

White Supremacy Traits¹

White Supremacy Culture Traits	Examples
1. Perfectionism	Little appreciation among people for the work that others are doing; more common to point out either how the person or the work is inadequate; making a mistake is equated with being a mistake.
2. Sense of Urgency	Speed makes it difficult to intentionally include, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, and frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick wins.
3. Defensiveness	Energy spent to protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it & criticism of those with power is viewed as rude & threatening.
4. Quantity over Quality	Resources dedicated to producing measurable results, and things that can be measured are more highly valued than those that can't (i.e., outputs of widgets over human relationships). Content prevails over process.
5. Worship Written Word	If it's not in writing, it doesn't exist, and the organization does not value other ways in which information is shared. Those with strong writing skills are more highly valued, even in where ability to relate to others is valued.
6. One 1 "Right Way"	The belief that there is only one "right way" to solve a problem, and once others see this "right way," they will go along with the approach. Failure to adapt or change indicates something is wrong with that person.
7. Paternalism	Decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it and those with power think they are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power.
8. Either/Or Thinking	A binary way of seeing the world in 0's and 1's. There is no room to accommodate nuance, which results in trying to oversimplify complex challenges creating conflict and a sense of urgency.
9. Power Hoarding	Sharing power isn't an option because power is a scare; those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done. Belief that requests for change reflect poorly on leadership.
10. Fear of Open Conflict	Leaders are scared of conflict and try to ignore it when a direct report raises an issue that causes discomfort. The response is to blame that person for rudely raising the issue and to emphasize being polite.
11. Individualism	Little experience or comfort working as a team. Each person feels they are responsible for solving problems alone. Desire for individual recognition and credit leading to isolation. Competition is valued over cooperation.
12. Progress is Bigger, More	Infinite growth is a way to determine success. The progress of an organization expands with more staff, more money, more resources. There is no value to the cost of expansion (increased accountability, risk, etc.)
13. Objectivity	The belief that humans can be rationale, and that emotions are inherently destructive. Invalidating anyone who shows emotion, requiring people to think in a linear way, and impatience with those who fail at this approach.
14. Right to Comfort	The belief that those with power have a right to emotional & psychological comfort, scapegoating those who cause discomfort and placing a dominant group's comfort over the marginalized group's safety.

¹ Perry, R. (2021). Imagine Belonging. Manuscript in preparation.

Belonging Culture Traits

Belonging Culture Traits	Examples
1. Appreciation	Make sure that people's work & efforts are appreciated; develop a learning environment where it is expected that people will make mistakes and that the group can learn from them; separate person from mistake.
2. Intentionality	Develop realistic workplaces with leadership that understands that we move at the speed of trust, and plan together for what it means to set and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments over time.
3. Listen to Understand, Not Respond	Name defensiveness as a problem when it is one and understand the link between defensiveness and fear of loss. Listen to understand, observe without judging, express feelings, express & clarify needs & make a request.
4. Quality over Quantity	Include process and quality goals in planning, ensuring your organization has a values statement which express the ways in which you want to do your work, and make sure the statement is in the way you do your work.
5. Cross-Cultural Communication	Take time to consider how people inside the organization gain and share information and find ways to document what is happening beyond simply writing. Recognize skills of building relationships equally important.
6. Adaptability	There are many different paths to reaching a shared goal, and notice how others may do things differently, and how those differences may improve your approach; never assume that a dominant approach is the "right" one.
7. Trust	Make sure that everyone knows and understands who makes what decisions and that they understand their level of responsibility and authority, including people who are affected by the decisions.
8. Both/And Thinking	Push others to come up with more than two alternatives and notice when people are oversimplifying complex issues. Slow down decision-making and encourage people to take a deeper analysis.
9. Power Sharing	Giving people what they need so they can do their best work by sharing power. Include shared leadership as a value; underscore that good leaders develop the power and skills of others by "dropping down the ladder."
10. Gifts of Feedback	Feedback is a gift, even when it's difficult to receive it from a leader's biggest critic. Conflict is actually a good thing for a group, and it should be expected. Equip leaders with the skills on how to manage it when it arises.
11. Cooperation	Recognize that accountability goes up and down with power as well as out to peers. This means working together to delegate to strengths and evaluation people based on their ability to work together to reach goals.
12. 7 th Generation Thinking	Ask how the actions of the group today will impact people 7 generations from now; make sure that any cost/benefit analysis includes all the costs, not just the financial ones, include process goals in your planning.
13. Sonder	Realization that each random person you pass is living a life as vivid and complex as your own, and that inner world is 100% invisible to you. Assume that everyone has a valid POV, and be okay with discomfort.
14. Psychological Safety	Remember that a dominant group's comfort is secondary to a marginalized group's safety. We must remember that a marginalized group's safety comes before a dominant group's comfort to advance our JEDI goals.