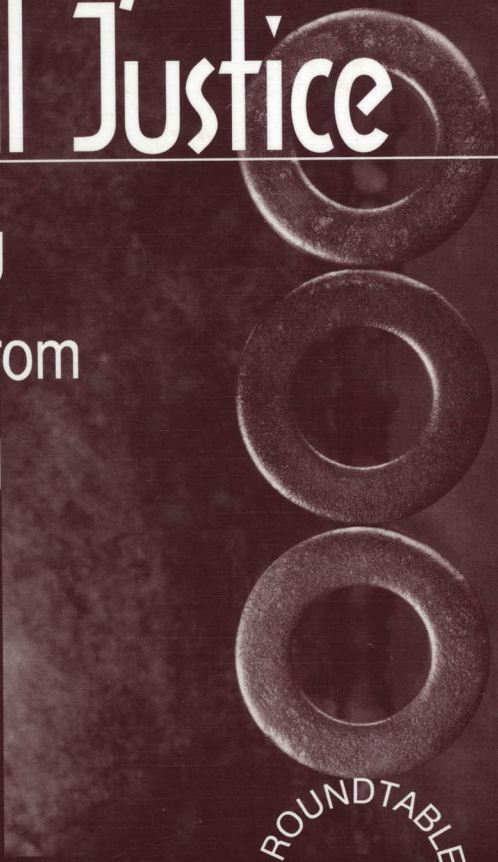
Diane J. Goodman

Promoting Diversity and Social Justice

Educating People From Privileged Groups



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Educating People From Privileged Groups

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To Halle and her generation, so that they might grow up
in a more caring and just world.

1

Introduction

In graduate school, my dissertation advisor told me, "People usually do research on the issues they're trying to work out in their own lives." That was true about me then, and it still is now.

Since the early 1980s, I have been doing what feels like my life's work: educating about diversity and social justice. I have done so in a range of contexts—universities, nonprofit agencies, schools, women's organizations, and community groups; in different roles—as a professor, trainer, consultant, facilitator, and affirmative action officer; and with various groups of people—students (of all ages), teachers, counselors, administrators, managers, staff members, board members, police, local citizens, and activists.

This has been an ongoing learning experience, both personally and professionally. Issues of oppression and multiculturalism have complex histories and continually evolve. New concerns and manifestations of inequality emerge as social, political, and economic changes occur in our country and throughout the world. Demographics shift, and social dynamics become increasingly complex. Personally, I am continually faced with trying to stay abreast of current issues, working on raising my own consciousness, and exploring the significance of my own social identities. Professionally, as the social climate changes, so does the way we need to educate for social justice. People's attitudes about different groups shift, as do their ways of explaining inequalities. Different concerns become

more prominent and evoke new sets of feelings and reactions. One of the most challenging aspects of social justice education is working with people from privileged or dominant groups—those who are in the more powerful position in a particular type of oppression. At times, I have been impressed and humbled by their degree of openness, courage, and risk taking. At other times, I have been frustrated, angered, and stymied by their unwillingness to consider new information, rethink assumptions, or express concern for others. It is in the latter situations that I, and many of my colleagues, have struggled the most.

It is critical that we are able to engage people from privileged groups in social justice issues. From a simple educational perspective, most educators will have a mix of people in their classes or groups, including those from dominant groups. For sessions to run smoothly and for learning to be maximized, ideally, all participants should be productively involved. From a social change perspective, people from privileged groups perpetuate oppression through individual acts, as well as through institutional and cultural practices. They have access to resources, information, and power that can either block or help facilitate change. People from privileged groups who are allies can influence decision making, allocate funds, share needed skills and knowledge, and be role models for other dominant group members to support equity. It also helps to have people from privileged groups as part of the change effort. Even though more people from oppressed groups are likely to push for greater social justice, as people from privileged groups join in the struggle, it increases the critical mass needed to effect change. Furthermore, if we care about liberation, we need to care about liberating all people. As I'll discuss further, oppression diminishes all human beings.

My experiences, both positive and negative, and my commitment to justice led me to write this book. In part, I was involved in a quest to more effectively understand and work with people from dominant groups on social justice issues. I wanted to be a better educator and change agent. I also wanted to share with others what I have learned and found useful. As I have presented some of this material at conferences, workshops, and classes, I have found people hungry for ways to think about and address diversity issues, especially with people from privileged groups. My choice to focus on working with people from dominant groups in no way implies that this is more important than working with people from oppressed

groups. It is a response to my own experiences and to what I perceived as a need in the field.

I am extremely fortunate to have had graduate training in a program focused on diversity and social justice training at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. The courses on oppression theory, workshop design, psychological education, group dynamics, and developmental theories and the workshops on racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and anti-Semitism were invaluable. And although they were not my only source of education, I am indebted to the faculty and students there who provided me with such rich learning opportunities (and who continue to be valued colleagues).

Many people educating about social justice do so with very little training in how to do this type of education. Often, people are well versed in content areas but less trained or skilled in issues of pedagogy or process. Generally, people rely on their natural talent, intuition, and trial and error. These are indispensable. Yet I find I am most effective when I can also draw on other theories and frameworks. These allow me to better make sense of what is occurring, and they inform my responses. This background helps me plan my approaches and anticipate reactions.

In this book, I share some of the theories, perspectives, and strategies I have found most useful when working with adults from privileged groups on diversity and social justice issues. It is written for practitioners who already have a commitment to these issues. I am not trying to convince readers of the existence of oppression or of the need to value differences and promote equity. My hope is that these theoretical tools will allow educators to be more reflective and intentional in their work, helping them to consider who they're working with, what they're doing, why they're doing it, and how to educate more effectively. The fields of education and psychology are heavily drawn upon. Yet in doing so, I attempt to continually consider the individual in social context, to embed a psychological analysis within a structural analysis. I want to recognize the interplay between the external and the internal, how the sociopolitical context affects individual attitudes and behaviors and, thus, our classroom dynamics.

Some general principles and practices are reviewed that are helpful in most educational situations, but they are discussed in relation to working with people from dominant groups. This is not a how-to book, providing detailed activities and exercises; nor is it a

cookbook that promises that if you follow this simple recipe, you'll have a perfect educational experience. I offer educational and psychological perspectives to inform one's practice and increase one's options in addressing situations. I'll suggest approaches, but I will not supply easy answers. There are none. I try not to be prescriptive, but in an effort to be concrete, examples and specific suggestions are offered. I encourage readers to take and adapt what is useful. This is not everything you need to know to teach about diversity and social justice. Readers are referred to the appendix for some additional resources, especially for ideas for particular activities. An explanation of the title will further clarify the focus of the book.

About the Title

Promoting Diversity and Social Justice

The term *diversity* has become a buzzword with a variety of connotations and synonyms. Schools are addressing "multiculturalism," businesses are learning to "value diversity," and our society is grappling with "cultural pluralism." These efforts usually promote the understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of cultural differences. For people to live together in a caring and just world, this is important work. Consciousness-raising can increase an awareness of self and others. It allows people to challenge stereotypes, overcome prejudices, and develop relationships with different kinds of people. It can help individuals enlarge their narrow worldview and recognize that there are other legitimate ways of thinking, being, and doing. At times, diversity training allows people to work and live together more productively and peacefully.

Unfortunately, most diversity work stops here. It tends to focus on individuals and interpersonal dynamics. I add the words *social justice* to indicate that I advocate going farther. Social justice also involves addressing issues of equity, power relations, and institutionalized oppression. It seeks to establish a more equitable distribution of power and resources so that all people can live with dignity, self-determination, and physical and psychological safety. It creates opportunities for people to reach their full potential within a mutually responsible, interdependent society. Working toward social jus-

tice requires changing unjust institutional structures, policies, and practices and challenging the dominant ideology. Social justice educators seek to create the conditions required for a true democracy, one that includes the full and equal participation of all groups in the society.

Educating

I use the term *educating* in the broadest sense. I do not limit education to classrooms or to teacher-student relationships. Whenever we help people learn, think, and grow, we are involved in education. Educating involves increasing knowledge, developing skills, raising consciousness, and enhancing critical thinking. Social justice education takes many forms in many contexts, from lectures in formal classroom settings to conversations over the kitchen table to policy presentations in conference rooms.

This book is intended for anyone who educates others about diversity and equity. Although the primary focus is on professors, teachers, and trainers in classrooms and workshops, others who are involved in social change—such as counselors, organizers, student affairs personnel, community educators, advocates, and group facilitators— may find this information relevant. The principles and perspectives discussed can be applied to a range of situations and audiences. Therefore, I will use a variety of terms to reflect different contexts and relationships: *teacher, facilitator, educator, trainer,* as well as *student* and *participant*. I hope the language (i.e., teacher and student) will not interfere with translating and applying the concepts and strategies to other situations.

The people we encounter in our classes, workshops, and meetings are often starting from different places in the educational process. They come with varying knowledge, attitudes, experiences, predispositions, prejudices, and expectations about diversity and social justice issues. On one end of this continuum may be people who are highly resistant to exploring multicultural issues. They may be very defensive and closed-minded. Others may be cautiously open to new information and perspectives. They are guarded but willing to consider some alternative views. Some may be eager to explore these issues and to find ways to make change. They embrace the opportunity to grapple with diversity issues and to expand their awareness. Occasionally, on the other end of the continuum, we get

people who are already committed to social justice and are anxious to further their growth and take positive action. Ultimately, I would like people from privileged groups to be committed to being allies and to be able to act in solidarity with people from oppressed groups (and others from privileged groups) to promote equity. Social justice education is about facilitating movement along this continuum.

As I will discuss at length, when people are resistant, they are unwilling to learn. Our first step is to reduce resistance and create an openness to the educational process. Once people are in a more neutral state, we can consider how to challenge apathy and spark interest. As concern and commitment grow, we need to nurture this development and foster ways to act on their convictions. In this book, I focus on a few of the places on this continuum between resistance and alliance. The first is on resistance—how to understand the reasons for resistance and find ways to prevent and address it. The second is on motivating support for social justice—exploring why people from privileged groups support equity and developing ways to appeal to and encourage this in our educational work.

People From Privileged Groups

The term *people from privileged groups* implies that there are people from nonprivileged groups. Systems of oppression are characterized by dominant-subordinate relations. There are unequal power relationships that allow one group to benefit at the expense of another group. The various ways people name the two sides of this dynamic reflect these qualities: *oppressor* and *oppressed, advantaged* and *disadvantaged, dominant* and *subordinate, agent* and *target, privileged* and *marginalized, dominator* and *dominated, majority* and *minority.* Although I am not fully comfortable with any of the existing language, I will use a variety of terms to refer to groups in the more and less powerful roles. I chose the term *privileged group* for the title because it is the term that people seem most familiar with. Yet I also use the term *dominant group* because it reflects the fact that this group not only gets privileges and has greater social power but also sets the norms. Its values, images, and experiences are most pervasive in and representative of the culture—in other words, dominant. In using such language, I in no way imply that there are any inherent qualities that make either group deserving of its status. These are socially constructed and reproduced social dynamics.

Membership in a dominant or subordinate group is ascribed to us simply on the basis of our social identity or how we are socially categorized. The categories and language used to refer to different groups of people are imperfect and problematic for a variety of reasons. People often do not fit neatly into these boxes. Dividing people into dominant and subordinate groups tends to promote dualistic and dichotomous thinking. It implies that people can easily be classified into one group or the other (i.e., either White or a person of color, either able-bodied or disabled; Rosenblum & Travis, 1996, pp. 14-25). Yet there are degrees, gradations, and variations within and between social groups, and our individual social identities are not distinct from each other. One component of our identity is not completely separate from other aspects of ourselves. However, oppression operates on the basis of how society (the privileged group) views and names individuals, not necessarily on the basis of how people define themselves. Moreover, the ways in which identities are socially constructed and valued change. For example, with the Americans with Disabilities Act, we are continually redefining what makes someone "disabled." When the Irish first came to this country, they were not considered White by the dominant group (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants), but they were granted that status to prevent them from aligning with African Americans (Ignatiev, 1995). People in positions of power have used the categorizing and naming of groups for the purposes of control and domination. Even though there are numerous problems with trying to classify people in this way, I think it is helpful in order to discuss power relationships and dynamics of oppression.

The chart below (Table 1.1) outlines various types of oppression and the corresponding dominant and subordinate groups for some of the most common forms of social injustice in the United States. Although these forms of oppression occur globally, my focus will be on how they operate within the United States. This is not an exhaustive list; I could include several others as well, such as ethnocentrism (oppression based in ethnicity), other types of religious oppression, anti-Arab oppression, linguicism (oppression based on language), and sizism or fat oppression (oppression based on physical size or weight). Their lack of inclusion in the chart does not mean to imply that these types of oppression are less important or less harmful. I encourage readers to apply what is relevant to other forms of social injustice.

Table 1.1 Oppression Chart

Types of Oppression	*Dominant Group*	*Subordinate Group*
Sexism	Males	Females
Racism	Whites (People of European descent)	People of color (People of African, Asian, Latin American, Native American descent); biracial/ multiracial people
Heterosexism	Heterosexuals	Gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people
Classism	Middle and upper classes	Poor and working classes
Ageism	People in early and middle adulthood	Children and elders
Ableism	Able-bodied/ nondisabled people	People with disabilities
Anti-Semitism	Christian	Jews

We all have multiple social identities that, depending on the social category, may place us in either a dominant or subordinate group, on different sides of the power dynamic. I, like most others, am part of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. For example, I am a woman and a Jew and therefore am part of the subordinate group in sexism and anti-Semitism. Yet I am also White, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class, and in my middle-adult years, which makes me a member of several dominant groups as well. Our particular constellation of social identities shapes our experiences and our sense of self.

Throughout the book, I refer to individuals from privileged groups and, in doing so, imply that there are some shared experiences for members from different privileged groups as well as for people from the same privileged group. However, I recognize that

people have other identities that make up who they are and that affect each one's experience and identity as a dominant-group member (i.e., being middle-class, female, and Jewish affects my experience of being White). Even as I focus on a single dominant identity, it is important to remember that all aspects of our social identities are interrelated and interact. Obviously, in reality, one's dominant-group identity cannot be isolated from one's other social identities. Yet to explore the meaning of being part of a privileged group, I have found it helpful to temporarily narrow the lens to focus on this dimension of one's experience. Even though I try to continually keep present the fact that other social positions do make a difference and that all dominant groups are not the same, for the purpose of clarity and simplicity, I speak in more general terms. Frameworks that seek to simplify and make accessible complicated dynamics never capture the full complexity of the situation or issue. These models and concepts and this language can be useful as pedagogical tools, ways to help people understand social dynamics and their role in them. Please keep in mind that the map is not the territory. I hope educators will be able to highlight the variations and intricacies as they work with these topics in their particular settings.

As I wrote about people from privileged groups, I struggled with whether to use the term *they* or *we* because, depending on what identity I thought of, I could be one of "them" or not. For the most part, I refer to people from privileged groups with the less personal term *they* because I am not part of the dominant group in all cases. (I use the term *we* to refer to other educators.) When I refer to people from dominant groups, I am not referring to people who are part of the dominant group in all forms of oppression—White, heterosexual, Christian, middle-aged, able-bodied, middle- to upper-class men. I am referring only to people who, within a particular type of oppression, are part of the advantaged group.

Benefits and Limitations of Discussing Privileged Groups in General

Instead of choosing to focus on educating Whites about racism or men about sexism or heterosexuals about heterosexism, I have chosen to focus on educating people from privileged groups in general. In using this approach, I hope to highlight the common roots and the interlocking nature of systems of domination. I have found

that there are many similar dynamics, patterns, and themes across different forms of oppression (Adair, 1993; Adair & Howell, 1988). Many of the same issues are encountered when working with people from privileged groups, regardless of the particular ism. Because I, along with many others, educate about multiple forms of oppression, I thought this book would be more useful if it was kept broader, instead of being narrowed to only one type of oppression.

However, this does not mean that I think all forms of oppression are the same or that there are no differences in educating people from different dominant groups. Each type of oppression has particular characteristics and dynamics. For example, with sexism and racism, one's identity and dominant or subordinate status are fairly fixed. However, with ageism, it is natural that these change, and with classism and ableism, it is possible that they will. With sexism and ageism, there are usually close, even intimate, relationships between members of the dominant and subordinate groups, whereas with racism and heterosexism, it is possible for people from the dominant groups to avoid close relationships with members of the subordinate groups. There are also different attitudes toward the disadvantaged group. In racism, there is often fear; in ableism, pity; in heterosexism, revulsion; and in ageism, condescension. With some forms of oppression, it is easier for some members of the oppressed group to "pass," such as with heterosexism, anti-Semitism, and classism, yet this is more difficult or nearly impossible for other people from subordinate groups, such as in the cases of sexism, racism, or ableism (if the person has an obvious disability). There are also different histories and social functions of the oppression (i.e., the particular use and treatment of African Americans in the United States). Young (1990) identifies five "faces of oppression," which include exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. A social group may be considered oppressed if its members experience one or more of these conditions. Therefore, the type and degree of oppressive actions enacted and experienced may vary as well.

All these differences warrant attention when educating about social justice. They also have implications for educating privileged-group members about different forms of oppression. Even though there are many common responses and generally effective strategies, we are likely to encounter specific types of reactions when educating about certain types of oppression. For example, when addressing heterosexism, we are likely to find resistance

based on moral and religious beliefs, which is unlikely to occur with other isms. With classism, I have found that critiques of capitalism and our classist system can quickly evoke defensiveness and distorted views of other economic systems. People feel that their desire for upward mobility is being threatened or criticized and that the only alternative is some version of repressive communism. Red-baiting may also occur.

There are clearly some limitations or dangers in choosing this broad, inclusive approach. Some of the nuances and distinctiveness of particular forms of oppression are sacrificed. What is gained in generalizability is lost in specificity. My intention is not to deny or obscure differences among various forms of oppression, though some of this occurs when speaking more generally. Using an inclusive framework does not eliminate the need to provide a more in-depth treatment of particular topics and isms. This broader approach also means that I will not be able to adequately deal with issues that are unique to educating about specific forms of oppression. Given these various constraints, I strongly urge readers to use the resources listed in the appendix and available elsewhere to gain the needed information to address these concerns.

Overview of the Book

In this chapter, I lay out the purpose, rationale, and parameters of the book. The concepts of privileged groups and social identities are clarified. Chapter 2 focuses on describing privileged groups to develop a better understanding of the people we are working with. I highlight key characteristics of dominant groups and dominant-group members, discuss how multiple identities affect the experience of privilege, and explore the resistance to seeing oneself as privileged. Chapter 3 reviews several theories of individual development and change. These perspectives aid in creating environments and approaches that meet the needs of different individuals and that facilitate the learning process. In Chapter 4, I define and explore the various sociopolitical and psychological reasons for resistance from people from dominant groups. Why we are likely to receive the most resistance from White men is also considered. By understanding some of the sources of the resistance, we can better address it. This is the focus of Chapter 5, in which I suggest a range of strategies to prevent and address the resistance we may encounter when working with dominant-group members. Chapter 6

presents a host of psychological, social, intellectual, moral or spiritual, and material costs of oppression to people from privileged groups. This challenges the win-lose framework that assumes that people from dominant groups solely receive benefits from injustice and would only lose out if there were greater equity. Chapter 7 then moves to the question of why people from privileged groups would support social justice. I discuss how empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest are key sources of motivation. Chapter 8 explores how to build on these elements to develop and enlist support for change. I demonstrate the importance of meeting people where they are and addressing their needs and concerns. Chapter 9 turns to issues for social justice educators. I consider how our own social identity development affects our work, factors that affect our educational efficacy, and ways to enhance our effectiveness as educators and change agents. The final chapter explores how to sustain a sense of hope and possibility that we can create a more just and caring world. I discuss the need to shift our current dominant paradigm, the importance of having an alternative vision, and hopeful signs that people from privileged groups can embrace more equitable relations and social systems. I include the potential benefits of social justice to people from privileged groups and the need for both individual and systemic change.

Educating about diversity and social justice is a challenging yet rewarding endeavor. It is a never-ending process and an ongoing opportunity to learn. Many of the ideas in the book are works in progress, and I offer them as contributions to the growing field of people struggling with how to best educate for social justice. I hope that these ideas will advance our efforts to work with people from privileged groups and, as a result, strengthen our collective ability to make this world one that values and nourishes our full humanity. I welcome your thoughts and feedback. You can reach me through the publisher or at dianejgood@aol.com.

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The Costs of Oppression to People From Privileged Groups

The previous chapter discussed how resistance could be reduced if people from dominant groups reconceptualize how they think about social justice. Although change for most people tends to be difficult, it is even more so for those who feel they are on the losing end. People from privileged groups often see social change as a win-lose situation in which they lose. Even though greater equality would undoubtedly involve giving up and sharing power and resources, social justice could also enrich their lives.

Living in a society where there are systematic, institutionalized inequities affects everyone, whether they are in advantaged or disadvantaged roles. It has profound ramifications that influence and limit how we think about ourselves and others, how and with whom we interact, and the opportunities and choices we have about how to lead our lives. Although in some instances there are positive effects, there are costs and harmful consequences for all of us, though in different ways.

Most efforts to understand the social and psychological effects of oppression have focused on the experiences of those in disadvantaged groups. Yet systems of oppression also affect people in advantaged groups. When the experiences of people in privileged positions are considered, they tend to be compared with the experiences of those who are oppressed. The focus is usually on how people

from dominant groups oppress others or benefit from the inequalities. Most theorists have paid less attention to how oppression has negative consequences for people in the advantaged group. However, our understanding cannot be complete unless this is fully explored as well. As members of an interdependent society, what affects some people inevitably affects us all. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1991) reminds us, "All men [sic] are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly" (p. 7).

One way to address resistance and to foster meaningful, long-term involvement in social change is to help people in privileged groups understand how they are harmed by oppression. In this chapter, I will first present specific ways in which people from dominant groups are adversely affected by oppression and ways in which they could benefit from its elimination. Then, I will consider how oppression more generally undermines their sense of humanity and human potential. As I have said before, most people are part of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The focus here is on their experience as someone from a privileged group, even though their other social identities always affect this experience.

Specific Costs of Oppression to People From Dominant Groups

We need to name the damaging effects of social injustice on people from advantaged groups without ignoring the larger dynamics of social power in which they occur. Recognizing the ways in which privileged groups may be negatively affected by oppression in no way equates that reality with the experiences of people in oppressed groups. Whatever the costs are to those in dominant groups, it is not the same as the loss of power, dignity, opportunities, and resources faced by people in disadvantaged groups. In this sense, I am not suggesting that people who are in privileged groups also are oppressed; they still have disproportionate social power. While keeping this in mind, I still believe it useful to discuss the price paid for privilege and dominance to more fully understand the dynamics of oppression and to develop strategies and visions for change.

In general, there has been little written about the particular costs of oppression to dominant groups. The profeminist men's move-

ment has probably most clearly articulated the harmful consequences of sexism for men (Kaufman, 1993; Kimmel & Messner, 1989/1995; Kivel, 1992/1998) and offered new models of masculinity. Others have described some of the negative ramifications for privileged people in relation to classism (Bingham, 1986; Mogil & Slepian, 1992; Wachtel, 1989), racism (Bowser & Hunt, 1981/1996; Feagin & Vera, 1995; Kivel, 1996), and heterosexism (Blumenfeld, 1992; Thompson, 1992). Even though each form of oppression has its own particular effects on those in the advantaged group, there are numerous similarities that illustrate some common dynamics of systems of domination.

Drawing on the works cited above and my own teaching experiences, I will discuss the psychological, social, moral/spiritual, intellectual, and material/physical costs of oppression to people from privileged groups. Although these different consequences will be discussed separately, their overlap with and impact on each other is extensive. In addition, even though people may experience these costs on an individual basis, they are the result of larger social patterns, structures, and ideology. They grow out of our particular systems of domination and inequality. Other oppressive societies with different forms of social organization may have both similar and different negative effects on those from privileged groups.

