms the foundational theorization of diversity and inclusion studies, led by pioneers who include Roosevelt Thomas (Johnson, 2008) and Taylor H Cox (whose personal experiences of racism inspire his intellectual ideas; Blake-Beard et al., 2008). More Black scholars such as Stella Nkomo are central

to the positioning of critical race theory (CRT), with particular focus on White supremacy (Swan, 2017). Also noteworthy is the instrumentality of Black scholarship to the critical evolution of feminist studies, where it interrogates the intersectionality of gender and racism, to counter the homogenization of White women's experiences as representing Black women's social realities (e.g. Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). The rich theoretical ideas and experiences generated by Black scholarship popularized the area of diversity and inclusion among White academics in MOS, despite little recognition from the hegemonic actors for the pioneering Black bodies (Johnson, 2008).

These diverse Black scholars pursue their emancipatory mission as enslaved bodies (c.f. Mignolo, 2011), whose work is founded on the colonized experiences of Black communities, and a collective desire for self-definition (Harding, 1974). Their location at the edges of a hegemonic system (Collins, 1999) subjects them to epistemic injustice, as revealed by their documented narratives and autoethnographic studies that we subsequently conceptualize. Although we primarily focus on the epistemic injustice experiences of Black scholars in MOS, we also include insights from other academic disciplines. To illuminate such experiences and coping mechanisms, we develop two intertwined dimensions of Black scholarship: *epistemic struggle* and *epistemic survival*.

Epistemic struggle

Black scholarship experiences a complex epistemic struggle that we conceptualize as striving to produce and disseminate knowledge while facing difficulties and resistance linked to the structural and agential power intrinsic within racist academia. Epistemic struggle evokes battling for legitimacy, academic freedom and a sense of belonging. These dimensions co-function and reinforce one another, particularly in the areas of research and teaching (Settles et al., 2019; Stewart et al., 2008). Contrary to White faculty (Harlow, 2003), Black scholars can be experts in their fields, yet they carry the burden of contested authority (Morgan Roberts and Mayo, 2019), encountered right at the beginning of the academic pipeline (Minefee et al., 2018). Their 'otherness' means that Black scholars must start from a point of disqualification-by-default, and work to disprove bias as well as assert their professional identities (see Stanley, 2006), with the hope to acquire authority and social acceptance (Fricker, 2010).

In particular, 'entry points' – for instance, admissions into doctoral research and publications – are designed to sustain hegemonic interests around White supremacy, through suppressing the potential emergence of contesting perspectives (Minefee et al., 2018). Hence, when the traditionally underrepresented Black scholars join academia, they face an almost insurmountable barrier in the form of lacking access to resources and social networks available to White academics (Stewart et al., 2008). This challenge is linked to powerful White actors' ostracism of research by Black bodies on other Black bodies, and the trivialization of Black individuals as samples for scientific inquiry within MOS, promoted by White supremacy (Cox, 2004). Thus, hegemonic actors such as 'departmental leaders, business school deans, business faculty, and leaders of disciplinary association' (Minefee et al., 2018: 91) and funding bodies are reluctant to provide financial resources to Black scholars (Cox, 2004; Minefee et al., 2018).

Furthermore, powerful White academics, including those who identify as liberals, deny Black scholars the academic freedom to pursue research that they deeply care about (Christian, 2017). Hegemonic actors use rationalizations such as lacking universal utility (Cox, 2004), risking self-location into 'a research ghetto' (Bell and Nkomo, 1999: 82) and thus not awarding tenure (Cox, 2004; Nkomo, 2016), in order to suppress Black scholarship. Such White supremacist devaluing, and epistemic exclusion of research topics centered on Black bodies (Settles et al., 2019), implies that powerful actors 'advise' Black academics to abandon their preferred studies (Cox, 2004; Nkomo, 2016). In this regard, White supremacy also implies that Black scholars face more pressure to tailor their research to hegemonic interests, as compared to their White peers conducting similar studies on ethnic minorities (Cox, 2004). Hegemonic approval of White academics in this case, and hostility against Black scholars, partly arise from fear of Black scholarship's potential to undermine 'White expertise' (de la Luz Reyes and Halcón, 1988: 307). Researchers who share a similar social identity with powerful White academics appear less threatening to the perception of the system as socially just, and are thus less opposed (King et al., 2018).

The racial identity of authors affects Black academics in at least four ways that intensify the epistemic struggle for Black scholarship. First, to the extent that most White individuals classify issues pertaining to racism as a concern for Black people in particular (Lewis, 2004), and hegemonic actors categorize Black scholarship as narrowly-focused minority research, they consider it unfit for publication in leading journals (Cox, 2004; Diaz and Bergman, 2013). Consequently, Black scholarship struggles to penetrate powerful networks of 'global knowledge' (Ibarra-Colado, 2006: 465), within which predominantly White male gatekeepers (Burgess and Shaw, 2010; Harzing and Metz, 2013; Roberts et al., 2020) 'brand' what constitutes 'good' theories (c.f. Mehrpouya and Willmott, 2018). Black scholars struggle to disseminate their work through such elite networks, partly owing to the untrustworthy status ascribed to them by hegemonic actors (Stanley, 2006).

