Racial Affinity Groups FAQ for Participants:

**What is a racial affinity caucus?**

During a racial affinity caucus, people divide into group by their (self-determined) racial identity. This creates space for people with similar racial experiences to learn, discuss, and be together.

**What if I’m not sure which group to join?**

Where you go is up to you. Join whichever group will be discussing things that have an experience most resonant with your experience of being in the world. Mary Ehlenbach ([mehlenbach@pediatrics.wisc.edu](mailto:mehlenbach@pediatrics.wisc.edu)) is one of our fabulous facilitators who identifies as bi-racial and has offered to connect with anyone who is struggling to decide where you fit best, and talk about the unique experience of walking through the world with that identity. Please reach out to her if you’d like.

**Why are BIPOC (** **Black, Indigenous, and people of color)** **identities grouped together? The racial and ethnic identities captured within this grouping are really varied!**

Given the size and identities represented in our residency program, we are unable to create groups of meaningful size within the BIPOC caucus nor a group specifically noted as multi-racial / multi-ethnic. This is a problem—we need to change this! But it is where we are now. Within a BIPOC group there are certainly folx whose racial identities have given them different experiences of living in the world. That is ok. If those of you in the BIPOC group, with your facilitators, decide to sub-divide further you can definitely make that choice.

**Why caucus at all? Doesn’t it just create more division?**

*“White people and people of color each have work to do separately and together…. For white people, a caucus provides time and space to work explicitly and intentionally on understanding white culture and white privilege and to increase one’s critical analysis around these concepts. A white caucus also puts the onus on white people to teach each other about these ideas, rather than constantly relying on people of color to teach them. For people of color, a caucus is a place to work with their peers on their experiences of internalized racism, for healing and to work on liberation.”*

* From Racial Equity Tools

*“Caucusing often feels divisive, especially at first and especially for White People. When a White caucus is meeting down the hall from a People of Color caucus, it isn't unusual for the White caucus to hear laughter coming from the latter. Coming to terms with Whiteness is rarely a source of comfort, but we can find strength and support in those who share this struggle. Truly there is much to learn from People of Color, but they are often in positions where they must educate White People. Caucusing allows People of Color freedom from responsibility for White People's education, placing the responsibility instead on the White People themselves.”*

* From Roots of Justice, Inc.

**This is too easy. I already “get it.” Can’t we move faster?**

Caucus work can build relationships and systems of support, and create a vehicle to leverage collective power— *“generating more influence and energy for race equity change than individuals can generate and sustain on their own… Racial caucuses are spaces for learning and building self-awareness on the role of race in our lives. As a result, most groups have participants at many levels of awareness and understanding about the role race plays in their lives. Those early in their learning may choose first to listen instead of speaking as they navigate their own experience and/or feel uncertain of how they are feeling. Those later in their learning may have much to say, sharing stories and anecdotes that can jumpstart discussion… embrace this powerful space for learning”*

* From “Caucuses as a Racial Justice Strategy: What We Have Learned” from JustLead Washington July 2019.

**What if I want to opt out?**

For those choosing to opt out, there will be no questions asked. I do not know all of anyone’s identities and lived experiences, and trust you will do what you need to do. If you are thinking of opting out, please reflect the on your identity and relationship to power/privilege position; why you want to opt out; what it would mean to leave; what it would cost to stay. Some general rules of thumb:

* If you are an identity position of power/privilege:
  + If uncomfortable b/c this is new, you’re not sure how you feel, this topic brings up negative or unwanted feelings, etc.  à please join.
  + If you feel you “know all this already” à please join
  + Consider what will it communicate to others in the room and our program if you choose not to be present
* If traumatizing, redundant, and/or unnecessary because of your identity and lived experience, and your time would be better spent on another endeavor, feel free to opt out. Please use this time to do something that lifts you up and brings you joy (even if that is sleeping) and re-join the group after the caucus is over.

**What if I want to spend more time in affinity groups?**

* UWHealth currently hosts the following Employee Resource Groups, with plans to expand: African American / Black; LGBTQ+; Women’s Leadership; Military Service Membership; LatinX. If you want to learn more or join, contact Naomi Takahashi [ntakahashi@uwhealth.org](mailto:ntakahashi@uwhealth.org)
* Creation of a resident-led BIPOC affinity group (UWSMPH wide—not Peds specific) is underway. To express interest: <https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_82ie3BhSReDmDps>
* Fill out the survey/eval at the end of each Social Justice session, and express your desire for more!

**What are some common pitfalls especially in the White caucus?**

* Talking about People of Color rather than focusing on White People's issues.
* Having only intellectual discussions and never uncovering the emotional and spiritual aspects of antiracist identity.
* Becoming an elite group of White antiracists who stand above those others who ”just don't get it.”
* Getting stuck in the ambiguity that surrounds being accountable. ("We can't start caucusing until we are accountable, but we can't become accountable until we've done some of our own work!")

**I identify as \_\_\_, but/and I have other marginalized identities. Why are we always talking about race, and dividing our caucuses by race, instead of more focus on other aspects of identity?**

* Race is central to the way power was constructed and continues to be distributed in our country—including in healthcare
* In the spirit of Audre Lorde, we cannot fight one form of oppression without fighting all forms of oppression, and when we fight one form of oppression we fight all forms of oppression (intersectionality!)
* Consider race as an archetype about how we may think about and work to fight other forms of oppression
* Bring this question up in your affinity group!