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HOW TO SABOTAGE MULTICULTURAL GROUPS

Objective: To identify behaviors that prevent multicultural groups from succeeding and thriving.

TIME REQUIRED 30 minutes or less

RISK LEVEL Moderate

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED Any number of participants, plus one facilitator

PROCEDURE Please take the following steps:

1. Distribute the list of 13 strategies for sabotaging a multicultural group in Exhibit 2.5 to the participants.
2. Read each of these strategies out loud to the group of participants.
3. As you read off each strategy, ask the students to provide examples they have observed or experienced of that particular strategy at work. Students may choose to work in small groups to discuss these strategies and how to best cope with them in groups.

DEBRIEFING In debriefing this experience, the leader may want to be careful in case one or another of these strategies has frequently been used by one or more group member in the past. Questions for discussion might include the following:

1. Do you think the strategies will work?
2. Can you think of a situation where you might use one or more of these strategies?

Note. From "How to Become a More Sophisticated Saboteur in Groups," by B. Gertz, 1969, in C. R. Mill (Ed.), *Selections From Human Relations Training News* (pp. 87-88), Washington, DC: NTL Institute. Copyright 1969 by NTL Institute. Adapted with permission.

Exhibit 2.5 *Saboteur Skills*

Listed below are typical tactics of a saboteur in group dynamics:

1. Find a scapegoat to blame, or ultimately blame the "social order."
 2. Declare that you do not have "the" answer, which gets you out of having any answer at all.
 3. For every proposal made, come up with an opposite so that the middle ground (no proposal at all) appears to be the wisest choice.
 4. Argue that the group must not move too rapidly, which avoids the necessity of getting started.
 5. Point out how any attempt to reach a conclusion is a "futile quest for certainty" and that doubt promotes growth so that, if challenged, you say something that nobody in the group can understand.
 6. Look slightly embarrassed when the problem is brought up, hinting that it is in bad taste or too simplistic to discuss.
 7. Point out that no problem can be separated from any other problem, so no problem can be solved until all problems have been solved.
 8. Suggest that the problem is simply a projection by unhappy group members of their personal problems onto the group.
 9. Ask what is meant by the question, which will consume the discussion until time runs out.
 10. Point out all sides of every issue to hide your own indecisiveness behind the illusion of objectivity.
 11. Insist that the group wait until an expert can be consulted.
 12. Retreat into general objectives on which everybody agrees but that are so general that they do not suggest a course of action.
 13. Give heartfelt thanks to the person raising the problem and praise the profound discussion the problem has stimulated before declaring the meeting closed.
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3. Can you identify examples where you have seen these strategies at work?
4. Are there strategies for making groups work better as well?
5. Do some cultures use these strategies more than others?

INSIGHT

Multicultural groups are vulnerable to intentional and unintentional saboteurs.