In order to effectively implement diversity and social justice initiatives, it is critical to involve people from privileged groups. It is privileged groups that perpetuate oppression through individual acts, as well as through institutional and cultural practices. How can an educator meet the challenge of implementing diversity and social justice in organizations, institutions, and the community?

Promoting Diversity and Social Justice provides theory, perspectives, and strategies that are useful for working with adults on diversity and social justice issues. This book offers educational and psychological perspectives to inform practice and increase options in addressing conflict situations. The first part of the book helps the educator understand the reasons for resistance and ways to prevent it. The second part explains how educators motivate dominant groups to support social justice.

This book is an excellent resource for group facilitators, counselors, trainers in classrooms and workshops, professors, teachers, higher education personnel, community educators, and other diversity and equity education professionals.

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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.

2

About Privileged Groups

In any educational context, it is helpful to know your audience to understand with whom you're working. Being a member of a privileged group affects one's worldview, assumptions, and behavior. In this chapter, I'll explore what it means to be part of a privileged group and the significance of this for our educational efforts. Specifically, I'll discuss some common characteristics of dominant groups and dominant-group members, multiple identities and the experience of privilege, and the resistance to acknowledging one's privilege.

Characteristics of Privileged Groups

There are several key attributes of privileged groups. The first part of the discussion will focus on what characterizes a dominant group.[1] I will then consider the implications of these qualities for members of privileged groups. Although I will focus on what is generally true for dominant groups, I recognize that there are important variations among forms of oppression and among individuals.

Cultural and Institutional Domination

Oppression entails domination, the ability for one social group to systematically control, manipulate, and use other people for its own ends. Domination is created and maintained through interper-

sonal, cultural, and institutional forces. The privileged group creates systems and structures that reflect its values, embody its characteristics, and advance its interests. Unequal power systems are sustained by shaping people's worldviews, controlling resources, and constraining opportunities. Because domination has both ideological and structural dimensions, it can take many forms. At times, the domination is blatant and coercive, and the advantages to the privileged group are clear, such as with Jim Crow laws or forced (uninformed) sterilization. Often, however, it is more subtle and insidious, with less obvious benefits to the privileged group, such as media images that portray women as sex objects or economic policies that maintain some unemployment to ensure a pool of cheap, surplus labor.

Privileged groups define the mainstream culture—behavior patterns, symbols, institutions, values, and other human-made components of society (Banks, 1991). They determine what is acceptable and unacceptable, what is valued and ignored. Other groups are relegated to being subcultures. For example, the dominant cultural norms are reflected in our standards of beauty. The image of a beautiful woman is someone who is young, extremely thin, tall, and light-skinned, has Anglo features and finely textured hair, and often is blond and blue-eyed. White (European) culture, as expressed in music, art, dance, and literature, is considered more sophisticated than and superior to the culture of other racial/ethnic groups. According to mainstream time norms, people should be ruled by the clock. People are expected to be prompt and to end meetings according to prearranged times. Other cultural groups are more relaxed about time and begin and complete activities when they feel ready to do so. Often, this is seen as lazy and undisciplined.

Advantaged groups also establish the dominant ideology—a pervasive set of ideas and ways of looking at reality. The dominant ideology shapes individual consciousness and both justifies and conceals domination (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 15). Privileged groups are able to impose their conception of reality on subordinate groups. As Jean Baker Miller (1976) explains,

> A dominant group has the greatest influence in determining a culture's overall outlook—its philosophy, morality, social theory and even its science. The dominant group, thus, legitimizes the unequal relationship and incorporates it into society's guiding concepts. (p. 8)

This dominant ideology, which I discuss in more depth in Chapter 4, is embedded in institutional structures and practices that shape our consciousness and experiences. What we learn (and don't learn) in school, what we see (and don't see) in the media, how we are expected to act at work, how our economy is structured, what individuals are held up as role models, and what research gets funded and validated reflect and reinforce the dominant ideology. This informs our sense of what is important, true, and real about ourselves, others, and the world.

Institutional power also allows for the control of subordinate groups. As of 1997, the top 10% of the population controls approximately 73% of the wealth in this country (Wolff, 1998), there are only two women CEOs in the Fortune 500 companies (seven in the Fortune 1,000),[2] and women and people of color are still grossly underrepresented in Congress. Privileged groups use this power to establish policies and procedures that can provide, deny, or limit opportunities and access to resources and power. They exercise control over access to health care, housing, education, employment, political representation, fair judicial treatment, and legal rights.

Dominant groups also define acceptable roles for people in subordinate groups. These roles usually involve providing services that people from advantaged groups don't want to do or don't highly value. This social manipulation impedes human dignity and self-determination. Conversely, people from privileged groups can provide benefits to others from their own social group—by sharing information, providing jobs, creating laws and policies, contributing money, making appointments to boards and committees, and facilitating social and political connections.