Second, granted that Black scholars' social identities are deeply intertwined with their work (c.f. Thomas et al., 1999), their research is often deemed self-serving (Blake-Beard et al., 2008) 'heart work' (Bell and Nkomo, 1999: 82) or arguments presented 'on behalf of the group' (King et al., 2018: 846), and thus lacking objectivity (Cox, 2004; Harding, 1974). In general, 'majority White faculty do not believe that [Black] individuals are objective when researching their own community, and therefore, they cannot be trusted' (Stanley, 2006: 703). From a hegemonic perspective, being Black introduces bias into the research (Hendrix, 2002), given the scholars' strong emotional attachment to their work (Cox, 2004; Harding, 1974). However, hegemonic actors do not raise similar concerns with regards to White scholars' research on White bodies (de la Luz Reyes and Halcón, 1988), reflecting the operation of White supremacy in subjecting Black bodies to epistemic injustice.

Third, the conception of the manuscript review process as 'blind' does not necessarily stop reviewer speculation on authors' identities (King et al., 2018) against the backdrop of 'White males' definition of research and scholarship' and explicit dominance (de la Luz Reyes and Halcón, 1988: 308). Therefore, different social identities and value systems between Black scholars and the White actors dominating both reviewer and

editorial boards (Burgess and Shaw, 2010; Harzing and Metz, 2013) induce gatekeeper resistance to Black output (Cox, 2004). Resistance manifests as presumably value-neutral standards, including, among others: exaggerated reviewer or editor demands for validation and legitimacy; preferences for samples covering the entire world; requests for multiple manuscript revisions that still produce no publications (Cox, 2004); claims regarding lack of audiences for the respective work (Cox, 2004; Cox and Nkomo, 1990); extreme scrutiny (Bell and Nkomo, 1999; Proudford and Thomas, 1999); and hypercriticism, particularly of ethnic minority women (King et al., 2018).

Fourth, the intersection between being Black and being a (Black) woman (Crenshaw, 1989) generates a relatively large credibility deficit for female Black scholars than that encountered by any other academic group, which magnifies the individuals' epistemic struggle (King et al., 2018). Hegemonic actors feel the urge to implement control mechanisms when assessing Black female academics' work by demanding excessive access to the scholars' research data, as Bell and Nkomo (1999: 82) exemplify: 'One senior scholar even suggested that scholars doing research on race should make their raw data available to others for inspection. Our subjective position to the subjects of our research was seen as weakening our scholarship.'

Exercising such dominance over Black scholars positions them as incapable of engaging on a par with their presumably epistemically authoritative White peers, which de-humanizes and emotionally bruises the individuals (Chowdhury, 2019; Fricker, 2010). Central to such hegemonic demands for scientific rigor and legitimacy is the White supremacist idea that the 'standard for normality and comparison is White', scholarship (Stanley, 2006: 703) and samples (Cox and Nkomo, 1990). This hegemonic behavior is designed to erase distinctions between social groups and conceal structural inequalities in tandem with sustaining the White supremacist underpinning of MOS. For instance, all White individuals benefit from White privilege – that is, they have better 'life chances and outcomes' owing to their White identity – irrespective of their life conditions (Taylor Phillips and Lowery, 2015: 12). This aspect is rarely accounted for in hegemonic theorizations.

In the very few cases where Black scholarship gains exposure through leading MOS journal outlets, it still faces a perpetual battle for mainstream acceptance – even by other Black scholars, who fear losing legitimacy for citing work by non-White bodies (Mukandi and Bond, 2019). To exemplify, there are significantly fewer citations for the trailblazer, Roosevelt Thomas's work on diversity published by the *Harvard Review* in 1990 (Johnson, 2008) as compared with follow-up studies by White academics: 'e.g. Milliken and Martins (1996)' (Oswick and Noon, 2014: 32). Black scholars may well have pioneered the discourse on diversity and inclusion (Blake-Beard et al., 2008; Johnson, 2008); however, literature shows that the research gradually evolved into a legitimate field within MOS only *after* White scholars started engaging with it (Oswick and Noon, 2014). Therefore, epistemic injustice as a dimension of White supremacy implies that White scholars' research on Black social realities attracts far more citations than similar work by Black academics.

Beyond such epistemic struggle, Black scholars deal with constant trivialization of their research by fellow White colleagues. Settles et al. (2019: 69) exemplifies: 'I am treated like the work I do is ancillary, people not really getting it, not being able to

understand why it's important, and being dismissive about it.' This reveals how White academics use various notions of scientific incoherence and irrelevance to attack Black scholarship, and subtly disenfranchise non-White bodies. Such peer judgments implying the unintelligibility of a Black scholar seek to humiliate the individual and (re)produce power articulations reinforcing the outsider status or 'placelessness' of Black academics in MOS.

