Uncovering Unconscious Dominance

Owen Karcher, MA, LPC | Chelsea O’Neil Karcher, MA, LPC-IT
Center for Community Healing, LLC

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IDENTITY

1. How we see ourselves, values and beliefs which we hold close to our hearts and abide by on a daily basis. They may also include secrets and emotional characteristics that no one knows about, but influence us in every aspect of our days.

2. The image society has of us, which allows society as a whole to treat a person differently than they would others who may have a different identity than us.
Identity Groups

1. Dominant – Those who belong to the group with more power, by virtue of their identity

2. Subordinated – Those who belong to the group with less power, by virtue of their identity
Right Handed vs. Left Handed

Which group is considered ‘normal’ and which is considered ‘different’ or ‘deviant’?

Which group is the world arranged for?

How does society socially and systemically reinforce what’s ‘normal’?
“Do you have any books on the white-male experience?”
Because everyone has multiple and sometimes changing group memberships, many (but not all) people have both dominant and subordinated group membership experience somewhere in their life.
Dominant Groups

- They are considered “normal.”
- The world is organized to benefit them, and suit their needs.
- Their life of privilege is considered ‘just the way things are.’
- They make the rules, and determine what is right and wrong, good and bad, normal and abnormal.
- They are able to limit access to resources or the behavioral options of others.
- They have advantages and privileges that they did not earn by their deeds, but merely by virtue of their group identity.
**Subordinated Groups**

- They are considered abnormal, different, deviant, or somehow less than dominant groups.
- The world is not organized to benefit them or suit their needs, and they have to find a way to accommodate themselves to the world the way it is structured.
- They adapt to the rules, or face serious consequences.
- They may be or feel invisible.
- They have a harder time having access to resources, or controlling their own behavioral options.
- They have to work extra hard to have the same status or advantages that dominant groups take for granted.
Spectrum of Impact

All of the ‘isms’ of modern society – colonialism, racism, imperialism, sexism, ageism, etc. – are systems in which we play out the dom-sub relationship dynamics
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1. Thoughts and Perceptions / Conscious Awareness

2. Subconscious / Memories and Stored Knowledge

3. Unconscious / Fears, phobias, pain, anxiety, conflict, urges, forgotten memories

4. Collective Unconscious / Human Experiences, ancestral memory,
Reflection

Identify 1-2 dominant identities you hold

- Seems “normal,” most places you go, you don’t have to think about it very often
- Helps you get things you want or need - explicitly or implicitly
Journal/Contemplate the following questions

- Determine a situation(s) when your dominant group membership has been challenged or became more potent to you (Examples: A white person travelling to a black neighborhood, A thin person uncomfortably sitting next to a fat person on an airplane, A PhD student debating politics with a relative who did not go to college)

- How does it feel when your dominant group identity is challenged? Identify emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations
DRAWING - 10 MINUTES

- If your dominant group membership was a living, breathing creature... what would it look like?

- Consider how it moves, its size, its sounds, its texture, what it eats
Reflection / Witness writing (in a pair or alone)

- How does your creature try to protect you?
- What is your creature asking for when they take over?
- What’s the wisdom in this part of you?
Discussion Questions - with your table

- Discuss what it was like to create a representation of that part of you.

- Is this part of you one you typically look at or interact with?

- Is it a part of you that you hide?
Questions?

Owen Karcher
owenkarcher@gmail.com

Chelsea O’Neil Karcher
chelskarcher@gmail.com

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