The control of the dominant belief system and major institutions results in psychological domination as well. People from both privileged and marginalized groups often begin to accept the messages from the dominant culture about dominant-group superiority and subordinate-group inferiority. For people from oppressed groups, this *internalized oppression*—the belief in their own inferiority—undermines their self-esteem, sense of empowerment, and intragroup solidarity. It encourages unhealthy, dysfunctional behavior. In addition, people from oppressed groups are encouraged to develop personal and psychological characteristics that are pleasing to the privileged group—to be submissive, dependent, and docile (Miller, 1976). As long as people believe that they are inferior or

deserve their plight, consider their treatment fair or for their own benefit, or are constrained in their self-development, they will not effectively challenge the current system.

Because the dominant ideology is embedded in our institutional practices and individual consciousness, for oppression to continue, we just need to act as usual, to go along with the status quo. It does not require malice or bad intentions to perpetuate systems of domination. We have been conditioned to see our social systems as normal and natural, even if some societal inequities are recognized.

Because only privileged groups have institutional power and the ability to systematically enforce their views, only they may be oppressive (e.g., racist, sexist, ableist, etc.). Certainly, people from all social groups (advantaged and disadvantaged) have prejudices and may act in discriminatory ways. Women may stereotype men, gays may deride heterosexuals, and Latinos may favor other Latinos for jobs. However, I, like many others, make the distinction between oppression and other terms such as prejudice, bigotry, or bias. None of the oppressed groups have the societal power to systematically disadvantage the corresponding privileged group. Consequently, from this line of thinking, there is no "reverse racism," even though people of color can act in hurtful, unfair ways toward White people. The shorthand definition "prejudice + social power = oppression" is useful to capture this distinction.

Normalcy

The dominant culture and societal norms are based on the characteristics of the privileged group (Wildman, 1996). The dominant group becomes the point of reference against which other groups are judged. It becomes normal. This standard of normalcy is also used to define what is good and right. These cultural norms become institutionalized and establish policy and practice. Catherine MacKinnon (1989) illustrates how this is true about men.

> Men's physiology defines most sports, their health needs largely define insurance coverage, their socially designed biographies define workplace expectations and successful career patterns, their perspectives and concerns define quality in scholarship, their experiences and obsessions define merit, their military service de-

> along with each other—their wars and rulerships—defines history, their image defines god, and their genitals define sex. (p. 224)

White (Christian), middle-class, heterosexual norms pervade our culture. Schools are one place where this is evident. The communication patterns and cultural styles used in most educational settings are more typical of White, upper middle-class families. There is an emphasis on individualistic learning, competition, and quiet and controlled classrooms, as opposed to collectivist values, oral traditions, and more active behavior, which are more common in other cultural groups (Delpit, 1995; Greenfield & Cocking, 1996; Viadro, 1996). The structure and content of standardized tests have been based on White, middle-class males, giving rise to concerns about gender and cultural bias (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The conformity, or lack thereof, to these norms has significant impact on educational success and achievement.

This is also true in the workplace. Consider the style of speech and dress required for success in the business world. "Proper" English, suits or other "professional" attire, and a refined interpersonal style are the accepted standards. Domhoff and Zweigenhaft (1998a) found in a study of the experiences of women, Jews, African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and gay men and lesbians in positions of corporate leadership that although the faces may be more diverse, the behaviors and values remain the same. To be successful, members of these groups must conform to the norms and expectations of the dominant group. "Hedging against traditional stereotypes, Jewish and Black executives must be properly reserved, Asian executives properly assertive, gay executives traditionally masculine, and lesbian executives traditionally feminine" (Domhoff & Zweigenhaft, 1998b, p. 44). People must not be "too Jewish," "too Black," or "too gay."

The image of a "good family" (still) consists of a mother who is home raising children and a father who is earning the money. When I recently bought a house, I got a strong dose of these cultural norms. Over the past several months, I have made many calls about hiring someone to do work in the house, saying only that I recently bought it and giving my full name (first and last). With few exceptions, people referred to me as Mrs. Goodman and assumed that I had a "handy husband" and that I would be home during the day. The possibility that I might be single or a lesbian was not part of most people's thinking.

Other cultural norms are also widespread. Christian holidays are officially recognized and celebrated. Although everyone has the day off for major Christian holidays, people from other religious groups must take personal or vacation days to observe their holidays. I became painfully aware that I was not part of the norm when I attended a huge educational conference in a major hotel in San Francisco during the week of Passover and there was not a matzoh in sight. Look in most mainstream greeting card stores, and notice how often you see a person with a disability, a person of color, or a gay couple on the front, unless the card is targeted to that particular population.

We often become aware of the norms when we are exposed to the reverse or an exception. Try switching to all-female pronouns when reading something that uses the generic *he*. When I visited Atlanta, I was struck the first time I saw brown mannequins throughout a department store, despite having lived around New York City and other urban areas of the Northeast. Guided fantasies that reverse the norms, such as ones where homosexuality is the most common and accepted form of sexual orientation (e.g., Thompson et al., 1990), also illustrate what we take for granted as standard and appropriate.