The themes cited highlight consequences or issues that pertain to dominant groups across different forms of oppression. The quotes are taken from participants in classes and workshops I have conducted in the past several years. Some of the effects are very personal and center around the individual and her or his interpersonal relationships. Others involve societal ramifications that affect the individual as a member of society.

Psychological Costs: Loss of Mental Health and Authentic Sense of Self

Systems of oppression constrain the ability of people from privileged groups to develop their full humanity. Pressures to fit proscribed roles and to limit one's emotional capacity hinder one's self-development. Diminished self-knowledge and fears further thwart healthy psychological growth. I will describe several aspects of how overall mental health is compromised.

Socialization Into Roles and Patterns of Behavior

People in dominant groups are socialized to conform to certain rigid standards of behavior. This impedes the exploration of aspects of themselves that do not fit with these expectations. For example, heterosexuals may constrain their feelings and relationships with people of the same sex, whereas men may block their emotional expressiveness or pursuit of interests considered feminine. People from upper-class families are prevented or discouraged from considering nonprofessional occupations or career interests outside the family's established sphere. Individuals' efforts to conform to expected roles can undermine their ability to know who they are, what they can do, and what they really need.

Denial of Emotions and Empathy

Personal growth is further limited when people attempt to deal with the contradiction between what they are often taught (equality, love, and kindness) and what they are expected to do (treat people inequitably). This may occur when they divert their eyes from a homeless person or treat a person in a service role as a lesser human being. As a result, people may disregard or not perceive the feelings of other people. Although clearly damaging to people in disadvantaged groups, it also requires people in advantaged groups to deny their own emotional capabilities, sensitivity, and mutuality. This stifles emotional honesty and hinders the development and use of empathy.

Limited Self-Knowledge and Distorted View of Self

People from privileged groups are routinely denied information and opportunities to understand their role in an unjust social system as well as honest feedback from people in oppressed groups. As a result, they are denied self-knowledge. This skewed self-awareness has numerous ramifications.

People from privileged groups often obtain a positive sense of self (consciously or unconsciously) based on the diminishment of others. They feel good about themselves because they can point to someone else who they believe is inferior. However, this positive self-esteem is shallow, artificial, and false. After marrying a Latino from Central America, one White woman reports,

> Because of my own "privileged" background, I felt somehow better than him and his people. When I began to accept responsibility for myself, I had to "eat" my own response to this racism. It wasn't easy, but it was necessary.

People from advantaged groups often develop a sense of superiority or a distorted sense of self to rationalize the inequality. Promotions, opportunities, and access to resources are inequitably distributed in an unjust, hierarchical system. Often, these are not truly gained by merit but by connections or by belonging to a certain race, sex, or class. To justify these greater advantages, people from privileged groups often convince themselves that they are better than other people and therefore more deserving, even if they are somehow aware that this is not so. To reconcile themselves to this situation, they may maintain the belief in their own superiority. They can easily draw on the dominant culture to create and reinforce this view.

Despite these efforts, they may find it hard to trust their gains and to believe in their abilities. They may wonder whether their achievement was based on privilege or merit. McIntosh (1985) labels this "feeling like a fraud." Although these feelings can arise for a variety of reasons, success in a rigged system can rob people of faith in their capabilities and diminish their sense of accomplishment.

Discrepancy Between External Perceptions and Internal Realities

There is often the discrepancy between external appearances and internal realities. Individuals do not feel like the powerful, privileged people they are presumed to be. On the surface, it may appear that privileged people "have it all," especially those with wealth. Yet internally, people often feel isolated, lonely, and cut off from one's self, others, and "the real world." Even though there may be material success, there can be emotional and spiritual emptiness.

Fears and Pain

There are numerous fears, many of which have social ramifications (and are addressed in the following section). Even when people recognize the irrationality or unfoundedness of some of their fears (of certain types of people, of new or different situations), they still find that these fears inhibit their lives and cause psychological distress. Some people are afraid of losing entitlement and privileges.

They worry that people in oppressed groups may retaliate and mistreat them as they have been mistreated. If marginalized groups are given greater social power, they fear this will be used against them (i.e., women will deny men employment opportunities, people of color will subjugate Whites to second-class treatment).

For those with close relationships with individuals from dominated groups, there can be fear for the others' well-being. People from dominant groups find it painful to witness and share in their suffering and mistreatment. Whether this involves common encounters with discrimination or a more dramatic occurrence, it can be distressing to see and feel the effects on one's friend or relative. This is particularly evident when a daughter or wife gets raped, a friend of color is harassed by police, a low-income friend is unable to find work or housing, a gay friend gets beaten, or a Jewish friend's synagogue is defaced. Parents from dominant groups who have children from disadvantaged groups (of color, gay or lesbian, or with a disability) are often concerned about those children's treatment and safety.

People from privileged groups who support justice often describe the pain they feel when they hear offensive remarks made about disadvantaged groups. Others from their social group often assume that they will share the prejudiced view. It is both psychologically and emotionally upsetting to listen to such disparagement about other people. When there are other, more serious acts of hatred, it is even more painful to realize that fellow human beings are capable of such cruelty.

Diminished Mental Health

Thomas Pettigrew (1981) identified six criteria for positive mental health. Among them, he cites self-awareness and self-acceptance, degree of actualization of one's potential, relative independence from social pressures, adequate perception of reality, and the integration of psychic functions. As reflected in the above costs, being socialized into an unjust system negatively affects our ability to obtain these components of psychological health. In particular, people from dominant groups tend to develop unhealthy psychological mechanisms (such as denial, false justification, projection, disassociation, and transference of blame) to deal with their fears of minorities or people from oppressed groups (Fernandez, 1996). One

woman describes this process: "As a White woman, I cannot easily own the negative parts of myself. I disavow them and project them onto others (people of color). As a result, I am cut off from important parts of myself." Middle-aged people, in an effort to deny their own mortality, may marginalize and discard elderly people; or heterosexuals who cannot accept their feelings for members of their own sex may act out in homophobic ways.

Social Costs: Loss and Diminishment of Relationships

The lack of trust between groups, a social climate that rarely supports relationships across differences (except for between men and women of the same backgrounds), and our socialization, which has fed us misinformation about ourselves and others, undermines relationships. Internalized oppression and social taboos often interfere with positive interpersonal relations among diverse people. Fears, avoidance of different people, and limited experiences and knowledge of others result in less human connection and more isolation. The social costs are immense.

Isolation From People Who Are Different

The separation people experience from those who are different may be due to an individual's psychological or emotional issues and to the social structures and norms in society. In the former case, fear and discomfort prevent people from reducing the distance. "I often felt so isolated from most people and yearned to be able to connect but my fear of the 'unknown' was so prevalent. It overpowered me. How very sad and how I regret this!" Opportunities for deep, important, gratifying relationships with diverse people are lost.

An able-bodied man recounts,

> I literally often avoid contact with the disabled because I'm unsure how to act—to walk the line between acknowledging a difference in ability and being rude; between helpfulness and patronization. My social distance grows as I don't make efforts to interact fully with the disabled.

In the latter case, various forms of oppression restrict where we work and play and the ease with which we can have meaningful relationships across differences. Often, we have no contact with certain groups of people or have contact only in limited ways:

> As an able-bodied person, I did not come into contact with handicapped people until I was old enough to participate in volunteer work in junior high. Though I have done extensive work with them, I still don't feel natural being around them. They are not part of my life. I feel like I am missing out on the opportunity to be friends with a certain number of the population.

Barriers to Deeper, More Authentic Relationships

Even when there is contact, it is difficult to have meaningful relationships. It is often hard to develop deep, genuine relationships with people from diverse backgrounds. Numerous barriers interfere with this process.

First, people from privileged groups often carry a host of fears because of their social position and socialization in an unequal society. Very common fears are of people who are different and of participating in other cultural experiences. Because privileged-group members have had limited contact with and have received negative messages about people who are different, they are fearful of going places or having relationships across social-group boundaries. When and if they do deal with people from dominated groups, people from privileged groups worry about saying or doing the wrong thing and being offensive:

> I hear negative messages about racial groups that my grandparents used to say and I fear that someday I will use them out of my subconscious. On a conscious level, I do not want to believe or use the terms they used, but I fear some aspects of racism were ingrained at an early age.

Often, people talk of "walking on eggshells." With the constantly shifting social norms, even many well-intentioned people are confused or frightened about what is acceptable and what is not. At times it can seem easier to do nothing at all than to risk pain or embarrassment.

Second, stereotypes or prejudgments may prevent contact in the first place or impede real relationships once there is contact. People from disadvantaged groups can hold prejudices toward people from advantaged groups and vice versa. People from the dominant group often complain that they are stereotyped and not seen for who they are. They may be judged and avoided on the basis of their social

group identity, which may feel frustrating and unfair. Quite at odds with these individuals' own experiences and self-images, a man may be seen as a potential rapist and not trusted by women, a wealthy person viewed as an elitist snob, or a White person as an unconcerned racist. Two White women describe this experience:

> When attempting to assist with problems of others that are not White, it is looked upon as charity or I'm told that I don't care because I'm White, or that this trouble doesn't concern me. This was said without regard to my feelings about the situation or my beliefs as an individual. There was a simple presumption that I would only offer to help because I believed I was superior to them, solely based on the color of my skin.

This was echoed by another person:

> Not being taken for who I am but assuming I am part of the stereotypical dominant race who are stereotyped as uncaring, rich, selfish, biased, unaccepting of other cultures, rude, snobby, better than others, etc. by the minority race who holds negative opinions of the White race.

As a result of feeling like they will be judged, people from privileged groups choose to hide aspects of themselves. Hiding aspects of who one is undermines an open and honest relationship. People most often discuss this in terms of class:

> As a product of a middle/upper class environment, I often feel that I am pre-judged. People think I'm spoiled or have been given everything on a silver platter. They think I'm pretentious or a snob or that Daddy is going to do everything for me. Consequently, it is an aspect of my life that I don't usually reveal.

People from dominant groups also recognize that their own stereotypes of others (especially in a context that encourages segregation) inhibit their ability to get to know people from oppressed groups or to develop those relationships. One White woman spoke of her loss of a potentially important relationship due to her own racism and the segregated social environment:

> I had a male friend in college who was African American, and my friends told me he really liked me. I never made any advances (and

> neither did he) because the idea of going out with a Black man made me nervous. I think I missed out on an opportunity to become involved with a sensitive and caring man because of how separated/segregated my experience was when I was growing up. If I were confronted with why I didn't go out with him, I would have denied racism vehemently. But in hindsight, I know that this is the truth.

Third, people from privileged groups recognize a lack of trust. They realize it will be harder and slower for people from oppressed groups to be open and honest with them. In relation to heterosexism, one person writes, "I lost out in the ability for people to share their [gay men and lesbians] lives fully."

In addition, the lack of trust makes it less likely that they will broach difficult subjects or try to work out troublesome interpersonal dynamics. A White woman spoke of how racism affects her ability to have real and honest interpersonal relationships with people of color:

> I am hurt or limited by the fact that I cannot honestly state some of my feelings and concerns about the subject for fear it may be considered racist. I feel that if there is not honest dialogue about people's true concerns, we will never be able to reach real solutions. We will just walk politely around the issues and put band-aids [sic] on problems as they jump up and hit us in the face. This is no different than communication between a couple or close friends. If you're not really honest about how you see things, you will either just learn to live with things as they are or pull away even farther from the situation. You will not really make a positive long-term change.

Disconnection, Distance, and Ostracism Within Own Group

As people from privileged groups speak about barriers to relationships, they often refer to the distance that is created in their own communities and families. As before, this distance may be because of their own or others' attitudes. One type of disconnection is due to differences in other social identities.

Among people with a shared subordinate identity, some individuals may also have a dominant identity that creates a rift within the social group. Middle- and upper-class people of color frequently

mention feeling disconnected from poor and working-class people from their own racial/ethnic group. Sometimes, it is they who feel excluded: "As a Black woman, it is a constant issue that I am upper-middle class. I am often made to feel that I must hide this fact because of the attitudes and judgments from Blacks." Other times, people feel they have little in common with people from lower socioeconomic classes. The distance is due to their own discomfort, estrangement, privilege, or any combination of these factors: "As a upper-class Black person in a wealthy White community, I often ended up oppressing people who looked just like me but didn't have money."

These dynamics, which lead to disconnection, also occur within families. A woman recounts how this occurred in her family because of class differences:

> As a result of classism, I don't know my father's side of the family. My mother's family is middle class and educated. Dad's are farmers and fishermen. They are seen by Mom's side as "not worth knowing," so I don't even know cousins I have.

In addition, because of heterosexism, heterosexual siblings or parents may reject a gay child, forfeiting that primary relationship.

Other times, people are ostracized for the choices they make that violate the accepted norms of behavior within their own group. This strains or breaks bonds with family members, friends, peers, and coworkers. Men can be teased and become social outcasts for not being "one of the guys":

> In my peer groups at work, I often get "knocked" because of my feelings and values, and my openness and willingness to express them. I definitely feel my male peers expect certain "male" behavior and attitudes from me.

If individuals date or marry outside their own racial or class group, they can be disowned by or estranged from their family. One White woman from the United States tells how after she married a Guatemalan man she "experienced the pain of rejection, abandonment, discrediting, and almost complete discounting" from her family. Another woman relates the "numerous issues with my father due to his belief that I should not date out of my race. His anger at my dating of a Black man has also led to physical violence toward me by him."

Moral and Spiritual Costs: Loss of Integrity and Spiritual Center

Most people like to see themselves as decent, caring, and having principles of fairness and justice. However, they live in a society where there are pervasive inequities, reflected in homelessness, poverty, violence, and job discrimination, to name a few. Many people grapple with the discrepancy between the reality in which they live and their moral/spiritual beliefs.

Guilt and Shame

Some people feel uncomfortable with the fact that some people have so much while others have so little. They may feel embarrassed or guilty for having more than others. People frequently feel guilt when they know that others do not share their privileges or standard of living. In response to these increasingly apparent inequities, people often "blame the victim." Yet for many people, the guilt and shame still haunt them. They may ask questions such as,

> Do I deserve to have so much when some people have so little?
> What is my responsibility to "them" and to myself and my family?
> How can I see myself as a good caring person, yet do nothing to really change the system or the conditions of the oppressed?

As people become more aware of injustices, these feelings and questions become harder to ignore, and these moral naggings intensify. People from advantaged groups may feel bad or defensive about who they are ("I may be White but some of my best friends are Black"). It is shameful to think about how one benefits from the pain or exploitation of others. Often, people feel guilty for not doing more to change inhumane or unjust conditions, for not responding to offensive comments and jokes, or for not taking a stand against an injustice.

Moral Ambivalence

Often, people feel torn between acting in accordance with their personal integrity and risking family or societal disapproval, such as giving up significant money to social-change efforts or marrying "one of them." They may be faced with decisions between doing the

"right" thing and going along with social pressure—selling their home to gays, Jews, or people of color in an otherwise (apparently) homogeneous neighborhood or hiring a person with a disability, knowing that clients or staff would be uncomfortable and resistant to accommodations. They may also question their negative feelings about a person from an oppressed group, wondering whether their personal dislike or perception of incompetence was due to prejudice or to a fair and reasonable judgment.

Spiritual Emptiness or Pain

Many people's religious or spiritual beliefs maintain that we are all "Children of God," part of the same Oneness, or interconnected and interdependent beings. Perpetuating oppression violates this sense of connection. It also belies the notion of God or Spirit in each person, and undermines the inherent integrity of each individual. As one person stated, "I believe when one group suffers, we all suffer for it is an indication of our own lack of 'soul.' "

Intellectual Costs: Loss of Developing Full Range of Knowledge

Neither their formal education nor their own experiences tend to provide people from dominant groups with sufficient and truthful information about their own or other social groups. The lack of relationships and the lack of (accurate) knowledge about people from dominated groups furthers ignorance. People's ability to expand their minds is thwarted.

Distorted and Limited View of Other People's Culture and History

People from privileged groups are uninformed or misinformed about much of the human race and the contributions of many other kinds of people. These include aspects of culture such as music, food, arts, values, philosophies, and social systems. When people in privileged groups are only exposed to the ways and accomplishments of people like themselves, they develop a distorted worldview. When history is recounted from the perspective of the dominant group, they receive only a partial picture of our past. This ignorance leads to limited and skewed views of different lifestyles, viewpoints, perspectives, and people. They become out of touch

with reality and lose the ability to consider other, more productive and effective ways to live their lives and to understand the lives of others.

A White woman recounts her experience in an African American community:

> I was so enriched when I worked with African American families and came to see a different worldview of collectivism—families taking care of family members, communities, themselves. What a loss had I not experienced this other possible worldview. It has changed my life and my priorities.

However, more often, ignorance allows people to retain the misinformation and stereotypes about people of other social groups. This, coupled with fears, fosters the avoidance of people and experiences that might challenge their view of the world. This distorted perspective also has social consequences.

> As a member of the upper middle class, classism and "blaming the victim" prevented me from knowing and reaching out to those who are less privileged than I am. I was prevented from seeing others as "human" until I learned more about my own privilege.

Ignorance of Own Culture and History

People from privileged groups lose not only a clear understanding of others but of themselves. History books, in addition to omitting and distorting the experiences of people from oppressed groups, misconstrue the experiences of people from dominant groups. In the section on psychological costs, I discussed the loss of individual self-knowledge. However, people also miss a more accurate understanding of their own cultural group. For example, racism has caused many Whites to let go of their particular ethnic backgrounds to assimilate into mainstream White society, with its resulting privileges. In addition, when we ignore the wisdom and stories of our elders, we lose important perspectives and information, particularly about one's own history: "Ageism has cost me a rich resource of knowledge from the past. From the mouths of elders in my own family, I have lost their life experiences which I cannot pass on to my own children."

Material and Physical Costs: Loss of Safety, Resources, and Quality of Life

Oppression creates social conditions that affect people from privileged groups not only personally and directly but indirectly as well. Because of social injustice, we lose and waste both material and human resources.[1] Many factors related to one's safety and quality of life are negatively affected.

Social Violence and Unrest

Oppression and inequality tend to breed social unrest. As people feel increasingly mistreated, hopeless, and disconnected from the larger society and its benefits, violence and antisocial behavior increase. Although people from privileged groups often have more opportunities to try to hide from this reality, its effects are inescapable. They may try to avoid people and experiences that make them uncomfortable, creating a smaller and smaller world in which to live. People may put up walls and live in gated communities, becoming prisoners in their own homes. Their access to places is restricted as they increasingly feel that it just isn't safe to go there. People become more fearful about moving about in the world and spend more time, money, and energy trying to protect themselves and their belongings.

Higher Costs

As it becomes more difficult to find homes and schools that are safe and of good quality, the ones that do exist become more expensive. It becomes more challenging to maintain a good standard of living. Basic economics teaches that when there is high demand and short supply, prices go up. This also occurs in the labor market. When groups of people are systematically excluded from the labor pool (because of stereotypes, discrimination, or lack of preparation), there are fewer people to choose from, which creates higher wage costs. Employers therefore need to spend more to attract qualified people.

Waste of Resources

Keeping an unjust system in place is also extremely expensive. A significant amount of our taxes and economic resources goes to supporting law enforcement and the judicial and penal systems, to providing social support services, and so on. Economic and human

resources are directed at addressing the effects of social inequalities as opposed to ensuring opportunities for all. Frequently cited examples are the special programs or college loans available to people of color. White students are left to struggle to fund their education, instead of having education available to all who desire it. As one person stated, "I've faced the inability to access services as a middle class child/adolescent/college student, due to the 'status' of 'being able to pay for everything' when in fact that wasn't the case."

Loss of Valuable Employees, Clients, and Customers

When groups of people are impeded from having decent jobs and earning living wages, they are less able to purchase goods and services. This in turn negatively affects the economy. When restaurants, universities, businesses, and other organizations are seen as inaccessible, discriminatory, or unfriendly to different oppressed groups, they lose clients, customers, and students. This tends to translate into financial loss for the owners and less job security for employees. Similarly, it is more difficult to attract and retain talented employees from marginalized groups who would enhance organizational success. When they are hired, if they are unable to bring their whole selves to work (including aspects of their identity or culture) or have to constantly deal with prejudices, they are less creative and productive.

Loss of Knowledge to Foster Societal Growth and Well-being

When groups of people are disenfranchised, given limited opportunities, or have their cultures ignored or obliterated, the society as a whole loses their contributions. We know that different cultures and life experiences can bring fresh perspectives to current problems and issues. When these are discounted or individuals are not given the chance to develop their abilities, we have lost the potential for new ways to think about old and new concerns. We also miss the contributions to the arts and sciences that enrich and advance our country and the world. As one person noted, "I believe that we simply 'miss out.' As a culture we lose some of the inventive, creative contributions that could be made by many people who are denied a chance to flourish."

Diminished Collective Action for Common Concerns

When attention and energy are directed at addressing the effects of oppression and at individual (or group) survival, they are diverted from other issues that would enhance societal well-being. This keeps us separated and impedes our ability to work together to address larger common concerns (education, health, or the environment). Even collective action in a narrower sense, such as in unions, is hindered by the intentional or unintentional exclusion or marginalization of oppressed groups.

Negative Health Implications

People in privileged groups experience high degrees of stress and stress-related illnesses as they feel increasingly fearful and disconnected from other human beings. Pressures to achieve and maintain status in a hierarchical and competitive social and economic system further undermine health. A recent study also found that there are higher mortality rates for both wealthy and poor people in metropolitan areas with high income inequality (Lynch et al., 1998). Metropolitan areas with the largest income differences between the top and bottom 10% of the population have the highest overall death rates. The larger this discrepancy within a geographic area, the higher the area's death rate is likely to be for people in both rich and poor communities.

Interconnections and Variations

Though described separately, many of these costs in fact are overlapping and mutually reinforcing. They build and feed on each other, often creating a vicious cycle. When people do not have contact with others who are different and do not have accurate information about themselves or others, they develop fears and stereotypes that make it harder to establish contact. This leads to more discomfort, avoidance, ignorance, and fear. They therefore are more likely to support social policies that are oppressive or ineffective at addressing the issues, which in turn helps to perpetuate the inequality.

Even the same general cost may affect various areas of one's life. The disconnection from others may have psychological, social, moral/spiritual, intellectual, and material costs. For example, one is likely to develop fears or be limited in one's self knowledge, to lose

Table 6.1 Costs of Oppression to People From Privileged Groups

Cost category	*Effects*
Psychological Costs: Loss of mental health and authentic sense of self	Socialized into limited roles and patterns of behavior Denial of emotions and empathy Limited self-knowledge and distorted view of self Discrepancy between external perceptions and internal reality Pain and fears (of doing and saying wrong thing, of retaliation from oppressed groups, of revealing self for fear of judgment, of different people and experiences) Diminished mental health (distorted view of self and reality, denial, projection)
Social Costs: Loss and diminishment of relationships	Isolation from people who are different Barriers to deeper, more authentic relationships Disconnection, distance and ostracism within own group if one acts differently
Intellectual Costs: Loss of developing full range of knowledge	Distorted and limited view of other people's culture and history Ignorance of own culture and history
Moral and Spiritual Costs: Loss of moral and spiritual integrity	Guilt and shame Moral ambivalence (doing right thing vs. social pressures and realities) Spiritual emptiness or pain (disconnection from fellow human beings, violation of one's spiritual values)
Material and Physical Costs: Loss of safety, resources, and quality of life	Violence and unrest (restricted ability to move about freely; increased fear for self and others; limited desirable places to live, work, go to school, recreate) Higher costs (e.g., for good and safe schools and homes, for qualified employees) Waste of resources (to address effects of inequality: prisons, law enforcement, social services, welfare) Loss of valuable employees, clients, and customers (because of inhospitable environments, discrimination) Loss of knowledge to foster societal growth and well-being (the underdevelopment, exclusion, and marginalization of the talents of people from oppressed groups) Diminished collective action for common concerns (e.g., education, health, the environment) Negative health implications (e.g., stress and stress-related illnesses)

out on meaningful interpersonal relationships, to feel cut off from other human beings who are subject to injustice, to not know about others' lives and perspectives, and to miss out on valuable talent or knowledge. As one woman aptly summed it up, "This separation causes a kind of blindness to others' suffering and experiences, and a narrowness of viewpoint which can affect one's political, social, intellectual and spiritual development."

