Privileged/Marginalized Group Dynamics:
Common Patterns of Whites and People of Color/People who Identify as Multiracial/Biracial

**Directions: review these common group dynamics:**

a. Check-off any dynamics which you have observed or heard a credible story about.

b. Make a note next to the different dynamics that you have personally experienced, felt, or done.

c. Add any additional common patterns/dynamics you have witnessed or experienced.

**Some/Many Whites Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):**

1. believe they have “earned” what they have, rather than acknowledge the extensive white privilege and unearned advantages they receive; believe that if people of color just worked harder…

2. not notice the daily indignities that people of color experience; deny them and rationalize them away with PLEs (perfectly logical explanations)

3. work to maintain the status quo and protect the advantages and privileges they receive

4. believe that white cultural norms, practices and values are superior and better

5. internalize the negative stereotypes about people of color and believe that whites are smarter and superior to people of color

6. want people of color to conform and assimilate to white cultural norms and practices

7. accept and feel safer around people of color who have assimilated and are “closer to white”

8. blame people of color for the barriers and challenges they experience; believe that if they “worked harder” they could “pull themselves up by their bootstraps”

9. believe that people of color are not competent and are only hired/promoted to fill quotas

10. interrupt and talk over people of color

11. resent taking direction from a person of color

12. dismiss and minimize frustrations of people of color and categorize the person raising issues as militant, angry, having an “attitude,” working their agenda, not a team player...

13. focus on their “good intent” as whites, rather than on the negative impact of their behavior

14. focus on how much progress we have made, rather than on how much more needs to change

15. want people of color to “get over it” and move on quickly

16. get defensive when people of color express their frustrations with current organizational and societal dynamics

17. “walk on eggshells” and act more distant and formal with people of color
**Some/Many Whites Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):**

18. segregate themselves from people of color and rarely develop authentic relationships across race

19. exaggerate the level of intimacy they have with individual people of color

20. fear that they will be seen and “found out” as a racist, having racial prejudice

21. focus on themselves as an individual (I’m not racist; I’m a good white), and refuse to acknowledge the cultural and institutional racism people of color experience daily

22. pressure and punish whites who actively work to dismantle racism to conform and collude with white racism; criticize, gossip about, and find fault with white change agents

23. expect people of color to be the “diversity expert” and take the lead in raising and addressing racism as their “second (unpaid) job”

24. minimize, under-value, ignore, overlook and discount the talents, competencies and contributions of people of color

25. rephrase and reword the comments of people of color

26. ask people of color to repeat what they have just said

27. assume the white teacher/coach/facilitator/employee, etc., is in charge/the leader; assume people of color are in service roles

28. rationalize away racist treatment of people of color as individual incidents or the result of something the person of color did/failed to do

29. dismiss the racist experiences of people of color with comments such as: That happens to me too...You’re too sensitive...That happened because of _____, it has nothing to do with race!

30. judge a person of color as over-reacting and too emotional when they are responding to the cumulative impact of multiple recent racist incidents

31. accuse people of color of “playing the race card” whenever they challenge racist policies and practices; instead of exploring the probability of negative differential impact based on race, or that racist attitudes and beliefs are operating

32. if confronted by a person of color, shut down and focus on what to avoid saying or doing in the future, rather than engaging and learning from the interaction

33. look to people of color for direction, education, coaching on how to act and what not to do

34. compete with other whites to be “the good white:” the best ally, the one people of color let into their circle, etc.

35. if a white person makes a racist comment or action, aggressively confront them and pile on the feedback to distance from them and prove who is a better ally

36. seek approval, validation, and recognition from people of color
Some/Many Whites Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):
37. if confronted by a person of color, view it as an “attack” and focus on and critique HOW they engaged me, not my original comments or behaviors

38. disengage if feel any anxiety or discomfort

39. avoid confronting other whites on their racist attitudes and behaviors

40. when trying to help people of color, feel angry if they don’t enthusiastically appreciate the help

41. believe there is one “right” way, meaning “my way” or the “white way”

42. track patterns of differential treatment of people of color and intervene to stop inappropriate actions and educate others

43. continually learn more about the experiences of people of color and racism

44. recognize when people of color might be reacting out of cumulative impact, and offer space to talk about issues and their experiences

