LEADING WHITE ACCOUNTABILITY GROUPS

Create Racially Inclusive Teams and Anti-Racist Organizations

KATHY OBEAR

Advance Praise for *Leading White Accountability Groups*

"Dr. Kathy Obear has long been a leader in the foundational work of white anti-racist education. Now she offers a veritable treasure trove of resources and guidance in this nuanced yet accessible guide for leading white affinity groups in the workplace. This book should be considered essential to every organization's DEI bookshelf."
—**Dr. Robin DiAngelo**, author of *White Fragility* and co-author of *The Facilitator's Guide for White Affinity Groups*

"For more than thirty years, Dr. Obear has worked not only with other 'white folks' but on herself to live an anti-racist life. This resource is grounded not only in her experience as a professional scholar, educator, and facilitator, but in her daily practice. The exercises, tools, and information shared here will meet folks wherever they are on their journey. This is not just a major contribution to the field of diversity and inclusion, but to the world."
—**Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington**, President, The Washington Consulting Group

"A must read for anyone interested in helping white people move toward greater racial insight and understanding, ability, and constructive action. White Accountability Groups can be a land mine *and* hold transformative potential of increased racial awareness. Kathy Obear's latest book, *Leading White Accountability Groups*, combines decades of experience with the craft of a teacher to all but ensure that such groups are a success. The book clearly lays out a step-by-step process to approach, create, and facilitate a successful white accountability group that advances institutional goals. The steps are supported by exercises, inquiries, and worksheets and perhaps, most valuable of all, Obear's deep and extensive experience."
—**Jacqueline Battalora**, PhD, author of *Birth of a White Nation* (2nd edition)

"*Leading White Accountability Groups: Create Racially Inclusive Teams and Anti-Racist Organizations* is a step-by-step guide for racial justice advocates who want to thoughtfully create white accountability groups that are rooted in justice and loving community. Dr. Obear provides resources, practical activities, and most importantly, critical questions that both guide the development of white accountability groups and invite the reader into deep self-reflection about their capacity and motivations to do this work. This book is a culmination of Kathy's work as a social justice advocate and is a gift to those seeking to invite privileged groups into deeper accountability and to continue on the journey towards justice."
—**Alejandro Covarrubias**, EdD, President, Foundations for Hope and Justice Consulting

"This book is a gift. It offers a treasure-trove of expert guidance and detailed, practical, ready-to-use resources to help white people counter racism within themselves and their organizations. Obear takes her twenty-five years of experience and meets the reader where they are, just as she advises conveners of dialogues to do the same for their participants. This book is an essential resource, perfect for facilitators new to the journey, yet packed with wisdom beneficial for seasoned practitioners. Using accessible language and stories, this book is a manual that inspires and supports readers to make a difference in their workplace."
—**Shelly Tochluk**, PhD, Professor of Education, Mount Saint Mary's University Los Angeles, and author of *Witnessing Whiteness: The Journey into Racial Awareness and Antiracist Action* (3rd edition)

"*Leading White Accountability Groups* is a content-filled gem with insights, resources, and practical tools to support Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives and efforts. Dr. Obear shares her experience and expertise as a consultant working towards racial equity and inclusion, particularly with white leaders. This book is a useful resource to design and sustain white accountability groups across various types of organizations. Read it and get to work!"
—BECKY MARTINEZ, EdD, President, Infinity Martinez Consulting

"An excellent read, *Leading White Accountability Groups: Create Racially Inclusive Teams and Anti-Racist Organizations* is for every leader and changemaker, particularly white people, who believe in white accountability groups and are looking for strategies and approaches to create or strengthen such groups. Clear and eminently practical, Dr. Obear's workbook offers basic tools, strategies, and resources to deepen the capacity of those who want to co-create anti-racist organizations. What I find particularly useful is the series of chapters that build the reader's skill set in responding to microaggressive situations, identifying and interrupting racist attitudes, and recognizing and shifting the dynamics of white privileges, among others."
—AMOABA GOODEN, PhD, Vice President, Division of People, Culture and Belonging

"Kathy Obear's vast knowledge and wisdom is on every page of this book. Her clarity on a subject that can cause so much anxiety is liberating and makes the work of antiracism for white people tangible and a practical matter. From shifting interpersonal dynamics to outlining necessary racial competencies, Kathy gives us the tools as well as the work plan for creating and sustaining racially just organizations. This book is a gift for those of us who want meaningful, racial equity and are ready to take action."
—JENNA CHANDLER-WARD, co-author of *Learning and Teaching While White: Antiracist Strategies for School Communities*

"Dr. Obear's latest book, *Leading White Accountability Groups*, answers many questions for facilitators of these groups including: Where and how do I begin? Her workbook is a blueprint for organizations and individuals seeking to advance their knowledge and skill as racial equity change agents. I have seen firsthand the importance of white accountability groups and the impact of Dr. Obear's work on individuals wanting to engage in racial healing and justice."
—MOHAMMED I.T. BEY, Vice President for Institutional Inclusion

"This encyclopedic guide strips away the guesswork and intimidation from the white affinity group process. Packed with assessments, checklists, activities, reflections, agendas, and anecdotes, Obear has downloaded her decades-long practice into an adoptable or adaptable how-to and why-to for anyone interested in developing white anti-racist awareness and skill."
—DEBBY IRVING, author of *Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*

"Once again, Kathy Obear has written a timely and essential resource for people who want to strengthen their anti-racism work and be advocates for racial justice in their organizations. In addition to guiding frameworks, Obear has developed a practical scope and sequence to ensure these critical conversations are happening in an effective way. Filled with examples and exercises, readers will have a complete guide to start their own accountability group or to

reimagine an existing group that needs new energy. Obear approaches anti-racist work with humility, candor, and a strong sense of purpose. This text will help any team improve their collaboration and be a force for positive change."
—**Elizabeth Denevi**, PhD, co-author of *Learning and Teaching While White: Antiracist Strategies for School Communities*

"Dr. Kathy Obear has done it again. From a comprehensive outline of a white accountability group structure to tangible examples, mistakes, and learnings, this book is essential if you are considering white accountability groups within your organization. Kathy's ability to engage the reader to dig deeper into their own fears, attitudes, and behaviors while modeling how to navigate organizational complexities is unparalleled."
—**Dr. Rachael Forester**, CEO, RF Equity Consulting, and Senior Consultant, EDIJ, Nonprofit HR

"With her fourth book, *Leading White Accountability Groups: Create Racially Inclusive Teams and Anti-Racist Organizations,* Dr. Kathy Obear offers a comprehensive 'how to' for white folks committed to supporting the important work of racial equity in their organization through meaningful, effective white accountability groups. From initial development, to honing convener competencies, to building white accountability group curriculum, Dr. Obear offers clear, specific guidance to deepen the capacity of white leaders and change agents. This book is chock full of activities, resources, and materials to start or enhance a white accountability group and contribute to anti-racist organizations."
—**Beth Yohe**, Executive Director, The Conflict Center

"This book meets the reader where they are—new to this work or far into their journey. It skillfully starts with increasing self-awareness and leads to the subsequent iterative institutional change. This book can orient and mobilize readers and their colleagues so that they shift the racial dynamics of their organization."
—**Beth Douthirt Cohen**, PhD, Faculty Specialist and DEI Activist-in-Residence, University of Maryland School of Public Health

"I highly recommend this book for anyone who is considering starting a white accountability (white affinity) group. This book is expertly tailored to the workplace environment, with detailed steps to help successfully form a new group—who to talk to, how to do it. I am starting a local white accountability group, and I'm active at my children's school, voicing concerns around anti-Black racism that I see in that mostly white environment. This book is giving me step-by-step, detailed guidance and insight into how to be more effective. I see myself referring back to this book frequently as I navigate anti-racist organizing as a white person in this multiracial world."
—**Ryan O'Leary**, anti-racist mom and community member

Other Books by Kathy Obear

Turn the Tide:
Rise Above Toxic, Difficult Situations in the Workplace

But I'm Not Racist! Tools for Well-Meaning Whites

In It for the Long Haul:
Overcoming Burnout & Passion Fatigue as Social Justice Change Agents

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Introduction

A growing number of white people are deeply concerned about the racist dynamics in their organizations and increasingly recognize racist microaggressions and practices. Unfortunately, many do not yet know how to create change at the interpersonal level, much less help shift systemic racism embedded in organizational climate, culture, and infrastructure. They feel increasingly frustrated and alone as they try to interrupt racist dynamics only to experience resistance—and in some cases retaliation—from white supervisors and colleagues. Some may feel angry with colleagues of color for not joining them as they question and confront the racist status quo, though others realize the career-impacting risk for People of Color to speak truth to power in predominantly white organizations.

Many white leaders and changemakers have found a place to deepen their capacities as well as engage with a growing community of white colleagues committed to racial equity in White Accountability Groups. In these confidential learning spaces, white people can focus on their collective development as they unlearn racist attitudes and behaviors, develop greater skills to interrupt racist microaggressions, and shift policies and practices that perpetuate white privilege and create cultural and structural barriers for People of Color.

White Accountability Groups are a critical strategy for creating inclusive organizations. Building on what they learn from foundational equity trainings, members of White Accountability Groups can deepen their skills and conviction to develop and maintain racially inclusive, high-performing teams, work environments, products, and services. Participants can accelerate their capacity to partner with People of Color and Indigenous Peoples to improve the recruitment and retention of a more racially diverse, culturally competent workforce throughout the organization. Collectively, they can help the organization move from merely talking the talk to effectively implementing daily practices and systemic change efforts to manifest the vision and strategic equity goals of the organization.

The concepts, techniques, and resources in this book reflect the processes and tools I have used in White Accountability Groups and racism trainings over the past twenty-five years. I encourage you to seek out additional resources to find even more strategies that may be useful in your organizational and community context. As they say in Twelve Step programs, take what you like and leave the rest, knowing that some ideas and tools may be useful in the future.

There are several ways to use this book. If you are new to leading White Accountability Groups, I recommend you take your time to read this book from cover to cover and stop to complete every exercise offered. If you are already convening a White Accountability Group, and you

want more activities and resources right now, you could start with chapter 5, then refer to other chapters as needed. If you are not sure where to start or how to gain leadership support for White Accountability Groups, begin by reading chapters 1–4. If you are wondering if you are ready to design and facilitate these types of groups, you may find the self-assessments and other resources in chapter 3 particularly useful.

Each chapter is intended to offer concrete, specific suggestions for co-conveners as they design and facilitate White Accountability Groups. All the references and resources mentioned in each chapter are listed in full at the end of the chapter. Appendix 1, Outline of Suggested Learning Activities, provides a sample agenda and program for a White Accountability Group. Appendix 2, Selected Worksheets, provides the full text of a number of key worksheets referred to elsewhere in the book; all worksheets are available at this open-access link on my website: drkathyobear .com/leading.

Wherever you start, I recommend that you complete every activity and worksheet. We can only lead others where we have gone ourselves. Take your time reading and engaging with the material. Go deep into yourself and your life experiences as you envision what you can co-create with your colleagues.

I wrote this book for white allies who yearn to be a part of a community of change agents. I want to share all I have learned in these past twenty-plus years of facilitating groups focused on dismantling racism at the Social Justice Training Institute and a wide variety of colleges and other organizations. This is the book I wish I had when I first began leading these kinds of groups. I hope the resources in this book help other white allies deepen their capacity to design and convene effective White Accountability Groups in their organizations and communities.

A note on the term "White Accountability Group": Over many years, I have facilitated workshops on developing white allies, using the term "white caucus" or "white affinity group" to describe the critical space for white participants to both learn how they perpetuate racism and develop the capacity to interrupt racist dynamics in themselves and other white people. I have recently received feedback from several Black women who feel the terms "caucus" and "affinity" should only be used for gatherings of people from marginalized groups. Upon hearing the term "White Accountability Group" a few years ago, I started to intentionally use this concept to frame my work.

The White Accountability Group frame centers the work of accountability for change at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and societal levels. White people are not in these groups just to increase their awareness and knowledge. We are accountable for actively changing our racist attitudes and behaviors as well as effectively partnering with People of Color and Indigenous Peoples to dismantle racist dynamics and practices as we collectively create greater racial equity throughout our organizations. We are accountable for our individual and collective learning and skill development so that we no longer demand that People of Color teach us and carry this unpaid, often career-impacting, costly emotional burden. In White Accountability

Groups, we take responsibility for our own collective unlearning of racist attitudes as we practice interrupting our racist behaviors before we negatively impact others.

What one names this type of group sends a powerful message. About ten years ago, I attended a national conference focused on dismantling racism. There were scheduled times for many different groups of People of Color and Indigenous Peoples to gather in affinity spaces for support and strategizing. The organization's leaders were very receptive when I asked if they might support my starting a group for white attendees where we would focus on doing our own self-work. A colleague and I held the first meeting of this group we called "Whites Partnering to Dismantle Racism." Not every organization may be ready for a name like this, much less calling it a White Accountability Group. Seek and follow the advice and counsel of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) leaders of color as you begin to frame the name and initial structures of your group. Other possible names include Developing White Allies; Understanding Race and Racism, a Group for White Employees; and Doing Our Part: The Role of Whites in Creating Racial Equity. You can always change the name over time when there is more opportunity or the need for a clearer or more direct title.

* * *

I am deeply grateful for all those who have come before and who today are writing and teaching about whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy culture as well as those who are actively engaging in dismantling racism and white supremacy in their organizations and societal institutions. I am indebted to the many colleagues, professors, and friends across racialized identities, especially from Elsie Y. Cross Associates Inc. and the Social Justice Training Institute, who throughout the past thirty years challenged and confronted me as well as supported and nudged me along my journey, even as I resisted and reacted in racist ways. I thank you for staying in it with me as I now commit to staying in it with other white people, for the long haul. I hope I honor my many teachers and their work with this book.

CHAPTER 1

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Preparation and Planning

Building Key Collaborations

When I get excited about an idea, I can quickly run with it on my own without including key colleagues and stakeholders in the early planning. White allies may fall into this same common trap and start to build and launch a White Accountability Group without planning for and anticipating ways to navigate the predictable, mostly avoidable resistance. If a few well-meaning, naïve white employees storm ahead believing they know what is best without garnering support from senior leaders and key Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) change agents, they may set back organizational change efforts in the process. They could especially damage key relationships that are critical for sustainable organizational initiatives.

White organizers need to build collaborative connections with leaders and groups as they begin to explore strategies to start a White Accountability Group. A good place to start is to meet with the highest-ranking leaders of color who have been championing issues of racial justice in the organization and successfully navigating through political landmines and leader opposition, such as senior diversity officers and cochairs of organizational Inclusion Change Teams. With humility, ask if these leaders would be willing to meet with you or suggest others to consult with to gather their advice and counsel for ways to move forward.

In an email or early in the conversation, acknowledge the legacy of the years of work by People of Color in the organization to create greater racial equity as well as the lack of leadership and allyship of most white leaders and peers. Share why you want to create a structure to accelerate the courage and capacity of white allies to partner with colleagues of color and do their part to dismantle racism and white supremacy culture throughout the organization. Ask if they would be willing to discuss with you the potential learning outcomes and accountability structures to foster meaningful skill development and learning transfer to the work environment. Seek out and listen deeply to their advice and counsel as well as their concerns and questions. Those concerns and questions may be related to timing, naming the group, positioning within existing structures and EDI initiatives, ways to frame the intended outcomes of the group, and strategies to develop support from key white leaders.

They may suggest several next steps, including meeting with the full Inclusion Change Team and subcommittees focused on training or professional development as well as leaders of any existing Employee Resource Groups and Affinity Groups, especially the ones with a specific focus on race. With members of these groups, continue to explore similar questions and concerns as well as seek their advice and counsel. Use each of these opportunities to build relationships and deepen your understanding of the purpose, structure, and result of each of these groups so you can better align the intentions of your White Accountability Group. The goal is to create a joint effort to support and advance these racial equity efforts, including the hiring, retention, and advancement of more People of Color and Indigenous Peoples; creating racially inclusive teams and organizational practices; and better serving the needs of the increasing racial diversity among client populations.

Prepare for the types of questions and concerns People of Color may have about a group of white employees, without skilled facilitation, meeting to talk about race. Welcome their skepticism as a sign of their willingness to be in the conversation.

Do not expect colleagues of color to trust your intentions or your ability to lead a group of white colleagues until you have a long history of showing up and demonstrating your effectiveness as a white change agent. Consider these common questions your colleagues of color may ask:

- How can white people learn how to disrupt whiteness, racist behaviors, white privilege, and white supremacy culture on their own?
- Every meeting in this organization is just more white space, so how will this be different?
- Will white participants intellectualize and talk about problems so they sound more "woke," yet continue to perpetuate racist behaviors and practices within the workplace?
- Will these meetings just turn into a white guilt-fest so they can feel better after purging their negative feelings without any meaningful change in behavior?
- Will they continue to coddle and protect each other as they again fail to hold white colleagues accountable for their silence and collusion and for their racist attitudes, behaviors, and practices?
- Will these white people now think they have arrived and start showing up as the white savior and "the good white" by confronting others without any concern for the damaging blowback People of Color will experience as a result?
- Are they just looking for the next gold star to advance their career?

Anticipate these types of questions and prepare thoughtful responses and strategies to address them. At the close of each of these meetings, be sure to show your appreciation for the willingness of these leaders to share their time, wisdom, and recommendations. Ask if you can circle back to share your revised ideas and plans based on their input. In addition, offer to support these groups

in any way you can to honor their investment in helping to shape this White Accountability Group.

Once you have revised the intentions and possible group structures based on the ongoing dialogue with key EDI leaders, ask for their advice on how to get greater leadership support:

- Who should talk with which senior white leaders to start?
- Should a few of the white organizers have informal conversations with some white leaders?
- Which leaders might be potential sponsors of the group?
- What elements of the leadership case may appeal to each specific white leader?
- What other white leaders in the top two to three levels of the organization would be potential sources of support?

Next, ask for their suggestions on ways to test the waters with the executive team: Should the idea be floated from the senior EDI leader, the white organizers, or the leaders of the Inclusion Change Team?

The process of working collaboratively with leaders of color to collectively develop a plan and structure for a White Accountability Group could be the most critical step to ensure its success.

Identifying Potential Learning Outcomes

As you meet with leaders and colleagues, you will be exploring the vision for the group and the goals you want it to accomplish. Use the list below to begin to identify a full breadth of possible learning outcomes.

Participants in White Accountability Groups will have the opportunity to develop many skills, including how to:

- stay engaged in authentic, meaningful dialogue about the current state of race and racism in the organization
- realize and recognize how the dynamics of racism manifest in the organization, local community, and society
- understand and articulate the leadership case for how creating greater racial equity is integral to organizational success
- engage in authentic dialogue to explore the impact of their own racialized socialization experiences
- recognize the common, pervasive racist microaggressions that negatively impact colleagues of color

- understand the cumulative, negative impact of racist behaviors and practices on People of Color
- identify the common racist biases, stereotypes, and prejudices that fuel racist microaggressions and practices in the workplace and local community
- understand the concept of internalized dominance and honestly explore any racist beliefs or assumptions that may influence their own behaviors and actions
- recognize and interrupt racist attitudes, behaviors, and microaggressions in themselves and other white people
- unlearn and shift any currently held implicit racist biases and beliefs
- identify the personal and organizational costs of racist dynamics on morale, retention, team effectiveness, productivity, and innovation
- understand how white privilege manifests in organizational practices and policies
- examine how the current organizational culture, climate, and practices privilege white people and create barriers and toxic work environments for People of Color
- identify how racist biases and dominant white cultural beliefs are embedded in the policies, practices, programs, norms, and services of the organization
- use a race lens in all planning and decision-making processes
- use a race lens to analyze and revise policies, practices, programs, norms, and services to identify any negative differential impact on People of Color
- effectively interrupt and shift racist dynamics, policies, and practices in the moment to create greater racial equity
- recognize and shift unproductive white cultural dynamics in the organization to create a more inclusive, racially just organizational climate and culture
- work to collaboratively create racially inclusive products and customer service
- partner with leaders to accelerate the recruitment, retention, and development of culturally competent, racially inclusive groups of leaders and employees
- build and expand the accountability community of white allies and change agents
- continue this level of authentic dialogue about race, racism, and skill development to create racial equity in meetings and daily activities with colleagues

You may find this list overwhelming; if so, you may decide to prioritize some of these outcomes and set aside the others for subsequent group sessions. Consider sharing these possible learning outcomes with some leaders of color in equity and inclusion work as well as a few select white leaders with whom you are working in the early stages of shaping the structure of the group. The following questions may be useful as you seek their input, advice, and feedback on your drafts of the group's purpose and intended outcomes: Which, if any of these, could be useful, given the needs of the organization? Which ones are needed and would also potentially garner leadership support?

The Role of an Executive Sponsor

There are many potential advantages for developing a formal relationship with a white senior executive who agrees to serve as an executive sponsor for the White Accountability Group. This executive can serve as a liaison with other top leaders to talk about the purpose and organizational benefits of the group, and engage any initial resistance to the idea. During planning, the sponsor can offer a sounding board as well as strategic advice to navigate through organizational politics. Their insights can help conveners more effectively develop the structure and advertising of the group, identify ways to secure financial resources for group development and programming, explore strategies to move through potential roadblocks, and develop plans to periodically update executive leaders to continue to deepen their capacity and support of the group.

The sponsor may not yet have a deep understanding of how the dynamics of racism and white supremacy culture negatively impact employees, customers, and organizational strategic goals. Conveners can gradually expand the sponsor's capacity through one-on-one conversations, recommended readings and educational events, and occasional discussions with the members of the White Accountability Group.

Making the Leadership Case

I recently heard the Reverend Dr. Jamie Washington use a technology metaphor to explain the critical need to shift how we address EDI in organizations. He asked people to remember the first computer or mobile phone they used and how that compares to technology many have access to today. The stories people shared brought back memories of glacially slow internet and very basic apps. He then asked us to imagine trying to get any work done today with the technology from the 1980s or '90s or even the early 2000s. In the same way that we need to constantly upgrade our technology to be efficient and productive, he says we also need to constantly upgrade how we do work focused on equity, inclusion, and social justice. Creating White Accountability Groups in your organization is potentially a critical upgrade that could significantly accelerate progress toward far greater racial equity and inclusion.

Today, most organizations face a very different reality than even a decade ago with shifting racial demographics and increasing demands for racial justice in the face of far more emboldened racist actions both inside and outside of organizations. The need to establish White Accountability Groups may be very far down the list of priorities for most leaders. You will need to find ways to help your organization's executives recognize the leadership case, the compelling reasons to invest organizational resources in something they may not even know exists or believe could be worthwhile.

Prepare to communicate how White Accountability Groups advance the organization's strategic priorities. First, identify the reasons and rationales for any recent organizational initiatives or changes of any kind. Then, review all of the key organizational plans and public statements, such as organizational statements after George Floyd was murdered and the insurrection on January 6, 2021; strategic plans; current mission, vision, and values statements; any statements and plans about the strategies to create a more inclusive organization; any videos or talking points from top leaders related to framing equity and inclusion as a strategic imperative; and any communications or recruiting materials that speak to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The next step is to analyze any data about the current organizational culture and climate. Sources of information to examine include recent climate and employee engagement survey and focus group data disaggregated by race; the last five to ten years of data on recruitment and retention of People of Color compared to white employees; information about turnover and the revolving door; data about how long People of Color stay with the organization disaggregated by position and hierarchical level; promotional data disaggregated by race; and any qualitative or anecdotal data available about common racist microaggressions employees of color experience from colleagues, supervisors, and customers. It may also be useful to research the efforts of competitors and key peer institutions to identify the types of race-related EDI training and development programs as well as Affinity or Employee Resource Groups they have implemented and their purported organizational outcomes.

While many leaders might publicly support organizational EDI priorities as the right thing to do, most need additional reasons to invest their time and resources into advocating for new organizational strategies like White Accountability Groups. If you can identify the personal self-interests and key organizational concerns for each senior leader, you can frame the benefits of White Accountability Groups to align with the leaders' priorities. Below I highlight several examples to consider as you develop your purpose and leadership case to present to leaders.

Improving Your Organization's Reputation

Many senior leaders recognize the critical business advantage to being seen as an employer of choice by People of Color. As a result, they may support strategies to create safe, affirming, racially inclusive work environments throughout the organizational footprint. Data amplifying the chilly workplace culture and racist dynamics that many employees of color experience daily can bolster your argument for White Accountability Groups. Emphasize the need to accelerate the capacity of white leaders, managers, and employees to actively create racially inclusive environments that support and build the organization's reputation.

Creating High-Performing, Innovative Teams

In today's increasingly competitive, constantly changing environment, most leaders recognize the need to create and foster teams where all employees feel valued and respected as well as inspired

and supported to contribute to their full potential. Inclusive teams leverage the creativity of every member and encourage everyone to offer multiple perspectives and suggestions, which are all considered and critically examined.

Most leaders, supervisors, and team members need a broader set of skills and capacities to successfully develop high-performing, racially inclusive teams. These competencies can be learned and practiced in White Accountability Groups, such as understanding how racism manifests in organizations; recognizing common racist microaggressions that damage working relationships and undermine teamwork and customer service; and effectively interrupting and shifting interpersonal racist dynamics as well as institutionalized racism embedded in policies, practices, norms, products, and services.

Diversifying Recruitment

Nearly every organization I have consulted for over the past two decades has a clearly stated commitment to recruit and retain a more racially diverse workforce at all levels of the organization that reflects the racial demographics of their current and future customer base. Increasingly, organizations are also emphasizing a key requirement in selection processes that all final candidates have at least a moderate degree of demonstrated cultural competence. This emerging hiring criterion needs to apply not only to candidates of color, but also to every white candidate.

To achieve this strategic recruiting goal, all hiring managers, search committee members, and Human Resources staff need the capacity to consistently design and implement racially inclusive, bias-free processes. Key skills that white employees can develop in White Accountability Groups include the capacity to recognize and interrupt racist implicit bias, coded racist comments, and common selection practices and processes that privilege white candidates. Unfortunately, when People of Color raise these concerns in search committees, their observations are often minimized and dismissed. It is imperative that white teammates learn to use their white privilege to speak up and partner with colleagues of color to shift racist hiring practices in the moment, and revise all search processes to eliminate the biased exclusion of competitive candidates of color.

Increasing Retention Rates

Most leaders will recognize the many organizational benefits of retaining and promoting employees and leaders of color who advance strategic organizational goals. Some, though, may resist calls for more attention to retention efforts by claiming the percentage of People of Color has remained consistent or slightly improved over recent years. Often, a more critical analysis of the data highlights a revolving door, where leaders and employees of color leave after just a few years, only to be replaced by new hires, most often at entry- or lower-level positions in the organization. The overall data may remain stable, but the critical loss of experience and talent has a significant impact on morale, team effectiveness, productivity, and organizational reputation.

You may get the attention of senior leaders if you calculate the actual cost of turnover for at least four to five different types of positions across the organizational hierarchy, and then share the aggregate cost of turnover for People of Color for the past five years, including costs for recruiting, onboarding, supervision, and professional development. In White Accountability Groups, white managers and supervisors can develop their capacity to consistently implement practices that increase retention, including racially inclusive supervision, mentoring, career development, and performance management.

Research consistently shows that People of Color tend to leave organizations due to the heavy emotional toll from the daily dynamics of racism they experience as well as the silence and collusion of most white colleagues. Many People of Color express feeling deep exhaustion and burnout from working to fulfill their job responsibilities in a racist environment while at the same time working to complete the many uncompensated race-related responsibilities they are tasked to do on top of their job. In White Accountability Groups, white allies can deepen their awareness of these devastating racist dynamics as they learn and practice skills to share the labor and responsibility for creating racially inclusive organizations.

Expanding Market Share

Most leaders understand the connection between financial viability and increasing the number of new clients while continuing to serve and retain satisfied repeat customers. Creative ideas from racially diverse, high-performing teams can help revise existing new programs, products, and services as well as develop new ones to meet the evolving needs of clients of color. A key competitive advantage is having the internal resources to anticipate the trends of emerging needs, and develop products and services that exceed the expectations of the organization's increasingly diverse client base. White employees can develop greater capacity to collaborate in these critical development processes as well as gain insights into ways to avoid public relations disasters from advertising racially offensive programs, products, and services.

Avoiding Grievances and Lawsuits

It may be useful to talk about the damaging costs of grievances and lawsuits to organizational reputation, recruitment, and retention as well as budget and market share.

Assessing Organizational Readiness

In your initial conversations with key EDI leaders, you may come to the collective understanding that the organization is not ready to support a White Accountability Group. In that case, strategize and identify the types of awareness-building interventions that could be useful next steps to develop a greater sense of readiness and willingness to deepen the capacity of white leaders and employees while creating greater racial equity in everything they do.

Hosting several different reading groups with specific intended outcomes may help some white colleagues increase their understanding of the dynamics of race and racism as they recognize how much more they need to know. Conduct a needs assessment and ask white colleagues what they want to learn and discuss. Offer several initial reading groups to get as many white employees to participate as possible. One could use a variety of articles and book chapters to explore socialization experiences, identify the types of racial inequities and microaggressions that occur both inside and outside of the workplace, and discuss tools and strategies to speak up and create greater racial equity. Another reading group can learn about the history and legacy of race and racism in the US. This group may discuss the role of white people in perpetuating racism as well as examples of white change agents who took risks to speak up and interrupt racist dynamics and practices. Another reading group could focus directly on the current-day manifestations of race, racism, white privilege, and white supremacy culture in US organizations and societal institutions. Participants could work on applying insights from the readings to examine how similar dynamics might exist in the organizational culture, climate, practices, and policies. After six to eight sessions, there may be more momentum and interest in a pilot White Accountability Group.

A video club is another grassroots strategy to build greater interest, willingness, and momentum for White Accountability Groups. Organizers can select a few initial ones for participants to watch, including mainstream movies, documentaries, YouTube clips, TED Talks, or segments of TV shows. As you choose what to watch as a group, intentionally avoid videos that showcase the trauma of Indigenous Peoples and other People of Color as well as any that replicate racist stereotypes.

Whether these types of reading groups and video clubs are open to all employees or specifically focused on white participants, it will be important to co-create group norms to build the learning community as well as guide engaging, inclusive conversations. Set fluid boundaries for these groups so people who hear about them from colleagues can join after the groups start. The conveners and discussion leaders can provide reflection questions ahead of time for each reading or video as well as prepare prompts to guide each debriefing session. Leaders of these groups need to have at least a moderate capacity to facilitate inclusive conversations, shift unproductive comments and behaviors, and navigate difficult conversations.

In addition to creating reading and video groups, work with EDI leaders to offer more educational opportunities focused on race and racism, including panels, workshops, and webinars, to continue to create momentum for forming a White Accountability Group. As white participants learn more about the damaging impact of racist interpersonal dynamics, policies, and practices on the teamwork, productivity, innovation, morale, and customer service within their departments and organization, they may recognize their need to develop far greater capacity to interrupt racism daily and build racially inclusive, high-performing teams.

I've created a resource for evaluating the current capacity of participants and leaders of these groups: *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1). Most white participants who complete this ninety-six-item self-assessment honestly recognize

how much more they need and want to learn. Also consider asking some colleagues of color to complete the assessment to give their perspective on the current collective capacity of white leaders and employees in the organization as well as identify the top ten to twenty skills they want white people to develop immediately. Giving leaders the data from both groups to compare the responses of white employees to those from colleagues of color can spark greater interest in deepening the competencies of white colleagues throughout the organization.

A final strategy to garner more support for an organizational White Accountability Group is to pilot a six-week session in a department or division where you believe it will be successful and well received. Be sure to gather some pre-assessment and post-assessment data that can show the development of greater awareness, skill, and courage to create change.

Each of these grassroots strategies can build greater interest and support for a White Accountability Group. Use each of these professional development opportunities to gather participant feedback about the questions they still have and the skills they want to develop in the future. As each reading or video group is winding down, survey the interest for a deeper-dive experience by floating the possibility and benefits of a group where white employees can accelerate their capacity to be more effective colleagues and change agents. These data can help you shape additional offerings as you build momentum as well as provide ideas for where to start once a White Accountability Group is formed.

Chapter Resources

Worksheets

Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents (W1, in Appendix 2)

CHAPTER 2

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Anticipating Questions and Resistance

When you start to publicly promote the White Accountability Group, you will most likely get several questions from other employees. In this section, I review some of the more frequent questions and concerns, and offer some thoughts to consider as you respond.

Why are you focusing only on race and white people?

I remember having a similar reaction when my supervisor told me I had to attend a racism workshop. I wondered why we weren't going to address sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression.

Leaders, managers, and employees need the capacity to keep in mind a full breadth of intersecting privileged and marginalized group identities as they interact, plan, make decisions, and provide services. At the same time, in this moment we are called to center the dismantling of racism and white supremacy for a few reasons. White supremacy has justified enslavement of Black people, genocide of Indigenous Peoples, and systemic racist violence against all People of Color over the past five centuries in the lands we now call the US. It continues to result in life-threatening experiences for people in racialized, marginalized groups while privileging and positioning white people as the dominant, more deserving, superior racial group. Most every societal institution and organizational system was intentionally created to maintain white supremacy and to increase the wealth and security of a very small subgroup of white people.

Let me be clear: I'm not saying race is more important than other areas of difference, nor am I advocating for a hierarchy of oppressions. However, given how racism and white supremacy continue to fuel laws, societal institutional practices, and interpersonal and organizational violence in the US and in many other countries, it is critical that all leaders and change agents lead with a clear racial consciousness and deep competence as they center race when creating equitable, inclusive, and just organizations.

While racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism, and all other forms of oppression are not the same, there are many similarities between privileged and marginalized group dynamics

and structural manifestations of oppression. Members of your organization can take all the lessons, tools, skills, and insights they learn in anti-racism work and apply them to similar equity and inclusion change initiatives focused on other areas of difference.

Why can't we have a group, too?

As some organizations accelerate their focus on dismantling racism by offering both White Accountability Groups as well as Employee Resource Groups or Affinity Groups for employees of color, people in other marginalized group memberships may ask how they can develop similar support and development opportunities.

Leaders can anticipate this probable reaction by creating a clear, transparent process for members of both marginalized and privileged identities to propose additional organizational structures. Reviewing the materials on the leadership case as well as possible purposes for White Accountability Groups can provide some guidance in this process.

Why can't we have mixed-race workshops?

At some point, white colleagues may have enough self-awareness, knowledge, and skill to engage in productive conversations in mixed-race groups. Unfortunately, most white leaders and employees typically do not have the capacity and competence to stay engaged in conversations about race, racism, whiteness, white privilege, systemic racism, and white supremacy culture without continuing to harm their colleagues of color.

When organizations try to address racism in mixed-race groups, some white participants have reported greater learning and understanding. However, I rarely have heard People of Color express a similar appreciation for these sessions. More often, I hear about the persistent barrage of deeply painful racist dynamics People of Color endure in these meetings, when white participants shut down, get defensive, and make minimizing comments like, "I'm not racist," "I'm color-blind," or "I treat everyone with respect."

A persistent damaging demand of white people occurs when we expect, and possibly require, People of Color to teach us through retelling painful stories of experiencing racism. What happens next is predictable: After People of Color have taken the risk to share more openly and authentically, most likely reactivating racial trauma in the process, one or more white colleagues dismiss, ignore, question, or directly challenge these life experiences once again in an effort to maintain the racist status quo.

Often in mixed-race conversations, I have witnessed white participants accuse People of Color of attacking white people when someone shared an example of organizational racist dynamics or

pointed out the racist impact of a comment. People of Color are also labeled by white people as being too sensitive, or overreacting, or playing the race card, and criticized for overly focusing on race to the detriment of completing their real job responsibilities.

In those occasional moments when some People of Color react out of passion or cumulative impact with more directness, energy, and emotion than many white people feel People of Color have the right to, white people often counteract this with tone-policing. That is, they critique how People of Color respond while overlooking and dismissing the racist dynamics they are talking about.

I have witnessed white leaders and colleagues use their power and privilege to label as unprofessional, insubordinate, and noncooperative the People of Color who speak up, question, and challenge racist dynamics. These racist accusations can stall and damage, if not derail, the careers of People of Color.

In addition, white people sometimes dissolve into tears and profess deep guilt and shame over racist behaviors during these mixed-race sessions. People of Color may experience these behaviors as an effort to perform as a "good white" and to distract attention from the impact of their racist comments, attitudes, and behaviors. In another common dynamic, white people will acknowledge the racist dynamics of other whites, but not their own, while refusing to recognize how structural racism in the organization continues to privilege white colleagues and create significant barriers to success for People of Color.

Possibly equally painful, if not more so, is the silence and inaction of white leaders and colleagues when they refuse to interrupt these types of racist dynamics in mixed-race conversations. In addition, white people cause significant harm when they jump in to defend their white colleagues who have been confronted about a racist comment, attitude, or behavior.

The pervasiveness of these types of predictable racist dynamics in mixed-race sessions can and do have a significant negative impact on People of Color in the moment as well as possibly reactivating cumulative racial trauma. The costs to the lives of People of Color are too high to justify the educational benefits some whites may receive. Many colleagues of color have told me they leave these dysfunctional sessions feeling even more exhausted, disheartened, and angry, yet still must show up and work with these same white people day after day.

Another problematic dynamic for starting with mixed-race sessions is the clear differential level of competency among participants. Most People of Color have far greater awareness, understanding, and skill to recognize, discuss, and dismantle racist dynamics and structures than their white leaders and colleagues. In addition, far fewer white people have a true willingness to learn and a deep commitment to actively create racially equitable, inclusive, and just organizations. This lack of readiness and capacity for most white leaders and employees requires us to focus directly on the competency development of white employees in the organization. White Accountability Groups are one strategy to address this critical, urgent, and long-overlooked need without requiring the emotional labor of People of Color.

I know I never was very honest or effective in mixed-race groups until I had developed far greater confidence, courage, and competence from my work in white accountability spaces. White people need these opportunities to do our collective learning, skill development, and healing work together as members of the privileged group. If your organization is currently planning or engaged in mixed-race trainings on racism, I highly recommend you pause, seek input from People of Color on the effectiveness and impact of the work to date, and seriously consider implementing White Accountability Groups and possibly Affinity Groups for People of Color until white leaders and colleagues have the readiness to stay engaged in meaningful, productive dialogue and organizational change work in mixed-raced groups.

CHAPTER 3

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Creating the Group's Structure

After you have consulted with leaders of color in your organization, made the leadership case to management, and outlined the proposed learning outcomes of the group, you'll need to establish a format and structure. In this chapter, I outline ways to determine the role of the co-conveners, the format of group meetings, the communications plan, the process to register group members, and an ongoing list of additional administrative tasks.

Co-Conveners' Roles and Skills

I use the terms conveners and co-conveners instead of leaders for a few reasons. The success of White Accountability Groups depends on all group members taking collective responsibility for learning. Having a shared organizational model that includes participants helps to deepen the competence and confidence of all members. Over time, the role of the conveners may shift and require new people to move into these evolving responsibilities. This model of multiple co-conveners disrupts the dominant cultural narrative of the need for a single leader or expert.

Before focusing on curriculum development, conveners will want to explore questions like the following:

- Do we want to have an executive sponsor, and if so, who might we approach about this opportunity?
- What types of accountability systems do we want to create?
- How do we want to conduct a needs assessment to identify the types of skills and capacities potential members want to develop?
- What format do we want to create?
- How will we advertise the group?
- How, if at all, do we add members to the group once it has started?
- Who will complete the various logistical and administrative behind-the-scenes tasks?
- Who will design and facilitate the sessions once the group is launched?

- How will we develop a group of conveners-in-training to be ready to lead activities or group discussions if the original facilitators leave the group?

I recommend having at least four to five co-conveners and conveners-in-training who collectively share the workload and administrative responsibilities. It will be important to have a clear understanding of who is responsible for each key task, including:

- designing and implementing a needs assessment process
- creating a public-facing website and a private website (and optional discussion board) just for members
- creating advertising materials and a communications plan
- developing a membership registration process
- creating and maintaining the membership list
- serving as liaisons with various constituencies, including the executive sponsor, the leaders of color who agreed to be part of the accountability structure, leaders of other employee Affinity Groups, the organizational Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Change Team, Human Resources, and others as needed
- coordinating meeting logistics
- designing and facilitating the sessions

Assessing Co-Convener Candidates

Designing and facilitating meaningful White Accountability Group sessions each takes significant skills and personal capacity. At a minimum, conveners who plan to facilitate sessions need at least a moderate level of demonstrated capacity to design interactive, meaningful learning activities; create an environment for authentic dialogue and self-reflection; use personal storytelling and self-disclosure to deepen engagement; and navigate difficult dialogues and participant resistance.