How people from privileged groups perceive and experience the costs varies among individuals. Sometimes people may not even recognize something as a cost until it is named by someone else (e.g., the expense involved in maintaining oppression). They may take for granted certain ways of being or social arrangements, assuming these are normal (e.g., sex roles or conflicts among different groups). One's other social identities clearly play a role in what is seen or felt to be a cost. I wonder about gender differences. In general, males may be less likely to identify costs because they are more advantaged by our current social system. Yet because males are socialized overall into roles of dominance and are more constrained by rigid sex roles, those who are socially conscious may be more sensitive to the pressures to act in ways that deny their own and others' humanity. Women, who are allowed (and encouraged) to be more emotionally expressive and often experience more flexibility in their ways of behaving (and thus experience less of a cost), may be more attuned to the loss of connection with others (because of being White, heterosexual, middle/upper class, etc.). We cannot expect all individuals to experience the costs in the same way. It is useful, however, to be able to illustrate the various effects and to help people to identify the relevant ways in which they as individuals and as members of society are negatively affected by oppression.

General Costs to People From Privileged Groups

When we collectively consider the range of costs of oppression to people from privileged groups, it becomes clear that they cannot escape the consequences of systems of injustice. To maintain inequality, people from advantaged groups must be psychologically conditioned to assume their roles in the social order. The current ideology and social structures reinforce the kind of thinking and behavior that perpetuate injustice that ultimately diminishes all human beings (see Chapter 4). As we participate in the dehumanization of

others, which we inevitably do by participating in institutions, practices, and social relations that support societal inequality, our own freedom, authenticity, and humanity are limited. Several prominent social activists have acknowledged the intertwined fate of the oppressor and the oppressed.

According to Paulo Freire (1970), humanization is the vocation of human beings: "As oppressors dehumanize others and violate their [the oppressed's] rights, they themselves also become dehumanized" (p. 42). Freire further states, "Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a *distortion* of becoming more fully human" (p. 28).

Nelson Mandela (1994), in his book, *Long Walk to Freedom*, adds,

> I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. (p. 544)

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1991), also noted this connection.

> I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you might be until I am what I ought to be. (p. 7)

In his writing about racism, Robert Terry (1981) addresses the loss of authenticity. He maintains that authenticity "describes the press in all of our lives to make sense out of our world and act purposefully in it" (p. 121). This involves being true to ourselves and true to our world. Like other forms of oppression, racism distorts authenticity because it distorts our relationships to ourselves, to others, and to our society.

One of the fundamental human desires is to know and be known. We seek relationships with others that allow us to see them fully and have those others see us fully. We want to be recognized for who we truly are. Oppression prevents this process of mutual recognition. It thwarts our ability to become our authentic selves and to

fully know ourselves. It also impedes others from knowing who we are. It is often with much pain that people from privileged groups recount stories of how they feel mis-seen and misjudged, especially by people from oppressed groups. The full complexity of their history, backgrounds, and experiences is not acknowledged. Instead, they are perceived more one-dimensionally. Certainly we know that this occurs to people from subordinate groups. Even though they are not experienced in the same way by people who are in advantaged and disadvantaged positions, dehumanization, inauthenticity, and misrecognition are inherent aspects of all forms of oppression.

Conclusion

As discussed in Chapter 2, McIntosh (1988) makes the distinction between conferred dominance and unearned advantage. The first is the way in which society gives people in dominant groups the power to control and disadvantage others. These so-called privileges "distort the humanity of the holders as well as the ignored groups" (p. 78). They are the products of unjust hierarchies. Unearned advantages are the conditions that currently are available to people in privileged groups (access to decent food, housing, education, and respectful treatment) that should be had by everyone. These privileges we need to make available to all. The goal is not for people in privileged groups to be punished or diminished as human beings but to eliminate the conditions that hurt them and others and to increase the conditions that benefit all our lives.

As people from privileged groups gain an awareness of these costs, it can lead to their understanding of how systems of oppression are not necessarily or fully in their best interest. From there, one can more readily think about the benefits of greater equity. As the costs imply, with greater social justice, people could have a fuller, more authentic sense of self; more authentic relationships and human connection; greater moral consistency and integrity; access to cultural knowledge and wisdom; and improved work and living conditions. There would also be the potential for real democracy in our government and institutions. (I will discuss these further in Chapter 10.)

Yet simply helping people from privileged groups to understand the personal and societal limitations of oppression does not mean they will readily work to change the current system. There are

many incentives to maintain the status quo. However, it does create an opportunity for critical thinking and for challenging the win-lose paradigm. The following chapters discuss ways to build on this perspective and engage people in social justice efforts.

Note

1. See Glyn, A., & Miliband D., (Eds.). (1994). *Paying for inequality: The economic cost of social injustice.* London: IPPR/Rivers Oram Press. There, they provide a more thorough discussion of how social inequality negatively affects various sectors of public life and decreases efficiency.

7

Why People From Privileged Groups Support Social Justice

There are obvious reasons why people from dominant groups resist challenges to the status quo. There are also plenty of reasons why they remain apathetic and uninvolved. Yet we know from history and our current experiences that people from privileged groups also support and often lead struggles for social justice. Instead of just focusing on why people from privileged groups don't support equity, I have been exploring what motivates people to do so. Why do some people from dominant groups act as allies, supporting the rights of an oppressed group of which they are not part? Why do some men support feminist initiatives, some heterosexuals work for gay and lesbian rights, or some Whites challenge racist practices? I have been asking people in classes and workshops that question. How would you answer it?

People's responses tend to fall into three distinct, though interrelated, categories. Some speak about a personal relationship they have with an individual from an oppressed group, of how they can relate their own experiences to the experiences of others, or how they feel a sense of connection or "we-ness." I call this type of response *empathy.*

Others speak of their need to act morally and their discomfort with the discrepancy between what they believe and what they observe around them. Some talk of unfairness, of how certain groups

don't deserve their plight, and of their desire to fulfill the American ideal of equality. A spiritual belief in the inherent worth and dignity of all people motivates others. I call this type of response *moral principles and spiritual values.*

Still others focus on how oppression affects them as members of the dominant group and on the potential benefits of greater equity. They speak of wanting to live in a society with more harmonious intergroup relations, of wanting a world safe for their children, and of seeing the survival of the planet predicated on creating greater justice. Others personally desire more diverse friendships, broadened knowledge, and more varied cultural experiences. Some acknowledge the benefits to their organization through increased enrollments, retention, or profits. This group of responses I name *self-interest.*

I will first describe and discuss each of these factors individually.[1] I will then explore the interconnections among them. In the following chapter, I discuss how to actually foster and appeal to empathy, moral or spiritual principles, and self-interest to gain support for social justice concerns. I am not suggesting that these are the only qualities needed to be an ally or to work for equity but that these are key factors that encourage people to do so.[2]

Empathy

Empathy involves being able to identify with the situation and feelings of another person. It incorporates affective and cognitive components, requiring both the capacity to share in the emotional life of another as well as the ability to imagine the way the world looks from another's vantage point. Chinua Achebe refers to this as "imaginative identification" (as cited in Lazarre, 1993, p. 4). It is "our capacity to understand and feel the suffering of others even though we have never experienced that particular suffering ourselves" (in Lazarre, 1993, p. 4). Being empathic, or taking the perspective of another person and imagining how that person is affected by his or her plight, can be useful for promoting more positive attitudes and inspiring action. Research suggests that empathy and the desire to help are natural human inclinations (Kohn, 1990).

Empathy is not the same as pity. With pity, we hold ourselves apart from the other person and his/her suffering, thinking of their plight as something that makes the person fundamentally inferior or

different from ourselves. Pity is seeing a homeless person on the street and, while feeling sorry for that person, thinking, "that never could be me." Empathy, however, is more like compassion. It recognizes our shared vulnerability while also acknowledging the differences between one's self and the other. Compassion is seeing the homeless person and thinking, "that could be me." We acknowledge our susceptibility to situations or conditions of misfortune as fellow human beings.

Empathy and Social Justice

Many theorists have discussed the significance of empathy in social relations (see Kohn, 1990, for a review of the literature). The presence of empathy can foster positive social action whereas its absence can perpetuate injustice. Suppressing empathy for people in oppressed groups is a powerful tool in maintaining oppression. When we fail to see our common humanity with people we perceive as different from ourselves, we can more easily ignore their plight. It also allows us to dehumanize others, seeing them as less than human or as unworthy of care and respect. This sets the stage for the acceptance or perpetuation of violence (a common strategy during wars; Grossman, 1995). The more one dehumanizes people, the more likely one will do violence. This in turn increases the need to dehumanize them. "By making the objects of our violence less than human, we do not experience the guilt associated with killing or harming fellow human beings" (Sampson, 1991, p. 322).

There are many ways in which people from oppressed groups are depersonalized and dehumanized in our society. Depersonalization and dehumanization occur through stereotypes (defining gay men as child molesters), images (depicting African Americans as animals) and language (using derogatory names—*gook, bitch, wetback*). In sum, perpetuating the sense that the Other is sufficiently different and less human than ourselves erodes the capacity for empathy and, thus, the propensity for care and action.

On the other hand, empathy can be a powerful tool in promoting social responsibility. Empathy helps us connect with and subsequently care about others who seem different. "Coming to see others as more simply human than one of Them, represents so drastic a conceptual shift, so affecting an emotional conversion, that there may be no greater threat to those with an interest in preserving inter-

group hostility" (Kohn, 1990, p. 145). Empathy makes it more difficult to use derogation as a means of maintaining a belief in a just world—vilifying or blaming victims for their circumstances to continue to believe that society is fair. Instead, empathy tends to encourage prosocial action to remove the injustice (Batson et al., 1997). It also helps to counter the egoistic desire to avoid personal costs and maintain relative advantage.

There is an important difference between using empathy to motivate altruistic or helping behavior and using empathy to encourage social activism and support for social justice. Most research on empathy and altruistic or prosocial behavior is confined to studies of people responding to someone's immediate distress (often in laboratory conditions). A single act will often suffice to alleviate that distress. It is usually focused on helping an individual in a particular situation, regardless of his or her social group membership or connection to social oppression. Prosocial activism, on the other hand, is "sustained action in the service of improving another person's or group's life condition by working with them or by trying to change society on their behalf" (Hoffman, 1989, p. 65). People are more likely to be engaged in prosocial activitism when they respond empathically to a victim's or group's long-term plight, rather than just to an immediate situation. This involves understanding that the other person or persons are part of a social group and recognizing the chronic nature of the victim's or victims' distress.

Although I will draw upon the research on empathy and prosocial behavior to discuss why people act in caring and socially responsible ways, the research on prosocial activism is most relevant to social justice efforts. As I will discuss, it is important that we encourage people to see beyond just aiding an individual in a particular situation. We need to foster their support for societal changes that will improve the lives of those who suffer systemic victimization.

Types of Empathic Responses

An empathic connection with someone who is suffering tends to elicit two kinds of affective responses (Hoffman, 1989). One is *personal* or *empathic distress*. This is when the empathy generates uncomfortable feelings for the people who are empathizing. This negative arousal may make people feel anxious, upset, disturbed, guilty, or shameful. With empathic distress, individuals have a personal re-

action of distress to the situation of another. For example, when I see the unsafe, overcrowded, and inadequate conditions of the schools for children in the inner city near where I live, I often feel guilty and upset.

A second kind of affective response is *sympathetic distress.* This is what we tend to think of when we think of empathy or compassion. It involves caring about and feeling for the person in distress. In response to the above school conditions, I may also feel sorry for the children and families that must live with these circumstances (sympathetic distress). Hoffman (1989) has suggested that sympathetic distress may also elicit other related feelings. These can include feelings of empathic anger—anger on behalf of the victim toward the party responsible for the suffering—and empathic injustice—feeling that the victim's treatment is unfair and undeserved. For example, I may also be angry at the politicians who don't attempt to remedy this school situation (empathic anger). Or I may feel outrage because these children don't deserve to be forced into these oppressive conditions (empathic injustice).

Motivations to Care and Act

Once we have empathized and feel some kind of empathic or sympathetic distress, we have to decide what to do about it. Different types of empathic responses tend to produce different motivations to respond to the person (group) in need. Although these motivations are independent and distinct internal responses, they are not mutually exclusive and often occur in conjunction with each other.

Two main motives for acting on our empathy are egoistic motivations because they are primarily concerned with addressing our own needs (Batson, 1989). The first motivation is based on acting in *compliance with internalized standards.* Through socialization, we internalize standards or expectations for appropriate actions or behaviors. These may be based on social expectations (societal or group norms) or self-expectations (personal norms). Our motivation to act is driven by our desire to live up to these standards. By complying with these expectations, we can anticipate receiving rewards or avoiding punishment. These rewards or punishments may be explicit and obvious, such as obtaining an award, peer approval, monetary remuneration, gratitude from those helped, or public censure. Often they are more subtle and in compliance with internal-

ized needs, such as avoiding guilt, seeing oneself as a good person, receiving esteem in exchange for helping, or gaining a sense of adventure. Continuing with the above example, I may decide to participate in a campaign for school finance reform because I think of myself as a caring person, my friends are involved in social justice causes, and I want to live up to the expectations of myself and my peers.

The second type of motivation is *aversive arousal reduction.* The motive is to reduce our own distress that was generated by empathizing. There is the desire to do something to reduce feelings of guilt, anger, or discomfort. From this perspective, I may work for school finance reform because I want to relieve my guilt that my children attend a high-quality school whereas other children do not, to dissipate my anger at their unjust treatment, or to relieve my discomfort at having to walk by there every day.

A third motivation is *altruism,* which is focused on addressing others' needs. The motivation to act is focused not on addressing our own distress, arousal, or needs, but on responding to the needs of other person (group). Our concern is simply to improve the welfare of the other, regardless of whether we will benefit. We may still experience some kind of positive effect, but that is not the motivating factor. My social action might be based on my care for the children and my desire that these children get the kind of education that all children deserve.

People's motivation to act on empathic responses can be based on any one or all of these factors, and often, the line is blurry. Though isolating the specific factors is not crucial, it can be helpful for educators to understand people's motivation to better foster and channel their emotional energy.

Moral Principles and Spiritual Values

Morality deals with questions of right and wrong. Research suggests that people are intrinsically motivated to behave fairly and to seem moral and good (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997). Value systems affect people's judgment of a situation and their determination of whether it violates their moral or spiritual code. When someone considers something morally or spiritually wrong, that provides an impetus for the person to act to remedy that situation. Even though people from privileged groups may

be inclined to justify their advantage as fair, studies demonstrate that concerns about justice affect both the feelings and actual behaviors of the people in privileged positions (Tyler et al., 1997). Despite the assumption that self-interest most influences people's decisions in the political arena, research suggests otherwise (Orren, 1988; Sears & Funk, 1990):

> What is far more likely to predict someone's position on an issue of public policy is a deeply held principle. Attitudes about issues ranging from desegregation to unemployment tend to reflect value commitments more than they do one's personal stake in a given policy. (Orren, 1988, p. 24)

In fact, many actions toward social justice are done to uphold ethical or spiritual values (Colby & Damon, 1992; Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996; Hoehn, 1983; Oliner & Oliner, 1988).

Types of Moral Reasoning

There are two commonly recognized modes of moral judgment. One is a person-oriented ethic of care; the other is a principle-oriented ethic of justice (Gilligan, 1980/1993; Lyons, 1988; Reimer, Paolitto, & Hersh, 1983). The dominant ideology in the United States, which espouses values of fairness, equality, and equal opportunity, reflects a justice orientation. Each of these moral orientations and their developmental sequences has implications for motivating support for social justice. I discuss each of these below.

A morality of justice, long believed to be the only system of moral reasoning, is focused on rights and fairness. This form of morality is concerned with upholding principles or standards. It is rooted in a formal sense of equality and reciprocity (treating others as you would want to be treated). When using this type of moral reasoning, people make moral decisions by applying logical, abstract, and impartial rules or principles. People contend that something is unjust when it violates these accepted standards, which often involve equal rights, equal opportunity, or role-related obligations.

A morality of care is focused on relationships and responsiveness. This form of morality is concerned with promoting the welfare of others, preventing harm, and relieving physical or psychological suffering. Using this type of reasoning, people arrive at moral deci-

sions inductively, motivated by the desire to maintain connections and avoid hurt. From this perspective, individuals contend that something violates their moral code when people are being harmed or not cared for.

People may therefore agree that something is morally wrong but arrive at that determination in different ways. Take, for example, a situation of housing discrimination based on race. A justice perspective might focus on its unfairness because it violates laws that assert equal opportunity. A care perspective might focus on the harm to the family looking for a home and the suffering it causes them.

Most people tend toward one type of moral orientation, though they often use both. Because a morality of justice is the norm, even people who prefer an ethic of care are fluent in and can use a ethic of justice perspective. Studies have suggested that women tend to use an ethic of care more frequently than men (Gilligan, 1980/1993; Lyons, 1988).

Developmental Sequences

Even within the same moral orientation, there is a developmental sequence of moral reasoning that reflects distinctions in how people make moral judgments within that framework. Again, although people may engage in similar actions, their reasons for doing so may differ. I'll use an example of a college administrator charged with recruiting and hiring more faculty and students of color to illustrate the different perspectives.

Within an ethic of justice, there are three levels, each with two stages, that reflect the development of moral reasoning. Reasoning at the first level, *preconventional*, is concerned with the concrete interests of the individuals involved, not with what society defines as the right way to behave in a given situation. People here consider what the specific consequences would be for acting in a particular way. An administrator reasoning from this self-oriented level might not even feel that there is a moral problem (racial discrimination or exclusion) to be addressed. However, he may comply because he fears losing his job if he doesn't or because he thinks that he will be more marketable if he does increase diversity. He might also believe that this will give him more leverage with the student organizations or faculty groups that support diversity when he has to deal with other issues, such as an alcohol policy.

Moving away from a self-centered focus, the second level, *conventional,* involves an identification with the expectations of others and the rules and norms of society. This level is most common among adults. The administrator might pursue this effort because it is what his peers are doing at other colleges, people he respects expect him to do so, and it is commonly recognized in academic circles that there needs to be more inclusion of underrepresented groups at colleges. He also might be concerned with conforming to affirmative-action laws, campus policies, or other statutes that mandate equal opportunity and outreach.

At the third level, *postconventional* or *principled,* the focus shifts to abstract ideals of justice. These may include abiding by the social contract (laws, rules, and values), which considers the welfare of all and protects all people's rights. Individuals may also be guided by universal ethical principles that involve the equality of human rights and the respect for the dignity of human beings as individuals. People will abide by laws and social agreements to the extent that those correspond with their universal principles. The administrator reasoning from this level might support efforts to create a more diverse and inclusive college to benefit all—providing a better-educated workforce that can value diversity and use the talents of more of its citizens. He may believe that all people should have the freedom to pursue knowledge and be able to fulfill their potential.

The ethic of care also has a developmental sequence of moral reasoning. This three-position sequence begins with *survival,* a position in which the concern is for caring for oneself to ensure survival. The second perspective is *goodness,* a position that involves caring for others and being good according to conventional definitions. The last perspective is *truth,* in which care for oneself as well as others is considered and the interconnection between self and others is recognized. Care becomes a self-chosen moral principle with the injunction to prevent or condemn harm and violence.

Similarly, different considerations might motivate the administrator using a care perspective. From the view of survival, he may comply with this strategy to keep his job so he can pay his bills and support his family. From the view of goodness, he may feel that being a good administrator means caring about all potential students and faculty and being liked and respected by his colleagues and the campus community. From the third perspective of truth, he may re-

alize that exclusion hurts people of color by denying them opportunities and harms Whites by denying them a fuller educational experience. He may feel that, ultimately, our collective well-being is better served by a more diverse campus.

Spiritual Values

Spiritual beliefs may fall within these moral frameworks or have their own ethical codes. Spirituality or religion always has an ethical orientation because it seeks to respond to the moral question of how we ought to live our lives (Daloz et al., 1996). Some talk of upholding the Golden Rule, of treating everyone as a child of God, of the importance of relieving suffering, or of recognizing that "there is that of God in every person." In their study of people committed to working for the common good, Daloz et al. found that for many individuals, religion and spirituality played an explicit or implicit role in their development of commitment and in their larger meaning-making system. People frequently alluded to a principle of interdependence. This sense of the interdependent nature of life informed their public commitment. These individuals also found a way to continually reframe and expand their religious understanding and practice to include and respect others and the complex diversity of the world. Some spoke of a sense of spiritual imperative, of feeling called and compelled to respond to the needs of the world. Despite their many differences, most religious or spiritual belief systems share a common mandate to care for those less fortunate and to treat people humanely.

We can be more effective at appealing to moral and spiritual values if we understand how people determine what is ethical or just. As these frameworks and sequences suggest, different moral orientations and reasoning can motivate people to support social justice. The early stages in both moral frameworks are self-oriented, more focused on one's own needs than those of others. However, as we'll see in the next section, self-interest is not necessarily selfish concern. Self-interest can also be a healthy aspect of being an ally.

Self-Interest

I previously discussed some of the many costs of oppression to people from dominant groups. These various psychological,

moral/spiritual, intellectual, social, and material/physical costs provide a basis for why people from privileged groups might support greater equity. They may seek greater authenticity and integrity, better interpersonal relationships, safer communities, or more effective organizations. These reasons highlight how justice can be in the self-interest of dominant-group individuals.

However, the term *self-interest* tends to have a negative connotation. In fact, the primary dictionary definitions explain it as selfish concern and personal advantage. These common definitions of self-interest imply that one gains at the expense or exclusion of others, that it is a zero-sum game. This is consistent with economic exchange theory and with the dominant worldview that envisions people as separate individuals competing for positions of advantage or superiority. Although this may reflect one aspect of self-interest, it ignores the possibility that what may be in my interest might also benefit others.

People also tend to assume that there is something inherently wrong or less pure about considering one's own interests or needs, especially in doing work as an ally. As Carol Gilligan (1980/1993) has suggested, in interdependent relationships, we need to put ourselves in the "web of care" and consider our own needs as well as the needs of others. A healthy self-concern is not the same as selfishness. We do not need to ignore or act against our own needs in the process of working for justice. But to do so, we need a broader understanding of self-interest (see Kohn, 1990, and Lappe & Du Bois, 1991, for a discussion of alternative conceptions of self-interest). The term *enlightened self-interest* has been used in a general way to describe the understanding that the interests of the individual and the common good can converge. I will propose a more complex conception of self-interest and suggest that it is a useful, if not necessary, component of motivating people from privileged groups to support social justice.

Continuum of Self-Interest

Instead of defining self-interest simply as selfish concern, we can define it more broadly to include benefits to oneself that do not necessarily exclude benefits to others as well. Self-interest can incorporate the interests of others as well as one's own. It can range from a very narrow, selfish perspective to a more inclusive, interdependent perspective. There are two key factors that distinguish different

types of self-interest: one's conception of self (separate and autonomous or connected and relational) and a short- or long-term perspective (whether one focuses on immediate or long-run interests). Moreover, as evidenced in the costs of oppression described earlier, the benefits for people from privileged groups may take various forms, from the psychological to the material. I will describe a continuum of self-interest (see Figure 7.1) and provide some illustrations of the various perspectives.