45. analyze policies and practices to assess any differential impact on people of color and intervene to create change

46. constantly track daily organizational activities to ensure fairness, respect, and inclusion for all people with respect to group dynamics, communication, task assignments, professional development opportunities, decision-making, conflict management, mentoring, networking, etc.
B. Some/Many People of Color and People who Identify as Biracial/Multiracial Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):

47. easily identify the “daily indignities” they experience and understand many of the dynamics of racism

48. have an awareness of white privilege and the disadvantages they receive as people of color/people who identify as biracial/multiracial

49. feel angry about racism and the unjust treatment they receive

50. feel hopeless and disempowered

51. work to change the status quo

52. fight back and resist the injustices they experience

53. feel a heavy responsibility to be a “role model” and to help other people of color/people who identify as biracial/multiracial to succeed

54. clearly realize the negative consequences they will experience if they speak up and challenge racist dynamics

55. feel pressure to conform, go along, and “not rock the boat”

56. fear losing what little access and reasonable treatment they get in racist systems

57. overlook many of the daily indignities and racist dynamics they experience

58. experience the “cumulative impact” of holding in their emotional reactions to the daily indignities in their lives

59. internalize the negative stereotypes about their own group and other groups of color

60. focus on survival in racist systems by assimilating, colluding and working within white cultural norms

61. focus on the impact of negative comments or actions, regardless of the intent of the person

62. be very cautious and reserved around whites

63. see whites as members of the dominant group until individuals distinguish themselves as anti-racist and as allies working actively to dismantle racism

64. possess and demonstrate greater cultural competencies than whites; they are often at least bicultural and know how to work within white culture and how to live within their own culture as well

65. participate in “horizontal prejudice” and act out of prejudice towards other groups of color

66. collude with the dynamics of racism as it plays out along the “color line” and more highly value those with lighter skin, more European features, “good hair,” “good English,” etc.

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Liberating Behaviors and Attitudes from Members of Privileged Groups that Shift the Status Quo

1. Consistently track interactions and group dynamics: work to create balance of engagement among all members; and speak up when you notice exclusionary comments and behaviors.
2. Cultivate relationships with other members of privileged groups who actively work to dismantle oppression and create inclusive organizations. Talk honestly about where you get stuck and ask for feedback and coaching.
3. Continue to deepen your awareness about privilege and dominant culture, and how these operate in you, others, and organizations/systems.
4. Recognize and change in the moment when you are operating out of stereotypes, privilege, and/or dominant cultural beliefs.
5. Track patterns of negative differential treatment on members of marginalized groups and intervene to stop inappropriate actions and educate others.
6. Recognize and intervene when unconscious bias and prejudice are impacting opinions and decisions.
7. Continually learn more about the experiences of members of marginalized groups and oppression.
8. Recognize when members of marginalized groups might be reacting out of cumulative impact, and offer space to talk about issues and their experiences.
9. Analyze policies, programs, services, and practices to assess any differential negative impact on members of marginalized groups and shift practices to create change.
10. Track current utilization of services and assess the degree of satisfaction and usage by members of marginalized groups.
11. Regularly assess the climate and culture of organizations and analyze the data for any differential experiences from members of marginalized groups.
12. Constantly track organizational activities to ensure fairness, respect, and inclusion for all people with respect to group dynamics, communication, task assignments, professional development opportunities, decision-making, conflict management, mentoring, networking, hiring and promotion, etc.
13. Support others when they question or challenge uninclusive or disrespectful behaviors or policies so they are not alone. Recognize that marginalized group members have a far greater risk if they challenge and speak up.
14. Ask questions to seek to understand BEFORE disagreeing or defending your position.
15. If your behavior has had an impact on a member of a marginalized group, avoid defensively talking about your intent. Instead, listen thoughtfully to their feelings and perspective; acknowledge the impact; make amends and change your behavior as needed.
16. In meetings and conversations, ask these questions, “How might this impact members of different marginalized groups?” “What perspectives and input might we be missing from different marginalized groups?”
17. Talk with members of privileged groups who seem to be colluding, “going along to get along” ~ help them consider the consequences of their actions and shift their behaviors.

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