Conveners need to complete these three self-assessments to get a clearer idea of their readiness, strengths, and areas needing further development:

1. *Self-Assessment: Effective Design and Facilitation Skills* (W42)
2. *Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism* (W29)
3. *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1)

All co-conveners will need to share their results from the self-assessments with their colleagues so they can gather a collective understanding of the strengths and skill gaps in the group.

You may realize there is enough collective capacity to move forward as different conveners lead from their strengths and balance out the developmental areas of each other. However, if you identify some critical skill gaps, consider obtaining training with skilled facilitators to develop these capacities before starting a White Accountability Group. Another option is to work with coaches throughout the process to provide just-in-time skill development for conveners. Another resource is my self-paced, virtual course on designing and facilitating workshops on equity, inclusion, and social justice: drkathyobear.com/facilitationcourse/.

If no one from the initial group of organizers has the appropriate level of competence, identify more experienced white trainers who facilitate workshops on race and racism in the organization and the local community to co-lead the sessions with a few of the original organizers. Conveners-in-training and co-conveners can also work with a consultant or coach to create a development program for the group facilitators to guide and support them.

There may be times conveners give lectures and present information and concepts; however, their primary role is to consistently facilitate dialogue, self-reflection, personal growth, and skill development. This requires them to be more of a coach than a teacher or trainer.

Conveners need to consistently show up authentically, bravely, and vulnerably as they encourage the group to engage in honest dialogue. They need to model the depth of required self-work as well as support participants as they attempt more productive, possibly new approaches to self-reflection and improvement. Group participants will need to be able to practice and deepen their capacity to:

- share personal stories and experiences
- relate to the emotions and experiences of others
- acknowledge any racist behaviors they have ever done and the probable racist attitudes and white supremacist beliefs fueling them
- own times they colluded with maintaining the racist status quo for their own advantage
- recognize their white privilege
- acknowledge how they have benefited from and perpetuate white supremacy culture

The intensity of the group dialogue will require conveners to challenge others to move beyond their cognitive thoughts to recognize and express their feelings, such as guilt, shame, discomfort, embarrassment, fear, anger, anxiety, and resentment. One of the critical responsibilities of conveners is the capacity to create and hold space for this level of deep emotion, self-awareness, and vulnerability while not reacting unproductively based on their own triggers and hot buttons.

Another core capacity for conveners is to nudge and support participants to move out of unproductive, performative ways they avoid their own critical healing, growth, and self-work. Some of these might include intellectualizing, crying, critiquing and calling out other participants, competing to be seen as the most developed white change agent in the room, distancing

themselves from other participants, hiding in their silence, and telling other white group members how they need to change. Conveners will need to consistently redirect group members to recognize and shift ways they are perpetuating whiteness and white supremacy culture in the group.

Conveners need the skills and grounding to effectively offer direct, honest feedback to help participants recognize the disparities between their stated vision and values and the impact of their behaviors. They need to care more about the growth and healing of group members than they do about whether they will be liked, or whether someone will be angry at them for holding them accountable. They will have to navigate their own emotions of discomfort, anger, or fear to effectively respond to participants when group members feel triggered and react unproductively. (See chapter 6 for resources and activities related to navigating difficult, triggering situations.)

These types of facilitator skills require conveners to develop and model new ways of being white change agents in every moment, to the best of their ability. When their behaviors fall short, they will have to own the impact of their actions and inactions, make amends, and commit to changing in the future.

The worksheet *Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism* (W29) can help conveners reflect on their own racialized journey and recognize when they have been in the Boxes of Denial, Fear, and Judgment as well as Engagement. Sharing experiences and stories with colleagues serves to build a deeper learning community and a sense of being part of a team. People will realize they are not alone and can learn from each other as colleagues committed to collective growth and development. Each will better understand the skills and capacities they can contribute as well as those they can support others in developing. This process will also help each convener identify personal stories they can share in the White Accountability Group sessions as they relate to and connect with participants wherever they are on their Path to Competence.

One final way for conveners to identify their readiness to lead is to share the results from the third self-assessment, *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1). This process will help conveners get an overview of their collective capacity. They will identify their gaps in knowledge and where they need to develop skills. Some of my open-access webinars, courses, radio shows, and books are useful resources for conveners looking to deepen their capacities.

After these self-assessment activities, some potential conveners may realize they are not yet ready to lead a White Accountability Group. One option to accelerate their ability to lead in the future is to shadow the conveners in planning and debriefing meetings while they also actively participate in the White Accountability Group.

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Case Study of a Failed White Accountability Group

A few passionate white allies created a successful anti-racism book group for white employees in their organization. As the group grew over time, the organizers realized it needed to move beyond exploring concepts, terms, and knowledge to focus on deepening participants' self-awareness as white people and developing skills to create racially inclusive teams and organizations.

None of the organizers had ever led a White Accountability Group, but they planned to use activities and video clips they had collected from attending sessions, webinars, conferences, and community events. They decided to spend the first part of every meeting discussing the assigned book, and then have the group do an activity together in the second half.

The organizers were pleased the first few times they tried this new format, though a couple of group members stopped attending after the first time they did an activity. As the leaders introduced other activities, they experienced increasing pushback and resistance from members as conversations became more intense and complex than they could manage. Eventually, as more white people left the group, the leaders decided to go back to the original purpose as a book club. But by then so many people had left that the group lost momentum.

Many well-intentioned White Accountability Groups flounder and dissolve over time unless the organizers first prepare the ground in the organization and then plan the group's purpose, structure, and programming from the beginning.

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Practice Sessions for Conveners

Conveners need to collectively create structures to support their continuing development throughout the White Accountability Group. As you debrief each session, identify the skills and self-awareness that will support your facilitating effectively in the next few group gatherings. A critical area for skill development that you may want to practice at each planning meeting is responding effectively in difficult, triggering situations. "What can we do if _____ ?" is by far the most common question I am asked when training facilitators of White Accountability Groups.

First, make a list of the types of specific comments and behaviors you would like deeper capacity to engage more effectively. As you practice and role-play a variety of strategies for each

scenario, you may find even more situations to add to the list. Common ones include someone making a racist comment, being defensive, focusing only on their good intent, intellectualizing, critiquing and calling out others, using Perfectly Logical Explanations (PLEs) to justify their racist behaviors, crying, deflecting to a marginalized identity, and becoming stuck in feelings of guilt and shame. Another scenario to explore is when a co-convener makes a mistake or says something racist.

Inviting conveners of other groups to these practice sessions can provide greater opportunity for more people to deepen their capacity to respond effectively in the moment. Review other resources of skills and strategies, including my webinars on *Navigating Difficult Situations* (V1) and *Microaggressions* (V3), and chapter 7 from my book *But I'm Not Racist!: Tools for Well-Meaning Whites*. The recent book coauthored by Dr. Robin DiAngelo and Amy Burtaine, *The Facilitator's Guide for White Affinity Groups*, offers further insights and strategies.

Before facilitating any activity in a White Accountability Group, conveners should first experience it themselves as a group during a planning session. Rotate the responsibilities of leading different activities and providing feedback to colleagues as you debrief. Discuss the types of participant comments, behaviors, and resistance that could occur during various activities and discussions as well as what might be hot buttons for conveners. Use these group development sessions to explore the intrapersonal roots of any real or anticipated triggering situation as well as to practice strategies to navigate any triggered emotions so conveners can respond effectively.

Another possibility for continued development is to organize a regional or national group for conveners of White Accountability Groups. You can share insights, strategies, resources, and new activities, and spend time discussing and practicing ways to address dilemmas and situations you find challenging. In addition, organizational leaders can provide resources to support conveners attending conferences and trainings to deepen their skills and capacities.

Transparency and Accountability Structures

You will need to establish a system of transparency and accountability to avoid the common pitfall of developing White Accountability Groups in isolation. The intent of these structures is to stay connected to and converse with interested colleagues of color to gather their feedback and ideas, not to seek validation or to contribute to their workload or emotional burden.

Be sure to stay in touch with the leaders of color in EDI roles and Affinity Groups you initially consulted with about the group's purpose and intentions. Ask if they might consider some type of formal or informal check-in or update process during the first few months after the group is launched. They may be interested in an ongoing dialogue or feel comfortable with offering occasional ideas and feedback if they have any reactions to what the group posts on the members' website (see below).

If possible, suggest that the leaders of all Employee Resource Groups gather a few times a year with the executive leaders to provide updates on the groups as well as recommendations for needed organizational changes.

Members' Website

Developing a website for the members of the White Accountability Group will provide a long-term resource and communication hub for the group. (It can also be ultimately made accessible to all employees.)

The initial website can feature the group's purpose, the leadership case, and the overall intended learning outcomes for the group. Before you launch the site, ask for feedback on the website's content from a few of the leaders (e.g., in EDI roles) you consulted as you planned the group.

Over time, the site could include a range of content: for example, a short video of the conveners sharing why they participate or a video from the sponsor and other executive leaders articulating the leadership case for this group as well as the affinity spaces for People of Color; the logistics for the sessions (dates, times, locations); links to the readings and videos to be discussed at the first few sessions; and a link that connects potential participants with a convener for a follow-up conversation.

As the group continues to meet, the site can be updated with assignments for each session, worksheets and other resources used in group meetings, session summaries highlighting the key takeaways, links to recommended resources and activities, start dates for the next White Accountability Group or book club, and announcements of related organizational and community workshops and programs. Consider having a moderated discussion board available only to registered participants where they can have virtual discussions between meetings.

Assessing the Needs of Potential Participants

In addition to the initial needs assessment performed through conversations with leaders of color, look for other avenues to assess the needs of the organization in relation to race and equity. For example, extend an invitation to a group of white colleagues to meet with you who have attended foundational EDI trainings as well as ones focused on race and racism. In this informal focus group, ask them to share their perspectives on the current dynamics of race in the organization, the degree of racial equity in the organizational culture and practices of their division, and the capacity of white employees in their area to recognize and shift racist microaggressions and practices in the moment. Inquire about their interest in joining a White Accountability Group

and invite them to recommend others for the conveners to reach out to for ideas and potential membership.

Conveners can use the *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* self-assessment (W1) to obtain a broader sense of the focus areas that can meet people where they are. This worksheet can be used to identify a shorter list of skills to include in a short survey for white colleagues who have participated in past book or video groups or shown some interest in racial equity work. Ask them to use a scale of 0 to 10 scale to rate themselves on each skill, then have them list the top five to ten areas they believe other white employees need to develop to collectively create a more racially inclusive organization.

Doing a pre-assessment with interested and potential members can provide even greater assessment data for the conveners as they sketch out the initial sessions. Be sure to provide a high-level overview of the purpose and intentions of the White Accountability Group as well as the expectation that members attend most meetings and participate actively. As an example, these questions give respondents the opportunity to help shape the design and initial learning activities of the group:

- What are your hoped-for outcomes for this group?
- What is your current understanding of the dynamics of race and racism in our organization, the local community, and within our organization's footprint?
- What types of questions and topics do you hope we cover?
- What, if any, concerns do you have about participating in this group?
- What are five to ten skills you hope to develop in this group?
- What other questions do you have at this point?

Conveners can use these data to plan the initial session as well as to finalize key decisions about the structure and format of the group. These same questions may be useful to include in the registration process to give conveners more specific information about the participants.

Expectations from Your Organization's Leaders

In one White Accountability Group I was leading, about half of the white participants demonstrated some progress and willingness to develop the skills and knowledge I was offering; unfortunately, even after several sessions, the rest of the group had not. I recalled what I had learned from my mentors at Elsie Y. Cross Associates Inc. about parallel process: that everything happening in the moment may be an indicator of larger organizational issues. In this case, I began to wonder if some of the white participants were mirroring a lack of clarity, commitment, and resolve from top leaders.

I asked to meet with the leaders to discuss the pattern of group dynamics I was noticing and explore possible ways to move forward. As we talked, I realized I had never asked them to communicate their clear expectations for the types of competencies they would hold employees accountable for developing and demonstrating effectively. To frame the initial sessions, leaders had made statements about their organizational vision to be anti-racist and why they were holding these training sessions, but they had not specified the key expected skills and capacities that would eventually be integrated into organizational accountability practices, including hiring, training and development, supervision, promotion, and performance reviews.

Over the next few weeks, they worked as a leadership team, using many of the resources I had shared, to write down their expectations, which they shared at the beginning of our next White Accountability Group meeting. Afterward, it was apparent that something had changed. The quality and quantity of participation improved significantly in future sessions, with many more people sharing authentically and bravely, powerfully naming racist interpersonal dynamics and ways to respond effectively, and recognizing organizational policies and practices that perpetuate whiteness and white privilege while creating barriers to the success of People of Color.

Having leaders identify and widely communicate the specific competencies they will expect, and eventually require, of all leaders and employees with respect to race dynamics in the organization is a critical early step. A White Accountability Group can be presented as one of the many available employer-sponsored opportunities to develop these key competencies in addition to reading and video groups and workshops on topics such as understanding racism, leading racially inclusive teams, developing racially inclusive products and services, dismantling unintended dynamics of racism, and interrupting racist comments.

Chapter Resources

References

DiAngelo, R., & Burtaine, A. (2022). *The facilitator's guide for white affinity groups: Strategies for leading white people in an anti-racist practice*. Beacon Press.

Obear, K. H. (2017). *But I'm not racist!: Tools for well-meaning whites*. Difference Press.

Self-Paced, Open-Access Courses

Design and Facilitate Powerful Workshops on Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice. drkathyobear .com/facilitationcourse/

Leading White Accountability Groups in Your Organization. drkathyobear.com/wag-mini-course/

Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace. drkathyobear.com/nds-course/

Videos and Radio Shows

Obear, K. H. (2020, February). *Leading white accountability groups, part 1*. Transformational Talk Radio. https://bit.ly/leadingpart1

Obear, K. H. (2020, March). *Leading white accountability groups, part 2*. Transformational Talk Radio. https://bit.ly/leadingpart2

Webinar: *Microaggressions* (V3)

Webinar: *Navigating Difficult Situations* (V1)

Worksheets

Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism (W29, in Appendix 2)

Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents (W1, in Appendix 2)

Self-Assessment: Effective Design and Facilitation Skills (W42, in Appendix 2)

CHAPTER 4

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Launching the Group

This chapter offers an overview of the steps to launch a White Accountability Group (including making it voluntary or mandatory), ways to navigate workplace hierarchies, deciding between in-person or virtual sessions, determining membership policies, publicizing the group, and choosing the length of the program.

Voluntary Versus Mandatory Attendance

There are a few key questions to explore as conveners shape the structure of the group. One of the first is whether participation will be mandatory or voluntary. If you are developing a White Accountability Group for members of the same team as well as a parallel structure for the team members of color, then the leader may decide to require attendance. If you are considering this direction, I recommend you work with leaders in Human Resources and possibly the General Counsel's Office to identify any possible legal or contractual concerns. Voluntary participation may result in less resistance and sabotage, though some white team members may never opt to join the group.

Instead of mandating attendance, consider leveraging performance management and supervisory structures. Leaders can first identify the expected behaviors and level of required skill development for all employees. The next step is to provide options for how to develop these required capacities, such as participating in organizational workshops, attending external professional development opportunities, or joining a White Accountability Group.

Mandatory sessions can be extremely challenging to design and facilitate given the significant variance among participants with respect to their current understanding and beliefs about race and racism, their skills to engage effectively, and their level of resentment and resistance from being forced to attend. If co-conveners do not have a depth of experience leading anti-racism workshops and facilitating White Accountability Groups, I recommend that they do not organize mandatory sessions for leaders or employees. Instead, consider partnering with external consultants who have a solid track record of leading meaningful anti-racism development sessions.

If you're concerned that you will have few participants if they're not required to attend, remember those times you didn't choose to learn more about race, racism, whiteness, and dominant white culture as well as times when you were the person others believed needed to attend. Identify what helped you become more willing to participate in White Accountability Groups and the types of skills and relationships you gained from the experience. Discuss these as you encourage others to join.

One option is to launch the first few pilot White Accountability Groups with smaller groups of eight to twelve willing volunteers who already see the organizational value of doing the work and developing their capacity as white change agents. Leading groups of participants who come into the session with some foundational knowledge and readiness to learn, if not a level of eagerness, can provide new co-conveners the opportunity to learn as they go. Conveners can gather input and feedback from these earlier participants to use as they design future groups. The insights, experience, and confidence developed in these first few groups will leave conveners better prepared to design and facilitate learning environments for a wider range of participants, some who may not come with the same level of understanding, skill, or openness as in the initial pilots.

Managing Workplace Hierarchies

No matter how you structure a White Accountability Group, anticipate ways to navigate hierarchical dynamics. Even if your organization is large enough to offer several groups designed for different levels within the organization, there will likely be the possibility of group participants from the same line of supervision. Directly and honestly address the possible impact of hierarchical dynamics in the first meeting, and have group members discuss their concerns with each other as well as strategies for mitigating any problems that could arise. Emphasize the group norm for confidentiality and giving people room to learn and grow. Encourage participants to talk with other group members from their department to negotiate how they intend to engage and support each other's learning. If possible, avoid having a supervisor and their direct reports in the same group. While you can ask people to leave their titles at the door, supervisors and their team members will still be impacted differently. Offering a couple of groups at or around the same time can provide the opportunity for people to learn in separate groups without their direct supervisor in the room.

You will also need to decide the size of the White Accountability Group. I have facilitated meaningful dialogue in groups ranging from fifteen to thirty people using share pairs and small groups as well as large-group discussions. If only a few people express interest, consider inviting members of local organizations to form a regional group.

Holding In-Person Versus Virtual Meetings

A critical consideration involves whether to have the group meet face-to-face or virtually. There are benefits and possible drawbacks to both formats, and it may be necessary to plan for a hybrid variation where some attend in person and others virtually. Having everyone physically in the same room provides more opportunity to shift the design to meet emerging needs and issues.

As an extroverted facilitator, I feed off the energy and comments of participants and can better read the room when we are face-to-face. After having facilitated numerous virtual trainings and team retreats during the COVID-19 pandemic, I now also appreciate the advantages of everyone being on Zoom or some other virtual format. I find I lead at a slower pace and provide more time for reflection. I invite participation through the chat function, breakout rooms, and polls as well as in large-group discussions. I have noticed that far more people share their reflections and reactions in this setting than during in-person discussions. I have also noticed a deeper, possibly faster group development process as I've strategically used the breakout rooms to continually mix people up and invite them to have progressively more intimate conversations in smaller groups. Having at least one co-convener assigned to take care of technical issues, monitor the chat, notice group dynamics, and watch the time frees others to fully participate.

Limiting Late Joiners

One of the more challenging structural questions is whether to allow people to join the group at any time or to close the membership after a certain point. I believe it is critical to create a learning environment that encourages deepening authenticity and courageous self-work. Allowing people to join the group at any point impacts the group's development and undermines feelings of trust and connection among members. I can also appreciate the desire of conveners to provide opportunities for learning to as many white people as possible.

Encourage people to attend from the start, but also allow new participants to join the group for the second and maybe the third session before closing membership. A convener can talk with anyone who missed the first or second meeting to give them a summary of what occurred and ask them to complete any of the readings, homework, and group activities to date. If other white employees want to join after the third session, offer them written resources to read, videos to watch, and book clubs and workshops to attend as they wait for the next White Accountability Group to begin.

Adding Groups

Offering a series of shorter groups as opposed to one that continues for four to six months may reach more people. Conveners might develop and offer a few initial eight-session foundational groups over a set time frame. As some conveners continue to offer foundational sessions, others can design and facilitate a second set of six to eight sessions (part two) that is open to anyone who successfully completed part one. These participants will have had similar content and skill development opportunities, though they may not yet know everyone in the new group. After offering a few part-two groups, it might be possible to create an ongoing group for anyone who has completed both part one and part two.

When People of Color Want to Join

Over the years, I have offered workshops at national conferences on developing white allies assuming only white people would attend. Imagine my surprise the first time I facilitated this session when about 25 percent of the hundred or more participants identified as People of Color. I was knocked off my game for a moment and had to redesign on the fly. In every subsequent in-person or virtual training where I am talking about dismantling whiteness and developing white change agents, I now anticipate there will be a mixed-race group. I present the same material and activities I would if everyone identified as white, though I invite the People of Color to work with others who are also marginalized by race for share pairs and small-group discussions. Having people engage in groups of similar racialized identities maximizes the opportunities for deep learning and healing; it also minimizes the chance of re-traumatization when white participants honestly explore their racist attitudes and behaviors. If small groups form across privileged and marginalized racialized identities, I make sure to debrief the experience, impact, and outcomes in real time.

Prepare for some People of Color to register for the White Accountability Group. I would never tell a Person of Color they cannot attend, though I would ask for a conversation to share the purpose of the group, explore their intentions, and let them know about the parallel Affinity Groups for People of Color that exist. After every one of my conference workshops on whiteness, several People of Color have stayed afterward to talk about their deep learning from the activities exploring socialization as well as the common racist attitudes and behaviors of white people. Some report realizing the impact of having been socialized in a similar racist, white supremacist culture and the resulting internalized racism and collusion they struggle with. As I acknowledge their honesty, I also gently offer the possibility of even deeper healing and empowerment that I know occurs when People of Color come together in affinity spaces without white colleagues present.

A question I often get asked is, "If some People of Color attend a White Accountability Group, will it reduce the honest participation of whites?" My guess is yes, at least at first. With

time and intentional facilitation, I have experienced mixed-race groups engage in very deep, authentic dialogue about whiteness, racism, and accountability. Chapter 5 discusses how to proactively create the container for meaningful connection, dialogue, learning, and skill development, including ways to minimize predictable traps and potholes that commonly occur in White Accountability Groups with only white participants as well as ones with Multiracial members with white ancestry.

Advertising Strategies

When you start to create the publicity for the group, consider all the input and feedback you've gathered to date. Pay close attention to the current organizational, regional, and national context to both meet people where they are and anticipate the possible types of resistance given the culture and climate within which they work.

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Sample Ad for a White Accountability Group

Below is an example of a description I wrote for an organizational White Accountability Group I facilitated in late 2020 with required participation:

> The purpose of gathering in White Accountability Groups is to create brave space for members to deepen their capacity as white allies and change agents to partner with People of Color, Indigenous Peoples, and other white colleagues to interrupt racist dynamics and practices and create more racially just organizations, policies, programs, and services. In our privileged identity as white employees and people who identify as Biracial/Multiracial with white ancestry and light-skin privilege (if they choose this group), our work in White Accountability Groups is different from that of members of the marginalized group, people who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American/Pacific Islander, North African and Middle Eastern, and/or Biracial/Multiracial. We need to deepen our competence, compassion, and courage so we can show up more effectively in cross-race conversations without continuing to do harm. Equally important, in these groups we can realize how we can support our collective development and learn with each other without expecting People of Color to teach us.

As we engage in increasingly authentic self-reflection, dialogue, and skill practice, members of White Accountability Groups can develop greater capacity to discuss the real impact of the current dynamics of racism in the department, organization, and region/nation; recognize and interrupt racist microaggressions; identify and shift racist biases and stereotypes; identify and disrupt any unproductive elements of the dominant white culture; and use a race lens in decision-making processes as well as to analyze and revise current policies, practices, programs, norms, and services in our area of responsibility.

The White Accountability Group will be facilitated by Kathy Obear, EdD, who is the founder of the Center for Transformation and Change (drkathyobear.com). The group will meet four times over an eight-week period in two-hour sessions. Most sessions will require prework or homework. Sessions will meet virtually over Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent out shortly.

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Consider these questions as you develop communications about the White Accountability Group:

- Why are you creating this group now?
- Why would white leaders and employees want to join?
- What are some of the skills and capacities they want to develop?
- How can participating in this group help them achieve the organization's vision and strategic goals?
- What may be their concerns and fears about participating?
- What are the possible concerns of top leaders, Human Resources staff, and the General Counsel?

After developing a draft of a communications plan, you may want to meet with key partners in Human Resources, the General Counsel's Office, and Marketing and Communications to seek their feedback and build organizational buy-in and support. Be aware that engaging with these leaders may also result in slowing down the process if they are not very racially conscious or are resistant to racial justice work. As you share how the group's purpose and intended outcomes align with the organizational vision and strategic plan as well as the leadership case for the group, ask for their initial thoughts on how people both inside and outside the organization may react, and inquire about possible concerns, resistance, or pushback to anticipate.

As you share your communications plan, ask their advice for public-facing communications and advertising strategies as well as ways to respond to possible negative reactions from internal and external sources. Proactively engaging these organizational partners will not only help you fine-tune your communications approach but also better prepare them to engage any questions or resistance they experience from their positions in the organization. If possible, work closely with a partner from Marketing and Communications who has at least a moderate capacity to use an anti-racism lens in their work. This person can assist in developing and editing text and graphics for advertising for the group in emails, on the website, in short videos, and so on.

The following are important elements to include in marketing materials:

- the group's purpose
- the leadership case
- specific skills and capacities participants can deepen and develop to help their team achieve strategic goals
- some of the initial topics the group will discuss
- how the group will learn and work together
- logistics, including dates and times of sessions, meeting location, number of group meetings, and expectations of group members
- ways people can ask questions and communicate with the co-conveners

Be sure to share the co-conveners' hopes and expectations of group participants in text-based communications or a short video. This may help people decide if they have the resources and degree of commitment at this point to join the group. Here are some examples of common expectations:

- For voluntary groups, require attendance at 75 to 100 percent of the group sessions.
- Group members are expected to engage in increasing openness, authenticity, and bravery to support everyone's collective growth and development.
- Participants are expected to complete assignments between sessions as much as possible.

Use existing structures and activities to help get the word out. Talk with people in the training department to explore how facilitators of scheduled workshops can share the details about this group. Ask leaders if someone can join their team meetings of directors and supervisors to talk about the group. Share a one- to two-page summary of the group's purpose, intended outcomes, what a White Accountability Group is and what it is not, and logistics as well as some ideas for how supervisors can support people in their areas who choose to attend. Conveners may also want to ask if they can share materials with different groups focused on equity and inclusion, including various task forces, organizational and unit change teams, and Employee Resource Groups.

Establishing Supervisory Responsibilities and Accountability Structures

Another organizational strategy to potentially increase the participation in these nonmandatory spaces is to build the accountability infrastructure for supervisors to work with white team members. This infrastructure will help supervisors to integrate the team members' insights and skills into daily practice as they infuse issues of racial equity and inclusion into policies, practices, services, and programs. For instance, in one-on-one regular meetings, supervisors can ask participants to share their learnings and insights from the White Accountability Group sessions as well as any confusing topics or dilemmas. They can talk these through as well as role-play strategies to interrupt and shift racist dynamics in team meetings and informal conversations among staff. In my experience, unfortunately, many supervisors view these training opportunities as one-off or standalone events that have little to do with the core work of the unit. Consider partnering with facilitators in the training and development unit to emphasize these types of supervisory skills in existing professional development opportunities.

Leaders should establish clear requirements that all managers and supervisors develop racially inclusive teams, products, and services. They will also need to build these expectations into meaningful performance management systems. Imagine what might change when there are clear performance indicators that are used to hold all supervisors accountable for not only creating racially inclusive work environments, products, and services, but also accelerating the capacity of all members of their department to demonstrate racial equity competencies.

Within this type of accountability structure, more supervisors may be eager to complete organizational trainings to develop essential coaching and leadership capacities and create the infrastructure to accomplish these goals. They might have more confidence and willingness to hold a pre-meeting with participants in White Accountability Groups to review the curriculum and resources. Even more, they can use this pre-meeting to discuss how this professional development opportunity can help them develop some of the required organizational Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) skills and capacities.

Here are a few additional requirements for supervisors:

1. Meet with participants every few weeks to review what they are learning and explore ways to integrate their insights and new skills into daily practices.
2. Have a final meeting after the group is completed to assess progress toward performance goals, and identify additional learning opportunities to ensure continued development.
3. Hold quarterly performance management coaching sessions with each employee to review progress and identify support structures needed for their next level of development.

4. Create a structure in the department to partner with all the participants in White Accountability Groups and other anti-racism development programs to collectively transform the work environment, policies, and services, as needed.

Do the managers and supervisors in your organization currently demonstrate the competencies to dismantle racism as well as the capacity to ensure the professional development of all their employees? Your answer is probably no. Most leaders, managers, and supervisors are not given sufficient training nor held accountable for leading this level of transformational change. In addition, few organizations I have worked with over the past three decades have effective accountability structures in general, much less those related to requiring demonstrated capacity to dismantle dynamics of racism and create racially inclusive organizations, practices, and services. While supervisory accountability structures may not be in place as you start a White Accountability Group, you can partner with other EDI leaders to continue to influence this level of transformational change over time.

Foundational Inclusion Awareness and Skills Training

Even though white employees may realize the organization is serious about holding people accountable for demonstrating these types of expected or required competencies, they may not yet be ready or prepared to actively participate in White Accountability Groups. Unprepared white participants may not get much out of these groups, and their resistant behaviors may impede group development and collective learning. Key foundational equity and inclusion concepts and skills are critical prerequisites for effective participation in White Accountability Groups. Some of these prerequisites include the capacity to engage in authentic, engaged dialogue about dynamics of inclusion, privilege, and marginalization; recognize common dynamics among privileged and marginalized groups; discuss their experiences as members of both privileged and marginalized groups; identify microaggressions they have experienced and observed; and understand how organizations and systems have been created to advance the needs of members of privileged groups often at the detriment to members of marginalized groups.

After participants have developed a solid foundation of these types of core EDI concepts and skills, they are better prepared and less resistant to go to the next level of developing their capacity as white change agents.

It may be useful to work with co-conveners and other EDI leaders to develop a set of criteria and prerequisites for people to consider as they decide when they are prepared for the depth of work required in White Accountability Groups as well as to develop the expected or required organizational EDI competencies. Create an organization-wide website listing these types of EDI resources, including a list of common terms, definitions, concepts, trainings and workshops, and

suggested readings that are foundational for the work in White Accountability Groups as well as other anti-racism development opportunities.

Each of the steps and recommendations in this chapter underscore the critical need that all leaders move past lip service and actively, consistently communicate and reinforce their expectations that all employees develop and demonstrate these required EDI capacities, implement meaningful accountability structures to ensure accelerated growth and development among all employees in their spheres of influence, and personally model each of these competencies every day. Without this demonstrated level of leadership commitment, most employees will not believe leaders are serious about creating a racially inclusive, anti-racist organization, and will plan to bide their time and wait out this change process until the next crisis diverts attention and deflates momentum toward racial justice in the organization.

Chapter Resources

Worksheets

Key Prerequisite Foundational Equity and Inclusion Concepts and Skills for Participation in White Accountability Groups (W48)

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Building an Authentic Learning Community in the First Few Sessions

The activities and resources offered in the next chapters reflect the types of conversations, self-work, and skill-building as well as some designing and facilitating guidelines I have found extremely useful in leading White Accountability Groups. I encourage you to explore other facilitators' approaches to sessions and curricula to identify a range of options that could meet your group's needs and help it achieve its intended outcomes.

Creating the Container for Deep Learning

Building the curriculum for a White Accountability Group is like writing a play in three acts: Act One, create the container for learning; Act Two, build the body of the workshop for learning knowledge, concepts, and skills to apply in the participants' daily lives; and Act Three, create the space to summarize key learnings, identify action plans, and close out the group. The first act is the foundation for the next two; therefore, in one sense, it is the most important. Too often workshop facilitators expect participants to take risks and practice new skills but do not create an effective learning container to support the group's members in their efforts to be authentic and vulnerable.

Building the learning container starts long before the first session: it begins with the marketing and needs assessment processes. Your initial welcome email to participants helps to prepare them for deep, meaningful work in the sessions. In addition to sharing your intentions and passion for convening the group, it can be useful to share the types of capacities and competencies people can develop in the sessions. The worksheet *Expected Competencies for Creating Racially Inclusive Organizations* (W2) offers some ways to describe the intended outcomes of the sessions. For example, participants can deepen their self-awareness, knowledge, and capacity to:

- effectively engage in meaningful, authentic dialogue about race, racism and its history, whiteness, white privilege, white supremacy culture, and racially equitable and inclusive organizations

- recognize and interrupt racist biases and microaggressions
- shift white privilege and unproductive dynamics of white culture in the moment; respond effectively when given feedback about the racist impact of comments, actions, or inactions
- use a race lens in all planning and decision-making processes as well as to analyze and revise programs, practices, policies, norms, and services

You may also offer ways people can start learning before the first session. Suggest recommended readings to help set the stage, such as the first several chapters of *But I'm Not Racist!: Tools for Well-Meaning Whites*; see the resource list at the end of this chapter for more resources. Another potential assignment before the initial session is to ask participants to complete the self-assessment *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1), and identify some of their strengths as well as five to ten areas they want to focus on during the sessions.

Consider asking participants to come to the first session prepared to share their responses to the following prompts:

1. What is a source of your passion and level of resolve for dismantling racism and becoming a more effective white ally and change agent?
2. What is your vision of an anti-racist organization and society?
3. What is your experience discussing issues of race and racism in groups like this White Accountability Group?
4. What are your hopes for what we learn together? Do you have any concerns or fears about participating in this group as we begin our work together?

I remember attending a few workshops on racism where after introducing themselves, the presenters lectured about the history of racism, reviewed key terms and concepts, and emphasized how white people must stop being racist. I cringe remembering how little I learned, much less changed, from those trainings. While this type of content is useful, in my experience, most white participants rarely do the necessary depth of self-work and unlearning until they are personally, deeply invested and engaged in the learning process with their full body, mind, heart, and emotions.

Conveners need to intentionally and deliberately create the learning container to ensure deepening authenticity, connection, belonging, and trust as well as meaningful engagement, brave dialogue, and cascading self-awareness, healing, and skill-building. Without continuous attention to the emotional learning needs of participants, many group members may shut down or drop out and miss this powerful opportunity to develop as active and effective change agents.

The First Sessions' Agendas

While there is no perfect or best order to activities, I believe it is useful to plan to cover the following in the first few sessions:

- welcome and framing the purpose and intended outcomes
- offering a Land Acknowledgment
- introducing co-conveners
- using warm-up activities to begin group introductions:
  ◊ Who are you?
  ◊ Why did you want to join this group?
  ◊ What is a source of your passion for dismantling racism and creating a more racially inclusive organization?
- discussing your intentions as conveners
- discussing the planned flow or agendas for this session as well as the next few sessions
- discussing how the group will work together for our collective growth
- holding more joining-up activities:
  ◊ How are you feeling as a member of this White Accountability Group?
  ◊ What has been your experience in similar types of groups that helped you learn? Were any dynamics not as useful to your development?
  ◊ What are your hopes, concerns, or fears, if any, as we work together?
  ◊ Describe the type of learning environment where you can be present, authentic, self-reflective, brave, and open to new and differing perspectives.
- co-creating engaging guidelines
- exploring your vision of a racially inclusive, anti-racist organization
- sharing reactions, results, and insights from completing the self-assessment *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1)
- having participants reflect on the types of learning activities so far and the ways the group has engaged in the first few sessions to discuss any additional hopes, concerns, and learning needs

Co-Conveners' Introductions

At the start of the first session, the co-conveners will introduce themselves to the group. In these introductions, honestly address the following:

- why you are passionate about participating in White Accountability Groups

- how you have perpetuated racist dynamics, colluded with racist practices, and stayed silent in the face of racist behavior.
- how you have been challenged by others (white people or People of Color) to acknowledge your white privilege and the impact of your racist attitudes and behaviors.
- how you have interrupted racist behaviors and shifted racist dynamics.

Openly sharing these experiences in your introduction can set the stage for others to not only see themselves in your stories but also recognize that they need to dive into this opportunity for more continuous learning and growth.

The depth of authenticity, vulnerability, and humility you share as you introduce yourselves can model new ways to be a white change agent. You are inviting participants to go a little deeper and be a little more honest as they begin to connect in small groups. How conveners show up, engage, and respond in the moment is a catalyst for group learning and development.

First Small-Group Discussion

These prompts can be used in the first small-group discussion:

- Share a bit about yourself.
- Why did you want to join this group?
- What is a source of your passion for dismantling racism and creating a more racially inclusive organization?

As people move into groups of two to three, ask them to actively and deeply listen to each other. Encourage them to see themselves in each other and notice the similarities and differences among what is shared.

After about ten minutes, it can be helpful to debrief this first activity by having people talk about the impact of sharing and listening about a source of their passion. Invite three to four participants to briefly share their name and pronouns, if they want, and then talk about the impact of as well as how they connected and related to what they heard.

Next, invite in a few new voices to talk about why they joined the group. Be sure to let people know how over time, instead of one initial round of introductions, everyone will have multiple opportunities to share and get to know others in small- and full-group discussions.

Sharing the Co-Conveners' Intentions

After debriefing the small-group conversations, talk about your intentions for this group. In your own words, describe your vision of the group and how it will support authentic personal development. Use "I" statements to describe your own commitment as a co-convener and participant.

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An Example of a Convener's Statement of Intentions

Here's an example of what I have said as a group convener:

> My hope is we will co-create a space where we can support each other's learning, a place for authentic dialogue where we can be real, lean into discomfort, and talk about our feelings and life experiences. I want this to be a confidential, judgment-free space where instead of distancing ourselves from others or competing to be the most woke, we get honest and see ourselves in each other and realize how similar we are as members of this privileged group. I commit to leave no one behind, attempt to do no harm, and allow no harm as we create a brave learning community where we support each other's growth, knowing we all have so much to learn, unlearn, and relearn. I learn best in White Accountability Groups where we are vulnerable, increasingly honest, show up in our emotions as well as our thoughts, and engage each other with compassionate accountability to not collude and let group members unknowingly perpetuate racist dynamics ever again. These are my commitments to you: I will show up as real and authentic as I can and love you enough to be honest as we help each other reach our learning goals.

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Providing an Overview of the Topics and Learning Methods

Ask if anyone has a question about the intended learning outcomes outlined in the welcome email. Talk about the ways participants will engage each other through dialogue and experiential

activities using random pairs, small groups, accountability partners, core groups, and the full group.

Consider sharing a high-level overview of the content learning outcomes for the rest of these initial sessions, including joining up, building the learning community, and beginning to co-create engaging guidelines.

To address a common trap some participants may fall into, be sure to name the problematic dynamic of expecting conveners to be the experts and leaders of the group. While conveners will develop a design for each session, they will meet participants where they are and co-create the experience with everyone in the group.

Activities to Encourage Authentic Engagement

At this point, create another randomized set of small groups of two to three to give participants a chance to have more authentic engagement with some new partners. Try these prompts:

- How are you feeling as a member of this White Accountability Group?
- What has been your experience in similar types of groups that helped you learn? Were any dynamics not useful in your development?
- What are your hopes, concerns, or fears, if any, as we work together?
- Describe the type of learning environment where you can be present, authentic, self-reflective, brave, and open to new and differing perspectives.

Another option is to divide these questions into two breakout discussions and lead a full-group debrief after each one.

Identifying Fears and Concerns

The book *But I'm Not Racist!: Tools for Well-Meaning Whites* describes an activity to help group members authentically identify and name some of their concerns and fears. You can use it here or later in the group's process.

Distribute six or more half-sheets of blank paper to each participant and invite them to anonymously write about any of their fears, concerns, and emotions. Here's an example of how to explain the activity:

> It is so common to have a wide range of emotions and fears as we begin our group. This activity is one way to help us anonymously surface many of them. On each sheet of paper, please write a word or phrase that describes any feeling, concern, or

fear you are experiencing as well as a sentence to explain it a bit more. For instance, in this moment, I'm feeling anxious. So, I'd write 'anxious' at the top and then to explain more I'd write, 'I am afraid of saying something racist. Not being as effective as I think I am.' Please write out five to eight of these in the next five minutes or so, each with a different feeling or concern and an explanation. Once we write some, crumple them up and throw them into the center of the room. We will mix them up even more, hand them out, and read them aloud in the room. Please don't put your name on these. Any questions?

As people finish writing, ask a few participants to start mixing up the papers and hand them back out to those who are willing to read them aloud. Once they are all distributed, invite people to open them up and look them over. Encourage them to read each one aloud slowly and then pause, so that everyone can take in the words before the next person reads. Ask participants to consider when they've experienced similar feelings. Ask for no cross-talk or interruptions as people read aloud unless someone needs to ask the reader to repeat a word or phrase.

Once all the papers have been read aloud, invite everyone to pause. Ask participants to suggest any themes they noticed and what feelings and fears they related to. Some examples of common fears and feelings: What if I say something racist? Will I make a career-impacting comment? What if I really am incompetent? Who am I without white privilege? Once I start to really feel my feelings of guilt and shame, will it ever stop? Will I ever get it right?