On one end of the continuum is *individualistic*, or "me-oriented," self-interest. This coincides with the common equation of self-interest with selfish concern. People operating from this type of self-interest may support social justice efforts solely for their own perceived personal gain. The concern is for the self; the fact that it benefits someone else is incidental or secondary. The prime motivation to support social justice is seen in terms of "what it will do for me." Appealing to this type of self-interest may be getting someone to do the right thing for what may seem to be the wrong reason. It is a short-sighted and short-term perspective, concerned with immediate, and usually material, benefits.

For example, a politician may support rights for people with disabilities because it will provide votes among a needed constituency. Similarly, an individual or organization may give money to a shelter for battered women or antipoverty program because it will be good public relations and help their reputation. A male student may help organize campus events against violence against women as a vehicle to meet women or fulfill an extra-credit assignment.

Farther along the continuum, self-interest involves a consideration of what benefits others as well as oneself. A *mutual* perspective sees benefits for both—"you *and* me." Moving away from a narrow, self-oriented perspective, this reflects a more relational view of self-interest. The action is based on real concern for others. The personal benefits may be of many types. People may volunteer in a food kitchen because it makes them feel good about themselves and allows them to feel they are doing something helpful (psychological) or to learn more about homelessness (intellectual). At the same time, they may also genuinely want to do something to address the disadvantaged situation of others. People may join the Peace Corp or other service organizations both for the sense of adventure and to meet new people (social), as well as to aid in the development of poor communities. Individuals might work on campaigns for wel-

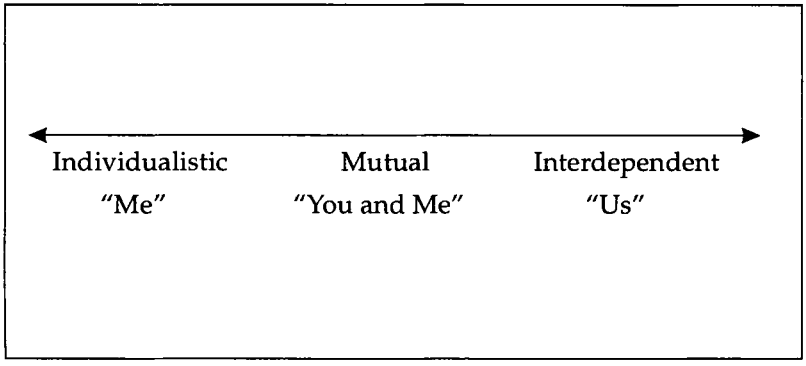

Figure 7.1. Continuum of Self-Interest

fare reform and living wages to relieve their guilt about their privileged economic background (moral), in addition to assisting people in need. A heterosexual father of a gay son may be involved in passing gay nondiscrimination laws. It reduces his own anxiety over his son's experience of homophobia and benefits his son and other gays and lesbians. There may be material benefit when the decision to sponsor a Diversity Week is based partly on the desire to respond to the concerns of marginalized groups and also based partly on seeing it as a strategy to quell greater demands and accusations that the organization doesn't care about diversity.

My assumption is that for the majority of people who support social justice efforts, there is some sense of mutual benefit. Even though they might like to believe or have others believe that the support is solely on behalf of the oppressed group (in which case it would be pure altruism with no self-interest), I suspect that most of us get some other personal satisfaction from engaging in such actions. This in turn motivates further involvement.

The *interdependent* perspective has a greater relational view that blurs the boundaries between you and me and sees "us." As Sampson (1988) explains, "When the self is defined in relation, inclusive of others in its very definition, there is no fully separate self whose interests do not of necessity include others" (p. 20). Various feminist theories have been developing relational theories of self (Gilligan, 1980/1993; Jordan et al., 1991). Work on behalf of others is simultaneously work on behalf of ourselves. From this interdependent perspective, because our lives and fates are intertwined, social

justice efforts are being done for our collective benefit. A heterosexual person who fights against homophobia might feel that all of us need to be free from rigid sex roles, limits on sexual expression, and lifestyle constraints. Likewise, a person without a disability might champion the humane treatment of people with disabilities, believing it reflects on how society views and values all human beings.

Interdependent self-interest may require that people work against what appears to be their immediate self-interest. However, a relational sense of self and a more long-term perspective allows them to see the benefit to themselves and others in the long run. Wealthy people may support higher tax rates or caps on executives' salaries (which affect their earnings) to create a more equitable distribution of wealth. They may believe that because a more peaceful society depends on people having quality educational and work opportunities and decent living conditions, there needs to be a fairer allocation of resources. White men (or women) may support affirmative action, even though in the short run it reduces the likelihood that they will be hired. They support a practice that they feel will lead to the kind of world they want to live in—one with great equity and the inclusion of important voices that have been silenced. People who have an interdependent sense of self-interest are likely to recognize their privilege and to seek ways to give it up, to not take advantage of it, or to use it to promote social justice.

The Connections Among Empathy, Morality and Self-Interest

By themselves, empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest can provide an impetus to support social justice. However, they often operate in conjunction and can be addressed in combination to strengthen the appeal to action. I will provide some examples of how they can be used to bolster each other.

Empathy Joined With Moral Principles and Self-Interest

The use of moral values along with empathy can help transform feelings into action. Instead of just making people feel bad, moral or spiritual principles can create a sense of responsibility to act to alleviate the suffering or injustice. The experience of empathy may lead to the invocation of moral principles. In addition, because empathy

generally requires that people see the situation or suffering as unjust, moral principles can allow people to come to that understanding or interpretation.

Self-interest is implicit in much empathically motivated behavior. People often act in socially responsible ways to address their empathic distress. They are motivated by a desire to reduce their negative arousal or to be consistent with their internalized standards. After an empathy-generating experience, self-interest can be useful in helping them deal with their reactions. It can motivate and sustain action once their empathy has been aroused.

Moral Principles Joined With Empathy and Self-Interest

Empathy can help move one's moral concern out of the abstract and impersonal. Some people are rule-, not person- or other-, oriented. Kohn (1990) suggests that if people are overly concerned with rules, ideology or abstract principles, this actually may interfere with their sensitivity to the suffering of real people. In these cases, empathy can help put a human face and a personal connection on the moral injustice and thus enhance these individuals' commitment to address the situation. Feeling a human connection can also help expand one's sense of who is included in one's moral community. The more others are seen as similar or sharing a close relationship, the less able one is to maintain the cognitive distortion to justify the status quo. Also, empathy may be evoked once some human contact has been made, after the initial action was taken out of moral principle.

Moral values promote action in part to maintain self-integrity. It is in people's self-interest to protect their self-esteem and self-image. Self-interest can also be tied to one's level of moral reasoning and motivation to act morally.[3] For some, as earlier examples illustrated, self-interest is central in their process of making moral judgments. For those with more principled reasoning, a more mutual and collective sense of self-interest strengthens their ability to follow through on their moral convictions. Because people generally weigh the personal costs before acting on their moral values, increasing the sense of personal benefit helps shift the balance toward acting.

Self-Interest Joined With Empathy and Moral Principles

Empathy can shift people out of narrow, individualistic self-interest by fostering a concern for others. It can strengthen their feel-

ings of connection and promote interdependence. This can help move them toward a more mutual and collective sense of self-interest.

Moral principles can encourage people to act not just out of selfish motives or short-term advantages but also out of ethical considerations. It provides people with other guidelines to make decisions about their behavior. Because we want people to be engaged in social justice work with commitment and integrity, enhancing their emotional and intellectual investment leads in this direction.

Research on activists (though the activists are not necessarily working on issues in which they are part of the dominant group) suggests that they are highly developed in their senses of empathy, morality, and collective self-interest (Berman, 1997). Indeed, these factors are intertwined. Activists have a sense of self that is defined by moral values and a sense of connectedness with others, especially with those suffering injustice and with the world as a whole. This relational sense of self fosters a sensitivity to the feeling of others and an understanding of the connection between others' well-being and one's own and leads to a commitment to relieve suffering and oppression. This connected sense of self underlies and promotes empathy, a morality of care, and an interdependent sense of self-interest.

For most activists in the research, seeing themselves as moral beings was also a central part of their sense of self. This unity of self and morality fostered activism and erased feelings of self-sacrifice. "No one saw their moral choices as an exercise in self-sacrifice. To the contrary, they see their moral goals as a means of attaining their personal ones and vice versa" (Colby & Damon, 1992, pp. 300-301).

In addition, studies suggest that "roots of activism also lie in the desire for a sense of meaning that takes one beyond oneself. To be bigger than oneself, to feel that one is contributing to the welfare of others and society, not only motivates action but sustains it over the long term" (Berman, 1997, p. 68). Commitment to honesty and openness to new information and change were also cited as common characteristics of activists.

Conclusion

As reflected in this chapter, the reasons people from privileged groups may support social justice are varied and multilayered No one factor—empathy, moral and spiritual values, or self-

interest—will motivate all people, nor will the same factor appeal to people in the same way. My impression is that educators often emphasize one of these aspects—usually empathy or morality—to the exclusion of others. Some people address these sources of motivation generally, without considering some of the complexities within each. Becoming more conscious about which we use, how we use them, and in what combinations we use them enhances our effectiveness with the various individuals and issues that we deal with. It provides some direction for our educational and social change efforts. When we build on empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest in conjunction with each other, we also promote more long-term activism. In the following chapter, I will discuss how to develop these qualities in our students and how to encourage social action.

Notes

1. Kimmel (1993) found that one reason why men have supported the women's liberation movement was that it simply made logical sense. Although this may be true for some individuals, in my own research, I have found that this reason has rarely arisen, and therefore I do not include it in my discussion.

2. I wish to acknowledge the work of Steve Wineman (1984), which suggested a framework for these responses.

3. For an interesting discussion of the connections among moral reasoning, racism, and self-interest, see Terry, R. (1978). White belief, moral reasoning, self-interest and racism. In W. W. Schroeder & F. Winter (Eds.), *Belief and ethics* (pp. 349-374). Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion.

8

Developing and Enlisting Support for Social Justice

In the previous chapter, I discussed how empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest can motivate people from privileged groups to support social justice. This chapter will focus on how this framework can be applied to our educational and change efforts. I will further describe how to foster and appeal to empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest to enlist support for social change efforts. I will also consider ways to encourage people to be allies and activists.

Empathy

Fostering Empathy

To increase empathy, both the intellect and the emotions need to be engaged. In general, to foster empathy, people need to maximize personal knowledge and heighten emotional attunement. By imagining another's point of view and feelings, we can better understand his or her situation. It is also helpful to minimize distance and anonymity by actually getting to know real people and experiencing their life circumstances. There are many things we can do to increase the empathy of people from privileged groups toward people from oppressed groups.

Expose People to Other Life Experiences

We can be exposed to others' realities through books, movies, panels, and personal testimony. Hearing the information in person tends to be the most powerful (though this has a higher risk because there is less control over what people say and do). Invite an individual or a panel of speakers to discuss their lives. One of the more effective programs in my work with faculty on addressing issues of diversity and equity in the classroom has been to have students from marginalized groups (students of color, gay and lesbian students, poor students) talk about their experiences in classes. After hearing the panel, faculty are usually more receptive to discussing how to be more inclusive and sensitive in their teaching.

It's important to include a variety of experiences from within a particular group or to discuss how this individual reflects the experiences of many others. There is the possibility of seeing an individual as an exception or atypical for his or her social group. In addition, because perspective taking fosters empathy, provide frequent opportunities for people to develop their ability to take the perspective of others and consider other points of view. This can be done through simulations, role plays, and case studies.

Have People Share Their Own Experiences

We can ask people to reflect on and share their own experiences with discrimination and oppression. Nearly all people are members of at least one oppressed group. And everyone has some experience of being stereotyped and treated unfairly. People can better understand the feelings of others through considering how they felt in similar circumstances. Individuals who have experienced the effects of oppression in one aspect of their identity can often use this to relate to the experiences of someone from a different oppressed group in which they are part of the dominant group. A heterosexual African American woman acknowledged that she was homophobic and expressed some discomfort at the prospect of listening to a panel of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people share their stories. After the session, she remarked, "They deal with a lot of the same stuff I do as a Black person!" She could relate to their feelings of internalized oppression, marginalization, and fear of violence. By using her experiences as a person of color as a reference point as a heterosexual, she now had new insight into (and tolerance for) gays.

This can be a helpful starting place to make some connections and develop compassion, but further discussion is needed so that it goes beyond emotional catharsis. We don't want people to overlook differences or equate isolated incidents with systematic, socially sanctioned mistreatment. Just because the woman above could use her experiences as an African American to connect with the experiences of gays and lesbians, this does not mean that she knows what it's like to be gay (or vice versa). Moreover, a man's exclusion from a women-only support group is not the same as women's exclusion from men's organizations or from positions that serve as vehicles for the sharing of social power and promotion.

Furthermore, if we want people to be engaged in social action, they need to understand that a person's plight is not just an individual issue. His or her lack of opportunities or disadvantage is due to larger societal conditions that require addressing social inequalities. People need to understand that the distress of this individual is symptomatic of some form of oppression that also affects many others like them.

Give People the Opportunity to Have Firsthand Experiences

Provide people with the chance to get to know actual people and experience others' situations directly. In a diverse class, cooperative learning and group projects can help achieve this end. Internships, extended visits to different neighborhoods, volunteer work, and service learning can reduce both emotional and physical distance. Even helping that is initially done nonempathically can lead to empathy (Kohn, 1990). People who help tend to develop a more positive view of those they have assisted, become more concerned with their well-being, and feel a greater responsibility to continue to help them (Staub, 1989). In conjunction with these activities, it is important that students are engaged in a process of self-reflection and in discussions of privilege and social inequality so that they can make sense of their experiences and avoid paternalistic attitudes.[1]

Hoffman (1989) found that activists' direct and repeated contact with disadvantaged groups intensified their initial empathic and sympathetic distress. It also diminished their intellectual remoteness and challenged their stereotypes. Their empathic and sympathetic distress was transformed, in part, into empathic feelings of injustice, empathic anger at society, and guilt over their own relatively

privileged position. This led them to question their own ideology that assumed that society was basically caring and just.

A recent newspaper article (Bole, 1997) suggests the power of empathy. In Tennessee, after failed efforts to get Whites to support additional funds for poor Black schools, a group of African Americans invited a group of Whites (though an interfaith organization) to visit their schools. After this firsthand experience, Whites were willing to support the additional funds and also joined forces in fighting for school-based management. The politicians were unable to split the Black and White communities on these issues.

Potential Pitfalls of Empathy

Although empathy is a powerful force in acting for justice, we need to be careful in our efforts to help people from dominant groups empathize with the experiences of people from marginalized groups. Elizabeth Spelman (1995) spells out some of the paradoxes of these efforts and dangers to watch out for.

In Spelman's *paradox of appropriation,* there is the tendency, in the process of seeing oneself in the experiences of others, to erase the specifics of the others' experience and to equate the two experiences. Although we want people to connect to the experiences of another and to a sense of shared humanity, we do not want them to expropriate that experience. It is the danger of falling into the trap of thinking, "I know just how you feel!"

In the *paradox of identification,* the danger is overemphasizing the similarity of experiences by ignoring the differences and the larger social and historical context in which these experiences take place. This overlooks the implications of differential social positions and access to power and privilege. Because oppression breeds on highlighting difference and building barriers based on those differences, by identifying with others, we can break down those divisions. However, this poses the danger of coming to think, "We're all alike."

Consider the situation when a White person tries to empathize with the experience of an African American person in an all-White environment. The White person may recount how she also felt uncomfortable and marginalized as the only White person in an all-Black gathering. On the one hand, it may be helpful to focus on the similarities for her to relate to the experience of the Black person. However, she may ignore the particularities of the Black woman's experience and the differences between their experiences, given the larger context of racism. For example, the White woman can gener-

ally choose whether or not to be in the situation of being a racial minority, and it is an exception to her usual interactions where her Whiteness is the norm.

While encouraging empathy, we need to be careful not to obscure differences as we emphasize similarities. We must acknowledge and discuss differences in power and social position. In addition, some people feel that by empathizing they are "doing something." Empathy itself is not action; it is a starting place, not the end product.

Impediments to Empathy and Empathic Responsiveness

The potential of empathy as a positive social force can be diminished in many ways. There are many factors that reduce people's ability to be empathic, as well as to act on their empathic responses. I will identify several of these and offer some brief suggestions for how to address them.

Lack of Cognitive Ability

First, people need a certain level of cognitive ability to engage in perspective taking. Although there are different kinds of empathy displayed by children, the type of empathy discussed here requires the ability to have a differentiated sense of self and the cognitive flexibility to imagine the perspective of someone else. Most teenagers and adults have that cognitive ability, though many still have a difficult time with the cognitive flexibility that is required. People who are dualistic thinkers (see Chapter 3) tend to see things as either-or and have difficulty considering experiences or perspectives that differ from what they consider the truth. For these individuals, it may be helpful to stress that being empathic does not mean condoning someone else's behavior. Because abstract connections may be more difficult for these individuals, we can provide opportunities for them to concretely put themselves in the position of another that require them to take on a different way of seeing the world (i.e., through a role play).

Lack of Emotional Flexibility

In addition to cognitive flexibility, people need emotional flexibility.

> One who cannot tolerate his own feelings, or who is essentially a stranger to himself, is unlikely to forge an affective connection to someone else. A degree of self-knowledge and comfort with one's own affective life facilitates both knowing and being known to others. (Kohn, 1990, p. 152)

Generally, people who have difficulty acknowledging and experiencing their own feelings have difficulty perceiving and understanding the feelings of others. Although there is not conclusive research on gender differences and empathy (varying with how empathy is measured), it tends to be more challenging for males to make empathic connections. Male socialization usually does not foster the development of emotional self-knowledge, expressiveness, or sensitivity to others. As a result, men often have underdeveloped empathic abilities and overdeveloped emotional armor to protect themselves against feelings that might make them vulnerable and uncomfortable. In educational contexts, we can consistently model empathic behavior toward them and others and can provide opportunities for them to develop and practice empathic skills.

Lack of Psychological or Emotional Freedom

Third, people are less likely to feel empathy if their own needs feel more pressing than those of others. It can be hard to be empathic when feeling stressed or in pain. If people are self-absorbed, are anxious, or lack the psychological or emotional freedom to attend to another's needs, their empathic abilities will be decreased. As previously discussed, this can be the case when someone is focused on his or her victimization as a member of a subordinate group. We can provide the safety and opportunity for these people to share their feelings, concerns, or experiences so that they feel heard and validated. Once they feel recognized and no longer need to defend their own pain or disadvantage, they may have more psychological space to connect with another. (Also, review the suggestions in Chapter 4 for reducing resistance.)

Blaming the Victim

People often have little or no empathy for victims they see as accountable and deserving of their fate. Blaming the victim may in fact lead to feelings of indifference or hostility. Through a variety of edu-

cational strategies—providing information, role plays, personal stories, researching facts, or critical analysis—people can develop a more informed perspective that may shift their understanding or interpretation of the situation. This in turn can alter the way they see the victim and allow for some empathic connection. People who believe in a "just world," which assumes a close relationship between one's fate and one's merit, are more likely to react with compassion if they are asked to imagine themselves in the same situation as the victim (Rubin & Peplau, 1975).

Empathic Bias

People also tend to have difficulty empathizing with people that seem too different from themselves. There tends to be an *empathic bias;* individuals feel less empathy for those they perceive as different and more empathy for those they perceive as more like themselves. Empathic bias is reinforced by the stereotypes and prejudices people learn. It can be reduced by providing people with opportunities to increase familiarity with individuals or groups they see as different and encouraging a focus on the similarities between themselves and the others—shared characteristics, feelings, and experiences. Ultimately, despite all other differences, we share a common humanity.

Psychological Threat

Finally, although similarity of experience can promote empathy, it can also impede it when the situation is experienced as too psychologically threatening. It may touch on one's own unresolved issues, unconscious conflicts, or disappointments. A heterosexual woman may resist empathizing with an angry lesbian woman because of her inability to acknowledge her own anger about the sexism she herself faces. A man may have difficulty empathizing with a battered woman if he has not dealt with his own feelings about seeing his mother in an abusive relationship. We may be able to help him empathize with women in other situations that do not stir up such feelings but also involve sexism or the domination of women by men. And even though we are not therapists, we can appropriately allow people to express their feelings and help them understand why they are unable to empathize in this situation. We can also recommend referrals for counseling or other assistance.

Limitations of Using Empathy to Promote Prosocial Activism

Not all empathy leads to prosocial action or activism. Even when people do feel empathy, there are several factors that reduce their motivation to act on this empathic connection. One is *empathic overarousal.* People can be overwhelmed by their own feelings of distress that are generated from being empathic. The level of guilt or anxiety can be immobilizing. Allowing people to process their feelings—through writing, talking, emoting, movement, or art—helps reduce the intensity of the feelings so that they can consider acting more constructively.

A second reason is *feelings of powerlessness.* When people are unable to relieve the suffering, they may rationalize their failure to act by derogating the victim. After an empathic connection with a homeless man, a person who feels powerless to help this man or to deal with homelessness might find ways to blame him for being in his situation (i.e., not trying to find a job, not going into rehabilitation). We can assist people in dealing with their sense of disempowerment by helping them to learn about and develop strategies for positive intervention and action.

Third, we live in an *unsupportive social context,* in a culture where people are encouraged to see victims as deserving their plight. Empathic abilities and the motivations to act are not commonly taught, encouraged, or valued in this society.

> What motivates people to help others is determined more by the social system in which they live than their basic nature. Absence of genuine altruism in the US should not be attributed to a fundamentally egoistic human nature, but to the highly individualistic, competitive and success-oriented nature of our social system. (Sampson, 1991, p. 275)

Even though we cannot simply change the dominant culture, we can continue to help people to develop their empathic abilities, to highlight the benefits of caring for others, and to provide examples of people who do act on their sense of empathy to improve the lives of others.

To use empathy as a motivation for progressive social action, we need to help people emotionally and intellectually relate to other's experiences and to understand that people may be motivated by their

own personal needs as well as altruism, and we need to be able to address the various individual and societal impediments to people developing and then acting on their empathic responses. Because the effective use of empathy generally requires that people see the victim's situation as somehow wrong or unfair, moral principles become an important ingredient. It is to these that I next turn.

Moral and Spiritual Values

By invoking moral principles and spiritual values, people can be motivated to live up to and according to one's values and to right what they perceive as a wrong. For people to act on moral or spiritual principles, they need to be aware that there has been, in fact, a violation of their values. Everyone may not agree on how to remedy the moral infraction, but at least if people see that there is an injustice, they can become concerned and invested in addressing it.

First, it can be helpful to encourage people to identify and articulate their moral/spiritual values. This provides a standard from which to judge situations. It can also provide educators with useful information about how to speak to their concerns. Although not everyone has the same interpretation of justice or fairness, most people in the United States tend to support the notions of equal opportunity, meritocracy, and equal rights.

Next, we can educate people about the inequity. People often have little accurate knowledge about social inequities. In addition to providing facts, statistics, personal stories, and theories, individuals can be asked to conduct research themselves and to gain awareness from firsthand experiences. Often, students are more persuaded by information they uncover themselves. If people think that a life on welfare is one of luxury and an easy free ride, we can ask them to research the amount of the allowance, to live on that amount for a couple of weeks, or to try to apply for welfare to see how they are treated.