Moreover, we tend to indicate the identity of an individual only when he or she is not what we consider the norm; otherwise, his or her social identity is assumed and unnamed. People are likely to refer to the "woman doctor," "Black leader," "Latino businessman," "lesbian teacher," or "disabled lawyer," even when the individual's social identity is not significant to the story. Yet how often would someone use the terms *male, White, able-bodied,* or *heterosexual* to refer to individuals in similar positions? More specifically, I've never heard Bill Gates referred to as the "White businessman" or Bill Clinton as the "male president." Sometimes only through exposure to difference can we begin to see what we have become accustomed to and take to be normal.

Superiority

This sense of normalcy also leads to a sense of superiority: Not only is it normal, it's better. Differences get converted into "better" or "worse," with the attributes of the dominant group being the winners.

In a study of mental health, Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosencrantz, and Vogel (1970) asked clinicians to describe a "healthy man," a "healthy woman," and a "healthy adult." A healthy woman was described as emotional, dependent, and submissive. The description of a healthy man was largely the same as that of a healthy adult—rational, independent, ambitious, and active. Not only was *man* the standard for *adult,* but a healthy woman could not be a healthy adult. (This study has been replicated many times since, with inconsistent results.) Furthermore, not only is Standard English more socially accepted, it is considered "better" than other cultural dialects. And heterosexual nuclear families are more common than gay or lesbian families, but they also are considered the "best" family structure.

Even the same traits may be named and valued differently depending on whether they are associated with a privileged or an oppressed group. Christians are "thrifty," whereas Jews are "cheap"; heterosexual men are "studs," whereas gay men are "promiscuous"; men are "leaders," whereas women are "bitches"; Whites are "shrewd," whereas Asians are "sneaky." Privileged groups uphold their own attributes as preferable while distorting and disparaging the qualities of others.

Superiority is not always conveyed in blatant and intentional ways. In reference to racism, bell hooks (1989) calls this type of superiority "White supremacy." She defines it as the unconscious, internalized values and attitudes that maintain domination, even when people do not support or display overt discrimination or prejudice (p. 113). It is the expectation (often unconscious) that people of color should assimilate to White norms to be acceptable and accepted. A similar process occurs when women are expected to adopt "male" styles of leadership and communication to be viewed as competent and effective in the workplace (though they can't be too "masculine" either). Trying to get people from disadvantaged groups to be "more like us" is usually a sign of supremacy at work, carrying the implicit message that "our way" is better.

This sense of superiority extends from the characteristics and culture of the dominant group to the individuals themselves. Oppression is commonly defined, in part, as the belief in the inherent superiority of one group over another. This influences how people are viewed and treated. People in professional positions are considered worthier of respect than are people in working-class jobs. There

is usually more public outcry when a White woman is raped or a White child is killed than when this occurs to a woman or child of color. People with developmental disabilities have been seen as appropriate guinea pigs for dangerous medical experiments.

People from disadvantaged groups are generally labeled as substandard or aberrant. They are assumed to be less capable because of innate defects or deficiencies (Miller, 1976). For example, women are too emotional, Blacks are less intelligent, gays are morally deviant, and people with disabilities are defective. Not only are people from subordinate groups somehow inferior, but by logical extension, people from dominant groups are superior. This reasoning allows privileged groups to rationalize the systematic unfair treatment of people from oppressed groups and to feel entitled to power and privilege.

Privilege

Oppression involves both systematic disadvantage and advantage. Most discussions of social injustice focus on the subjugation of oppressed groups—the ways in which they are discriminated against, marginalized, exploited, manipulated, demeaned, and physically and emotionally attacked. Less attention is given to the other part of the dynamic—the privileging of the dominant group. This "system of advantage" (Wellman, 1977) bestows on people from privileged groups greater access to power, resources, and opportunities that are denied to others and usually gained at their expense.

Social oppression creates privilege systems—benefits or unearned advantages systematically afforded people from dominant groups simply because of their social group membership. "What makes something a privilege is the unequal way in which it is distributed and the effect it has on elevating some people over others" (Johnson, 1997, p. 175). It includes what we are able to take for granted or do not have to think about simply because we are part of an advantaged group; people from disadvantaged groups cannot make the same assumptions. Peggy McIntosh (1988) describes White privilege as "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks" (p. 71). Privileges do not need to be desired—we get them whether we want them or not and whether we are aware of them or not. Privileges can be both material and psychological. They can include concrete benefits as well as psychological freedoms; often, these are interrelated.

McIntosh (1998) lists numerous privileges for Whites that reflect these two interconnected dimensions. She writes,

> I can go home from most meetings of the organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, feared or hated; I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them; I can go into a supermarket and find the food I grew up with, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair; I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge" I will be facing a person of my race; I can be pretty sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race; I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race; I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race; I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, or be late to meetings without having people attribute these behaviors to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race; I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do. (pp. 5-9)

Male privilege is evident in an exercise I do with groups of university men and women.[3] I ask them to describe what they do on a daily basis to ensure their safety. The men have a hard time coming up with a list. On the other hand, the women quickly cite numerous efforts: locking doors, walking with buddies, getting rides, avoiding certain areas, checking their cars, staying inside during late hours. Men have the privilege of being able to move about with less thought, worry, and constraint. (For men facing other forms of oppression—racism, classism, heterosexism, or ableism—the privilege of safety may be significantly limited.)