To close this activity, divide people into small groups to share both the impact of the activity and the feelings and concerns they connect with. Then debrief the small groups and ask how, moving forward, people intend to participate to support everyone's collective learning.

For conveners leading virtual White Accountability Groups, consider using a tool to collect anonymous input, such as jamboard.google.com, polleverywhere.com, and padlet.com. Once all members have contributed their comments, participants can volunteer to read them aloud.

Learning to PAN

Panning is a useful skill to practice in White Accountability Groups. It's based on Elsie Y. Cross Associates' concept of tracking: noticing and naming what you are experiencing and observing at the group and individual levels. The acronym PAN stands for "pay attention now." To create a learning environment that maximizes hopes and minimizes or addresses concerns and fears, participants need to all pay close attention to the group's dynamics and to individual behaviors.

Ask participants to breathe deeply a few times and invite them to notice their feelings, body sensations, and thoughts. In effect, ask them to PAN themselves in the moment. Ask them to compare how they are feeling now to how they felt when they started the session. After hearing

from a few participants about what they are panning about themselves, give a high-level overview of the tool, emphasizing these points:

- Everyone needs to pay attention to themselves at the individual level while also panning the group dynamics using a race lens. A key purpose of panning is to increase individual and collective awareness of race dynamics.
- Counter to when we may have been taught to be color-blind and to not see race, white allies and change agents need to continuously use a race lens to PAN themselves, group interactions, and organizational dynamics.
- If we don't notice racist microaggressions or discriminatory policies and practices, we can't intervene to change them.
- When first describing what you PAN, identify concrete details, behaviors, and facts, without any additional interpretations, assumptions, judgments, or conclusions.

Start and end most of these early sessions by asking people to PAN and talk about their feelings and body sensations. Between sessions, assign participants panning homework: have them PAN everything they do with a race lens, including meeting dynamics, shopping, informal conversations, movies and TV, social and religious activities, billboards, and websites and other media. Ask them to come prepared to share two or three race-related dynamics they noticed, either individual moments or a pattern of experience.

Invite people to share their PANs early in the first pair check-in of every subsequent session. Then have participants in the full group name four or more.

Refer to the skill of panning often, particularly during sessions on recognizing and responding to racist microaggressions as well as in later sessions on analyzing and revising current policies, practices, norms, programs, and services with a race lens. Repetitive skill practice is essential for integrating these tools into daily life.

Identifying Unproductive Behaviors

One step toward negotiating engaging guidelines is to have participants talk honestly about the types of unproductive behaviors that can undermine collective learning and group development. Have participants use the worksheet *Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About Race and Racism, a Beginning List* (W3) to identify some common unproductive dynamics, such as dominating the conversation, intellectualizing, getting defensive, shaming or judging others, and distancing from group members by competing to be the best white person in the room. Use these reflection and discussion prompts to increase awareness of the negative impact of these dynamics as well as nudge participants to notice and interrupt some of their own unproductive tendencies:

- Which ones have you noticed or experienced in other settings? What was the impact on you? On the group?
- Which ones have you ever done? What was your intention? Your possible impact?
- What is the probable impact if we do any of these in our sessions?
- How have you stopped yourself from doing any of these?
- How could we PAN and shift these types of unproductive dynamics if they occur?

After some quiet time and possibly a pair share, first talk about some of the negative impacts when you have reacted unproductively in similar settings and invite others to relate in as well as share about themselves. Then have the group discuss how they can stop themselves in the moment before doing any of these unproductive behaviors, and identify ways the group can engage each other if anyone contributes to these dynamics. These previous activities set the foundation for the next step in the process of identifying the group's engaging guidelines or group norms.

Identifying Productive Behaviors and Group Dynamics

At this point, work with the group to talk more specifically about the types of engaging guidelines or agreements they believe will help meet collective learning goals as well as minimize and avoid the common unproductive group dynamics they just discussed. If this activity occurs at the beginning of a session, start with a couple of reflection and discussion prompts to warm up participants:

- Describe the kind of group dynamics or learning experiences when you felt valued, heard, and respected, and where you learned a lot. What behaviors and group norms helped you have that experience?
- What has or could occur in groups or learning experiences that leave you feeling dismissed, overlooked, or devalued? Where you and others don't learn as much?

Put people into random groups of two to three individuals to share before debriefing in the full group. After these small-group sharing sessions, the full group is probably ready to identify the types of agreements, norms, or guidelines that can help create an effective learning community. As a place to start the conversation, ask the group to review and consider some examples of engaging guidelines, such as:

1. Communicate openly and honestly.
2. Anticipate your possible impact before you speak.
3. Participate fully beyond your current comfort zone, and expect discomfort if learning.
4. Speak from personal experience.

5. Listen respectfully; listen to learn; relate in to what others share.
6. Seek to understand; expect disagreement and listen harder.
7. Share airtime; equitably move in and out of the conversation.
8. Be fully present.
9. Be open to new perspectives.
10. Explore and take responsibility for impact; acknowledge intent, if useful.
11. Expect people to learn and grow; don't freeze-frame others, but instead, realize when they grow and change.*
12. Take risks; lean into discomfort; be brave; engage in the dialogues.
13. Respect and maintain confidentiality.
14. Notice and describe what you see happening in the group and in yourself.
15. Recognize your hot buttons and triggers; share if you feel triggered, if you want; circle back and check in on people who felt triggered.
16. Trust that dialogue will take us to deeper levels of understanding and acceptance.
17. Engage and embrace this opportunity; we won't be finished.

 * I learned this guideline from Kaplowitz, Griffin, and Seyka.

Ask people to reflect on these questions as they review the list:

- Which have you observed group members already working within?
- Which are your strengths, ones you can easily do in the group?
- Which, if any, are a stretch for you, but you commit to leaning in and practicing these ways of engaging in the group?
- Which ones, if any, do you want us to clarify or talk about more?
- What other norms or guidelines do you want us to discuss and add to the list?

After sharing in pairs, take however long is needed to discuss these prompts and negotiate the group's engaging guidelines. Have these discussions over a couple of sessions to give members a chance to come back to the next session with additional questions, thoughts, and ideas.

Avoiding Potholes When Creating Engaging Guidelines

Groups can fall into some predictable potholes in this process. A common one is wordsmithing and arguing over words themselves instead of exploring the intent, emotions, and hopes behind a particular word or phrase. For instance, white participants have often wanted to create group rules so they will feel safe. If this happens, ask the person raising the concern to say more about

it and what they hope for from the experience in the group. This can lead to an important conversation about the difference between what Arao and Clemens refer to as the "safe space" and "brave space."

Be sure to emphasize that everyone is committing to co-creating a group where they value and respect each other while also bravely discussing and addressing racist issues, attitudes, and behaviors without attacking the humanity of anyone. Participants can value each other as people while also caring enough to accelerate their collective learning by giving honest reactions and feedback about possible racist attitudes and behaviors of group members.

Another pothole to unpack is the reluctance to feel uncomfortable. Remind the group that if people are too comfortable, they rarely learn anything new, much less question or examine any problematic attitudes or behaviors. Learning occurs when participants are on the edge, challenged to consider new ideas, and feel a blend of curiosity, excitement, and sometimes slight discomfort or nervousness. Share your own experience of benefiting from moving out of your comfort zone.

This conversation can easily transition to the concepts of hot buttons and triggering situations. People with privilege may say something like "I feel triggered" as a strategy to stop the conversation and avoid further engagement. It is critical that the group discuss the difference between feeling uncomfortable while still being present to learn, compared to feeling so deeply triggered one can't take in any more at that moment. Keep in mind that the capacity to notice and name when we feel triggered is a very advanced skill.

Offer an example of when you have been so triggered that you couldn't hear or take in anything people were saying. Invite people to share their own experiences, then begin to tease out the differences between being too comfortable and being overly stimulated. Work together to define the middle ground that supports learning. While some people may still learn when they feel deeply triggered, it most often takes a lot of time, space, and healing after these experiences to reflect, express emotions, and dig deeply to harvest the lessons and insights.

At this point in the group's process, take the time to discuss when and how it might be useful to name triggered reactions and pause as a group to explore group dynamics in real time. Some of the most powerful learning occurs as groups explore triggering moments: they can support those impacted and use the situation as a teaching moment to advance the group's collective learning. Use a few future sessions to dive deep into the concepts and skills of navigating triggering events. You may want to identify tools and resources related to managing triggers, including the book *Turn the Tide: Rise Above Toxic, Difficult Situations in the Workplace*, the webinar *Navigating Difficult Situations* (V1), and the self-paced virtual course *Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace* (V2).

Another norm that often gets suggested is to assume good intent, or a related one, to give each other grace. Ask people to unpack and explore what is fueling the request. Then explore another key concept: intent versus impact. Most often when someone asks a member of a privileged group to explore the impact of their comment or behavior, the privileged person will

respond, "That wasn't my intent!" Have the group discuss the probable problematic result of this dynamic.

This discussion offers an opportunity to notice the tendency to replicate the dominant white cultural practice of "either/or." When someone's behavior is being raised as a concern, first explore the impact an individual and possibly other group members experienced before discussing any possible intent behind the original comment. Holding space for exploring both the impact and the intent can help create a powerful learning moment, but often only after the person acknowledges the impact of their behavior.

Someone may say something like, "I can do and say whatever I want!" If this occurs, clearly state the need to identify and discuss the impact of the words and behaviors of both participants and conveners. Point out that actions always have consequences. The group can explore these together to ensure everyone learns from the experience.

Managing Confidentiality and Hierarchical Differences Among Participants

Before seeking agreement on the guidelines, make sure the group has discussed confidentiality and hierarchical differences among participants. Ask group members what they want around the guideline of confidentiality. For example:

- What's said here stays here.
- Don't take any names or stories out of the session without permission.
- Don't bring in anyone's name who isn't a member of the group.
- No gossiping or retaliation.

Ask each member to indicate that they will abide by the collective request for confidentiality. You may want to clarify that honoring the agreement is a matter of trust, not a guarantee.

Even after negotiating and agreeing to confidentiality, some group members may still be hesitant to participate fully, given the various hierarchical differences among participants, especially if there are direct lines of supervision in the room. Even if you've avoided having direct reports in a group with their supervisor, some group members may still be in the same unit or division with other members who have a higher hierarchical status in the organization or possibly a relationship with their direct supervisor.

Address the dynamic directly. Ask for people to identify the hierarchical relationships in the room and lead the group in a discussion of how to navigate them. Explore these questions as a group:

- What are ways we can navigate hierarchical differences while creating a learning community for authentic conversation, deep self-work, and vulnerability?
- How can we be flexible in our pairings and small groups to ensure that people do not have to participate in a particularly vulnerable conversation with someone in their line of supervision?

During this group conversation, reiterate key points related to confidentiality. Remind everyone that all participants have self-work to do and skills they need to develop in this learning community. Everyone should do their best to leave their rank at the door and commit to no retaliation in the workplace for comments and actions in the group. Participants in the same unit and division will need to negotiate roles and confidentiality among themselves as well.

Encourage participants with positional power to show up vulnerably, lead by doing deep self-work, and admit racist thoughts and actions as they model what anti-racist leadership looks like. Be sure to underscore the need to not punish people or retaliate against those who make racist comments in our learning space, but rather engage them in ways to raise their awareness and support their growth. Emphasize the principle that people will be held accountable for the impact of what they say or don't say and what they do or don't do as they carry out their work responsibilities.

Once the group has agreed on guidelines, ask this question: "How ready and willing are you to do your best to engage within these guidelines, using a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (completely)?" Break the group into pairs to reflect on this question to help deepen their commitment as well as provide a chance to raise any final issues or concerns.

A participant may raise the question of how to handle the situation when someone violates a guideline. If no one raises this concern, a convener could pose similar questions to the group such as, "What can we do if someone's behavior, including mine, doesn't seem to be within our engaging guidelines?" You can also ask all participants to answer this question: "How do you want us to engage you if your behavior is outside of these agreements?" The subsequent conversation offers the chance for people to ask for what they might need to effectively respond to feedback about their behaviors as well as for the group to commit to speaking up in times the group dynamics do not meet their needs.

Handling Microaggressions in the Sessions

Before the group moves too far along in its development, it can be useful to negotiate ways to engage if members experience microaggressions related to one or more marginalized identities. For example, you might say to the group, "As we keep the focus on racism and our self-work and skill development as white colleagues, we might occasionally feel impacted in some of our

marginalized identities by group member comments and behaviors. For instance, someone might unintentionally say or do something sexist, classist, ableist, anti-Semitic, or homophobic. How do we want to engage each other if these types of situations occur while also keeping our focus on dismantling racism?" Consider using the worksheet *Tools to Respond in the Moment* (W4), which lists numerous skills and prompts to respond to microaggressions.

Revisit these group agreements in the next session as well as do a short pulse-check every few sessions by asking, "How have we been engaging in ways that support your learning and unlearning? Are we building a learning container for deepening authenticity, bravery, and skill-building?" After some conversation exploring what is working well, these questions may help identify any unmet needs: "Are there any group dynamics that give you pause or concern? Are there ways you have shown up less productively that you want to acknowledge and resolve? Are there any other ways we could engage that might further our group development and learning goals?"

Envisioning a Racially Inclusive, Anti-Racist Organization

To continue building the learning container for engaged, authentic dialogue, invite participants to discuss their personal vision of a racially inclusive, anti-racist organization using the worksheet *Envision an Anti-Racist Organization* (W21).

Giving these reflection prompts as homework can support a powerful conversation in the next session:

- What is your vision of a racially inclusive, anti-racist organization?
- What would be happening? Not happening?
- How would all people feel and be? How would people be treated?
- What is the racial demographic representation throughout the organization? What would it look like at every level?
- What would white people be doing differently? What will be our individual and collective level of demonstrated competence related to dismantling racism and creating anti-racist practices, policies, culture, climate, and services both internally and externally? What will no longer occur?

Some additional homework questions to encourage honest discussions include:

- Given our vision, how close is your current area of responsibility to manifesting this vision each day?
- How effectively do you lead and manifest your vision in everything you do?
- What will be the benefits and outcomes when we partner across racialized identities to collectively create a racially inclusive, anti-racist organization in our spheres of influence?

- What are the costs when the organization falls short of this vision?

These last two questions invite participants to identify the leadership case and compelling reasons for transformative change. Provide space for people to continue to broaden and deepen the leadership case as well as their vision over the course of multiple sessions.

Assessing Participants' Capacities

A final activity to help the group as they develop as a learning community is to have members share honestly about the skills and capacities they consistently demonstrate effectively as well as those they want to develop in the sessions. If you assigned the self-assessment *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1) before the group's first meeting, now that you've led several sessions, ask participants to use it to reassess themselves. Have people share in pairs before discussing in the full group to provide conveners with an idea of the group's level of readiness and willingness to do the depth of required self-work and skill development as well as some data to help plan future sessions.

Invite participants to share some of their strengths, a few skills they have developed over the past few sessions, and five or more skills they hope to deepen in future sessions. Use both accountability partners and core groups as learning structures for this depth of sharing to provide the space to both deepen relationships and contract for feedback from each other over the sessions.

Beginning Each Subsequent Session

Conveners can use this outline to start the first few sessions: a welcome, a Land Acknowledgment, and an opening activity involving breathing and reflections on a prompt like, "As a (name your racialized identity), I enter feeling _____." Next, frame the session's purpose and learning outcomes, and welcome any new people who have recently joined the group. Reground participants in the engaging guidelines, and then move into an activity related to the session goals that invites any thoughts, insights, or unfinished questions from previous sessions or the assignments. Always encourage people to find new partners to build and deepen connections across multiple colleagues in these early sessions.

As you work to create the learning container, be mindful of common less productive ways some white participants may show up. These can provide powerful teaching moments to reinforce more useful ways to engage as well as to highlight the work you are there to do. For instance, it is common that people will intellectualize when they respond to a prompt about feelings. In this situation you can ask, "I'm wondering if you are talking about ideas or feelings. Are you in your head or your heart right now?" You might mention how you feel more comfortable talking about thoughts and concepts rather than authentically, vulnerably sharing emotions. Ask everyone to

breathe as you share and model how you are feeling as a white person in the current context. Then invite others to respond to the prompt, starting with the initial participant who was intellectualizing, if they choose. Always mention how knowledge, facts, data, and concepts are important competencies to keep developing, but that it is especially critical to deepen their individual and collective capacity to be present to and express emotions.

Creating Different Participant Groupings

There are a few learning formats and practices conveners may find useful in addition to individual reflections, random share pairs, and small-group work. Continually PAN group dynamics and invite in members who haven't spoken recently. After most comments, ask, "Who relates?" to give the speaker a sense of connection and support as well as invite the next person into the conversation.

I first learned about using accountability partners from other faculty at the Social Justice Training Institute. This format provides a consistent pairing to facilitate deeper trust, authenticity, feedback, and accountability over time. You can set up accountability partners in the first session and assign weekly discussion prompts to support learning and connection outside of the group meetings. Have participants meet with their accountability partner to initially discuss any medium- to high-risk topics before sharing in the large group. Create new accountability partners halfway through the program. In this way, participants can develop strong personal connections with at least two members they can reach out to for support and continued development during and after the completion of the White Accountability Group.

Core groups are another learning format used at the Social Justice Training Institute to facilitate deeper learning, self-work, and skill development. Ask members to form groups of four to five participants with people who are not in their line of supervision and are not their accountability partners. Use core groups at least once in each of the early sessions, and encourage them to meet between meetings as well. Any of the activities mentioned in this chapter can be done in core groups, though the following prompts may be especially useful throughout the first few sessions:

- What are your hopes and learning goals?
- What concerns or fears, if any, do you have about being in this group?
- What are some of your strengths as well as areas for development?
- Which engaging guidelines are a stretch for you? Which ones will help us have deep learning and group development?
- How close is the current state of your area of responsibility to your vision of a racially inclusive, anti-racist organization?

One final learning format to consider is to recommend participants reach out to each other between sessions for further conversation and support. These more informal groupings can provide opportunities for members to take responsibility for their continued learning from colleagues who demonstrate greater capacity and skill in areas they want to develop. As you offer this option, also emphasize that colleagues can say, "Thank you, but not at this time."

Assigning Homework

Giving homework and assignments for participants to complete between sessions accelerates learning and skill transfer to their daily responsibilities as well as prepares them to make the most of the next meeting. Assign a few reflection questions as well as some new content related to the next session, including readings, video clips, or journaling activities.

After the first session, ask participants to begin to review varying definitions of the key terms and concepts they will explore in the White Accountability Group, such as race, racism, colonization, white supremacy, oppression, racialized identity, prejudice, implicit bias, privileged and marginalized groups, microaggressions, intent and impact, anti-Blackness, white privilege, systemic racism, dominant white culture/white supremacy culture, racial equity and inclusion, decolonization, allyship, anti-racist, anti-racism, and liberation. Offer some definitions in the session packet, and ask participants to seek out more recent information and share additional definitions they find from other resources, especially from authors, practitioners, and activists of color.

Closing Out Each Session

As conveners transition to the end of each session, ask participants to breathe as they PAN their thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations, and reflect on one or more of the following questions:

- How are you feeling?
- What was the impact of our time together?
- What are some insights and reflections you are leaving with?
- What are some questions or dilemmas you hope we discuss next time?

Have participants talk in pairs, and then invite four or five individuals to share in the full group.

After reflecting on the session, invite participants to clarify their intentions for the next meeting. Here are two potential prompts:

- What do you intend to do differently based on what we covered in this session?
- What support from group members and others will help you integrate this session's material into your daily practices?

After sharing reflections on these questions, ask participants to share their appreciations for other participants as well as the depth of engagement, learning, and group development.

You might also ask the group for feedback about any shifts in group dynamics they believe will accelerate group learning goals. Try any of these prompts:

- As you reflect on how we engaged each other and our engaging guidelines, is there anything you'd like us to pay more attention to in the next session?
- Are there any bumps or triggering moments you'd like us to revisit next time?
- Is there anything you intend to do differently moving forward?
- Are there any of your comments or behaviors you want to revisit to explore in terms of their possible negative impact?

At this point, announce the homework assignments and give a brief overview of the learning outcomes for the next session. Thank participants for their deepening engagement and contributions to the group's collective learning. If possible, conveners should stay after the session for five to ten minutes in case any participants have additional questions, feedback, or ideas to share.

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Avoid Common Traps in Designing Session Curriculum

Below I highlight some common missteps to avoid as you make plans for the first few sessions.

Expecting Too Much
Meet people where they are and not where you expect or want them to be. When conveners push too much or move too quickly, they miss opportunities for meaningful growth and development. The input and data gathered in the needs-assessment process can support you identifying the current level of readiness, willingness, and demonstrated awareness and skill of the participants.

Cramming in Content
Earlier in my career I would spend hours developing an intensive design with far too many activities and unrealistic time expectations, never allocating enough time for discussion and processing. I was more focused on the quantity of learning

rather than balancing this with the learning needs of the group. Now I try to heed Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington's advice to focus on "deepening the capacity to engage in authentic and meaningful dialogue."

I've learned to center the what—the capacities and skills I want to explore in a particular session—and let go of the how—the ways we get there. There are multiple ways to help participants deepen their awareness and skills, and often the unexpected path turns out to be the most impactful. The design of a session is like a kaleidoscope; when group dynamics shift, the pieces realign to create another beautiful image, different from what I had imagined. Nothing is lost, yet I can now see new ways to accomplish the session's intended goals.

Making the Agenda Too Rigid

As you plan for and begin each session, pause to reflect on the current context within your organization, your region, the nation, and the world to anticipate as well as engage the shifting issues in people's hearts and minds. The key is to continuously balance the current context with the capacity-building and organizational needs that may be most relevant in this moment in time.

Prioritizing Content Over Process

While the content goals you cover are important (skills, self-awareness, knowledge, and concepts), it is equally, if not more critical, for co-conveners to focus on the process outcomes related to the group's development as a learning community. Any activity or discussion prompt is a means to facilitate progress toward key process goals, such as staying present and engaged in the conversation, sharing bravely, noticing and shifting when feeling defensive or shut down, empathizing and relating to the comments of others, and shifting unproductive thoughts and behaviors. The best way to accomplish both the content and the process learning outcomes is to intentionally focus on co-creating a meaningful learning community in the first few sessions.

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Chapter Resources

Books

Obear, Kathy. (2016). *Turn the tide: Rise above toxic, difficult situations in the workplace*. Difference Press.

Obear, K. H. (2017). *The book club guide.**

Obear, K. H. (2017). *But I'm not racist!: Tools for well-meaning whites*. Difference Press.

* This is a guide for the book *But I'm not racist!: Tools for well-meaning whites*. For this resource and more titles, see https://drkathyobear.com/racebook.

References

Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces. In L. Landreman (Ed.), *The art of effective facilitation* (pp. 135–150). Routledge.

Kaplowitz, D. R., Griffin, S. R., & Seyka, S. (2019). *Race dialogues: A facilitator's guide to tackling the elephant in the classroom* (p. 32). Teacher's College Press.

Videos

Webinar: *Navigating Difficult Situations* (V1)

Self-paced, open-access course: *Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace* (V2)

Virtual Tools

https://jamboard.google.com

https://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment

https://native-land.ca

https://padlet.com

https://polleverywhere.com

Worksheets

Common Fears and Emotions Shared During the Crumpled Paper Activity (W47)

Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About Race and Racism, a Beginning List (W3, in Appendix 2)

Engaging Guidelines (W14, in Appendix 2)

Envision an Anti-Racist Organization (W21)

Expected Competencies for Creating Racially Inclusive Organizations (W2, in Appendix 2)

Panning with an Inclusion Lens (W16)

Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents (W1, in Appendix 2)

Tools to Respond in the Moment (W4)

CHAPTER 6

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Navigating Difficult, Triggering Situations

Stages of Group Development

Conveners may be familiar with the models of group development like Bruce Tuckman's Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning stages. Groups need to effectively address the needs of the Forming and Norming stages as they create the learning community in the first several sessions to build a solid foundation to navigate the inevitable conflict and disagreements in the Storming stage(s). Groups often experience multiple challenging phases in their life cycle. If managed well, these times of disagreement and conflict can provide a fertile opportunity for deeper learning and group development.

The key aspects and activities that develop the learning container are intended to help groups effectively move with and through these developmental stages. Some groups begin to perform as members engage authentically and support the collective learning of the group. Short-term groups, like most White Accountability Groups, will also need to navigate the fifth stage: Adjourning. Unfortunately, many groups rarely effectively reach the Performing stage, most often due to their inability to negotiate the Storming stage(s) of group conflict. This may result in members disengaging and dropping out. A critical skill set that can help individuals and the group navigate the Storming stage(s) is the capacity to recognize and navigate triggering situations. This chapter provides key tools and activities to help group members develop the skills and capacities to recognize their hot buttons and effectively resolve triggering situations in the White Accountability Group as well as their work activities.

Preparing to Navigate Triggering Situations

Even with all the tools and techniques in my toolbox, I still can be caught off guard and react unproductively when one of my buttons gets pushed. I experience unexpected intense emotions and often cannot think clearly enough to choose an effective strategy in the moment. Most participants will benefit from developing greater capacity to navigate and shift their triggered

reactions before they react in ways that may be out of alignment with their core values and productive intentions.

To help the group develop skills in this area, start a discussion with a few key questions:

- Who has ever hit a hot button in conversations about racism and whiteness? How did you know?
- What were or are some of your signals or warning signs that you are starting to feel mildly triggered? Moderately emotional? Or deeply swirling in an unexpected level of intense emotions? How did you react in these moments?
- As you look back, how might you have responded more effectively?

Share a few quick examples of times you have had varying levels of triggered emotions in conversations about race and racism before asking participants to respond to the questions.
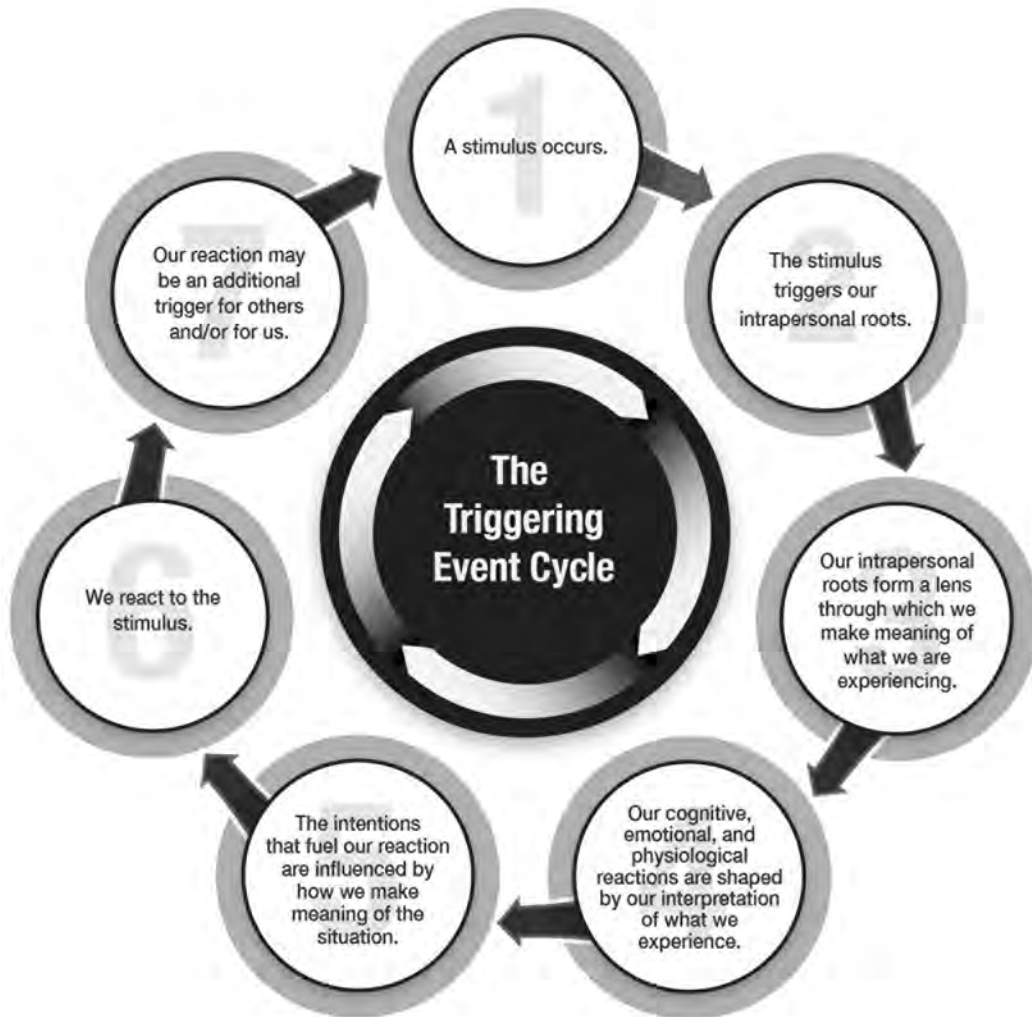
Use the next couple of sessions to deepen participant capacity to recognize and navigate triggering situations. Use the worksheet *Characteristics of a Triggering Event* (W5) to jumpstart the conversation, and ask members to think of times they can relate to experiencing any of the following during triggering moments:

- unexpected, strong, intense wave of feelings, often disproportionate to stimulus
- disorientation, feeling distracted
- feeling out of control, overwhelmed
- feeling "de-skilled" and unable to respond
- reacting less effectively
- requiring extra effort to navigate the situation effectively

While it is possible to respond effectively when we feel deeply triggered, I have rarely seen participants demonstrate these capacities early in a White Accountability Group. In both my research and personal experience, most of the time, our split-second, knee-jerk reactions create and escalate unproductive dynamics. Invite participants to identify some of their common, unproductive triggered reactions during conversations about race, racism, white privilege, and whiteness. Use the handout *Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations* (W6) to have participants identify which of the four Fs reflect their common stress reactions: fight, flight, freeze, or flounder. Have participants review the handout and identify the ways they might react when they feel mildly triggered compared to when they have moderate and extreme emotional reactions.

One critical outcome of these conversations is for participants to realize not only how common it is to feel triggered in discussions and react less effectively, but also that the group can effectively engage each other in these moments. The key is not to try to avoid feeling triggered, but instead to recognize and respond effectively when someone hits a hot button.

A predictable series of seven steps occurs every time we react unconsciously when we feel triggered, which I call the *Triggering Event Cycle* (W7). Instead of feeling out of control and powerless to influence our reactions, we can use the cycle as a framework to first recognize where we are in the process, and then choose the right tools to help us respond effectively in the moment.

The Triggering Event Cycle

1. A stimulus occurs.
2. The stimulus triggers our intrapersonal roots.
3. Our intrapersonal roots form a lens through which we make meaning of what we are experiencing.
4. Our cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions are shaped by our interpretation of what we experience.
5. The intentions that fuel our reaction are influenced by how we make meaning of the situation.
6. We react to the stimulus.
7. Our reaction may be an additional trigger for others and/or for us.

When you introduce the Triggering Event Cycle to the group, spend some time discussing the first step. Encourage participants to identify the types of comments and behaviors that may be triggering for group members. The worksheet *Examples of Hot Buttons and Triggering Comments and Behaviors During Discussions of Race and Racism* (W8) can help participants identify and talk about some of their common hot buttons in conversations about race and racism.

Some common types of hot buttons for White Accountability Groups include:

- when participants make comments that deny the existence of racism (I don't see color; We are post-racial; There is reverse racism now; I didn't own slaves)

- when group members spout the most current terms, research, and concepts to show how woke they are
- when people excuse the racist behaviors of other whites (They are a good person; I don't believe they would do that; She was misunderstood; What they said wasn't about race)
- when participants give unsolicited advice to others with an attitude of superiority and judgment
- when group members make racist comments
- when peers express hopelessness and helplessness (This is too hard and so overwhelming! I feel so powerless, helpless! I am so tired! I need to take a break from this work!)
- when group members stay stuck, wallowing in shame and guilt (I am so ashamed! I am so guilty! I'm a horrible person!)

Ask participants to take turns sharing four or five of their personal hot buttons in their core groups using these prompts:

- The comment or behavior that is a hot button or trigger for me in discussions with white people about racism is _____.
- On a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = no triggered emotional reaction to 10 = significant intensity of triggered emotional reactions), in these situations I often have this intensity of emotions: _____.
- Ways I have reacted less effectively in these situations include _____.
- When I reacted in these unproductive ways, my probable impact was _____ (on others, me, the group).

Conveners need to initially share a few of their own triggering experiences using these prompts to model the depth of vulnerability and bravery they wish to see from participants. Sharing about these types of hot-button situations in small groups before debriefing in the large group not only continues to build a strong learning container but also normalizes the probability that all group members will feel triggered at some point in group conversations.

Next, have participants deepen their understanding of the internal dynamics that may have been fueling the ways they reacted less effectively in the past. Ask them to use these prompts from the worksheet *Journaling: The Triggering Event Cycle* (W9) as they reflect on a few difficult situations where they reacted less productively. Briefly share an example from your own experience to highlight the various reactions you've had in each of the steps in the cycle.

As group members share their journaled reflections with their accountability partner or members of their core group, they will deepen their understanding of the various steps of the Triggering Event Cycle as they identify ways they could react differently in the future.

Exploring Intrapersonal Roots

Spend some focused group time exploring step two of the Triggering Event Cycle: identify the intrapersonal roots fueling triggered reactions.

Many participants may struggle at first with this often-unconscious step in the cycle. I used to believe that other people made me feel triggered and therefore were responsible for how I treated them. I have come to believe that our emotions and reactions during triggering situations are not caused by others, but instead influenced by the complex intersection of our intrapersonal roots. Through my research, I have identified seven types of intrapersonal roots, many of which could be fueling our triggered reactions in any moment without our conscious awareness:

1. Current life issues and dynamics
2. Cumulative impact of recent experiences
3. Unresolved, unfinished business and old wounds
4. Fears
5. Unmet needs/what I value
6. Ego-driven desires
7. Biases, assumptions, expectations, shoulds, and judgments
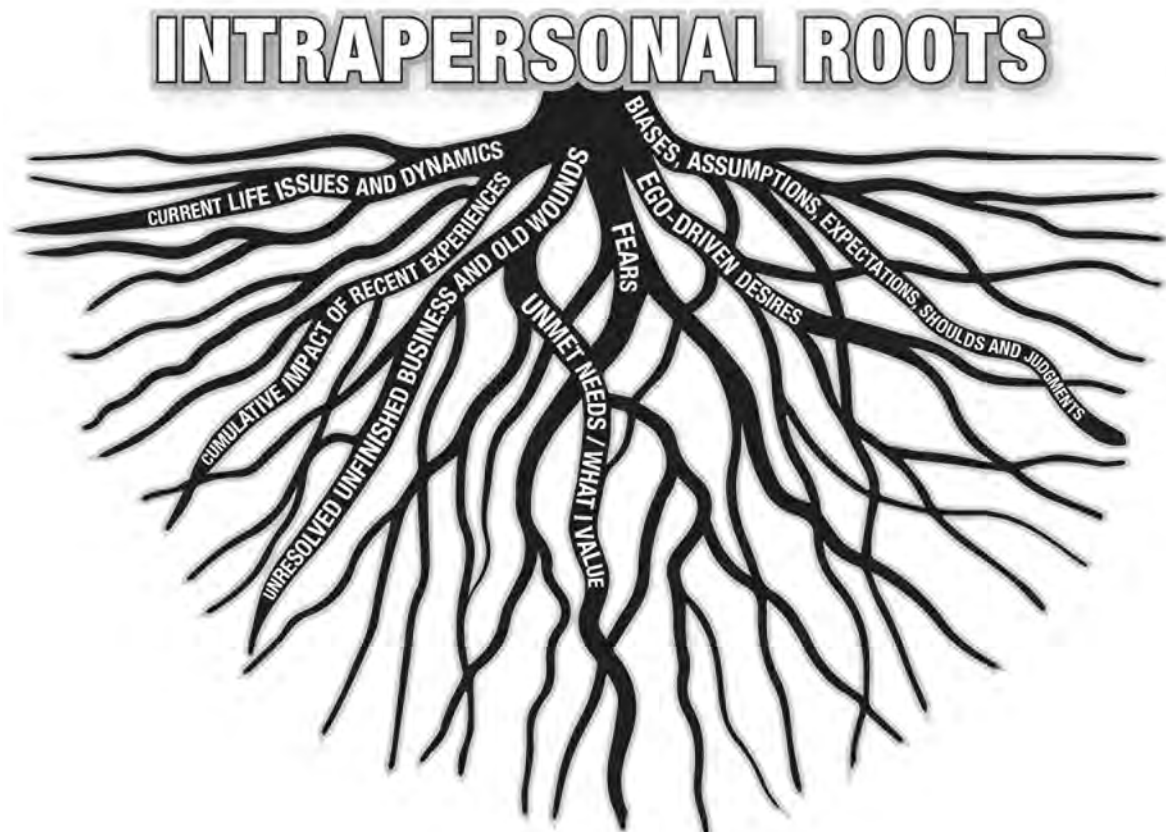
Completing the worksheet *Intrapersonal Roots of Triggering Events* (W10) can help participants understand this concept and identify the possible personal dynamics fueling their triggered reactions. Group members can read about intrapersonal roots in far greater depth in chapter 3 of *Turn the Tide: Rise Above Toxic, Difficult Situations in the Workplace*.

After understanding the common characteristics of triggering events as well as exploring their warning signs, common hot buttons, unproductive reactions, the Triggering Event Cycle, and intrapersonal roots, lead a discussion on ways group members can respond in triggering situations during sessions. These discussion prompts may be useful in this process:

- How can we support each other when one or more of us feels triggered in a session?
- What are some ways we can take care of ourselves if we hit a hot button?
- What are ways we can navigate our triggered reactions in the moment so that we are more present and grounded to engage each other effectively?

Have participants review some engaging tools from my worksheet *PAIRS* (W11) to give them a few ideas for how to respond in triggering situations. The Panning, Ask questions, Interrupt, Relate in, and Share (PAIRS) strategies can help group members identify approaches they can use to pause in these moments and create space for meaningful dialogue and learning.

For more resources to help both conveners and participants deepen their capacity to navigate triggering situations, see the list below.

Chapter Resources

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Videos

Webinar: *Navigating Difficult Situations* (V1)

Self-paced, open-access course: *Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace* (V2)

Worksheets

Characteristics of a Triggering Event (W5)

Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations (W6)

Examples of Hot Buttons and Triggering Comments and Behaviors During Discussions of Race and Racism (W8)

Intrapersonal Roots of Triggering Events (W10)

Journaling: The Triggering Event Cycle (W9)
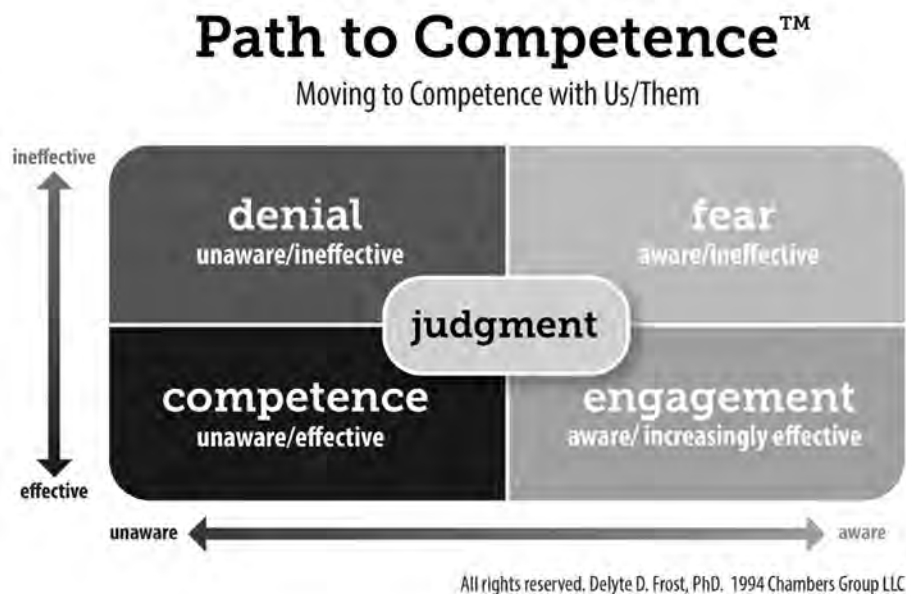
PAIRS (W11)

Triggering Event Cycle (W7)

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Using the Path to Competence Model to Design Group Activities

This chapter offers ways you can use the Path to Competence model to assess participant learning needs as you design learning activities and facilitate discussions to help members develop greater capacity and courage.