The placeless and lack of legitimacy foisted upon Black scholars extends into their pedagogical responsibilities where their 'competency, qualifications, and credibility' are questioned by both Black and White students (Harlow, 2003: 352). Structurally defined concepts of social identity determine what it means to be Black, and the positions Black lecturers are supposed to assume within academia even when they are in disagreement for legitimate reasons. For instance, many White students presume that they possess power and authority over all Black people, including their Black lecturers (c.f. Fricker, 2010). Researchers further demonstrate how internalized racism – such as the notion that 'Blacks are intellectually inferior to Whites' (Fricker, 2010: 23) – primes students (albeit unconsciously) to accept White supremacy (Chisadza et al., 2019). Thus, compared with White lecturers, Black scholars face rejection as teachers who are in possession of valuable knowledge (Shockley and Holloway, 2019; Stanley, 2006).

When observing Black scholars enacting their teaching roles and thus transcending their socially imagined areas of competency (Mukandi and Bond, 2019), students encounter dissonances between such performance, and their biased beliefs on Black individuals' position within society (c.f. Fricker, 2010). To illustrate, several White students give confrontational responses to Black scholars, with the aim to discredit the lecturers' knowledge claims (Harlow, 2003) and align with the White supremacist notion of racial superiority. The White students may also seek evidence to reaffirm their assumptions about Black educators' incompetence and untrustworthiness, as exemplified by double-checking lecture notes with textbook materials and consulting with White scholars on the subject matter taught by Black faculty (Harlow, 2003; Hendrix, 2002).

Notably, many Black students often penalize Black lecturers (Harlow, 2003), with Black women in general likely to experience a greater epistemic struggle for legitimacy (Chisadza et al., 2019; Shockley and Holloway, 2019). For instance, not only do Black students in South Africa tend to negatively evaluate Black (female) educators as compared to their White peers, but they also penalize the lecturers for their accents, despite sharing the same socio-linguistic backgrounds (Chisadza et al., 2019). White scholars are aware of the impact of racism and gender bias on student evaluations. However, a culture of White defensiveness (Stanley, 2006) and inclination among White academics and administrators to ignore racism (Contu, 2018) or deny its prevalence (Dar, 2019) blocks these White actors from directly engaging students in the discourse about prejudices and epistemic injustice. This inaction not only perpetuates the invisibility of White supremacy to White individuals (Lewis, 2004), particularly those managing business schools (Dar et al., 2020), but it also promotes failure to design feedback mechanisms controlling for discrimination, and failure to train students to assess Black lecturers fairly. The resounding silence across the majority of university deans and heads of departments, among others leaders (Minefee et al., 2018), exacerbates Black scholars' epistemic struggle. Dar (2019: 442) substantiates:

[W]hen academics of color do talk about racism in their workplace, our experiences are predominantly denied, fictionalized or individualized by (often White) management. We are told that it didn't happen, that our colleagues are not racist, or that there is simply no evidence of White supremacy structuring our career development, propensity to publish, or the opportunities for taking more powerful roles in the institutions.

Ignoring or denying racism reflects a willful blindness (c.f. Heffernan, 2011), underpinning the normalization and perpetuation of White supremacy and, in turn, entrenching epistemic injustice within MOS. Willful blindness also prevents White scholars from changing the structures responsible for generating inequalities (Proudfoot, 1999), and simultaneously suppresses a shared understanding of epistemic injustice between Black and White actors. The deliberate lack of a shared understanding by the majority of White scholars results in a deficit of common concepts that legitimately frame Black scholars' experiences of disenfranchisement. Consequently, as Bandura (1999) asserts, experiences acquire different meanings depending on what dominant actors call them. Insofar as *Black* scholars represent epistemic injustice, it does not 'exist' in the (MOS) academic world.

Epistemic survival

Researchers have identified coping strategies that Black academics deploy in an attempt to adapt to the experiences of racism – for example: 'strategic invisibility', which entails Black scholars' disengagement from both White colleagues and their organization, while remaining committed to research pursuits; 'working harder' to assert a scholarly identity and boost professional visibility; and 'disengagement', as significantly withdrawing input from academic work (Settles et al., 2019: 62). With regards to structural inequalities in knowledge production, multiple Black scholars across generations (and domains) do not surrender to epistemic injustice. Consequently, Black scholarship continues to survive, (re)emerge more powerfully – for instance, Du Bois (c.f. Morris, 2015) and current academics (Dar, 2019; Nkomo, 2020) – and mobilize communities despite constant existential threat from hegemonic structures (Dei, 2018).

Therefore, we conceptualize the idea of epistemic survival as sustained presence of Black scholarship within academia based on the three strategies – *compromising* (negotiating and navigating the system through compromises); *collusion* (mimicry and reinforcing hegemonic scholarship); and *radicalism* (refusal to compromise; therefore, paying the price of marginalization but at the same time producing some radical and pathbreaking outcomes). These strategies are not mutually exclusive, as they allow Black scholars to shift between them or adopt a combination thereof, depending on the power linked to career status at any given time. We subsequently analyze Black scholars' use of the three strategies to cope with the brutality of a White supremacist academia.