People with class privilege have access to the best medical care; to leisure and vacations; to good housing, food, and clothing; and to governmental financial advantages (e.g., tax breaks, write-offs for mortgages). They feel entitled to be treated respectfully, to be taken seriously, and to have opportunities to use their talents. They can

choose work that may be meaningful, though not well compensated, knowing they have a safety net—other marketable skills, opportunities for education, or financial resources. They can use connections to get jobs or to be admitted to college. It's interesting to note that when opportunities are gained because of connections, there is not the outcry about merit. On the other hand, affirmative action is constantly attacked.[4]

Able-bodied people do not have to think about access to buildings—for education, cultural events, employment, or socializing; about travel—around one's own town, vacation areas, or conference sites; or about needing assistance to do basic daily tasks. They do not fear that people will assume them to be less intelligent or less productive solely because of a (possibly irrelevant) disability.

Heterosexuals can freely display public affection, talk openly about their partner, have their relationship publicly acknowledged and celebrated, and be protected from discrimination. They don't need to worry whether it's all right to bring their partner to events (and then whether they can dance together); whether they'll lose their job if they're out; whether they'll be accepted by their neighbors, or whether their partner will be considered as family under hospital guidelines and thus be able to visit or make medical decisions.

I became aware of another aspect of heterosexual privilege when I worked on a committee against homophobia on a university campus. When I was hired to do human relations education, it was clear that few people on campus were willing to publicly deal with issues of homophobia, despite the often-stated need and some very active (though essentially closeted) gay and lesbian faculty and staff. I quickly formed a committee (open to everyone) to address gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues on campus. There was a lot of interest and a strong representation of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. Although we worked very collaboratively, I was the chair and contact person, regularly sending out notices of our meetings and events and being called by the student newspaper to report on our activities. On a campus that felt unsafe to most gays, I realized that as a heterosexual, I had more freedom to be public about working against homophobia than my lesbian and gay colleagues. I had the safety of not being "found out," despite assumptions that I was a lesbian. It felt like a privilege to be able to be visible around this issue. (This is not to deny the fact that people from privileged groups do face risks when being allies.)

Michelle Fine (1997) notes how the creation and reproduction of privilege relies on the interdependence between dominant and subordinate groups. The privileged group is only privileged in relation to the targeted group. In many cases, a sense of privilege is gained through the deprecation and deprivation of the disadvantaged group. She observes this dynamic at work in a school in a low-inome community in the South. In a context where no one is receiving a good education, it is only because the White students are receiving more opportunities relative to the Black students and can align themselves with Whiteness (i.e., with a superior identity) that they can consider themselves privileged.

Promoting identification with superiority and privilege also helps to prevent people from an advantaged group from allying with people from one of their disadvantaged groups. White, poor, working-class men have often used (and have been encouraged to use) their "whiteness" to feel privileged while rejecting alliances with men of color in similar class positions (Roediger, 1991). They rely on racism and their sense of White privilege to create separation, instead of forging a common struggle against classism and economic exploitation.

Moreover, oppression is maintained not just by taking actions against disadvantaged groups but also by increasing privileges for advantaged groups. Instead of, or in addition to, active hostile actions taken against people of color, there may be a resurgence of pro-White policies and practices (Gaertner et al., 1997). According to Fine (1997),

> Where we look for evidence of discrimination and prejudice will have to move to the cumulative benefits of being White, rather than the (exclusive) tracking of blatant racism against, in this case, Blacks. Documenting racism *against,* as if separable from racism *for,* may be a diversionary strategy by which our eyes have been averted from the real prize. (p. 60)

Because oppression creates not only disadvantages for subordinate groups but also advantages for the dominant group, we need to examine both parts of the dynamic. White women and people of color may not be actively denied jobs, but unless they are included in the informal social network, mentored, encouraged to take on new responsibilities, and provided opportunities for professional

development, the net effect is that they will not advance at the same rate as White men. White men are being privileged, even though White women and people of color may not be facing overt discrimination.

McIntosh (1998) also makes distinctions among privileges. She suggests that some are advantages that everyone is entitled to and that these should be a right; these need to be extended to all. Examples include having your neighbors be decent to you, not having your race work against you in employment, or not being followed or harassed in stores. Other privileges confer dominance and reinforce our present hierarchies, such as being able to ignore less powerful people, to manipulate our legal system to avoid punishment, to withhold information or resources, or to advance our interests to the detriment of others. These need to be rejected and eliminated. Therefore, as we examine privilege systems, we need to consider how privileges are constructed, how they are used to further systemic and structural inequality, and how to ensure that everyone has access to the privileges that should be human rights.

Individuals From Privileged Groups

Individuals are affected by being part of a privileged group and the dominant culture. Their experiences and perspectives are shaped by their social position. The effects of being dominant group members are reflected in people's attitudes, thinking, and behavior. I'll discuss several of the most common traits.