The Path to Competence model, developed by Jack Gant and Delyte Frost, is built on Abraham Maslow's Conscious-Unconscious Competence model. Gant and Frost provide a road map to help identify the developmental journey along five key elements in the transformation process from denial, judgment, and fear to greater capacity to effectively shift racist dynamics and create greater racial equity and inclusion. In chapter 5 of *But I'm Not Racist!: Tools for Well-Meaning Whites*, I explore their model in greater detail; you may find the webinar *Path to Competence* (V4) a useful overview of the model.

Path to Competence™
Moving to Competence with Us/Them

ineffective

denial
unaware/ineffective

fear
aware/ineffective

judgment

competence
unaware/effective

engagement
aware/ increasingly effective

effective

unaware ⟷ aware

Understanding the Boxes Along the Path to Competence

Participants who are in the Box of Denial are unaware of both the dynamics of racism and white supremacy as well as how incompetent they are as change agents. Many at this stage have made statements or have beliefs like the following:

- I treat everyone the same.
- I don't see color.
- I don't have racist attitudes.
- We are post-racial.
- I just want to help People of Color.
- We have made such good progress.
- Sometimes People of Color are racist toward white people. Reverse racism happens, too.
- I don't like to use the term "white."
- We can't learn without People of Color.
- I don't have white privilege; I've worked hard for everything I've earned.

Clues that some group participants may be in the Box of Judgment include comments where they criticize others, like these:

- The whites I work with are so racist.
- I call out other white colleagues, but they don't change.
- I am the only white person in this place that gets it.
- I just want to work with People of Color, and the white leaders are so incompetent.

In the Box of Judgment, participants may also be critical of themselves with comments like these:

- I feel so guilty and ashamed.
- I am a bad person.
- I have caused such harm to People of Color that I don't know what to do.
- I feel bad about how unskilled and unaware I am.
- I am hopeless and will never get this right.

Some degree of regret and self-criticism can be helpful to spur white people to greater learning and effective action. However, too often, participants choose to wallow in guilt and shame as a distraction from their critical next levels of self-work and skill development.

Conveners need to be watchful for the types of problematic behaviors from participants in the Box of Judgment that can undermine group development, like crying after being asked to explore the impact of their behavior; swirling in guilt, shame, and inaction; critiquing and

judging others; competing to be the best white ally; and distancing themselves from other white participants.

Participants are in the Box of Fear when they show up increasingly aware of dynamics of racism as well as their own racist attitudes and behaviors, yet without enough skill and courage to effectively interrupt and shift those dynamics. Comments from people at this stage in their development include:

- I see so many more racist microaggressions occur, but I don't know what to do.
- I'm scared I will mess up and make things worse.
- What if I say something racist and cause even more negative impact?
- I never realized how many racist microaggressions occur and that I have done.
- I have many more racist thoughts and beliefs than I ever knew or admitted before. They just seem to pop into my head out of nowhere. What else am I missing?
- I have caused such harm in the past, and I never want to perpetuate racist dynamics again.
- I deeply regret my past actions, but I don't know what I can do now.
- I just said something racist last week and froze. I need help to repair the damage I caused and support for how to interrupt my racist attitudes and behaviors in the future.

Participants who start in the Box of Engagement at the beginning of a White Accountability Group tend to readily demonstrate a more complete understanding of how racism and white supremacy operate in organizations and society. They consistently display greater self-awareness, humility, and capacity to name the racist attitudes they still hold and the types of racist behaviors they do. Members in this stage of development take more risks in group discussions, relate in as others share, show up in greater vulnerability and self-disclosure, admit when they feel stuck or have recently reacted unproductively, and gently nudge and support other participants in their growth. While they still have to practice and consciously think through how they want to be more effective, their actions in the group can model for other group members more effective ways of being a white change agent.

The Box of Competence is an aspirational space where we may sometimes find ourselves. In this place of unconscious competence, white change agents may spontaneously respond very effectively at times without having to think about or plan what they will do. White participants are rarely consistently in the Box of Competence.

Designing Activities for People in Each Box

The worksheet *Principles for Designing White Accountability Groups: Meet People Where They Are and Accelerate Development* (W43) can help conveners identify specific learning outcomes and

varying content and activities based on the current degree of racial consciousness and readiness of group members. For instance, if many participants are still in denial that racism exists or are actively colluding with dominant white culture, conveners need to focus on helping group members increase their awareness and understanding of the breadth and complexity of the dynamics of race, racism, and white supremacy. When participants realize how much they do not know, they may be more willing to learn and expand their knowledge and self-awareness. It is critical that group members in the Box of Denial move beyond just seeing themselves as well-intended individuals so they can begin to recognize racist dynamics at the group level, including racist biases and prejudices, microaggressions and their impact, and common privileged and marginalized group dynamics.

Sometimes using current and historical statistics related to the participants' industry can help some white group members move out of denial and resistance. Others may respond to statistics identifying manifestations of systemic racism in a full range of societal institutions like health care, housing, education, employment, the legal and policing systems, and the military.

Most participants in the Box of Denial seem to make progress as they identify the broad range of racist microaggressions that occur in their organization and local communities. To personalize the examples of racist microaggressions on the worksheet *Common Racist Microaggressions* (W19), ask participants to review data from recent focus groups and climate surveys as a homework activity. In addition, ask them to watch some videos and movies that not only depict common types of racist microaggressions and their impact on People of Color, but also identify pervasive organizational racist dynamics that create barriers for and have negative differential impact on People of Color.

Another way to support participants moving out of denial is to focus on the history of race, racism, and white supremacy as well as the throughlines from the past to current times. Through readings, videos, and field trips, participants can broaden their understanding of the impact of centuries of intentional racism and white supremacy in their industry, region, and nation and around the world.

The Box of Judgment is a painful and extremely unproductive place to be. These activities support participants who mostly blame and shame themselves:

- Identify more racialized socialization experiences to realize they are not to blame for learning racist biases and white supremacist beliefs. (See chapter 8 for resources and learning activities.)
- Share and express their feelings of guilt, shame, and blame as a first step toward redirecting this energy into passion to deepen learning and skill development.
- Practice ways to shift any racist thoughts or white supremacist beliefs they may still have.

Participants in the Box of Judgment need to shift from critiquing and competing to relating in and supporting the growth of their colleagues. The following activities help participants who tend to judge and criticize others to move out of the Box of Judgment:

- Ask group members to journal about their racial journey to identify multiple times they had racist thoughts, reacted on racist biases, and colluded with the racist behaviors of others.
- Ask them to identify what helped them increase their self-awareness, deepen their understanding of race and racism, stop perpetuating racism and white supremacy, and develop the skills to interrupt racist dynamics in the moment.

This depth of self-reflection and sharing can build enough empathy and compassion to more effectively engage others who are still in denial and actively perpetuating racist dynamics.

Group members in the Box of Judgment may develop greater humility as conveners lead activities for participants to acknowledge their recent racist thoughts and behaviors as well as times they stayed silent and colluded with racist dynamics in the past few months. One final skill set for people in the Box of Judgment is to recognize their common hot buttons and intrapersonal roots as they develop greater capacity to effectively navigate their own triggered emotions and reactions in the moment.

The intent of learning activities for participants in the Box of Fear is to increase their awareness; support their learning; acknowledge and share their fears and concerns about speaking up as a change agent; recognize how ineffective most of their behaviors and reactions are as they practice new productive ways of engaging; and identify the breadth of knowledge and skills they still need to develop.

Until participants feel heard and supported in their fears about taking action, they may stay stuck in their emotions and inaction. Some prompts to facilitate reflection and dialogue include the following:

- Describe a time you tried to intervene or disrupt a racist comment, behavior, or practice. What motivated you to speak up? What concerns, if any, did you have as you chose to speak up? What was the impact of your behavior?
- Describe other times you noticed racist dynamics, yet did not do anything to shift them. What were your thoughts, concerns, or fears in those moments?
- Overall, as you imagine speaking up to create greater racial equity and inclusion, what fears, if any, do you have?

As participants share, encourage them to relate to the concerns of others without shaming, blaming, or offering unsolicited advice.

Have group members in the Box of Fear identify and talk about the common ways they have reacted ineffectively in the past. The worksheet *Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations* (W6) can support participants in recognizing ways they have shown up in fight, flight, freeze, or flounder as well as other types of problematic ways. Have them explore the costs and benefits of staying silent and colluding, such as allowing harm to continue, losing the trust of colleagues, being seen as part of the problem, and avoiding retaliation from supervisors and peers.

Another activity for participants in the Box of Fear is to use *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1) to identify a few specific skills they want to deepen in the next few sessions. Most identify their need to learn and practice more effective ways to interrupt racist microaggressions and practices. Have participants review the worksheet *Tools to Respond in the Moment* (W4) for homework, and come prepared to share some of their strengths as well as a list of the skills they intend to add to their tool kit.

Group members in the Box of Fear will need to practice new skills and approaches to gain greater confidence and capacity. Have them first analyze case studies and discuss strategies to respond before you ask them to role-play different tools and skills. Participants can also identify more examples of effective interventions through video clips and stories from a panel of past participants. Next, you might have group members role-play to illustrate ways to respond in a variety of different scenarios.

For homework, ask participants to practice ways to respond as well as to try out tools in real time. In the next session, have core groups share the impact of their practice as well as how they are feeling about developing greater capacity to intervene in racist situations. Add a section of skill practice in each of the next several sessions until most participants not only demonstrate greater effectiveness but also describe feeling more confident and prepared to interrupt future racist microaggressive situations.

To support group members choosing courage in the future, it can be useful to lead a discussion exploring the benefits of speaking up, including interrupting racist harm, modeling skills for others to learn, living in integrity, and co-creating a more racially equitable and inclusive organization.

Some participants may not move out of the Box of Fear during a White Accountability Group. It can take significant amounts of time and lots of practice for them to deepen their skills and courage to move into the Box of Engagement, where they are much more aware of racism and generally respond effectively, though they have to consciously think through what to do.

To support group members in the Box of Engagement as they continue to deepen their capacity, courage, and compassion, conveners can introduce ways to use a race lens in planning and decision-making meetings as well as to analyze and revise current policies, programs, practices, norms, and services. The worksheet *Reimagining with an EDIB/Race Lens: Planning and Decision-Making* (W36) can be a helpful tool to teach and practice these skills. Most important,

participants need the space to practice skills and receive honest developmental feedback until they can respond effectively almost unconsciously. Group members at this level of development can support the learning of others and stretch themselves by volunteering to role-play in small-group practice sessions as well as participate in large-group skills demonstrations. In addition, they can deepen their capacities by facilitating core-group discussions and engaging other participants who show up in the Boxes of Denial, Judgment, or Fear.

Chapter Resources

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Videos

Webinar: *Path to Competence* (V4)

Worksheets

Common Racist Microaggressions (W19)

Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations (W6)

Principles for Designing White Accountability Groups (W43)

Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents (W1, in Appendix 2)

Reimagining with an EDIB/Race Lens: Planning and Decision-Making (W36)

Tools to Respond in the Moment (W4)

Activities for Exploring Racialized Socialization and History

This chapter focuses on the types of topics and activities conveners can use in the next five to eight sessions. Always try out each possible activity together in convener planning sessions before including them in a session design. This practice can facilitate deeper relationship-building and skill development as well as increase convener confidence to lead these activities.

Understanding Racialized Socialization

After creating the learning container in the first few sessions, devote the next two or three to exploring the participants' individual and collective racialized socialization. Give participants the space to unpack and reflect on how they may have been influenced by the dynamics of race and racism in their early years through their late teens until today. Use some of the questions in the worksheet *Examine Your Racialized Socialization: Questions to Discuss and Explore* (W13) to start exploring socialization to build connection among participants and encourage brave sharing.

"It's not our fault, but we must accept responsibility." This is one of the *Diverse Community Foundations* (W12) identified by Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington, president of the Washington Consulting Group. This foundation is especially useful to discuss as conveners begin a deeper dive into racialized socialization experiences. Referring to this concept at this point can help participants move bravely into reflections and analysis without swirling in guilt and shame related to the racist attitudes and behaviors of people they respect and love. It is not our fault that we grew up in environments that taught and reinforced white supremacist beliefs and racist biases. Anyone who grew up in the US has been surrounded by societal messaging, if not family dynamics, that perpetuated racism and white supremacy. As Rev. Dr. Washington so clearly emphasizes, while it is not our fault for what occurred around us, it is our responsibility to take a critical look at our early socialization, identify how we were influenced, and recognize how the throughlines of these early experiences may still impact our thoughts, attitudes, and actions today. Most importantly,

participants must take the next steps to interrupt and shift their racist thoughts and behaviors in each and every moment.

Conveners need to honestly share about their own racialized socialization as they model courageous self-discovery and vulnerable self-disclosure. In *But I'm Not Racist!: Tools for Well-Meaning Whites*, I share detailed reflections about my own racialized socialization. Rereading those early chapters may help you uncover and retell some of your own memories to share in sessions as you model the depth of honesty and vulnerability you hope to see from participants.

For many people, reflecting honestly on their racialized socialization will stir various emotions as they face more of the truth about their upbringing. Conveners need to share some of their emotions and struggles as they model the ongoing need to sit with their feelings and talk about the impact of this deepening level of self-work. It is critical to acknowledge any feelings of guilt, shame, anger, disappointment, and even betrayal from people who raised us and were authority figures in our early years. However, the challenge is to develop the capacity to express our emotions without wallowing in them and staying stuck in inaction. This depth of authentic sharing is liberating and freeing for most participants as they speak their truth, identify the racist attitudes they absorbed, and explore how they may still be impacted by their early racialized socialization. The key next step is to shift and change our racist attitudes and behaviors moving forward.

Identifying Your Race Journey, Timeline, and Neighborhood Map

Reflecting on multiple prompts in the worksheet *Examine Your Racialized Socialization: Questions to Discuss and Explore* (W13) and sharing in pairs and small groups will provide powerful insights into participants' racialized socialization. A few additional learning activities can encourage everyone to dig even deeper into their early experiences.

Drawing a neighborhood map can help participants both remember and gain insights into their past experiences. Each person uses a large piece of chart paper to sketch out the people they lived with, the places where they lived, and the institutions where they learned over time (school, family, neighbors, friends, TV and movies, social media, books, social or athletic groups, religious organizations, leisure activities, police, etc.). The next step is to draw or note stories and experiences where they heard messages about race and learned racist biases and beliefs. This more tactile activity can help people identify who was around them in their early years and the types of messages they received both passively and actively.

Writing about their individual racial journeys in a narrative format can help participants describe many of the everyday types of situations as well as critical moments and significant racial incidents that shaped their understanding, life experiences, attitudes, and behaviors. Give people a couple of weeks, if possible, to reflect and begin to write their race journey before you ask them to share with their accountability partner or core group members.

Another approach is to have participants first draw a timeline of critical race moments in their lives. Some may be able to remember certain specific dates while others may group their timeline entries by age, such as 0–3, 4–5, 6–8, and so on. The list of prompts in the worksheet *Examine Your Racialized Socialization: Questions to Discuss and Explore* (W13) can help guide participants to complete a narrative or timeline. As group members reflect on and share about their early racialized experiences, they can gain new insights and greater humility as they see how far they have come and how far they may still need to go to unlearn persisting racist attitudes and behaviors.

Mapping Our Current Racialized Experiences

Many, if not most, white people live much of their lives without meaningful connections and relationships with People of Color and Indigenous Peoples. As a result, we are still influenced by the pervasive racist messaging all around us that continually reinforces racist stereotypes and white supremacist beliefs we absorbed growing up. Asking participants to create a map of their current racialized experiences can spur them to greater self-awareness and willingness to change how they live their lives.

The prompts on the worksheet *Mapping Our Current Racialized Experiences* (W15) can guide greater self-reflection and deeper awareness. It may be useful to spread the personal reflection and sharing about their current race map over a few sessions. After each conversation, have participants identify specific actions they will take in the short-term to expand their current racialized life experiences. Remind participants to not contribute to the emotional labor and exhaustion of People of Color by asking them to teach and coach. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of opportunities they can find online and in their local communities to deepen learning and experience meaningful interactions in mixed-race groups actively working to dismantle racism and create racial justice.

Incorporating the History of Racism and White Supremacy

There are many ways to include the history of racism and white supremacy in the group's curriculum. As you begin each session, share a few historical events that occurred around that week in the past. The Equal Justice Initiative calendar and the daily History Channel emails are good resources; for more, see the list at the end of this chapter. In addition, ask participants to do some research and offer their findings as you begin each session. Spend a couple of sessions specifically focused on how race, racism, and the ideology of white supremacy were socially constructed to justify centuries of exploitation, enslavement, extraction, and colonization. Ask participants to

form small groups to research and share examples of both white supremacist exploitation and terrorism throughout the centuries as well as efforts to resist and dismantle racism and white supremacy. In group discussions, ask, "If you were alive back then, what do you think you would have felt and done?"

Another powerful activity is for participants to spend a few weeks developing a personal historical timeline of the familial, local, regional, national, and global racist and white supremacist events and dynamics that occurred during their lives as well as those of their parents, grandparents, and possibly great-grandparents, if they have access to this genealogical information. As they trace and share the roots and throughlines in their own lives and ancestry, they may more readily recognize the larger patterns of racism and white supremacy in the US and around the world.

Assigning participants to do research and reflection related to their own industry can help them recognize many more historical events and patterns as well as the devastating impact of racism and white supremacy in their current practice and organization.

In subsequent sessions, continue to weave history into discussions as participants explore current racist regional and national events and incidents. These questions may be useful to guide the dialogue:

- What are some historical patterns and throughlines that seem to influence these current events?
- In what ways have similar dynamics and structures existed and possibly evolved or regressed over time?
- What types of resistance and social change efforts were used to address similar racist and white supremacist dynamics in the past? What were the results? What could we do today?
- How might some of these historical roots be manifesting in our organization, families, and communities today?

As conveners support the deep dive into the history of race, racism, and white supremacy in their industry, the nation, and the world, participants will be far better positioned to recognize and disrupt manifestations of racism in their everyday lives.

Chapter Resources

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Worksheets

Diverse Community Foundations (W12)

Examine Your Racialized Socialization: Questions to Discuss and Explore (W13)

CHAPTER 9

Activities for Recognizing Interpersonal Racist Dynamics and Microaggressions

Before moving too quickly into organizational systemic dynamics, build on the increasing self-awareness about racialized socialization by exploring how these same racist and white supremacist beliefs fuel daily interpersonal racist dynamics and microaggressions in the members' spheres of influence.

Lead participants through a series of activities to deepen their skills to recognize and effectively respond to racist dynamics at the interpersonal level. Revisit the skill of panning as you introduce the tools on the worksheet *Panning with an Inclusion Lens* (W16). I first learned these skills in my work with Elsie Y. Cross Associates Inc. While I used to notice unproductive behaviors in the workplace, such as when people interrupted others, dominated group discussions, and worked on their phones as others were speaking, I only noticed these dynamics at the individual level. As members of the White Accountability Group deepen their capacity to use a race lens to "pay attention now" (PAN) interpersonal dynamics, they will more readily notice, by racialized group membership, the patterns of unproductive behaviors by white colleagues and how these negatively impact People of Color.

All too often, well-intentioned white participants and their colleagues say they are committed to creating racially inclusive organizations and yet interact in ways that negatively impact People of Color and undermine organizational goals. We rarely do more than talk the talk. So many of us are unaware of the ways we perpetuate, model, and reinforce racist dynamics and white supremacist ideologies. When we are asked to look at the impact of our actions, we typically use our intent as an excuse to avoid responsibility for any racist impact. Whether through conscious or unconscious behaviors, most white people tend to act in ways that undermine organizational efforts to dismantle institutional racism and white supremacy culture. We may easily feel outrage at the actions of other white colleagues and societal racism, yet we will overlook and discount our day-to-day interactions and ways we negatively affect our colleagues across racialized identities.

When we start to pay attention at the group level and PAN group dynamics with a race lens, we begin to see the frequency of these unproductive behaviors as well as the negative impact on our colleagues of color. We also begin to see the patterns of how white people tend to react

differently when these same behaviors happen to other white colleagues compared to when they impact People of Color.

Identifying Unproductive Meeting Behaviors

The worksheet *Panning with an Inclusion Lens* (W16) provides some specific ways people can use a race lens to pay attention in meetings and identify unproductive race dynamics. Ask participants to first check off which of these tools they regularly use in most meetings, which ones they use with a race lens to PAN group dynamics, and which tools they want to add to their practice. For homework, ask them to take this worksheet to at least five meetings and PAN group dynamics with a race lens. In the next session, review what race dynamics they noticed.

Then ask members to complete the worksheet *Unproductive Meeting Behaviors* (W17), and share a few of the unproductive behaviors they have noticed or done in meetings and what has been the probable impact on individuals and teamwork. Quite often, participants will share common examples related to other people behaving in these unproductive ways out of their privileged identities related to hierarchical and positional power, gender, years of experience, or age. Many easily identify the negative impact of these actions, including feeling dismissed, disrespected, devalued, and like they don't belong as women, people in lower-status positions, younger or newer employees, and so forth. Talking about the negative impacts they have experienced in situations in some of their marginalized identities tills the soil for the transition to recognize similar dynamics and negative impacts related to racist microaggressions. I will often share how as a senior white woman, I may feel mildly irritated if another white woman leader interrupts or talks over me, though these types of interactions rarely knock me off my game. However, there is usually a far greater, problematic impact when members of privileged groups treat members of marginalized groups in these ways.

For whites who are newer to this level of self-work, starting with these types of common unproductive behaviors may be a place to enter the conversation, since most will probably agree that egregious, blatantly racist comments and behaviors have no place in the organization. Many may find it harder to recognize the more subtle comments and behaviors that leave People of Color feeling marginalized, scrutinized, and on the periphery. Reinforce the reality that these types of common unproductive meeting behaviors can negatively impact anyone, and they have far greater impact if they come from someone in a privileged identity–in this case a white person—to someone in the corresponding marginalized identity—a Person of Color.

Ask participants to refer to the worksheet *Unproductive Meeting Behaviors* (W17) as they discuss these questions:

- Which items in the list do you notice white people doing to People of Color? How often?

- If a white person does any of these behaviors toward a colleague of color, what is the probable racist impact?
- What could be the cumulative impact over time for colleagues of color? For teams? For the overall organization?

Then invite them to increase their capacity to use a race lens as they PAN group dynamics. At this point, if not before, ask them to expand the list of identities, in addition to race, that they need to keep in mind as they PAN, such as culture, ethnicity, skin color, appearance, English proficiency, accents, nationality, national origin, immigration status, documentation status, and refugee status.

Understanding Intent Versus Impact

At times when I have been asked to examine the impact of my behavior, I have maneuvered to avoid any responsibility by individualizing the situation and defending my actions with different excuses. This is what my colleagues at Elsie Y. Cross Associates Inc. called Perfectly Logical Explanations (PLEs). I have argued how the Person of Color was too sensitive or they misunderstood me. I have defended my racist impacts by proclaiming, "That wasn't my intent!" in hopes this would absolve me of any responsibility for what the Person of Color experienced.

Reviewing the worksheet *Key Concepts* (W18) may help more participants stay present in their discomfort as they explore the probable racist effect of their own behaviors. Once I was able to separate my conscious intent from the impact of my behavior across race, I could listen more deeply and accept feedback. This is often easier said than done. Like many white people, I was socialized to believe that my actions were a reflection of my goodness as a human being: If I did good works, I was a good, moral person; however, if I negatively impacted People of Color, I was a bad person and a racist. Learning to unhook their innate humanity and goodness from the negative impact of their racist behaviors is a critical capacity for white change agents. When a white person accepts that admitting some of their racist attitudes and behaviors does not make them a horrible person, they can focus their energy on changing their actions rather than defending their humanity and innate goodness.

Understanding Cumulative Impact

The worksheet *Key Concepts* (W18) also emphasizes cumulative impact. Too often I have dismissed the experiences of People of Color with some PLEs, including "It wasn't that bad," "That happens to me, too," and "That has nothing to do with race." I could easily find multiple excuses to discount the impact when I viewed my behavior as an individual incident. However, I found

it far more difficult to ignore the pain I caused as I realized my actions were just one more racist dynamic that many People of Color experience in most every interaction with white people. I remember the power of someone asking me a question as I was again trying to downplay my impact: "How often do you think People of Color experience what you just said in any given day or week?" They were inviting me to recognize the cumulative impact of these types of racist dynamics, of which my behavior was just one moment.

With these tools and concepts, white participants are better positioned to PAN group dynamics with a race lens in their daily activities. Have them refer to the worksheets *Panning with an Inclusion Lens* (W16) and *Unproductive Meeting Behaviors* (W17) in meetings to help them more quickly notice problematic behaviors as well as the negative impacts on colleagues of color and team effectiveness.

However, even with increased awareness, many white participants may still not take action to intervene in these moments. Derald Wing Sue and Madonna G. Constantine argue the ultimate example of white privilege is to be aware and acknowledge racism, yet do nothing to create greater racial equity and inclusion. One way to increase the willingness of group members to speak is to deepen their understanding of the damage caused when racist unproductive behaviors go unaddressed. To do this, ask participants to identify the probable consequences of common racist dynamics for People of Color (for example, deep exhaustion, anger, frustration, a sense of depletion, burnout, and passion fatigue).

White people's silence and inaction in these microaggressive moments undermine team effectiveness by damaging working relations; increasing tension, distrust, and conflict; disrupting creativity and innovation; and undermining productivity. The organizational costs to recruitment, retention, and promotion of talent as well as decreased customer service and satisfaction should be significant enough to demand immediate action and meaningful organizational change, but this is rarely the case. After discussing these consequences and others in the group, ask participants to begin to have these same conversations with their leaders and peers, which can lead to positive change and sustained progress toward a racially inclusive workplace.

Recognizing Common Racist Microaggressions

Most, if not all, group members may be familiar with the term microaggressions developed by Chester M. Pierce in the 1960s and more recently researched and written about by Sue and others. You can offer the following definitions from Sue at the start of a discussion of this topic:

> Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

Racial microaggressions are the brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities, and denigrating messages sent to People of Color by well-intentioned White people who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated.

As the group discusses the term and these definitions, emphasize several key points, including how white people may believe we are fair-minded and without conscious malice, and yet still say and do things that result in negative impacts on People of Color. White people are typically unaware of the effect of our behavior unless someone reacts in the moment or gives us feedback later.

Most white participants will not have a full understanding of the types of common racist microaggressions their colleagues of color experience. In the next sections are activities to develop participant capacity to recognize microaggressive incidents. Subsequent chapters offer tools to respond to microaggressions as well as interrupt the conscious and unconscious racist biases fueling them.

Either before or after discussing the definition, share a few of your own microaggressive behaviors and the impact they probably had on People of Color. For instance, recall times you have interrupted and talked over colleagues of color, misnamed them as you mistook them for another Person of Color, or didn't acknowledge an idea from a colleague of color until a white person said the same thing later in the meeting. I encourage you to disclose other racist behaviors that you may feel more uncomfortable sharing to model the depth of vulnerability and honesty required for this next level of self-work. See the sidebar below for an example.

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Modeling Vulnerability: Sharing a Racist Microaggression

Here is an example of a story I have told in White Accountability Groups and trainings:

My wife and I overslept on our last morning in Paris, and we were rushing down to the hotel lobby trying to still make our early flight home. I had called the front desk to ask them to order us a taxi, and as I ran out of the elevator, I saw a man dressed casually in front of the desk clerk. I urgently approached him and loudly asked, "Taxi?" He looked confused, possibly irritated, and turned back to the clerk to finish their conversation before walking away. I watched him join a group of about ten adults and children, the women dressed in saris. As I looked closer, they were standing and sitting around a large pile of suitcases. I felt deep dread as I realized I had seen a man with a darker skin tone than I have and had assumed

he could only be in the hotel in a service role, not as a customer with his family. I spun in guilt and shame as I tried to rationalize away the truth that I had treated him out of racist stereotypes. By the time I got up the willingness to consider apologizing for the racist impact of my behavior, he and the group of people had already left the hotel.

Every time I have told this story in trainings, inevitably a white participant has tried to excuse away my impact by claiming I'd had no racist intent when I negatively impacted him. This is what I know to be true: I have been in hundreds of hotels over the years and have never approached a white-appearing man in similar clothing assuming they were a taxi driver. Instead, I have always assumed they were a guest in traveling or vacation clothes, just as I was.

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As conveners tell some of their own stories, ask participants a few questions to both reinforce earlier concepts as well as introduce the next ones. For example:

- Regardless of my conscious intent, what was my probable racist impact?
- What could be the racist assumptions and beliefs that were fueling my actions in that moment?
- What might I have been able to do or say to acknowledge and possibly begin to repair the damage I had caused?

This process of self-disclosure can prepare group members for the next level of authentic engagement as they share racist microaggressions they have observed as well as done themselves.

Give participants a few homework assignments to prime the group for productive conversations about microaggressions. Ask them to review the list of more than eighty *Common Racist Microaggressions* (W19) as well as the worksheet *Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W20) as they reflect on these prompts:

- Which seem familiar? Which have you observed or heard occur?
- Which seem new to you?
- Which have you thought or done?
- What is the probable impact in the moment when these occur? What is the cumulative impact?
- Which types have you interrupted in the past? How effective were you?

In addition, ask them to review any organizational survey or focus group data that highlight these types of daily microaggressions and come ready to share five to ten types of generic patterns they have observed, done, or heard occur in the organization or local community. The webinar *Microaggressions* (V3) may also be a useful homework assignment.

In the next session, invite participants to share their examples in small groups before discussing a wide range of racist microaggressions in the full group. Key questions to explore include:

- Which have you observed?
- Which have you done?
- What is the probable immediate as well as cumulative impact of these racist microaggressions?
- What are the probable racist biases fueling these behaviors?
- What is the negative effect on both individuals and the team when we do not interrupt and shift these problematic dynamics in the moment?

Recognizing Coded Racist Comments and Microaggressions

Once participants have more confidence in their ability to recognize some of the more obvious racist microaggressions that occur, lead some activities to deepen their capacity to identify what I call coded racist messaging. It took me a long time to notice these types of racist microaggressions, much less to know how to engage effectively in these moments.

To transition to this section, tell a personal story and ask people to note the various coded racist comments. Here is an example from my teenage years:

> As I was going into ninth grade in 1970, the state of Maryland moved ahead to desegregate Prince Georges County public schools. I'd heard people in my white suburban neighborhood talk about how we were now going to be bussed to Bethune Junior High, which was always described as an "all-Black school in a bad neighborhood." I do not remember my parents ever talking directly about race as they made arrangements for me to go to a private Episcopal school, one that happened to only have white students and teachers. Instead, my parents said things like, "You are smart. We want you to get a good education and be in a safe school." I never questioned their decision. As I look back, I now realize I shared their racist attitudes and fears.

Ask participants to name the coded racist messages in convener stories. Below is a list of some of the types of coded racist comments participants make in workshops and consulting sessions.

Ask participants to review these comments as they consider these questions: How many have you heard? How many have you thought or said? What is the damage to People of Color when we do not interrupt and address these in the moment?

- They're not a team player.
- They're not a good fit.
- They can't relate to our clients.
- Our clients won't relate to them.
- She had an attitude.
- She isn't very professional.
- He doesn't have the right experience, just a lot of raw talent.
- They're unpolished.
- I couldn't understand what they were saying.
- They are so loud.
- They are so emotional.
- They self-segregate.
- Their research is on the margins.
- All they focus on is race.
- He is difficult to work with.
- They can't get along with their team members.
- They always seem angry.
- They are too sensitive and overreact at nothing.
- All of a sudden, she attacked me in the meeting!
- They aren't very collegial or civil.
- She was so aggressive.

These types of coded racist comments can negatively impact the careers of People of Color at any time; however, they can be particularly harmful if unaddressed during hiring, development, and promotional processes.

Understanding How the Police Are Weaponized

Another activity to deepen participant capacity to recognize interpersonal racist dynamics is to ask them to write down as many answers as possible to this prompt: "If People of Color, particularly Black people, do these common, everyday life activities, some white people call the police." After giving this assignment, chart the participants' answers. More than likely, they will generate twenty or more types of situations, including standing on their front porch, sleeping in a college lounge, having a barbecue in a park, driving in a predominantly white neighborhood where they

live, entering their office building, swimming in the pool at their apartment complex, bird-watching in a park, renting an Airbnb, and walking to the bathroom as they are working at their office in jeans on the weekend. This is a powerful, more advanced activity to help white participants deeply realize how often People of Color are criminalized and their lives put in danger by white people just for doing daily activities that white people do every day without consequence.

As you facilitate discussions related to these activities focused on recognizing racist microaggressions, help participants identify the more blatant, egregious comments and behaviors that occur as well as those some may describe as more subtle and insidious. When group members can acknowledge and discuss at least fifty types of racist microaggressions, they are better positioned to recognize them in the moment and interrupt more effectively. After developing this depth of greater awareness, most participants are ready and eager to learn how to interrupt and shift microaggressive dynamics.

Chapter Resources

References

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Videos

Webinar: *Microaggressions* (V3)

Worksheets

Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism (W20, in Appendix 2)
Common Racist Microaggressions (W19)
Key Concepts (W18)
Panning with an Inclusion Lens (W16)
Unproductive Meeting Behaviors (W17)

CHAPTER 10

Responding in Microaggressive Situations

After this level of authentic dialogue and self-work, most participants may be yearning to move beyond awareness to learn tools to interrupt microaggressions. But until they have done the depth of self-work to recognize and shift their own white supremacist, racist attitudes and behaviors, they may not have the required humility, empathy, and skill to effectively engage other white people during microaggressive situations. While silence is not an option and our inaction perpetuates racism, we also can cause harm with our many ineffective reactions when we are triggered out of ego, self-seeking, fear, or judgment. Most white people need significant training and practice to effectively respond to microaggressions in ways that interrupt the negative impact on colleagues of color as well as align with stated organizational goals. As Dr. Ibram X. Kendi states throughout his book *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, we are either actively anti-racist, or we are perpetuating racism. We are either a part of this anti-racist transformational change process every day, or we are choosing to collude with the racist, white supremacist status quo to maintain our white privilege and dominance at the devastating expense to People of Color. Most white people need to develop greater courage and capacity to show up every moment as an anti-racist change agent.

To prepare group members for this depth of skill development to effectively interrupt racist microaggressions, assign the following homework to group members:

- Reflect on these questions and come prepared for authentic engagement:
  ◊ When have you effectively spoken up to interrupt racist microaggressions? Why did you choose to speak up? What were your intentions? What did you say and do? What was your probable impact?
  ◊ When have you stayed silent and not spoken up during racist microaggressions? Why did you decide to stay silent? What were your reasons? What was the probable impact of your silence? What do you wish you had done instead?
  ◊ When have you tried to interrupt racist microaggressive situations, yet were not very effective? Why did you choose to speak up? What were your intentions? What did you say and do? What was your probable impact? What do you wish you had done instead?

- In the past, are there times you didn't know some of these types of comments and behaviors were racist microaggressions?
    - ◊ Why do you think you didn't know?
    - ◊ How might you have chosen to not know? To not pay attention?
    - ◊ What was the payoff, the benefit to you for not acknowledging these types of racist microaggressions?

As a convener, you will need to disclose times you have not known and chosen not to learn more, as well as times you stayed silent to protect your own white privilege and status in groups and organizations.

Developing the Skills to Respond

I remember wanting the recipe, an easy step-by-step guide for how to respond to every type of racist microaggression. I wanted to do it right, show up perfect, and not make a mistake. These dominant white cultural expectations got in my way of developing my capacity to engage effectively in the moment. There is no recipe or checklist, but there is a range of tools and strategies that are useful in different microaggressive situations. The key is to stay present and grounded enough to diagnose the current situation and the specific context so you can choose which approaches might be effective. And when your initial response doesn't result in the conversation you'd hoped for, you can pivot and try another tool.

To help participants realize and practice the varied types of skills for any given microaggressive situation, they need to first acknowledge ways they have reacted less effectively in the past. Ask group members to again review the worksheet *Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About Race and Racism, a Beginning List* (W3) as they identify behaviors that are generally not helpful. Have them consider these questions:

- What are some of your less effective reactions during racist microaggressive situations?
- What could be fueling your reactions? (Fear, judgment, ego, self-seeking)
- What could you do instead?

As they discuss their less effective reactions as well as their negative impact in these situations, most participants realize they are not alone and find more willingness to learn ways to respond more effectively in the future.

Over the years, many people have appreciated how I organized a small number of tools into the Panning, Ask questions, Interrupt, Relate in, and Share (PAIRS) model (see the worksheet *PAIRS* [W11]). Ask participants to review this one-page worksheet along with *Engaging Skills*

(W22) as they identify what tools they have used in the past and which they want to learn to use now.

After group members have talked through and practiced these various approaches, many are ready for an even more expansive list of possibilities. As homework, ask everyone to review *Tools to Respond in the Moment* (W4) and respond to the following prompts:

- Note the tools you have effectively used in the past to interrupt racist microaggressions and engage in effective learning moments.
- Which ones do you want to add to your tool kit?
- As you do some additional reading and internet searches, be prepared to share a few additional effective approaches and tools with the group.

Before practicing more of these tools, invite participants to recognize their motives and intentions that fuel their choice of responses.

Recognizing the Intentions Fueling Our Interventions

The first time someone asked me why I chose to respond in a certain way, I did not know how to answer. With time and further self-work, I came to realize, whether we are conscious in the moment or not, we choose our motives and intentions for every way we behave, even when we are silent and do nothing.

Recall step five of the *Triggering Event Cycle* (see chapter 6). This step is typically the hardest one for most people to understand and navigate. Ask participants to first review *Less Productive Intentions* (W23) as they identify those that feel all too familiar, such as to win the argument, to put the other person in their place, to prove you are competent, and to avoid conflict and confrontation.

After participants discuss the types of unproductive motives they have chosen in the past, ask them to reflect on a racist microaggressive situation in which they did not respond very effectively and use the same list to identify which, if any, of these less productive, negative intentions may have been fueling their ineffective response. For instance, in a workshop I was leading, we were discussing examples of racist microaggressions when a white participant said something like, "My best friend is Black and he uses the N-word all the time and said I could, too! You all are way too sensitive." I regret what I did next. In my knee-jerk, triggered reaction, I said in a raised voice, "I don't care what your best Black friend said, it is never OK for white people to use the N-word!" As I look back, I see how I reacted out of several unproductive intentions, including to make him learn, to prove I was right, and to show up like a good white ally. I don't know the full impact of my words, but the participant shut down, didn't participate in the next few activities,

and eventually left the session early. I violated my own core values as I reacted with such a self-righteous, judgmental, and paternalistic tone. Because I was the facilitator, my triggered response probably disrupted any chance for learning for that participant and possibly others. As a convener, you will make mistakes and react less effectively; do your best to acknowledge them, make amends, and show up differently in the future.

Next, have group members review the list of *Productive Intentions* (W24) as they identify which ones they already use or think about as they choose ways to engage as well as those they want to add to their tool kit. Some examples include to create greater inclusion; leave people feeling whole; engage in authentic, respectful dialogue; do no harm; deepen understanding, learning, and growth; meet people where they are; model the skills you hope others learn; and shift unproductive behaviors.

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Moving from Unproductive to Productive Intentions

During the session, conveners need to share personal stories of how they shifted unproductive motives in the moment to ground themselves in more productive intentions. For instance, I remember feeling caught off guard in just the third meeting of a White Accountability Group during the check-in about what they had panned with a race lens since our last session. A participant shared a painful example of their racist behavior as a supervisor.

With apparent feelings of remorse and regret, they talked about how they had intentionally not recommended a direct report who was a Person of Color for a promotion to be the manager of a different team because they didn't want to lose them from the department. Before I was able to acknowledge their vulnerability, another white participant said, "That was so harmful and racist! You have stunted and possibly ruined their career! This is why we only have white men in leadership!"

I was shocked by this person's reaction, and my first motives were not at all productive. I wanted to control the situation, reassert my power and authority as the facilitator, put them in their place, and make them learn how not to judge and demean other group members. Fortunately, another group member said, "I relate to doing that, too. I'm embarrassed to admit it." Then the initial participant said, "I didn't realize the harm I caused at the time, but I do now. I truly regret what I did."

Their comments gave me enough time and perspective to respond more effectively when the more judgmental participant started to say something else. I

interrupted and asked everyone to breathe a few times and then said something like, "I so appreciate each of your honest acknowledgments of past racist behaviors." And then to the full group I continued, "Raise your hand if you can relate to seeing this dynamic in organizations. Or maybe having done this or thought about doing this at times. I know I have. Or if not this specific racist move, who can relate to the feelings of regret and embarrassment from the racist impact you have had?"

As most group members raised their hands, I then focused back on the group member who had entered with criticism and asked, "You can take a pass, but might you also share a time you said or did something racist and how you feel now as you realize the impact you had? I have no doubt that I and many others have said or done similar things in our past."