Compromising. This strategy involves negotiating and navigating the system by adjusting one's interests to fit into the dominant structures without actually embracing them. Black scholars who compromise may 'lie low', meaning that they do not visibly pursue the objective of Black scholarship to avoid upsetting, for instance, university deans and presidents, funding bodies and networks of actors in the publication system, thereby risking

even more exclusion and expulsion from academia (Christian, 2017). Lying low, therefore, means that Black scholars have to temporarily suspend their values, concerns and true selves in order to assimilate into the dominant structures until they feel more secure in their positions – for example, through tenure (Nkomo, 2016),

When Black scholars compromise, they do not undermine Black scholarship's fundamental claims on Black people's social realities, neither do they (immediately) challenge hegemony. Black scholars who compromise become neutralized, and appear to temporarily 'accept [their] inferiority and resign [themselves] to play the game that is not [theirs] but has been imposed upon [them]', (Mignolo, 2011: 275). They 'make it' and survive in the system without necessarily changing it (c.f. Harding, 1974), which creates tension between the scholars' work and a desire for authenticity (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). Hence, compromising involves managing emotions to support the pretense that goes into displaying content with the way things are – and are supposed to be from the perspective of the powerful White academics (Harlow, 2003). Christian (2017) alludes to such pretense as putting on a 'grinning mask', implying that in order to cope, Black scholars must hide their true selves, and even decorate themselves for the hegemonic actors, just like theater performers (Dar, 2019). Subsequently, by compromising, Black scholars tend to pay a high price emotionally and psychologically (Mukandi and Bond, 2019) owing to a potential dissonance between their roles and social identity.

In managing emotional and psychological discomfort, Black scholars may deny and/or downplay encounters of epistemic injustice or ascribe self-blame to their feelings. *Self-blame* entails attributing negative experiences to an unjustified – and unjustifiable – intense scrutiny (Harlow, 2003). *Denial* involves the Black scholar's rejection of the experiences as something that does not affect the individual (Harlow, 2003). *Downplaying* epistemic injustice includes the dismissal of any negative encounters as trivial to the individual's emotional, psychological and professional well-being (c.f. Harlow, 2003; Stanley, 2006). However, Black scholars who compromise are still anguished by the prevalence of epistemic injustice (c.f. Banks, 1984). They subsequently confront epistemic injustice through 'fighting back' as deeply critical and assertive Black scholars, thus risking hegemonic condemnation of their work as 'too Black' (Christian, 2017).

Black scholars whose work is perceived by White university management and faculty as 'too Black' risk not being hired or promoted to more powerful positions. Christian (2017: 423) notes: 'If one is hired, what is usually inevitable is the "chilly climate", and undermining of one's intellectual contributions in terms of salary increments or promotion.' This simply denotes an inescapable antagonism directed at assertive Black scholars appointed to higher positions. Theoretically, a promotion resembles an elevation to a position with more influence and better rewards as formal validation of an individual's progress. However, the promotion of Black scholars whose work is 'too Black' (Christian, 2017) is incongruent with hegemonic actors' role in exercising epistemic injustice, given that such acknowledgement implicitly endorses Black scholarship. Therefore, strong-willed Black academics face an even tougher struggle for legitimacy (Christian, 2017). They are inclined to get promotions that are inherently fake and meaningless bearers of fancy titles with more work and mis-matching compensation. Promotions for Black scholars do not eliminate epistemic injustice. Rather, they often help organizations to

manage their images and foster community and stakeholder relationships, as signified for instance by 'affirmative action cover girl' (Bell and Nkomo, 1999: 82).

Additionally, 'fighting back' by a supposedly promoted Black scholar mostly results in the individual's isolation, and is unsustainable owing to the intensity of the structural power generating epistemic injustice. Woodyard and Gadson (2018: 777) illustrate this point in recounting an experience of one of the scholars while training to be a psychologist: 'My outspokenness was not always welcomed, and I received professional consequences. As I got further in my training, and the stakes of what I could lose became higher, I started to become silent.' This implies that Black scholars do not feel safe or respected. Instead, they must resort to silence as a way to maintain their presence in academia. While silence seems to keep Black scholars safe (Dar, 2019), it permits daily micro-aggressions (Rosette et al., 2013) that potentially undermine the Black bodies' academic freedom and intensify epistemic injustice.

Collusion. Some Black scholars choose not to fight back. Instead, they 'fully' assimilate into the hegemonic structures as a strategic choice. In colluding, Black scholars abdicate their social identity, adopt the language and goals of White supremacy and, in effect, align themselves with its racist biases (c.f. Ibarra-Colado, 2006: 468). Collusive Black scholars 'buy-in' (c.f. Harding, 1974: 16) to the ideology of White supremacy for the sake of recognition by hegemonic actors. Contrary to wearing 'grinning masks' (Christian, 2017), such scholars choose to put on 'White masks', which implies mimicking elite actors' representations of Black people (Fanon, 1967a). While mimicry offers some extent of camouflage (Bhabha, 2004) to the Black scholars and ensure their epistemic survival, it deludes them into erroneously imagining an alignment between their interests and those of White supremacy, when in fact they continue to be outsiders (c.f. Bhabha, 2004; Fanon, 1967a).