Lack of Consciousness

People from privileged groups tend to have little awareness of their own dominant identity, of the privileges it affords them, of the oppression suffered by the corresponding disadvantaged group, and of how they perpetuate it. In the first place, people from privileged groups generally do not think about their dominant group identity.

I conduct a couple of activities that highlight this point. At the beginning of a class or workshop, I'll ask each person to introduce herself or himself by choosing words to describe who she or he is. People of color will virtually always refer to their racial/cultural identity, whereas someone who is White rarely will. (Tatum, 1997, and Wildman, 1996, report similar findings.)

In another activity, I list common social categories—race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, ability or disability, class, age, and ethnicity— and I ask people to choose the two or three that are most important to who they are, to their sense of identity. I later ask them to choose the three that feel least important. Again, most people include in their three most important identities subordinate ones (though depending on the group, people are less likely to reveal their sexual orientation if they are gay, lesbian, or bisexual). The three least important are dominant identities. The one consistent exception is gender; both females and males often include it in their top three. This is not surprising because gender is such a salient and referenced social category.

When these results are pointed out to people in the class, I ask them why they think this occurs and why they chose the identities they did. People who choose a subordinate identity as most important talk about feeling very aware of that identity—it makes them feel different, others make them aware of it, it has created obstacles to overcome, or it is where they get mistreated. On the other hand, they recognize that their dominant identity is something to which they generally do not need to pay attention.[5] Even though we are most exposed to information about privileged groups, people from these groups tend to have the least self-awareness about that aspect of their identity and its social significance. This absence of consciousness about their social identity seems to, in part, reflect unequal power relationships. Miller (1976) maintains that people from dominant groups are deprived of feedback about their behavior because people from subordinate groups feel it's unsafe to give such feedback for fear of negative repercussions. Therefore, people from privileged groups don't learn about their impact on others. Nor do mainstream institutions (media, schools) provide this kind of perspective. (I also think that most people from privileged groups are not interested in or are afraid of knowing anyway, a point discussed later.) Nonetheless, people from advantaged groups are allowed to, and in fact encouraged to, remain unaware. In contrast, people from disadvantaged groups become highly attuned to and knowledgeable about the dominant group because their survival depends on it.

This lack of awareness relates to being the norm and therefore not needing to think about one's social identity. It's like being a fish in water—when one is surrounded by water as part of one's natural environment, it's hard to be aware of it. And this water has been

filtered through the dominant ideology. People from privileged groups are surrounded by their culture and, therefore, they don't notice it. This allows them to see themselves as individuals, not as part of a group that has social power and privilege. Although members of other social groups may be lumped together, obliterating individual and intragroup differences, people from privileged groups tend to see themselves as unique individuals who succeed or fail on the basis of their own merit.

Moreover, this fish-in-water phenomenon contributes to the lack of awareness that people from dominant groups have about their privileges. Because the norm or reality is perceived as including these benefits, the privileges are not visible to members of the dominant group (Wildman, 1996). As I stated earlier, because privileges are things we usually take for granted and assume to exist, they therefore tend to be invisible. Frequently, we do not realize that something is a privilege until we compare it with the experience of the disadvantaged group. Several examples illustrate this occurrence.

One Sunday morning, I was in New York City saying good-bye to my then-boyfriend. As we stood on the curb next to my car, kissing, I heard some people clapping, down the block behind me. We stopped, and as I slowly turned around, I saw four men sitting on the back of a truck, laughing and applauding. I felt mortified. As I was recounting this episode to a lesbian friend of mine, it suddenly occurred to me how this was about heterosexual privilege. I could blithely and obliviously kiss on the street and then be applauded for my action. I doubt that my gay or lesbian friends would so unconsciously kiss their lovers in public or that they would be likely to get such a positive reaction for doing so. I had the luxury of just worrying about being embarrassed.

I am usually unaware of my privilege as an able-bodied person until I am with a person who is disabled. For several days of a conference I was attending, I wandered about the large hotels looking for the sessions, joined friends for meals, and explored the city. I then met a colleague who used a wheelchair. She generally limited herself to the sessions that were being held in one hotel because navigating it was difficult enough. Trying to get out of the hotel, cross the streets, and move about other hotels was too time-consuming and exhausting. Finding an accessible place to have dinner became another issue. After spending most of the day together, we arrived

back at our hotel and found that the elevator in the lobby that stopped at our floor was closed for the evening. Because the suggested alternative was up an escalator (which was impossible to do in a wheelchair), we ended up taking the freight elevator. Technically, the hotel and the conference were wheelchair accessible. However, it made me realize how much I take my mobility, and what it affords me, for granted.

In the above examples, the privilege is clear if we try to become conscious of it. In other cases, the privilege is more hidden. In an effort to explore sex discrimination, the television show *Prime Time* matched a White man and a White woman on all variables except sex (e.g., overall appearance, education, etc.).[6] The two individuals went out separately to look for jobs, buy a car, and do other tasks. Both applied for a job as a territory manager for a landscape business that was advertised in the newspaper. Even though, on the basis of their resumes, the woman was better qualified for the job, when the man was interviewed, he took an aptitude test and was told about managerial possibilities; when the woman was interviewed, she took a typing test and was asked about her secretarial skills.