I'm grateful I shifted my intentions in that moment to different ones, which included leaving people feeling whole, interrupting unproductive behaviors, helping people relate and connect, furthering the group's development, modeling the types of skills I espouse and teach, and creating space for people to reflect and acknowledge their past behaviors and impact. At the time, I chose not to directly engage the participant who criticized their colleague. I felt it was too early in the group's development for this level of direct confrontation and had planned to talk with them one-on-one after the session.

Imagine my surprise when during the follow-up discussion on engaging guidelines and ways to respond when we hit a hot button and feel triggered, they apologized for their behavior and impact. As they acknowledged they'd felt triggered by the supervisor's example, I asked them to say more. They went on to share how a close colleague of color had lost out on a significant career opportunity in the same way. At the time, the participant hadn't said anything, and that day still felt deep shame and disappointment for their lack of courage. Their vulnerable comments helped the group move to an even deeper conversation about how to create confidential space in the sessions for sharing more examples of racist behaviors as well as times someone colluded and did nothing.

I thanked the group for their powerful work and let them know that we would definitely have a few sessions in the near future focused on recognizing racist microaggressions as well as the racist attitudes and beliefs that fuel our behaviors.

I closed out the session by describing how the group could support everyone's healing, growth, and development. I said something like, "At my core, I believe some of the best ways we can help each other learn and grow is to interrupt our judgments and advice-giving. With empathy and understanding, we can hold

each other accountable and practice new ways to show up as white allies and change agents. Together, we can help each other do this critical self-work in a brave space of compassion and accountability for change."

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Ask group members to reflect on an example of how they responded to a racist microaggression with unproductive intentions and think about ways they could have shifted these by choosing more productive ones in the moment. We are far more effective when we consciously choose more positive intentions to fuel our interventions. Others still may not react in ways we had hoped, but at least we respond in alignment with our core inclusion values and organizational anti-racism goals.

For further practice, ask people in small groups to identify five or more unproductive intentions and practice shifting them using these prompts:

- What is the less productive intention?
- Why might we choose this in the moment, even if unconsciously?
- How might we react less effectively based on this intention?
- What may be our negative impact?
- What are some more productive intentions we could choose instead?
- How might we respond more effectively if we choose these?

While shifting negative intentions may seem somewhat easy in a White Accountability Group activity, during actual workplace conversations it can be far more challenging. These questions can help participants slow down and shift their negative intentions before they react ineffectively:

- How am I just like them?
- When have I said or done something similar?
- When have I thought the same offensive, racist comment?
- When in the future might I do a similar racist microaggression?
- In the past, what might have helped me recognize what I'd done and the impact I had?
- What do I hope to accomplish with my response?

As you create more opportunities for group members to identify ways to respond to racist microaggressions, use a few case studies to have participants discuss varying approaches for responding in the moment and afterward. These questions can help in their discussions:

- How might you feel in this situation?
- What are some of your initial, maybe knee-jerk unproductive thoughts and motives?

- What are the key racist dynamics that need to be addressed?
- By group membership, who has a greater chance to be listened to?
- Who has less potential risk if they speak up?
- Which of your unproductive reactions do you want to avoid?
- What types of intentions and fears might fuel these unproductive reactions?
- How could you ground yourself and become more present during this type of situation?
- What more productive intentions might help you be more grounded, choiceful, and effective in this situation?
- What are four to five different approaches that might be useful in the moment? Afterward?
- Which do you feel ready and willing to do in future situations?

Have group members revisit the worksheet *Tools to Respond in the Moment* (W4) as they explore a variety of tools to use in these case studies. Assign each member of the small groups a different set of three to four pages of tools to review as they prepare to share some of their favorites with the other group members.

Providing Opportunities to Practice

Up until now, group members have only talked about ways to respond and haven't practiced them live. Anticipating that most participants are nervous to publicly try out some of these tools, start by developing a few large-group demonstrations where participants suggest a microaggressive situation and conveners respond in the moment. Then debrief and critique these approaches as group members offer additional ones.

Layer in greater skill practice by having participants consider a few new scenarios and write down one or two ways they might respond in these situations. Prompt further discussion with questions like, "What would that sound like? What would you actually say?" To continue to build willingness and confidence to practice publicly, ask group members to only identify what they found useful about their colleague's approach as well as additional ideas their contribution sparked. After practicing a few scenarios as a full group, ask, "If you are in a similar situation in the future, who can imagine they could respond with some of these tools?"

For the next level of skill practice, move people into small groups with several additional scenarios, and ask them to first identify three to five ways they could respond in the moment or afterward. Then ask them to prepare a live one- to two-minute demonstration for the full group using at least one or two engagement tools. Have each group present their situation, and have observers note what was effective and other possible strategies. As you debrief each small-group demonstration, ask for any dilemmas or particularly challenging variations participants want to discuss or role-play in the full group. To close this session, encourage group members to gather

with colleagues for continued skill practice outside of the White Accountability Group. For homework, ask them to bring two to three examples of other racist microaggressive situations for which they want some peer coaching to identify more ways to interrupt and respond effectively. Hold additional "What could we do if" segments in each of the next two to three sessions.

I developed the worksheet *Ways to Interrupt and Engage Microaggressive Situations: A Beginning Set of Steps & Guiding Principles, Especially for White Change Agents* (W25) after a client asked me to offer more specific ways to respond to racist microaggressions in the moment. These tools and approaches can help group members identify the various steps that could be useful to interrupt problematic, racist dynamics as well as support those impacted by them. Ask participants to use these reflection prompts as they review the worksheet:

- Which steps feel reasonable and doable?
- Which have you done in the past? What was the outcome?
- What types of statements or questions feel useful?
- Which, if any, give you pause? Are there any you are not so sure about? Can't imagine using? How might you rework these to better fit your style, approach, and positionality?
- What are some other useful approaches or strategies?

After participants reflect and discuss their reactions in small groups, talk through any of their questions or concerns in the large group as well as all additional approaches they find useful. Role-play and demonstrate some of these suggestions for those who learn better experientially.

The worksheet *Effective Interventions Worksheet: Ways to Respond to Racist Microaggressions: A Beginning List of Possibilities, Especially for White Change Agents* (W26) can help the group develop a broader set of responses than they have used in the past, especially ways to more directly name racist dynamics and expectations for behavior change. Many white people are not yet willing or comfortable with some of these more pointed interventions. Conveners can engage their concerns and hesitancy while also practicing many of these responses in both large- and small-group role plays.

Provide multiple opportunities for group members over several sessions to practice responding to racist microaggressions and receive developmental feedback from their peers. Initially give them a list of ten to fifteen examples of racist microaggressions to use in these practice sessions, ones that are not too complex to start. In large-group debriefs after each small-group session, conveners can ask people to share the tools and approaches they found useful as well as moments when they did not respond as effectively as they'd hoped. Invite the full group to offer additional ideas and coaching for ways to better respond in these moments.

Once participants have some greater capacity and confidence, ask them to bring a few examples of racist microaggressions to the next session where they feel stuck and want group coaching on how to respond in the moment and afterward. Having discussions and role-playing in both

core groups and the large group can provide opportunities for practicing tools to engage in some of these more complex, challenging racist dynamics.

During these different practice sessions, remind participants to respond in ways that:

- interrupt racist dynamics
- support those negatively impacted by the comments and behaviors
- engage others to reflect on the impact and intentions of their racist actions
- educate why the comment, behavior, or policy has a racist impact
- build connections and relationships with white colleagues for further dialogue, learning, and organizational change over time

Anticipating the Common Dynamics of Resistance

Like many white people, I have not always been very open or appreciative when others held up a mirror to show me the negative impact of my racist attitudes and behaviors. When group members begin to notice and then name these common racist dynamics in meetings and one-to-one conversations with colleagues, others may not be as receptive as they may have hoped. Conveners need to help prepare participants for what to do if someone pushes back or resists their observations and feedback.

Ask participants to revisit the worksheets *Effective Interventions Worksheet: Ways to Respond to Racist Microaggressions: A Beginning List of Possibilities, Especially for White Change Agents* (W26) and *Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About Race and Racism, a Beginning List* (W3) to identify eight to ten types of reactions they have experienced or anticipate as they interrupt racist microaggressions, such as: "This has nothing to do with race!", "This happens to me, too!", "That wasn't my intent!", "You're over-reacting!", or "It was just a joke!" Have participants practice ways to respond to four or five examples of resistance during each of the next two to three sessions. Encourage them to work with their accountability partner and core groups between sessions to practice responding to a few more.

For one final assignment, have participants choose five or more resistant replies they anticipate and write out three to four possible ways to respond. Ask people to start by identifying approaches for each of the five skill sets in the worksheet *PAIRS* (W11), and then identify others as well.

While there is no best way to engage these types of resistance, with greater skill development and confidence, participants will have access to a packed tool kit from which to choose as they respond to racist microaggressions and resistance in the moment and afterward.

In skill-practice sessions focused on responding to interpersonal microaggressions, some participants may bring up very complex organizational toxic dynamics that reflect a far deeper

systemic dysfunction than these tools can readily address. Create a Parking Lot as people raise some of these concerns. After acknowledging the difficulties and challenges they have named, let participants know your intention to review organizational change strategies in future sessions. Follow up with individual group members to explore organizational resources that might be helpful in the short-term: Human Resources, Ombudsperson, Employee Relations, Office for Equity and Inclusion, departments focused on organizational effectiveness and training, and local community and regional resources. Develop relationships with people in these types of organizations so you can quickly refer group members to a particular person with whom they can follow up.

Using the Path to Competence for Reflection and Growth

Be sure to pause several times throughout a White Accountability Group program to have participants reflect on their progress as well as identify the capacities and tools they want to develop further. Sharing both how far they've come and how far they want to go can increase the passion and motivation to stay committed to the process. One approach is to have group members retake the self-assessment *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1), and discuss what progress they have made and the three to five tools and capacities they want to develop in the short-term.

Conveners can also use the worksheet *Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism* (W29) in two powerful ways at this point in the group's development: (1) to assess where group members were when they joined the group as well as the current learning needs of participants, and (2) to have members reflect on where they believe they are in their journey to greater awareness and demonstrated capacity.

Group members can use this worksheet to reflect on their own path from unconsciously colluding with racism to deepening their capacity to interrupt and shift racist dynamics effectively and consistently at the interpersonal and organizational levels. Ask participants to complete this self-assessment and note for each of the five boxes:

- What did you think, say, and do in different places on the Path to Competence?
- What helped you move along your Path to Competence from denial to judgment and fear and possibly to greater capacity, courage, and demonstrated racial competence?
- Which box(es) best describes your current level of competence and courage?
- What are three to four skills and capacities you need to focus on developing next?
- What support do you need to keep moving along your Path to Competence?

Have participants share their reflections with their accountability partner and core groups to create a support system to help them achieve their commitment to continuous learning and development.

It has taken me decades of self-work and practice to develop the capacity to recognize a broad range of racist microaggressions and dynamics of systemic racism as well as to develop an extensive tool kit of strategies to respond effectively more often than not. There are still situations where I freeze, can't think of what to do or say, or completely mishandle the moment. I usually think of what I could have said later that day or as I debrief with trusted white colleagues. From some colleagues of color, I have learned I can always circle back and revisit a racist microaggression in hopes of raising awareness, developing skills, and repairing relationships. What is most important is that we never stop trying, speaking up, or learning from feedback as we continue to improve our capacities each day.

Chapter Resources

References

Obear, K. H. (2016). *Turn the tide: Rise above toxic, difficult situations in the workplace.* Difference Press.

Worksheets

Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About Race and Racism, a Beginning List (W3, in Appendix 2)

Effective Interventions Worksheet: Ways to Respond to Racist Microaggressions: A Beginning List of Possibilities, Especially for White Change Agents (W26)

Engaging Skills (W22)

Less Productive Intentions (W23)

PAIRS (W11)

Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism (W29, in Appendix 2)

Productive Intentions (W24)

Racial Equity and Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders and Change Agents (W1, in Appendix 2)

Tools to Respond in the Moment (W4)

Triggering Event Cycle (W7)

Ways to Interrupt and Engage Microaggressive Situations: A Beginning Set of Steps & Guiding Principles, Especially for White Change Agents (W25)

CHAPTER 11

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Identifying Racist Attitudes

White leaders and change agents need to consistently respond to racist microaggressions every time they occur. They also must increase their capacity to recognize the various racist attitudes and implicit biases that often fuel these microaggressions. Once they can readily notice and acknowledge these biases in themselves and others, they will be better equipped to interrupt and shift them effectively in the moment.

I remember times in my life I resisted believing I could possibly have any racial bias or prejudice. Even after I finally acknowledged to myself that I still harbored some racist beliefs, I would never have admitted that to anyone else, ever! Today I believe one of the truest paths to developing our capacity as white change agents is to admit—in a brave, confidential space with other white colleagues committed to racial justice—any racist thoughts and attitudes we may still hold onto. Only by acknowledging these truths are we then able to interrupt and shift them in the moment.

This chapter outlines activities to support white participants in this level of deep self-work to recognize how these racist attitudes and beliefs manifest in their everyday individual thoughts and behaviors as well as why they continue to choose to hold onto and react out of them.

Identifying Common Racist Attitudes at the Group Level

Thousands of people have used the worksheet *Common Racist Behaviors and Attitudes of Some/Many White People* (W27), finding it to be a powerful resource to help them deepen their capacities to:

1. Honestly acknowledge the common racist attitudes among white people with whom they have lived and worked.
2. Admit and own the racial biases they have had and still hold onto.
3. Relate to and support other white colleagues as they collectively become more authentic and real.

4. Acknowledge and sit with their emotions as they recognize the devastating impact of their behavior on their colleagues and clients of color.
5. Explore and identify the roots and sources of these racist beliefs in their individual lives and collectively as white participants.
6. Recognize and disclose the true motives behind their racist actions and inactions.
7. Continue to see themselves in others and resist the temptation to judge or shut down when they feel uncomfortable with the truths about their racist attitudes and behaviors.
8. Actively leave no one behind as they work collectively to support their individual and collective growth and healing.

Use the more comprehensive versions of this original worksheet as you design activities to help group members identify and shift racist attitudes and behaviors: *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28) and *Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W20).

Depending upon the level of individual awareness and willingness, have participants first review the worksheet *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28) at the group level with these directions: "Read through all these common racist beliefs and attitudes, and check off any you have heard from other white people or thought could be fueling some of their racist behaviors. Come prepared to share some examples with the group, if you can." People will inevitably begin to reflect on themselves as they complete this activity. Starting in this way can help ease them into this depth of self-work and possibly minimize their resistance to critically examine their own beliefs.

During the next session, have people first discuss their insights and examples with either their accountability partner or their core groups. Prompt them to engage in brave conversations and relate in as their colleagues share. During the debrief in the large group, conveners can help participants make the connections among racist beliefs, resulting actions, and the negative impact on People of Color as well as on team and organizational goals.

As you transition to asking people to reflect on their own racist beliefs and actions, stay at the group level by asking: "Where and how might other white people have learned these racist attitudes? Why might some still hold onto them and react out of them?" Introduce or reinforce the concept of internalized dominance, which Bell, Funk, Joshi, and Valdivia say "occurs among white people when they believe and/or act on assumptions that white people are superior to, [or] more capable, intelligent, or entitled than people of color."

Talk about some of your own internalized dominance as you share a few racist attitudes and behaviors from your past as well as ones you have recently realized you still hold onto. Ask the group if anyone relates to any of your stories, and invite them to share some of their own. Underscore how, more often than not, we have not been consciously aware that we were reacting out of these implicit biases. However, whenever we find the courage to dig under the impacts of

our comments and actions, we almost always recognize a racist attitude. It is particularly painful to go even deeper and admit the payoff we receive at the expense of People of Color from our continuing to believe and react out of internalized dominance and racist attitudes.

The worksheet *Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W20) will help participants more clearly recognize the types of racist attitudes that fuel racist microaggressions. Have participants review this worksheet as homework. Offer these prompts:

- Which of these types of racist behaviors have you ever observed or heard about occurring?
- Which, if any, have you ever done or considered doing at any point in your life?
- Choose five to ten racist behaviors and note what could be some of the racist beliefs and attitudes underneath these actions.
- Where might you and others have heard or learned these types of racist beliefs and attitudes?

In the next session, ask participants to share their insights and responses in either core groups or with their accountability partner before debriefing in the large group. Emphasize and identify the racist attitudes that fuel racist microaggressions.

Identifying Common Racist Attitudes at the Individual Level

Many in the group may now be ready and willing to begin the next level of self-work. Have them review the worksheet *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28) at the individual level and circle any of the racist attitudes and beliefs they have ever thought or done at any time in their lives. While they may more easily find examples from their youth and early adulthood, encourage them to also be open to acknowledging more recent situations as well.

As you move into the next level of sharing, remind people of one of Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington's *Diverse Community Foundations* (W12) statements: "It's not our fault, but we must accept responsibility." Reiterating the power of past and current racist socialization helps participants move into authentic engagement without choosing to deflect into deep shame and guilt. If you are near the end of a session, have people share a few racist attitudes they can identify in themselves with their accountability partner and then invite further conversation in the large group. First ask, "How are you feeling as you use this worksheet to reflect on your own racist attitudes and beliefs?" As time allows, ask for a few people to share a couple examples before you close the session. For homework, ask participants to continue to reflect on this worksheet and come prepared to share more examples from their personal experience.

As you start the next session, ask for their feelings and reactions to this depth of self-work on racist attitudes and beliefs before creating the space for large- and small-group sharing. In the large group, model the process they will continue in smaller groups of four or five people by asking for an example of a racist attitude. Then acknowledge how you have been taught it and still sometimes think it, and then ask if anyone else relates. Share an example of how you reacted out of that bias and your probable negative impact as you ask others if they have done similar behaviors with similar impact. Ask if someone else would own a different racist attitude, how they have reacted based on it, and the impact they probably had.

To reinforce courage and authenticity, always ask people to verbally or nonverbally show that they relate to what their colleague is sharing. Invite the next person to first acknowledge what the previous person shared and then give an example from their own life.

Continue this process until four or five people have shared and you feel they can continue this process on their own in unfacilitated small groups. As you send the groups off for fifteen to twenty minutes of conversation using the worksheet *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28), ask them to choose a participant to lightly moderate the conversation to help the group equitably share the airtime and relate in to what others have shared.

As you reconvene the large group, ask participants to deeply breathe a few times and share their emotions from their small-group discussions. Then ask the impact of sharing, listening, and relating to each other. Most often, people express a deep sense of relief that they can be honest as well as deep gratitude for the bravery of others who helped them see more of their own racist attitudes, behaviors, and impact.

Invite a few more examples from people who haven't yet shared some of their racist thoughts and behaviors in the large group. When people actively participate in these activities, the learning container deepens and promotes future self-work and skill development. For homework, challenge people to share this worksheet on common racist attitudes with some trusted others as they have honest dialogue and insights with people outside of the group.

The process of recognizing our racist attitudes and behaviors as well as owning the damage we have caused paves the way for the next step in our critical skill development as white leaders and change agents. The next chapter offers a variety of skills and activities to support participants as they interrupt and shift their racist attitudes before they commit more racist actions.

Chapter Resources

References

Bell, L. A., Funk, M. S., Joshi, K. Y., & Valdivia, M. (2016). Racism and white privilege. In M. Adams & L. A. Bell (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (3rd ed., p. 137). Routledge.

Worksheets

Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism (W28, in Appendix 2)

Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism (W20, in Appendix 2)

Common Racist Behaviors and Attitudes of Some/Many White People (W27)

CHAPTER 12

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Interrupting Racist Attitudes and Behaviors

The activities in the previous chapter support participants to honestly recognize many of the racist thoughts and attitudes they still have and from which they react. Conveners need to first encourage participants to acknowledge their sense of relief and deeper connection to the group from this depth of authentic engagement. Next, they can support participants to develop the skills to interrupt and shift their racist thoughts in the moment before they cause more harm, with the ultimate goal of eradicating their racist beliefs completely.

One way to prepare group members for this next level of deep work is to have them revisit the worksheet *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28) to identify five or more of their past racist attitudes. As homework or using reflective time in a session, have participants use the following questions to dig deeper underneath each of their previously held racist beliefs:

1. Where and when did I first hear or learn this racist belief?
2. When and how were these taught and reinforced throughout my life?
3. When have I thought this before?
4. How have I reacted out of this racist attitude? What was my probable racist impact?
5. What was or is my payoff for having this racist thought? How do I benefit?
6. What do I wish I had thought and done instead?

Conveners can use these questions as they share examples from their own lives. The depth of vulnerability and honesty modeled by conveners can encourage greater development for participants. See the sidebar below for two examples of the process of examining and digging beneath one's racist beliefs.

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Digging Deep into Racist Beliefs

Example 1: White people are smarter and make better leaders.

1. Where and when did I first hear or learn this racist belief?

   - All my teachers and adult figures were white.
   - Every book I read or movie and TV show I saw presented white people as leaders and People of Color, especially Black people, as underprivileged and not as smart or competent.
   - Dr. King and a few other Black leaders seemed to be an exception to the rule.

2. When and how were these taught and reinforced throughout my life?

   - In hiring situations, I heard comments like, "We can't find any qualified ones," "We can only hire qualified minorities," or "We have to hire a Person of Color to meet our quota."
   - My white colleagues and I gossiped about and judged the only leader of color as less competent without any thought as to how our collective racist attitudes and behaviors as well as the pervasive racist climate and culture impacted his experience and performance and our critique of him.

3. When have I thought this before?

   - When I applied for jobs.
   - When I didn't get hired and a Person of Color did.
   - Sometimes when I first see a leader of color I don't know.

4. How have I reacted out of this racist attitude? What was my probable racist impact?

   - I listen harder when white leaders speak, and I follow their directions.
   - When People of Color share ideas that differ from mine, I am more skeptical and most often continue to believe I am right.
   - I have given little consideration to ideas from colleagues of color until a white person has repeated it or validated what the person had said.

5. What was or is my payoff for having this racist thought?

   - I get to believe I am smarter and better than People of Color.
   - I get to ignore or minimize the input of colleagues of color and keep doing things the way I want to, in ways that benefit me.
   - I can avoid acknowledging the white supremacist, racist beliefs I absorbed growing up and still hold onto.
   - I can help hire and promote other white people with whom I feel more comfortable and can relate to more.
   - I can believe I got hired and promoted based on my competence and intelligence, rather than due to white privilege and racism.
   - I had and have greater access to mentoring, coaching, and sponsorship from white leaders.

6. What do I wish I had thought and done instead?

   - Named this common belief in hiring committees and identified ways we will not make decisions based on this and other racist beliefs.
   - Seen my colleague of color as a full human being and treated him with the same level of engagement, dignity, and respect as I did my white colleagues.
   - Recognized and shifted the racist beliefs fueling my critique of my colleague of color.
   - Interrupted the gossip and racist criticism of this colleague.
   - Worked to develop meaningful working and social relationships with colleagues of color.
   - Challenged our leadership team to use a race lens to examine our current culture, climate, policies, and practices as we revised those that perpetuated racist dynamics and structural racism.

Example 2: People of Color just need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and stop depending on the government to support them.

1. Where and when did I first hear or learn this racist belief?

   - History texts about the era of Reconstruction after the Civil War.
   - Newscasters talking about welfare and handouts.
   - Maybe from my parents.
   - Seeing only low-income housing areas where Black people lived.

- TV shows that only portrayed People of Color in low-income, poverty situations with few exceptions.
- *Gone with the Wind* and other movies or TV racist portrayals of Black people as lazy as well as multitudes of white people who succeeded on their own.

2. When and how were these taught and reinforced throughout my life?

- President Reagan's "welfare queen" racist political campaign and governmental practices.
- Republican political stances and views about the limited role of government in the US.
- Special programs for students of color at colleges and universities.
- *The Cosby Show* and other media images: If they can do it, why can't other People of Color?
- Model Minority myth juxtaposing Asians or Asian Americans against Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities.

3. When have I thought this before?

- When I feel challenged and uncomfortable as People of Color raised concerns about racist organizational norms, practices, and policies, especially those I created or believed to be fair.
- When I have seen repeated images of People of Color in low-income or poverty situations: news, TV shows, movies.
- When I have driven through a predominantly Black, low-income area in cities and seen multiple Black youth and adults sitting on their front stoops during work hours.

4. How have I reacted out of this racist attitude? What was my probable racist impact?

- I have used this racist belief to justify the existence of racial disparities without having to learn about or sit in the reality and pain of the truth about centuries of intentional racism, genocide, exploitation, and white supremacy.
- I have focused my work on individual People of Color without taking the risk to challenge and change the systemic barriers and structures that continue to support the racist status quo and my white privilege.
- I have blamed People of Color for their low-income status or poverty.

5. What was or is my payoff for having this racist thought?

- I still got to believe I earned everything I had; I do not have to sit in the truth about the impact of white privilege and white supremacy in my life then and now.
- By blaming People of Color for the poverty so many experience, I have not used my energy and resources to actively disrupt institutional racism, and kept access to white privilege and economic resources; I stayed in the club with all its benefits and privileges.
- I could dismiss any feelings of guilt or shame for the access and privileges I received.

6. What do I wish I had thought and done instead?

- Researched the history of government support to identify all the ways most government programs over the centuries have directly benefited white people, almost exclusively, and most often at the expense of People of Color and Indigenous Peoples.
- Recognized much sooner how my family benefited from government programs, most that were denied to People of Color.
- Interrupted anytime I thought or heard related racist beliefs.
- Understood much sooner and talked much more about how most, if not all, societal systems were created by whites for the benefit of whites and made possible by the exploitation of unpaid or low-wage labor of People of Color and natural resources.

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Return to this activity during the next few sessions to provide more opportunities for small- and large-group practice. Invite participants to ask their peers for insights and coaching to help identify additional ideas and possibilities as they dissect these racist attitudes.

In preparation for the next session, ask participants to bring two or three more recent examples of when they have had racist thoughts and possibly reacted out of them. Use either accountability partners or core groups for people to share these prior to a large-group discussion. Share several recent examples of your own before asking participants to share.

The repetitive use of these activities can help participants deepen their capacity and courage to recognize, admit, and shift racist thoughts in the moment before they react out of them. Owning the reality of the harm we have caused through our racist actions and the payoff we receive at the expense of People of Color can provide a powerful source of willingness and conviction to

radically change our daily racist thoughts and behaviors, so we no longer perpetuate racism in the future.

Interrupting Racist Thoughts in the Moment

Ask participants to share the worksheet *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28) and these activities with one or two people between each of the next few sessions. In the process, they encourage other white colleagues and family members to address their racist beliefs as they recognize more of their own and the damaging impact of their actions and inactions.

A common question at this point in the process might be: "How can I interrupt this racist pattern in the future, especially in the moment?" Participants have already taken the first step, which is to deepen awareness of the racist attitudes they still have and those that might still be hovering just below their consciousness.

The following is a list of approaches that can help participants interrupt racist thoughts in the moment.

1. Use scenarios to facilitate self-reflection, dialogue, and skill-building.

Use scenarios and short case studies of common racist dynamics in organizations and in society to show participants how to anticipate and shift their racist thoughts in the moment. Here are a few sample scenarios that may be useful:

- During a presentation, a colleague of color mispronounces a couple of words and has a spelling error in their materials.
- Some of your colleagues of color repeatedly contend that many of your employer's current policies, programs, norms, and services are racist.
- Social media that people are watching in the workplace shows a video of People of Color going in and out of stores carrying goods without paying for them during a Black Lives Matter protest.
- An evening news program features a segment about the increasing crime rate in a lower-income neighborhood near where you live.

Conveners can also work with participants to identify ten to twenty scenarios that occur in the organization and local community to use in this activity and subsequent homework assignments.

Have individual group members choose a scenario and note their responses to the prompts below before sharing in a small group:

- What are some possible racist thoughts and assumptions someone might have in this situation?
- Which racist thoughts or implicit biases might you have in this scenario?
- How can you interrupt and shift this racist thought in the moment?
    - ◊ Shift your thoughts to:
        - ¤ This isn't true.
        - ¤ It's just another racist thought from my socialization.
    - ◊ Ask yourself these questions:
        - ¤ Is this true?
        - ¤ How could this be connected to racial bias and prejudice?
        - ¤ What is my evidence that this is truer for People of Color than white people?
        - ¤ When white people exhibit the same behavior, how do I make meaning of that? How do I react and treat them similarly or differently?
    - ◊ Think the exact opposite:
        - ¤ For instance, instead of "People of Color are so aggressive!" think, "Actually, white people can be as aggressive or more so at times. How many times have I excused or accepted the aggressive bullying behaviors of white men, and possibly white women? Maybe even framed it as necessary leadership?"
        - ¤ Instead of thinking, "White people are smarter and make better leaders," choose different thoughts, including "People of Color have shown powerful leadership in many ways, often leading in ways that are critically needed in these times. They are collaborative, engaging, relationship-focused, and mission-driven, and they offer transparent truth-telling. Some may have different styles as leaders than the traditional white-male version I was taught, and I am glad for that."
    - ◊ Dig deeper into the possible racist roots of this thought:
        - ¤ When did I hear and learn this racist stereotype?
        - ¤ How did it serve me to believe it? What is my payoff in the moment to hold onto it?

Practicing with these tools over and over will help participants increase their capacity to use them in the moment as soon as they notice a racist thought or any suspicion they may be about to react based on a racist belief. Through vigilance and continuous practice, they can decrease the volume of racist thoughts and attitudes enough to stop themselves before reacting out of them and perpetuating more racism. Learning more accurate information will also create new neural pathways. Without it, white people will predictably fall into the old ruts of racist attitudes that are so deeply carved in us.

2. Shift racist thoughts and biases in the moment.

Ask participants to identify two or three of their actions or inactions they now realize were most likely fueled, at least in part, by racist attitudes. Invite them to use these reflection questions to write about two or three of these situations:

1. Describe the specific elements and dynamics of the situation.
2. What did you say and do? What did you not do?
3. What were the probable racist impacts of your actions and inactions?
4. What were the probable racist biases fueling your actions or inactions?
5. How can you interrupt and change these racist beliefs in the moment to what is true?

Below are a couple of examples to illustrate how to shift racist thoughts.

- Racist thought: People of Color are criminals.
  - ◊ More accurate thoughts and questions:
    - ¤ People of all racial identities commit crimes.
    - ¤ The systemic racism in the legal system protects many white people from the consequences of their crimes.
    - ¤ TV and movies continue to portray People of Color as criminals far more than white characters.
    - ¤ Who gets to define what is a "crime"? How has it been defined over the centuries? For whose benefit?
    - ¤ Over the centuries and recently, how many People of Color were arrested and wrongly accused of crimes they didn't commit?
    - ¤ How often have police arrested People of Color for extremely minor infractions that white people get away with all the time?
    - ¤ How much white-collar crime occurs that we never hear about and goes unaddressed?
    - ¤ What is the actual data of crime statistics disaggregated by race? And do these reflect all the crime that is committed, or disproportionately those by People of Color still?
    - ¤ Most interpersonal crime occurs within racial groups.
    - ¤ What is my payoff for thinking People of Color are criminals?
    - ¤ How many crimes have I committed over the years that I have never been held accountable for?
- Racist thought: People of Color are lazy.
  - ◊ More accurate thoughts and questions:
    - ¤ People of all racial identities may not work as much or as hard as I do or as I want them to.

⬚ There are so many times in my life when I slacked off, took a break, or didn't do good work, and I never got called lazy.

⬚ By racialized identity, which groups built this country's economy and infrastructure while whites benefited from and exploited the labor of enslaved, indentured, and low-paid workers?

⬚ By race, who performs the most challenging hard labor? The most dangerous jobs? Jobs I am not willing to do? Those most white people are unwilling to do?

⬚ When have I done some physical labor and taken breaks during the process?

⬚ How many People of Color do I know who work two or three jobs and travel long distances to make a living?

⬚ What is my payoff for thinking People of Color are lazy?

This activity helps participants recognize their current racist beliefs, interrupt and shift these pernicious messages in the moment, and pave new neural pathways so they may no longer react out of these racist attitudes.

Ask group members to schedule weekly fifteen-minute sessions (virtually or in person) with their accountability partner or a member of their core group to continue to practice recognizing and interrupting racist attitudes and identifying far more accurate thoughts to replace them. You may want to ask participants to negotiate a new engagement guideline with people in the group and in their work environments to create greater and more immediate accountability and coaching. Invite them to ask people, "If you notice that I say or do something that has a possible racist impact or could be rooted in racist beliefs, could I ask you to interrupt the dynamic and help me see what I am missing so I don't continue this racist behavior in the future?" Most white participants are eager for their peers to give them the gift of feedback and coaching, even if in the moment they may not always like this level of truth-telling and support.

Over a few sessions, conveners can help participants deepen their capacity to recognize and interrupt their own racist attitudes as well as create new neural pathways as they relearn more accurate information and beliefs. For me, this is lifelong, daily work to identify the racist attitudes I still have and shift them before I perpetuate more racist harm. Unfortunately, not all participants may be willing to embrace this critical depth of self-work.

Responding to Resistance from Participants

If some group members are not able or willing to identify any racist attitudes or beliefs they may have, assign everyone to complete at least two of the assessments focused on race available on Harvard University's Project Implicit website (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit). While some individuals may still challenge the validity of the process and results, and thus resist acknowledging their racist beliefs, many will find it to be a helpful wake-up call.

Some participants may try to avoid this degree of self-work by choosing to keep swirling in guilt and shame. They may say things like, "I feel guilty for being white. Being white is bad and wrong. I am a horrible person." Participants often wallow in these feelings as a performative defense mechanism to avoid making any meaningful behavioral change.

The point is not to apologize for being white or to believe there is anything inherently wrong with being white. On the contrary, it is our racist thoughts, beliefs, actions, and inactions that are problematic, not our essence and value as a human being. One of the greatest fears of white participants is to be called a racist. So many are stuck in this either/or dichotomy: Either I am a racist because I say and do racist things, and therefore am a bad person, or I don't have racist thoughts and behaviors, and therefore am a good person. Help participants recognize this common trap of dualistic thinking and shift to a more complex stance, such as, "I have racist attitudes that sometimes fuel racist behaviors that negatively impact others, *and* I am worthy and deserving of love, respect, community, connection, belonging, and opportunities to learn and grow. I can change any racist thoughts and actions I still have. If I have a racist impact on others, I can apologize, sit with my negative impact, make amends, and change my behavior in the future."

Ask participants to review the worksheet *Diverse Community Foundations* (W12) developed by Rev. Dr. Jamie Washington. Encourage them to reflect on the following points:

1. Communities are built through building relationships of trust and commitment.
2. We are all doing the best we can (most of the time).
3. We don't know all there is to know.
4. Just because you are, doesn't mean you understand. Just because you're not, doesn't mean you don't understand.
5. Oppression is pervasive and impacts us all.
6. It is not our fault, but we must accept responsibility to create change.
7. Conflict and discomfort are often a part of growth.
8. Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
9. Practice forgiveness and letting go.
10. Self-work, healing, and self-love are necessary for acceptance of others.
11. Acknowledge, appreciate, and celebrate progress.
12. There are no quick fixes.
13. Individuals and organizations do grow and change. There is hope.
14. We're better together, and deeply connected soul to soul.

As the group discusses these ideas, ask them to identify any specific ones that help move away from the lie that "If I have racist thoughts, I am a bad person" to the belief that we all have been socialized in a racist, white supremacist system. From this ground of being, we may be more likely to continuously shift our racist thoughts and behaviors as we partner to create true racial equity and justice in organizations and society.

There is deep healing power in first getting honest with ourselves, and then vulnerably sharing with other white participants in brave spaces of accountability. As colleagues relate to our situations without judgment and offer their own examples, we begin to know we are not alone, we see ourselves in each other, and we realize we no longer need to hide these secrets. We can learn to not fall into the trap of comparing or ranking whose racist behaviors are worse while hoping ours are not so bad. Instead, we can recognize the damage caused by each racist action as we find more willingness to acknowledge and disclose some of our racist behaviors and attitudes we thought we could never tell anyone else. Through this process, we can find renewed commitment to live differently in the future.

Each time I choose to be authentic in these ways and own my racist impacts, I experience feelings of regret, guilt, and shame. It is critical that we resist the urge to stuff these emotions and instead create safe spaces to stay with them and feel them fully on our own or with other white people. It is deeply painful to live with the guilt and shame for what we have done in the past. We must develop the capacity to stay present with our feelings and release them in productive ways. If we do not, we may perpetuate even greater racist harm in the future.

In the past, I tried to cover up my emotions by justifying my actions as necessary for someone's development or my own protection. Only as I reflected on these situations did I realize the racist attitudes I used to defend my actions. While this resistance tactic may seem to have worked in the moment, something inevitably would occur to remind me of the harm I had caused. In those moments, I would be hit with another wave of guilt and shame that seemed even more powerful than before. The only way out of this vicious, unproductive cycle of racist harm, guilt, and shame is to work with other white colleagues to admit our past behaviors, acknowledge the damage we caused, and release our pent-up emotions.

Chapter Resources

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Worksheets

Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism (W28, in Appendix 2)
Diverse Community Foundations (W12)

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Responding to Feedback About Our Racist Behaviors

Regardless of all the self-work, training, and reading I have done, I still have racist thoughts and occasionally say and do things that have a racist impact on others. Like many other white people, I struggle with the pressure to appear perfect and fear the consequences of making a mistake. As we are vigilant and work continuously to not perpetuate racism, we also need to be prepared to respond effectively when we get feedback about the negative impact of our behaviors.

At this point, most participants are very eager to learn new ways to respond when they make a racist misstep. To model possible ways to react more effectively in these moments, first share a story from your own experience or from people with whom you have worked. See the sidebar below for an example.

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Learning from Your Mistakes: One Person's Story

One of my white clients shared this story with me and asked for my advice:

> During a leadership team meeting, our white supervisor angrily criticized some of the lower-level Black staff as unprofessional and too aggressive because they gave direct negative feedback in the open forum about department dynamics and practices. The manager went on to say these staff were just "playing the race card" to get out of doing their jobs. At the time, I didn't say anything and just looked down at my phone. I was stunned and taken aback and honestly didn't know what to say.
>
> When my colleague, who is a Person of Color, confronted me afterward and said they were disappointed in me, I immediately felt defensive. They then said my silence served to validate and reinforce the racist

comments of the director. I quickly tried to justify my inaction: "I was caught off guard and felt so uncomfortable. I didn't know what to say! I looked at you, but you were looking down, so I didn't say anything. It wouldn't have made any difference anyway since they were so upset. I thought I would follow up afterward once they cooled down, though I never did." As soon as I started laying out all these excuses, I could see my colleague starting to frown even more. As they stood up to leave, they said, "I need you to think about what you did and how you impacted me and our other colleagues."

After the client and I talked through this situation and explored ways they could have responded differently in the team meeting as well as when their colleague gave them feedback, my client felt more prepared to continue the conversation and make amends with their colleague. In our next session, they shared how that went:

> I was nervous to follow up with my colleague, but did ask if they were willing to talk more. I'm grateful they agreed to meet after work. I started off by apologizing for both my silence in the meeting as well as the defensive, insensitive ways I dismissed their feedback to me. I said I regretted not speaking up as well as disrespecting them when they took the risk to confront me. I said I would start attending groups to learn more about racist microaggressions and ways to react in the moment. I committed to doing my best to never stay silent again. They listened as I talked and said, "OK, I look forward to seeing what you do differently next time." To be honest, I'd hoped for a more enthusiastic reply.

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After conveners tell their stories, participants may be ready to use the following prompts on the worksheet *When Someone Gives Feedback About the Racist Impact of Our Behavior* (W44) to review a time they reacted less effectively when someone tried to give them feedback about the racist impact of their behavior. Help participants acknowledge even the small steps some people have made to use some of these skills and build the willingness to continue to develop these critical capacities.

Have participants share their written reflections with their accountability partner during the session as well as with core group members as homework. Invite group members to seek out other white colleagues who have demonstrated capacity to receive feedback effectively to discuss ways they handle these challenging moments.

Role Plays and Reflection

The next step is to support group members as they deepen their capacity to respond effectively when they receive feedback about the racist impact of their behaviors. Conceptual understanding is necessary but not sufficient. Participants need to practice these skills until they become a part of who they are. Start with some common, generic situations to help members build their capacity to role-play and give feedback to each other. After this, most participants will likely be ready to use some of their own examples of reacting less effectively to feedback they wrote about in the earlier activity to set up realistic role plays in their core groups.

Here are two ways to create the role plays. The group can choose to have the author of the situation play themselves as others take turns giving them feedback and reacting to how they respond to it. Another approach is to have someone else play out a colleague's situation and model effective engagement skills. Observing others role-play their situation gives participants enough emotional distance to recognize ways they could respond more effectively in the future.