Baker (2008) exposes a pattern of collusion in the work of Steele (2006) and McWhorter (2000). For example, Steele (2006) blames inequalities on both White and Black actors in the USA. From his perspective, while White actors must be blamed for creating affirmative action out of a guilty conscience, Black individuals deserve condemnation for what he regards as opportunism in supporting such affirmative action (Steele, 2006). Likewise, collusion is mirrored in McWhorter's (2000) claim that systemic racism has been eliminated from American society, and only its residue remains. McWhorter (2000) purports that achievement is an intrinsically driven universal human trait not subject to environmental conditions. In showing such sympathies with White supremacist ideologies, Steele (2006) and McWhorter (2000) downplay power imbalances accountable for the marginalization of Black people (Baker, 2008). Commitment to White supremacy – thus promoting biased ideas about Black people's incapacity and opportunistic behavior – reflects not only a betrayal of the Black scholarship agenda (Baker, 2008), but also a 'selling-out' (de la Luz Reyes and Halcón, 1988). Black scholars who 'sell-out' sacrifice their integrity, morality and principles in pursuit of recognition by hegemonic actors, yet they never truly belong to the White supremacist establishment.

Radicalism. Another group of Black scholars fights for epistemic survival through radicalism. We consider radicalism to be an epistemic survival strategy that pursues the emancipation of Black bodies and minds and challenges the devaluation and disenfranchisement

of Black scholarship. Radicalism neither compromises on the objective of Black scholarship nor conceals Black pain. Given that the wounds of Black pain are not always visible or traceable (Chowdhury, 2019), they continue to be suffered down through the generations of Black scholars, with no efforts to stop or prevent their infliction by those in power. This produces the discernible anger in radical Black scholarship, which is confrontational and bold in its provision of more transparency to the harshness of discriminatory practices and their dehumanizing effects on Black people (e.g. Fanon, 1967a, 1967b; Nkrumah, 1961). However, the articulation of Black pain and anger resembles an emotive act running counter to the tradition of separating sentiment from reason as the foundation for a rigorous objective analysis.

In an academia that disavows emotions (Callahan and Elliott, 2019), Black scholars' 'passionate concern' (c.f. Meyerson and Scully, 1995: 589) for issues inseparable from their identities (Thomas et al., 1999) reinforces their lack of credibility from a hegemonic perspective. When Black scholars reveal their Black pain (Chowdhury, 2019), they are quickly delegitimized as irrational, angry and violent, reaffirming the White supremacist idea of White as representing reason, and Black as symbolic of irrationality. Thus, radical Black scholarship pays a high price for epistemic injustice, as shown by Fanon and Du Bois: the powerful White actors initially banned Fanon (1967b) in France where the scholar had citizenship (Gordon, 2015), and they denied Du Bois's contribution to the founding of modern sociology for over a century (Morris, 2015). Still, radical Black scholars do not appear afraid of, or deterred by, the isolation and hostility surrounding them. Instead, they seem to regard such punishment as a badge of honor reflecting the power of their writings (c.f. Chowdhury et al., 2017), as shown by the survival of their ideas.

Nonetheless, the three survival strategies – *radicalism*, *collusion* and *compromise* – enable Black scholars to retain membership in academia; yet these fragmented strategies fail to guarantee belongingness of Black scholars or center Black scholarship specifically within MOS. Henceforth, Black scholars' subjection to epistemic injustice should be understood in relation to the limitation of the strategies as a disintegrated response to epistemic injustice, implicating minority knowledge producers and the significance of MOS globally.

Epistemic bridging: Moving beyond epistemic injustice and hegemonic MOS

While Fricker (2010) recognizes that abolishing epistemic injustice benefits individuals by providing a wider pool of ideas, she invests faith in hegemonic actors' capacity to eliminate epistemic injustice. This dependency is very problematic since it requires the very same actors who are in positions of extreme power to dislodge White supremacy from academia in order to allow diverse epistemological perspectives to flourish within MOS. Medina (2013) offers an alternative solution centered on the idea of networked agency as chained action or collective acts of resistance performed by individuals subjected to epistemic injustice, led by 'epistemic heroes'. While we embrace Medina's (2013) proposal, we caution against self-aggrandizement that rearranges structural inequalities, potentially resulting from individuals' self-categorization as 'heroes' or 'White saviors' of Black scholarship.

We suggest the necessity of Black scholars and leadership from within MOS to stay at the forefront of the battle against epistemic injustice, equipped with proactivity and perseverance as their armory. Proactivity entails direct initiatives for eradicating epistemic injustice such as the growth of counter-hegemonic research (Alcadipani et al., 2012; Nkomo, 2011; Ruggunan, 2016), recent establishment of the *Africa Journal of Management (AJOM)* within the Academy of Management, and creation of networks such as the Management Faculty of Color Association based in the USA. Black scholars must propagate such proactive measures and foster the pivotal roles of eldership, mentorship and path finding to center Black scholarship within MOS.