The staff at *Prime Time* conducted a similar experiment with a White man and a Black man to examine racism.[7] In one situation, both men responded to an ad for an apartment to rent. The Black man was told that the apartment was rented, whereas the White man, who went in later, was told that the apartment was still available. In both of these situations, not only did the White man receive better treatment and more opportunities than the White woman or Black man, but those options and advancements were gained at their expense. The White man had these chances because others were denied the same opportunity. If there had not been hidden cameras, the White man never would have known that the White woman and Black man were not treated as he was—he was just being treated nicely. Unfortunately, this kind of treatment becomes a privilege, an unearned advantage. Dominant-group members may be unaware that they are the recipients of privileged treatment and that this is at the expense of others. They therefore believe that their achievements are based on their own merit, not on systematic advantage. (See Chapter 2 of Hawkesworth, 1993, for a review of the research that documents how sexist bias privileges men at women's expense.)

Last, because the privileges are sometimes hidden and the discrimination is subtle, people from privileged groups don't realize the pervasiveness of oppression. They assume their experiences and treatment are normal. This assumption, coupled with little knowledge of the injustices that people from disadvantaged groups face, allows them to remain unconscious of other experiences. People from advantaged groups are taught to notice neither inequalities nor privileges. They are "privileged to remain innocent" (Lazarre, 1996).

This lack of consciousness allows for the unintentional perpetuation of injustice. People do not realize that what they are doing is biased or discriminatory. There are innumerable examples of this, yet one recent situation in particular captures this well. A photo in a local newspaper featured a White boy and an African American boy, with the White boy in the foreground. The title announced the winner of the geography bee. The caption began with the name of the White boy and the fact that he finished in second place. It then explained that the other boy was the winner and gave the other boy's name. Even when the African American deserved the spotlight, from looking at the photo (and the order of the information in the caption), it appeared that the White boy was the winner. A positive image of an African American male was diminished there, yet newspapers have no difficulty highlighting African American males when they are involved in illegal activity. Although some people may intentionally promote racist or other oppressive images, I doubt whether the photographer or the editor of the newspaper intended to convey such a distorted and implicitly racist message. Yet they colluded with institutional racism. Because people do not have to act in overtly discriminatory ways but have only to behave normally or unconsciously to perpetuate oppression, it is easy for members of dominant groups to remain unaware of the impact of their own actions or of their institution's practices. They are less likely to realize how business as usual could still cause injustice.

Denial and Avoidance of Oppression

There is a fine line between recognizing that some privileges may be less obvious and therefore easy to overlook and choosing not to see or look for those privileges. Similarly, there is a difference between lacking an awareness of the extent of social injustice and deciding not to acknowledge it. People from privileged groups have the options to deny the existence of oppression and to avoid dealing with it. Lazarre (1996) refers to this as "willful innocence" (p. 49).[8] For the reasons cited above, people from privileged groups tend to be less conscious of oppression and more likely to deny that it exists. In their reality, they are generally unhampered by their social identity and ignorant of the mistreatment of others. Along with a sense of superiority, it becomes easy for them to proclaim that if it is not an issue from their perspective, then it's not an issue. Because their lives can proceed rather well under the current circumstances, they do not need to bother to explore or listen to the complaints of others. They can ignore claims of discrimination and label those who raise issues as oversensitive or troublemakers. Denying that there is oppression also allows the system of domination to remain in place and be justified.

This is exacerbated by the fact that people from advantaged and disadvantaged groups tend to define oppression differently. In the case of racism, Whites are more likely to see racism as "individual acts of meanness" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 18), as individual acts of prejudice and discrimination, or as extreme actions that are the exception rather than the norm. Blacks are more likely to see it also as a series of daily indignities and as a system of institutionalized practices and policies that works to their disadvantage (Duke, 1992; Shipler, 1997). Therefore, if people only recognize injustice when it is blatantly expressed by individuals, they will never understand the depth and breadth of social oppression.

Admitting that there is oppression and that one participates in it opens up the possibility of personal discomfort. As Allan Johnson (1997) explains, people from privileged groups feel they should be exempt from such an experience:

> Dominant groups typically show the least tolerance for allowing themselves to feel guilt and shame. Privilege, after all, should exempt one from having to feel such things. They experience reminders of their potential for feeling guilt as an affront that infringes on their sense of entitlement to a life unplagued by concern for how their privilege affects other people. The right to deny that privilege exists is an integral part of privilege itself. So men can be quick to complain about "being made to feel guilty" without actually *feeling* guilty. (p. 62)

This privilege is sometimes referred to as "the right to comfort." This was expressed very directly at a training I conducted with a group of university students. The first several activities highlighted the group's diversity and clearly made the point that we need to value our differences and create equality for all groups. After participating in an exercise that physically demonstrated White privilege and institutional racism, a White male said that he didn't like the activity because it made him feel uncomfortable and bad about being White. He understood that the point of the activity was to demonstrate inequities and knew that the purpose was not to make White people feel guilty. Nevertheless, he still insisted that his discomfort made him not want to engage and, therefore, that the activity was counterproductive. He felt entitled to the privilege of not having to be uncomfortable and therefore had the privilege of choosing not to confront issues of racism.