After each role play, give feedback and offer thoughts of alternative approaches to try out. Have group members use these prompts as they debrief each practice session:

- Questions for the person playing the role of receiving feedback:
    - ◊ How did you feel receiving and responding to feedback in the role play?
    - ◊ What do you think you did that was useful?
    - ◊ As you reflect, is there anything you might do differently? Is there any potential negative impact of what you did or said?
    - ◊ Are you open to the group's thoughts and reflections?
- Questions for the person or persons giving the feedback in the moment:
    - ◊ How did you feel giving the feedback in this role play?
    - ◊ What did you find useful and why?
    - ◊ Is there anything that gave you pause? What could be the unproductive impact of anything they did or said?
    - ◊ What, if anything, may also have been useful in this scenario?
- Questions for observers:
    - ◊ How did you feel observing this role play?
    - ◊ What did you find useful and why?
    - ◊ Is there anything that gave you pause? What could be the unproductive impact of anything they did or said?
    - ◊ What, if anything, may also have been useful in this scenario?
- Final questions for the person playing the role of receiving feedback:
    - ◊ How are you feeling as you hear our comments and suggestions?
    - ◊ What ideas did you hear that might be useful in the future?
    - ◊ Do you have any other insights or reflections from our discussion?

To close out this activity, the group can take a few moments to reflect on the ways they gave each other feedback with these prompts:

- What did you notice about yourself and how you like to give and receive feedback?
- In your opinion, what were helpful ways others gave feedback?
- Do you have any other insights on ways to give each other feedback in the future?

Chapter Resources

Worksheets

When Someone Gives Feedback About the Racist Impact of Our Behavior (W44)

CHAPTER 14

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Recognizing and Shifting the Dynamics of White Privilege

The activities and concepts in this chapter can support group members exploring how white people have benefited from white privilege and the dominant white culture in organizations and society. The next step is to recognize how we continue to perpetuate white privilege in our interactions and support of organizational policies and practices as well as through our silence and ineffective reactions to the status quo.

I resisted the concept of having privilege, much less any white privilege, for far too long. Many white participants also struggle with recognizing and owning privilege, much less disrupting it in the moment. For decades I was only focused on the pain and oppression I experienced in my marginalized identities. I didn't make room to explore my privileged groups and the unearned access and opportunities I received.

If some participants are having similar struggles, you will want to first explore the concept and dynamics of privilege in general before delving deeply into the manifestations of white privilege. Consider exploring the privileged and marginalized dynamics related to right- and left-handedness. The following questions can be used as the basis for discussion:

- Who was the world set up for: right-handed or left-handed folks?
- How do you know?
- What are ten to fifteen examples of how objects and language reinforce right-handedness as better, aka the privileged group? (Examples include school desks, spiral notebooks, scissors, door handles, logos on coffee cups with handles, some sports equipment, "that idea came out of left field," "left-handed compliment," "right" meaning correct, "right or wrong.")
- How do you imagine these objects and this language came about?
- Today, how many people intentionally want to discriminate and oppress left-handers?
- How might similar practices and dynamics exist for other marginalized groups?
- Who has some examples of current-day minimization, discrimination, or oppression

of marginalized groups you are a member of or have proximity to? (To seed the conversation, start by sharing a few examples about the experiences of people living with disabilities, women, younger or new employees, LGBTQIA+ folx, people who grew up or are currently living in poverty or as working class, and so on, before opening it up to others.)

Another useful metaphor for privilege is Dr. Beverly Tatum's example of the moving walkway. As participants imagine a moving walkway in an airport or mall, ask: "How is having privilege like being able to use a moving walkway?" Some common answers are:

- You get farther faster.
- You don't have to do anything, and you still move ahead.
- You are not tired and exhausted from dragging luggage like those not on the walkway.
- A voice keeps you safe and warns you when it is time to get off.
- If you walk as well, you get even farther ahead of others.

Identifying Privileged and Marginalized Groups

As you transition from this activity, have the group identify a variety of both privileged and marginalized groups as well as common organizational dynamics. To illustrate the common dynamic between privileged and marginalized groups, hold your hands in fists and put one above the other, as shown in the illustration.

As you hold your fists one above the other, ask people to call out different categories of difference and the corresponding privileged and marginalized groups, in that order, such as: race—whites and People of Color, Indigenous Peoples; socioeconomic class—wealthy, upper middle class, middle class, working class, and people living in poverty; sex—men, women, and intersex people; sexuality—heterosexuals and gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and other queer-identifying people; gender identity—cisgender and transgender folx, gender-nonconforming and nonbinary people; education—more formal schooling and less formal schooling as well as if attended a private school or public school; years of experience—more experienced and less experienced, and so on. If group members struggle to name specific groups, visually give a prompt using whichever fist to focus their attention as you seek more examples of either privileged or marginalized groups.

Ask participants to think about one or more of their marginalized group identities as they review a list of common *Privileged and Marginalized Group Dynamics* (W30). Group members will likely easily relate to members of privileged groups generally having greater access to power and resources, making the rules, defining what is normal, or being assumed to be the leader and more competent. As they reflect on their marginalized identities, most participants see how these dynamics reflect their lived experiences, including being assumed to be deficient and inferior, having to assimilate and collude to survive, being punished if they challenge and question the status quo, and having their truth and competence questioned and invalidated.

Participants can deepen their understanding as they share personal and organizational examples of experiencing these and other types of common privileged and marginalized group dynamics. Discuss at least five or more different categories, including socioeconomic class and organizational hierarchy. White members who grew up poor or working class as well as those currently in lower status positions may struggle a bit more than others to realize the white privilege they have been given. Holding space for stories of classism and hierarchical oppression will help more group members feel heard and understood enough so they can more readily engage the conversations on white privilege.

Examining White Privilege

To introduce the concept of white privilege, share some personal reflections and stories of times you resisted or rejected this concept, or simply were confused by the term. Then use the same lists of characteristics from the worksheet *Privileged and Marginalized Group Dynamics* (W30) to talk about several examples of dynamics you have observed or experienced related to whiteness and white privilege. You can start with these questions:

- In what ways do we, as white people, relate to some of the characteristics of privileged groups?

- In what ways do the characteristics of marginalized groups operate in relationship to People of Color and Indigenous Peoples in society? In our organization?

At this point, participants may be able to realize that interrupting racist interpersonal aggressions is necessary but not sufficient to manifest transformational change. White people must deepen their capacity to recognize and interrupt dynamics of white privilege and whiteness in organizational policies, practices, programs, norms, and services. The first step in this long developmental journey is to dive into the common dynamics of white privilege.

For homework, consider assigning an article such as Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." Have participants review *Examples of White Privilege, Unearned Advantages* (W31), and ask them to come prepared to share examples that occur in organizations, societal structures, and their own lives.

Before asking participants to share examples of white privilege in their own lives, conveners can each highlight a few insights and examples from their experiences. My reflections in the worksheet *Personal Examples of White Privilege* (W45) may be useful as you identify some of your own.

Creating a White Privilege Timeline

Invite group members to create their own individual white privilege timeline as they identify examples of unearned advantage in their lives. Share some key moments from your own experience to model this depth of honesty and transparency. Throughout this process of identifying and owning white privilege, pause at various points to process the impact and feelings related to this vital self-work, particularly the depth of guilt and shame.

I used to believe the more I talked about feeling guilty and ashamed for being white, the more others would think I was committed to racial justice. To be more honest, I also hoped they would give me a pass if I ever said or did anything racist. As I wallowed in guilt and shame, I floundered around and was an ineffective, wannabe ally. The only way to move through this unproductive space is to honestly share our feelings with other white group members as we learn new ways to effectively transform guilt and shame into the passion that fuels anti-racist work.

The White Privilege Move-in Circle

The White Privilege Move-in Circle is an experiential activity to help participants more readily recognize and acknowledge white privilege in their lives. This is a variation of the Common

Ground activity in which participants identify and claim their various privileged and marginalized group identities and experiences.

Ask the group to form a circle where people can stand or sit to participate. Then explain the first step: Name a specific type of white privilege you have either personally experienced or realized that whites, as a group, experience. Conveners can model different ways people can participate by sharing personal examples, like: "In my life I have experienced this type of white privilege: _____." Or "I have seen others receive this type of white privilege: _____."

After each example, group members can either move into the circle or raise their hand to signify they also have received or observed this aspect of white privilege. After pausing to notice how many people have moved or raised their hand, ask participants to move back and invite someone else to offer another instance of white privilege.

Keep the activity going for about ten minutes and until most people have offered a few examples. Use accountability partners, core groups, or new pairings to debrief this activity and explore the depth of emotions and insights people are experiencing.

Most likely, at this point, many participants will be eager to know what they can do when they notice dynamics of white privilege in their organizations and in their lives. In response, first focus on discussing ways to disrupt organizational manifestations of white privilege.

Recognizing Organizational Manifestations of White Privilege

Ask the following questions to help participants begin to identify ways that white privilege manifests in various organizational norms, practices, processes, and policies:

- In your organization, what are the written and unwritten rules about what the characteristics are of a good leader?
- Are all people across racialized identities assessed and viewed in similar ways against these types of written and unwritten rules?

Share a story similar to mine shown in the sidebar below to help participants begin to recognize how they and some of their white employees possibly negatively judge and critique colleagues of color who demonstrate some of these valued leadership behaviors.

Use the worksheet *Desired/Expected Leader Behaviors* (W32) to discuss when and how they may have observed or heard about colleagues of color who were negatively critiqued for exhibiting these leader behaviors while white colleagues received praise and positive assessments.

Have group members first discuss ways to interrupt these dynamics of white privilege. Next, have them role-play and practice ways to speak up and shift these examples of white privilege in the moment.

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Critiques of People of Color Who Demonstrate Leadership Qualities

When I first thought about good leadership traits, I easily identified a long list, including being assertive, confident, decisive, passionate, extroverted, charismatic, a direct communicator, logical, analytical, even-tempered, friendly yet impersonal, task- and time-focused, a problem solver, solutions-oriented, inspiring, innovation-driven, and hardworking. I taught students and staff to develop these same leader characteristics without any consciousness that I had developed this list from both personal experiences in traditional organizations as well as from studying research written exclusively by white, class-privileged men.

I still appreciate many of these qualities in leaders. The problem was not only that most of my role models and data sources were white men, but also that I believed and presented these principles and research as the best and only good way to be a leader. Only decades later did I realize I was unconsciously privileging and perpetuating many characteristics of dominant white and male culture without any critical lens.

During hiring and promotional processes, I privileged and valued candidates, almost exclusively white, who seemed to possess these characteristics over others, without attention to demonstrated competence. At the time I thought I was simply looking for a good fit. On reflection, I now realize I was trying to hire people who were more like me. I am even more embarrassed to admit how if I was hiring direct reports, I looked for additional characteristics, including the ability to follow my directions, get along with current team members, develop near-perfect programs and services, not make waves or cause conflict, and work within the established hierarchical structures.

I perpetuated and reinforced common unwritten norms and rules in traditional white organizations that I believed were the right way to work on teams. Equally troubling, I expected people to look and act professional, by which I meant they had to dress and wear their hair in certain white, middle-class ways; use verbal and written communication styles like mine; be on time; not make mistakes; engage in dialogue and disagreements with a measured, polite tone and style; offer input and feedback in ways that left me comfortable and unchallenged; and respect my authority to make decisions.

Only years later did I realize a deeper insight: I had held People of Color to these dominant white cultural standards to a far more rigid degree than I did white colleagues for whom I made many allowances. For instance, when whites

questioned current practices with a passionate, emotional, and direct tone, I coded their actions as demonstrating leadership potential. However, when People of Color showed up in similar ways, I judged them as unprofessional, angry, and in need of further coaching and development.

Over the years, I have noticed this strong pattern of white privilege: When white people demonstrate certain characteristics, they are generally recognized for their leadership abilities. However, when People of Color and Indigenous Peoples exhibit these same behaviors, they are often negatively critiqued and judged by many whites, and their actions are labeled in far more negative ways. For instance, when People of Color are assertive, they may be labeled as aggressive or bullying; when they are innovative risk-takers, they may be negatively critiqued as reckless; if they appear confident, they may be judged as arrogant and condescending; and when they raise concerns, they may be called too confrontational and militant.

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Comparing White Privilege to Other Privileges

If white group members have trouble recognizing and owning white privilege, use an example from another form of oppression they might better relate to: male privilege. Most white women in White Accountability Groups, as well as many white men and gender nonbinary folx, will easily identify multiple personal and organizational examples of times women have been criticized, censured, and undermined for demonstrating the very same behaviors that many white men are rewarded for. Use the worksheet *Desired/Expected Leader Behaviors* (W32) as you invite group members to tell stories of how women have been judged, if not punished, for demonstrating some of these leadership behaviors.

As you hold space for these stories and the damaging impacts on women, ask participants to discuss these questions: "How might these dynamics of male privilege be similar to those of white privilege in our organization? How might People of Color have racist experiences similar to the sexist ones experienced by women?"

To help participants identify ways white privilege may be embedded in daily practices within their teams, encourage them to consider the following questions and pay attention now (PAN) by racialized group membership:

1. Whose ideas are considered?
2. Whose contributions are questioned and challenged?
3. Who is assumed to be competent? Who is assumed to be deficient?

4. Whose credentials are questioned?
5. Who is assumed to belong?
6. Who gets the benefit of the doubt? Who has exceptions made for them?
7. Whose culture is infused in the organization as the right way to operate and engage?
8. What behaviors are valued as competent or professional?
9. By group membership, who gets rewarded for demonstrating these?
10. By group membership, who gets ignored, overlooked, or even criticized for these same behaviors?

Identifying the Costs of White Privilege and Racism to White People

Another key to deepening understanding of white privilege is to consider the costs to white people. To guide the discussion, consider assigning as homework chapter 4, "Why Would Whites Want to Change?", from *But I'm Not Racist!: Tools for Well-Meaning Whites*. This chapter describes in depth much of the damage white people experience from growing up in a white supremacist society, including building our sense of self-esteem on the illusion and lie that white people are superior to People of Color and Indigenous Peoples; needing to believe racist stereotypes and white supremacist ideology to justify the vast differences in lived experiences between white people and People of Color; acting in ways that violate our core values as we collude with racist dynamics; coping with deep feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and inadequacy; and living in isolation without meaningful, authentic relationships with People of Color and white change agents.

Of course, we can't equate the costs of racism and white privilege that whites experience to the pervasive, systemic violence People of Color and Indigenous Peoples experience daily. But by acknowledging and accepting the truth of how we have traded our humanity for white privilege and the illusion of superiority, white people can start to develop the necessary depth of commitment, resilience, and perseverance to sustain our anti-racist efforts throughout our lives.

To prepare for the group discussion, ask participants to come ready to honestly describe the types of costs they have observed in general as well as personally experienced. Have them complete the worksheet *Costs of Racism for White People* (W33). As always, hold space for the depth of emotions people will feel as they grapple with acknowledging the pain of these costs of racism and white supremacy in their personal lives.

Chapter Resources

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Worksheets

Examples of White Privilege, Unearned Advantages (W31)
Costs of Racism for White People (W33)
Personal Examples of White Privilege (W45)
Privileged and Marginalized Group Dynamics (W30)

CHAPTER 15

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Influencing Change at the Organizational Level

As the White Accountability Group nears its final four to five sessions, participants will want concrete anti-racism strategies to implement in their workplace and spheres of influence. These three key steps can help prepare participants to go to the next level in their anti-racism journey:

1. Establish clear expectations for all employees.
2. Assess the current organizational culture and climate.
3. Use a race lens to identify and shift unproductive white cultural norms in planning and decision-making as well as when analyzing and revising practices, policies, programs, norms, and services.

Establish Clear Expectations for All Employees

Meaningful, sustainable systemic organizational change will only occur if leaders set clear expected competencies and consistently hold people accountable for developing and demonstrating them effectively. Have participants use the worksheet *Expected Competencies for Creating Racially Inclusive Organizations* (W2) as a tool to rate themselves as well as their colleagues and work teams. This process will help them recognize how many skills and capacities they have developed through their participation in the White Accountability Group, and they can use it to identify additional skills they want leaders and employees to develop in the future.

Leaders, managers, and supervisors need to both constantly communicate the critical need for these competencies as well as consistently demonstrate and model them. Current employees should receive comprehensive training and coaching to accelerate their capacities. In addition, hiring and onboarding structures need to be revised to ensure new employees either demonstrate these competencies or acquire them in an intensive development program during their first six months in the organization.

Assessing the Current Organizational Culture and Climate

There are several activities to help participants assess the current state of racial equity and inclusion in their organization. Start by asking people to use a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = not at all, 10 = completely) as they reflect on and answer this question: "How equitable, inclusive, and racially just is the current organizational culture and climate for all employees, managers, leaders, and those we serve?" As group members share in pairs or small groups, encourage them to share their rating as well as any evidence or data that supports their ratings. Encourage participants to engage in authentic dialogue with curiosity and deep listening, as colleagues may share differing viewpoints.

Have the group review the worksheet *12 Indicators of Current Organizational Culture and Climate* (W34). Invite them to consider several different perspectives, including those of employees and leaders from various marginalized racialized groups as well as white employees. Use these prompts: "Which of these descriptors best describes the current state of the overall organizational climate and culture? Which describe different pockets of the organization? By racialized group membership, might there be differing ratings?"

Ask the group to note the data and evidence that support their choice of indicators. Use these questions to guide discussions in both core groups and the full group:

1. Which indicators describe the overall organization as well as any smaller units?
2. What might be the ratings of members of different racialized groups?
3. What data and evidence seem to support your perspectives?
4. What is useful, if anything, about these various stages or indicators? What is not useful?
5. Where do you want the organization to be?
6. What might facilitate greater progress?
7. What are ways to mitigate possible resistance to change?

If you sense that participants have an overinflated assessment of their organization, have them review organizational and industry datasets disaggregated by race and hierarchical level, including climate surveys, focus group data from Employee Resource Groups, hiring and retention data, promotional data, performance management ratings, exit interview themes, and data about race and racism in the region. You could also invite a panel of white change agents from across the organization to share their perspectives and experiences regarding the current organizational culture and climate as well as ways they intentionally work to co-create greater racial equity and inclusion in their daily work activities.

The Multicultural Organizational Development (MCOD) model, created by Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman, is a strategic road map for envisioning what more is possible in an organization and implementing critical, transformative change. The MCOD model provides a common

set of terms and concepts to use when applying a race lens to evaluating an organization. Chapter 6 of *But I'm Not Racist!: Tools for Well-Meaning Whites* describes the model's six stages in detail. Assigning members of each core group the chapter as well as articles by Jackson and Hardiman (see resource list at the end of this chapter) will help participants develop a deeper grounding in the concepts and learn ways to use the model for organizational change.

The Multicultural Organizational Development Model

Jackson 2005; Graphic developed by Dr. Shelly Kerr

Once the group is familiar with the model, try this activity. Ask participants to physically line up in a continuum from zero to six indicating what stage they believe their organization is in. Next, break into small-group discussions organized by the stages participants have identified to discuss the reasons and evidence behind their ratings. Then facilitate a large-group conversation exploring the varying viewpoints and data people cite that support their choice of their stage.

Group members need space to envision what an inclusive, racially just organization could be in the future. To help them imagine, I developed the following statement for position announcements to support participants seeing what is possible:

> Our organization is committed to creating racially equitable and inclusive work environments to support the success of the full range of our clients and employees. We believe that employees who feel valued and respected will create policies, programs, practices, norms, and services to effectively meet the needs and exceed the expectations of the increasingly racially diverse client populations we serve now and hope to serve in the future.
>
> We encourage candidates to apply who have demonstrated capacity to create racially inclusive work environments, work effectively on racially diverse teams, and serve the increasingly racially diverse clients we serve and want to attract.

We are committed to hiring and retaining a racially diverse, culturally competent leadership and employee group at all levels of the organization who not only reflect the demographics of our clients, but also continue to deepen their skills and competencies to serve the full range of those we serve.

Ask participants to review this statement as they assess how similar or different it is to those used in their organizational hiring practices. Invite them to bring current position announcements to the next session to work in core groups to revise and edit them to better reflect the vision of creating a more racially equitable and inclusive organization.

For more information and strategies to use the MCOD model to facilitate organizational change, view the webinars *Creating Inclusion, Pt 1* (V5) and *Inclusive Culture (Creating Inclusion Pt 2)* (V6).

Identifying White Supremacy Culture

The next step to prepare group members to shift the status quo is to deepen their capacity to recognize and interrupt unproductive dynamics of white culture. For homework, ask participants to use the following prompts as they review Tema Okun's article "White Supremacy Culture" or similar publications:

- How, if at all, were you taught to value various characteristics of white supremacy culture?
- When, if at all, are each of these useful to you in your life?
- When, if at all, have these been harmful to you or others?
- Which, if any, of the antidotes resonate with your values and leadership style?

In the next session, consider using sets of White Supremacy Culture Cards to support group members in discussions. Tema Okun gave me permission to replicate her material in this format. On the front of each card is one of the characteristics and on the back are the related antidotes from her original article. (See the resource list at the end of this chapter.)

Invite participants in core groups to flip through their set of White Supremacy Culture Cards as they discuss these prompts:

1. Which of these characteristics of white supremacy culture do you see reflected in our societal or organizational culture, practices, services, programs, and unwritten rules and norms?
2. How do you see these playing out in your work and in your thoughts and actions both inside and outside of work?

3. What are one to two ways some aspects might be useful at times?
4. How, if at all, are these characteristics unproductive at times?

Some of these characteristics can be useful at times. The problem is how these norms and practices are upheld as the only right way, and those who have other norms and practices are negatively critiqued and punished.

To illustrate how some characteristics may be somewhat useful at times as well as when they are not, ask participants when, if ever, a sense of urgency is useful, such as when someone is having a heart attack or there is a critical, looming deadline. In these types of situations, focused attention and action are critical; however, frantic urgent activity may not be productive. In fact, when white people are operating in crisis mode without thought and clear intention, our stress reactions are often influenced by racist attitudes and whiteness.

Use a couple of sessions for members to continue to discuss the unproductive manifestations of white supremacy culture in both the organization and their personal lives as well as more inclusive, effective ways to act and engage. Use the White Supremacy Culture Cards to increase participant capacity to readily recognize these characteristics. Have each core group develop a scenario to act out for others that shows how four or five of these aspects of white supremacy culture operate unproductively in daily work activities. They can shuffle through the cards to identify which ones they want to focus on. For instance, one group may choose to role-play various conflicts at a budget meeting where power hoarding, paternalism, individualism, and either/or thinking are prevalent. Another group may act out a training session on race where perfectionism, fear of open conflict, right to comfort, and defensiveness are operating. A third group may choose to model a project team meeting where the characteristics "I'm the only one," "quantity over quality," "progress equals bigger and more," and a sense of urgency are pervasive.

As each group demonstrates their scenario, other group members can look through their stack of cards as they note the following:

- What characteristics of white supremacy culture did you notice in the scenario?
- What was or could be the unproductive impact if these are not interrupted and shifted?
- What, if any, additional negative impact might People of Color experience in this scenario?
- Who could change and shift these unproductive dynamics in the moment? Afterward?
- What are more inclusive ways of engaging and working together?

As participants debrief each scenario in the full group, they will most likely see a few more characteristics of white supremacy culture than the core group had intended to show. Through these discussions, group members can realize how dominant white culture is like the air we breathe: it is hard to recognize what has become an almost invisible aspect of our lives unless we intentionally pay attention in each moment.

Unwritten, often unacknowledged norms and rules for appropriate conduct and valued behaviors are insidious in most every organization. Unaddressed, this hidden curriculum perpetuates unproductive dynamics of white supremacy culture and can undermine stated organizational goals, mission, and values. In addition, these unwritten rules accelerate the advantages and opportunities of white employees as well as those in other privileged groups while negatively impacting the success and engagement of colleagues in other marginalized groups, including People of Color.

These organizational norms are most often passed down and taught outside of formal onboarding and training processes through supervision, informal peer coaching, mentoring, and sponsoring. These unofficial expected standards of behavior are also applied and enforced unequally, with members of marginalized groups often held to much higher standards as well as disproportionately criticized and punished if they violate these unwritten rules.

The following activities can help group members more readily recognize pervasive unwritten rules, understand how they privilege white colleagues while creating barriers for People of Color, and identify ways to disrupt these unproductive norms in their areas of influence.

Use the worksheet *Unwritten Rules: How Might the Current Organizational Culture Support and/or Undermine Equity and Inclusion Goals?* (W35) to help participants recognize both unwritten norms and rules that perpetuate chilly, if not oppressive, climates for People of Color as well as identify those that could help create greater racial and gender equity and inclusion in work environments.

After participants complete the worksheet for homework, have a session focused on discussing these questions:

1. What words or phrases from the worksheet describe your experience of the current organizational culture?
    ◊ Which already help create work environments and effective teams that advance racial equity and inclusion organizational goals?
    ◊ Which, if any, hinder or undermine stated organizational goals? What impact do these have?
    ◊ Which, if any, may have a negative differential impact across racial group identities?
2. Which ones might help disrupt racist dynamics and white supremacy culture?
3. Which ones might help create work environments and effective teams that advance racial equity and inclusion?

Some of the more common unproductive unwritten rules and norms people describe include: top-down, strict hierarchy, competitive, crisis-driven, fear-based, controlling, transactional, debate and defend your position, interrupt to make your point, don't criticize or embarrass leaders, smooth over differences, keep your mouth shut, can't make mistakes, don't get out of line, punitive and retaliatory culture, be constrained, don't show emotions, busyness and face-time

valued over quality and excellent service, little to no accountability, fit in and assimilate, back-room dealings, and profits over people.

Some of the desired organizational norms typically include developing a sense of community and belonging, finding a sense of purpose in the work, interdependency, transparency, encouragement to speak your truth, authenticity, brave engagement, humility, OK to make mistakes and learn from them, acknowledge progress, continuous improvement, be an innovative risk-taker, build trust, real accountability, growth mindset, culture of appreciation, collaborative decision-making, life/work balance, self-care and community care, OK to be emotional, share power and access, value the whole person, act with integrity and ethics, encourage disagreement, engage in conflict openly and productively, and actively create equity and inclusion.

Encourage group members to explore ways they can share these concepts, skills, and work-sheets with team members. When they do, they will deepen the capacity of a wider range of employees to disrupt unproductive, unwritten organizational norms and dynamics as well as work collectively to create a new culture of far greater racial equity and inclusion.

Another activity can help participants identify dynamics of white supremacy culture and dynamics of racism in societal institutions. Assign each accountability partnership or core group a specific type of institution or industry to research over a few weeks and share their findings, insights, and examples of discrimination, white privilege, white supremacy culture, and systemic racism with the full group. Facilitate conversations exploring how policies, practices, norms, services, and structures need to be revised to eliminate systemic racism and create far greater equity and racial justice.

Using a Race Lens to Influence Organizational Change

Most organizational policies, practices, programs, norms, and services were created, whether consciously or not, to meet the needs of white leaders, employees, and clients with little intentional thought to the needs of People of Color, much less to how these practices may have a negative impact and create barriers to their success. White change agents need to deepen their capacity to identify and shift wherever whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy culture have become embedded into the very fabric and structures of organizational life. This section discusses three critical ways to use a race lens to disrupt these racist impacts and influence transformative organizational change: in planning and decision-making processes; when analyzing and revising an individual policy, practice, norm, program, or service; and to revise more complex, complicated processes.

Planning and Decision-Making Processes

Ask group members to imagine what they might do when their supervisor suggests a new practice or policy that will, possibly unintentionally, privilege white people and create obstacles and

barriers for People of Color. Most participants fear they will experience retaliation if they directly confront or question their supervisor. Positional privilege and misuse of power are realities in most work environments. Group members need the tools and courage to use a race lens and speak up as new decisions are being considered that could have racist impacts.

Offer participants in White Accountability Groups two sets of questions to use with their teams in planning and decision-making processes to guide the conversation toward more equitable outcomes. The first list may be useful for those who are not very racially conscious or committed to racial inclusion. Suggest group members use the following questions in team meetings and planning sessions to analyze each idea with an inclusion lens:

1. Why might this be a useful idea?
2. By group membership, whose needs does this address? Whose needs may not be met?
3. What groups might have unintended hurdles or barriers if we implement this idea?
4. What groups might be unintentionally negatively impacted by this decision?
5. How can we make this idea and implementation more inclusive and equitable?

Using these nonspecific questions may invite more team members to thoughtfully consider the impact across racial identity as well as many other group memberships. Have participants identify a few ideas from recent meetings, and practice using these questions to analyze them in small groups.

Some members of teams and task forces may have the necessary racial consciousness and competence to effectively use more advanced questions in planning and decision-making processes. The following prompts from the worksheet *Reimagining with an EDIB/Race Lens: Planning and Decision-Making* (W36) more directly name and explore the possible impact of ideas across racialized identity:

1. What are the productive intentions of this idea?
2. How will this idea advance our organizational goals for racial equity and inclusion if this idea is implemented?
3. By racialized group membership, who probably will have their needs met if this idea is implemented? What groups may not have their needs met?
4. How might whites be unintentionally privileged or advantaged by this idea?
5. How might the implementation of this idea reinforce and perpetuate whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy culture?
6. How might People of Color experience greater obstacles or barriers?
7. What racialized groups will experience unintended negative differential impact from the implementation of this idea, decision, policy, practice, program, or expectation/norm?
8. What assumptions, ideologies, or racial biases may be under this idea or approach?

9. What else is possible? What variation would meet the needs of more people across racialized group identities?
10. What more do we need to know? What are some questions we still have?
11. Whose involvement and input and what data could help us in this conversation?
12. What other questions, issues, or ideas seem out of scope, yet we need to pass along for someone to consider?

Have participants first review these questions as they identify ones they typically ask as well as those they imagine they could use in the future. Then have them practice using these questions in small groups. Offer a few common scenarios for groups to work through, or have participants use actual ideas and suggestions from recent planning and decision-making processes.

Current Individual Policies, Practices, Norms, Programs, and Services

To analyze current individual policies and practices with a race lens, have group members use the worksheet *Questions for Analyzing Policies and Practices with a Race Lens* (W37), which includes similar questions from the previous section on planning and decision-making as well as a few additions, to start the analysis:

1. How does this policy or practice advance our organizational goals for racial equity and inclusion?
2. What are the intentions behind this policy or practice?
3. Who was involved in creating this?
4. By group membership, whose needs were considered when this policy or practice was created?
5. What else would be useful to know about when, why, and how it was created and implemented?
6. Who owns this policy or practice now and can make changes to it?
7. What types of information may help them decide whether to revise it or not?

First, have participants practice using a race lens to analyze a few scenarios of generic individual policies and practices before they apply these same tools to ones in their areas of responsibility, ones they may have helped develop or to which they have become attached. Consider using these examples for groups to practice analyzing with a race lens:

- For in-person and virtual hiring interviews, candidates are not given the interview questions ahead of time. They are usually asked eight to ten questions in an hour-long interview. Question: How might this practice privilege white candidates or create differential impacts for candidates of color?

- During a meeting to discuss possible criteria for a new college scholarship that will be awarded to local high school seniors, someone says the recipients should have a GPA of at least 3.5 out of 4.0. Others seem to nod in agreement. Question: How might this practice privilege white high school seniors or create differential impacts for students of color?

- For remote and virtual work, supervisors require that group members always have their video cameras on. Question: How might this have differential impacts on People of Color given dynamics of race and racism on the team?

- The current criteria to be considered as a candidate for a supervisory position includes having a four-year college degree, preferably from a liberal arts college, and eight years of experience in the field. Question: How might race and racism have contributed to who can meet these criteria and who can't?

- During the most recent budget-cutting process, some leaders changed the travel policy to require employees to stay at motels in order to save money. Employees can no longer stay at hotels where they enter their room from within a secured building.
  ◊ By racialized group membership, who might have concerns for their safety or be in danger?
  ◊ Who else may have concerns for their safety or be in danger if we consider other identities related to racialized and Indigenous identity, such as culture, ethnicity, skin color, dress and appearance, religion, English proficiency and accents, nationality, and immigration and refugee status?

After group members have practiced analyzing some more generic policies and practices with a race lens, have the full group create a list of current programs, services, policies, norms, and practices that might be improved by analyzing and revising with the questions in the worksheet *Questions for Analyzing Policies and Practices with a Race Lens* (W37). In core groups or some other type of small group, invite each participant to offer a specific policy or practice for group analysis and revision. Use time in the next few sessions to repeat this process, and ask participants to practice using these questions in their daily work activities.

For some, these questions may seem reasonable and useful. For others, they may be a bit challenging and provocative, given their degree of racial consciousness and commitment to racial equity. As always, remember to meet people where they are; gradually add more challenging concepts and questions as group members are better positioned to consider them.

Ask participants how they will share and embed these questions and processes within their organizational practices to increase the capacity of everyone in planning and decision-making processes. Ask how they will do the same when analyzing and revising current policies, programs, norms, practices, and services with a race lens. Some may decide to begin by personally asking some of these questions in future meetings. Others may believe their team is ready to review the

lists and discuss how everyone can help the group use a race lens to analyze and revise policies and practices. Another possibility is to add these questions to the bottom of meeting agendas or post them on a wall chart in meeting rooms as a visual reminder.

Complex Processes

I am deeply grateful to Carol Brantley, Delyte Frost, and Barbara Riley, some of my mentors from Elsie Y. Cross Associates Inc., for teaching me how to analyze and revise more complex processes using their tool *Discretionary Points Mapping* (W38). The purpose of process mapping is to identify all the various points in a process where someone might have the discretion to act. For each of these discretionary points, we can note which types of behaviors increase the possibility of creating greater racial equity and inclusion and which don't. Unfortunately, all too often during complex organizational processes, people's indifference, inattention, or racial bias negatively impact People of Color and undermine strategic goals related to racial equity and inclusion.

This section outlines activities that deepen capacity to use a race lens to analyze and revise more complex organizational processes, such as hiring, onboarding, and mentoring programs; supervision and coaching; performance management; promotional processes; learning and development; budgeting; and bias response processes. Hold several sessions for participants to learn and practice these tools.

To introduce participants to the concept of process mapping, give them one to two minutes to individually draw a process map of how they want someone to make them a tuna fish sandwich. After a couple of minutes, ask them to share and compare their maps with three or four other people. As you debrief this activity, many will realize several key insights: people start their process at different points, some have similar steps while there are many diverging elements, some people don't eat fish, and no process map is the same as the others.

Then ask, "What do you think we would discover if I asked you to now write out a process map of the entire recruiting and hiring process?" Most will readily agree they would experience similar dynamics. Give participants ten to fifteen minutes to individually create a process map of the hiring process in their organization, then have them share and compare in core groups. Next, have participants collectively create as complete a process map as possible of all the steps. Key change agents need to learn how to map out each discrete element in complex processes within their organization, including both formal and informal ones.

Next, assign small groups of participants different sections of the current process to map out on large chart paper, including developing the expected responsibilities, criteria, and demonstrated competencies; revising the position description; determining the marketing strategies; selecting and training the Search Committee and others who will interview the candidates; developing interview questions and processes; reviewing candidate materials; selecting candidates for first-round interviews; choosing candidates for the next round of interviews; selecting final candidates

to recommend to the hiring manager; contacting references; and developing the onboarding and transition plan.

After each small group has compiled their section of the process, ask all group members to review the lists and add additional formal and informal steps that occur, no matter how small.

Once the group has reached agreement on the general accuracy of the formal (written) and informal process steps, ask participants to identify every discretionary point, where someone's action, inaction, or indifference could increase or decrease the chances of hiring a racially inclusive, culturally competent workforce or possibly negatively impact People of Color in the process. One possibility is to give each small group a different colored marker and ask them to put a checkmark by every discretionary point they see as they move through the charts.

In the debrief of this activity, participants will most likely feel overwhelmed by how many discretionary points exist that could be mismanaged in a hiring process. Using these activities in a White Accountability Group is not to completely revise the hiring process, but to teach the key components of *Discretionary Points Mapping* (W38) so group members can both initiate and effectively participate in revising processes in the future.

For homework, ask everyone to choose ten to fifteen of the discretionary points they've identified and rate each one:

> What is the probable impact of each discretionary point on the racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) hiring goals?

> +1 to +10: Positively impacts racial EDI organizational goals
> 0: Neutral—no positive, no negative impact
> -1 to -10: Results in probable barriers, unintended negative impact, perpetuation of whiteness, white supremacy culture, and white privilege, or undermines our racial EDI goals

Another option is to have all participants focus on the top ten or so items with the most checkmarks from the previous activity. In addition, ask them to bring ideas for revising five or more of these discretionary points to create a far greater chance of minimizing racist impact as well as hiring a racially diverse, culturally competent workforce.

As participants are sharing and discussing their homework, be sure to take detailed notes to pass along to leaders in Human Resources. The insights and innovative ideas from the White Accountability Group members may help accelerate systemic changes in the overall organizational processes. Conveners can assign additional resources to help group members realize ways to use a race lens to revise complex processes, including the worksheets *Marketing Recommendations* (W39), *Inclusive Onboarding Practices That Increase Retention* (W40), and *Selection Processes for*

Colleges and Universities (W41). Participants and conveners may also benefit from watching the webinar *Use a Race Lens in Planning and Revising Policies & Practices* (V7).

For the next session, have participants bring actual examples and supportive materials of complex policies and practices from their areas of responsibility for small groups to analyze and revise in real time. Have each group share their insights and recommended changes in the full group as well as note ideas to pass along to those who may find them useful across the organization.

Encourage participants to articulate how they can individually and collectively influence others to implement structures to prepare and require all members of the organization to use a race lens to analyze and revise policies, practices, norms, programs, and services in their areas. To truly transform white supremacy culture, everyone will need the capacity to participate in this level of analysis and ultimately be required and held accountable to do their part to shift the current racist structures and norms.

Chapter Resources

References

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Videos

Webinar: *Creating Inclusion, Pt 1* (V5)

Webinar: *Inclusive Culture (Creating Inclusion Pt 2)* (V6)

Webinar: *Use a Race Lens in Planning and Revising Policies & Practices* (V7)

Worksheets

12 Indicators of Current Organizational Culture and Climate (W34)

Discretionary Points Mapping (W38)

Expected Competencies for Creating Racially Inclusive Organizations (W2, in Appendix 2)

Inclusive Onboarding Practices That Increase Retention (W40)

Marketing Recommendations (W39)

Questions for Analyzing Policies and Practices with a Race Lens (W37)

Reimagining with an EDIB/Race Lens: Planning and Decision-Making (W36)

Selection Processes for Colleges and Universities (W41)

Unwritten Rules: How Might the Current Organizational Culture Support and/or Undermine Equity and Inclusion Goals? (W35)

White Supremacy Culture Cards, https://programs.drkathyobear.com/wp-content/uploads /2020/02/White-Culture-CardsCompressed.pdf

CHAPTER 16

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Closing Out a White Accountability Group

By now, your group has navigated the four stages of group development identified by Bruce Tuckman: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. As the final session gets closer, some members may already be moving into the final stage, identified by Mary Ann Jensen: Adjourning. In this final stage, group members may feel a sense of loss at the group's ending as well as transitioning back into the flow of their work responsibilities without the continued support and learning from the group.

Over the final two or more sessions, the activities should prepare the White Accountability Group for closure. Here are some key goals and discussion topics to incorporate into these last sessions:

1. Recommit to your vision and passion for anti-racism.
2. Acknowledge growth and development individually and collectively.
3. Reflect on and share the impact of experiencing this White Accountability Group.
4. Identify specifically what members said or did that helped the group have authentic dialogue, deepen self-awareness, increase their commitment to shift racist attitudes and actions, develop greater capacity to use a race lens in daily activities, and so on.
5. Discuss how participants can integrate new insights and learnings into their work and personal life.
6. Discuss and negotiate ways to support each other moving forward.
7. Publicly commit to taking new actions and staying in the work for the long haul.

Reflecting on Your Vision

For homework, ask participants to reflect on what they had shared in the early sessions about both their passion and their vision for creating racially equitable and inclusive organizations as they

come prepared to answer the same questions in the next session. After group members share their current views in core groups or with their accountability partner, debrief using these prompts:

- What is your current passion for creating racially equitable and inclusive organizations? How is it similar or different from when you started in this group?
- What is your current vision for a racially equitable and inclusive organization? How is it similar or different from when you started in this group?
- How might your passion and vision support you to continue to use these tools and skills to create greater racial equity and inclusion?