Once people are aware of an inequity, we can help them see that it is unfair, that it violates their moral/spiritual principles. Unless they perceive the discrepancy as an injustice, they will not feel that a moral wrong has been committed. Because there is pressure to cognitively distort situations in ways that justify the status quo, educators need to be able to challenge those distortions. We need to help people question the dominant ideology that makes inequities seem

fair and to offer alternative explanations. People can be encouraged to reexamine their assumptions and beliefs that tend to blame the victim, deny discrimination, and presume a level playing field. We can help elucidate how institutional structures and practices violate stated principles of fairness and equity. Often, when myths are exposed and greater understanding of systemic inequality is revealed, people are more likely to feel that their values have been breached, that something isn't right. In the United States, many people accept the fairness of the free market system and the ideology that people get what they deserve on the basis of ability or hard work. Yet a study by Smith and Tyler (1996) with people who were economically advantaged found that the more respondents viewed market procedures and outcomes for the disadvantaged to be unfair, the more they supported redistributive policies. As in the above example of welfare, if people realize how inadequate most public assistance is in supporting families and in providing the necessary job training, transportation, day care, and employment opportunities for people to get decent-paying jobs with medical benefits, they are more likely to feel that people are being denied the opportunity to live a reasonable life off welfare and that this is detrimental to those individuals and society at large.

Because an ethic of justice tends toward an intellectual or cognitive orientation, providing information and facts is a useful strategy. An ethic of care tends to be more feeling or affectively oriented. In this case, an effective approach is to illustrate the harm of social injustice, thereby promoting empathy. This appeals to values of caring for others and alleviating suffering. The strategies discussed earlier to foster empathy—such as personal stories, relationships, and perspective taking—are useful with people who have a care-based morality.

After people recognize moral injustice, the next step is motivating them to take some action to remedy the situation. For some, the clarity of a moral wrong might be enough to elicit their support. For others, more particular appeals may be needed. We can be more effective at appealing to moral values if we understand the process through which people determine what is just and why they would act morally. Otherwise, we can offer a range of reasons that will appeal to people with different moral orientations and motivations. The developmental sequences within each moral framework can provide a guide for speaking to particular moral frameworks. Also, although individuals tend to be predominantly in one stage, they

may use reasoning from other stages, depending on the circumstances.

I have often been asked to do diversity and sexual harassment training in schools with teachers, administrators, and other staff. Frequently, this is initiated by a teacher who sees a problem and wants to garner the support from the administration and fellow teachers. There are usually several ways to appeal to people's moral values. I will tend to include a variety of reasons, both to appeal to the range of concerns and to provide examples of more principled and caring considerations.

Those using moral reasoning from preconventional or survival perspectives may be most concerned with protecting themselves from accusations and legal liability. For them, addressing sexual harassment can reduce their personal or institutional liability as well as negative public exposure that could jeopardize their careers. For those concerned with being able to teach without as many discipline problems and conflicts, the training can reduce negative behavior and tensions among students.

Those at the goodness or conventional level tend to be interested in having policies and laws to ensure that people are treated fairly or are not subject to behavior that interferes with their right to an education. They want to follow and enforce established rules that help maintain order in the school and allow people to be treated respectfully. For those concerned with being good and caring teachers, the training can help them better meet the needs of their students, ensure their safety, and prepare them to deal with differences.

To speak to the concerns of people at the truth or postconventional level, I try to appeal to shared or stated values. These may include wanting every child to be able to reach his or her full potential or wanting to create a caring community in which people are not subjected to hurtful or demeaning behavior. These individuals are seeking ways to create an environment in which everyone can learn and work effectively.

Limitations of Appealing to Moral Principles and Spiritual Values

Equity theory suggests that recognizing an injustice produces an uncomfortable and distressing emotional state (Tyler et al., 1997). People attempt to restore a sense of justice (a) behaviorally, by changing their behavior or the situation, and (b) psychologically, by

changing their interpretation of events (such as assuming that people are lazy, incompetent, or undeserving). The psychological solution allows people to justify their advantage. People who view themselves and others as personally responsible for their success or failure are more likely to assume that societal inequities are legitimate. They accept the just-world hypothesis that people get what they deserve in life and consequently deserve what they get. Therefore, there is no motivation to remedy the situation.

Even when people do recognize an injustice, they will decide whether to act on the basis of two main factors. The first is practical concerns (e.g., the likelihood of success or of retaliation or the amount of self-sacrifice). People may want to see justice occur but may not be willing to incur the consequences of the imagined change. The second is the ambiguity of the situation—how clear it is that an injustice has occurred and what specifically needs to be done to address it. If people are not convinced that there is an unfair inequity or do not believe that what is proposed will remedy it, they are less likely to act.

In addition, there may be some groups of people who are seen as nonentities, undeserving, or expendable, and thus are morally excluded from one's scope of justice (e.g., migrant workers, the Japanese during WWII, gays; Opotow, 1990). This allows people to see the harm to these groups as acceptable, appropriate, or just. Moreover, the less one's sense of self is rooted in a moral identity, the less persuasive moral arguments will be.

Deciding whether to address a moral injustice is more than a simple instrumental decision, a rational assessment of the costs and benefits of a certain course of action. Emotional reactions may be the most important influence on whether or not people take actions. The type of action is more a function of cognitive judgements (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Therefore, eliciting emotions such as anger or moral outrage enhances an individual's likelihood of acting. Since people are more likely to act to restore justice when there is a clear injustice and when there is a particular set of actions that could correct the injustice, it is important that they have specific ideas of how to act that they feel will make a difference. Otherwise, they may feel hopeless and powerless and resort to psychological distortion.

Self-Interest

Most change agents know that you need to be able to answer the question, "What's in it for me?" People are concerned with how things will affect them. The previous chapter outlined how people may construe that question differently; yet in some form, people want to have their needs met.

A basic principle of conflict resolution is to identify underlying concerns and interests and to try to develop a solution that meets the needs of both (all) parties. This requires letting go of preconceived solutions and being willing to think creatively to come up with alternatives that would be satisfying to both. Often, conflicts persist because people cannot imagine alternatives to the present situation or do not believe that their needs would be met by the currently proposed solutions. Similarly, with issues of oppression, people often don't support efforts to eliminate oppression because they feel that it doesn't affect them or that nothing can really change, or they cannot imagine how it could be different and not threaten their well-being. Ultimately, we need to help people from dominant groups expand their sense of possibilities to see how their long-term interests and needs really can be met by social justice. (I discuss this in Chapter 10.) In the meantime, we may need to identify their present and short-term interests and find ways to address those while engaging them in actions for equity.

Some appeals to self-interest can be targeted toward a specific issue or action. In this context, self-interest is used as a strategy toward a particular end (at least for the moment). We are interested in getting support for a given program or project. It can also be used in a more educational or theoretical way to help change people's ways of thinking about social justice and to help them understand how oppression is harmful to all. In this case, the goal is twofold: consciousness-raising and changing attitudes and behavior. Strategic and consciousness-raising approaches can be used separately or in conjunction with each other.

Strategic Approaches

First, find out what people are concerned about. Then, *integrate people's concerns into the social justice agenda.* Try to show how those

interests can be addressed by supporting your efforts. For some people, these concerns may be very self-focused; for others, they may be more inclusive of other people. The examples along the continuum of self-interest illustrate what might appeal to people with different conceptions of self-interest. The most important thing is to understand their viewpoints and to speak to their needs. From there, we can make the link to issues of equity and show how their needs can be compatible with social justice.

Even while appealing to more individualistic types of self-interest, offer a more interdependent perspective. This is a chance to raise consciousness, provide alternative ways of viewing the situation, and challenge the win-lose mentality. Because we do not want to reinforce individualistic thinking, the goal is to start where people are and help expand their perspective toward consideration of the common good. While providing additional examples of how to use self-interest to garner support for a current issue or project, I will also illustrate how we can expand on narrow self-interest, help people see their personal concerns in a larger context, and link their short-term and long-term interests.

As a university affirmative action officer, I needed to enforce affirmative action guidelines that many people felt were unfair and interfered with their right to hire who they wanted. To get their cooperation, I often pointed out ways in which hiring a person from an underrepresented group benefited them—not only were they more likely to get permission to actually fill the position, but that person might also help attract and retain students in their department, especially students from underrepresented groups (which was important for maintaining or increasing the viability and resources for their department). I also included ideas about how this new person's experience or perspective might enhance their own scholarship and thinking about their discipline and about how diversity makes the campus a more vibrant and attractive place to students and faculty. Finally, I challenged them to think about what it meant to be "most qualified" (especially when diversity is a goal) and provided information about how to more fairly evaluate qualifications. Regardless of the real reason for their compliance, I felt I needed to expose them to broader ways of thinking about and justifying the hiring of a candidate from an underrepresented group.

Another approach is to *link personal concerns to larger issues of equity and justice.* This shifts the dynamic from blaming the victim to

blaming the system. Many college students, particularly at public universities, are concerned about paying for college and experience the stress of working and worrying about expenses. I have heard White students complain about the "special treatment" some students of color receive and about some of the scholarships that are set aside just for students of color (though this is quickly changing). This tends to lead some White students to blame students of color for White students' lack of financial support for college. The economic concerns of White students are valid. However, the real problem is not students of color (who also generally receive very little financial backing). Some White students realize this, and instead of working against scholarships for minority students, they have organized to challenge the larger system that does not make college accessible to all who want to attend. They have enlisted the support of other White students by addressing their concerns about college costs, but they have focused on the bigger issue of educational funding and opportunity. Through collective action and lobbying with students of color (and other allies), they have been more successful in addressing access to a college education (e.g., through lower tuitions and more state and other aid). So although their concerns may be about their own college tuitions, their solution has been to address the larger issue of economic and social equity. They feel that their self-interest is better served by more systemic change.

Last, we can *link people's short-term and long-term interests with the social justice agenda.* We can help people see that they will be better off both in the short term and in the long term by supporting efforts toward equity. Most people are concerned with juvenile crime and drug dealing. Some people believe that building more prisons is the answer. Alternatively, in many communities, people are trying to create comprehensive programs for youth that include education, training, and constructive involvement in recreational and community activities. One strategy to enlist support for these efforts is to help people see how these types of programs reduce violence, are far more cost effective, and improve their quality of life. In the short run, young people are less likely to be involved in illegal activity and create problems on the street. In the long term, they are more likely to become productive, contributing citizens as opposed to adult criminals, prison inmates, or welfare recipients who require further government money. It also maintains the integrity of the

community and property values. Instead of some quick fixes, people's short-term as well as long-term concerns can be addressed.

Theoretical and Consciousness-Raising Approaches

The strategic use of self-interest clearly provides the opportunity for consciousness-raising. Educational contexts often offer us greater latitude in how we can educate people from privileged groups about their self-interest in social change. We can help them to explore the costs of oppression, the benefits of justice, and ways to move toward the kind of world they would like to live in.

There are many ways that people can be given the chance to *consider the costs of oppression to themselves and others from dominant groups.* I have engaged students in thinking from this perspective by asking them to identify the ways in which they feel negatively affected by some form of oppression in which they are part of the dominant group. This makes most sense once they have already done some exploration of oppression and multicultural issues. After considering this question individually, they then listen to the responses of peers, provoking further reflection and discussion. This may be one of the few times when the pain of people in privileged groups has been acknowledged and validated. For people who have never named or discussed these costs, it can be a powerful experience and provide great relief to let go of the secrets or of the feeling that they were the only ones. When I have conducted this exercise with groups, simply viewing the list of costs generated by the group has had a significant impact. It vividly illustrates the pervasive detrimental ramifications of oppression for members of privileged groups.

For some groups, responding to a general list of costs will be much easier and more effective than trying to develop their own because it requires less original thought. You can ask them which items they can relate to on the list and have them add their own examples. Even for people who have a difficult time identifying costs, it encourages them to think in a different way, it allows them to hear the stories of others, and it begins to broaden the way they think about oppression and their role in it.

People from oppressed groups may have difficulty seeing themselves as members of a privileged group. As discussed previously (Chapters 3 and 4), people tend to most identify with their subordi-

nate identities because that is where they usually experience the most pain. I particularly have found that people of color initially tend to find this type of exercise challenging. They tend to be most aware of their experience as victims of racism and much less able to see themselves as members of a privileged group in another ism. Some of this may be due to their stage of identity development. It may also be related to the fact that the existence and impact of racism is so often minimized that people of color feel they need to consistently remind people (especially White people) of its significance. I have found it helpful to acknowledge the pervasiveness of racism and its widespread effects as well as how it mitigates other areas of privilege. However, because the focus of this exercise is not on privilege but on the costs of oppression to all, I encourage them to think about how they might also be harmed by an oppression for which they are not the direct target. In addition, before I begin the discussion of costs to the dominant groups, I usually review how oppression affects those in disadvantaged groups and review some of the privileges for those in advantaged groups. I then add the parts about negative effects on people from dominant groups, suggesting this as a way to provide a more complete and complex understanding of oppression. Naming oppression and recognizing privilege at the outset allows some people from oppressed groups to then feel more comfortable considering costs to the privileged group.

People may suggest situations in which they see themselves as the victims of reverse racism or of another form of oppression. Affirmative action is often a favorite example of how White people are negatively affected by racism. First, it is helpful to dispel the myths that there is currently a level playing field and that affirmative action has taken away so many jobs from White men. Then it's important to help them reframe this situation and understand it not as a victim of racism but as a result of racism in our society. A system of racial discrimination and bias has motivated the establishment of these kinds of programs and supports. If there were no racism, there would be no need for affirmative action or special consideration given because of race.

Encourage students to imagine what it would be like if there were no racism, sexism, or other forms of oppression and how that would be beneficial to them. Ask them to consider questions such as the following: How would their lives be enhanced if they did not have to deal with the results of systemic injustice? What would it be like if the list of

costs were obliterated? What would it feel like to be rid of the limitations, pressures, conflicts, guilt, moral ambivalence, and ignorance? Visualizations, drawing, writing, discussion, and list making can make these imaginings more concrete.

A related approach is to *have people compare their vision of an ideal world with our current reality.* Ask people to imagine and describe the kind of world they want to live in—How would society be organized? What would work, housing, education, the environment, neighborhoods, or recreation look like? Then have them compare that ideal to this reality. They can consider the following questions: How is the vision different from our reality? What gets in the way of attaining that vision? How do oppression and inequality undermine this ideal? How might greater social justice help to reach those ideals? Because most people want to live in a world with peace, positive social relations, and material well-being, this can lead to discussions of various forms of oppression, as well as the larger dominant-subordinate power structure upon which injustice is based. This exercise can also be focused on a particular aspect of society, for example, one's community, school, or workplace. Similar questions and discussion could ensue. These types of discussions can help people think about their investment in social justice and lead them to consider ways to move toward that vision.

Help people to identify and experience more equal and satisfying relations in everyday life. Imagining a total transformation of society can seem too unrealistic or abstract to be useful. Yet, in most of our daily lives, we have the kinds of experiences that would be more available in a just and caring society. Encourage people to notice how they feel when they do have emotionally honest and mutually satisfying relationships with others; when they are behaving in accordance with their values; when they feel that they are acting out of their deeper sense of humanity and love; when they have positive, enriching relationships with people who are different from themselves; and when they feel a sense of personal integrity and moral consistency. Help them verbalize these situations and positively reinforce these kinds of connections and ways of being. We can provide opportunities in the class for these types of relationships and experiences through how we structure the class and the activities we do. These activities can be used to discuss how to create more of these kinds of

experiences in our lives, how to change the systems and structures that undermine these ways of being, and how to replace them with ones that foster a more just and caring world.

Pros and Cons of Appealing to Self-Interest

Intentionally appealing to self-interest can be a controversial strategy. It has advantages as well as dangers. Although it can be a useful and necessary approach, we need to be thoughtful and careful in its use. I will first discuss some of its possible pitfalls and then consider some of its positive uses and benefits.

One of the major dangers of using narrow self-interest to motivate support is the distrust it breeds from people (both allies and people from oppressed groups) who are genuinely committed to the action. People appropriately may not trust the motives or the depth and longevity of the support of people who they suspect are acting on individualistic self-interest. If the motivation stays only at the level of narrow, individualistic self-interest, their support may be withdrawn when self-interest is reassessed as circumstances change. By appealing to individualistic self-interest, without trying to broaden the perspective or commitment, we may be reinforcing a way of thinking that is counter to our ultimate goals.

In addition, someone may engage in superficial involvement or low-risk commitment while undermining a more serious examination of the issues or more meaningful change. This often results in mere lip service, or it can trivialize or co-opt the issue. Many people are familiar with the token committee and unread report or with diversity training that never goes beyond understanding cultural differences to address inequities in organizational policies and practices. Sometimes strings are attached; support will be given as long as the work is not too radical or avoids certain topics.

Using self-interest to develop support also has advantages. Appealing to narrow, individualistic self-interest is probably most problematic; however, it starts where people are and addresses them in a way that makes sense to them. "Speaking their language" initially may be more effective than appealing to issues that hold little interest for them. Although we might prefer that people engage in actions from more lofty ideals and commitments, this is not always

immediately possible. Obtaining support, even if it is with selfish motives, may allow a positive project to move forward instead of being blocked or impeded.

Joining narrowly self-interested people where they are can also provide an opening for more genuine change, a first step in real engagement. Involvement with an issue may expose people to individuals, situations, or information that they otherwise might not have encountered and that may, in turn, change attitudes and subsequent behavior. A White manager may initiate a program to address the hiring and promotion of people of color primarily because she sees this as a way to get more financial resources for her department. Yet in the process of participating in the task force, she may develop actual relationships with people of color, learn some important information about racism, and encounter people who challenge her stereotypes. This can result in a more genuine commitment to racial equity.

If the ally behavior is inconsistent with currently held beliefs or behavior, it may create cognitive dissonance and the need to rationalize the new behavior. Attitude change may occur to justify the behavior to oneself and others. For example, a heterosexual leader of a fraternity decides to be a representative on a committee to examine the treatment of gays on campus and to play a role in educating about homophobia. Although initially participating to deflect criticism of fraternities, through this experience he might gain some new awareness and justify his involvement by explaining to his friends that this really is something to take seriously.

Furthermore, recognizing one's self-interest, particularly from a mutual or interdependent perspective, can foster a more long-term commitment to social justice. Shifting the focus from only doing it for "them" to also doing it for oneself enhances the investment. It can be hard to maintain a commitment to social change, particularly when some issues are framed as against your immediate best interests. Acting for oneself, not just for others, can help deepen and sustain support for social justice efforts. A recognition of the collective benefit may reduce potential condescension and thus make one more trusted by the oppressed group.

Drawing on Empathy, Moral and Spiritual Values, and Self-Interest

In the previous chapter, I described how empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest could be used in conjunction to

strengthen the motivation to act for social justice. Similarly, when we try to implement strategies to foster support for equity, we can intentionally try to integrate these three dimensions. We can consider how we can appeal to these various aspects and have them build on each other.

After a workshop in which I presented this framework, a participant, Tim, developed an action plan that illustrated this integration. Tim was interested in creating interracial dialogues on campus, particularly between White fraternity members and other students of color on campus. There had been some incidents of racial prejudice from some fraternities. He decided to initially appeal to the fraternities' self-interest. He knew that the fraternities were concerned about their image on campus. (Another participant said that on his campus, the self-interest would be to increase membership in their fraternity.) He would initially propose a daylong retreat with representatives from the fraternities to discuss how they could improve their reputation of being racially insensitive. During this retreat, he would also do some consciousness-raising about racism, attempting to help these students become more sensitive to and empathic toward the experiences of students of color. Just as the fraternity members hate to be stereotyped, so do the students of color. By the end of the day, Tim expected to have some fraternity members willing to participate in racial dialogues, both as a mechanism to improve their racist image and as a way to actually better understand the issues for students of color. Through these dialogues, he hoped to foster their sense of empathy and their moral commitment to eliminate behavior that is racially offensive. In general, we strengthen our appeal and effectiveness when we can draw on the various sources that motivate people to support diversity and justice.

From Motivation to Action: Allies and Activism

Although not everyone we work with will become an activist, empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest can help generate concern and the motivation to help. We need to assist people in translating this interest into action. As educators, we can support people in their desire to create more justice in the world.

Throughout the discussion of how to motivate people to support social justice, I have included various reasons why people might do so—from primarily self-serving reasons to altruistic ones.

When I speak of allies, I refer to people who make intentional choices to support or work for the rights of those from disadvantaged groups of which they are not part. They are committed to eliminating some form of oppression from which they benefit. Even though we may need the support of those who do not share these larger goals, allies are people with integrity and genuine concern. They attempt to have their behavior be consistent with their beliefs. Allies act out of their own values, not for the approval of people from the oppressed group. However, to ensure that their efforts are appropriate, allies should have some relationship with and accountability to the people they are seeking to assist.

By focusing on empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest as the factors that tend to motivate people to support social justice or become allies, I do not mean to imply that that is all that is needed for people to be good allies. Despite good intentions and real commitment other qualities are also important. I consider some of these to be the following: (a) self-awareness—of one's personal characteristics and social identity, (b) an understanding of the structural and interpersonal dynamics of oppression, and (c) the ability to choose appropriate strategies given the situation. As part of our overall educational efforts in developing allies, certainly these and other issues need to be addressed.

There are a range of ways in which people can be allies—from more passive support to active leadership. We need to help allies find ways to be involved, support their increasing commitment, and deal with some of the blocks that undermine their best intentions. (See Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Ayvazian, 1995; Kivel, 1996; and Tatum, 1994, for examples of how people can be allies.)

Blocks to Taking Action

There are several things that tend to act as impediments to people following through with their support. One is that people feel inadequate, overwhelmed, powerless, or hopeless. As they become aware of the depth or pervasiveness of oppression, people may feel that it is useless to try to change things or that there is little they can do. Some people believe that they are not smart enough, educated enough, "together" enough, or somehow just not good enough to take action. Often people have a very limited perspective on the kinds of things they could do to make a difference. They would like

to help but don't know what to do, and, therefore, do nothing. For others, guilt becomes immobilizing. They feel too embarrassed or ashamed of their background or privilege to get involved. Additionally, people frequently feel overburdened and busy with their lives as they currently are and resist adding more to their plates.

Many people also feel isolated or alone when these concerns or interests are not shared by their families, peers, or colleagues. This diminishes their courage to act and may impede their willingness to speak out, for fear of being viewed as crazy, silly, or a troublemaker. People face a variety of fears and risks in being an ally. These can include the disruption of relationships, reprisals at work, threats to one's current standard of living, and even violence.

Encouraging Action

One of our important roles is to help people acknowledge and address these concerns. In doing so, we need to respect where people are and what they feel ready to do. Like other endeavors, acting as an ally is a process. It can be useful to make people aware that there are numerous ways people can be allies. Although they may not be ready to take on high-profile leadership roles, they can still be involved with actions requiring less visibility or risk. Allow people to choose the kind of involvement that fits their level of comfort, commitment and risk taking, and their time and interests. In some cases, where and how to act will be clear (e.g., when one's support is being solicited in a particular situation). In other cases, people will need to spend more time thinking about next steps.

Help people deal with their guilt and reframe how they see their privilege. Instead of hiding the fact that they have privilege, people from advantaged groups can acknowledge it and use it responsibly—in the service of social justice. They can use their skills, knowledge, resources, and access to power to foster equity by working for change in arenas where they have influence. They can also share their expertise with people from oppressed groups and support the empowerment and leadership of people who have been marginalized. When people from privileged groups are aware of the dynamics of oppression, they can use their privilege in the spirit of collaboration as opposed to paternalistic helping. (See Crowfoot & Chesler, 1996, for a discussion of the role of White men in multicultural coalitions and the struggle to be appropriate allies.)

Because nothing succeeds like success, it can be helpful for people initially to be involved in efforts in which they can obtain a sense of efficacy and empowerment. In these cases, starting with a small and doable goal may be the best course. Furthermore, because people get overwhelmed thinking about trying to change the world, we can ask them to think about the areas in their lives where they do have an impact, their "spheres of influence" (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). These may include themselves, their immediate family, and their friends, neighbors and colleagues and move out toward their community and organizational affiliations, political leaders, and national or international groups. They can consider ways they can use their influence in any one of these areas to effect change.