Perseverance means that a critical mass of Black scholars becomes increasingly proactive in raising awareness of epistemic injustice and attacking it as long as it continues to pervade academia. The persistent exposure of epistemic injustice and its broader harm dismantles 'collective White ignorance' actively promoted and utilized by powerful White actors to suffocate potential action against structural inequalities (Swan, 2017: 547). To the extent that knowledge potentially changes mindsets and triggers agential action against epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2010; Medina, 2013), and abolishing structural inequalities mandates the meaningful participation of White individuals (Boykin et al., 2020; Swan, 2017), Black scholars must relentlessly expose and educate a significant mass of non-Black scholars about this invisible issue. Exposure, by naming epistemic injustice and its effects, potentially destabilizes powerful White actors' comfortability with the status quo, ultimately compelling them to be attentive to the issue. The aim of continuously unmasking epistemic injustice is to engage scholars in the fight for equality, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

In essence, we propose the deployment of *collective intellectual activism* by *cross-racial coalitions* of Black and Brown scholars, and White bystanders who choose to become comrades. The term bystander describes those White academics who are not harmed by the epistemic injustice suffered by Black scholars, do not directly disenfranchise non-White bodies within MOS, and are passive about the harmful issue (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008; Latané and Darley, 1970). Notwithstanding, researchers confirm the principal role of White individuals in establishing structural inequalities (Lewis, 2004), through direct involvement or silence (Rosette et al., 2013). The inaction of White bystanders reflects 'silent agreement' (Murrell, 2020) with epistemic injustice, despite some of the individuals' opposition to any form of inequalities.

Our conception of the White bystanders' role is analogous with Meyerson and Scully (1995), insofar as these agents (e.g. White female academics, and White individuals who identify as two spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and/or queer – 2SLGBTQ+) have greater access to powerful White actors and decision-making contexts than Black bodies, and a desire to achieve structural equalities within their organizations. White bystanders' social position and powerful social identity (Fricker, 2010) capacitates the individuals to disrupt the status quo and advance Black scholarship if they choose to. Furthermore, White bystanders may experience exclusion to a certain extent, and thus be motivated to tackle epistemic injustice by empathizing with Black scholars or through the expression of moral outrage towards persisting structural inequalities (Morgan Roberts, 2020). Other antecedents for bystander intervention entail the recognition of epistemic injustice as a critical issue, a sense of urgency and personal responsibility to tackle the

structural problem, and the right skills for consciously engaging in counter-hegemonic action against the disenfranchisement of Black scholars (c.f. Latané and Darley, 1970).

Based on some White individuals' fight against racism and White scholars' appeal for equality in MOS (Contu, 2018, 2019; Grimes, 2001; Swan, 2017), we propose a transition of White bystanders to comrades. Hence, the necessity for a critical mass of non-White bodies to persevere in exposing epistemic injustice, and sensitizing White bystanders to the issue. Our understanding of comrades is situated in Dean's (2019) theory on comradeship. Dean (2019) defines comrades as individuals on the same side of a political struggle and who are instrumentally connected to realize a common goal. Their sameness arises not from a shared social identity, but rather from fighting on the same side to replace hierarchy, isolation and oppression with equality, solidarity and respect (Dean, 2019). Comrades realize personal sacrifices entailed in the struggle (Dean, 2019), yet they remain committed to discharging their shared moral responsibility as members of a 'goal-oriented collective' (Isaacs, 2011).

Relations between comrades (comradeship) are a means to achieve specific outcomes, focusing on ends beyond individual interests, and thus require *collective co-ordination*. The prevalence of a struggle (e.g. against epistemic injustice) serves as the condition for comradeship, which however does not shape relationships between comrades who may lack knowledge of each other's identities (Dean, 2019). We conceive the role of White comrades as informed by attentiveness and actualization. Attentiveness requires that White comrades listen carefully to Black scholars' experiences of epistemic injustice in order to identify tangible ways of showing solidarity with the individuals (Bystydzienski and Schacht, 2001), without rationalizing the hegemonic system or defending the self (Swan, 2017). The attentiveness of White comrades is underpinned by critical reflection on own agency, ignorance, acknowledged role in promoting epistemic injustice (Contu, 2018, 2019; Edmondson et al., 2020) and rejecting White privilege (Bailey, 1998). This departs from excessively scrutinizing, and retaliating against, Black scholars as well as referencing an illusionary system of meritocracy to justify the disenfranchisement of the academics (Boykin et al., 2020; Murrell, 2020).

We interpret actualization by White comrades as signifying proactive intervention through concrete actions that offer the same academic freedom and career progress to Black scholars that is accorded to their White peers. From this perspective, actualization also means that when White comrades enact roles as manuscript reviewers, journal editors and grant assessors, they must detach their innate prejudices from their conclusions of the social and scientific relevance of Black scholars' work. Furthermore, to rectify White elite academics' domination of editorial boards and their sustenance of narrowly focused self-interests, White comrades must advocate for the inclusion of Black scholars in the different functions of the publication processes, and pressure academic boards to appoint gatekeepers with a genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion. These efforts require a more tangible pillar.