Reassessing Your Capacity as Change Agents

Have participants retake the self-assessment *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1). These homework prompts can also be used to guide core-group sharing as well as the debrief in the full group:

- Where do you currently rate yourself on these competencies?
- Where have you made progress?
- How are you using some of these tools and skills effectively in your work responsibilities? Outside of work?
- What five to ten capacities do you commit to deepening over the next few months?

If the group has developed the necessary depth of trust and vulnerability, have participants return to their core groups to give and receive feedback about each person's progress as well as suggested areas for continued development. After some time to reflect and make notes about each colleague, have core group members spend a few moments focused on each other as they practice giving the gift of honest feedback. To set the stage, conveners can first model giving each other this level of appreciative and developmental feedback in the full group.

Another way for participants to reflect on their progress to date is to revisit the worksheet *Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism* (W29). As conveners are closing out the group, this tool can help members discuss where they were in their development when they began the group, where they believe they are now, and where they hope to be in another few months. At this point in the group's development, members may more honestly share times they were in the Box of Denial or had some awareness and understanding of racism but were stuck in the Box of Fear without the tools or courage to intervene effectively. Using the Path to Competence model as you close out the group can open a space for conveners and group members to acknowledge and apologize for any of their unproductive

behaviors in earlier sessions when they were in the Box of Judgment, such as judging and distancing from other white colleagues or trying to be the good white in the group. Some members may acknowledge how they are now more often in the Box of Engagement as they speak up effectively to disrupt racist dynamics. They may also admit how at any moment they may slide back into the Boxes of Denial, Fear, or Judgment as they encounter new situations that require greater courage and capacity than they have in that moment.

Have the group reflect on their growth and progress by answering the question, "What has been the impact of participating in this White Accountability Group?" Typical responses include:

- I thought I was farther along, but now I see how far I still need to go.
- I hadn't realized how much racism exists, and now I know what I need to do as a white change agent.
- I used to believe I just needed to not say anything racist and that was enough, and now I realize how I can use my white privilege to shift organizational racist dynamics and white supremacy culture.
- I came wanting more skills to interrupt racist microaggressions and am leaving committed to doing more self-work and healing to dismantle internalized dominance and racist attitudes in myself, and I now see how critical it is to keep learning with other white colleagues.

Support for Continued Growth and Skill-Building

In the Adjourning stage, some group members may feel anxious about the group ending for fear they will backslide into complacency, indifference, and collusion without a group of white colleagues to hold them accountable. Offer empathy and describe how you have committed to an ongoing, lifelong journey of unlearning, relearning, and deep healing work as a change agent.

Then prepare to lead a group discussion about structured as well as informal ways participants can keep deepening their skills and capacities. Ask, "How have you been learning outside of our group? What are some ways you could continue growing and developing?" Some may want to continue meeting with their accountability partner and core group. Others may join or start a group that reads books, watches videos, or attends programs and conferences on racism and anti-racism together.

Participants may want to keep meeting as a full group. If conveners are willing, organize times to reconnect every month or two to explore the following:

- What have you been observing and experiencing related to race, racism, whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy culture?

- What have you been learning and unlearning?
- How are you using the tools and skills in your work responsibilities as well as outside of work?
- Where do you get stuck?
- What can you do in these types of situations in the future?
- How are you focusing on self-care and community care to stay in the work for the long haul?
- How can you work collaboratively in meetings and project teams you attend with other group members to infuse a race lens in the work?

In addition, group members can ask others for feedback:
- What have you seen me do?
- What else do you wish I had done?
- Have I done anything that gave you pause or concern? What could I have done differently?

These types of group discussions can reinforce how everyone needs to be in the work together as white change agents and support each other's growth and development along the way.

Some group members may offer to organize times for socializing or attending anti-racism programs together. Be sure to mention how these types of activities are optional, as some participants may find other groups to continue their development. The key is for all group members to find spaces with other white change agents to continue their growth and self-work as well as deepen their commitment to creating racial equity and inclusion. For more ideas of next steps, view the radio shows on *Leading White Accountability Groups* (V8 and V9).

Developing a Personal Action Plan

Invite participants to write out specific action steps they will take to create greater racial equity and inclusion as well as further their learning and development. Offer one or more of the following prompts:

- What do I commit to stop doing, start doing, and continue doing?
- What will I do in the next two weeks, one month, three months, and six months?

Have group members share these plans with both their accountability partners and their core group members to increase the chance of people holding each other accountable for following

through on their commitments. Another useful activity is to have participants write a letter to themselves summarizing their action plan. Conveners can collect these and send them back out to participants in a month as one way to support them on their journey.

Sharing Appreciation and Commitments

As conveners guide the group into their last few moments together, have members share their appreciation for each other and the process as well as their commitments to create change. Consider these prompts:

- What have you appreciated about our experience together?
- What have others done or said that helped you grow and helped us develop as a group?
- What will you do to create greater racial equity and inclusion in the future?

Final Closing Activity

The reflection below by W. Timothy Gallwey can be a powerful way to close out the White Accountability Group. Invite participants to share reading it aloud as they reflect on which phrases speak to them in the moment.

> When we plant a rose seed in the earth, we notice that it is small, but we do not criticize it as "rootless and stemless." We treat it as a seed, giving it the water and nourishment required of a seed. When it first shoots up out of the earth, we don't condemn it as immature and underdeveloped; nor do we criticize the buds for not being open when they appear. We stand in wonder at the process taking place and give the plant the care it needs at each stage of its development. The rose is a rose from the time it is a seed to the time it dies. Within it, at all times, it contains its whole potential. It seems to be constantly in the process of change; yet at each state, at each moment, it is perfectly all right as it is.

Hold space for group members to share their insights or impact from the reading as it applies to themselves, their collective experience, and other white colleagues they will support in the future. To officially close the group, conveners can share their final appreciations and hopes for group members and other conveners.

Chapter Resources

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Radio Shows

Leading White Accountability Groups (V8, February 2020 and V9, March 2020)

Worksheets

Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism (W29, in Appendix 2)

Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents (W1, in Appendix 2)

CHAPTER 17

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Evaluating the Group

To evaluate the group's effectiveness, you can send out a short survey to group members to gather feedback and recommendations for future White Accountability Groups. Collect participant reflections about how they have grown and changed throughout the process. Be sure to ask if you can use their comments, with or without attribution, in future marketing materials and on the website.

Be sure to circle back to the colleagues you connected with as you were forming the group to share insights, impact, and lessons learned. Here are a few ways to ensure greater transparency of the work the group completed in the White Accountability Group:

1. Keep the executive sponsor, senior equity officer, and other leaders informed about the outcomes of the group and plans for continued professional development.
2. If you consulted with any leaders and members of Employee Resource Groups or racialized Affinity Groups, reach out to ask if they would like an update and access to the resources you used in the group sessions.
3. Use the group's public website to post the curriculum, resources, and high-level outcomes from the White Accountability Group.

Organizational Structures to Deepen Competency Development

Over time, as you hold multiple White Accountability Groups within the organization, be sure to provide opportunities for all past members to connect with other white change agents to continue their growth and development. Various combinations of conveners can organize a gathering once a quarter or every couple months. Discussion and skill practice can focus on the skills group members wanted to continue developing. In each session, plan for a balance of activities to support people checking in, sharing about recent insights and things they noticed. Incorporate some skill practice as well to interrupt and shift whiteness, racist microaggressions, white privilege, and white supremacy culture at the interpersonal and systemic levels. Before each session, invite

participants to send in the types of issues, dilemmas, and difficult situations they hope to address in the session.

Former group members may appreciate a couple of other professional development opportunities in these community sessions. They could bring current policies and practices for small groups to analyze and revise with a race lens. In several sessions throughout the year, focus on self-care and community care to support change agents developing greater capacity to avoid passion fatigue and burnout as they learn tools and approaches to stay in the work for the long haul. See the resources page on my website (drkathyobear.com/resources/) for open-access worksheets, webinar resources, and a PDF download of the book *In It for the Long Haul*, which can be used as prework or in postsession activities. Attending these community sessions can help past participants reenergize and recommit to being an active change agent as they build a larger community of white colleagues with whom they can partner as well as reach out to for peer coaching and support.

In addition to professional development for past group members, consider offering some foundational sessions that are open to any member of the organization. These workshops can support organizational racial equity goals as well as provide advertising for future White Accountability Groups. They can address common terms and concepts, identify the leadership case for racial equity and inclusion, understand dynamics of race and whiteness in the organization, recognize racist microaggressions, shift unproductive meeting dynamics to create greater racial equity and inclusion, learn the history of race and racism in our industry and region, and understand white privilege.

Another program option is having panels of white change agents who share ways they work with others to create more racially inclusive and equitable teams, practices, products, norms, and services. Past participants can act as small-group facilitators. They can also model ways to be a white ally and change agent in the organization. At each of these open sessions, advertise future programs and workshops as well as collect contact information for people interested in learning more about participating in a White Accountability Group.

Being a Resource for Organizational Change

People who have actively participated in a White Accountability Group have developed critical skills and capacities to help facilitate systemic change. Leaders may be interested in inviting some group members to join new or existing task forces, committees, and programs dedicated to creating racial equity and inclusion, such as Strategic Planning Task Forces, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Councils, Inclusion Change Teams, Inclusion Partners Programs, and working groups to analyze and revise policies, practices, norms, programs, products, and services with a race lens.

Consider developing a structured development program to ensure a pipeline of colleagues to continue to lead White Accountability Groups in the future as well as serve as mentors and coaches for group members. Invite interested past participants to join this process, especially those who made significant progress in the group and have effectively shown up as white change agents in the organization.

Chapter Resources

References

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CHAPTER 18

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Committing to the Work

I still feel anxious every time I start to facilitate a White Accountability Group. I have to work hard to shift any number of swirling thoughts and fears, including: What if I mess up? What if my planning misses the mark? What if I don't respond effectively to resistance and racist comments? What if I feel triggered and react in ways that disrupt the group's development and undermine their trust in me and the process?

When I recently found myself spiraling in these ways, I chose to take a few deep breaths and reground in my reasons for working for racial justice. Remembering and sharing our motives for anti-racism work helps participants identify and share theirs.

Why would white people work for racial justice? I remember asking this question many times over the years, particularly after I had experienced intense resistance or retaliation for speaking up and questioning racist dynamics. Be sure to raise the possibility that group members may face some consequences both at work and in their personal lives as they interrupt racist microaggressions and question racist organizational policies, practices, norms, and services. I have heard too many stories of white change agents paying a price for racial justice work. Some have no longer been invited to lunch and informal social events; were left off of meeting invitations and emails; had their comments ignored or dismissed in meetings; experienced chilly relationships with colleagues and were gossiped about by peers and supervisors; were labeled as disruptive and difficult to work with; received increased scrutiny and unexpected negative performance reviews; were critiqued for investing too much time doing racial equity work and denied the time and resources for professional development; were no longer given coaching, mentoring, or opportunities that fast-tracked career advancement; were overlooked for promotions; or were demoted or terminated.

I do not intend to minimize the significant impact of these types of consequences in the lives of white change agents. Nevertheless, I believe the benefits of working for racial justice outweigh most anything we may lose. Imagine how life will be different when you no longer carry the heavy weight of deep guilt and shame about the treatment of People of Color or are entrapped by racist stereotypes and white supremacist beliefs. Envision effectively partnering with colleagues and friends of color as well as other white change agents to successfully co-create racially inclusive

work environments where all people thrive, can be their full selves, and actively contribute to the betterment of others. The work may not be easy or comfortable at times, but there is no better reward than being able to look ourselves in the mirror knowing we live a life of integrity and are doing all we can to create liberation and racial justice for all.

To stay vigilant and consistent in our efforts, we all need to continuously ground ourselves in our passion and our reasons for racial justice work. For me, I do this work to dismantle racist attitudes and behaviors I still hold in hopes I no longer cause harm to People of Color. I yearn to create a world where we all can live in our full humanity free of oppression, white supremacy, and hatred.

I encourage conveners to talk about their personal reasons and invite group members to share their reasons and passion for dismantling racism and working to create anti-racist organizations. If we don't stay rooted in our passion and vision, we may decide to drop out as soon as the work gets too hard for us. We may lose out on the chance to develop meaningful, authentic relationships with colleagues of color and other white change agents. We may miss opportunities to create truly inclusive, racially just organizations that deeply benefit all those we work with and serve.

We cannot do this work alone. I encourage you to create and nurture a vibrant learning community of other white co-conveners and changemakers committed to continually deepening their capacity and courage to lead White Accountability Groups. My hope is that the tools, worksheets, and strategies in this book provide you with numerous resources to consider as you design and facilitate groups. May the stories and examples inspire and motivate you to commit to actively work to create racial justice and liberation for all and to stay in this work for the long haul.

Throughout history, progress was made when white change agents partnered with and followed the leadership of People of Color and Indigenous Peoples to disrupt racism and create more racially equitable, anti-racist organizations and systems. Your commitment and leadership can continue this legacy of transformative change. You can hold spaces for others to heal from internalized dominance and white supremacy, and to grow into the white changemakers we desperately need in these times.

And when you doubt that your efforts make any difference, reground in your vision of an anti-racist organization and society as you imagine what is possible if you persevere in your efforts. What could be different if organizations championed and supported structures and practices that facilitate racial healing and liberation? What will be different when we collectively create racially inclusive, high-performing teams and organizations that attract, develop, retain, and promote innovative talent across all racialized identities committed to providing exceptional programs, products, and services to exceed the expectations of all they serve in every racialized group? What could be different if all leaders and employees consistently lived into the stated mission, vision, and values of the organization where they work? How could these practices and examples ripple out and inform and impact our society?

Know that you are right where you need to be in your process as a convener of White Accountability Groups. You are ready to work with others to implement the insights and resources from this book that spoke to you. You can always revisit relevant chapters as well as the website resources as you realize you want other activities and strategies to meet the needs of the participants in your groups. Over time, you will deepen your capacity to design and facilitate more complex and challenging conversations and developmental spaces.

Thank you for your work to increase the capacity and courage of many more white people to dismantle racism and co-create anti-racist organizations committed to the liberation of everyone. Together we are building on the centuries of anti-racism movements as we do our part to finally manifest liberation and racial justice in our lifetimes. This is our sacred, life-giving calling. I hope our paths cross in the future. I would love to hear about your experiences, challenges, progress, and insights that support our collective lifelong learning and growth in this work.

From my soul I urge you to stay on this journey of racial healing and community development. I hope you live a life of significance, and leave an enduring legacy of racial liberation for the next generations.

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Outline of Suggested Learning Activities

The activities listed below reflect some of the foundational types of conversations, self-work, and skill-building I have used while leading White Accountability Groups. Greater detail for ways to design and facilitate these activities and others are located in the cited chapters. While I believe there is no one right way to design the programming of White Accountability Groups, the following offers a progression to consider as you align your session designs with the current capacities, needs, and learning goals of group members. I encourage you to explore other facilitators' approaches and curricula to identify a range of options that could meet your group's needs and help it achieve its intended outcomes.

Sessions are grouped by topic and purpose. Over the course of sixteen to twenty sessions, you may decide to offer a series of groups, each one designed to focus on one or more specific skills, such as:

- exploring the impact of racialized socialization
- identifying and shifting biases and attitudes that perpetuate racism
- recognizing and interrupting microaggressions
- exploring the history of racism and white supremacy and the implications for today
- using a race lens in planning and analyzing policies and practices

Focus on Building the Learning Community

(See chapter 5.)
Time commitment: Two two-hour sessions
Activities:

- Welcome and grounding activities
- Share the purpose and intended outcomes for the group
- Offer a Land Acknowledgment
- Conveners introduce themselves

- Warm-up activities to begin group introductions:
  - ◊ Who are you?
    - ¤ Share a bit about yourself.
    - ¤ Respond to this prompt: As a (name your racialized identity), I enter feeling
      _____.
    - ¤ Why did you want to join this group?
    - ¤ What is a source of your passion for dismantling racism and creating a more
      racially inclusive organization?
- Share your intentions as conveners.
- Give an overview of the planned flow or agendas for this session and the next few.
- Share how the group will work together for their collective growth.
- Facilitate large- and small-group dialogues to encourage authentic engagement:
  - ◊ How are you feeling as a member of this White Accountability Group?
  - ◊ What has been your experience in similar types of groups that helped you learn?
    Were any dynamics not as useful to your development?
  - ◊ What are your hopes, concerns, or fears, if any, as we work together? Describe the
    type of learning environment where you can be present, authentic, self-reflective,
    brave, and open to new and differing perspectives.
- Teach the skill of Pay Attention Now (PAN), or *panning* (see the worksheet *Panning
  with an Inclusion Lens* [W16]).
- Review the worksheet *Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About
  Race and Racism, a Beginning List* (W3).
  - ◊ Use these reflection and discussion prompts to increase awareness of the negative
    impact of these dynamics as well as to nudge participants to notice and interrupt
    some of their own unproductive tendencies:
    - ¤ Which ones have you noticed or experienced in other settings? What was the
      impact on you? On the group?
    - ¤ Which ones have you ever done? What were your intentions? What was your
      possible impact?
    - ¤ What is the probable impact if we do any of these in our sessions?
    - ¤ How have you stopped yourself from doing any of these?
    - ¤ How could we notice or PAN, interrupt, and shift these types of unproductive
      dynamics if they occur?
- Co-create engaging guidelines.
- Have participants discuss their vision of a racially inclusive, anti-racist organization.
- Ask participants to use a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = not at all, 10 = completely) as they reflect
  on and answer these questions: "How equitable, inclusive, and racially just is the current
  organizational culture and climate for all employees, managers, leaders, and those you
  serve? How close are the culture and climate to your vision?"

- Ask participants to share their reactions, results, and insights from completing the self-assessment *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1).
- Have participants share more about what they hope to learn and develop in these sessions.
- Ask participants to reflect on the types of learning activities so far and the ways the group has engaged in the first few sessions to discuss any additional hopes, concerns, and learning needs based on the self-assessment.

Focus on Self-Awareness: Recognize and Navigate Hot Buttons and Triggering Events

(See chapter 6.)

Time commitment: One or more two-hour sessions

Presession homework: Have participants review the worksheets *Characteristics of a Triggering Event* (W5), *Triggering Event Cycle* (W7), *Examples of Hot Buttons and Triggering Comments and Behaviors During Discussions of Race and Racism* (W8), and *Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations* (W6).

Activities:

- In small groups and then in the large group, have participants share some of their common hot buttons, particularly those they believe could occur during group sessions.
- As a group, discuss the common dynamics of triggering events, including those listed on the worksheets *Characteristics of a Triggering Event* (W5), *Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations* (W6), and *Triggering Event Cycle* (W7).
- Discuss and practice ways to engage effectively during triggering situations that could occur during group sessions, including reviewing the five sets of engaging strategies: Panning, Ask questions, Interrupt, Relate in, and Share (*PAIRS* [W11]).

Focus on Self-Awareness: Examining Racialized Socialization Experiences

(See chapter 8.)

Time commitment: One or more two-hour sessions; conveners can also plan to have participants discuss various aspects of their racialized socialization in the first three to four sessions.

Presession homework: Ask participants to reflect on and make notes about a series of prompts related to examining their racialized socialization experiences.

Activities:

- In small groups and then as a full group, have participants describe their racialized socialization experiences. Use the worksheet *Examine Your Racialized Socialization: Questions to Discuss and Explore* (W13) as a resource.
- For homework, ask participants to draw a Neighborhood Map as they prepare to discuss this in the next session.
- For homework, ask participants to bring four to five examples of the history of race, racism, and white supremacy in the US during their early lives as well as from earlier decades and centuries that could be impacting societal and organizational dynamics today. (Note: Consider spending five minutes or more in each future session exploring other aspects of historical events and their impacts on our world today.)

Focus on the Interpersonal Level: Recognize Racist Microaggressions

(See chapter 9.)

Time commitment: Two or more two-hour sessions

Activities:

- Have group members review the worksheet *Panning with an Inclusion Lens* (W16).
- Ask participants to review and discuss the worksheet *Unproductive Meeting Behaviors* (W17).
- Have participants discuss and practice ways to interrupt and shift these types of unproductive meeting behaviors.
- Ask group members to review the worksheet *Key Concepts* (W18) as they explore the dynamics of intent versus impact, cumulative impact, and others.
- Lead participants though a series of conversations to identify and discuss common racist microaggressions using the worksheets *Common Racist Microaggressions* (W19) and *Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W20).
- Use these prompts to deepen dialogue about racist microaggressions:
  - ◊ Which have you observed?
  - ◊ Which have you done?
  - ◊ What is the probable immediate as well as cumulative impact of these racist microaggressions?
  - ◊ What are the possible racist biases fueling these behaviors?
  - ◊ What is the negative effect on both individuals and the team when we do not interrupt and shift these problematic dynamics in the moment?

Focus on the Interpersonal Level:
Interrupt and Shift Racist Microaggressions

(See chapter 10.)
Time commitment: Two or more two-hour sessions
Activities:

- Ask participants to reflect and discuss times they did any of the following:
  ◊ Effectively spoke up to interrupt racist microaggressive situations
  ◊ Were not very effective interrupting racist microaggressive situations
  ◊ Chose to be silent and said nothing
- Ask participants to discuss the types of tools and skills they want to add to their tool kit to respond more effectively during microaggressive situations. Give them time to review multiple tools using the worksheets *PAIRS* (W11), *Engaging Skills* (W22), and *Tools to Respond in the Moment* (W4).
- Invite participants to identify and discuss some of their less productive as well as more productive intentions that fuel their reactions and responses using the worksheets *Less Productive Intentions* (W23) and *Productive Intentions* (W24).
- Ask participants to practice shifting unproductive intentions to more productive ones.
- Have group members discuss strategies to respond effectively to racist microaggressions in a variety of scenarios.
- Create multiple opportunities for participants to practice skills to respond to racist microaggressions.
- Have participants assess their progress as well as the skills and capacities they hope to continue to deepen using either or both of the worksheets *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1) and *Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism* (W29).

Focus on the Interpersonal Level:
Recognize and Shift Racist Attitudes

(See chapter 11.)
Time commitment: Two or more two-hour sessions
Activities:

- Use the worksheet *Common Racist Behaviors and Attitudes of Some/Many White People* (W27) to help participants begin to identify common racist attitudes of white people at the group level.

- Have participants review the worksheets *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28) and *Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W20) to deepen their capacity to recognize racist attitudes fueling microaggressions.
- Revisit the worksheet *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28) to help participants recognize and acknowledge how they have in the past held and possibly still hold some of these racist biases.
- Have participants identify several examples of their racist attitudes and thoughts from the worksheet *Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism* (W28), and discuss the following prompts (greater details are in chapter 12):
  - ◊ Where and when did I first hear or learn this racist belief?
  - ◊ When and how were these taught and reinforced throughout my life?
  - ◊ When have I thought this before?
  - ◊ How have I reacted out of this racist attitude? What was my probable racist impact?
  - ◊ What was or is my payoff for having this racist thought? How do I benefit?
  - ◊ What do I wish I had thought and done instead?
- As homework, have participants bring three or four more examples of racist thoughts they have had recently in the last few years. Ask them to use these same questions to write about these thoughts in preparation for sharing in the next session.
- Have participants practice shifting racist thoughts using several generic scenarios.
- Ask group members to practice shifting some of the racist attitudes and thoughts they identified in the homework activity.

Focus on the Interpersonal Level: Responding to Feedback About the Racist Impact of Our Behaviors

(See chapter 13.)
Time commitment: Part of a two-hour session
Activities:

- Ask participants to review the worksheet *When Someone Gives Feedback About the Racist Impact of Our Behavior* (W44) and discuss the suggested ways to respond when they are given feedback about the racist impact of their behaviors.
- Have participants role-play ways to respond in these types of situations.

Focus on the Organizational Level:
Recognize and Shift the Dynamics of White Privilege

(See chapter 14.)

Time commitment: One or more two-hour sessions

Presession homework: Have participants review the worksheet *Examples of White Privilege, Unearned Advantages* (W31) as they reflect on their own life experiences.

Activities:

- In the large group, review the concept of privilege with group members (for example, using the left hand-right hand metaphor or the moving walkway metaphor).
- Ask group members to identify various types of white privilege they recognize exist for white people at the group level as well as those they have personally experienced in their lives (White Privilege Timeline, White Privilege Move-in Circle activity, small- and large-group discussions).
- Have participants practice ways to interrupt and shift these dynamics of white privilege during interactions and in organizational policies, processes, and practices.
- Use the worksheet *Desired/Expected Leader Behaviors* (W32) to help group members recognize the ways white colleagues are more likely positively viewed for demonstrating valued leadership qualities while People of Color and Indigenous Peoples are often negatively judged and critiqued for these same behaviors.
- Use the worksheet *Costs of Racism for White People* (W33) to lead a discussion of the costs of racism for white people.

Focus on the Organizational Level:
Influence Change at the Organizational Level

(See chapter 15.)

Time commitment: Three or more two-hour sessions

Activities:

- Using the worksheet *Expected Competencies for Creating Racially Inclusive Organizations* (W2), have participants rate the current demonstrated capacities of their colleagues and themselves.
- Ask participants to use a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = not at all, 10 = completely) as they reflect on and answer this question: "How equitable, inclusive, and racially just is the current

organizational culture and climate for all employees, managers, leaders, and those we serve?"

- Discuss their responses as the group reviews the worksheet *12 Indicators of Current Organizational Culture and Climate* (W34) or the Multicultural Organizational Development model to identify which ones best describe the current organizational culture and climate.

- For homework, ask participants to use the following prompts as they review the article "White Supremacy Culture" by Tema Okun or similar publications:
  ◊ How, if at all, were you taught to value various characteristics of white supremacy culture?
  ◊ When, if at all, are each of these useful to you in your life?
  ◊ When, if at all, have these been harmful to you or others?
  ◊ Which, if any, of the antidotes resonate with your values and leadership style?

- Discuss how the dynamics of white supremacy culture manifest in the organization and in themselves:
  ◊ Which of these characteristics of white supremacy culture do you see reflected in our societal or organizational culture, practices, services, programs, and unwritten rules and norms?
  ◊ How do you see these playing out in your work and in your thoughts and actions both inside and outside of work?
  ◊ What are one or two ways some aspects might be useful at times, if at all?
  ◊ How, if at all, are these characteristics unproductive at times?

- Have small groups prepare to role-play a short scenario that demonstrates how three or four of these characteristics operate in the organization. Use these prompts to analyze and debrief each scenario:
  ◊ What characteristics of white supremacy culture did you notice in the scenario?
  ◊ What was or could be the unproductive impact if these are not interrupted and shifted?
  ◊ What, if any, additional negative impact might People of Color and Indigenous Peoples experience in this scenario?
  ◊ Who could change and shift these unproductive dynamics in the moment? Afterward?
  ◊ What are more inclusive ways of engaging and working together?

- Use the worksheet *Unwritten Rules: How Might the Current Organizational Culture Support and/or Undermine Equity and Inclusion Goals?* (W35) to help participants identify additional ways white supremacy culture and other unproductive dominant culture characteristics manifest in daily organizational practices and unwritten rules and norms.

- Discuss and practice ways to shift these types of unwritten rules in the moment to create greater racial equity and inclusion.

- Have participants first review and then practice the suggested questions on the worksheet *Reimagining with an EDIB/Race Lens: Planning and Decision-Making* (W36) to use a race lens in planning and decision-making.
- Have participants use the worksheet *Questions for Analyzing Policies and Practices with a Race Lens* (W37) to practice analyzing and revising generic scenarios of practices and policies before inviting them to analyze real examples from their work activities.
- Lead a large-group discussion exploring ways participants can support colleagues and leaders to analyze and revise any racist implications of current examples of policies, practices, norms, and processes.
- Use the worksheet *Discretionary Points Mapping* (W38) as participants practice identifying the discretionary points within several more complex organizational policies, processes, and practices (recruiting, hiring, onboarding, supervising, marketing, performance management, and so on).
- Lead a large-group discussion about ways participants can advance efforts to identify and revise discretionary points that have racist implications in complex policies, practices, and processes.

Focus on Closing Out the White Accountability Group

(See chapter 16.)
Time commitment: One or more two-hour sessions
Activities:

- Remind participants in earlier sessions that the group will be ending shortly.
- Lead activities for participants to revisit and revise their initial passion for and vision of a racially equitable, inclusive organization as they recommit to interrupt racist dynamics and dismantle racism in the organization.
- Have participants retake the self-assessment *Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents* (W1) or the *Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism* (W29).
- Ask group members to share both where they have made progress and what knowledge, skills, and capacities they commit to continuing to deepen over the next few months.
- Have participants first reflect on and then share about the impact of experiencing this White Accountability Group.
- Ask participants to give feedback focused on what members said or did that helped the group have authentic dialogue, deepen self-awareness, increase their commitment to shift racist attitudes and actions, develop greater capacity to use a race lens in daily activities, and so on.

- Discuss ways participants can continue to integrate new insights and learnings into their work and personal life.
- Identify and negotiate possible ways to support each other's growth and development moving forward.
- Have participants write out and share their specific commitments to take new actions, deepen their competencies, and stay in the work for the long haul.
- Ask group members to share their appreciations for participants and their shared experience in this White Accountability Group.
- Express your appreciations and hopes for members as you officially close out the group.

APPENDIX 2

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Selected Worksheets

Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism (W28)

Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism (W20)

Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About Race and Racism, a Beginning List (W3)

Engaging Guidelines (W14)

Examples of White Privilege, Unearned Advantages (W31)

Expected Competencies for Creating Racially Inclusive Organizations (W2)

Path to Competence, Common Indicators: Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism (W29)

Racial Equity & Inclusion: Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents (W1)

Self-Assessment: Effective Design and Facilitation Skills (W42)

Biased Attitudes That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism (W28)

Review the list of attitudes below. As you read:

✓ Check off any you have heard from white people.

◯ Circle the number of any that you have personally thought or believed at any time in your life.

After you've read through the list and marked it, follow the directions below the list for additional reflection.

Some/Many People, Particularly White People, Tend to Believe
(Consciously and Unconsciously):

1. I have earned everything I have. All white people have.
2. There is no such thing as white privilege.
3. White privilege was made up to make white people feel guilty.
4. Racism is a relic of the past; we are living in a post-racial society and world.
5. The few people who still have racist attitudes and behaviors are fueled by hate and intend to cause harm to People of Color.
6. If an occasional microaggression occurs, white people should stay quiet and let the Person of Color respond.
7. If People of Color just worked harder and pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, they could succeed, too.
8. We should be color-blind and not talk about race. It is divisive.
9. Most People of Color are undereducated and haven't yet had the opportunity to develop the critical skills and competencies needed to succeed.
10. White people are generally smarter, more competent, more polished and professional, better leaders, and more deserving than People of Color.
11. Many People of Color only have the capacity and work ethic to be in lower-level service roles.
12. People of Color tend to "play the race card" and call white people racist to avoid developmental feedback and being held accountable for doing their jobs.
13. Many People of Color are not qualified and get hired to fill a quota over deserving white candidates. They don't have the experience and credentials for the job.
14. Many People of Color get promoted into positions of power because of their race, not their competence and capacities. They didn't earn it fairly.
15. Many People of Color are lazy and can't be counted on to get the job done well.

16. People of Color are generally less productive and quick to make excuses for their lack of performance.
17. People of Color overexaggerate when they complain about the daily indignities they say they experience. These things happen to white people, too.
18. Many People of Color are looking for a free handout and special privileges they didn't earn.
19. People of Color don't appreciate all we have done for them.
20. There is no systemic racism anymore.
21. The current societal and organizational norms, practices, and values are fair for everyone.
22. People of Color should conform and assimilate to organizational culture, norms, and practices.
23. People of Color should dress and act professional and appropriate at all times, which means looking, sounding, and acting more like white people (for example, tone, language, expression of emotions, dress, hair, posture, compliance with directions, obeying authority figures, etc.).
24. We need to hire and promote people who are a good fit for the organization.
25. Good, loyal white people are overlooked and not promoted when we have to promote from within the organization and meet our racial diversity goals.
26. Many People of Color can be loud, too direct, argumentative, and unprofessional.
27. People of Color who always talk about race are divisive and often troublemakers.
28. Many People of Color these days are too uppity and don't know their place.
29. People of Color are too sensitive and take offense to most anything white people say and do.
30. Many People of Color are angry all the time and aggressively attack white people for the smallest, unintentional misstep. They are looking for things to confront.
31. Most People of Color blow things out of proportion and claim there is systemic racism every time a white person makes a joke or uses the wrong term.
32. People of Color need to decide what we should call them and stick with it. It is too hard to keep up.
33. White people can't do anything right. People of Color will always find fault with what we do.
34. People of Color should give us grace when we make an honest misstep and didn't intend to say anything racist.
35. Many People of Color are racist against white people.
36. White people experience reverse racism from People of Color.
37. White people have to be extremely careful about what they say, or People of Color will file a grievance.
38. People of Color are always looking for a reason to file a lawsuit so they can cash in and not work.

39. People of Color overlook all the progress we have made and only harp on what they still think is wrong.

40. People of Color need to get over it and stop using the past as an excuse for their lack of success.

41. People of Color believe they should be given more money, promotions, or similar benefits without having to work for them.

42. People of Color segregate themselves.

43. Many People of Color are hard to work with.

44. It is often hard to understand what many People of Color are saying.

45. People of Color need to be more articulate when speaking if they want to be understood and respected.

46. People of Color will stick together even when they are wrong.

47. People of Color should share their experiences and teach white people about the dynamics of race and racism.

48. White people's main role in addressing racism is to just be quiet, listen, and learn from People of Color. People of Color are the only ones who can address racism.

49. It is better to stay quiet about race or racism than to get it wrong.

50. White people should never confront, disagree with, or question what a Person of Color says about race or racism.

51. As a white person, if you want to address racism, go do service work in communities and countries that are primarily comprised of People of Color.

52. People of Color make it so uncomfortable to talk about race.

53. White people should just sit back and give People of Color the space to talk.

54. If I say anything, they get mad; if I stay silent, they are angry. We're damned if we do, damned if we don't.

55. We can't say anything anymore without being called a racist.

56. People of Color should appreciate when white colleagues are trying.

57. White colleagues deserve to be given the benefit of the doubt and acknowledged for their good intent. There is no need to constantly harp on the impact to People of Color.

58. People of Color should welcome the chance to work with clients of color, mentor employees or students of color, and serve on organizational diversity committees. It is good for their career.

59. I understand racism since I am _____ (a member of a marginalized group, for example, a woman, LGBTQIA+, Jewish, someone with a disability, someone who grew up poor).

60. I understand racism because _____ (I am married to a Person of Color; I have Biracial kids; We adopted a Chinese baby; I grew up in a predominantly Black and Latinx neighborhood; My best friends are People of Color).

After you've marked the list:

- Add any additional common unproductive, possibly racist attitudes of white people.
- How do white people tend to react out of these types of beliefs?
- How could you effectively engage others, particularly white people, who have these biases and beliefs?

Then, thinking about the items that you circled in the list (the views you have personally held at some point), answer the following questions:

1. When did you first hear each of these attitudes? When did you come to believe each of them?
2. Who benefits from these racist attitudes and beliefs? How?
3. When have you reacted out of any racist attitude or belief (even if unconsciously)? What was your probable negative impact on People of Color and Indigenous Peoples? On the team? On organizational goals?
4. As you think about the reality of the impact of your attitudes, actions, and inactions, what emotions come up for you?
5. What is the payoff when you believe this racist attitude? How have you benefited from holding onto these racist beliefs and attitudes? For reacting based on them?
6. How have your racist beliefs and attitudes driven your behavior, interactions, and decision-making?
7. How could you stop yourself and interrupt this type of thought the next time one arises?
8. How can you shift each racist thought in the moment? How can you strategize ahead of time if you anticipate that you may fall into a particular racist attitude again?

* * *

Biased Behaviors That Perpetuate Racist Dynamics and Structural Racism (W20)

Review the list of behaviors below. As you read:

- ✓ Check off any dynamics and behaviors you have observed white people engage in.
- ○ Circle the number of any that you have personally done at any time in your life.

After you've read through the list and marked it, follow the directions below the list for additional reflection.

Some People, Particularly White People, Tend to
(Consciously and Unconsciously):

1. Interrupt and talk over People of Color in meetings and casual conversations more frequently than white colleagues.
2. Minimize, undervalue, ignore, overlook, and discount the talents, competencies, and contributions of People of Color.
3. Rephrase and reword the comments of People of Color much more frequently than those of white colleagues.
4. Ask People of Color to repeat what they have just said far more often than white colleagues.
5. Question, challenge, and doubt the validity and credibility of what People of Color say far more often than with white colleagues.
6. Require and demand proof if People of Color raise concerns about racist dynamics.
7. Question and undermine the authority of leaders of color; resent taking direction from a Person of Color.
8. Do not follow the direction of leaders, managers, and facilitators of color.
9. Walk on eggshells around or act more hesitant, distant, and formal with People of Color; feel uncomfortable and nervous and do not develop the same depth of effective working relationships for fear of saying or doing something racist.
10. When asked to examine the impact of their behavior, get defensive and argue their good intent rather than explore the negative racist impact of their action or inaction.
11. Focus on how much progress has been made, rather than on how much more needs to change.
12. Diminish and downplay the reality of recent racist behaviors and incidents by expressing shock and dismay—"I can't believe this is still happening in (year)"—to avoid further exploration of the negative impact on People of Color.

13. Respond impatiently when People of Color raise concerns and issues of racism; move on quickly to another topic.

14. Get defensive when People of Color express their frustrations with current organizational and societal dynamics.

15. Get angry if People of Color don't enthusiastically appreciate when white people are trying to help them.

16. Engage in tone-policing of People of Color (for example, pressure them to soften their tone, not be so emotional and angry, to smile and be nice, be more professional, be more palatable).

17. Make racist comments during hiring practices, including: We have to hire a Person of Color, regardless of their qualifications; we need to find more qualified People of Color; they won't be a good fit here; they won't stay; they were too aggressive in their comments; they seemed to have an attitude; all they talked about was race; they don't have the right degree or the right experience for this job; I'm not sure about their research focus.

18. Try to teach People of Color about racism, or "white-splaining."

19. Play the white savior: try to help People of Color, give unsolicited advice, or rush to fix and solve issues on their own for People of Color.

20. Proclaim "I'm not racist!" while refusing to acknowledge the patterns of interpersonal, cultural, and institutional racism People of Color experience daily.

21. Rationalize away racist treatment of People of Color as individual racist incidents, a misunderstanding, or the result of something the Person of Color did or failed to do.

22. Refuse to recognize racist dynamics and 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!"

23. Look to and demand their colleagues of color be the diversity expert and take the lead in raising and addressing racism as their second (unpaid) job.

24. Seek or demand approval, validation, and recognition from People of Color.

25. After a meeting, tell People of Color how awful something was but don't do anything to address the microaggression or problematic behavior in the moment or afterward with the person responsible.

26. Refuse to acknowledge and continue to minimize the devastating emotional labor and racial trauma their colleagues of color experience in the organization and in society.

27. Dismiss what People of Color say. Accept the same types of comments as valid when stated by a white person.

28. Look to a white person to validate the comments and ideas of a Person of Color.

29. Look to People of Color (especially when it is not within a paid position description or outlined within the person's job responsibilities and duties) for direction, education, and coaching on how to act and what not to do related to any issue of race or racial equity.

30. Discount, critique, question, and outright ignore the insights, coaching, and direction from People of Color in leadership roles related to racial equity.

31. Act performatively; say they support racial equity while still perpetuating or ignoring racist dynamics, policies, and practices. Often focused on being perceived as the good white person versus addressing racism.

32. Believe they are already woke (effective allies or accomplices) and resist further education and accountability.

33. When asked to examine their white privilege, get defensive and use Perfectly Logical Explanations (PLEs) and justifications for remaining in resistance.

34. Assume the white teacher, coach, facilitator, or employee is in charge, or a competent leader; assume People of Color are in service and support roles.

35. Seem surprised when a Person of Color makes a useful comment or offers an insightful idea; calls them articulate.

36. Do not notice or outright ignore the daily racist indignities, microaggressions, and systemic racism that People of Color and Indigenous Peoples experience.

37. Use PLEs to minimize, dismiss, and rationalize any racist microaggressions or other racist dynamic.

38. Dismiss and minimize the frustrations of People of Color and Indigenous Peoples; label the person raising issues as aggressive, angry, having an attitude, working their agenda, not a team player, or unprofessional.

39. Judge and critique People of Color as overreacting, too emotional, extreme in their reactions, and unprofessional when they are responding to the cumulative impact of racist incidents.

40. Accuse People of Color of playing the race card whenever they challenge racist policies and practices; refuse to explore the probability of negative differential impact based on race or how racist attitudes and beliefs are operating in the dynamic.

41. 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.

42. If confronted by a Person of Color, view it as an attack and focus on and critique *how* they engaged, not the original problematic comments or behaviors.