People can also be encouraged to think about actions that target oppression on both the individual-interpersonal and institutional-cultural levels. At the individual-interpersonal level, they may choose to commit to educating themselves more thoroughly about oppression, interrupting offensive comments or jokes, pointing out inequitable group or classroom dynamics, or speaking up at meetings about diversity issues. At the institutional level, they may be involved with changing educational policy, workplace practices, tax laws, or welfare programs; working on media reform, the redistribution of wealth, or company boycotts; or instituting educational programs in their workplace, community, or religious organization. Because most people tend to reduce social change to addressing individual actions and attitudes without a systemic perspective, we need to continually encourage people to hold a larger vision of change. Remind them to consider how their individual actions can be joined with collective action to contribute to more comprehensive social transformation.

A critical element in taking and sustaining action for social justice is support. We all need people we can rely on to help us work effectively, deal with the risks, and keep us going in the face of adversity. Support from others reduces our sense of isolation and feelings of powerlessness. Collective action can also be some of the most effective action. Help connect individuals with shared interests with each other and with groups or organizations in their area. This helps reduce their isolation, provides ideas of how to be involved, and gives people the feeling of being part of a bigger effort. Communities and college campuses often have a variety of groups dealing with issues of social justice.

An historical perspective also provides many benefits. It helps people feel that they are part of a larger process and movement and provides role models and sources of inspiration. We can learn from past experiences, successful (and unsuccessful) strategies, and individuals who had wisdom, courage, and hope. In addition, a historical perspective reminds people that although change is possible, it takes time. It involves forward movement as well as setbacks. If people expect a quick victory, they will generally be disappointed.

Last, people tend to do some kind of cost-benefit analysis to see if it is worth getting involved or supporting a change. As discussed previously, we need to highlight and increase the sense of benefit and self-interest and find ways to decrease the sense of costs. Because people already want to be allies, we can highlight the possibility of increased self-esteem, moral integrity, personal connections, and knowledge, as well as the long-term benefits and their contribution to the greater good. If they are given what feel like viable options, most people would rather feel good about themselves than guilty and ashamed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is no one right way to engage people in social change efforts. We need to know our audience and our context. I've suggested a variety of approaches that can help develop people's sense of concern and encourage their support and involvement. Often, multiple tacks are most effective. We can build on the interconnections among empathy, moral and spiritual values, and self-interest to broaden people's perspective and strengthen their commitment. Overall, we can continually reinforce how supporting equity and diversity offers benefits to themselves and others and serves our collective well-being.

Note

1. Even though service learning can be beneficial for both students and communities, there is also the potential for it to undermine the goals it seeks, such as by reinforcing stereotypic beliefs and a colonialist mentality or superiority and by exploiting the community for the benefit of the student. (See Cruz, 1990; Kendall, 1990; Reardon, 1994.)

9

Issues for Educators

Throughout the book, I have reiterated the importance of creating a safe and confirming environment, of offering appropriate challenge, and of embodying respect and acceptance. As I have said numerous times, our own perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors are central to our educational effectiveness. Yet thus far, the primary focus has been on gaining insight into the students or people we work with. Characteristics of privileged groups, various developmental theories, reasons for resistance, motivations for supporting social justice, and how these affect educational strategies or pedagogy have been discussed. I've emphasized how more knowledge and insight about our students allows us to be better educators. However, our students are not the only ones we need to understand. So I now turn the spotlight on us as educators.

In Chapter 3, I referred to the qualities identified by Rogers (1980) as being necessary for growth-promoting relationships—genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathy. People need to be able to trust us to take intellectual and emotional risks. Stephen Brookfield (1990) refers to the trust between teachers and students as the "affective glue" (p. 163) that binds educational relationships together. We need to be perceived as authentic—as human beings, in our regard for the students, and in our commitment to equity. Students need to feel that we really do care about them and are their allies in the learning process. They also need to believe that we are genuine in our interest in the issues and in our desire to promote

social justice. In addition, trust is gained when people see us as credible and congruent: when we have sufficient knowledge and experience and when our actions match our words. If we talk about valuing individuals and cultural differences, we had better reflect that in our practice.

Furthermore, through our own reactions and interactions with students, we have the opportunity to model the principles of equity, democracy, and respect that we espouse. Our classrooms are microcosms of the larger systems of social relations and can be laboratories for alternative ways of relating. On the one hand, we can engage in classroom dynamics that mirror the societal dynamics of domination, competition, and win-lose conflict. We do this when we treat students disrespectfully, overpower their voices, or show off our expertise at their expense. On the other hand, we can demonstrate how power can be used in ways that enhances others and how conflict can be a productive process. Our own behavior is a powerful educational tool.

In a similar vein, Shelley Kessler (1991) describes the "teaching presence," the qualities in the classroom that allow students to be vulnerable and discover new things, to be authentic and fully alive. She identifies three components for generating this teaching presence: being fully present, having an open heart, and maintaining discipline. When a teacher is fully present, she or he is "alert to the circumstances of what is happening *right now,* attentive to what is happening inside him-herself and what is going on in the room" (p. 13). A teacher with an open heart is willing and able to care and willing and able to be vulnerable—to feel deeply and to be moved. Discipline refers to creating the safety needed to allow students to take risks and be authentic with one another. The teacher ensures that students follow the class guidelines and are not allowed to hurt each other. These qualities transcend any particular methods or activities. Although Kessler writes about her work with young people in a program to foster spiritual development, these ways of being correspond to the nonjudgmentalness and compassion that I've stressed are needed when educating people from dominant groups about social justice.

Without a doubt, cultivating this teaching presence is easier said then done. When educating about diversity and social justice, who among us has not at some point gotten our buttons pushed or gotten hooked? How many of us have never disliked a person and found it hard to work with him or her, become aware of our biases, or felt very judgmental toward a student? Who has not at some point lost

their ability to think clearly, respond flexibly, really listen, and be understanding?

As we become aware of our own issues and reactions, we can better manage and transform our responses. Self-awareness is essential for any good teacher. There are many things we should know about ourselves to be competent and compassionate educators. Because of the intellectual and emotional complexity of educating about diversity, it is even more critical for social justice educators to be self-reflective. Insight into our own inter- and intrapersonal dynamics allows us to better monitor our behavior and address areas of limitation (see Bell, Washington, Weinstein, & Love, 1997). We then can more successfully create educational experiences that meet our goals.

In this chapter, I'll first examine some common attitudes and behaviors that may diminish our effectiveness in educating people from privileged groups. After considering some of these challenges, I will then suggest some ways to deal with them. Throughout this discussion, my focus will be on how to develop and sustain the patience, flexibility, and openheartedness needed for social justice education. I will explore how to cultivate the qualities that can enable educators to develop trusting relationships and offer constructive challenge.

Social Identity Development

Theories of social identity development are one way to develop insight into our attitudes and behaviors in educational contexts. Our stage of social identity development affects our views of self and our own social group, of others and their social group, and of social oppression. In Chapter 3, I described the process of social identity development for people from privileged groups. These models were presented in the context of understanding the thinking and behavior of students at different stages. Those same theories, applied to us, can help us to understand our own actions and reactions.

I will briefly review each stage of the Hardiman and Jackson model (1997), this time with emphasis on the social identity development of people from targeted groups. I will then explore how our levels of awareness, in both our dominant and subordinate identities, may affect our work with people from privileged groups. Even though I will focus on work with people from advantaged groups, it is essential to consider how our social identities and levels of aware-

ness affect our work with people from oppressed groups, especially when we are part of privileged groups. I hope readers will use this discussion as an impetus to further explore these issues.

We simultaneously go through the process of identity development in each of our dominant and subordinate identities. We also tend to be at different stages of development in our different identities. Moreover, no one is solely in one stage or moves neatly from one stage to the next. We tend to have a predominant stage or worldview, although we will incorporate perspectives from other stages depending on the issue and situation.

I doubt any social justice educator would be in the first stage, *native*, in which people are unaware of structural inequities and of the social significance of our identities. This stage is most typical of young children, and older individuals at this stage would have little interest in engaging in social justice work. In *acceptance*, people (actively/consciously or passively/unconsciously) accept the current social arrangements and dominant ideology, along with its stereotypes and notions of subordinate-group inferiority and dominant-group superiority. People from oppressed groups in acceptance will attempt to ignore, deny, or rationalize the inequities they face. They will also internalize the negative messages about themselves and their social group.

Educators who are primarily in acceptance are not ready to be teaching about social justice. They have not yet developed a critical consciousness about power relationships and institutional oppression or the ability to offer more equitable alternatives. People in active acceptance are firmly committed to our present social relations. People in passive acceptance are less aware of how they perpetuate systems of oppression and maintain the supremacy of the privileged group. "Good liberals" are generally in passive acceptance and might teach about diversity with good intentions. Nevertheless, they will tend to point to individual reasons for inequities and imply that people from the oppressed group should be more like those in the dominant group. Even if this is not the educators' predominant perspective, they may still hold beliefs indicative of this stage. They need to continue to deepen their awareness of this form of oppression and make conscious efforts to check their assumptions about the privileged and oppressed groups. Students in acceptance may feel very comfortable with an instructor who is also at this stage. However, the educator is unable to offer sufficient challenge or con-

tradiction to facilitate the participants' growth and may instead reinforce the status quo. She or he may lose credibility with and frustrate the people who are in resistance or redefinition.

In *resistance,* people become highly attuned to the dynamics of oppression. They are invested in unlearning the misinformation they believed in acceptance and in challenging unjust behaviors and social structures. People in active resistance tend to do this more publicly and vehemently than people in passive resistance. People from dominated groups attempt to purge themselves of the negative images they have internalized about themselves and their group. They generally want to associate with others from their social group and have little interest in or tolerance for people from the privileged group. As people become aware of their oppression and attempt to change it, they often experience strong feelings of pain, anger, and hostility.

At this stage, people often want to help others "see the truth" and to rally support for social change. Thus, they are motivated to be educators. Resistance is probably the most common stage of social identity development of social justice educators and is the most challenging one from which to do this work. Someone from a dominant group who is in resistance may glorify people from the oppressed group and excuse their inappropriate behavior, yet have little compassion for people from their own group. They may feel particularly punitive toward those who are in acceptance and lack an understanding of the oppression or a commitment to address it. They may project their own negative feelings about themselves as a privileged-group member onto others from their group. Because most would prefer to be with people from the oppressed group, they may not want to deal with people from their dominant group, especially if those people are not at a similar stage of consciousness.

These feelings are likely to be even greater for educators from a subordinate group. They tend to be highly invested in having people "get it" and may become overly emotionally involved in class discussions or in student outcomes. Such educators will often be perceived as having their own agenda or a chip on their shoulder. They may find it hard not to stereotype or dehumanize people from the privileged group (i.e., "those White men") or to value any aspects of the dominant group's culture. It is particularly difficult for educators in active resistance to have patience with the educational process and to maintain respect and empathy for people from the privileged group.

People in resistance also may have difficulty educating about other forms of oppression. In this moment in time, their ism feels the most important and compelling. Because they are most focused on this issue and their own experiences, they may not have the depth of understanding of other isms or the same level of commitment to address them. (Even though understanding one form of oppression can help in understanding others, most people in this stage are not yet ready to be making those strong connections. It also depends on their level of awareness in their other social identities.) In general, educators in resistance need to assess whether they are ready to be in an educational role.

This occurred with a colleague of mine in graduate school. Michael was from an upper-middle-class family and recently had become very interested in class issues. He was reading a lot about class exploitation and working people's movements. He was an activist on campus, particularly in efforts to ensure greater accessibility for poor and working class students. He was into "downward mobility" and looked the part. Michael was anxious to teach the weekend workshop on classism. After doing so a couple of times, it become clear to Michael as well as the other trainers that this was not a good match. He had a constant edge of anger in his voice, students found him overbearing, and cotrainers found him too inflexible. At this point in time, Michael needed to be able to immerse himself in the literature about and struggles against class inequality. Being a trainer was not most productive for him or the participants. Being an organizer was more appropriate.

People who are moving out of resistance and into *redefinition* are grappling with redefining their social group identity, independent of the oppressive system. People from privileged groups are trying to develop a positive identity that is not based on superiority. Instead of rejecting and reacting to the dominant culture, people from oppressed groups are seeking and reclaiming aspects of their own culture. The intensity of feelings has usually subsided.

Because educators from privileged groups are developing an affirmative sense of their social identity, they may have fewer negative feelings about others from their group. Educators from oppressed groups are still most interested in being with others from their group with a similar consciousness in order to forge a new social identity. However, they are in a proactive, as opposed to a reactive, mode. As they develop strength in their own social identity and efficacy at

dealing with oppression, they tend to be better at managing their own feelings in order to educate others.

In *internalization,* people have internalized this new sense of their social identity. Although they may still feel passionately about social justice, they now have more emotional and psychological space to deal with others. They are less immersed in their own issues and are more able to take a broader perspective. People are able to see themselves as individuals with multiple social identities and make links among different manifestations of oppression. This makes it easier for them to relate to people who are from dominant as well as subordinate groups. They tend to have more tolerance for and understanding of people in privileged groups who are ignorant, resistant, or both.

Ideally, it would be nice if we all could reach internalization in all our social identities before being educators. Needless to say, this is not the case, nor would it be practical. We cannot afford to wait until we have it "all together" to educate others about issues of social justice. However, we can do some honest self-assessment and then make responsible choices about what we do. We can create ways to manage our feelings and behavior. Later in this chapter, I'll suggest some ways to do this.

Other Factors That Affect Our Educational Effectiveness

Social identity theory is just one way to understand our thinking and reactions. Just as many forces affect students' openness to learning and growth, many things affect our educational responses and abilities. I will now highlight a few other factors that, in addition to or conjunction with our stage of social identity development, affect how we work with people from privileged groups.

Triggers

Most of us can think of words or behaviors that push our buttons—that make our stomachs tighten, our fists clench, our hairs stand up. There may be things that make us freeze and feel paralyzed. Thus, I'm calling these *triggers.* In addition to rolling the eyes and other body language, some common triggers are these: "You're being too sensitive." "Those people . . ." "They all look alike to me." "Why do they have to be so obvious?" "She asked for it." Triggers

can cause us to lose our composure, our clarity, and our ability to respond appropriately. People from privileged groups can trigger educators from both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. (People from subordinate groups can also push our buttons, though I'll confine my discussion to dominant-group members.)

I remember walking into a room to do a training on oppression issues after a week of dealing with several incidents of rape and sexual harassment of women on campus. I said to my male cotrainer, Jim, "If any of these guys say that men are as oppressed as women, I may strangle him. You have to deal with it." Of course it came up, and fortunately, Jim could address it. By knowing how I was feeling, I could avoid acting inappropriately. Even if I had not been fortunate enough to have a skillful cotrainer, I would have been somewhat better prepared to respond realizing that I would have to carefully watch my response.

Usually, the trigger hits upon our own issues. Often there is something in our own experience that makes these words or actions so potent. Sometimes it touches on our unresolved issues. This occurred when I was coleading a weekend workshop on classism at a university. One woman in the group consistently said classist, insensitive things. People in the workshop tried to engage her, but she remained narrow in her perspective. As people became more frustrated with her, she became more entrenched. At a break, a professor who was observing suggested that one of us (the trainers) talk to her because she seemed to be boxing herself into a corner. I said I didn't want to be the one to do that—I didn't like her, and I wasn't feeling at all empathic. She was an upper-middle-class Jewish woman who pushed my buttons about materialistic, spoiled Jews, of whom there were many in the town where I went to high school. I still had my own issues about my experiences there and about my own identity as an upper-middle-class Jew. Fortunately, my cotrainer had more presence and was able to speak with the student, who was in fact feeling judged and attacked. The student was able to return to the workshop with more openness and more ability to participate productively. (I used the break to try to deal with my feelings.)

Other times, our reactions may be related to transference. This occurs when we project our feelings about an individual who is close to us onto another person (in this case, someone from a privileged group). A certain appearance, tone, comment, or interpersonal style may set us off because it restimulates our emotional reaction to

someone else. It seems that people frequently have difficulty with individuals that remind them of their parents. Very often, transference occurs unconsciously. We may end up in a strange dynamic with a person, not quite understanding what is going on or why we are feeling so intensely. (Students also engage in transference, which sometimes explains their reactions to us.) A female colleague had an especially hard time with men who were condescending. Although few women appreciate this kind of conduct, it really set her off; that dynamic always seemed to hook her. When we discussed it, she began to realize how this was reminiscent of her relationship with her father and her struggle to be seen as an adult in his eyes.

Another kind of triggering situation occurs when educators from disadvantaged groups are working with groups of people from advantaged groups. In the course of educating about diversity issues, many educators ask people to identify stereotypes or prejudices they have about different social groups. How this is done warrants serious thought because the intent is not to inflict pain but to increase awareness. People from oppressed groups, including trainers, may find it particularly painful to hear negative things said about their social group by dominant group members because this replicates oppressive societal dynamics.

In one situation, I was coleading a daylong workshop on racism and anti-Semitism with a relatively inexperienced trainer, an African American woman whom I'll call Denise. The group was made up of highly motivated and concerned White psychologists from various religious backgrounds. As the day progressed, several participants shared some of their racist prejudices and misconceptions—this was done appropriately, honestly, and with an investment in overcoming these beliefs and attitudes. I (and others) began to notice Denise becoming more and more quiet and withdrawn. When I asked her what was going on, she explained how overwhelmed she felt hearing voiced the negative things such nice, caring professional people felt about people of color.

Another time, I was cotraining with a lesbian, whom I'll call Patty, who was not out to all members of the group. The 2-day workshop was on diversity issues and was with a group of people who were committed to social justice and who were (mostly) heterosexual (from what we knew). On the second day, we were planning to do several role plays to help participants develop skills to interrupt oppressive comments and behaviors. Together, we developed a role

play about homophobic name-calling. I would be the one doing the name-calling, a participant would try to intervene, and Patty would process (discuss and debrief) the role play. We enacted the role play, and when it came time for Patty to facilitate the discussion, she sat there silently. I looked at her, waiting for a response, indicating that we were ready to end the role play. When it became clear to me that she was not responding, I began to debrief what we had just done. When we spoke about it afterward, she said she just had frozen when she heard the homophobic remarks.

I do not think that anyone really becomes impervious to hearing negative things about one's group, especially when they are from a dominant group toward a target group. Perhaps we become more used to it, develop ways to cope with it, and find ways not to absorb it. It can be easier to deal with when it is clearly done in the context of raising consciousness—bringing things to light for examination, instead of keeping them hidden and allowing them to grow and fester. Many people say that people from disadvantaged groups have heard all these words before and know that people have these thoughts. However, there is something very powerful about hearing them all at once, especially from the mouths of nice, caring people. The educator is even more vulnerable when she or he is one of the few people (if not the only person) from that targeted group present. Becoming immobilized may be related to inexperience or one's stage of social identity as well as to what else is going on in one's life at that time. Although we can't always anticipate our reactions, we can try to think through the impact of our activities on both our participants and ourselves.

Becoming the Advocate or Missionary

Another common pitfall in educating for social justice is falling into the role of missionary. This is when we try to convert people to our point of view or argue with them in an attempt to get them to "see the light." When we feel strongly about an issue, it can be quite easy to slip into this role. When we start trying to convince people, we take on the role of advocate and lose our ability to be an educator who assists people in their own learning processes.

I think this reflects one of the central challenges for social justice educators. Generally, people do this work because they care deeply and have a personal stake in the issues. This energy can be crucial to creating exciting educational experiences and to persevering

through all the difficulties and risks. Yet there is a difference between passion and overzealousness, commitment and dogmatism, and integrity and self-righteousness. I couldn't teach without passion, but it needs to be tempered with respect and openness. Otherwise, when we act in ways that overpower or negate the views and feelings of others, we jeopardize our credibility as educators and our relationships with individuals. If people feel that something is being forced upon them, they are likely to resist or withdraw. This is counterproductive to our intentions.

Stereotypes and Biases

Just like everyone else, we educators have our own prejudices and assumptions about individuals from different social groups, including privileged groups. Appropriately, many educators are sensitive to and concerned about stereotypes about people from marginalized groups. However, they are often less aware of or take less seriously stereotypes about people from privileged groups. Like biases about people from oppressed groups, prejudices about people from dominant groups can grow out of messages from our environment (e.g., family, peers, or media) and our own experiences. The same principles regarding stereotypes about oppressed groups hold true for stereotypes about privileged groups—even when there may be a kernel of truth, it is exaggerated and applied to all members of that group, regardless of their individual qualities. Moreover, one or more experiences with individuals from a particular group does not give us license to then assume that those qualities fit all members of that group. Our stage of social identity development (especially resistance) may heighten our tendency to hold negative views about individuals from privileged groups. Even though knowledge about particular cultural groups and social positions (see Chapter 2 on privileged groups) can be useful, we lose our ability to really see an individual if we make blanket generalizations. Furthermore, when we objectify or dehumanize people from an advantaged group, we are doing just what we are asking them not to do with people from a disadvantaged group: We are distorting and diminishing their sense of humanity. We are perpetuating the very notion of "us and them" that we are attempting to overcome by social justice work. When our hearts and minds are clouded by biases, our ability to be open and fair is impeded. Our capacity to be empathic and accepting is diminished.

Increasing Our Educational Effectiveness

Educating about diversity brings together our own issues with our students' issues. This interplay is embedded in the context of the larger social dynamics. This highly charged mix creates opportunities for great stimulation and learning as well as frustration and challenge. To navigate and grow from this work, we need to engage in praxis—action and reflection (Freire, 1970). As we engage in teaching and reflect on our practice, we will encounter difficulties and disappointments. Instead of seeing these situations as negatives, we can try to view them as gifts. They provide an opportunity for growth. We can ask, "What can I learn from this? How can this make me a better educator? How can this experience help me develop as a person?" And even when it's hard to view the situation in such a way, we can always consider it an AFGO (Another F__ing Growth Opportunity).[1]

Ongoing Personal Work—Content and Consciousness

Being an effective social justice educator and having the qualities required for "the teaching presence" requires ongoing personal work. Educators need a commitment to personal and professional growth. We need to continually raise our consciousness, work through our issues, and stay current on the topics. There are numerous things we can do to improve our ability to be present, open, and informed.

We become more comfortable and flexible as we increase our knowledge of the content we teach and enhance our skills in managing the process. The better informed we are about our subject or subjects, the more easily we can respond to stereotypes, provide accurate information, and challenge misconceptions. The more skilled we are at dealing with conflict, working with emotions, and handling group dynamics, the more we can enjoy the process rather than dread it. These skills allow us to foster the conditions for safety and the development of trust. We also become better able to structure sessions to enhance the potential for learning and decrease the likelihood of resistance. When we feel competent and well-informed, we can be less self-conscious, anxious, or defensive. Information and skills can provide us with a confidence that allows us to

be more relaxed and more present. We are less likely to be in situations where we think, "I didn't know what to do!"

As important as it is to be knowledgeable about the content and able to manage the process, it is just as important to be aware of and able to manage ourselves. Some honest self-evaluation is a key starting point. We need to determine whether we are ready to educate about certain issues, and if so, how, with whom, and in what context. As suggested above, models of social identity development provide one tool for this type of self-reflection. We need to understand the impact our identities and stages of development have on our self-awareness and our work with others. If we haven't done our own work around an ism, we won't be ready to educate others. If we are going to be working with people on an emotional as well as a cognitive level, we need to have had the opportunity to do this ourselves. As I've stated throughout, consciousness-raising is not just an intellectual endeavor. In addition to having the content knowledge and the process skills, we need to have explored our own baggage. Part of this exploration of readiness includes assessing our strengths and limitations. As much as possible, we need to try to anticipate our reactions and the situations that might be challenging for us.