Thus, we propose to create a specific *division for Black scholarship within the Academy of Management (AOM)* to sustain, foster and illuminate intellectual debates on non-White bodies, and build a global academic network. The establishment of a Black scholarship division at AOM represents a moral and formal acknowledgement of the legitimacy of such research within MOS. This would also provide a cooperative

space and acknowledgement of belonging to allow Black academics to flourish, lead and develop the field on their own terms (c.f. Chowdhury, 2021). We propose that Black scholars must lead this division with the support of White comrades. Since Black scholars produce rigorous scientific work like any other academics, only epistemic injustice can deny them the leadership of an AOM Black scholarship division (c.f. Chowdhury, 2021). Nonetheless, collaborating with White comrades potentially achieves more inclusive MOS, and mitigates the potential risk of further marginalization of Black scholarship. For example, hegemonic actors may be tempted to denigrate the division. However, the growth of diversity and inclusion studies, for instance, is a resounding testament to the power of Black scholarship. What is missing so far is a cooperative MOS space that more transparently cultivates Black scholars' ideas, gives them credit, and lets them take part in the decision of what is important and what should be on the agenda of advancing Black scholarship (c.f. Chowdhury, 2021). Such space would not only boost the legitimacy of Black scholars in the wider MOS but also invite other divisions to join and collaborate within the Black scholarship division. This can enrich knowledge on Black issues, Black lives, and their impacts on organizational and societal levels.

However, a concern worth noting is the vulnerability of coalitions to fragmentation into identity politics, resulting from the essentialization of both social categorizations and groupings as epitomized by the feminist movement (Yuval-Davis, 1994). A potential solution to fragmentation, however, lies not in individuals' identities, but rather in what they seek to achieve as a collective (Yuval-Davis, 1994). Notably, inspiration for successful cross-racial coalitions against epistemic injustice is offered by Black scholars such as Morris (2015) in the field of sociology. Morris's (2015) coalition with a multi-racial team of fellow sociologists seeking to acquire recognition for Du Bois, culminated in the American Sociological Association's renaming of the most prestigious sociology prize after the Black scholar. Such actions indicate the potential of Black and Brown scholars, and White comrades, in dislodging White supremacy to ensure equality in scientific knowledge production and dissemination processes.

Discussion and conclusion

Implications for management and organization

Our exploration of Black scholarship in connection with epistemic injustice has sought to identify possibilities for dismantling White supremacy and thus contribute to the debate on counter-hegemonic management and organization theories and practices. Situating epistemic injustice as a context-specific effect of racism, we have argued that White supremacy first categorizes Black individuals as inferior and subsequently trivializes their knowledge as unintelligible, thus suppressing their ideas. However, the White supremacist suppression and disenfranchisement of non-White bodies' ideas and epistemes has promoted hegemonic theories of limited relevance to global communities. Black scholarship particularly represents a rich example of how epistemic injustice not only dehumanizes Black bodies, but also undermines the utility of the 'global' MOS for diverse organizations and communities across the world.

Epistemic injustice primarily operates in invisible ways. Contrary to other critical social movements (Spicer and Böhm, 2007), for instance, linked to climate change, racism and 2SLGBTQ+ issues, among others, protests against epistemic injustice are largely invisible. Furthermore, unless subjected to scrutiny, the effects of epistemic injustice also remain concealed. Targets of epistemic injustice face loneliness in their struggle to speak, to be heard, to be believed, and to be helped. Often, each Black scholar undergoes an epistemic struggle in isolation within their institution and, in an effort to cope, must adopt one or a combination of the survival strategies – that is, *compromise*, *collusion* or *radicalism* – based on career progression and a sense of security within the roles. The lack of unison among these different responses highlights Black scholars' vulnerability to epistemic injustice, and the exclusion of Black scholarship from MOS.

Notwithstanding, Black scholarship endures, anchored on a future-oriented vision to establish alternative and more humanistic theorizations of Black people's and other marginalized bodies' social realities. The emergence of early Black scholarship may have been partly reactionary (Harding, 1974), taking form as epistemic disobedience, which signifies a body of ideas seeking to challenge universalistic and prejudicial theories about people of color (c.f. Mignolo, 2009, 2011). Nevertheless, Black scholarship's strong commitment to Black bodies, and reactionary formation, do not bar non-Black scholars from embracing the knowledge.

Although hegemonic actors do not grant Black academics their deserved legitimacy and recognition, these non-White bodies' ideas are not less intelligent than those of their structurally privileged White peers. The narrow-minded hegemonic conception of the significance of Black scholarship as relating just to Black people (Cox, 2004; Lewis, 2004) appears to have created what we call a 'research myopia' among powerful White actors (Medina, 2013). By 'research myopia', we mean a deliberate failure of powerful White actors to acknowledge crossovers between ideas generated by Black bodies and theorizations advanced by non-Black bodies to model the experiences of marginalized social groups globally. Such social groups entail 2SLGBTQ+s (who account for a number of Black scholars as well) and other ethnic minority individuals discriminated against on the basis of gender, sexuality, religious affiliation and other aspects of their social identity.