43. If confronted by a Person of Color, use tears to distract from the conversation and re-center themselves to avoid accountability.

44. Disengage when they feel any anxiety or discomfort; blame People of Color if they feel uncomfortable.

45. Demand to always feel comfortable and have a safe space when talking about issues of race. Avoid conflict and seek harmony above truthful conversations about race or racism.

46. Profess feelings of deep guilt and shame without taking meaningful action to interrupt racist attitudes, behaviors, policies, and practices.

47. Defend white colleagues who are confronted about the racist impact of their behavior with comments like: "He's a good guy and would never mean that and would never do that." "She has Biracial kids." "They're married to a Black person." "He is part Native American! You must have misunderstood."

48. Work to maintain the status quo and protect the advantages and privileges they receive as a white person.

49. Believe and insist they know what is best for others and, given their power and privileged status, feel they are entitled to make decisions without inclusive input of those impacted or charged with implementing them.

50. Create, maintain, and enforce work environments based on white cultural norms, practices, and values.

51. Insist there is one right way, meaning "my way" or the white way.

52. Claim to not know how to consistently use or outright refuse or fail to consistently use a race lens in decision-making and planning to create greater racial equity.

53. Claim to not know how to consistently use or outright refuse or fail to consistently use a race lens to analyze and revise current practices, policies, programs, norms, and services to create greater racial equity.

54. Give white colleagues continuous coaching and developmental feedback to help them be successful, often with the thought that "They remind me of myself." Fail to develop effective coaching relationships with People of Color or give useful, timely developmental feedback.

55. Critique the comments and behaviors of People of Color and discipline them far more often, more quickly, and more severely than white colleagues.

56. Give white people the benefit of the doubt if they make a misstep; hold People of Color to a far higher standard of performance.

57. Either make People of Color's and Indigenous Peoples' experience (or their labor) invisible or scrutinize them under a microscope.

58. Avoid giving direct feedback to colleagues of color; instead, complain to the person's supervisor or gossip with white peers.

59. Make comments that reinforce and perpetuate racist stereotypes about People of Color.

60. When confronted about the racist impact of their comment, respond defensively with comments including: "That wasn't what I said!" "I was only joking; you misunderstood me!" "That wasn't my intent!"

61. Positively comment much more often on the skills and achievements of white colleagues and overlook those of People of Color.

62. Only compliment People of Color on their appearance, hair, and articulate speech while praising white colleagues on their performance and demonstrated competence.

63. Attribute the work of individual People of Color to the whole team, yet single out individual white people for public recognition and appreciation for their contributions, even if achieved through teamwork.

64. Take credit for the work of People of Color on their team.

65. Critique and chastise People of Color who do not conform and assimilate to white cultural norms and practices (for example, call them unprofessional).

66. Accept and feel safer around People of Color who have assimilated and are closer to white.

67. Mentor, coach, sponsor, and promote People of Color they view as assimilated and who are closer to white.

68. Refuse to acknowledge the existence of and cumulative impact of racist microaggressions.

69. Refuse to acknowledge the devastating, life-threatening impact of systemic racism.

70. Blame People of Color for the racist barriers and challenges they experience.

71. Segregate themselves from People of Color and rarely develop authentic relationships across race.

72. Call security or law enforcement to confront People of Color who are just going about their daily lives. Weaponize security or law enforcement when they feel People of Color don't belong where they are or shouldn't be doing what they are doing.

73. Exaggerate the level of intimacy they have with individual People of Color.

74. Use credentialing to try to prove they are a good white colleague, such as: My best friend is Black; I'm married to a Native American; I adopted a child from China; I majored in Latin American literature; I am bilingual in Spanish; my great-grandfather was Cherokee; I have researched and written about issues of race and racism all my life; I teach about race and racism; I am active in local anti-racism organizations; I marched in Black Lives Matter protests; I have Biracial children.

75. Pressure and punish white people who actively work to dismantle racism to conform and collude with the status quo.

76. Criticize, gossip about, and find fault with white allies and change agents.

77. Compete with other whites to be the good white, the best ally, the one People of Color let into their circle.

78. If a white person does or says something racist, aggressively confronts them and piles on the critical feedback to distance from them and prove who is a better ally.

79. Avoid ever confronting other white people on their racist attitudes and behaviors or does so only in the presence of People of Color.

After you've marked the list, add any additional common behaviors that perpetuate racist dynamics and organizational racism you have witnessed, experienced, or done.

Then, review all the racist behaviors you have observed and answer the following questions:

1. What is the probable impact of these behaviors?
2. What are three to five ways you could effectively interrupt and engage these dynamics in the moment?
3. How could you follow up afterward?
4. What kinds of changes to policies, practices, and norms could you advocate for that could minimize these occurring in the future?

Now, choose five to ten unproductive behaviors you have done and answer the following questions:

1. What could you have done instead that would have aligned with your core values and furthered organizational racial equity goals?
2. When asked to examine the racist impact of your behaviors, how could you have engaged more effectively to hear the feedback and take responsibility for your impact?

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Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About Race and Racism, a Beginning List (W3)

Review the list of behaviors below. As you read, check off (✔) all the potentially problematic behaviors you have observed people doing or done yourself during discussions about race and racism.

After you've read through the list and marked it, follow the directions below the list for additional reflection.

1. White silence
2. Dominating the conversation
3. Being inauthentic
4. Being polite and nice, not real
5. Staying guarded and protected
6. Credentialing
7. Intellectualizing
8. Stuck in our heads
9. Shutting down
10. Not present to or sharing our emotions
11. Stuck in fear, guilt, and shame
12. Using white tears to derail the conversation, avoid feedback
13. Overlooking the comments and contributions of colleagues of color
14. Discounting the experiences of colleagues of color
15. Insisting we understand and can relate
16. Dismiss the comments of colleagues of color
17. Minimizing the emotions of colleagues of color
18. Downplaying the impact of racist dynamics
19. Using a Perfectly Logical Explanation (PLE) to excuse or rationalize away racist dynamics
20. Refusing to believe the lived experiences of colleagues of color
21. Questioning and challenging the validity of what colleagues of color share
22. Disregarding feedback
23. Denying and defending our racist impact
24. Interrupting and talking over colleagues of color
25. Debating and arguing
26. Insisting we are right
27. Trying to justify our behaviors: That wasn't my intent!
28. Take it personally when someone is describing a pattern of racist dynamics
29. I don't do that! I am a good white!
30. Feel indignant if asked to explain, say more
31. Stuck at the individual or interpersonal level
32. Missing the patterns and dynamics of systemic racism
33. Judging and distancing from other white people
34. Competing to be the most woke white person in the room
35. Blaming the victim

36. Giving unsolicited advice
37. Rush to solutions
38. All talk, no action
39. Taking on a different vocabulary or accent when speaking with colleagues of color
40. Re-centering our issues and needs over those of colleagues of color
41. Claiming a false equivalency
42. Insisting there is reverse racism
43. Trying to smooth over conflict
44. Avoiding the pain of the reality of racism by putting a happy face on everything
45. Focusing only on how far we have come
46. Being surprised as colleagues of color share powerful ideas and insights
47. Condescending, arrogant, and patronizing tones and attitudes
48. Distracting nonverbal behaviors as people share: eye-rolling, deep sighs, head shaking, side conversations, looking at your phone, or other dismissive behaviors.

49. Rescuing other white participants who are given feedback
50. Ignoring the racial trauma from national events and the organizational climate
51. Asking colleagues of color to teach or represent their racialized group(s)
52. Not interrupting racist dynamics in the moment
53. Insisting we need to be color-blind
54. Insisting "I'm not racist" instead of acknowledging racist attitudes and behaviors
55. Only considering a comment after a white person has validated what a Person of Color just said.

After you've marked the list, add any additional behaviors you have observed in yourself or others.

Then respond to these prompts:
- What is the probable impact when these behaviors occur?
- Go back through the list and note what you can do differently when *you* are about to engage in a problematic behavior.
- Review the list again and identify how you can interrupt the dynamic when other participants react with some of these problematic behaviors.

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Engaging Guidelines (W14)

1. Be open and honest as you share.

2. Anticipate your possible impact before you speak.

3. Participate fully, even if that means you're out of your comfort zone. Expect discomfort as you're learning.

4. Speak from personal experience.

5. Listen respectfully; listen to learn and believe.

6. Seek to understand; expect disagreement, and listen harder when it happens.

7. Share airtime: Move in to share; move out to listen.

8. Be fully present.

9. Be open to new perspectives.

10. Explore impact and take responsibility for your words and actions; acknowledge intent behind actions, only if useful to deepen understanding.

11. Expect people to learn and grow; don't freeze-frame others* or judge them on only one comment or behavior.

12. Take risks; be brave; engage.

13. Respect and maintain confidentiality.

14. Notice and describe what you see happening in the group and in yourself.

15. Recognize your hot buttons and triggers; share if you feel triggered; circle back and check in on people who felt triggered.

16. Trust that dialogue will take us to deeper levels of understanding and acceptance.

17. Engage and embrace this opportunity; we won't be finished.

* Kaplowitz, D. R., Griffin, S. R., & Seyka, S. (2019). *Race dialogues: A facilitator's guide to tackling the elephant in the classroom* (p. 32). Teacher's College Press.

Examples of White Privilege, Unearned Advantages (W31)

(For more, read resources by Dr. Peggy McIntosh, Alan G. Johnson, Robert Jensen, Tim Wise, and others; see References.)

1. We are assumed to be competent and smart; our ideas are seen as worthwhile.
2. We don't have to prove we are skilled and competent.
3. We can be average or even mediocre and still be hired and promoted; we don't have to be exceptional to be hired or advance in our career.
4. We are assumed to have potential and are prepared for the next level of responsibility.
5. Our voices are heard and listened to.
6. Our ideas are given legitimacy.
7. Our ideas are considered and explored.
8. We are not interrupted and talked over very often; people apologize when they do.
9. We are assumed to be the leader even when the Person of Color is in charge.
10. We see other whites in many different types of leadership roles; we can imagine moving up in the organization the way they did.
11. We are assumed to belong and have a right to be here.
12. We feel normal and welcome.
13. White people are most often the positive characters and leaders depicted in literature, movies, and TV shows.
14. We can build our self-esteem and self-confidence on the beliefs that whites are better leaders, smarter, more competent, have greater potential, or have other positive attributes.
15. White cultural practices are standardized, expected, and enforced in organizations.
16. We are treated with respect; our humanity is valued and honored.
17. People remember and pronounce our names correctly.
18. We frequently see leaders who look like us and are portrayed in a positive light.
19. We can believe that our success has resulted from our individual hard work and intelligence.
20. Standardized tests are embedded with white culture.
21. We can ignore and deny that white privilege exists.
22. If we make a mistake, miss a deadline, or are late to a meeting, we are given the benefit of the doubt.
23. If we mispronounce a word or make a spelling error, we are not assumed to be deficient or incompetent.
24. We are more often given a break when we need it or even if we don't.
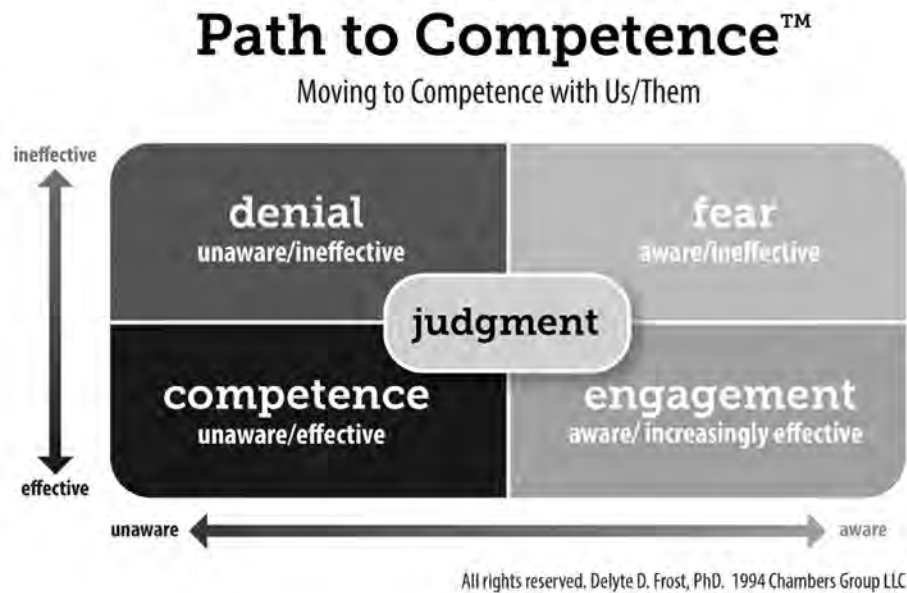25. Our flaws are often overlooked or considered quirks—"That's just how they are."

26. Any mistake is assumed to be an isolated incident, not evidence of a defect or character flaw or used as an indictment of our race.

27. We are not under constant scrutiny (aka a microscope).

28. Our credentials and achievements are not questioned as often or seen as suspect.

29. We are assumed to be worthwhile until our actions prove differently.

30. We are assumed to be innocent until our actions prove otherwise.

31. We more easily and more often receive mentoring, coaching, sponsorship, access to informal and formal networks, or other professional guidance.

32. If we raise issues and concerns about the negative dynamics of racism that People of Color experience, we are likely to be rewarded, appreciated, and seen as a leader; we are not accused of playing the race card.

33. We can ignore issues of racism and not be held accountable.

34. If we make subtle racist comments or jokes, we will rarely be confronted or held accountable. We will be believed and have our actions excused if we say, "I was only kidding" or "That wasn't my intent."

35. We are not racially profiled by police, INS, IRS, or TSA agents.

36. We are not assumed to be a drug user or drug dealer.

37. If we use illicit drugs, we are given support and rehab opportunities, not viewed as a criminal.

38. We don't have to carry the constant fear that our family members and friends may be brutalized or killed by police.

39. When we go into a store, we are not assumed to be criminals or seen as dangerous or a threat.

40. When we go into a store, we can start shopping without having to acknowledge the security guard and take time to have a conversation in hopes they will see us as non-threatening and treat us as individuals, not based on racist stereotypes.

41. We don't have to constantly be on guard, protected against potential racist microaggressions for ourselves and others.

42. We don't have to expend significant emotional labor to survive in predominantly white organizations.

43. We don't have to use significant time and energy for uncompensated Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) efforts, including teaching white people about race and racism, leading EDI efforts, being on multiple EDI task forces and hiring committees.

44. We can focus all our energy and attention on our job responsibilities.

45. We aren't policed as much for how we speak, dress, or wear our hair.

46. We can wear casual clothes if working on a weekend without security being called because someone assumed we didn't belong.

47. We can express our emotions without tone-policing or being labeled "an angry _____."

48. We have easier access to loans, lower interest rates, housing purchases, or similar financial advantages.
49. Our families may have accumulated wealth over generations through the opportunities in the housing and educational advantages of the GI Bill and other federal practices (for example, redlining).
50. If we are a recent immigrant from Australia, Ireland, or England, people view our accent as positive and are interested and excited to learn about our experiences in other countries.
51. Even if ID is required, we may not need to show it, and it is rarely scrutinized or seen as suspect.
52. When we speak, we are rarely told, "You are very articulate."
53. We don't have to live with the chronic stress and toxicity of a racist work environment and other types of systemic racism.

Expected Competencies for Creating Racially Inclusive Organizations (W2)

1. Create racially inclusive, high-performing teams and work climates where all are respected and valued, feel a sense of belonging, and can contribute to their full potential.
2. Develop racially inclusive products and services.
3. Continually deepen self-awareness and knowledge to effectively engage in meaningful, authentic dialogue about race, racism, whiteness, white privilege, white supremacy culture, the history of racism, racially equitable and inclusive organizations, and other aspects of racial inequities.
4. Continually deepen the capacity to effectively engage in meaningful, authentic dialogue about race, racism, whiteness, white privilege, white supremacy culture, the history of racism, racially equitable and inclusive organizations, and other aspects of racial inequities.
5. Recognize racist attitudes, behaviors, and microaggressions in yourself and others.
6. Effectively interrupt racist dynamics and microaggressions in the moment.
7. Respond effectively when given feedback about the impact of comments, actions, or inactions.
8. Recognize and shift dynamics of white privilege in the moment.
9. Use a race lens in all planning and decision-making processes.
10. Use a race lens to analyze all current policies, programs, practices, norms, and services, and revise them as needed to eliminate negative differential impact on People of Color and create greater racial equity and inclusion.
11. Recognize and shift unproductive white cultural dynamics in the organization to create a more inclusive, racially just organizational climate and culture.
12. Implement a system of development and accountability to ensure accelerated progress toward becoming a racially inclusive, anti-racist organization.

Path to Competence, Common Indicators:
Capacity Development for Change Agents to Dismantle Racism
(W29)

Path to Competence™

Moving to Competence with Us/Them

ineffective

denial
unaware/ineffective

fear
aware/ineffective

judgment

competence
unaware/effective

engagement
aware/ increasingly effective

effective

unaware — aware

Where were you? Where are you now?

Note: A webinar about the Path to Competence* is available on YouTube (https://youtu.be/_6Q61OP58y8).

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What did you think, say, and do in these different places on the Path to Competence? (Some may apply more to white people than People of Color and Indigenous Peoples.)
- What helped you move along your Path to greater capacity, courage, and demonstrated racial competence?
- What have you observed or heard from colleagues?

* The Path to Competence model was developed by Drs. Jack Gant and Delyte Frost, Elsie Y. Cross Associates Inc.

Box of Denial: Unaware/Ineffective

- Unaware of their racist attitudes and behaviors.
- Stuck at the Individual Level.
- Perfectly Logical Explanations (PLEs).
- Deflecting to a marginalized identity.
- That had nothing to do with race! That happens to me/others, too!
- My best friend is Black; I adopted Latinx orphans; I'm married to an Asian American.
- You make it worse by segregating us, talking about race; we all got along great before this training; now we're walking on eggshells.
- We are all part of the human race.
- I'm part Native American; I'm not white!
- I'm color-blind; I don't see color!
- I treat everyone the same; I interrupt everyone!
- Tone-policing of People of Color: If they would only _____.
- They are too sensitive.
- But they are racist, too!
- They play the race card—use it as an excuse.
- There are microaggressions against whites, too!
- We are post-racial; you are making something out of nothing.
- Things are so much better now; what is the big deal?
- I'm not racist! I'm a good one.
- I grew up poor; I have no privilege.
- Classism is the most important oppression.
- Things have swung too far; now whites are discriminated against.
- We can't say anything anymore or joke at all!
- We can't learn without People of Color.
- We just have different opinions.
- You can't lump people together; we're all individuals.
- They just need to work hard and assimilate like my family did.
- Get defensive if confronted.
- I don't hate anyone; I'm not racist.
- I don't have any racial prejudice.
- There are bad apples in every group.
- That was an isolated incident.
- I treat people how they treat me.
- There is no white privilege; I worked for everything I have.

Box of Fear: Increasing Awareness/Ineffective

- See more racist dynamics.
- Realize how much they don't know or see.
- Silent.
- Scared of making a misstep, offending, doing something racist.
- Walk on eggshells.
- Scared, hesitant to respond.
- Stay stuck in fear.
- Ineffective reactions.
- Know they are ineffective.
- Giving up: I tried—I'm damned if I do, damned if I don't.

- Can't do anything right.
- Realize how many microaggressions they have done or overlooked.
- Realize how they have colluded, gone along to get along.
- Guilt, shame, regret.
- Defensive, reactive.
- Inaction.
- Feel powerless, overwhelmed.
- Look to others to lead.

Box of Judgment: Maybe Aware or Unaware/Ineffective

- Blame, judgment of others.
- Triggered critiques, confrontations, calling out, unproductive anger.
- Not building connections with own group; only want to be with People of Color.
- Ineffective engagement.
- Self-righteous.
- Take no responsibility for developing colleagues.

- Shame, blame, guilt, anger toward self.
- Swirl in negative self-critique.
- Stuck, no effective engagement.
- Inaction.
- Blame others for our lack of competence.
- I'm better than that person; I'm a good one; you are bad.
- I am bad; all whites are bad.

Box of Engagement: Greater Awareness/Increasingly Effective

- Recognize most racist dynamics.
- Take more risks to engage.
- Respond with increasing effectiveness, still misstep.
- Still have to concentrate and focus as they engage others.
- May need to plan and think through what to do.
- Speak up, use a race lens in discussions and decisions.
- Revise current practices with a race lens.
- Seek out and use feedback.
- Use mentors and coaches.
- Practice with others.
- Admit racist thoughts and actions.
- Listen to the impact of their actions; make amends and change their behaviors.
- Take responsibility for developing colleagues.

Box of Competence: Unaware/Show Up Very Effective

- In the flow, present.
- Respond effectively without planning or much thought.
- Habitual, automatic capacity to respond effectively.
- Speak up, take risks, confront effectively.
- Committed to stay on their Path to Competence.
- Always learning, developing, deepening capacity.
- Develop white leaders and change agents.
- Support and develop colleagues of color.
- Leading organizational and systemic change.

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Racial Equity & Inclusion:
Suggested Competencies for Leaders & Change Agents (W1)

There is a wide range of competencies that I believe leaders and change agents can deepen on their own or in community with others. While the list below is not comprehensive, my hope is that it is a useful tool to spark conversation, assess your current level of demonstrated competence, and identify goals for professional development. It may also be a good resource in cohorts and learning communities as participants plan their discussion topics and skill-practice sessions.

Directions: Use the following scale as you reflect on the following competencies (knowledge, self-awareness, and skill) and rate how often you effectively demonstrate each of these:

1 = Rarely   2 = Occasionally   3 = Often   4 = Most of the Time   5 = Almost Always

A. Knowledge about race, racism, dominant white culture, white privilege, etc.

_____ 1. I recognize how I was socialized related to dynamics of race and how these experiences still impact me today.

_____ 2. I understand the common, often different, patterns of racialized socialization and life experiences of People of Color, Indigenous Peoples, people who identify as Multiracial or Biracial, and white people.

_____ 3. I understand how the history of racism, colonization, and immigration in the US and around the world impacts current dynamics and experiences.

_____ 4. I understand the damage and devastation white people have perpetuated on People of Color and Indigenous Peoples over the centuries and currently.

_____ 5. I understand how multiple, persistent racist microaggressions and institutional racism negatively and cumulatively impact the quality of life for People of Color and Indigenous Peoples.

_____ 6. I recognize how institutional racism permeates societal institutions, including the legal, policing, and justice systems, housing, health care, education, employment, the military, politics, the media, entertainment, and so on.

_____ 7. I identify the common racist attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and implicit biases of white people that perpetuate the status quo (internalized dominance).

_____ 8. I identify the common attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and beliefs of People of Color and Indigenous Peoples that support the status quo (internalized racism).

_____ 9. I recognize the common daily indignities and racist microaggressions that People of Color and Indigenous Peoples experience.

_____ 10. I understand multiple ways to effectively facilitate change and create greater racial equity and inclusion in organizations.

_____ 11. I am aware of how people may experience and interpret comments and nonverbal behaviors differently based upon their cultural perspective and their racial identity.

_____ 12. I understand how white privilege and white cultural values and norms are infused into formal expectations and workplace culture as well as informal, unwritten rules for success.

_____ 13. I understand how white privilege and white culture are infused into organizational policies, practices, programs, and services.

_____ 14. I recognize how white people most often get the privilege of being seen at the individual level and not viewed as representative of all white people.

_____ 15. I recognize that People of Color and Indigenous Peoples are generally viewed at the group level and their attitudes and behaviors are assumed to be reflective of all members of their racial and ethnic group(s).

_____ 16. I recognize the full breadth of unearned white privileges that white people receive in society and in organizations.

_____ 17. (For white people) I understand the pervasive white privileges and advantages that I still receive, even as I work for racial equity and inclusion.

_____ 18. (For white people) I understand I am seen and experienced as white, at the group level, even if I actively work for racial equity and inclusion.

B. Use a race lens to notice and respond effectively to interpersonal dynamics

_____ 19. I intentionally notice or PAN the full range of common racist dynamics that occur during meetings, conversations, workshops, or other gatherings.

_____ 20. I describe the details or facts of what I observe without judgments, assumptions, interpretations, or conclusions (panning).

_____ 21. I recognize and effectively respond to racist microaggressions that occur in my presence, included racially coded terms and phrases.

_____ 22. I consistently recognize and respond to racial implicit bias.

_____ 23. I recognize and intervene when white people are expecting or demanding that People of Color and Indigenous Peoples educate them or take care of them.

_____ 24. I effectively bring up and discuss issues of race and racism. I keep race on the table as one of the factors to be considered.

_____ 25. I notice and effectively intervene when people try to change the subject to avoid talking about issues of race and racism.

C. Engage white people effectively

_____ 26. I encourage white people to participate in conversations about race and engage them in the process.

_____ 27. I ask questions and listen deeply to increase understanding, especially if I initially disagree.

_____ 28. I use effective listening and communication techniques, including clarifying, paraphrasing, open-ended questions, silence, connecting language, and other skills.

_____ 29. (For white people) I am able to relate to and see myself in other white people to find compassion and make a connection with them, rather than judging them or distancing from them.

_____ 30. I effectively share stories and personal experiences to relate to and build connections with others.

_____ 31. I effectively use self-disclosure to authentically share my feelings, thoughts, and beliefs.

_____ 32. I minimize how much I intellectualize or use the telling style; instead, I maximize how often I pose questions or dilemmas to facilitate dialogue.

_____ 33. I demonstrate compassionate, empathetic accountability when engaging with white people.

_____ 34. I find ways to include everyone in the discussion.

_____ 35. If a white colleague tries to shift the focus to one of their marginalized groups, I effectively acknowledge the dynamic and redirect the conversation back to race and racism.

_____ 36. I meet people where they are without judgment and do not demand or expect them to be further along in their understanding or skill development.

_____ 37. I effectively name common dominant white cultural dynamics and use these as teachable moments to facilitate deeper understanding and learning.

_____ 38. I can let go of my planned agenda, trust the process, and effectively engage with what is happening in the moment.

_____ 39. I consistently demonstrate respect, compassion, and empathy for all participants.

_____ 40. I effectively navigate discussions where participants are feeling and expressing deep emotions, including anger, sadness, fear, frustration, guilt, shame, overwhelm, or hopelessness.

_____ 41. I am able to be in the moment—fully present and focused on what is happening in the group and in myself during difficult dialogues.

_____ 42. I acknowledge comments that sound inappropriate or triggering.

_____ 43. I speak up and interrupt racist microaggressions and exclusionary behaviors.

_____ 44. I engage people in meaningful dialogue when I experience one of their comments as inappropriate, racist, or triggering.

_____ 45. I consistently communicate clear guidelines for expected behaviors that promote racial equity and inclusion as well as clear consequences for exclusionary practices and inappropriate or racist behavior.

_____ 46. I recognize that resistance and challenges are often doorways to deeper understanding and learning for individuals and the group.

_____ 47. I respond effectively to challenges and resistance without taking it personally or feeling deeply triggered.

_____ 48. I effectively navigate conflict and disagreement in discussions about race and racism.

_____ 49. I can use triggering events as teachable moments for the group.

_____ 50. I respond effectively to feedback without taking it personally or feeling deeply triggered.

_____ 51. I effectively explore the unintended impact of racist comments and behaviors while also holding space to explore the person's intentions and possible implicit bias.

_____ 52. I facilitate productive dialogue when there is a mismatch between the intent and the impact of someone's behavior, a policy, a practice, or a decision.

_____ 53. I recognize effective behaviors that further learning and community building.

_____ 54. I give effective feedback to others about the impact of their attitudes and behaviors.

_____ 55. I support and coach others to deepen their capacity as effective leaders and change agents as they develop racially inclusive organizations.

D. Recognize and engage organizational dynamics

_____ 56. I communicate why racial equity and inclusion are some of my core values and why I am committed to creating racial equity in everything I do.

_____ 57. I effectively discuss a wide range of compelling reasons that position racial equity as a critical factor in the organization's success.

_____ 58. I effectively create work environments that support the success and full participation of all People of Color, Indigenous Peoples, and white people.

_____ 59. I create fair and equitable selection and hiring processes that consistently identify racially diverse, culturally competent pools of final candidates.

_____ 60. I effectively intervene to shift dominant white cultural norms and dynamics of white privilege to create greater racial equity and inclusion.

_____ 61. I consistently use a race lens to analyze policies, practices, programs, norms, and services to identify institutional racism and any negative differential impact on People of Color and Indigenous Peoples as well as any inequitable advantages, privilege, and access for white people.

_____ 62. I continuously engage with others to revise any policy, practice, program, norm, or service to ensure they meet the needs of People of Color as well as whites.

_____ 63. I ensure that all planning processes intentionally include equitable participation and full consideration of input from People of Color, Indigenous Peoples, and whites.

_____ 64. I effectively collect and analyze disaggregated data about the experiences and perceptions of People of Color, Indigenous Peoples, and whites in the organization.

_____ 65. I use these data to effectively analyze, evaluate, and revise current policies, programs, services, practices, procedures, norms, facilities, and so on, to ensure racial equity.

_____ 66. I continually research and share national or international trends and promising practices to help organizations achieve greater racial equity and inclusion.

E. Self-work and healing

_____ 67. I continuously use a race lens to self-reflect and examine my behaviors, thoughts, feelings, biases, and attitudes as well as my impact on others.

_____ 68. I am aware of the racist biases, assumptions, and stereotypes that impact my thoughts, judgments, decisions, and actions.

_____ 69. I am aware of how my beliefs about what is effective or professional have been influenced by my racialized socialization and dominant white culture (for example, leadership; communication styles; decision-making practices; dress, attire, and appearance; dialogue; conflict styles; meeting management; supervision; etc.).

_____ 70. I continually interrupt, reframe, and unlearn these racist biases, stereotypes, and assumptions.

_____ 71. I recognize and honestly talk about the racist attitudes I still hold and how they have fueled racist behaviors.

_____ 72. I understand how my racialized identity (how I identify or what I am assumed to be) impacts how I am perceived, experienced, and treated by others.

_____ 73. I effectively listen to, receive, and appreciate feedback from others and utilize this input to improve my practice.

_____ 74. I continually seek out feedback about my behaviors and attitudes from others and utilize their input to improve my practice.

_____ 75. I am aware of my common hot buttons and triggers and their intrapersonal roots.

_____ 76. I am aware of my early warning signals that I am beginning to feel triggered.

_____ 77. I recognize when I am reacting out of alignment with my core values.

_____ 78. I recognize when I am operating out of guilt and shame.

_____ 79. I am able to effectively navigate my own triggered feelings of anger, fear, stress, grief, guilt, shame, and other powerful emotions, so that I do not work through my issues at the expense of others.

_____ 80. When I react unproductively, I effectively navigate that moment, apologize, acknowledge the impact of my actions, and commit to changing my behavior in the future.

_____ 81. I actively do my healing work around my hot buttons and triggers in the moment: explore the intrapersonal roots; acknowledge or feel my feelings; shift unproductive thoughts, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

_____ 82. I regularly do ongoing deep healing work to release and heal old issues, wounds and trauma, resentment, fear, guilt, or shame.

F. Deepen partnerships with People of Color and Indigenous Peoples

_____ 83. I effectively listen to and believe People of Color and Indigenous Peoples when they tell me about the dynamics of racism they experience.

_____ 84. I notice and effectively respond when white people interrupt People of Color and Indigenous Peoples, take over the conversation, and re-center whiteness or white issues.

____ 85. I effectively partner with People of Color and Indigenous Peoples to create change.

____ 86. I effectively follow the leadership of People of Color and Indigenous Peoples.

____ 87. If I am called racist, I effectively listen to the feedback, ask questions to deepen my understanding, and acknowledge the person's perspective.

____ 88. If I realize I have acted out of racial bias, I readily acknowledge my behavior and apologize for the impact.

____ 89. I strategically consider how and when to engage in order to optimize the chances for meaningful change. I don't win the battle, but lose the war, especially if that puts People of Color and Indigenous Peoples at greater risk.

G. (For white people) Learn with a community of white allies and change agents

____ 90. I intentionally build a community of white allies for support and to accelerate my learning, growth, and healing.

____ 91. I use other white allies to create greater accountability for my actions as a change agent.

____ 92. I actively create space to support other white people in their development and healing processes.

____ 93. I help other white people recognize and release the fears, guilt, shame, and racist biases that are fueling their behaviors.

____ 94. I effectively partner with other white people, People of Color, and Indigenous Peoples to create change.

____ 95. I hold other white people accountable for their behaviors and efforts to create change.

____ 96. I am committed to staying in it: to work for racial equity and inclusion for the long haul.

After rating your current demonstrated competence, go back through the list:

1. Identify eight to ten of your greatest strengths.
2. Identify five to eight areas you want to develop further; note ways you might increase your competence in each of those areas.
3. Check off which competencies are an explicit part of your unit's hiring, training or development, and accountability processes.
4. Star (*) which additional competencies you believe are necessary for people in your unit to demonstrate as they intentionally create greater racial justice and inclusion in the organization.

We must be vigilant and persistent as leaders and change agents as we continually deepen our capacity to create greater racial equity and inclusion. Unlearning racism is a lifelong process of healing and reeducation. I hope you choose to stay in it for the long haul. If you do, I guarantee that when you wake up each day and look in the mirror, you will realize you are closer to living a life of integrity and purpose.

Self-Assessment: Effective Design and Facilitation Skills (W42)

Directions: Read each of the following and rate your current level of knowledge and demonstrated skill level in each of the five sections using the following scale:

1 = Rarely   2 = Occasionally   3 = Often   4 = Most of the Time   5 = Almost Always

A. Designing Training Sessions

_____ 1. I assess the learning needs of participants before I design the development session.

_____ 2. I gather background data on the demographics and experiences of the participants before I design the development session.

_____ 3. I use some type of conceptual model(s) as I design activities. (Examples: "What, So What, Now What," Gibb: "Who am I? Who are you? What are we going to do? How are we going to do it?," or the Experiential Learning Cycle: Do, Reflect, Analyze, Generalize, Apply.)

_____ 4. I write specific, realistic, and behavioral learning outcomes that are linked to the learning needs of participants.

_____ 5. I write clear and understandable designs and lesson plans.

_____ 6. I develop effective grounding, warm-up, or icebreaker activities that leave participants feeling energized, engaged, and motivated to learn.

_____ 7. I sequence activities to teach foundational concepts and skills before more complex ones.

_____ 8. I design activities that meet the varying learning styles of all learners.

_____ 9. I effectively use a variety of learning methods and tools, including experiential learning, small-group activities, journaling, media, role-playing, and music.

_____ 10. I create multiple opportunities for participants to teach each other in a participative, collaborative learning environment.

_____ 11. I design activities that are inclusive of all participants across social group identities.

_____ 12. I use the principles of Universal Design in all learning activities to create maximum accessibility to the material and activities.

_____ 13. I develop useful handouts and learning tools that help participants both deepen their learning and apply the concepts and skills to their lives.

B. Facilitating Development Sessions

_____ 14. I create learning environments that are respectful and challenging in a brave space.

_____ 15. I use effective listening and communication techniques, including clarifying, paraphrasing, and using open-ended questions.

_____ 16. I demonstrate empathy effectively.

_____ 17. I use silence effectively.

_____ 18. I use humor appropriately and effectively.

_____ 19. I manage time effectively.

_____ 20. I introduce activities and give directions well.

_____ 21. I effectively teach key concepts, definitions, and terms as I process activities and facilitate discussions.

_____ 22. I process activities using open-ended and closed-ended questions effectively.

_____ 23. I use processing questions to move participants through the Experiential Learning Cycle to help them make meaning of activities and apply their insights to create change (Do, Reflect, Analyze, Generalize, Apply; or What? So What? Now What?).

_____ 24. I effectively move discussions and activities along and keep the group focused and on track.

_____ 25. I acknowledge and appreciate people's participation.

_____ 26. I summarize discussions and make transitions effectively.

_____ 27. I encourage group members to participate and engage them in the process through my choice of activities and my facilitation style.

_____ 28. I use connecting language that bridges one person's comments to another's.

_____ 29. I effectively find some relevant point in participant comments, even those that seem way off the topic.

_____ 30. I effectively help participants recognize assumptions and help them differentiate between observable facts and interpretations.

_____ 31. If I believe someone is on a tangent, I can effectively acknowledge their point, and redirect the conversation back to the group's topic.

_____ 32. I minimize how much I use the telling style and maximize how often I pose questions or dilemmas to facilitate dialogue among participants.

_____ 33. I can relate to and see myself in the participants enough to find compassion and make a connection with them, rather than judging them or distancing myself from them.

_____ 34. I use self-disclosure and share feelings, thoughts, opinions, and personal experiences effectively.

_____ 35. I easily go with the flow and am flexible with the agenda as I adjust to the needs of the group in the moment.

_____ 36. I consider feedback and coaching from group members and cofacilitators.

_____ 37. I can meet the participants where they are and not demand or expect them to be farther along in their understanding or skill development.

_____ 38. I can easily stay in the facilitator role and not become a participant in the learning process.

_____ 39. I effectively use my voice and nonverbal behavior to facilitate learning and engage participants.

____ 40. I effectively name and discuss group dynamics with participants in the moment and use them as teachable moments to facilitate deeper learning.

____ 41. I can let go of the outcome and trust the process, knowing learning takes place even when I do not recognize it happening in the moment.

C. Facilitating with an Inclusion Lens

____ 42. I talk about the organization's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

____ 43. I state that it is everyone's responsibility to help create an organizational climate that is respectful and inclusive for all community members.

____ 44. I effectively discuss the common daily indignities and microaggressions that people from marginalized groups experience.

____ 45. I effectively discuss specific behaviors and actions that help create an inclusive organizational environment.

____ 46. I consistently demonstrate respect for all participants across privileged and marginalized group memberships.

____ 47. I pay attention to the multiple group memberships of participants and notice patterns of participation, including who's talking, who is quiet, who interrupts, who gets interrupted, who takes leadership, or whose ideas plop or are ignored.

____ 48. I notice what issues of diversity are discussed effectively and which ones are ignored or not addressed productively.

____ 49. I recognize and interrupt prejudice, stereotypes, and exclusionary group dynamics that occur in the session.

____ 50. I am aware of how people may experience and interpret comments and nonverbal behaviors differently based upon their cultural perspective and their experiences in their multiple privileged and marginalized groups.

D. Responding in Difficult Dialogues with an Inclusion Lens

____ 51. I effectively navigate discussions where group members are feeling and expressing deep emotions, including anger, sadness, fear, frustration, or hopelessness.

____ 52. I am able to be in the moment—fully present and focused on what is happening in the group and in myself during difficult dialogues.

____ 53. I effectively respond to participant behaviors I believe are distracting, including dominating, interrupting, side-tracking, or side conversations.

____ 54. I acknowledge comments that sound inappropriate or triggering.

____ 55. I engage people in dialogue when I experience one of their comments as inappropriate or triggering.

____ 56. I recognize that resistance and challenges from participants are often doorways to deeper understanding and learning for the group.

_____ 57. I effectively navigate conflict and disagreement among group members.

_____ 58. I respond effectively to challenges and engage resistance from group members without taking it personally or feeling deeply triggered.

_____ 59. I can use triggering events as teachable moments for the group.

E. My Self-Work as a Facilitator

_____ 60. I am aware of my biases, assumptions, and stereotypes for the full range of privileged and marginalized groups.

_____ 61. I continually interrupt, reframe, and unlearn my biases, stereotypes, and assumptions about privileged and marginalized groups.

_____ 62. I understand how my various privileged and marginalized group memberships impact how I am perceived and experienced by others.

_____ 63. I understand how my various privileged and marginalized group memberships impact how I make meaning of situations and how I react or respond.

_____ 64. I am aware of how my beliefs about what is effective have been influenced by my socialization and experiences in my multiple privileged and marginalized group memberships (for example, facilitation, dialogue skills, conflict resolution, training, meeting management, supervision, advising).

_____ 65. I continuously self-reflect to examine my behaviors, assumptions, feelings, and attitudes and their impact on others with an inclusion lens.

_____ 66. I continually seek and utilize feedback about my behaviors and attitudes from members of privileged and marginalized groups, and utilize their input to improve my practice.

_____ 67. I am aware of my early warning signals that I am beginning to feel triggered.

_____ 68. I am able to notice and navigate my own triggered feelings, such as anger, fear, stress, or grief, so that I do not work through my issues at the expense of the group.

_____ 69. I am aware of my common triggers and their intrapersonal roots.

_____ 70. I actively do my work around my hot buttons and triggers: explore their roots, do my healing work, and so on.

_____ 71. I actively continuously expand my understanding of issues of diversity, inclusion, and social justice.