Once we have determined what we're ready to do and how we might behave, we can create structures to support us. If we are unsure of our emotional or intellectual readiness to educate about a topic, we can try to work with a cotrainer or coteacher for the whole session or for parts of it. We can bring in guest presenters who can more skillfully address and facilitate discussion on an issue. It is very helpful to have people with whom we can debrief and share support and advice. Many people find it useful to keep a journal to record and process their thoughts and reactions.

Another aspect of our personal work is being conscious of and able to deal with our biases. We need to monitor the thoughts in our heads, check the assumptions that we make, and reflect on our behavior to ensure that we are being nonjudgmental, caring, and fair. When we notice our prejudices infiltrating, we need to take responsibility to address them. This might mean gathering more information to enhance our understanding, seeking more contact with people from this group, speaking with the student to get to know her or him as an individual, exploring why we hold such views, or just be-

ing extra vigilant in our interactions. Certainly, the more we can rid ourselves of our stereotypes and biases, the less energy we need to spend worrying about them, and the freer we can be. We can remain self-aware without being self-conscious.

We also need to examine our areas of resistance or defensiveness. One way to become aware of these is to notice which feedback we automatically reject or rebut. If a male student claims that we were being unfair to men, do we automatically dismiss it as male privilege speaking, or do we take time to see whether there is some truth in what he is saying? If a student claims that we are portraying people of color as victims, do we justify our curriculum by claiming we're just trying to illustrate the depth of racism, or do we take a second look at our syllabus to see if it is imbalanced? If a heterosexual person accuses us of promoting homosexuality, do we just discount the remark as homophobia, or do we think about how we're presenting different sexual orientations? If a colleague comments on the fact that the authors of the books we use in our classes are not diverse or appropriately representative, do we immediately claim that we can't cover books by everyone, or do we ask for recommendations? We do not need to accept what people say as the unadulterated truth, but we can use their feedback as an opportunity for reflection.

We can also notice the events, discussions, or workshops that we make time to attend and those that we never seem to fit in. We can consider how these choices reflect what we consider more or less important or issues we want to avoid. If we pride ourselves on being more sensitive and socially conscious than others or on being committed to equity and fairness, we can find it more difficult to acknowledge the ways in which we do not live up to these ideals. Yet to truly achieve these goals, we need to explore the places where we fall short.

In general, we need to know our triggers. Although there is always the chance that we can be surprised, we can pay serious attention to the people or situations that push our buttons. We can explore when we feel most vulnerable and what gets us most angry. We can reflect on why we have certain reactions to certain people. As we become more conscious of our triggers, we can find ways to manage and eliminate them; we can look to address their source. This may mean working on healing some of our own pain and wounds or overcoming conditioned responses.

One way to do this is through self-talk. Before a class or in the moment when a triggering event occurs, we can silently talk to ourselves to get through the situation. We might think things like, "Remember, they're speaking out of pain or ignorance," "I can handle this calmly and rationally," "Just keep breathing," "He's just trying to get my goat, and I'm not going to fall for it," or "She's just showing off for her friends, but she's probably scared underneath." If we know in advance the kinds of things that tend to push our buttons, we can develop and practice in advance what we could say to ourselves to keep us centered.

Another strategy that more broadly helps us to be present and to deal with our triggers and prejudices is to practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is the "art of conscious living." It means "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity and acceptance of present-moment reality" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). Mindfulness is being awake and aware and able to "look deeply." In situations in which we feel we are not being conscious or are immersed in negative reactions, it can help us return to a more centered way of being and deepen our understanding of what is really going on. By developing mindfulness, we are less likely to be caught in conditioned responses and unproductive thoughts. During the times we do get stuck, it provides a way out. When we are able to be present and conscious in the moment, it expands our understanding and choices; it puts us in touch with our wisdom and creativity. Mindfulness helps us to develop awareness, calm, and joy in our lives and, by extension, in our educating. We can move away from dualistic thinking and better appreciate our interconnection. Kabat-Zinn suggests a way to check to see whether we are really awake—look at other people and ask yourself if you are really seeing them or just your thoughts about them.

Essentially, mindfulness practice is conscious breathing. You tune into and follow your breath. A helpful way to stay focused on your breathing is to say "In" as you breathe in and say "Out" as you breathe out. You do this silently without trying to control your breath. Mindfulness meditation is a way to systematically cultivate present-moment awareness and to connect your body and mind. Mindfulness meditation (as well as other forms of meditation) can be a "path for developing oneself, for refining one's perceptions, one's view, one's consciousness" (Kabat-Zinn, p. 264). In many

ways, mindfulness is similar to other meditative practices. For these purposes, I will not go into a comparison or explain in depth the philosophy and practice of mindfulness. There are currently many helpful and accessible books about mindfulness meditation available. (See, for example, Braza, 1997; Goldstein & Kornfield, 1987; Hanh, 1991; Kabat-Zinn, 1994.) Although mindfulness grows out of Buddhism, it is not a religious practice and can be done alone or along with other spiritual traditions.

Developing and Maintaining Respect and Compassion

Engaging in the process of self-development and reflection tends to expand our capacity for being open-hearted and nonjudgmental. Nevertheless, developing and maintaining respect and compassion for people from privileged groups can still be highly challenging. When people act resistant, treat others (or us) in hurtful ways, express offensive views, or presume entitlement, it generally strains our ability to be empathic. Dealing with deep levels of ignorance or defensiveness can be frustrating. However, if we seek to create "the teaching presence" and relationships that support growth and change, we need to be able to sustain feelings of respect and compassion.

Writing from a Buddhist perspective, Sharon Salzberg (1995) defines compassion as,

> The strength that arises out of seeing the true nature of suffering in the world. Compassion allows us to bear witness to that suffering, whether it is in ourselves or others, without fear; it allows us to name injustice without hesitation, and to act strongly, with all the skill at our disposal. To develop this mind state of compassion . . . is to learn to live with sympathy for all living beings, without exception. (p. 103)

Her description contains several important components that I will address in more detail. First, compassion encourages us to have sympathy. Her use of sympathy is akin to my use of empathy in that it requires us to be able to sense what another's experience is like. It enhances our sense of interconnection. One thing that blocks these feelings is our inability to see the full humanity or human dignity within each person. As I noted earlier, when we objectify or demonize individuals, we undermine our ability to be empathic and

accepting. "Process can be destructive when we lose sight of the person's potential for learning, growth and change" (Romney, Tatum, & Jones, 1992, p. 98). When we deepen our understanding, we deepen our capacity to really see others and, thus, to care about them. There are several ways we can try to gain or recapture this sense of human connection.

We can draw upon our own experiences of being a member of a privileged group to understand the feelings and behaviors of others from dominant groups. Whenever I feel angry or frustrated with men who are unable to see their privilege, are oblivious to common acts of sexism, behave in condescending ways, or belittle the concerns of women, I think of all the times I've heard people of color accuse White people of these same things. When I see men being defensive, feeling self-conscious about how to act and what to say, or tired of being made aware of all the things they do as men that perpetuate male dominance, I can see my own struggles in unlearning racism. It is humbling for me to think about how difficult it has been for me to look at parts of myself that I wish did not exist (and some that I still avoid), how painful it has been to acknowledge the ways in which I and other White people have systematically oppressed others, and how hard it is to try to rid myself of ingrained and sometimes unconscious attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Yet it is by drawing on these similar feelings that I can develop more compassion for others in privileged groups. As described in Chapter 2, there are common social forces that produce some shared characteristics of dominant groups. I realize that my consciousness and responses are not so different from theirs. I can appreciate the difficulty and effort involved in grappling with issues of oppression as someone from a privileged group.

When I am having difficulty feeling patient and compassionate, I've started to do a version of a Buddhist meditation, Metta, which is used to help cultivate compassion for oneself and others. (This is described in detail in Salzberg, 1995). I will repeat to myself, "May I be happy, may I be healthy, may I be safe, may I be at ease." Depending on the time I have, I will do this several times. I will then think of someone that I like and repeat the phrases directed at her or him, "May you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be safe, may you be at ease." I'll continue doing this as I think about someone I have neutral feelings for and, finally, about someone whom I'm having difficulty liking or accepting. I've been amazed at how this medita-

tion has allowed me to be more calm and open. I will also do it silently, while looking around at the students, as I sit waiting for a session to begin. I tried it one day with a class that was experiencing a lot of tension and conflict. I felt that they were getting into rigid positions and conceptions of each other, and I wanted to do something before we engaged in further hard conversation. At the beginning of class, I invited the students to close their eyes and go through this process with me: thinking first about themselves, then someone in the class they had a good relationship with, then someone they felt neutral about, and then someone they were having difficulty with. Although it didn't completely change the class dynamics, it did seem to soften some of the animosity, and it certainly allowed me to be more present.

Another strategy to develop a sense of connection is to try to look for something good in the person. As trite as this may sound, it is not uncommon for educators to get fixated on the ways in which an individual is unpleasant or difficult and to lose sight of all else. As long as we perceive the individual only in these terms, we are unable to see the complete person and will be unable to feel openly toward her or him. Intentionally look for admirable characteristics and behaviors. I have yet to be unable to identify some redeeming quality. This can provide an opening to expand our view of the person, develop some positive feelings, and begin to see him or her more fully as a human being.

Another related approach is to separate the humanness of the person from their actions. Regardless of what people do or who they are, we need to remember that they are human beings with innate human dignity. It can be helpful to remember that they are someone's son or daughter or to imagine them as young children, before they became so damaged. Nonviolent activists have this perspective at the core of their philosophy and practice.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. (1981), advised,

> When we look beneath the surface . . . we see within our enemy-neighbor a measure of goodness and know that the viciousness and evilness of his acts are not quite representative of all that he is. We see him in a new light. We recognize that his hate grows out of fear, pride, ignorance, prejudice and misunderstanding, but in spite of this, we know God's image is effably etched in his being. Then we love our enemies by realizing that they are not totally bad. (p. 51)

A second component of Salzberg's definition states that to be compassionate means to recognize the pain and suffering in ourselves and others and to bear witness to it. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said, "If we could read the secret history of our enemies we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility" (as quoted in Salzberg, 1995, p. 125). If we can truly acknowledge someone's suffering, it can profoundly shift our perspective and feelings. We can see them as wounded individuals, not just as destructive or "evil" people. Often the pain is not apparent, especially when people have material comforts or positions of social power. As I discussed earlier in the context of resistance, people who have not dealt with their own pain are the ones most likely to be resistant to acknowledging or addressing someone else's suffering; they are more likely to mistreat others. In social justice education, we often need to help people heal from their pain, especially that caused by systems of domination. This requires that we ourselves are able to be an "enlightened witness" in their process. Bearing witness means accepting people where they are and being with them as they struggle through unlearning and relearning. We may need to work through some of our own issues to have the emotional capacity and understanding to do this.

Last, as Salzberg states in her definition, compassion enables us to take action and change the things that cause suffering and injustice. This is a critical point because being compassionate is often misinterpreted as being passive and inactive. We can accept individuals as people with human dignity and acknowledge their suffering while working to change their behaviors and the conditions that create suffering. King reminds us that we can oppose the unjust system while at the same time loving the perpetrator of that system. Compassion does not mean condoning harmful action, denying injustice, accepting abuse, or allowing inequity. Salzberg asserts that to develop compassion, it is important to consider the human condition on every level—personal, social, and political—and then to try to change the conditions that create the social problems and cause suffering (p. 114). When we act with compassion, we are able to act with clarity, centeredness, and love, rather than out of anger, fear, and pain. We can make better choices and implement them more effectively. Martin Luther King, Jr. proposed that "Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend" (1981, p. 54). He was referring not to sentimental, affectionate love but to "understanding, redemptive, creative good will for all men" (p. 52).

Terms like *evil* and *enemy* might seem harsh or extreme when thinking about students and workshop participants or even about others we encounter in our social change efforts. And although I hope that we don't see the people we work with in this way, I have heard (and have said) things that reflect this type of thinking and feeling. When we are derisive, dismissive, insulting, or disdainful about individuals because of what they have done, their social identity, or their social position, I think we begin to take on this negative view. And although the term *love* may seem a bit overblown, it is this spirit that I think is crucial to our work. It encompasses the respect, nonjudgmentalness, presence, and empathy deemed central to creating relationships that foster change.

I believe this orientation toward others is beneficial in all aspects of our lives. Especially when we are in an educational role, it is incumbent upon us to act in a responsible manner. In the rest of our lives, we may choose not to associate with certain individuals, avoid engaging in certain types of conversations, or treat people less thoughtfully. (Sometimes I feel like I just want to be "off duty.") Yet when I'm in an educational capacity, I am accountable to all the students or participants. I need to do my best to do whatever I can to help facilitate each person's learning and growth. Although I cannot make some people think critically or change, neither can I just ignore them or write them off.

In a discussion about diversity training, a former student and colleague exclaimed, "How can anyone do this work without a sense of spirituality?" I know that many people do so, drawing on other moral or philosophical frameworks. However, various spiritual traditions provide philosophies and practices that aid us in cultivating love, compassion, and mindfulness as we work for social justice. (See Ingram, 1990, as one of many examples.) In this chapter, I have described what I personally have found most helpful. I encourage readers to draw upon whatever frameworks and practices are most meaningful and useful to them. We need all the strength, wisdom, and inspiration we can get.

Note

1. I learned this expression several years ago and have found it very helpful, as have the people I've shared it with. So, at the risk of offending some readers, I wanted to share it here.

10

Hope and Possibilities

Our obedience to the demands of justice can bring us the possibility of a far deeper happiness, security and sense of integrity than can any commitment to individual wealth or personal comfort.

—David Hilfiker

It is easy to look around and feel some despair at the state of the world. We can see the pervasive problems and formidable forces that impede our goal of creating a just and caring world. Yet we probably also know that this is not the full reality. If we are to do social justice education, I assume that each of us has our own experiences, theories, and beliefs that allow us to maintain our faith that things can be different.

A sense of hope and possibility is critical for both educators and students. As an educator, I find that I often need to hold out to others the possibility that change does and can occur, that there are more healthy and productive ways to structure our social, political, and economic systems. Social justice educators also need to sustain the belief that people can change and that people from privileged groups can accept and actively support efforts toward greater equity.

It is important that people learning about diversity and oppression realize how our sense of reality is socially constructed and can be transformed. If people accept the dominant worldview and our current system as the way things are, have been, and will always be, there is little reason to imagine or work for significant change. If they assume that efforts to promote equity will diminish their lives, they will resist altering the status quo. We need to help individuals develop positive alternative visions and a sense of hopefulness that they can be achieved. In this chapter, I will consider how our students and we can retain a sense of optimism in creating a different future. I'll suggest some models and signs to nurture our sense of hope and possibility. Throughout this discussion, I will return to some of the themes I have raised earlier in the book.

Shifting the Paradigm

As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, the dominant ideology and supporting social structures shape our attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and openness to change. The dominant paradigm is the thoughts, perceptions, values, and beliefs that form a particular vision of reality. It influences what people assume to be true about themselves, others, and social relations. People tend to see reality the way the dominant paradigm portrays it. In turn, ideology becomes the perceived reality. What people assume to be normal and natural affects what they can envision or believe can be achieved. As long as people accept systems of domination as inevitable and assume that it is human nature to want to control others, there is little hope for creating a just society. As long as people are conditioned to accept that personal value is gained by a sense of superiority, they will be reluctant to stop striving to be better than others or to transform unjust social structures. We need to help people understand how our social structures and ideology shape our sense of reality. And just as important, we need to provide alternatives to our present system.

Although there are many ways to describe our current reality and alternative ways of organizing society, I'll focus on two frameworks described by Riane Eisler (Eisler, 1987, 1996; Eisler & Loye, 1990/1998). By identifying underlying social patterns, Eisler has depicted two different types of social organization. She describes a dominator model and a partnership model that make very different

assumptions about human beings, social relationships, and social structures. Her descriptions of these models are based on extensive cross-cultural and historical evidence from anthropology, archaeology, religion, history, art, and the social sciences. I find these constructs helpful in educational contexts for several reasons. First, they are based on actual human societies, not imagined realities. Second, they present models of social organization in a fairly neutral and accessible way. Third, they help people look at the connections between social structures and underlying cultural and personal patterns. Rather than just describing particular elements of more egalitarian societies or human relationships, they illustrate a comprehensive social system with interrelated aspects.

According to Eisler (1987), the main characteristics of a dominator model include the following:

- Ranking and inequality, in which differences are systematically converted into superior and inferior (beginning with men and women)
- Hierarchical and authoritarian social structures
- Institutionalized social violence
- Widespread infliction of or threat of pain

Because the dominator model relies on fear and force to maintain the system, trust is systematically undermined. Power is often used to dominate and destroy—people as well as nature. A sense of scarcity is created to justify exploitive economic policies and a politics of fear. Planning is for the short term, with little thought for future generations.

Our current social organization, with its various forms of oppression, resembles the dominator model in many ways. This is reflected in our high rates of incarceration (especially of the poor and of men of color), the grossly unequal distribution of wealth, widespread incidents of rape and domestic violence, the exploitation of human and natural resources, the competitive individualism within our institutions, and the threat of job loss or physical harm if one is too much of a threat to the status quo.

In contrast, the partnership model highlights the following:

- Linking, in which differences (beginning with males and females) are valued and respected

- A low degree of social violence where violence is not a structural component of the system
- Generally egalitarian social structures
- Interactions based on mutual respect and empowerment

In the partnership system, human relations are held together more by trust and pleasure than by fear and pain. Equality is actively nourished. Power is generally used to give, nurture, and illuminate life. A sense of abundance is created, with a value placed on ensuring that people are taken care of. Planning includes long-term concern for present and future generations.

Eisler cautions that these models are not mutually exclusive. She maintains that history is shaped by the tensions between these alternative systems. Both models operate within a given society, within a given institution, and within a given individual. Yet societies tend to orient more toward one than the other. Some differences between the models are due to differences in emphasis or degree. For example, although there may be cooperation in both models, in the dominator model, cooperation is generally based on fear and aggression toward an out-group (consider war, team sports, business). In the partnership model, cooperation is based on trust and reciprocity with the other group or other individuals (consider cooperative learning).

Moreover, hierarchies exist in both models, but they are conceptualized very differently. In a dominator mode, hierarchies are based on power over others and are used for the purpose of domination. These types of hierarchies separate people, suppress empathy, and stifle creativity. In contrast, in a partnership mode, there are hierarchies of actualization. These help bring forth our human potentials. They support our growth and development (such as in the cases of parents with children or mentors with mentees).

A partnership pattern of social relations is not a utopian model. According to Eisler, it is unrealistic to assume that there would be no violence, pain, or cruelty in such a model because these seem to be part of the human condition (Eisler & Koegel, 1996). However, in partnership societies, these modes of relating are neither idealized nor institutionalized. Domination, fear, and force are not needed to maintain rigid and coercive systems of ranking. In a dominator system, there tends to be a high degree of conflict, with a win-lose orientation. Conflict is violently suppressed when it threatens the dom-

inant group and is encouraged when it benefits the status quo (such as within and between oppressed groups). In contrast, a partnership system openly recognizes conflict, sees it as potentially creative, and tries to make it nonviolent. A win-win orientation is promoted.

Extending the work of Eisler, Koegel (1997) suggests that these paradigms of social relations lead to different ways of thinking and acting. The dominator model encourages people to assume that people are inherently selfish, insatiable, and violent; that social life is a zero-sum, win-lose conflict; that relational inequality is inevitable; and that structural inequality is desirable. On the other hand, partnership patterns lead people to assume that people are or can be caring, benevolent, and respectful; that social structures can foster institutional dynamics that are more win-win; that relational equality is possible; and that increasing structural equality is beneficial (p. 49). Unless the dominator paradigm is challenged, there is a mutually reinforcing cycle. People will continue to reproduce the ways of thinking and acting that allow systems of domination to exist.

Certainly, the concepts presented in the dominator and partnership models are not new. In the past few decades, psychologists and social scientists have been illuminating aspects of a partnership model in interpersonal relationships and institutional structures. Feminists, in particular, have been critiquing patriarchal systems, redefining power, and creating alternative personal and organizational dynamics (see Miller, 1976, 1991; Starhawk, 1982, 1987). Western, patriarchal societies have predominantly conceptualized power as *power over,* as relationships of domination that involve force, exploitation, coercion, and manipulation. Consistent with a dominator model, power is seen as the ability to get one's own needs met by being able to control others. An alternative conception of power is *power with.* In this view, power is seen as "being able" or having the "capacity to produce a change" (Miller, 1991, p. 198). In power-with relationships, "all participants in the relationship interact in ways that build connection and enhance everyone's personal power" (Surrey, 1991, p. 165). The work of the Stone Center at Wellesley College has focused on developing theories that validate and explicate these types of relationships (Jordan et al., 1991; Jordan, 1997). They talk about "mutual empowerment" and "agency-in-community." Power with emphasizes interdependence and developing the capacity to act and do together. In synergistic communities where power with flourishes, "self and community work toward the common

good while seeking to fulfill their own perceived needs" (Katz, 1986, p. 22, as cited in Kreisberg, 1992).[1] Other social scientists and activists have been advancing in theory and practice more egalitarian, collaborative, and democratic organizations and policies—worker-owned and cooperatively structured workplaces, economic policies that don't value profits over people, and political processes that are truly participatory.[2]

I have asked students to identify how they have experienced partnership and dominator types of relations in their own lives—in personal and institutional contexts. People have little difficulty describing examples of dominator relations, whether with a controlling parent, an authoritarian teacher, an arrogant and dismissive doctor, a possessive and abusive lover, or a boss who expected obedience and conformity. They easily remember experiences with social service agencies, the police, judicial systems, and government bureaucracies in which they were threatened, intimidated, and denied a voice. Identifying partnership patterns is more challenging for some, especially in organizational settings. Most people can identify interpersonal relationships with family and friends that were supportive and mutually fulfilling. Some people can think of work situations in which they were treated respectfully, involved in decision making, and encouraged to contribute. Others describe classroom environments that fostered equitable participation, an appreciation of differences, creativity, and support for each other's learning. People also discuss religious/spiritual groups where there is a loving and supportive atmosphere and shared efforts to attend to individual and community needs.

It is important to provide real illustrations of partnership patterns. Doing so allows people to imagine and experience different ways of thinking, feeling, and relating. Specific examples help make the concepts of partnership come alive. People can better understand the difference between ranking and linking by having the opportunity to work effectively on a group project in which various abilities and talents are valued and people are not being pitted against each other for recognition and personal gain. By learning nonviolent conflict resolution skills, people can appreciate how conflict can be an opportunity for learning and growth; that it is not necessarily a destructive process.

However, the partnership model is more than just the sum of its parts; these elements are not isolated events. In a partnership para-

digm, they are part of a larger integrated system that has very different underlying values and assumptions. They are aspects of an interlocking pattern that fosters a different way of organizing social relations on a societal level. As many of us know, it is often difficult to create and sustain partnership structures and patterns of interaction when they are embedded in a social context that operates according to dominator norms and values. In fact, the larger system can be hostile to such efforts and usually is. Both the ideology and social structures need to change in order to advance real social justice. In sum, it is not possible to create true equity and systemic partnership relations within a dominator paradigm.

Clearly, the dominator and partnership models have implications for how social, political, and economic relations are organized. It is not my intent to prescribe how these should be structured. I offer these models as tools to expand people's frame of reference, as suggestions about new ways to conceptualize reality, and as challenges to the assumption that human nature or innate differences alone are responsible for inequities. These frameworks can help individuals see how patterns of social organization foster oppression and social injustice. The dominant ideology and social structures encourage personal and material gain at the expense of others (and the environment), assume that there is not enough for everyone, and institutionalize force and fear (explicit or implicit) to maintain compliance.