People from privileged groups can also choose to remain silent when they are aware of injustice. The impact on people from disadvantaged groups is usually more profound and immediate and, thus, more likely to elicit a greater need to respond. Because people from privileged groups are usually less directly affected, they can decide not to take action. In fact, there is incentive not to do so. First, people from advantaged groups who point out inequities and challenge the status quo often put themselves at risk. They may face retaliation at work or school, ostracism, harassment, or violence. Second, pointing out inequities and challenging the status quo disrupts a system that largely works to their benefit. People from privileged groups tend to have more to lose, at least in the short run, if they make waves. (However, in Chapter 5, I'll discuss the extensive costs of oppression to people from dominant groups as well.)

Sense of Superiority and Entitlement

Being part of the norm, a member of the dominant group, and the beneficiary of (invisible) privileges often leads to a sense of superiority and entitlement, or *internalized supremacy.* Even though this sense of identity is false and unearned, people from dominant groups come to expect certain treatment and opportunities. They feel that they deserve the privileges that they have come to assume will be theirs. This attitude is beyond a healthy sense of self-respect or pride in one's cultural group; it can be arrogance and snobbery.

Such individuals not only expect their needs to get met but often believe that their needs should supersede others' needs.

People with class privilege (money or status) expect their phone calls to be returned promptly and their work to receive priority. I notice that students who are upper middle-class, especially males, feel more entitled to my time and attention as a professor. They expect individual attention and accommodations to meet their needs. In general, men expect their wants and desires to take precedence over a woman's. Sometimes, people have a clear sense of entitlement and consciously believe that they deserve special treatment. Many times, people who are acting entitled rarely see their behavior in this light. They are just doing what they think anyone would or should do.

This sense of superiority often becomes evident when people from an advantaged group encounter someone from a disadvantaged group who is in a position of expertise or authority over them. Men may balk at having a woman boss, or Whites may be uncomfortable with a person of color as the doctor or consultant. People from privileged groups are often suspect of the ability, knowledge, or right to such status of people from oppressed groups. This may reflect more than just stereotypes and bias. This arrangement calls into question the implicit superiority of people from the dominant group and what they assume is the appropriate social order.

Multiple Identities and the Experience of Privilege

In my description of common characteristics of people from privileged groups, I have narrowly focused on a single aspect of one's identity. However, that is only one strand of a whole tapestry. Individuals' other social identities color their experience of that dominant identity and, more broadly, affect their overall experience of both privilege and oppression. Not everyone benefits equally; one's privileges are mediated by one's other social positions. Other social statuses affect the degree to which one experiences the advantages of privilege.

Privileges gained through a dominant identity may be mitigated or reduced because of a subordinate identity. Class privilege certainly provides many advantages, yet it may be limited by racism, sexism, or heterosexism. Even middle and upper-class Black men get stopped by police and are suspected of criminal activity; in

fact, being in an affluent neighborhood or driving an expensive car will often bring on this suspicion. Women in high-level positions still do not command the same respect or influence as men in similar positions. Openly gay men do not have the same access to corporate or political power (or membership in the old-boy network) as heterosexual men. (As described earlier in this chapter, people from various oppressed groups rarely have the same access to high-level institutional power, and when they do, it is at a cost.)

Nor does privilege in one area prevent subordination in another. Wealthy women are still subject to sexual violence, even though they have greater opportunities to protect their safety. Being able-bodied, heterosexual, and White does not exempt a working-class person from class oppression. A White man in his 30s who has the benefits of race, sex, and age may still face employment discrimination because he has a disability.

On the other hand, the experience of oppression in one aspect generally does not eradicate the experience of privilege in another. Some feminists feel that because they are all women and experience sexism, their experiences are similar. White women, able-bodied women, or heterosexual women often ignore the way they have privileges in other parts of their lives. Some Jews may be subject to anti-Semitism yet still have White-skin privilege. Men of color confront racism yet still benefit from sexism and patriarchy. However, in extreme cases, other dominant identities or privilege are irrelevant. No aspect of privilege could protect the Japanese from internment, the Native Americans from removal, or the Jews from extermination.

Though not absolute, our particular mix of identities does shape our experiences. Privilege can help alleviate experiences of oppression. The more dominant identities one has, the more one can draw on those privileges to deal with the discrimination and disempowerment faced in one's subordinate roles. The more subordinate identities one has, the more likely that the privilege one does have is eroded. However, this is not simply an additive game; our social identities are not a balance sheet in which one can just compare the number of identities on the dominant side and the number on the subordinate side and know how much power, privilege, or freedom one has. Individuals and the dynamics of oppression are much more complicated than that. Some people argue that certain oppressions are worse than others or have greater impact. As noted

in the previous chapter, Young (1990) points out there may be different "faces" or manifestations of oppression that are experienced to greater or lesser degrees by different oppressed groups. Oppressions may be linked but not comparable. As Audre Lorde (1983) asserts, "there is no hierarchy of oppressions."