A further illustration of the broader utility of Black scholarship, albeit outside MOS, is provided by Morris (2015). Morris (2015) observes that Du Bois developed his work with a forward-looking approach, envisioning a future that permits academics across racial divides to tap into his intellectual ideas, regardless of the epistemic injustice he endured from powerful White actors. Indeed, Black scholars' powerful, future-oriented ideological premises refuse to be buried, as further exemplified by the scholarship of Fanon, among others (Dar, 2019). However, disenfranchising and dehumanizing Black scholars is immoral. Beyond that, trivializing Black bodies' experiences and intellectual ideas compels Black individuals to adopt rejectionist perspectives (Chowdhury, 2019) rather than develop their scholarship more organically and potentially enrich MOS as a result.

Implications for diversity and inclusion literature

We have sought to demonstrate the broader implications of epistemic injustice beyond a specific group (i.e. Black people) by linking Black scholarship and the hegemonic body

of MOS. Epistemic injustice has deeper material and discursive consequences for organizations and society; it is not just a problem for Black or Brown people. It undermines the knowledge that business schools teach to students, and generate for social actors and the broader society. Nkomo (2020) juxtaposes racism with a virus, and concludes that racism mutates and evolves in new forms across contexts. Thus, in engaging with diversity and inclusion, which has now turned into a catch-all concept for any form of difference not necessarily linked to structural inequalities (Edgley et al., 2016), MOS scholars must re-examine how the category is hiding the multifaceted operation and outcomes of racism as reflected by epistemic injustice. This interrogation requires unmasking how prioritized justifications for employing and treating Black people as human beings perpetuates racism and its contextual outcomes (c.f. Morgan Roberts, 2020).

Henceforth, we propose a more integrative understanding of the legal, ethical, business, humanitarian, moral and social justice cases for diversity and inclusion. By doing so, we align with Morgan Roberts (2020) in rejecting the commodification of Black bodies, for what Edgley et al. (2016) aptly describe as reputational capital and branding purposes, implied in the business case, as the mainstream rationale for diversity and inclusion. In essence, hiring Black academics and advancing their scholarship are of paramount significance to organizations, individuals, society and policy makers as the scholars are genuinely interested in supporting the progress of their professional and social environments, despite the barriers they often face through marginalization (Morgan Roberts and Mayo, 2019; see Shockley and Holloway, 2019).

While Black scholars aim to add value to both their organizations and communities, they also have socio-economic needs and desires that they seek to fulfil through employment, promotion, knowledge and acknowledgment, and therefore deserve opportunities to do so. An appreciation of such human needs connects to the social justice case for diversity and inclusion. Concomitantly, structural inequalities generating White privilege for White bodies, and disadvantages for non-White bodies, necessitate understanding the moral, socially just and ethical imperative of providing opportunities to Black scholars to meet their needs and those of their ethnic group. Thus, on the basis of Black scholars' experiences of epistemic injustice (and other marginalized scholars such as 2SLGBTQ+s), we conclude that the cases for diversity and inclusion do not seem contradictory. Rather, the cases appear to overlap and complement each other as rationalization for diversity and inclusion, with the potential to boost the richness and significance of MOS globally.

While we propose a more integrative understanding of the cases for diversity and inclusion, we also acknowledge potential variations in the salience of some justifications across contexts. Still, the salience of one case does not preclude other cases from informing diversity and inclusion initiatives. Within the context of epistemic injustice, immediate action grounded on the less considered moral perspectives (see Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010) is imperative to stop the dehumanization of Black scholars. Bandura (1999) observes that the less visible the suffering of the dehumanized individuals, the easier it is for powerful actors to cause more harm, and the less morally obliged they are to stop the masked damage they inflict. Moreover, the structure of academia promotes the 'decoupling of functions' and 'diffusion of responsibility', meaning that no specific individual is held accountable for inflicting and/or eliminating epistemic injustice (c.f. Bandura, 1999).

Therefore, we also challenge the ‘moral disengagement’ among White bystanders. ‘Moral disengagement’ manifests as inertia in the face of dehumanization (Bandura, 1999) of Black scholars through epistemic injustice. The immorality of epistemic injustice, and need for White bystander scholars’ intervention, must also be understood in the context of its suppression of ideologies of academic value beyond one social group of Black individuals. Thus, management and organization academe should not ignore the perpetual and perpetuating nature of the negative consequences of epistemic injustice.

Concluding remarks

We conceptualized Black scholarship through the lens of epistemic injustice, linking the issue to how White supremacy organizes knowledge production in MOS. In focusing on Black scholarship, we sought to highlight the potential effects of epistemic injustice on non-White bodies in MOS. We suggested the inclusion of Black scholarship as one way to counter hegemonic theories that may render MOS more relevant to diverse communities across the world. To this end, we identified cross-racial coalitions between Black, Brown and White bystanders, as pivotal in tackling epistemic injustice through collective intellectual activism. We argued that racial heterogeneity should consist of diversity and inclusion of social groups’ intellectual ideas in MOS. We developed our conceptualization from the perspective of Black scholars who endure epistemic injustice and the invisibility of their communities in MOS, and who seek to facilitate change through mobilizing White scholars to engage in a truly collective intellectual activism.

Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank Associate Editor Alessia Contu and the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and valuable guidance in improving this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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