These paradigms also help people to evaluate current systems and envision alternatives. *Partnership literacy* is the ability to use the dominator and partnership models to analyze individual, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural dynamics. It allows us to examine the ways in which we have become conditioned to accept patterns of domination and subordination and how these dominator patterns operate in our own lives. Partnership literacy also enables us to develop ways to foster partnership patterns of relating and transform systems of domination. It can help us move from a dominator to a partnership way of life. Educators can help promote partnership literacy.

To have greater social justice, we need to shift the current paradigm. We need to provide visions and alternatives that change people's ways of thinking, acting, and behaving. As long as we operate within our current paradigm, people from either the dominant group or the subordinate group will seek dominance and superiority. Regardless of which group or individual is in power, the same

oppressive, unequal, and unfair dynamics will be in place. In this sense, the aim is not to change roles or change who has power but to change the very nature of the system.

The Appeal of Partnership Relations and Social Justice to People from Privileged Groups

Although more equitable, partnership-oriented dynamics may sound appealing, is it likely that people from privileged groups will trade in their power over for power with? It is clearly naive to assume that any fundamental progressive social change is simple, quick, or easy. I can just as easily argue that the glass is half empty (that significant social change is unlikely) as that it is half full (that there are hopeful signs of social transformation). What I'll offer here are ways in which social justice does and can attract people from dominant groups. In Chapters 7 and 8, I described specific ways to motivate people from privileged groups to support social justice efforts. In this chapter, I approach the issue less strategically and more philosophically. I'll explore the broader appeal of equity to advantaged groups and some reasons why they would embrace it.

In Chapter 6, we saw that one of the general costs of oppression to people from privileged groups was the loss of humanity and authenticity. Systemic social injustice compromises their ability to live with integrity, meaning, and honesty. It impedes their ability to lead lives that that are fulfilling and that nurture their full human potential. Oppression interferes with the human needs for recognition and interconnectedness.

Wineman (1984) discusses why people would seek to change a system in which they are advantaged. He suggests that superiority and domination are self-limiting experiences:

> Exercising power over others does not oppress the oppressor, it is simply a less attractive, less gratifying, less human way of life than treating people as equals and respecting their full humanity. Negative consciousness or rejecting access to the privilege and power of the oppressor is based on the notion that equal relations can be experienced as more rewarding than top-down relations. (p. 187)

All people's basic humanity and integrity are better nurtured when they can experience mutuality, sensitivity, connectedness, and shared power. According to Wineman (1984), people are more likely to make sacrifices or changes when these changes are connected to the quality of their everyday lives rather than when they are just based on ideological beliefs. When people can recognize how their personal relations are enhanced by rejecting or dismantling superiority and domination, they can see the personal reward of greater equality.

Preference for Partnership Relationships

In his work with graduate and undergraduate students, Koegel (1998) found support for the view that people preferred relationships based on the partnership model. He asked hundreds of individuals to describe their best and worst relationships. These relationships could be in the private realm—with a friend, lover, parent, or sibling—or in the public realm—with a boss, teacher, or co-worker. Koegel consistently found similarities in how people described their best and worst relationships. Time and again, despite differences in the context of the relationships, students characterized their worst relationships as unequal and unfair. These types of relationships made people feel diminished, inferior, weak, and violated.

Summarizing the common characteristics of the worst relationships, Koegel (1998) notes that these relationships routinely do the following:

> a) use intimidation, domination, and manipulation to maintain an unequal, unjust relationship and to resolve conflicts; b) convert differences into right and wrong, good and bad, better and worse; c) make one person feel more competent and complete and the other feel more incompetent and incomplete; d) generate what Abraham Maslow (1968) calls "deficit motivations" for the subordinate parties (such as fear, insecurity, shame, distrust of self, and mistrust of others) and the dominant parties (such as selfishness, intolerance, anger, arrogance); and e) draw on the widespread cultural belief that supports dominance. (p. 29)

On the other hand, most of the best relationships were described as mutually empowering and mutually beneficial. They were win-win; both people gained and grew. The relationships were seen

as basically fair and equal with a high degree of reciprocity and responsiveness. People in these relationships generally felt stronger, more complete, more connected, valued, and happier. In these relationships, individuals

> a) work to promote relational mutuality and to reduce inequality within the relationship; b) value the process of meeting the needs and enhancing the growth of each other; c) strive to maximize productive conflict, to minimize destructive conflict, and to honor differences within the relationship; d) engage in mutual caring, responsibility, and respect; e) cultivate empathy, compassion, understanding; and f) reflect an established cultural belief that supports partnership. (p. 30)

For obvious reasons, people prefer the more egalitarian, mutually enriching relationships that resemble partnership dynamics rather than the unequal and unfair ones based on dominator dynamics. To be sure, some individuals acknowledge that they have enjoyed being in the dominant role in an unequal relationship. However, few, if any, spontaneously cite such an instance as an example of their best relationship. Koegel uses this exercise as a way to explore issues of social dominance and privilege systems by making the link between people's own personal experiences and societal dynamics. This also provides the opportunity to discuss why some people prefer being in power-over relationships. We can explore how this is linked to the way that people are conditioned to feel important and successful, again challenging the notion that people inherently want to oppress others.

Benefits of Social Justice

As previously discussed, people from dominant groups are able to recognize numerous psychological, moral/spiritual, social, intellectual, and material costs of oppression to themselves and others from privileged groups. In a myriad of ways, they realize the loss of mental health and an authentic sense of self; the loss and diminishment of relationships; the loss of moral integrity and spiritual center; the loss of a full range of knowledge; and the loss of safety, resources, and quality of life. Yet eliminating the costs does not clearly indicate what it might be like if there was true equality.

I have also found that people from privileged groups can readily identify the benefits of social justice. Many people realize their personal stake in fostering equity. Imagining a different future reduces the tendency for people from dominant groups to become attached to victim status when they realize the costs. We can encourage people from privileged groups to see that creating "liberty and justice for all" can, in fact, have positive results for them as well as others. Enabling them to identify and envision the benefits of greater equity offers an invitation for change. It encourages people to consider ways to create a better society for everyone. When people from dominant groups recognize what they stand to gain, they are more motivated to change.

Below, I present some of the benefits of social justice that people from privileged groups have discussed. The positive effects of equality that I briefly describe are based more on conjecture than my discussion of the costs. Because we have yet to live in a truly just society, the benefits suggested below are based on what people imagine life would be like. They also reflect our experiences when we do have moments of freedom, authenticity, and equity (in relationships, personal pursuits, workplaces, social/religious organizations). Exactly how the benefits would look or be experienced would depend in part on the larger social system. My intent is not to portray a full alternative reality. Rather, it is to point to possibilities and to suggest how justice could lead to greater humanity, connection, and fulfillment for people from privileged groups.

Psychologically, people could have the freedom to explore their interests and abilities without the interference of rigid, externally imposed norms and expectations. There could be greater opportunity for creativity and experimentation. Individuals could have greater trust and confidence in their accomplishments without feeling they were somehow ill-gotten or fraudulent. Real choice about how one wanted to live one's life—in terms of work, partner, or lifestyle—could be available. Psychological and emotional development would be nurtured and enhanced.

Many fears and worries would also diminish. People would be able to walk the streets, interact with others, and explore new areas and interests with a greater sense of ease. The fear of offending someone from a dominated group or of retaliation and violence from the have-nots would fade. People could spend less energy on protecting and worrying about themselves, their loved ones, and

their possessions and would have more time for productive and enjoyable pursuits.

Socially, if the dominant-subordinate structure and other barriers that block equal relationships between people were removed, meaningful connections with different kinds of people could be established. Relationships that were previously prevented or distorted could be allowed to flourish on the basis of mutual interests and respect. Differences in social identities would not tear families or communities apart. Individuals would not have to choose between living their conscience and their heart and maintaining important relationships. People would no longer be isolated from other human beings. There would be greater potential for honesty and depth in relationships.

Morally, because the conditions that give rise to many moral contradictions and pangs of conscience would be eliminated, people could more easily create lives that would be consonant with their morality and spirituality. They could experience a sense of liberation as a result of acting in ways consistent with their beliefs and of knowing that others can live with dignity as well. People could feel pride in their identity and life choices, not shame, guilt, or envy. There would be greater freedom to explore the world, not a need to rationalize or hide from it for fear of moral discomfort.

Intellectually, people's minds and worlds could be expanded and enriched by the exposure to and knowledge of other ways of being and doing (e.g., solving problems, setting priorities, relating to nature). Intellectual and personal development could flourish. People could more readily enjoy the foods, music, and arts from other cultural traditions. The diversity of worldviews could contribute to our understanding of the universe and to a more complete and accurate view of reality. We also could have access to the creativity, wisdom, and insights from all those who could help illuminate and alleviate social concerns. Our potential as human beings and a planet would have the greatest opportunity to develop and thrive.

Materially and physically, people would experience less stress and economic insecurity. For most people, their standard of living would rise if wealth were distributed more equitably. Without the intergroup conflicts that are promoted to prevent people from uniting to change an unjust system, we would be able to have more effective and collaborative working relationships in workplaces that did not exploit employees. Because individual and cultural differ-

ences would exist, conflict itself would not disappear, but it would not be fueled by social, political, and economic inequities. The ways of addressing conflict would also be significantly different and far more productive, as discussed earlier. Morale would improve, and the barriers between people that were based on social identities and hierarchical positions would be eliminated. Organizations would be better able to attract and retain desired employees and better able to allow them to maximize their talents and contributions.

Because housing would no longer be (de facto) segregated, people would have more options for where to live, at more reasonable prices. Overall, public schools would be improved, and sending children to private schools to get a good and safe education would not be necessary. Neighborhoods could reflect the diversity of our society and allow for the development of relationships across differences.

Violence would be significantly reduced. Because all people would have their basic needs met and their human rights respected, there would be less need to engage in personally and socially destructive actions. The resources and energy used to maintain inequalities and to address the results of social injustice could be used to address issues that affect us all. There would be more money available to devote to things like health, education, and the environment. There would be more time and energy available to develop broad-based efforts on other common concerns because people would not be fighting for their basic rights, exhausted from just trying to survive, or disenfranchised from society.

A better-educated, productive, and engaged populace could allow us to better realize our national democratic goals. If people really believe that a democracy is the best form of government and way of life, this could provide us with a closer model of what it might truly look like. Our political system and other organizations could be more reflective of and responsive to the needs of (all) the people. Without such compelling self-interests, fostered by social and economic inequities, there could be greater opportunity for institutions to function more effectively and efficiently.

These benefits are also interconnected. Psychological well-being is one aspect that can underlie or affect other benefits. If individuals have good mental health, including a strong sense of self-esteem and personal authenticity, they are more likely to desire and be able to have meaningful relationships with different people and to feel a

sense of connection and responsibility to other human beings. They will be able to create effective collaborative relationships and organizations that value their members and will be able to support social systems that foster the empowerment and dignity of all people.

After doing this exercise with a group in which they identified the costs of oppression and the benefits of social justice for dominant-group members, the participants reminded me that it wasn't simply that there would be less fear, better relationships, or improved quality of life. There also would be more joy and fun. This is a wonderful example of how health is not simply the absence of illness, that wellness transcends just the removal of the sickness. They spoke about how people could more fully experience life and truly enjoy themselves and others. There is a freedom and exuberance that is captured by the word *joy* that more accurately reflects the liberation that a just and caring world could offer us.

The above examples provide a broad outline of how life could be improved for people from privileged groups if there was greater social justice. These illustrations do not ignore the fact that there would be some losses as well. However, they highlight that diversity and equity hold benefits and promote the liberation of all people. We all have something to gain.

Desire for Meaning

Another reason why people from privileged groups may be willing to challenge the dominant paradigm and support social justice is their desire for greater connection, purpose, and meaning in their lives. This is another manifestation of people seeking greater authenticity and a fuller sense of their humanity. As previously noted, Lerner (1996) describes our current system as based on an ethos of selfishness, greed, materialism, and cynicism. The dominant culture promotes a materialist and reductionist view of human beings—that we are isolated individuals motivated by material self-interest. This pervasive perspective is rooted in the economic and political structures of the competitive marketplace. Many others have voiced concerns about how the dominance of corporations and free market capitalism has promoted a preoccupation with self and money and has eroded a sense of morality, social responsibility, and community (Daly & Cobb, 1994; Derber, 1997; Handy, 1998; Korten, 1995). We are expected to look out for ourselves, view others

in terms of what they can do for us, and pursue our own short-term gains. Many believe that if they don't push for their own interests first, they will be taken advantage of. The more people try to live up to these societal norms, the more alone and vulnerable they feel. Economic dislocation (downsizing, sending jobs to other countries) intensifies the feeling that no one is there for them and that they need to look out for themselves. Given these social dynamics, it is hard to develop caring and trusting relationships. People are surrounded by others who are self-absorbed and indifferent to their well-being. As a result, they feel unrecognized, disconnected from others, and lacking a sense of meaning in their lives.

Lerner's (1996) perspective initially grew out of his work with thousands of middle-income people at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. Beginning in 1976, he and his colleagues wanted to understand the psychodynamics of working people and why so many were moving to the political Right. In the context of "stress clinics," they met with individuals over many weeks. After some initial defensiveness and the desire to present themselves as "together," participants revealed a hunger for community, recognition, and higher purpose. Even those who seemed most unconcerned about connections to others ultimately expressed a deep frustration about and yearning for meaningful relationships, a pessimism about one's ability to ever get one's needs met, and a deep shame about one's own imagined failures (p. 7). Overall, they found that people wanted to have their fundamental value as a human being recognized, to feel connected to a community, and to experience a higher purpose to their lives. However, escalating levels of selfishness and cynicism diminish the possibility of the kinds of lives people want.

Lerner is certainly not alone in claiming that people are seeking more meaning and spirituality in their lives. The lack of purpose and connection has been cited as a source for a variety of social problems, including gangs, school dropouts, early pregnancy, and addictions. This has devastating effects not only on these individuals and their communities but also on the larger society and on efforts for social justice. It also has some direct implications for working with people from dominant groups. For example, in his book *The Racist Mind,* Raphael Ezekiel (1996) explores the psychological foundations of neo-Nazis and Klansmen. He found that many of the youth who join Nazi movements are poor and are high school dropouts.

Meaning, not ideology, was the most compelling reason they joined these right-wing groups. They longed to be truly seen by an adult and to feel a sense of purpose and importance. (After spending many evenings talking with them, Ezekiel felt he easily could have led over half of them away from Nazism if he had had somewhere else to take them.) Even though they come from an oppressed group (the poor), they identified with their dominant identity, White (and male). They then acted against certain dominated groups—people of color, gays and lesbians, Jews. Many became involved in attacks or supported public policies that limited the rights and resources of oppressed groups.

According to Lerner, the rise of the Right is due to its ability to speak to the spiritual and ethical crisis people are experiencing and to address some of their longing for recognition. They understand that people are angry, frustrated, and confused about the lack of meaning in their lives and the range of social problems they encounter (crime, violence, homelessness, the breakdown of families). However, instead of blaming the impact of the competitive marketplace for these problems, it blames the traditionally demeaned Others—feminists, people of color, gays and lesbians, immigrants, and so on. They divert the attention away from corporate greed and concern for the bottom line and focus the scorn on groups struggling for full participation in society (Pharr, 1996). Although the Right may address the needs for care, community, and meaning in the private realm, they fail to address these needs in the public realm. Instead, they reinforce conservative politics and antidemocratic agendas that limit access to social and economic justice for marginalized groups.

Lerner cautions that there are limits to how long people will respond to the pain of others when no one seems to care about their own pain: "Unless we can provide the American Majority with a deep sense of being recognized, it will never respond to the pain of the most oppressed" (p. 174). Moreover, when people (especially White men) are repeatedly told that they are the oppressors, they will start to identify with that position and not with the oppressed.

Lerner claims that the Left has not been successful because it has failed to acknowledge and speak to these meaning needs and instead has focused primarily on the economic interests and political rights of oppressed groups. Social movements that have most successfully motivated people have framed the issues in a broader

moral and meaning context (e.g., the New Deal, civil rights and Martin Luther King, Jr.), not narrow individual rights. The question is not whether economic issues need to be addressed but how to include an ethical and spiritual dimension in the analysis. Lerner sees the economic and meaning crises as two aspects of the same issue. Economic realities are, in part, shaped by our framework of meaning. He suggests that if people had a different framework of meaning, they would demand different economic arrangements. If people came to see their own needs as best served by a society with a concern for the common good, they would be more open to economic policies that better provided for more people (e.g., redistributing work over a shorter workweek). They would also be more likely to collectively challenge policies that unfairly disadvantaged people (e.g., transferring jobs abroad).

Unlike some others who talk about an ethical and spiritual crisis, Lerner shows how it is a result of our social, political, and economic structures and suggests a progressive alternative. His critique of the dominant culture links the public and the private. He advocates more than just individual solutions and changes in people's personal situations. A progressive politics of meaning challenges the ethos of the competitive marketplace and the economic and political arrangements that undermine human relationships. The central goal is to build a society that encourages mutual recognition, caring, ethical and spiritual sensitivity, and ecologically attuned social practices.

Lerner's recognition of meaning needs in conjunction with economic and social concerns is an important perspective.[3] It is especially relevant when working with people from privileged groups. After all, most people from dominant groups are not part of the very wealthy and powerful elite. Many people who choose to participate in and support policies that systematically disadvantage others do so to increase their own sense of self-worth and self-protection, yet they often do this at a large personal and spiritual cost. If people can see how their needs are better met by challenging the dominant ethos rather than by accepting it and blaming the disadvantaged, there is the potential to create allies for change.

The Need for Both Individual and Societal Change

Even when people believe in fairness and equity, they are less likely to support practices and changes they feel pose a threat to

their well-being. Therefore, along with educating for critical consciousness, we need to create the social and economic conditions that allow people to more easily make choices that move us toward social justice. Changes in the policies and structures of the dominant culture can make it safer for people to support greater meaning and equity in our world. People need opportunities to act according to their highest ideals and not feel as if they are being fools or self-destructive. Underlying social and economic institutions are needed that foster, nurture, and sustain the experience of community, mutual interdependence, and social responsibility (Alperovitz, 1996). We need to work with the ongoing dialectic between the dominant ideology and people's belief systems, between social conditions and people's attitudes and behavior. Because oppression operates on individual, institutional, and cultural levels and because these different dimensions interact and support each other, all aspects need to be targeted.

An ethos of selfishness and materialism, a culture of competitive individualism, and policies that create a sense of scarcity fuel people's narrow self-interest. With a zero-sum mentality, people feel that there's not enough for everyone, that others are getting something at their expense. Many people assume that immigrants are taking jobs away from Americans, that White women and people of color are taking opportunities away from White men, and that gays and lesbians are demanding special rights beyond the equal rights afforded everyone else. Middle-class people fear that using their tax dollars to improve the quality of poor schools will compromise the quality of their own children's education. Money from one social service program is often taken to support another.

It is undeniable that people are facing real choices and losses. However, it is highly questionable whether the problem is that there is not enough to go around. The sense of scarcity and a zero-sum mentality is promulgated by our economic and social policies. In dominator models, as Eisler (1987) pointed out, dominant groups foster a sense of scarcity to maintain the status quo.

Economic inequality and the inequitable distribution of wealth is a pivotal factor in perpetuating social injustice and eroding social relations. The gap between the rich and poor is the largest it has ever been and is rapidly growing; it is also the largest of any industrialized nation. The 10% wealthiest own 73% of all the wealth in the United States (the top 1% own about 39%; Wolff, 1998). Between

1979 and 1994, family income fell 14% for those in the lowest quintile (20%) and rose 83% for the top 1%. In contrast, between 1947 and 1979, all quintiles grew between 86% and 116%, with the bottom quintile growing the most and the top quintile growing the least. In 1965, the average chief executive officer's income was 44 times that of the average U.S. worker's income; in 1995, that was up to 212 times as much—a ratio higher than that of any other industrialized nation. Between 1990 and 1995, corporate profits rose 50%, and CEO pay rose 65%. During the same time period, worker layoffs were up 39%, and worker pay was down 1%.[4] Such disparities undermine democracy because fewer people have access to full and equitable participation and decision making in our society.

To challenge the systems that create the sense of scarcity, we need to direct the attention toward those who are responsible for people not having what they need. (This is not to say we don't also need to look at our overuse of natural resources and excessive consumption of material goods.) Economic priorities and issues such as tax laws, corporate welfare, wage scales, and campaign finance need to be examined. Instead of having people fighting over the crumbs, we can look at how the whole pie is being divided. We can question systems and policies that set up a zero-sum game, demand more accountability from those who create situations of unnecessary scarcity, and challenge practices that put people in "us or them" situations. We can explore how to expand the "pie" and utilize resources in ways that do not pit people against each other. We can highlight shared goals, collective well-being, and mutual responsibility. For example, a recent controversy arose in New York City as to whether wealthy parents should be able to raise money to fund teachers' salaries and school programs. The chancellor of the New York City Schools was concerned that this would just further disparities in a public education system. Through letters to the editor in the local newspaper, I followed some of the discussion and the proposed solutions. Some parents, taking a very individual-rights orientation, argued that it was their right to support their child's education. Other parents offered a more collaborative, interdependent approach. I read few letters that recognized that it was in everyone's best interest for all of the children in their city to have a decent education. There was the suggestion that half of the money raised by the economically advantaged parents be shared with poorer schools. A couple of people suggested that the parents could be using this

energy and skill to be lobbying together to demand more adequate educational funding that would benefit all the schools.

Even when there is scarcity, people can respond in ways that are not selfish. There have certainly been other times when in situations of need, people have pulled together to provide for each other. The policies during the Depression were more reflective of this orientation. However, without a sense of community and mutual responsibility and with a heightened sense of cynicism, people are more likely to look out for themselves, regardless of the effect on others.

Significant social change inevitably meets with resistance and backlash. In fact, this is often how people can tell whether they are really having an impact. The power elite will try to protect their power. Historically, they have never been the ones to initiate change. Nevertheless, the subordinate group has always had allies from the dominant group. Although we should never overlook anyone as a potential ally, we can focus our energy on the majority of people (including those from privileged groups) who are not the main beneficiaries of oppression or who are initially most responsive to and see the benefits of equity. A general rule is that a minority of people will clearly be supportive of our goals, another minority will actively oppose them, and the large majority in the middle will be open to persuasion. In both organizational and societal change, we can work on developing a critical mass and not assume that we need to win over every person.

For all the signs I see of hope and possibility, there are as many barriers. Yet when we become pessimistic about people from privileged groups and the possibility of change, we fall prey to the culture of cynicism that undermines social change. *Surplus powerlessness* (Lerner, 1986) is our tendency to see ourselves as more powerless than we really are. It makes us feel that it is impossible or unrealistic in the face of real power inequities to try to create fundamental change. Surplus powerlessness is not based on a realistic assessment of the political situation but on the internalization of messages from the dominant culture that tell us that nothing can really change and that we had better do what we can to protect ourselves. However, we have a history rich with examples of people who had the courage to expect and demand change and who, in the process, inspired and empowered others to join them.

I often think of the words of Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, writer, peace activist. He had just finished speaking about his trips

to various places in the world that were beset with war, conflict, and human cruelty and his efforts to promote peace and healing. An audience member asked, "In light of all that you've seen, how do you keep going?" He responded, "What choice do I have?" For those of us who carry a commitment to a caring and just world in our hearts and souls, what choice do we really have but to continue the struggle? For ultimately, justice frees us all.

Notes

1. See Kreisberg (1992) for an excellent review and discussion of power over and power with.

2. The Center for Partnership Studies documents the workings of the partnership model in contemporary family, economic, spiritual, and political life. See also other organizations listed in the appendix.

3. For a more comprehensive and in-depth presentation of his views and a politics of meaning, see *Tikkun Magazine* and *The Politics of Meaning* by Lerner (1996).

4. All statistics were taken from United for a Fair Economy. (1997, March). *The Growing Divide: Inequality and the Roots of Economic Insecurity.* Boston, MA.