Resistance to Seeing Oneself as Privileged

Many people have reactions to considering themselves privileged or dominant. Some people have difficulty thinking in those terms about themselves; others can do it but just don't like the idea. There are several reasons for these types of responses.

First, being *privileged, dominant,* or an *oppressor* has negative connotations. People assume it means that people willfully discriminate against or mistreat others. It seems to refer to the "bad guys." Most people don't see themselves or want to see themselves in that light. They consider themselves nice people who try to treat people fairly.

Second, most people do not even realize that they are privileged or part of groups with greater social power. As I have described, most people from dominant groups don't think about that identity; they see themselves simply as normal. They also do not realize the extent of systemic inequalities and the ways in which they are advantaged. It is hard to accept being privileged when you are unaware of your privileges or feel you have earned them.

Even if people from dominant groups are aware of their social status, they don't feel privileged or powerful. Most people are struggling to live their lives. They worry about their jobs, their families, their health. They personally don't have access to great amounts of resources or make decisions that affect the nation. More people feel controlled, rather than in control. Given the individualistic and competitive nature of our society, few people feel secure. The fact that most people think of themselves as individuals, rather than as members of a social group, exacerbates the difficulty they have with seeing themselves as privileged. Because individuals alone do not themselves create and maintain dominant ideologies and oppressive structures, it is understandable that an individual would not feel that he or she had much of a role in societal oppression. Because individuals personally don't feel advantaged, it is difficult to acknowledge that they are part of a group that is. A White woman ex-

presses this realization: "I never thought about it before, but there are many privileges to being White. In my personal life, I cannot say that I have ever felt that I had the advantage over a Black person, but I am aware that my race has the advantage" (Tatum, 1997, p. 102). Alternatively, some people from dominant groups feel that they are the ones at a disadvantage. This is particularly true for Whites who feel that people of color are now the ones getting the benefits, especially in the job market. However, when taking part in exercises in which White people are asked if they would rather be a person of color, virtually no Whites indicate that they would like to switch.

Moreover, the sense of privilege is relative. First, Johnson (1997) contends that people tend to assess their relative standing in comparison to people like themselves (looking sideways) or to people more advantaged than themselves (looking up). Rarely do we judge ourselves in relation to people worse off than ourselves (downward). Therefore, if our peers or those above us seem better off than we do, it is of little comfort or consequence that others are in worse positions. Therefore, people are usually quite aware of their relative deprivation but refuse to acknowledge their relative privilege.

Second, not all people in a particular advantaged group are similarly situated. Certainly, the experience of class privilege of someone in the top 1% of wealth in the United States is quite different from that of someone who is comfortably middle-class. Third, other subordinate identities erode one's sense of privilege. Some people from a targeted group claim that their oppression undermines any privileges they may receive from their dominant identity. Rather, I would say that other social positions affect the degree to which someone is advantaged in one's dominant identity. An individual can recognize privileges due to one's dominant identities while also acknowledging how those identities are affected by his or her other targeted identities. Privilege and oppression are not mutually exclusive, even if there is a dynamic between them.

As noted before, people tend to focus on their subordinate identities. For people who are part of a privileged group, their targeted identity or identities will usually have greater significance than their dominant identity or identities. This makes it more difficult for them to identify themselves as someone from a privileged group and to acknowledge that status. Most people will tend to see themselves as someone from a disadvantaged group, ignoring their privileges in other aspects of their lives. In the models of social identity development that I will describe in the following chapter, there is a stage in which people are very invested in their subordinate identity. At that point, it is particularly challenging for individuals to examine their privilege from a dominant identity.

Conclusion

This chapter broadly describes privileged groups and offers perspectives to appreciate how they might see themselves and the world. The dominant culture both overtly and covertly promotes the normalcy and superiority of the advantaged group and that group's right to domination and privilege. People from advantaged groups therefore tend to be less aware and less sensitive to oppression and feel entitled to privileges (which they don't see and believe are deserved). There is generally little opportunity, support, or incentive for people from privileged groups to explore their identity and examine its social implications. Thus, this provides a social imperative and challenge for social justice educators. In the following chapter, I will discuss ways to approach facilitating an educational process toward awareness and change.

Notes

1. The writings of Jean Baker Miller (1976) and the growing body of work on "Whiteness" (e.g., Fine, Weis, Powell, & Mun Wong, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1988) are particularly helpful in describing the experiences of dominant groups.

2. 1997 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers. This statistic is from the Top Earners category.

3. I first saw this exercise done by Jackson Katz at the University of Rhode Island in 1993.

4. John Larew (1996) explores this issue in his article, "Why Are Droves of Unqualified, Unprepared Kids Getting into Our Top Colleges? Because Their Dads Are Alumni."

5. Gallagher (1997) has challenged this presumption in his research with White college students. He found that instead of it being an invisible identity, "being White was an explicit, meaningful part of how students constructed their social identities" (p. 28). Students felt that their "Whiteness" intruded on most of their everyday activities. He raises interesting questions as to the construction and meaning of whiteness in the 1990s, given a variety of social and political factors.